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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

School Of Management

**Do Middle Level Managers Contribute To Strategic Development?
A Study Of The Practices Of Middle Level Managers
In Strategic Renewal**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

STRATEGY

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This qualitative research explores the third-order sensemaking practices of middle level managers that could be seen as antecedents of strategic renewal within their organisations, and whether these micro-practices are context-specific or generalisable and transferable. The intention is to answer calls for deepening our understanding of the practices of middle level managers on influencing and changing strategic actions (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010), and contribute to the juxtaposition of the bodies of literatures on strategic renewal, Strategy-as-practice, middle level managers and sensemaking. The every day micro-practices of middle level managers have the potential for far-reaching consequences at a macro-level on their organisation's competitive advantage.

The important role of middle level managers in strategy processes has been recognised for a considerable time (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Lane 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1997; Nonaka, 1998). However, it has only been in the last decade that there has been a sizeable increase in the literature which discusses the role of middle level managers in strategy processes, viewing them as key strategic actors (Currie and Procter, 2005). In addition, there is also increasing focus on the role of middle level managers emerging from within a number of key process themes in the strategy literature: Strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington, 1996, 2003); strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011); and sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010).

This socially constructed qualitative strategic management research (Patton, 2002) is looking at the phenomenon that precedes and gives rise to strategic renewal, a second-order change process, through the sensemaking practices of 40 middle level managers in different change contexts, combined with an interpretivist approach.

Interviews were held with 40 middle level managers involved in organisational transformation. The interviews intended to provide explanatory depth and causal insight to the complex, inter-related and dynamic phenomena in this study (Sayer, 1992; 2000), and the agency of the middle level managers (Archer, 2007).

Findings indicate that middle level managers' formal conscious sensemaking practices are more likely to contribute to exploitation, whilst informal sub-conscious sensemaking practices are more likely to contribute to exploration within strategic renewal. Evidence is emerging that 'issue recognition' and 'feeling emotions' with related informal and sub-conscious sensemaking mechanisms have greater causal effects on renewal, and that enabling factors such as organisational size, diversity and culture, as well as external influences, underpin third-order sensemaking processes among middle level managers.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, NOELLE BRELSFORD

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

DO MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS CONTRIBUTE TO STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT? A
STUDY OF THE PRACTICES OF MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS IN STRATEGIC
RENEWAL

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission:

Signed:.....

Date:.....

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Definitions and Abbreviations

BSI	Background experience, skills and influences
CSF	Critical success factors
E	Enablers and constraints
EF	External influences
EI	Managing emotions
EP	Exploitation practices
ESI	Emergent strategic initiatives
EXP	Exploration practices
I	Issues and events
IF	Internal influences
KBV	Knowledge Based View
M	Motivating factors
MLM	Middle Level Manager
RBV	Resource Based View
S-as-p	Strategy-as-practice
SGP	Sensegiving practices
SMP	Sensemaking practices
TMT	Top Management Teams

Chapter 1:

1.1 Introduction

The inspiration behind this thesis is the growing evidence that how middle level managers influence strategy is important (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). In their study of the conditions under which 89 middle level managers in a US urban hospital engaged in divergent strategic activity, Pappas and Wooldridge's (2007) findings were consistent with the view that new strategies emerge through a social learning process where new knowledge is created, ideas generated, and capabilities developed as middle level managers and other organisational actors engage in complex social interactions (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Nonaka, 1998; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). Prior research indicates that middle level managers are change agents rather than just implementers of change (Conway and Monks, 2011; Currie and Procter, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994; Huy, 2002).

This thesis seeks to contribute to the literature by answering the following research questions that have evolved from gaps identified in the overlap between the Strategy-as-Practice literature, Sensemaking literature, Middle Level Management literature and Strategic Renewal literature:

- i. How does a Middle Level Manager's experience and organisational positioning influence their strategic practice?**
- ii. What motivates Middle Level Managers to contribute to a firm's strategic renewal?**
- iii. What are Middle Level Manager's sensemaking practices within the strategic renewal process?**

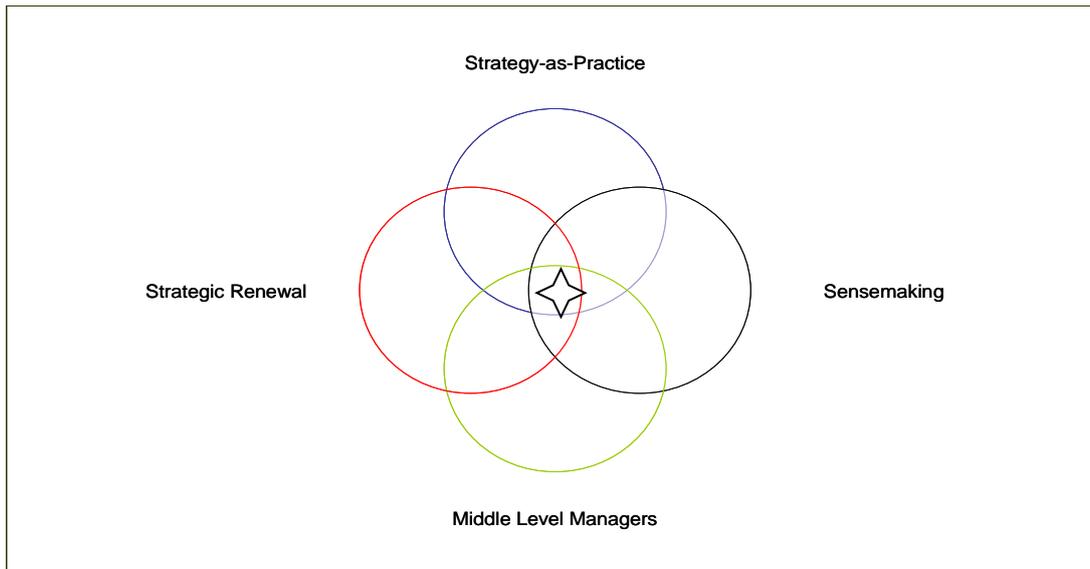


Figure 1: Focus for Research from the Literature. Source: Author.

The question of how experience and organisational positioning influences middle level manager’s strategic practice is motivated and explicated from gaps emerging from the work of Balogun (2003), Maitlis (2005), Mantere (2008), and Regner (2003). Regner (2003) identified that middle level managers closer to the periphery of an organisation were more likely to be involved in sensemaking and demonstrate exploratory and inductive practices critical to strategy creation, in contrast to more deductive and exploitative strategy practices in the centre of an organisation, and called for more exploration around different contextualisation. Mantere (2008) took a middle level managers view to explore the interactions between top managers usually based centrally and middle level managers based peripherally. Mantere (2008) identified that enabling conditions are key to middle level manager’s ability in their role to strategize, and that enabling agency is an outcome variable (Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003) and is therefore a legitimate concern in strategy practice. Mantere (2008) also called for more exploration around different contexts (Regner, 2003) and what other factors and influences contribute to strategic practices for middle level managers. Balogun (2003) calls for

more insight into skills, competencies and support requirements that enable and constrain middle level manager's strategizing. Rouleau (2005) calls for more insight into whether the level of strategizing increases the closer to the interface and how experience impacts on strategizing capability. In addition Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) asked what are the differing external and internal influences on middle level managers contributions in differing environments and competitive states, whilst Currie (2010) suggests that experience in boundary spanning roles could enable middle level managers strategizing skills. There appears to be a link between experience and enabling factors on strategic capability depending on where in the organisation the middle level managers are positioned. If the divergent activities of middle level managers lead to strategic development within the strategic renewal process (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007) then it would seem that there will be more divergent activity closer to the external environment where there is arguably more stimulus that can lead to divergence. This research question is designed to explore this link and whether the influence of external factors the closer to the periphery of an organisation are more enabling of agency than internal factors closer to the centre of an organisation. The sample of middle level managers were taken from differing environments and differing competitive states to provide insight into contextual factors.

The second research question is around the motivations of middle level managers to contribute to strategic renewal, and whilst motivations can be considered as being an enabler or constraint for middle level managers' sensemaking practices in driving strategic renewal (Balogun, 2003; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007), motivation is identified specifically as Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) suggest that this could be the most important characteristic for adaptive organisations. As middle level managers roles are critical and central to strategic renewal (Floyd and Lane, 2000) if they are not motivated they can slow down or

sabotage strategy (Guth and Macmillan, 1986), therefore it could be argued that motivation is a critical enabler. Mantere (2005) supports this view, based on his study, which implies that *'an individual is motivated to champion strategy because it provides purpose for his/her work.'* (Mantere, 2005: 172). Motivations at the individual level could include job enrichment, identity, power and purpose, capacity for enrichment and career advancement (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Mantere (2005) and Samra-Fredericks (2003, 2005) as well as Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) have all called for more empirical work on motivations and intent.

The third question is motivated and explicated by gaps in the literature and calls for more understanding of middle level managers sensemaking practices in strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Kwee, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2011; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010; Floyd, Cornelissen, Wright and Delios, 2011; Slocum, 2005). There are calls for insight into the middle level managers' strategic sensemaking role in practice (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010) and specifically within strategic renewal (Floyd et al., 2011). This third question is designed to identify middle level managers' sensemaking practices regarding exploitation and exploration (Kwee et al., 2011) and intuiting and interpreting within the exploration sub-process of strategic renewal (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Also within this question to identify sensemaking practices of balancing and managing emotions during change in different contexts (Huy, 2002; Huy, 2010; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009) as the literature has largely overlooked the social-emotional factors that impact on strategic actions and potential links to enabling factors, especially motivations. There is more recently an interest in understanding emotion as part of the sensemaking process (Maitlis, 2013; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Maitlis and Liu, 2014) and that emotional arousal can shape sensemaking (Cornelissen, Mantere and Vaara, 2014).

All three research questions are intended to work together to answer broader and synonymous calls and themes in the Strategy-as-Practice literature (Whittington, et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), in the Strategic Renewal literature (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011), in Middle Level Managers literature (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Balogun, 2005, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Lane and Vaara, 2007; Mantere 2005, 2008; Floyd and Lane, 2000), and in the Sensemaking literature (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010) to provide greater understanding of middle level managers' sensemaking practices in driving strategic renewal. A Weickian perspective on sensemaking (1979, 1995) is taken involving the three processes of sensemaking: creation, interpretation and enactment.

Middle level managers are those with one or two management levels above them and one level over workers and operational staff (Huy, 2001; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990). More broadly defined, the middle level manager is the *co-ordinator between daily activities of the units and the strategic activities of the hierarchy* (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994: 48). Mantere's (2005) empirical study of the social positions of 300 middle level managers in the strategic process identified three types of social position: the champion, an active participator in the process and strong supporter of the strategy; the citizen, that takes part in the process but is not as enthusiastic; and the cynic who does not believe in the strategy.

Patterns (Mintzberg, 1978) that emerge over a long period of time resulting from strategic actions are important aspects that define strategic renewal (Garud, Kumaraswamy and Karnoe, 2010). Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) and Pappas and Wooldridge (2007) suggest that strategic renewal is largely determined by the divergent strategic activities of middle managers, and their embedded social processes which help renew the firm (see Figure 1).

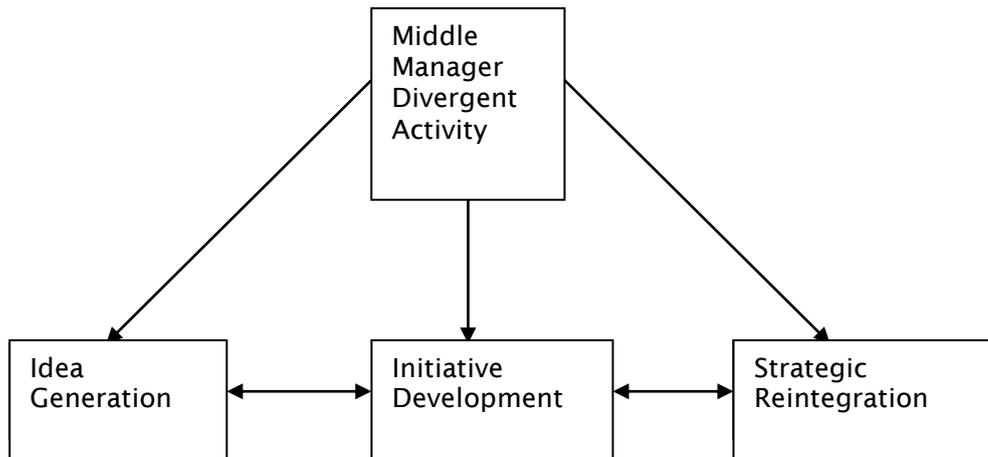


Figure 1: Middle management divergent activity and the elements of strategic renewal. Source: Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007:324

This links to growing interest in the patterns of strategizing activities, micro-processes or Strategy-as-practice that make up these patterns (Floyd et al., 2011; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2006) and strategic renewal as the outcome of these processes and practices (Floyd et al., 2011; Agarwal and Helfat, 2009).

Strategic renewal can be seen as an intensely social process (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Kwee et al., 2011). Sensemaking can also be seen as a social process (Maitlis, 2005) and a micro-mechanism that produces macro-change over time (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). A growing body of research has also emphasised that sensemaking is a critical capability for middle level managers during strategic change formulation and implementation (Balogun et al., 2005; Rouleau, 2010). This thesis intends to contribute to research gaps within the extant literature and build on prior knowledge of middle level managers' strategic practices, particularly sensemaking, and strategic renewal (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Middle Level Managers sensemaking practices drive strategic renewal. Source: Author.

1.2 Middle Level Managers as Strategic Actors

This thesis contributes to calls from the Strategy-as-practice perspective to identify the actual activities that managers engage in to accomplish their strategic work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003). Strategy-as-practice theorists reverse the conventional assumption that strategies are what organisations have and instead emphasise strategy as something that organisations do (Whittington, 2006: 613). This conceptual reorientation focuses research on the situated social practices that are enacted and re-enacted in the ‘doing’ of strategy (Rasche and Chia, 2009: 713). From this perspective, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) called for more research on middle level managers’ strategic roles in different contexts.

