

THE THREE MINDS OF THE STRATEGIST: TOWARD AN AGENTIC PERSPECTIVE IN BEHAVIORAL STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

By theorizing choice as an information and decision problem, behavioral strategy research has not considered fully the agentic capacities of strategists. We argue that agentic capacities are distinct from decision-making and information-processing capacities as they rest on temporally anchored engagements with the world through habit, imagination, and judgment. We propose that understanding agency as temporally anchored action capacities is particularly important for research in behavioral strategy, as strategic phenomena encompass accumulated experience and path-dependencies (the past), ongoing competitive, market, and organizational interactions and exchanges (the present), and plans, visions, and forecasts for the future (the future). We outline how strategic choice and agency involve cognitive engagement in the three time horizons through distinct cognitive capabilities and the organizational processes that support them.

Keywords: Agency; temporality; schemas; attention; imagination; choice; behavioral strategy; strategic cognition

Behavioral strategy, and its predecessors, including behavioral theory of the firm, strategic leadership and upper echelons, organizational learning, and strategic cognition research, is distinguished from other approaches to the study of firms and markets by its emphasis on managerial choice (Child, 1972). The rapidly gaining prominence of behavioral strategy in strategic management research

is, in part, a result of growing awareness in the diverse bodies of work on decision-making, cognition, routines and capabilities, organizing, and strategic leadership, of the fundamentally behavioral issues they investigate. Despite the variety of theoretical foundations and topics of inquiry that these bodies of work represent, they tend to share a concern with constraints on choice, arising from the bounded rationality of actors confronted with the need to form representations of, and act on, a complex reality (Gavetti, 2012; Levinthal, 2011). By theorizing choice as an information and decision problem, however, behavioral strategy research has not considered fully the agentic capacities of strategists.

We argue that agentic capacities are distinct from the decision-making and information-processing capacities on which most research in behavioral strategy has focused. We take our lead from the sociological view of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970; italics in original) as “*the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments ... through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment [...]*” Habit, imagination, and judgement refer to three different temporally oriented action capacities: (1) the iterative re-enactment of the past based on cognitive and social processes anchored in experience, routines, and habits; (2) the adaptive problem-centered responsiveness to unfolding problems in the present based on pragmatic judgments, negotiations, and evaluations; and (3) future-oriented imaginative-projective processes for envisioning future trajectories of action, respectively. Through these capacities, human agency “*both reproduces and transforms*” the structural environments of action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970).

We adopt this view of agency as encompassing different temporally oriented action capacities, to draw attention to the complex sociocognitive processes that underlie agentic behavior and to foreground the actor employing different processes for different strategic tasks. Our essential point is that strategic choice and agency involve simultaneously operating in three time horizons – not in principle, or in the abstract – but through distinct cognitive capabilities and organizational processes that support them. We argue that understanding agency as a set of temporally anchored action capacities is particularly important for research in behavioral strategy, as strategic phenomena encompass accumulated experience and path-dependencies (the past), ongoing competitive, market, and organizational interactions and exchanges (the present), and plans, visions, and forecasts for the future (the future).

To the degree that behavioral strategy differentiates itself by providing a realistic understanding of the choices and behaviors of strategists, we argue that it stands to gain from adopting a more agentic perspective on action. Such a perspective will add richness and realism by moving beyond the atemporal analysis of general heuristics and biases, as well as overly static conceptualization of managerial cognition (see Narayanan, Zane, & Kemmerer (2011) for a review). Further, by attending to the intertwining of past, present, and future, the agentic view is particularly well-suited to explaining strategic choices and trajectories of action over time. We use the term “trajectories of action” consistently with Gavetti and Menon’s (2016, p. 209) notion of a course of action as “a combination of many components such as commodities, resources, or activities, which

can be more or less interdependent.” An agentic perspective brings back into focus the issue of choice as fundamental and uniquely defined by the deployment of diverse and complex sociocognitive processes. To guide future research in this direction, we discuss extant research in strategic cognition as it pertains to the agency triad of habit, judgement, and imagination, and highlight some newer areas of research that can advance the development of behavioral strategy research by expanding the conceptualization of agentic behavior.