People create, implement and renew strategies (Mantere, 2008) and extant literature on middle manager involvement in strategizing has largely been functionalist (Mantere, 2008). Rouleau (2005) argues that we do not know enough about how middle managers draw on their practical knowledge to inform their practice, where practical knowledge is what we know without explicitly knowing we know it (Baumard, 2001). It is important to explore how middle level managers use practical knowledge in their daily activities as their strategizing roles are often informal and with less authority than those in formally recognised strategic roles (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). There is still little known of the strategic practices through which actors account for themselves as strategists (Jarzabkowski, 2009) and there are opportunities to

develop a further understanding of what individual practitioners do within their immediate locales (Jarzabkowski, 2009).

1.3 Middle Level Managers and Strategic Renewal

It can be argued that the most critical strategizing includes activities and practices that eventually lead to strategic renewal (Melin, 2007).

Research on strategic renewal has focused mainly on processes and outcomes in large established firms (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Volberda et al., 2001) and the top team (Kwee et al., 2011). There is a research requirement for understanding the impact of middle level managers on strategic renewal actions, particularly exploitation and exploration (Mom, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2007).

The middle line is where connections are made between intended, emergent and realised strategy (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). This is not to say that the top management team and operating levels do not have importance or that they do not have a role in strategic renewal, but that valuable insight can be gained through focusing on the middle line, where the knowledge and activities associated with renewal are most prevalent (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Research in a hospital setting found that middle level managers' strategic knowledge had a positive influence on the strategic change activities of championing alternative ideas and synthesising new information (Pappas, Flaherty and Wooldridge, 2004). Middle level managers' processes of disagreement and experimentation have been identified as core to renewal (Conway and Monks, 2011; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). Middle manager agency is a basis for strategic renewal where strategy is adapted to a changing environment (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mantere, 2008).

1.4 Middle Level Managers and Sensemaking

The processes of sensemaking by middle level managers have been shown by research (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005) to have intended

and unintended change consequences, and they call for more research into middle level managers' sensemaking activities that contribute to change outcomes (Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

Sensemaking (Weick, 1995) is generally conceptualised as a social process of meaning construction and reconstruction through which managers understand, interpret, and create sense for themselves and others of their changing organisational context (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Rouleau and Balogun 2011; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Sensegiving is a reflection of sensemaking in that meaning is disseminated to others and influences understanding (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Within the process of sensemaking and sensegiving it has been suggested that there is a dual, cyclical, and ongoing process of sense reading and sense wrighting where 'wrighting' is used in the same sense that a playwright 'wrights' (Mangham and Pye, 1991: 27). In other words intertwined cycles of interpretation and action, where interpretation shapes action, and action shapes interpretation in a reciprocal relationship through time (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011) are also intertwined with and influenced by the simultaneous cycles of interpretation and action of others (Balogun, Pye and Hodgkinson, 2008). In their exploration of research on middle level managers' practices in change situations, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) concluded that further research is required into middle level managers' situated sensemaking.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

This introduction in the first chapter is followed by an investigation of the literature as illustrated in Figure 3, and an identification of further contributory work.

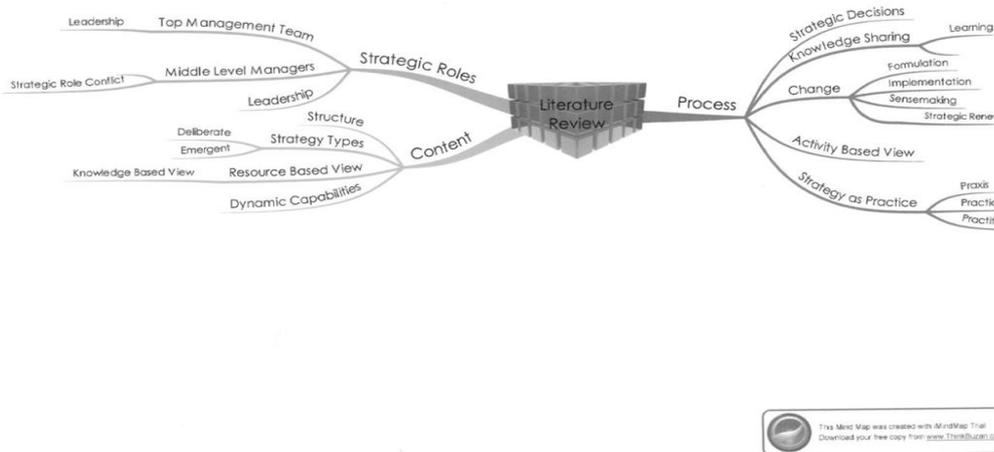


Figure 3: Literature Review Overview. Source: Author

The third chapter of this thesis explains the chosen methodology and theoretical lens, whilst the fourth chapter covers findings from this study of middle level managers. The final chapter is a discussion based on the findings and linked to the literature. Contributions to the literature and practice are also stated and limitations and areas for future research are identified.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis sets out to contribute to research gaps found in the juxtaposition of key emerging themes in the strategy literature of strategic renewal, Strategy-as-practice and the practices of middle level managers, using sensemaking as a lens. This chapter provides a review of the key literature themes and thinking related to strategy and strategic change, the processes and the strategic actors involved, specifically those at middle level management. Balogun (2003: 69) suggests that '*middle managers fulfil a complex 'change intermediary' position during implementation*' supporting the view that middle managers may be a strategic asset (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997) which is in contrast to long-held views and criticism that middle managers tend to be negative during change (Fenton-O'Creevy, 1998; Guth and Macmillan, 1986; Huy, 2001). Results from a number of studies (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) indicate that middle level managers can in fact be the drivers of organisational strategy (Mantere, 2008). Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) also suggest that the activities of middle level managers determine emergent change (Bamford and Forrester, 2003; Mintzberg 1978; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

There is an evolving paradigm shift in thinking around strategic change, and a developing research agenda on the roles of middle level managers (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997; Floyd and Lane, 2000). However, many of the hypotheses remain untested (Balogun, 2003; Mantere, 2008; Conway and Monks, 2011), and Balogun (2003) suggests that there is a greater need for understanding of the contribution made by middle managers during strategic change. The main focus within the strategic change literature has previously has been on the organisational level and the top management team as sole contributors to the

processes of strategizing formation, as these processes were seen mainly as decision making processes (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Emanating in the 1980s, a significant body of research evolved around the top team's decision behaviours (Hambrick and Mason, 1984), and a view that an organisation's performance was linked to its top team (Hambrick, 1987). Hambrick and Mason (1984) initiated a research stream that is known as Upper Echelon Theory (Higgs, 2009) which argues that the characteristics of the leadership team influence the decisions, actions and practices throughout the organisation (Chatterjee and Hambrick, 2007; Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1990; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). Several studies have demonstrated the link between upper echelon characteristics and organisational strategy and performance (Nishi, Gotte and Raver, 2007), such as top management team (TMT) gender diversity influencing organisational performance (Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick, 2003), and job diversity linking to internationalisation (Lee and Park, 2006). There is inevitably an interest in leadership characteristics and the change context and leaders contribution to successful implementation (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; 2008; Senior, 2000). A recent study found evidence of clear and strong relationships between leadership behaviours and change success (Rowland and Higgs, 2008) and that shaping behaviours, which are leader-centric behaviours that centre on the position, role and power, inhibit the success of implementation (Higgs and Rowland, 2005). The factors found in shaping behaviours, what leaders say and do, making others accountable, thinking about change and using an individual focus, do not appear to relate to successful change intervention (Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

Strategy formulation concerns the development and choice of a particular course of action, and strategy implementation comprises the subsequent communication, adoption, and enactment of the plans (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Noble, 1999; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk and

Roe, 2011). As strategy formulation and strategy implementation are inter-related processes containing both planned and emergent aspects they are together linked as strategy formation (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Strategy formation has been identified in the developing literature as patterns, activities and practices (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007).

The literature on Top Management Teams and Middle Managers has largely developed along separate lines, and researchers have given noticeably less attention to strategy implementation than to strategy formulation (Raes, et al., 2011). Also researchers have specified the respective strategic roles separately (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Mantere, 2008). Much of the research has determined that a key strategic task of middle level managers is implementing strategy (Currie, 1999) which is a key part of delivering the strategic process of change (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). However it has been argued that middle managers are seen as having a crucial role in both strategy formulation and implementation (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd, 2008), even though middle managers themselves see their strategic role as that of implementation (Mantere, 2008).

Recent research focus has shifted to the micro organisational social processes and practices of strategizing around strategic change, and understanding the strategic contribution of organisational actors outside the top team (Balogun et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski 2004; Johnson et al., 2003). Studies on strategic processes and practices of formation have evidenced the actions and interactions between organisational actors (Hoon, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Although the top-down view has remained dominant, there has been increasing evidence that middle level managers are key contributors to strategizing as opposed to being solely implementers (Balogun and Johnson 2005;

Burgelman 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge 1997; Huy 2002). Floyd and Wooldridge's (1997) study found strong statistical relationships between middle-level influence and organisational performance, and specifically high performance was linked to middle manager's engagement in implementation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). The study also found that groups of middle managers acting autonomously drove new strategic directions (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). Huy's (2002) study of radical change in a large organisation established that middle managers took on an emotional balancing role that was critical to delivering radical change. Also there have been broader challenges to the effectiveness of linearity and top-down change (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Sammut-Bonnici and Wensley, 2002; Senge, 1997) and particularly to the behaviours of leaders, where directive, shaping behaviours of leaders have been shown to inhibit successful change (Higgs, 2003; Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

This review takes us through the evolution of the literature relating to strategic change, and more recent developments in the thinking around strategic change, and emergent and current thinking around the activity based view of strategizing and activities as practice (Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003; Whittington, 2003). The activity-based view is concerned with the consequential details of organisational work and practice (Whittington, 2003). Strategy as social practice is about how practitioners of strategy act and interact (Whittington, 2003).

Traditionally the research focus has been on the macro level of organisations and understanding organisational performance, however there has been a shift in emphasis to understanding the micro level and the processes and activities that lead to strategic outcomes (Johnson, Melin and Whittington 2003), and how strategists 'strategize' (Whittington, 1996).

The practice approach to strategy is to understand the work and talk of the strategic practitioners (Bourdieu, 1990), and to the activities and

processes that underpin strategy content, explain strategy development or the management of strategic change (Johnson et al., 2003). This has led to an emerging focus on middle level managers as strategic practitioners and their contribution to strategic change (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Middle manager agency is a basis for strategic renewal, a bottom-up process where strategy is adapted to a changing environment (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mantere, 2008). Of particular importance are the middle level managers' practices of sensemaking, in terms of interpreting the intent to change, transmitting information, and gathering and diffusing new ideas (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007).

Strategic management as an academic discipline has developed significantly from the early beginnings (Andrews, 1971; Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962) to the emergence of the more contemporary Strategy-as-practice approach (Fenton and Langley, 2011; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003; Mantere, 2005; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Whittington, 1996).

2.2 Strategy Background – Developments in Thinking

2.2.1 Strategy Defined

There are many interpretations of how strategy should be defined. The term originated in the military, but is now used in different fields (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Sun Tzu, 1988). In a business context, strategic management is about how the organisation achieves its performance objectives and indeed how it determines what these should be. A long held view of business strategy which is still relevant today is that it is *'top management's plans to attain outcomes consistent with the organisation's missions and goals'* (Wright et al., 1994:3). However, earlier, in 1984, Mintzberg and Waters (1982, 1984) created a paradigm shift in thinking by identifying strategy as a *'pattern in a stream of decisions'*.

Strategy is not simple, it is dynamic and complex and strategic actions exist at different levels within an organisation (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

This evolving broader view of strategy suggests that strategy results over time from the activities of multiple organisational actors (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Strategy is becoming more than top team decision making, as although a key component of strategy is intention, another component is emergent, where emergent strategy is a pattern that is realised without intentions (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), i.e. without being anticipated by the top team, or even despite the top team (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Issues around strategic management have been the subject of much research and theorising for over 40 years and, over time, an increasing understanding of the complexities of strategic management has developed, as researchers have come to realise that 'one size does not fit all' and, that there is no 'ideal' strategy (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998).

Since strategic management emerged as a discipline about 40 years ago, there have been significant developments in thinking. Many reviewers trace the academic discipline of strategy to the early 1960s and three defining works: Chandler's (1962) *Strategy and Structure*; Ansoff's (1965) *Corporate Strategy*; and Andrew's (1971) *The Concept of Corporate Strategy* (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Furrer et al., 2008; Mellahi and Sminia, 2009; Rumelt et al., 1994). There is a parallel evolution between strategic thinking and how environmental challenges have changed over time (Bowman et al., 2002). Long-term planning, and strategy followed structure, dominated the 1960s thinking during a continuation of post-war recovery (Furrer et al., 2008). The corporate planning approach continued to dominate well into the 1970s, however it was during the late 1970s and 1980s that sound strategic

management began to emerge, and this was a period arguably dominated by Porterian thinking, linking industry characteristics to firm performance (Porter, 1980, 1985), as the environment brought increasing competition across global markets (Furrer et al., 2008). During the 1990s, strategic management scholars shifted their interest from external and industry level factors to internal factors (Barney, 1991; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Wernerfelt, 1984) against a background of rapid and discontinuous economic and political changes in the international environment (Bowman et al., 2002). The resource-based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) and dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997) have arguably become the dominant views as we moved into the next millennium (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009; Locke et al., 2009). It could be argued that strategic management has matured as a discipline during the last two decades, contributing to other disciplines as well as drawing on them (Pettigrew et al., 2002). The hyper-competitive environment is increasingly unpredictable and the field of strategic management is developing fast in terms of breadth and pace (Mahoney and McGahan, 2007). Against this background, more dynamic research domains are emerging from the RBV, evolving towards an appreciation of innovation and renewal (Furrer et al., 2008) and an approach that focuses on the people who practice, Strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 1996).

Strategic management research has been divided between two separate branches: content research concerned with the strategy part of strategic management to understand 'what' underpins firms' competitive advantage; and process research concerned with the management part of strategic management to understand 'how' the firms' strategy emerges over time (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009). This review looks next at how strategic management thinking has developed.