FROM A COGNITIVE TO AN AGENTIC PERSPECTIVE ON BEHAVIORAL STRATEGY

The cognitive perspective within strategic management research was introduced in the 1980s with studies by Anne Huff (1982) and her students emphasizing the importance of strategic framing and decoupling it from the direct effects of the strategist’s experience. Porac and colleagues (Porac & Thomas, 1990; Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989, 2011; Porac, Thomas, Wilson, Paton, & Kanfer, 1995) developed a novel research agenda for research on strategic groups and competition by demonstrating the effects of strategists’ competitive categorizations and mental models on the construction of exchange networks and industry boundaries. This body of work was distinguished by the assumption that environments and organizational contexts are not objectively determined, but enacted through the interpretive processes of managers (Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997). In assessing the progress of research on strategic cognition over two decades, Kaplan (2011, p. 681) concludes that strategic cognition research has become “a sort of ‘general purpose technology’ (Bresnahan & Trajtenberg, 1995) that has become an essential part of the theorizing in many different fields of management, including, or especially, strategy.” It has been central to understanding core questions in strategy ranging from industry structure (Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989, 1995, 2011), competitor behavior (Nadkarni & Barr, 2008), competitive advantage (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999), firm capabilities (Eggers & Kaplan, 2013), and the origins of strategy (Gavetti & Rivkin, 2007). Further, the research on managerial and organizational cognition has provided a broader perspective on the role of cognition inside and among firms. In a seminal review of the research on knowledge structures, commonly referred to as schemas, Walsh (1995) demonstrated the broad and diverse topics that involve the study of schemas across individual, organizational, and industry levels of analysis. These reviews convincingly show that the unique contribution of the cognitive perspective to strategy research derives from its focus on the mind of the strategist – that is, on the cognitive structures and processes that affect how decision-makers formulate their organization’s strategies.

Whereas strategic cognition research has unquestionably made important contributions to date, the questions we pose are whether it has adopted a sufficiently broad perspective for the analysis of the relevant sociocognitive processes, and whether its current assumptions and focus of inquiry enable it understand strategic agency, and not simply strategic decision-making. Our answers – building on Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) theory of agency as a triad of temporally and

socially structured processes – are that extant research has focused extensively on strategic cognition as the basis for re-enacting the past and as a constraint on strategy formulation (see [Narayanan et al. \(2011\)](#) for a discussion). It has directed growing attention to the cognitive processes that enable managing a rapidly changing present, and has taken only very few tentative steps toward understanding the cognitive processes involved in creating the future ([Porac & Tschang, 2013](#)). We, therefore, see an opportunity for broadening the research agenda for strategic cognition research by considering more systematically the agentic capacities of strategists rooted in different temporally oriented cognitive processes. This would require directing research attention to the different processes through which individuals and organizations are constrained by the past, responsive to the present, and capable of imagining the future.

In the remainder of the paper, we relate strategic cognition, and cognition research more generally to the processes through which the different temporal action capacities of agency are constituted ([Emirbayer & Mische, 1998](#)). In order to expand the perspectives available for cognitive research on strategy, we highlight work in psychology that is relevant for understanding the dynamic and adaptive cognitive processes through which strategists manage ongoing change in the present, as well as the work on creative cognition that has implications for understanding how strategists develop creative imaginative projections of the future.

THE TEMPORAL ORIENTATIONS OF HUMAN AGENCY

[Emirbayer and Mische \(1998\)](#) characterize human agency as a “chordal triad” encompassing three dimensions distinguished by their temporal anchoring in the past, present, and future. The core aspect of agency rooted in the past is iteration and reproduction of more or less habitual behavior; the core aspect of agency adapting in the present is ongoing modification of behavioral patterns to respond to evolving situations; and the core aspect of agency projecting into the future is imaginative construction of future possibilities ([Emirbayer & Mische, 1998](#)). Below, we use this typology to frame a discussion of themes in behavioral strategy research, and to propose future research areas that pertain to the processes associated with each aspect of the agency triad.