2.2.2 Current and Emerging Themes

Strategic management research has developed in growing pace and breadth, in two branches: content research concerned with the strategy and what a firm's competitive advantage is; and process research concerned with strategic management and how strategies emerge over time (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009). From the content perspective the RBV (Barney, 1991; Lockett et al., 2009) and dynamic capabilities (DC) (Teece et al., 1997; Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009) are emerging as dominant research themes. From the process perspective, it would appear that the dominant emerging theme is an approach that focuses on people who practice strategic management (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 1996). The study of the micro-processes of strategic management is known as the Strategy-as-practice approach (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009). These emerging themes are discussed in more detail later.

2.2.3 Content Research

Strategy literature originally started with a focus on strategic content. Content research was concerned with the strategy part of strategic management to understand the 'what' underpins firms' competitive advantage. (Ansoff, 1965; Andrews, 1971; Chandler, 1962; Miles and Snow, 1978; Porter, 1980; Schendel and Hofer, 1979).

The focus on strategy content and implementation maintained a separation between formulation and implementation, and a separation between strategists and others (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

2.2.4 Process Research

Whilst content research made important contributions to better understanding how competitive forces interrelate, it was dominated by a top team perspective on determining strategy and implementation mechanisms (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Schendel and Hofer, 1979) and did not contribute to increased understanding of process issues

(Bower, 1970). It followed that strategy research then took a decided turn towards process (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Process research was concerned with the management part of strategic management to understand 'how' firms' strategies emerged over time (Barney, 1991; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Quinn, 1980; Wernerfelt, 1984). However, process research was dominated by strategy making as a decision making process (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

2.2.5 Strategic Decisions

There has been a gradual shift in the research focus from strategy content towards strategic processes: strategy making as a decision process (Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Fredrickson, 1984); strategic thinking (Barr et al., 1992; Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Priem, 1990; Wiersema and Bantel, 1993); and strategic implementation (Andrews, 1971; Fredrickson, 1984; Pettigrew, 1992). Arguably, Porterian thinking that industry characteristics determine firm performance and that competitive advantage depends on a firm's ability to position and differentiate themselves within their industry (Porter, 1980, 1985) dominated empirical and theoretical work during the 1980s. However, during this period there were also strategic management scholars who expressed their concerns about the exaggerated impact of the industry on firms' performance and growth (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009). Research by Barney (1991), Prahalad and Hamel (1990) and Wernerfelt (1984) suggested that firm-level resources and capabilities and not industry characteristics are the primary determinants of firms' performance, which created the shift in strategic management research from external and industry-level factors to internal factors (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009).

Strategic decision making literature is divided into three sub-groups (Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992): bounded rationality, politics and power, and 'garbage can' models. Bounded rationality (Cyert and March, 1963; Mintzberg, 1978) argues that rationality ranges on a continuum from purely synoptic to purely incremental, depending on levels of

uncertainty and change in the environment. The political model contends that organisations consist of coalitions of people with conflicting interests (Pettigrew, 1973; Quinn, 1980) and that strategic decisions come from the most powerful groups (March, 1962). The 'garbage can' model argues that strategic decision making is not rational and organised but chaotic and a haphazard confluence of people, problems, solutions and opportunities (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972). Elements of rationality could arguably be found in all models, and all models found to varying degrees in most organisations (Fredrickson, 1984; Fredrickson and Mitchell, 1984; Mintzberg, 1978) depending on the stability of the environment. Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) linked the presence of rationality to three underlying assumptions in the strategy process literature: strategic decisions result from a process of ranking alternatives according to decision criteria; information from the environment and organisation is encountered by top management, who process it and formulate the organisation's strategy; and once the choice has been made, top management decisions lead directly to organisational outcomes.

There appears to be an acceptance amongst strategy researchers that strategy formation is a complex space (Mintzberg et al., 1998) as evidenced by a rich and diverse field crowded with competing theories (Whittington, 1996). Theories in the 1960s evolved around a planning perspective, the 1970s around a policy perspective, and since the 1980s a process perspective, including studies on the processes of change such as Gerry Johnson at Fosters (1987). More recently Whittington (1996) created a new paradigm, identifying an emerging practice perspective, as strategy research moves its focus to strategists and strategizing, rather than organisations and strategies. Emergent thinking is the Strategy-as-practice approach where strategy is a practice, based on an activity based view and the practice turn (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003) and that

'strategy is conceptualised as a situated, socially accomplished activity' (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007:8).

2.2.6 Strategy Process

Based on a review of the strategic process literature, and what they viewed as limitations in explaining capability development, Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) identified some critical assumptions for strategy process research and for a middle level perspective based on competitive advantage (2000:61):

1. *Sustaining competitive advantage depends on an organisation's ability to renew its capabilities by promoting and accommodating new knowledge and innovative behaviour.*
2. *New capabilities emerge from socially complex processes that are embedded in existing knowledge and social relationships.*
3. *Decision and actions that occur at middle levels of the organisation are at the centre of the organisational processes associated with strategic renewal.*

The first assumption holds that, in continuously changing environments, sustained competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997) reflects a firm's ability to renew its capability set, emphasising continuous adaption and learning to align with the environment (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) which is consistent with the evolutionary concepts of strategic renewal (Burgelman, 1983,1991; Nelson and Winter,1982). The second assumption is that renewal results from complex interaction between a variety of organisational actors at various levels and functions within and outside the organisation, derived from the Resource Based View (RBV) where strategically valuable capabilities are a combination of skills, knowledge, assets and technology (Barney, 1991), and that these combinations are critical to exploitation of resources thus leading to competitive advantage (Nelson, 1991). Building on the RBV view of competitive advantage (Nelson,1991) lying within the social processes

underlying strategic change, the third assumption is that information, knowledge and social influence that will impact on organisational capability sits in the middle, and that the middle line is the centre of strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) see strategy making as a social learning process rather than the traditional decision-making activity, which emanates from within the organisation rather than being the sole remit of the top team. This is an emergent change view, which understands change as a continuous learning process reflecting the analytical, evolutionary nature of change rather than a planned series of step changes (Burnes, 1996, 2004). Burgelman (1991) argues that incremental learning evolves out of existing competencies, and defines strategic renewal as processes involving evolutionary changes in core competencies. This definition links with the resource-based view of strategy (Barney, 1991; Conner and Prahalad, 1996) which has attained a pre-eminent position among theories in the field of strategy (Lockett, Thompson and Morgenstern, 2009) but is not central to this thesis.

In summary, research in strategic management has evolved into a rigorous search, influenced by social construction, for intellectual foundations with explanatory and predictive power (Furrer et al., 2008). There has been a shift in research focus to that of the firms' internal structure, resources and capabilities, to the resource based theory which includes the resource-based view of the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991), dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997) and a knowledge-based approach (Grant, 1996). Changes in strategic thinking appear to be linked to environmental challenges (Bowman et al., 2002). In progressively more dynamic conditions the re-thinking of strategy becomes more or less continuous and evolving towards dynamic capabilities, innovation and renewal (Furrer et al., 2008). This review now examines the change literature, and key gaps and issues, and calls for further research.

2.3 Change

Arguably, change is the most important process within the discipline of strategic management as it is an ever-present element that affects all organisations, and change and strategy are interrelated (Burnes, 2004; Todnem By, 2005). Change continues to be of interest to researchers due to the significant challenges around successful implementation, as most attempts to implement change are unsuccessful (Higgs and Rowland, 2000, 2011; Kotter, 1995).

Process research is concerned with understanding 'how' strategy emerges (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Emergent strategic initiatives can be defined as autonomous efforts within a group to affect significant change in organisational capability (Burgelman, 1983) and therefore the main focus in process research is on change. Change is the implementation of strategic direction and is identified as a strategic process where strategic change and strategy are nearly always synonymous (Burnes, 2004), and yet strategic development is also about continuity as well as change. The strategy literature suggests that drivers of organisational change are different for firms in dynamic environments and stable environments (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Nadkarni and Narayanan, 2007; Srour, Baird and Schoch, 2010) The Configuration School of Strategic Thinking (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998) sees organisations in a stable state for most of the time, interrupted by periods of transformation from one contextual configuration to another, ordered over time into patterns or sequences. However, this programmatic approach to change has more recently been linked to failure, whereas an approach that recognises change as a complex responsive process and embeds this recognition within the overall change process is more likely to succeed (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; 2011).

Studies by Tushman and Romanelli (1985) and Romanelli and Tushman (1994) appear to support this punctuated equilibrium model of change, where change is not a constant but a protracted series of discontinuous leaps driven by external dynamics (Jarrett, 2003). Theories of change are split between two paradigms (Gersick, 1991; Tushman and Romanelli, 1985): the paradigm of incremental change where change is continuous, incremental and cumulative (Gersick, 1991); and the punctuated equilibrium paradigm where change is sometimes incremental and slow, and sometimes disrupted by seismic and rapid change (Gersick, 1991). In the view of Miller (1996) and Miller and Mintzberg (1983), strategic management is about sustaining stability, recognising when transformation is required and then managing the organisation successfully through the transformation. The concepts of radical change or transformation are one of the key contributions of the Configurational School (Miller, 1996; Miller and Mintzberg, 1983; Mintzberg et al., 1998). However these views are challenged by Donaldson (1996) who believes that it is impossible for organisations to be either in a state of stability or rapid change, and that most organisations are continuously changing incrementally. Donaldson (1996) criticised the configurational approach, arguing that most organisations are changing incrementally most of the time and do not fit any configuration type but were usually somewhere in between, and from this perspective Donaldson (1996) disagreed with the concept of quantum change. Mintzberg (1998) suggested that innovative firms may not follow the punctuated equilibrium model of change but a more balanced pattern between change and stability. Rindova and Kotha's (2001) research on new organisational forms in an in depth case analysis of two new media firms also indicate that punctuated equilibrium does not describe the continuous evolving of organisations in extremely turbulent and hypercompetitive environments. Theories and approaches to change are often contradictory, lacking empirical evidence and supported by unchallenged hypotheses (Todnem By, 2005). Senior (2002) identified three categories of change

characterisation: rate of occurrence; how it comes about; and by scale. Early views on change suggested that constant change would have a negative effect on organisational efficiency and performance as people needed routines (Luecke, 2003; Rieley and Clarkson, 2001) but it is now argued that the ability to go through continuous change is vital to organisations (Burnes, 2004; Rieley and Clarkson, 2001) and even that change can be a routine in its own right (Luecke, 2003).

Strategic change is mostly a continuous process of incremental adjustments to existing strategy through activity within the subsystems of an organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 1984). Incremental strategic change is realignment of strategy through proactive adjustments to the operation, or reacting to environmental pressures by adapting the existing paradigm (Quinn, 1978, 1980). Burnes (2004) views incremental change as when individual parts of an organisation deal increasingly and separately with one problem and objective at a time (Todnem By, 2005). In contrast, transformational change is a process that cannot be managed within the existing paradigm and is a proactive process, and even a dramatic or revolutionary shift (Miller and Friesen, 1982).

In their large-scale empirical studies and statistical analysis of relationships amongst structural and strategic variables in 52 Canadian business firms over long periods, Miller and Friesen (1982, 1984) found that radical change rather than incremental change was associated with better performance. Miller and Friesen (1984) argued that radical or quantum change is necessary to break out of inertia and minimise the risks of incoherence and cost. They also distinguished between two types of change periods: momentum where there are long periods of incremental changes, and revolution where there are infrequent and short periods of extensive reversal (Miller and Friesen, 1980, 1984). Miller and Friesen (1984) defined quantum or transformational change as changes in the direction of change across a significantly large

number of variables of structure and strategies. Transformational change is described by Senge et al., (1999) as profound change where there is organisational change that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations, and behaviours with outer shifts in processes, strategies, practices, and systems. In profound change there is learning as the organisation does not just do something new; it builds its capacity for doing things in a new way and it builds its capacity for on-going change (Senge et al., 1999).

The literature has been dominated by planned and emergent change (Bamford and Forrester, 2004; Higgs and Rowland, 2005), as transformation is either planned or a reaction to a changing environment which forces the need for transformation. Strategic change is a type of organisational change that realigns an organisation's strategy, structure and process to fit within a new competitive context (Worley et al., 1996). An alternative view is the contingency theory that there is a need for a variety of approaches to change dependent on the situation and the organisation (Burnes, 1996). Todnem By (2005) argues that the contingency approach to change of one best way for each is an alternative to one best way for all planned and emergent approaches. Burnes (2004) viewed change as an ever-present feature of organisational life at the operational and strategic levels and that organisational change cannot be separated from organisational strategy. Higgs and Rowland (2005) found that change approaches based on assumptions of linearity were unsuccessful, whilst those built on assumptions of complexity were more successful, and emergent change approaches were the most successful.

One of the most in-depth studies of organisational change is Pettigrew's study of the change processes at ICI between 1969 and 1986. It is one of the relatively few longitudinal studies in the field. He found that change did not occur primarily as an incremental process, but as periods of radical change in which there was a mix of proactive and

reactive activity, influenced by external events and internal management initiatives (Pettigrew, 1985). This is in line with the Miller and Friesen (1984) view of change as quantum, where there are many changes occurring simultaneously within the organisation. The few in-depth case studies of the strategic change process in addition to Pettigrew (1985) also identify more complex patterns of change resulting in radical change and transformation (Burgelman, 1983; Johnson, 1988; Mintzberg and McHugh, 1985). This is in contrast to the views of Chandler (1962) where change occurred in stages and linearly, and Quinn (1980) who saw change as incremental driven by top managers sensing the need for change, driving that change and continuous learning. Pettigrew's study (1985) found little evidence to support Chandler's view, and suggested that to understand change there was a need to go beyond rational-linear theories (Mintzberg et al., 1998). In a study of an organisational change process in a Swedish telecoms company, Styhre (2002) found that non-linearity and complexity were an integral part of the change process. Higgs and Rowland's (2005) case study of seven organisations found that both quantitative and qualitative data showed that linear change approaches were unsuccessful in a wide range of contexts, whereas approaches based on complexity were more successful. Pettigrew's (1985, 1987) conclusions also disputed Quinn's (1980) view of change as the study showed that change did not occur as a continuous incremental process. The pattern of change (Pettigrew, 1985, 1987) was for radical areas of change occurring at periodical intervals, aligned to changes in leadership and power, with the changes occurring between being for implementing and stabilising change, emergent business strategy and for organisational learning (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

The pace of change has never been greater (Todnem By 2005). Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) concluded that time-paced transitions may be central to understanding how organisations continuously change and that together with Gersick's findings offer a more pro-active view of change than the event-paced view. Gersick's research (1988, 1989, and

1994) focuses on single projects and the midpoint transition that occurs between launch and deadline, but the common theme is time-paced evolution when change is linked to time not events. They believe that time-pacing is powerful in fast moving environments, enabling organisations to synchronise with their environments and set the tempo (Eisenhardt and Brown, 1997, 1998; Gersick, 1988, 1989, 1994). Time pacing is proactive change through regular deadlines, rhythmic time-based transition processes, used by successful companies in rapidly changing and intensively competitive industries (Eisenhardt and Brown, 1998). In contrast the more traditional model of event-paced change emphasises reactive change in response to failure (Tyre et al., 1996). Event pacing is an effective reactive change approach in stable markets where companies respond to changes (Eisenhardt and Brown, 1998).

One of Brown and Eisenhardt's (1987) key findings from an inductive study of multiple-product innovation in six firms in the computer industry were that organisational change readily occurs because links in time create direction, continuity and pace. This study examines how organisations engage in continuous change and is in contrast to the established punctuated equilibrium model, which assumes long periods of incremental change interrupted by periods of discontinuous, radical change (Gersick, 1991; Romanelli and Tushman, 1994; Utterback, 1994) sitting within a framework of emergent change (Burnes, 2004). Without understanding the present it is difficult to have a base from which to change, and without a future change becomes meaningless (Holland, 1975). Mintzberg (1978) differentiated between deliberate and emergent strategy which originates not in the mind of the strategist, but in the interaction of the organisation with its environment. Mintzberg (1978) claims that emergent strategies tend to exhibit a type of convergence in which ideas and actions from multiple sources integrate into a pattern. Eisenhardt and Brown's (1987) model of continuous change also fits within an emergent strategy framework (Burnes, 2004; Mintzberg, 1978).

The emergent view of change is of a continuous, open-ended process of adaptation to changing circumstances and conditions, as opposed to a series of linear event within a given period of time (Burnes, 1996, 2004; Dawson, 1994). Importantly emergent change can start anywhere not just from the top down. The emergent approach emphasises unpredictability and sees it as a process that develops through the relationship between a multitude of variables in an organisation (Todnem By, 2005) as well as a process of learning (Altman and Iles, 1998; Dunphy and Stace, 1993). The emergent approach is the most likely to succeed (Higgs and Rowland, 2005). Supporters of the emergent approach to change see it being more relevant than the planned approach given the uncertainty in internal and external environments (Bamford and Forrester, 2003). Critics of the emergent approach argue that it is relatively new compared to the planned approach; that it lacks coherence and diversity of techniques (Bamford and Forrester, 2003; Wilson, 1992), and that advocates are more united in their skepticism of the planned approach than united in an alternative approach (Bamford and Forrester, 2003; Dawson, 1994). In a quantitative and qualitative study of seven organisations, Higgs and Rowland (2006) found that change approaches based on assumptions of linearity were unsuccessful in a wide range of contexts, whereas those based on assumptions of complexity were more successful, and that approaches classified as emergent change (Johnson and Bailey, 2001; Mintzberg et al., 1998) were the most successful across most contexts.

Kuipers, Higgs et al., (2014) identified three orders of change in the literature. First-order change takes place at the sub-system level, where there is adaption of systems or structures occurring within part of an organization or sub-system, and it is incremental (Burnes, 2004; Carnall, 2007; Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, 1974). Second-order change occurs at the organisation level, where change is transformational, where there is movement in core organisational paradigms, where whole systems change. It is organisation wide (Burnes, 2004; Carnall, 2007;

Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, 1974). Third-order change takes place at sector level, where there is identity change, cross-organisational change, and where change spans specific organisational boundaries. It is sector-wide, affecting many organisations (Gratton, 2005; Tsoukas and Papoulias, 2005).

Strategic change occurs both at the macro-organisational level, and at the micro-intra-organisational level. Macro-levels are the social, economic and political institutions (Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004) and macro change is aimed at the whole of the organisation, for example, repositioning its place in the market (Mintzberg et al., 1998). At the other end of the spectrum, micro levels are at the level of the individual and the specific aspects of thinking and acting (Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004) and micro change is focused within the organisation, for example, job redesign (Mintzberg et al., 1998). However, it is important to link micro-analysis to macro-influences and outcomes (Johnson et al., 2003) as there is a relational tension between macro and micro as polarities on a continuum (Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2003). Mintzberg (1997) proposed that change at both micro and macro levels, was driven or planned, or evolved. Micro changes can have macro consequences (Mintzberg et al., 1998) and micro-activities contribute to and construct more macro-social contexts even as they are correspondingly influenced by these contexts (Orlikowski, 2000; Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2003). This is the meaning of emergent strategy, which single actions or micro-activities can lead to significant patterns of action (Mintzberg et al., 1998; Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2003).

Brown and Eisenhardt's (1997:4) organisational process analysis focused '*on when and how organisations steer successfully through changing environments*' and following an inductive study of multiple-product innovation in six firms in the high-velocity computer industry, examining how organisations engage in continuous change, they concluded that change in organisations should not be viewed as a static

concept but one that recognises the nature of dynamic and continuous change. There is also an increasing interest in the link between cognitive processes and actions and change outcomes (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Evidence that different change processes lead to different schema development was found in a longitudinal, qualitative study of middle managers' sensemaking during a top-down organisational restructure of a privatised utility in the UK (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Change is known to be a context dependent, unpredictable, non-linear process, in which intended strategies often lead to unintended outcomes (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Their findings from the same longitudinal, qualitative case study (Balogun and Johnson, 2004) show how intended and unintended change becomes inextricably linked as implementation progresses (Balogun and Johnson, 2005: 1574). Middle level managers' interpretations of change interventions are primarily from lateral, informal interactions, and through these inter-recipient processes these change interventions and plans are turned into actions, transforming top-down intended change into an emergent and unpredictable process (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). This is consistent with the view of micro-activities leading to emergent macro-level change (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Mintzberg et al., 1998; Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2003). Approaches to change which were based on an understanding of complexity, rather than an assumption of linearity were more likely to be successful (Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

Change is an on-going and never-ending process of organisational life, and whilst we attempt to explain, predict and control the change process, it often unfolds in unexpected ways (Burke, 2009). Most of the change literature examines the processual issues relating to implementation (Higgs and Rowland, 2011).

In summary, implementing the right changes to support the organisation is crucial for an organisation to survive (Armenakis and

Harris, 2009). There is however a general consensus that most change initiatives fail (Higgs and Rowland, 2000; Kotter, 1996; Miller, 2002) and that many fail to provide the expected return on investment (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008; Miller, 2002). This is regarded as being due to lack of careful attention to the people issues and human dynamics of change (Armenakis and Harris, 2009) and a lack of knowledge of the underlying processes of change (Burnes, 2004). The latter reason is supported by Turner, Hallencreutz and Haley (2009) who suggested that despite the use of change methodologies, failure may occur because leaders focus on managing the steps involved instead of managing the process of change, whereas success has been linked to an organisation's change capacity (Klarner, Probst and Soparnot, 2008); its leadership (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Higgs and Wren, 2005; Wren and Dulewicz, 2005); its culture (Bjorkman, 1989; Higgs and Rowland, 2003, 2005); and the commitment to the change of followers in the organisation (Higgs and Rowland, 2003, 2005). In particular there is growing interest in the middle level perspective and successful strategic change (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Against this background situated within the change literature, this review now explores in greater detail some of the pre-eminent themes and fields of research that have emerged.

A type of change that realigns an organisation's strategy, structure and processes to fit within a new competitive context is strategic renewal (Worley et al., 1996).

2.4 Strategic Renewal

Strategic renewal can be regarded as a continuous process of first and second-order change (Barr et al., 1992), and designates processes that change the organisation fundamentally, overcoming strategic problems through diversity of processes (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2010) to

deliver strategic outcomes (Walshe et al., 2004). It is emerging because it is one of the forms of change that is increasingly important to a firm's success (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2010). Evidence suggests that strategic renewal has a critical impact not only on individual firms and industries but on entire economies (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). There are calls to better understand what strategic renewal consists of (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Crossan and Berdrow, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Kwee et al., 2011).

The process of strategic renewal, although critical for the sustained success of an organisation, has received little attention in relation to the general phenomenon of strategic change (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). Strategic renewal can be broadly defined as the activities a firm undertakes to alter its path dependence (Volberda, Baden-Fuller and Van Den Bosch, 2001) or a firm's ability to reinterpret its environment and incorporate its understandings into new products, processes, strategies and structures (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003).

The strategic renewal literature is still developing, and is generally divided into macro and micro-level approaches; for example, at the macro level, the strategic management practices (Volberda et al., 2001), and contextual conditions driving strategic renewal (Huff, Huff and Thomas, 1992); for example at the micro level, the RBV and dynamic capabilities perspective (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997) and the processes of interpreting, intuiting, integrating and institutionalising within strategic renewal (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003); and at the meso level, different sub-organisational levels can respond differently to change (Rouleau, 2005; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007).

Research has focused mainly on processes and outcomes in large established firms (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kim and Pennings, 2009; Volberda et al., 2001). More recently the emphasis has been on the underlying organisational antecedents of strategic renewal (Bock,

Opsahl, George and Gann, 2012; Kwee, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2011; Mirabeau and Maguire, 2013).

Managerial theories on strategic renewal have also divided along a selection perspective or adaptation perspective (Volberda et al., 2001). Selection perspectives suggest that organisations exploit and strengthen existing competencies, for example in institutional theory (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996), evolutionary theories (Nelson and Winter, 1982) and resource-based theories (Wernerfelt, 1984). Adaptation perspectives suggest that firms do change and learn new behaviours and new competencies, for example in dynamic capability theory (Teece et al., 1997), learning theories (Argyris and Schon, 1978) and strategic choice theories (Miles and Snow, 1978).

Strategic renewal has been identified with evolutionary models of strategic change (Burgelman, 1983; Barnett and Burgelman, 1996; Huff et al., 1992; Nelson and Winter, 1982). Burgelman (1991) views renewal processes as evolutionary change in core competencies initiated by learning within the organisation. He departs from the top management perspective on the strategic renewal process (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990) in that he believes that strategic change could take place before it is understood by top management (Burgelman, 1996). Others such as Quinn (1985) also argue that renewal processes can be initiated at lower levels in the organisation by those other than the top team.

Burgelman's view of strategic renewal as an evolutionary model of strategic change that develops continuously over time is shared by a number of theorists (Burgelman, 1993; Huff, et al., 1992). Strategic renewal is seen by others as evolutionary change involving top managers' mental modes and their incremental reassessments of the relationship between environmental change and organisational performance (Barr, Stimpert and Huff, 1992; Quinn, 1980). Some also see that in strategic renewal, change is created by an iterative cycle of

belief, action and learning (Barr et al., 1992; Huff et al., 1992). Weick (1991) defined learning as a changed response to the same stimuli.

Burgelman (1991) believes that strategizing evolves out of existing competencies and leads to incremental learning, but that it is unlikely to lead to a change in product-market strategy. Meanwhile, Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) expand on Burgelman's (1993) concept of strategic renewal to include change in domain or strategic positioning in addition to change in core capabilities, thus creating a more holistic view of the renewal process. Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) share the view that the evolutionary model is limited in its ability to account for strategic change (White, Martin, Brazeal and Friedman, 1997) because Burgelman (1983, 1991, 1994) separates strategic change into bottom-up renewal and top-down reorientation, and relies on selection as the driver of renewal, without considering the range of interdependencies, and conscious adaption (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Floyd and Lane (2000) took a broader view on Burgelman's (1983, 1991, 1994, 1996) conceptualisation, building on Burgelman's (1991) assertion that successful changes in organisational domain are preceded by bottom-up learning and internal selection.

'Strategic renewal is an evolutionary process associated with promoting, accommodating, and utilising new knowledge and innovative behaviour in order to bring about change in an organisation's core competencies and/or a change in its product market domain' (Floyd and Lane 2000:155).

Maintaining adaptiveness involves the exploitation of existing capabilities and exploration of new capabilities, and as both are part of organisational learning they are by their very nature inseparable (Levinthal and March, 1993). The strategic renewal process requires decision makers to identify and select alternative actions and provide high-level guidance on how to modify or define new competencies

(Gavatti, Levinthal and Rivkin, 2005). This links strategic renewal to the RBV of dynamic fit between resources and the environment and dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). There is also a link in creating value to the KBV (Grant, 1991) of strategic renewal which is how new knowledge is created, leading to new organisational capabilities and new domains.

It is argued that proactive strategic renewal as a continuous process within an organisation provides greater flexibility and competitive advantage (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) than the reactive punctuated equilibrium model (Gersick, 1991), which is more akin to crisis management. It is common for firms to follow the 'punctuated equilibrium' pattern (Gersick, 1991) with long periods of strategic stability during which the effectiveness of the strategy declines gradually, followed by a crisis (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Often it takes a potential disaster for an organisation, which has been going through a long period of stability during which performance and strategic fit have been declining, to make a quantum change and to reconfigure (Miller and Friesen, 1984; Tushman and Romanelli, 1985). Performance decline and upheaval and crisis-driven change are associated with the 'punctuated equilibrium' pattern (Gersick, 1991). In contrast, sustained competitive advantage comes from an organisation's ability to renew its capabilities (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000), and as knowledge links to capability, then advantage comes from unique knowledge. Knowledge-based competitive advantage is the dynamic configuration of resource/plan choices to the changing knowledge in a social network (Ng, 2002). This view of competitive advantage is consistent with dynamic capability and a capability based view of competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997). Collis (1994) dissents however and takes a different and inconsistent view from others in viewing capabilities as no more significant than other factors in delivering sustainable competitive advantage, and that some capabilities provide no advantage.