For each aspect, we first briefly summarize [Emirbayer and Mische’s \(1998\)](#) articulation, and use it to identify relevant processes that have been studied by either strategic management or psychology researchers. We do so in an effort to connect the sociological theory of agency to the focal problems and questions in strategic cognition research. The processes that we discuss therefore differ from, but largely complement, those highlighted by [Emirbayer and Mische \(1998\)](#). Our analysis suggests that the three aspects of agency have been studied by behavioral strategy research to varying degrees. As the literature has emphasized views of agency that are rooted in the past, exciting possibilities exist for expanding our understanding of agency in the present, and vastly increasing theorization of agentic capacities for creating the future. To this end, we focus on major themes rather than delving into the details of specific studies, with the

objective of providing a high-level map of the current and potential understanding of agency in behavioral strategy research.

Acting Habitually: Re-enacting the Past

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the most researched aspect of human agency is what they term the habitual or *iterational dimension*, which involves “*the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity*” (p. 971; italics in original). The processes and patterns within this dimension are highly consistent with those discussed in the vast body of work on the role of schemas at the individual, organizational, and industry levels of analysis (Walsh, 1995). Schemas have been consistently found to filter out schema-inconsistent, and favor schema-consistent information, thereby stabilizing and constraining perception and action. Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 971; italics in original) similarly note that the habitual action capacities give “*stability and order to social universes and [help] to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time.*” They further clarify that “[t]he agentic dimension lies in *how actors selectively recognize, locate, and implement such schemas in their ongoing and situated transactions.*” (p. 975; italics in original).

Within strategic cognition research, theories that incorporate agentic action capacities that re-enact the past have been the most developed to date. This temporal orientation of agency is evident in the study of how strategy is derived from, and based on, prior experience, either as an accumulated aggregate – e.g., age or tenure – or as cognitive structures that are developed on the basis of past experience, such as knowledge schemas (Walsh, 1995). Within this theme, researchers have focused on the effects on strategic processes of cognitive structures that are shaped by past experience, including those captured in characteristics of the upper echelons of the firm, managerial interpretations, and cognitive filters (Barr, Stimpert, & Huff, 1992; Porac et al., 1989).

The most extensive body of research on the effects of firm strategists’ past experience on strategy formulation has been conducted from the “upper echelons” perspective focusing on CEOs and top management teams. The core idea on which upper echelons research has built is that firms’ strategies reflect the cognitive filters through which strategists process available information (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Empirically, however, this research has primarily used demographic characteristics as proxies for potential differences in cognitive filters (Knight et al., 1999). Most of the attributes of interest – e.g., functional background, level of education, age, and organizational tenure – ground the analysis of strategic decision-making in the past, thereby analyzing how the present reproduces the past.

A second, related body of research has examined how decision-makers’ attributes filter information and affect strategic interpretation in the face of environmental uncertainty. Here, the familiar attributes capturing past experience, such as functional background and industry or organizational experience are used to directly analyze their filtering effect on managerial interpretations

(Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Lant, Milliken, & Batra, 1992). Research within this domain has also focused on managerial sensemaking, which involves a combination of interpretation and action as the mechanism through which strategists shape trajectories of action, through a process of enactment (Weick, 1995). It has contributed to our understanding of how managerial interpretations are shaped by prior experience and in turn affect how executives perceive and respond to events and trends in their environments (Lant et al., 1992; Martins & Kambil, 1999).

A third body of research has endeavored to capture directly the cognitive filters of managers by analyzing their systems of categories (Porac et al., 1989), schemas (Walsh, 1995), personal constructs (Reger & Huff, 1993), and mental models (Barr et al., 1992). This research is distinguished by the use of original research methods to elicit and map directly the underlying cognitive structures that inform the strategic decisions of firms, instead of relying on experimental methods in laboratory settings or survey methodologies that often reflect the models and frameworks of researchers, rather than those of the strategists themselves. This body of work has articulated the counterintuitive view that decision-makers' cognitive structures not only reflect environmental information, but actually lead them to construct and enact their environments and competition.