Collis' (1994) view is inconsistent with other literature on competitive advantage (Barney, 1992; Teece et al., 1997) which appears to be caused by the realist ontology inherent in Collis' purely economical view of knowledge (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). The central role of subjective knowledge and path-dependent experience in competitive advantage is compatible with the notion of dynamic capability (Nelson, 1991; Teece et al., 1997), where dynamic capability is linked to renewing competencies (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000), a change in the resource base, and the renewal of resources (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). The dynamic capability perspective extends the resource-based view (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009), to knowledge and learning. Dynamic capabilities emerge from '*the co-evolution of tacit experience accumulation processes with explicit knowledge articulation and codification activities*' (Zollo and Winter, 2002:344) and they are deployed through learning (Zollo and Winter, 2002). Individual learning, organisational knowledge creation and knowledge transfer appear to be involved in strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Floyd and Lane (2000) and Crossan and Berdrow (2003) view organisational learning as a priori to successfully implementing changes. Organisational learning, organisational knowledge and memory are integrated concepts (Spender, 1996) and are arguably the main source of competitive advantage (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Starbuck, 1992). Organisational knowledge is integral to strategic renewal and the learning of doing new things (Nelson, 1991) and, whilst the organisational knowledge literature is diverse, there are two emerging themes: objective versus subjective knowledge criteria (Spender, 1996; Weick, 1995) and tacit versus explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). Objective and subjective criteria are both important to strategic renewal in taking an objective approach to accepting new thinking (Spender, 1996; Weick, 1995) and subjective stimulation for innovation, creativity and renewal (Nonaka, 1994). An important theme

is learning as knowledge creation, and the conversion of tacit knowledge - what we know implicitly, into explicit knowledge - what we know formally (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Polanyi (1967) first identified the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge, but Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) made a key contribution by identifying four models of knowledge conversion in their Knowledge Spiral, also known as the SECI model (see Figure 4).

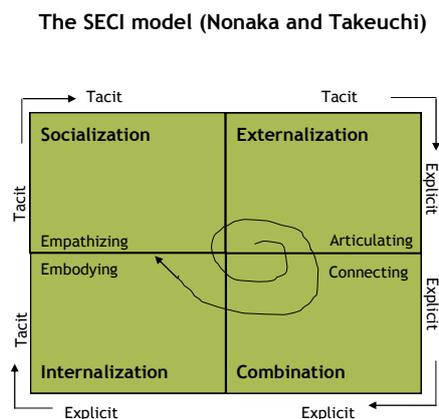


Figure 4: The Knowledge Spiral. Source: adapted from Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995:71

The four models are Socialisation - the sharing of tacit knowledge such as experience; Externalisation- converts tacit to explicit knowledge; Combination - combines and passes knowledge from one to another; and Internalisation - converts explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge such as learning by doing. The Knowledge Spiral is the key to all learning (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Crossan, Lane and White (1999) also argue that learning occurs on individual, group and organisational levels that are intrinsically linked. Organisational knowledge underpins the development of capability (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Spender, 1996) which underpins strategic renewal.

It is generally recognised by researchers that strategic renewal is a complex and adaptive process (Stacey, 1995; Waldrop, 1992) as is the capability development process. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) identified four motors of strategic renewal. In addition to the evolutionary model (Burgelman, 1991, 1994) and the life cycle model, there are two other motors of change which lie in the dialectical and teleological models (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Dialectical models of change are featured in political models of strategic decision making (Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Quinn, 1980). Teleological change models are more common in the strategy process literature based on shared purpose and strategic outcomes (Weick, 1995; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1989). Dialectical and teleological theories provide additional insight into a firms' internal dynamics, provide richer explanations for each stage of strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000), and are consistent with emergent change, in contrast to the evolutionary model (Burgelman, 1991, 1994) and life cycle models which are relatively probabilistic and deterministic (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

The literature on strategic renewal suggests there are three sub processes (competence definition, deployment, and modification) and within each sub-process, the roles of top-, middle- and operating-level managers differ in their time horizon, information requirements, and core values (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Strategic renewal is a social learning process (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) and can be best understood as a system of relational or social exchanges (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Research has identified one of the key issues of strategic renewal is the shift in roles that managerial actors play (Mintzberg, 1978), and the conflict around these shifts, and the relationships and social exchanges between roles. Strategic role conflict (Floyd and Lane, 2000) emerges during the period when managerial actors need to balance existing competencies with the need for new ones. They argue that successful strategic renewal overcomes the inertial forces of an established strategy and closes the gap between its core competencies and the basis

of competitive advantage in the industry (Burgelman, 1991, 1994; Huff et al., 1992).

2.4.1 Strategic Renewal and Culture and Social Context

Cultural and social context are important to strategic renewal because strategic renewal grows out of the current situation. It is continuous and accomplished over time (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) as managers incrementally reassess the relationship between environmental change and organisational performance (Barr, Stimpert and Huff, 1992) and the need to avoid inertia. Strategy making is now better understood as a social process (Whittington, 2007) of continuous change where organisational members take part to different degrees (Balogun, 2003; Currie, 1999; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Strategic renewal is described as an intensely social process (Floyd and Lane, 2000) and can be understood best as a system of relational or social exchanges, interactions between an organisation and its environment (Floyd and Lane, 2000).

The theoretical underpinnings of strategic renewal can be related to complexity theory (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Levinthal and March, 1993), evolutionary theory (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Quinn, 1982) and social theory in the context of organisational culture (Higgs and Rowland, 2004; Schein, 1992). Complexity theory and chaos theory (Levy, 1994; Stacey, 1992) studies systems that are too complex to accurately predict the future, but that still have underlying patterns that aid sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Strategic renewal occurs as the outcome of interactions between individuals and groups both internal and external to an organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000), and dynamic networks of interactions and relationships that also create individual and collective behavioural changes resulting from experience, sharing the properties of a complex adaptive system (Waldrop, 1992). Stacey (1992, 1995) described the change process as so complex that it could be perceived as chaotic, in that small disturbances could create large

effects. Levy (1994) linked chaos theory to themes in strategic management: long term planning is very difficult; industries do not reach a stable equilibrium; dramatic change can occur suddenly; short-term predictions and patterns can be made; and guidelines are needed to cope with complexity and uncertainty. Organisations could be viewed as dynamic states in a permanent state of equilibrium (Mintzberg et al., 1998), and Nonaka (1984) and Stacey (1992) advocate that these intrinsic properties create emergent learning and new knowledge. Successful adaptation suggests that new order can develop from chaos (Kauffman, 1995) but critics of this view include Gaddis (1997) who calls for clear strategic direction.

Evolutionary theorists see change being created from the learnings which evolve from the interaction between established routines and new situations (Nelson and Winter, 1982). They identified a dependency on the skills and initiatives and learnings of people deep within the organisational hierarchy – describing these managers as internal entrepreneurs, signifying ‘intrepreneurship’ (Pinchot,1985) and describing the process as internal corporate venturing (Bower,1970). What is important is that Bower and Burgelman recognised that strategic initiatives often develop deep within the hierarchy and are then championed by middle level managers in negotiation with senior managers; in other words, strategic initiatives emerge primarily from the activities of front-line and middle level managers (Mintzberg et al., 1989). There is a link between this evolutionary view and emergent strategy formulation to a new interest in middle level managers as strategic practitioners. Strategic renewal could be seen as a development of the concept of emergent strategy (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2013). This evolutionary view of strategic renewal has been dominated by Burgelman (1980, 1983, 1988, and 1996) and supported by others (Barr et al., 1992; Nelson and Winter, 1982; Noda and Bower 1996). Burgelman’s view was blended with a complex adaptive perspective by Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) to produce a more

comprehensive understanding of strategic renewal. This view that complexity and evolutionary theories provided an improved framework for understanding the change process (Depew and Weber, 1995; Lichtenstein, 1996, 1997) was evidenced in field studies (Higgs and Rowland, 2009). However, as always, there are differing opinions and views, and for example Strickland (1998) questions the relevance of complexity in organisational phenomena (Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

In line with the conceptualisation of strategic formation as a social learning process, and within a social theory context, themes in the strategic change literature have also developed around managerial cognition (Huff, 1990) and the organisation as a social system (Schein, 1985). For over 50 years the relationship between culture and social organisations has been a recurring theme in social sciences, with culture as a critical aspect of organisational adaptation (Denison and Mishra, 1995). The dynamics of change would not be complete without taking into consideration the interrelationship between strategic change and organisational culture (Higgs and Rowland, 2009) when culture is defined as a way of perceiving and behaving in a shared social environment, collective cognition or the 'organisation's mind' (Mintzberg et al., 1989). There is broad agreement that culture has a significant impact on the ability to implement change effectively (Goffee and Jones, 2000; Kotter, 1996), however some suggest that strategy cannot be changed without changing organisational culture (Bjorkman, 1989; Higgins and McAllister, 2004), whilst others think that organisational culture impacts on strategy formulation (Prahalad and Bettis, 1986; Shrivastava, 1985). The early literature linking strategic change and organisational culture was dominated by the filters and barriers that a 'dominant logic' could bring to changes in strategy (Lorsch, 1986; Prahalad and Bettis, 1986), linking to discussions on resistance to change (Kotter, 1996). Conversely, if culture is a barrier it can from an RBV perspective prove to be a barrier to imitation (Barney, 1986). Culture can be a key resource, and the affiliation system of what

people know and value among individuals with a common identity, making the organisation a social community, or rich culture, could be a source of inimitability (Kogut and Zander, 1996).

Schein (1992) identified implicit and explicit levels within culture, drawing parallels with the Knowledge Spiral (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1994), which has led to those taking a cultural change view to leverage explicit aspects of culture to shift change in the implicit level (Higgins and McAllaster, 2004). There are other researchers in this domain however who do not think that culture needs to be changed in order for business change to be successful (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2003). There is however growing consensus that there is a relationship between change effectiveness and organisational culture (Higgs and Rowland, 2009) and that to implement change effectively it is necessary to consider the culture of the firm (Shrivastava, 1985; Smith, 2003). In their studies Higgs and Rowland (2009) also found a link between culture and leadership in a change situation.

2.4.2 Strategic Renewal, Learning and Sensemaking

The social context within which strategies appear, and the contention that strategizing is an organisational learning process is an emerging theme in the literature. Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) suggest that strategic renewal results from deeply embedded complex patterns of social interaction within the firm (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). New strategies emerge over time from managerial behaviours embedded in a complex social setting (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) and existing strategies and competencies morph into new information, knowledge and competencies to form new emergent strategies (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mintzberg et al., 1989). In other words, strategies emerge through organisational learning ((Mintzberg et al., 1989). Crossan and Berdrow (2003) applied a framework of organisational learning to the process of strategic renewal in their study of the Canadian Post Corporation and their research found

that strategic renewal involves complex and deep multi-level learning processes ranging from individual intuitive insight to major resource allocation. This can come from the leader and the top team (Quinn, 1990); however there is increasing acceptance that other actors are involved in emergent strategizing (Burgelman, 1988; Burgelman and Sayles, 1986). Emergent strategy emphasises learning and developing a pattern in managerial actions, whereas deliberate strategy focuses on control and the realisation of explicit intentions (Mintzberg, 1989; Mintzberg et al., 1989). Within the strategic renewal literature context of learning and knowledge and emergence, a stream of work on managerial cognition – knowledge as how managers think - is growing, with researchers (Barr et al., 1992; Huff, 1990; Reger and Huff, 1993) trying to understand the link between organisational actions, and managers' mental models or schema (Weick, 1979; Weick and Bougon, 1986). The interplay between thought and action of managers, and the way they think about their strategic environment, internally and externally, is closely associated with firm behaviour (Reger and Huff, 1993).

Weick (1979) linked actions to learning, and advocated management and learning as a sensemaking process, where future direction emerges from making sense of experience (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is the rich process by which people give meaning to experience and the creation of individual and cognitive frameworks (Starbuck and Milliken, 1988; Weick, 1995; Westley, 1990), through which they are able to understand and learn and predict. Sensemaking, however, is more than interpretation through a schema which discerns patterns through which to see the strategy (Huff, 1990), as it is also about the creation of the schema (Weick, 1995), emergent sensemaking (Mintzberg et al., 1989) and the construction of knowledge (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). The sensemaking literature involves rich descriptions of the sensemaking process: Weick's seminal studies of crises (1988; 1993; 1995; 2010) and particularly the analysis of the Mann Gulch disaster (1993) suggests a

dialectical relationship between social structure and sensemaking, and the social roles and relationships among some group of actors provide a basis for sensemaking; Maitlis' (2005) longitudinal study of three British symphony orchestras identified four types of social process during organisational sensemaking: guided, fragmented, restricted and minimal. Thomas et al.'s (2001) study of the US army's attempt to institutionalise strategic learning processes found that sensemaking processes play a valuable role in learning. Most of the research on sensemaking emphasises its social and interpretive character (Rouleau and Balogun 2011). In contrast much of the organisational change literature focuses on highly structured mapping processes, such as cause maps, systems maps or influence diagrams, for management cognition studies (Huff, 1990), but, in the process, managers may interpret information based on their existing mental models, and not react to threats until there is a crisis (Huff, 1990; Huff et al., 1992). However, more recent work in this domain linked to social network theory, has evolved around sensemaking in business networks, the need to encompass strategic actors' mental models, theories-in-use and schemata into theories of networks (Cornelissen, 2002), and how actions may impact on their network and their position in it (Ford et al., 2003).

The strategic renewal literature has examined the tensions between selection and adaptation (Burgelman, 1991) or renewal journeys (Volberda and Baden-Fuller, 2003; Volberda et al., 2001). From a strategic renewal perspective there have been calls to encourage strategic thinking and innovation throughout the organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). This has evolved with a growing interest in the links between acting and thinking strategically (Johnson et al., 2007), and the practices of management and practitioners (Pettigrew, 2001). At the micro-level strategic renewal literature is beginning to address some of the practices and processes within a learning organisation or dynamic capabilities framework (Thompson et al., 2011). There is a link

through from the RBV and its derivatives, the KBV and dynamic capabilities, with the importance of internal capabilities, learning, knowledge, and culture to strategic renewal, and a growing research field focused on opening up the organisational 'black box' of processes and practices, and the activities of strategic actors. This field is known as Strategy-as-practice and has established itself as a significant social movement (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996), influenced by the marginalisation of the actor (Johnson et al., 2003) and growing concerns to bring new focus to human actors and their actions and interactions (Weick, 1979; Whittington et al., 2002).

2.5 Strategy-as-practice

There has been a growing momentum in thinking and interest in the micro approach, driven by an economic environment with more open markets, mobile labour and information abundance. *'Strategic innovation increasingly involves managers at the periphery, rather than just those at the centre'* (Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003:4). As a result of the continuous environmental changes, *'strategy-making becomes a chronic feature of organisational life...something in which more people are involved, more often, than ever before'* (Johnson et al., 2003:5). Johnson et al. and colleagues believe the key rationale to the importance of a more micro activity-based view of strategy is that *'managers manage activities'* (Johnson et al., 2003:5).

Whittington (1996) positions the new thinking by mapping the four basic perspectives on strategy:

- Planning approach which focuses on tools and techniques to help managers make decisions;
- Policy approach analysing organisational outcomes to different strategic directions;
- Process approach on recognising the need to change and how to achieve it;

- Practice approach building on the process school but at managerial level and on how strategists strategize.

Sztompka identified practice as the unit of analysis for 'becoming', which is the chain of social events *'where operation and action meet, a dialectic synthesis of what is going on in a society and what people are doing'* (1991:95)

Process theory (Johnson, 1987; Jonsson and Lundin, 1977; Melin and Hellgren, 1993; Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg et al., 1976; Normann, 1971, 1977; Pettigrew, 1977; Rhenman, 1973) has opened up the organisational black box but more exploration is required. This links to the growing interest in situated, practical activities of those applying strategy, and the dissatisfaction with the prescriptive models and frameworks (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Strategy-as-practice has been defined as *'a concern with what people do in relation to strategy and how this is influenced by and influences their organisational and institutional context'* (Johnson et al., 2007: 19).

The micro-practice view (Johnson et al., 2007) has built upon the directions of contemporary movements in philosophy and social theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001), practice (Schatzki, 2005) pragmatism (Egginton and Sandbothe, 2004), the RBV (Barney, 1991), institutional theories (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Nelson and Winter, 1982), sensemaking (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995) and organisational routines and dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997), situated learning (Elsbach, Barr and Hargadon 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991), and actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), and this list is by no means exhaustive (Johnson et al., 2003, 2007). Managers and managerial activities are essential to the actualisation of value (Johnson et al., 2003) and a new micro-perspective should clarify how valuable resources are developed, taking them out of the 'black box of process' (Priem and Butler, 2001).

2.5.1 Strategy-as-practice and Activity Theory

It is proposed that Strategy-as-practice studies further the social complexity and causal ambiguity in the RBV, unpacks dynamic capabilities theory (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Regner, 2008) and the practices within the strategy process (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003). Strategy-as-practice (S-as-p) seeks to differentiate its field of research from traditional process research by seeking to explain strategic change and organisational performance at multiple micro-levels of strategic actions and interactions, as opposed to the macro-level firm view (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington, 2007). It also seeks to provide insights to strategizing activities and wider social practices (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2006, 2007). There are some in the strategy field who do not agree that S-as-p is that different from process research (Chia and MacKay, 2007), seeing practice and process as meaning the same (Carter et al., 2008), or seeing practice as a type of process (Langley, 2007). S-as-p scholars counter this view through three interrelated concepts and research parameters: practitioners (those people who do the work of strategy); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done); and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished) (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006).

Strategy-as-practice evolved as the gaps in strategic change literature became increasingly clear, and research shifted towards viewing organisations as networks of activity systems (Blackler, Crump, and McDonald, 2000) and practice as activity, investigating the relationship between events and context, knowing and doing (Tsoukas, 1996). The activity-based approach to organisational knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and collective competency (Weick and Roberts, 1993) relates to current anthropological, ethnomethodological and network

approaches and is defined as '*functional materialism*' (Blackler et al., 2000:4). This links to managerial cognition which could be described as an experience led view, and the implicit levels inherent in the emergence of organisational culture.

People's activities change depending on the internal and external environments. Historically, Engestrom (1987) worked on Vygotsky's (1988) concept of mediation and Leontev's (1978) concept of activity, bringing in the social concept and producing a general model of activity systems. Engestrom's (1987) social perspective demonstrates the interrelationship of material, mental, social and cultural resources for thought and action (Blackler et al., 2000), and that activity systems are not straight-forwardly goal-oriented, but also produce disturbances. Disturbances naturally occur during day-to-day activities due to varying factors such as differing interpretations and unpredicted difficulties, which will influence the activity, changing the activity and through the learning, change their knowledge and competence. This emergent learning and the developing of new knowledge and competencies are intrinsic to strategic renewal and emergent strategy.

Organisations can be compared to complex adaptive systems (Waldrop, 1992) as they both exhibit similar systems of interactions associated with renewal. A key feature of complex systems is emergence, the process by which patterns or global-level structures arise from interactive local-level processes (Mihata, 1997). Activity theory recognises the link between the factors that drive activity and the specific activities, the knowledge through learning and how there cannot be a separation from the cultural environment (Blackler, 1995), and that activity theory predicts that periods of tension and unease are a key element in the cycle of collective development (Engestrom, 1987). There is a link between complexity theory and activity theory, as both theories seem applicable in the development of organisational culture, which is emergent, and S-as-p.

Activity theory enables the analysis of organisations as distributed, decentred and emergent knowledge systems (Blackler and Crump, 2000). An activity theory approach to research (Blackler and Crump, 2000):

- i) Studies the detail of the practices, what people are doing, how they are doing it and with whom, and what is the collective learning. The 'object of activity' is fundamental to activity theory-based analysis of practices. The object is partly given and partly anticipated; both are related to the mediating factors through which they are constructed. Activities are culturally situated and are linguistically and technologically mediated, enacted in communities and involve division of labour – these are activity systems. Activity systems are tension-producing systems and disturbances within and between activity systems drives development;
- ii) Studies practices in the context of their historical development, what people are doing, how they are doing it and with whom, and what is the collective learning. Actions are discrete, with clear beginnings and endings, existing over short timescales and goal oriented. In contrast, activities are complex patterns of practice that endure over long periods. As activity systems become more improvised and fluid, established priorities and power relationships are loosened and reformed;
- iii) Supports the development of the practices that are being studied, and how people can mould the contexts that shape their practices thereby creating awareness of the object of activity and the process of object construction; generating understanding of the dynamics of activity systems and the trajectory of their development, and predicting disturbances and potential responses.

Activity theory interprets practice as activity, and explores the links between event and context (Blackler et al., 2000). Engestrom (2001) defined 'practice' as having command of a complete 'activity system' including communities, rules, artefacts, tools and signs. Strategy-as-

practice is aligned to the activity-based view, that practices and processes are flows of activities that managers undertake daily, and which contribute to learning, knowledge creation and strategic outcomes (Engestrom, 2000).

A key social theory theme in this model is that strategy is explained as 'situated' activity (Engestrom, 2000); 'situated' being practice terminology for the two-way process of the activity shaping and being shaped by its societal context at institutional and local levels. Strategy-as-situated activity, is a continuous state which is always under construction (Suchman, 1987), and is known as 'becoming', because although it may be goal-directed, it is a never-ending process. In comparison the RBV holds that a firm's resources create sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; 2002), but it fails to differentiate between resources as inputs and resources that enable, or how different resources may contribute to sustainable competitive advantage in different ways (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010), and, unlike the concept of activity theory, is not emergent. Whilst the RBV literature distinguishes between resources and capabilities to an extent, neither are they the same as activities, which are also actions. Resources and capabilities are enabling capacities of an organisation's actions (activities, processes) (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Hodgson, 2008). However, both the RBV and the activity-based view focus on the internal environment and the micro level, which is in contrast to Porter's (1980) external macro-level focus on strategy formation.

The macro organisational view has been at the forefront of strategic management research led by influential scholars such as Henry Mintzberg (Floyd et al., 2011) and those who favour economic and positioning-based models of strategy formulation and choice such as Michal Porter (Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004). Proponents of the positioning school (Mintzberg et al., 1998) saw the strategy formation process as selecting generic, identifiable positions in the marketplace (Henderson, 1979; Porter, 1980; Schoeffler, 1980). At this corporate,

macro level, the argument was that market structure drives deliberate positional strategies that drive organisational structure (Mintzberg et al., 1989); therefore industry impacts on performance (McGahan and Porter, 1997). Their study of performance in manufacturing and service business segments over the period 1981-1994 (McGahan and Porter, 1997) led them to conclude that being in a particular industry contributes substantially to performance (Mintzberg et al., 1989). Porter's (1996) dominant view at the organisational and industry levels is that strategy is the creation of a unique and valuable position involving a different set of activities. A large proportion of the research in the strategic management field has centered on diversification and competitive strategy, whilst work at the intersection of strategy and organisation was less common (Floyd et al., 2011). This macro level view of strategy, however, has been found wanting in analytical depth for those who seek to understand and describe strategy processes, implementation and emergent, rather than planned strategic decisions (Cummings and Wilson, 2003; Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004). Even relatively recently, performance implications of personal relationships, cognition, and the affective interplay between people remain largely unexplored (Mahoney and McGahan, 2006).

As a process view of strategy has emerged in contrast to dominant positioning perspectives (Hickson et al., 1986; Pettigrew, 1973) there has been greater interest in the micro level (Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2003). It could be argued that the RBV has influenced this micro direction (Barney et al., 2011), and specifically the growing interest in strategies as patterns of activities (Mintzberg, 1978; 1989) and as the performances or practices that make up these patterns (Floyd et al., 2011). This current and emerging work on Strategy-as-practice or strategizing activities or micro-processes (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2006) appears to overcome some of the problems associated with research dominated by the macro approach (Floyd et al., 2011). Rather than replacing what we already

know, micro-level studies (Mantere, 2008; Regner, 2003; Samra-Fredericks, 2003) have demonstrated an inter-relationship between micro practices and macro-outcomes (Floyd et al., 2011; Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004), which is not surprising given that practices remain a situated concept (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Lave and Wenger, 1991), or in other words, 'context matters' (Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004). Accepting this inter-relationship leads to another definition of strategic renewal (Floyd et al., 2011) as the '*process, content and outcome of refreshment or replacement of attributes that have the potential to affect the long term prospects of organisations*' (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009: 281).

Learning can also be a situated activity where learning emerges through activity within a social context (Elsbach, Barr and Hargadon, 2005) and as a member of a community of practice. A community of practice describes a group of people who share an interest or a profession, and who through sharing information and experiences, gain knowledge, learn from each other and therefore develop themselves personally and professionally (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Organisational learning and organisational knowledge, which are key constructs for strategic renewal and competitive advantage, are both 'situated' (Spender, 1996; Suchman, 1987). The organisation could be regarded as bundles of 'situated' activities and learning, a dynamic 'community of practice' with institutional and cultural dimensions that give practices meaning, rather than as a system of tradable resources under the explicit control of senior managers (Spender, 1996; Spender and Grinyer, 1995).

In recognising that organisations have distributed and collective activities, S-as-p supporter's view situated activity as the commonality across all these activities as the shared practices and interactions (Spender, 1995) which is fundamental to the activity-based view. (Johnson et al., 2003). There is a commonality throughout all the writing that emphasises Pettigrew's (1985:21) view that '*strategic change processes are best understood as contextually located continuous*

processes with no clear beginning or end.' This view also aids understanding of emergent strategy, '*where for a strategy to emerge there must be order – consistency in action over time – in the absence of intention about it*' (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985:258). Increasingly in organisations, activity boundaries are less stable and communities more temporary, creating larger and more complex systems which are not well understood, and Buckler, Crump and McDonald (2000) argue that further work is required to understand the processes which temporary and fluid communities use for their activities, and further applications of activity theory is required to understand change.

In their critique of the RBV, Kraaijenbrink et al., (2010) have also called for greater understanding of the processes and practices around deployment and development of resources and capability. Empirical studies have mainly pursued a variance approach (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010) where independent resource or capability variables, such as information systems (Wade and Hulland, 2004) and organisational networks (Lavie, 2006) have been evaluated against dependant variables such as performance or sustained competitive advantage. This has left these practices black-boxed, and opening this black box requires a more practice-and-process based approach (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Sirmon, Hitt and Ireland, 2007; Van de Ven, 2007). This should enable a better understanding of which resources and capabilities create sustainable competitive advantage (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Sirmon, Gove and Hitt, 2008). The focus on practices and activities within the Strategy-as-practice field has the potential to provide greater insight to the RBV and dynamic capabilities (Johnson et al., 2007).

There are numerous and competing theories around strategic change, however there is a continuing trend from thinking about evaluating change at the macro-level to understanding in more detail what practices and activities at the micro-level contribute to strategy and change, and the behaviours of the actors. Jarzabkowski (2004:529) summed this up by saying '*Recently, concern over the gap between*

theory of what people do and what people actually do has given rise to the 'practice' approach in the management literature.'

Jarzbkowski (2003) uses activity-based theory as a framework to study strategy in practice, focusing on the role of strategic practices. Johnson, Melin and Whittington (2003:3) propose '*an activity-based view of strategy that focuses on the day-to-day activities of organisational life and which relate to strategic outcomes.*' Jarzbkowski (2003) concludes that the examination of structure and individual at a daily activity level should provide insight into the continuous performance and evolving of strategy, as patterns of activity are reinterpreted. Micro-level studies of Strategy-as-practice should provide new insight to internal organisational complexities and provide a balance to the macro-organisational and external positioning (Jarzbkowski, 2003).

An organisation may be considered to be an activity system comprising three main constituents: actors, collective social structures, and the practices in which they engage (Blackler, 1993). The broad field of S-as-p comprises practitioners (who do the work); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done); and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished) (Jarzbkowski 2005; Jarzbkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzbkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). Strategy-as-practice tries to explain how managerial actors do strategic work, through their social interactions with other actors and their specific practices (Hendry, 2000; Whittington, 1996, 2002). To distinguish between practice and practices, 'practice' is about the interactions and interpretations from which strategic activity emerges over time (Jarzbkowski, 2003) whereas 'practices' are the habits, artefacts, and socially-defined modes of acting through which the stream of strategic activity is constructed (Turner, 1994; Whittington, 2001). Praxis is defined as the link between the micro and the macro (Reckwitz, 2002).