Collectively, research on strategic cognition focusing on the information-processing effects of past experience and accumulated knowledge is well developed, with a clear focus on cognitive processes and structures. Its core concerns are with how cognitive structures relate to objective environmental characteristics, and it is therefore concerned with the accuracy of schemas and the quality and veracity of information processing (Kaplan, 2011). It is important to note that although rooted in the past, this research does not represent strategists' cognitive structures as immutable, but rather as stable but malleable and updated based on the subjective idiosyncratic attributes of actors (Barr et al., 1992; Gavetti & Rivkin, 2007). The emphasis, however, remains on the accurate and appropriate interpretation of the characteristics of, and changes to, the environment, and the relationship between the interpretations and the strategies developed to respond to them. Consistent with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) theorizing, agency is understood as being exercised through selective allocation of attention, categorization of actors and events, and the matching and adapting of strategies to the environments thus construed.

Making Judgment Calls: Managing the Present

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agency in the present is *practical-evaluative* and “entails the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments [...] in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations.” (p. 971; italics in original). What distinguishes practical-evaluative agency from the habitual-iterational is the problematization of experience, defined as “the recognition that the concrete particular situation at hand is somehow ambiguous, unsettled, or unresolved” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 998). As a result, the relevance and applicability of the knowledge stored in cognitive structures is called into question and “increasingly

reflective and interpretive work on the part of social actors” is required (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 994).

Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) conceptualization of the practical-evaluative element of agency emphasizes the importance of interpretation, that changes in the environment make it problematic, and that the specific context is the locus of agency in managing the present. Within behavioral strategy, research on strategic interpretation has distinguished between automatic and deliberative interpretation, the latter being characterized as data-driven, attentive, and reflective (George & Jones, 2001; Julian, Ofori-Dankwa, & Justis, 2008). We see the research on mindfulness in organizational contexts (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006) and attentional engagement (Ocasio, 2011) as pointing to sound cognitive foundations for building new theories of the mind of the strategist as adaptive, flexible, and fluidly effective in dynamic environments. Such theories would provide valuable contrasts to traditional views of strategic cognition anchored in the past, which emphasize the challenges to sensemaking in rapidly changing, hyperdynamic environments (Bogner & Barr, 2000).

First, Ocasio (2011) extended the attention-based view of the firm (Ocasio, 1997) to address different aspects of attention, including the factors that affect its dynamism. In reviewing the cognitive literature on attention, he concludes that “attentional engagement provides sources of variation in organizational sensemaking, providing opportunities for organizational change and learning” (Ocasio, 2011, p. 1292). Attentional engagement links top-down information processing, i.e., based on the cognitive structures discussed in the previous subsection, and bottom-up information processing, i.e., in response to ongoing stimuli. Developing this area of research further would enhance behavioral strategy research on strategists’ agency in managing the present. For example, future work focusing on attentional engagement can specify how strategists attend to multiple and varying stimuli, and across local and global contexts, and different time horizons.

Second, the emerging area on managerial dynamic capabilities (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015) and organizational dynamic capabilities addresses the challenges of interpretation and action that arise due to rapid changes in the environment. These capabilities are based on the processes used “to purposefully create, extend, and modify the resource base of an organization” either through organizational capabilities (Teece, 2007) or through managerial cognitive capacities (Helfat et al., 2007, p. 4). Managerial dynamic capabilities derive from variation in the cognitive capabilities of strategists related to perception, attention, problem-solving, reasoning, and communication. For example, an individual capability for “fluid intelligence” defined as the “ability to reason without relying heavily on previously learned knowledge or procedures” underlies a strategists’ dynamic capability to figure out what resources may be of relevance in a changing strategic situation (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015, p. 840). Further, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) argue that in high-velocity environments, where strategists need to respond to continuously evolving situations, even organizational dynamic capabilities exist in the form of cognitive heuristics – “simple rules” – which provide robust guiding principles for making judgment calls

under conditions that require ongoing interpretation in the absence of clear frameworks and templates. In such environments, the practical-evaluative aspect of agency appears critical to strategy formulation. In fact, Gans, Stern, and Wu (2016) have recently argued that under such conditions, near-term pragmatics may, in fact, equate with strategy.

Finally, Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 994; italics in original) argue that the locus of practical-evaluative agency “lies in the *contextualization* of social experience,” suggesting the importance of understanding the performance of routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2008; Howard-Grenville, 2005; Levinthal & Rerup, 2006) and the practical activities of strategizing (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007; Whittington, 1996). Both scholarly communities focus on studying “specific actions, by specific people, in specific times and places” (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 101), thereby providing insights into the microinteractions that generate important organizational outcomes (Turner & Rindova, 2012). The work on strategy as practice further endeavors to offer in-depth analysis of how strategy formulation, planning, and implementation are actually done, focusing on the thinking and doing aspects of strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2005; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Johnson et al., 2007). As such, it has strong behavioral components that become evident when behavioral strategists turn their attention to the exercise of agency in the present and in context.

Using Imagination: Creating the Future

The *imaginative-projective aspect* of agency “encompasses the *imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future.*” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971; italics in original). Key to the exercise of imaginative agency is engaging with existing knowledge, memory, and experience with the goal of constructing scenarios and envisioning possible trajectories of action in the future.

In contrast to the adaptive processes of responding to presently evolving situations discussed in the previous section, research on such prospective cognition focuses on the generative cognitive mechanisms that enable radical cognitive shifts and leaps of imagination. Scholars have identified the understanding of this aspect of strategic cognition as a critical gap in current thinking about management and strategy. For example, Boland and Collopy (2004, p. 8) lament that: “There is something tragically missing from management practice and education today, and missing even from our management icons. That missing element is an image of the manager as an idea generator who gives form to new possibilities with a well-developed vocabulary of design.” Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen (2009) similarly observe that only 15% of the executives in their study do creative work themselves, instead of delegating it to others. This gap in strategists’ activities is significant, as scholars have suggested the critical importance of prospective and projective cognition for understanding the development of fundamentally new strategies and opportunities. Adner and Levinthal (2008, p. 51) assert that

“cognitive shifts that offer a different topology of the business landscape are, arguably, the most powerful forms of entrepreneurship.” Whereas, there appears to be an emerging consensus on the importance of strategists’ creativity and imagination in formulating strategy, the imperative has not been matched by research on this aspect of strategic cognition, as the theoretical foundations of future-oriented imaginative thinking need substantial development. Several recent lines of research and thinking point to interesting possibilities.

First, anticipatory thinking (Klein, Snowden, & Pin, 2011) has been proposed as a type of macrocognition that helps individuals and collectives develop action plans for potential threats and opportunities. As a “future-oriented aspect of sense-making”, that is associated with domain expertise such as that demonstrated by chess masters, anticipatory thinking is “the process of imagining how unexpected events may affect plans and practices” (Klein et al., 2011, p. 235). This approach shares some similarities with forecasting, but is less structured and more intuitive. Whereas, anticipatory thinking involves prediction in being future-oriented, it goes beyond prediction in that it is broader and encompasses elements of preparation for action in response to potential future occurrences. Thus, it is not simply about making guesses about the future, but about preparing to adapt to potential futures, including the unexpected. Klein et al. (2011) identified three common forms of anticipatory thinking: (1) pattern matching, which refers to assessing circumstances of a potential future event against a repertoire of patterns encountered in the past in order to detect relevant deviations, (2) trajectory tracking, which involves noticing trends and extrapolating from them implications for preparedness and action, and (3) convergence, in which decision-makers assess the interdependencies across different future events and their implications. Across all three forms, anticipatory thinking involves “mentally stimulating courses of action in order to evaluate what sorts of problems they might lead to” (Klein et al., 2011, p. 239). Such cognitive projections could form powerful bases for strategy formation for both existing and new firms, and research on anticipatory thinking could be employed successfully to inform behavioral strategy research based on understanding agency oriented toward the future.