There has been a defined shift in thinking from strategy as an organisational property to strategy being a practice that people do (Hambrick, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2004). Strategy-in-practice is seen as demanding work that managers must master (Johnson et al., 2003, Samra-Fredericks, 2003). Whittington (2006) proposes a framework to aid understanding of strategy practice as organisational management activity and its societal relationship, focusing on locating current thinking on strategy within a wider 'practice turn' and context where detailed activity and societal context are linked.

2.5.2 Strategy-as-Practice and the 'practice turn'

This growing interest in strategic activity and practice fits with the wider 'practice turn' in social theory (Johnson et al., 2007; Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001). There are three core themes for practice theory (Whittington, 1996).

- Society – social norms define practices – shared understandings, cultural rules, languages and procedures –that guide and enable behaviours and activities.
- Individuality – actual activity in practice, the how as well as the what.
- Actors – their skills and initiatives as interpreters of practice. People are important in practice theory.

The Strategy-as-practice (S-as-p) view of strategy is '*a situated, socially accomplished activity*' (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007:7) and strategizing is '*the actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in that activity*' (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007:8).

The framework (see Figure 5) proposed by Whittington (2006) links practice and praxis with practitioners as the connection between intra-organisational, organisational and extra-organisational practices.

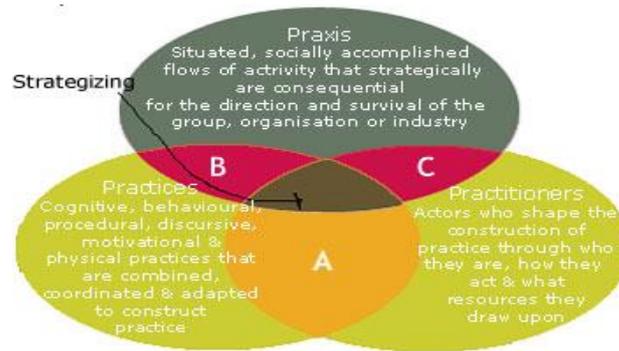


Figure 5: A conceptual framework for analysing Strategy-as-practice.

Source: Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007:11

Strategic practitioners are defined widely to include those directly and indirectly involved in making strategy (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008). Jarzabkowski (2003) sees the primary actors as the top management team. However Whittington advocates a research requirement for understanding '*what it takes to become a strategy practitioner in different kinds of context, particularly with a view to helping middle managers enter the challenging arena of strategy praxis.*' (Whittington, 2006:627). This links to the views of Burgelman (1983, 2002) and Floyd and Wooldridge (2002) about the potential importance of middle level managers as strategic practitioners. There is also considerable debate over how effective strategists are made (Liedtka 1998; Whittington 2006) and how they are produced.

Increasingly the focus is on the practice turn, and with emergent exceptions (Rouleau, 2005) at the intra- and extra-organisational levels and managers have been transformed from reactive administrators to active and accountable strategists. Studies at these levels have achieved real insight but completing the practice turn requires looping them together, so that intra-organisational studies can provide insight to extra-organisational practice.

What is clearly evident is that practitioners, people, are the key to reproducing, transferring or innovating strategy practices. The implication is that *'effective praxis relies heavily on practitioners' capacity to access and deploy prevailing strategy practices'* (Whittington, 2006:626).

From a practice perspective, strategy is not just an organisational property but is what people do with whatever comes their way in a more integrated approach rather than a singular approach to strategy practice. *'Intra-organisational praxis is marked by extra-organisational practice; successful practices are carried by influential practitioner; praxis forms practitioners'* (Whittington, 2006:626). Whittington (2006) states that more effective strategy practitioners and more appropriate practices can contribute directly to organisational performance. Completing strategy's practice turn, and looking at strategy as what people do potentially provides the missing dimension to identifying 'winning strategies or efficient processes.'

2.5.3 Strategy-as-Practice and Strategic Actors

Regner (2003) contends that little has been written about the activities and actors involved in creating and developing new strategies, and he builds on strategy process research and focuses on the micro-level and a deeper and closer understanding of strategy activities (Johnson and Huff, 1998) and their contextual origins (Brown and Duguid, 1991, 2001; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Whipp and Pettigrew, 1999) to address this. He looks not only at senior managers and traditional strategic practices, but middle level managers and lower level managers and irregular strategy activities because the lower level management category has been found to play an important role in strategy development and renewal (Burgelman, 1983; Fulop, 1991). Regner (2003) found that managers on the peripheries made sense of the strategic issues or the character of their reasoning or sensemaking

(Weick, 1995) and that explorative and inductive practice seem critical to strategy creation and development.

Pettigrew's (1985) study on change at ICI over a long period of time and the use of change vehicles and internal and external change agents in trying to initiate necessary change provides an insight into the patterns of change, the factors necessary for change and the actors involved. Most of the studies on the actors have been concentrated at the leadership and senior management levels (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Hambrick, 1988; Kwee et al., 2011). There are those who believe that strong leadership is key to strategic success, particularly those thinkers in the Entrepreneurial School (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Higgs and Rowland (2000,2001,2005) conducted a number of qualitative studies, involving change leaders across various organisations, linking leadership behaviours to activities involved in implementing change, and identified leadership competencies that could be associated with successful change implementation (Higgs and Rowland, 2000, 2001). Indeed there is recognition that the type of leadership employed is a critical factor in change implementation (Rowland and Higgs, 2008; Senior, 2002). Upper-echelons literature has emphasised the role of top managers in strategy formation and resulting organisational outcomes (Hambrick, 2007), and an important feature of this perspective is that strategic renewal trajectories are viewed as reflections of the values and cognitive bases of powerful actors in the organisation (Kwee et al., 2011). However, realised strategy often comes from the agency of other non-senior managers (Mantere, 2008) and, in particular, middle-level agency (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Lane, 2000: Floyd and Wooldridge 1992, 2000).

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) reviewed and evaluated the growing S-as-p research literature, identifying nine possible domains based on the different conceptualisations of practitioners and interactions and activities at different levels of praxis. Strategy practitioners were categorised into three groups: individual practitioners who could

interact with other actors; aggregate practitioners classified by type into groups of practitioners such as 'top management' or 'middle-level management'; and external actors, classified in aggregate rather than individually (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Praxes were defined on three levels: Micro being interactions at individual or group level (Samra-Fredericks, 2003); Meso being interactions at organisational or divisional level such as a strategy process or pattern of strategic actions (Balogun and Johnson, 2005); and Macro being institutional level such as patterns of actions in industries (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007).

The first three domains focus on the interactions between individual actors and the three levels of praxis (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Mantere (2005, 2008) found how individuals interpret their strategic roles and what strategic practices were enabling or disabling to strategizing. A number of studies (Bourque and Johnson, 2008; Mantere, 2005, 2008; Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2005) evidenced the link between individuals and micro practices. Two approaches have emerged from research into individual practitioners interacting at organisational level (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), one directly linking individual practitioner actions, interpretations and interactions to organisational outcomes (Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003), and the second linking individual actions with groups' actions, and evaluating practitioners both as individuals and aggregate actors (Stensaker and Falkenburg, 2007). Links between individual practitioners and the macro-level praxis are evidently more difficult to establish, given only one empirical study within the S-as-p field by Vaara, Kleymann and Seristo (2004) that analysed how the discourses of individuals in airlines gave rise to alliances becoming the dominant form of competition in the airline industry. Outside the S-as-p field other studies have linked agency and action into institutional theory (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2007).

The second three domains focus on the interactions of aggregate practitioners within the three levels of praxis (Jarzabkowski and Spee,

2009). Studies within the S-as-p perspective on aggregate practitioners were the most prolific, and were mainly conducted at the meso level of praxis (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) using single classifications, such as the top team (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2005) or middle level managers (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005), or multiple classifications such as top and middle management (Hoon, 2007) or peripheral actors (Regner, 2003). All the studies explained how specific strategy processes were constructed (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002)) or meso praxis in terms of strategic change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Sminia, 2005), providing links between classes of practitioner and organisational strategy (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008). There were fewer studies on aggregate actors at the micro level, but again they were classified by position or function (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Sillince and Mueller, 2007). Balogun and Johnson (2004, 2005) showed how middle level managers experienced structural change through their sensemaking and changing schemata, and similar discursive approaches were taken by others (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Sillince and Mueller, 2007). Others focused on how aggregate actors built on previous experience to construct micro levels of praxis (Molloy and Whittington, 2005; Whittington et al., 2002). Similarly there are few studies of strategizing groups at the macro level within the S-as-p field apart from a study of how senior management strategy workshops are now common practice across multiple industry sectors (Hodgkinson et al., 2006) and a study of Italian firms using decisions in time as the praxis (Salvato, 2003).

The final three domains focus on the interactions between extra-organisational actors and the three levels of praxis (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). A specific feature of the S-as-p agenda has been to broaden the definition of strategic actor beyond the top team to include external actors such as consultants (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2003, 2006), but there has been extremely little work focusing on external actors. There are no

studies specifically on external actors at the individual and micro praxis levels, although there is recognition of their involvement in strategizing (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Hoon, 2007; Molloy and Whittington, 2006; Pettigrew, 1987). There are a limited number of studies showing the direct and indirect involvement of external actors at the organisational praxis level, referring to their influencing role (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Sminia, 2005). Whittington et al., 2002 recognised the role of regulations and government policy in organisational strategizing. The main focus on the extra-organisational aggregate actors has been at macro-praxis level with a growing interest in how strategic practices become institutionalised (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2003), and the relationship between multiple actors and the construction of strategy as an institutional field (Whittington, 2007). Subsequently there is developing interest in linking practice theory and institutional theory (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2006) and the micro practices of actors and institutional change (Reay et al., 2006).

Through understanding the ways actors interact with the social and physical features of context in everyday activities, it would appear that changing practice occurs at the micro-contextual level where people are interacting during activity within the macro-contextual level of multiple social institutions (Jarzabkowski, 2004). In addition to the relationship between practitioners and praxis, strategic practices are a key element of s-as-p research, and many practices have been identified (Carter et al., 2008; Chia, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) supported by different philosophies and theories (Schatzki, 2006).

In summary S-as-p as a research topic is concerned with the doing of strategy; who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use, and implications for shaping strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). From a S-as-p perspective, strategy has been defined *'as a situated, socially accomplished activity, while strategizing comprises those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated*

practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity'

(Jarzabkowski et al., 2007:7). The literature in S-as-p explores strategy as a situated socially accomplished activity, and something people in organisations do rather than something organisations have (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere and Vaara, 2014; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006).

2.6 Definition of Practice

This section looks at strategy practice which is an essential part of the S-as-p research agenda (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2003, 2006).

Pierre Bourdieu (1977), a social theory pioneer, introduced the role of and concept of practice in his Theory of Practice. In the wider practice literature, Brown and Duguid (2000) see practice as the internal life of process; Schatzki (2006) defines practice as interrelated bundles of practices or activities separated out within a spatial and material set of arrangements; Orlikowski (2007) in contrast does not see the two as being separate and that activity cannot be separated from the material arrangements in which the activity is happening: Reckwitz (2002) in addition relates the interrelatedness of practice to states of emotion and knowledge, bringing in the element of unconsciousness and intuition (Chia, 2004). In the S-as-p field a definition of practice (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) has been developed that draws upon the embedded and institutionalised nature of practices (Chia and Holt, 2007; Seidl, 2007; Hendry, 2000; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006). It also draws upon plurality of dependent variables, levels of analysis, actors and theories (Johnson et al., 2007).

Practices involve the various routines, discourses, concepts and technologies through which this strategy labour is made possible - not just obvious ones such as strategy reviews and off-sites, but also those

embedded in academic and consulting tools (Porterian analysis, hypothesis testing etc.) and in more material technologies and artefacts (PowerPoint's, flip-charts etc.) (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008:101).

There are coexisting tensions between recursive and adaptive practice at micro and macro levels (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997). At the macro level, this tension is necessary to capitalise on routines of success as well as developing the capacity for reinvention (Garud and Karnoe, 2001). At the micro level the actor assimilates internal schema as well as accommodating external events or stimuli that are outside existing experience (Inhelder, 1969) and the assimilation-accommodation behaviours are on-going and developmental. Management practices have a technical, analytic component but their use is social, interpretative, and subjective (Hendry, 2000; Knights and Morgan, 1991) and their adaptation, whether they persist or become obsolete, or when new practices are developed, gives a means of understanding recursive and adaptive strategies as practice (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997).

In reality strategizing is a matter of balancing macro and micro approaches (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Feldman, 2004; Salvato, 2003). Organisations that engage primarily in strategic activities at the macro level are likely to find it difficult to implement strategic actions and to take advantage of opportunities emerging from daily activities at lower organisational levels (Feldman, 2000; McGrath, 2001). Conversely, organisations that engage in variance-seeking micro activities, to the exclusion of higher-level means-seeking processes, are likely to experience strategic drift and lack of coherence in market response (Orton and Weick, 1990; Quinn, 1980; Spender and Grinyer, 1995).

Salvato (2003) demonstrated that traditional exploitation and deductive practice are important for improving existing strategy in his study of two medium-sized Italian companies. The regularity of recombination processes and the shaping of micro-activities for long-term adaptation

which were observed during these studies show a link between micro-decisions and core competencies and competitive advantage (Salvato, 2003). Everyday activities that occurred at the peripheries were shown later to have been crucial to strategic change at the macro level (Regner, 2003). The different strategy and knowledge-finding activities at the periphery and in the centre based on the different contexts that managers find themselves in results in different strategic reasoning and sense making, and knowledge (Weick, 1995). The inevitable tensions were seen to be critical for strategic development. New ideas and thinking were generated at the peripheries but acceptance and implementation as corporate change emanated from the centre (Regner, 2003).