Second, scholars have begun to explore future-oriented cognition through framing and reframing processes, such as recategorization, analogical reasoning, and other forms of generative cognition, as such processes alter the frameworks within which current information is processed, organized, and acted upon. For example, researchers have incorporated analogical reasoning in the analysis of cognitive search defined as exploration of new trajectories on the basis of specific concepts that serve as analogies (Gavetti, Levinthal, & Rivkin, 2005). Cornelissen and Clarke (2010) point to analogical reasoning as a cognitive mechanism for opportunity recognition. Martins, Rindova, and Greenbaum (2015) generalize the idea to the broader category of creative cognitive processes and theorize how analogical reasoning and conceptual combination enable business model innovation proactively, in the absence of exogenous shocks. Generative cognition is an important area of focus for behavioral strategy research focused on the future to explore, as it refers to a diverse set of processes through which individuals modify, extend, and otherwise transform their

existing knowledge structures. It specifies the processes through which schemas are changed and entirely new schemas are created through specific mental operations (Ward, 2004). Psychological research on generative cognition provides a proximal and readily applicable theoretical foundation for future research investigating important new directions in behavioral strategy research, such as strategic innovation and new business model generation.

Third, as the earlier quote by Boland and Collopy (2004) highlights, the practices of design have gained significant attention as a source of ideation and innovation broadly framed as “design thinking” (Brown, 2009). Design thinking has been posited as a distinct cognitive skill related to lateral thinking and creative generation of possibilities (De Bono, 1999). Scholars who study architectural and product design have developed the cognitive aspects of design thinking as involving interpretative processes that are fundamentally different from the schematic-information processing involved in agency anchored in the past (Lawson, 1997; Rowe, 1987). Whereas, schematic-information processing involves the application of existing schemas to stimuli to give them meaning, design thinking has been associated with the use of mental imagery and mental simulation in order to combine available knowledge and representation in new ways (Eastman, 2001) for the purposeful construction of novel combinations. It further involves contextualization of stimuli in ecological, cultural contexts, as well as attention to their formal properties and relations among them. Strategy scholars have begun to show interest in applying these ideas to strategic phenomena, although actual applications have been limited. For example, Boland and Collopy (2004, p. 8) have argued that: “Managers as form-givers care deeply about the world that is being shaped by a business and refuse to accept default alternatives. They understand that the design of better products, processes, and services is their core responsibility. The design attitude is the source of those inventions.” Unlike psychological research, design thinking is theoretically grounded in the humanities, and encompasses domains that are somewhat less familiar to strategy scholars, such as semiotics. Thus, although translations of these ideas to the study of strategy formulation may be challenging from methodological and epistemological perspectives, they nonetheless hold significant promise to inform behavioral strategy research.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we sought to draw attention to the need for a broader incorporation of strategists’ agentic capacities in behavioral strategy research. We build on the idea of human agency as a triad of action capacities rooted in the past, adaptive in the present, and projecting into the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) as an organizing framework for a brief survey of themes within behavioral strategy research. We identify broad trends within this literature showing that the majority of this research has focused on how past experiences shape cognition, exploring characteristics of the upper echelons of the firm, managerial interpretations, and cognitive filters as they relate to strategy; several strands of research have focused on the processes involved in dynamic adaptive processes

for responding to presently unfolding situations, particularly within research on automatic vs. deliberative interpretation, mindfulness, attentional engagement, managerial dynamic capabilities, performance of routines, and strategy as practice; and that behavioral strategy research has barely scratched the surface in incorporating strategic cognition that underlies the creation of the future, with research on anticipatory thinking, problem framing and reframing, and design thinking being areas that offer strong potential for future research.

An important implication of the pattern in the current literature on behavioral strategy is that there is a need for research that emphasizes dynamic aspects of agency in strategic cognition and action. Essentially, the field needs more theories of the strategic cognitive underpinnings of the transformation of markets and industries through dynamic adaptation in the present and importantly, imagining the future. In developing such theories, behavioral strategy researchers would benefit from Emirbayer and Mische's (1998, p. 1003) observation that as actors "shift between their agentic orientations [...] they may increase or decrease their capacity for invention, choice, and transformative impact in relation to the situational contexts within which they act." This suggests that agency is not a fixed capacity or sets of capacities but an evolving configuration of capacities that enable different ways of relating to the environment. From this perspective, strategy is not about how an actor is positioned in an environment, but about how the actor is able to engage with the environment. As strategic cognition and behavioral strategy research continue to grow in significance in informing the field's understanding of strategic processes and outcomes, we propose that a more explicit incorporation of human agency in behavioral strategy will deliver powerful new insights for both research and practice.

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