Salvato (2003) and Regner (2003) expose the importance of the divide between the practices and activities in the centre and those in the periphery at the micro level as being important to strategic change and content. Salvato (2003) found evidence in both field studies that senior managers directly and intentionally guided adaptive recombinations of core micro-strategies with new external or internal factors; that the rationale was based on evolution-engineering knowledge; and that strategic intent provided the direction and impetus for new strategic initiatives resulting from recombinations (Salvato, 2003). At the periphery, strategy-making is inductive with the development of new strategic knowledge and new knowledge structures. At the centre, strategy-making is deductive based on traditional activities and existing knowledge structure, improving on existing strategy (Regner, 2003). Tsoukas (1996) suggested that the knowledge in an organisation is necessarily indeterminate and emergent, that it cannot be controlled centrally, that it is distributed and decentred, and that new knowledge originates partly from outside the organisation (Blackler et al., 2000). Regner (2003) found in his study of strategy creation in four multi-nationals that emergent change came out of the activities at the periphery, and in particular, sensemaking (Weick, 1995). The different

activities and interpretations reflected separate settings and social behaviours, providing an insight into the relationship between strategy context, practice and content. Whilst both inductive and deductive strategy-making are important to organisations, it would seem doubtful that radical new strategies could be generated at the centre (Regner, 2003). Regner (2003) provides a substantive link between the praxis of different groups of actors and organisational outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This view that change occurs at the periphery is supported by Wheatley (1994) and Sammut-Bonnici and Wensley (2002).

While there are a number of different approaches to practice within the S-as-p literature (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) the dominant approach is the discursive practices of strategy practitioners (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Sillince, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2005; Sillince and Mueller, 2007; Vaara et al., 2004) grounded in the linguistic turn in practice theory and referred to as discursive pragmatism (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000). More empirical research has evolved around common or emergent strategy practices that shape strategy praxis (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2005; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Regner, 2003) whilst others have tried to conceptualise these practices as a source of learning (Chia and Holt, 2007; Chia and MacKay, 2007). There is also a growing interest in episodic strategic practices such as meetings or workshops within the strategy praxis (Bourque and Johnson, 2008; Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Hodgkinson et al., 2008; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008).

S-as-p as a recognised literature field is evolving and there are many gaps that remain to be explored (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) as it has been dominated by how strategy is made and constructed rather than implementation and change (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Regner, 2003; Denis et al., 2007). The point of S-as-p is to diverge from traditional strategy research that relies on large-scale data-sets and variables to explain firm performance (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007), and to provide a rich understanding of strategic outcomes (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007;

Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2007) to explain underlying structures and patterns (Tsoukas, 1989) and variation (Langley, 1999). However, S-as-p is not the only view on changing the paradigm and future direction of strategy research, teaching and practice (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008). Other strategy researchers have explored different perspectives, such as dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Zollo and Winter, 2002) and complementarities (Ng, 2000). There is arguably a link between S-as-p and studying the social complexity and causal ambiguity in the RBV and unpacking the dynamism in the dynamic capabilities theory (Ambrosini et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Regner, 2008).

2.7 Roles in Strategy

Strategy's practitioners are defined widely, to include those directly involved in making strategy and those with indirect influence (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008) and can be individual or aggregate actors, inside or outside the organisation (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This section reviews the strategic roles of these actors in different contexts.

2.7.1 Roles in Strategic Renewal

Rouleau and Balogun (2011) highlight middle management sensemaking as critical to the roles they perform, and particularly in the development of emergent strategic initiatives, so this review of the literature examines the roles identified in the strategic renewal process.

Strategy process work has focused on the strategic roles across different levels of management (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Kanter, 1983) progressing to modelling on integrating strategic roles and strategic processes (Floyd and Wooldridge 1992, 1997; Hart, 1992; Nonaka, 1994; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990). Floyd and Lane (2000) distil and

bring together previous findings to identify ten specific strategic roles across the three managerial levels in strategic renewal (see Table 1).

These roles are not exclusive and there may be other strategic roles, but these ten roles provide a framework for managerial activities at different levels relevant to strategic renewal (Floyd and Lane, 2000). The definition of each type of managerial role will vary across different organisations, and in many cases roles will overlap and managers will move between roles (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1996). Each of the ten roles involves processing information and taking action that facilitates organisational change, which is consistent with the findings of Mintzberg (1973) and Sproull (1982). This suggests that the strategy process requires co-ordination among actors who may not share the same goals, which is in contrast with other strategy process models that seek to provide a mechanism for articulating a common goal (Guth and MacMillan, 1986; Hart, 1992; Nutt, 1987). The framework provides a description of how knowledge is created, transferred and co-ordinated (Grant, 1996; Nonaka, 1994; Spender, 1996) and the knowledge creation most critical to strategic renewal at the actor unit of analysis level within each sub-process, demonstrating that organisational knowledge can be a socially constructed phenomenon (Weick, 1995).

Table 1: The Strategic Roles of Managers (Floyd and Lane, 2000)

Roles	Behaviours	Documenting Studies
Top Management		
Ratifying	Articulate strategic intent Monitor Endorse and support	Hamel & Prahalad (1989) Burgelman (1983) Hart (1992)
Roles	Behaviours	Documenting Studies

Recognising	Recognise strategic potential Set strategic direction Empower and enable	Burgelman (1991) Mintzberg (1983) Hart (1992)
Directing	Plan Deploy resources Command	Ansoff (1987) Schendel and Hofer (1979) Bourgeois and Brodwin (1984)
Middle Management		
Championing	Nurture and advocate Champion Present alternatives to top management	Bower (1970) Burgelman (1983,1991) Wooldridge and Floyd (1990)
Synthesising	Categorise issues Sell issues to top management Blend strategic and hands-on information Synthesise	Dutton and Jackson (1983) Dutton and Ashford (1993) Nonaka (1988) Floyd and Wooldridge (1992)
Facilitating	Nourish adaptability and shelter activity Share information Guide adaptation Facilitate learning	Bower (1970) Mintzberg (1978) Chakravarthy (1982) Chakravarthy (1982)
Implementing	Implement Revise and adjust Motivate and inspire: coach	Schendel and Hofer (1979) Nutt (1987) Hart (1992); Quinn (1980)
Operating Management		
Experimenting	Learn and improve Link technical ability and need	Argyris and Schon (1978) Burgelman (1983)

Roles	Behaviours	Documenting Studies
	Initiate autonomous initiatives Experiment and take risks	Burgelman (1991) Hart (1992)
Adjusting	Respond to challenge	Hart (1992)
Conforming	Be a good soldier Follow the system	Bourgeois and Brodwin (1984) Hart (1992)

Renewal is also described as an intensely social process, involving crucial interactions between management levels which feed into the knowledge creation cycle and development of organisational knowledge, linking strategic roles, renewal of sub processes and organisational learning (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Understanding the sensitivities and implications of role conflict within the sub-renewal processes has wider implications for strategy implementation, and could alleviate some of the people issues around change which are otherwise perceived as resistance (Kotter, 1995). In the literature on change management, one of the issues researchers focus on is the management of resistance, the tactics needed by change agents (Nadler and Tushman, 1997), and the skills and competencies needed to overcome change resistance, such as flexibility and customised implementation, as well as extensive people skills, including communication, influencing and team building (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). The Floyd and Lane (2000) model suggests that resistance could come from disrupted information exchange and the breakdown of interpersonal trust. However, in a review of the research on resistance to change (Piderit, 2000), there are others who believe that the whole concept of resistance may have outlived its usefulness (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Krantz, 1999).

2.7.2 Roles in Change Agency

Strategy and change are synonymous (Burnes, 2004) and the importance of successfully managing change is generally acknowledged (Higgs and Rowland, 2011; Kotter, 1995; Mirabeau and Maguire, 2013). It would then follow that the roles of different actors in change agency are important to the development of strategy.

The top team perspective (Hambrick, 1987) has been dominant in the literature. However, *it is the middle manager that combines strategic, macro, universal information and hands-on, micro, specific information. They work as a bridge between the visionary ideals of the top and often chaotic reality of the frontline of business* (Nonaka, 1994:32).

2.7.3 Roles of Middle Level Managers

Strategic change activities have been identified by researcher's at all organisational levels – top, middle, and operational (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Hart, 1992; Johnson and Huff, 1998). This section reviews the roles of middle level managers, where the information, knowledge, and social influence most likely to drive the development of new capabilities are most likely to exist (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Interest is growing in the practices and behaviours of middle level managers because they are the hub through which most strategic information flows (Burgelman, 1994; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Nonaka, 1991), and because they experience greater levels of complexity and interactions due to their positioning. This strategic role framework (Floyd and Lane, 2000) clearly demonstrates again the unique position of middle level managers in the strategic renewal process, as they can evaluate the value of new information flowing up from the operational levels (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Kanter, 1983). They have more strategic knowledge

at the same time being more familiar with operational matters than top management (Walsh, 1995). The roles of managers, and particularly middle level managers, continue to evolve as organisations find themselves in a continuous state of strategic renewal due to the pressures of advances in information technologies, market forces and more demanding customers, thus creating less hierarchical and more flexible organisations that are changing managers' roles (Caldwell, 2003).

Consistent with the macro-level organisational focus of the strategic literature is the view that the key strategic actors and makers of strategy are the top management team. This view is pervasive in all the literature, specifically at the macro level (Pettigrew, 1980) but also in varying degrees at the micro level (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Salvato, 2003).

The dominant positioning of the literature all around the top team was generated by the founding fathers of strategic thinking, Selznick (1957), Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965) and Andrews (in Learned et al., 1965). Ansoff (1965:119) found that '*strategic decisions cannot be delegated downwards*'. Chandler (1962) believed that organisational success was dependent on the capability of the executive. Andrews (1965) polarises implementation of strategy from formulation of strategy and by inference, this means strategizing is the domain of the top management team, whilst the implementation must be what other levels of managers do. If strategy is a decision-making process, it was considered logical that key strategic decisions are made only at the highest level, and this has been a key theme of the research literature (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Fredrickson, 1984; Johnson, 1987).

The other theme of the literature around the top team is its characteristics, and how the homogeneity and heterogeneity, education, tenure, turnover and all the social and psychological processes within the top team influence strategic decision making and strategic outcomes (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Priem, 1990; Wiersema and Bantel, 1993;

Wooldridge and Floyd, 1989). The recurring assumption in much of the thinking and research literature has been the supremacy of the top team as the strategic actors. Top management activities of cognition and action, understanding and influencing, in other words, sensemaking and sensegiving are key to the effectiveness of the overall change process (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). In their ethnographic study of a strategic change effort in a large, public university in the USA, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identified the top team as architects, assimilators, and facilitators of change, and that their sensemaking and sensegiving constitute key processes involved in instigating and managing change, and complimenting and expanding the concepts of formulation and implementation (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991:446).

Floyd and Wooldridge (2000), however, argue that a paradigm shift followed Mintzberg's redefining of strategy as a pattern in a stream of decisions (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985:257), meaning that strategic actions occur in many different parts of the organisation, and that strategy emerges from the activities of multiple organisational actors (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000:23). This has led to a growing body of literature that argues that organisational performance is heavily influenced by what happens in the middle of an organisation rather than at the top (Burgelman, 2003; Currie and Procter, 2005; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000; Huy, 2001, 2002; Nonaka, 1988, 1991, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990). In a field investigation on strategic planning and capital investment in a large diversified firm, Bower (1970) found evidence to support a view that middle level managers are the only ones in an organisation who are in a position to judge whether strategic issues are being considered in the proper context (Bower, 1970:297). Traditionally, these middle level managers have not been considered as part of the strategy process apart from providing informational inputs and implementing (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992:153). Following Porter's (1980) landmark

contribution strategic research typically remained at the macro-level of organisations and market environments around causally related variables where there is little evidence of human action (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007). However, there is growing interest in human agency in the construction and enactment of strategy within the wider 'practice turn' (Orlikowski, 2000; Schatzki et al., 2001) in the social sciences (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

As part of a broader concern on refocusing strategy research explicitly on human activity (Johnson et al., 2003) there is a growing understanding that middle level managers influence strategy and champion new initiatives (Burgelman, 1983; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). A study on middle management's influence on top management showed that they were more likely to be successful than unsuccessful in influencing their superiors on strategic decisions, and that this activity was more evident during implementation than formulation (Schilit, 1987). The results of a study investigating the strategic involvement of middle level managers in 20 organisations shows a positive relationship between middle-management strategizing and organisational performance (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990). There are also descriptions of middle level management involvement in strategizing (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Kanter, 1983), and broader quantitative studies (Schilit, 1987; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990).

One definition of middle level managers is provided by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) using Pugh et al.'s (1968) interpretation to aid comparison across organisations:

Middle managers are organisation members who link the activities of vertically related groups and who are responsible for at least sub-functional workflow of the organisation as a whole (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992: 157).

Renewal is an emergent process (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) and the agency of middle level managers can be frequently found in the emergent change literature (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1992). Burgelman's (1991, 1994, 1996) work on strategic renewal, and evolutionary strategic change (Barnett and Burgelman, 1996; Burgelman, 1983; Huff, et al., 1992; Quinn, 1980), found that it was within the internal environment of the organisation that autonomous strategic initiatives born out of learning and generated by middle level managers provided early indications of impending shifts in the external environment, and that change emanating from internal organisational knowledge is vital for effective strategic renewal. Middle-management agency is also important in implementing deliberate strategy where managers can impede or sabotage implementation (Guth and MacMillan, 1986; Mantere, 2008).

In the knowledge literature, the link between knowledge and strategic renewal and the knowledge creation of middle managers (Grant, 1996; Nonaka, 1994), is important in support of the idea that the contributions of middle level managers are critical success factors to organisational change. In his work on knowledge, Nonaka (1994) suggests that middle level managers are the strategic hub of change. They are in the middle of vertical and horizontal information flow, combining strategic, macro, universal information and hands-on, micro, specific information, bridging the gap between the high-level vision and the reality of the business (Nonaka, 1994:32). Knowledge is also a critical link between strategic renewal and sensemaking (Nonaka et al., 2000; Tovstiga et al., 2004; Volberda et al., 2001).

Despite growing empirical evidence that middle managers can play a key role in initiating strategic change (Burgelman, 1983; Currie and Procter, 2005; Dutton et al., 2001; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Huy, 2001; Nonaka, 1988; Westley, 1990) the literature has in strategic terms underplayed the role of middle managers until relatively

recently (Mantere, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). At best they have been seen as supportive (Shrivistava, 1986), but weak in radical change contexts (Noer, 1993; O'Neill and Lenn, 1995; Tushman and Romanelli, 1985), despite recognition that they can make a positive contribution to incremental change. In contrast, Floyd and Wooldridge (1996) acknowledge that middle managers facilitate the organisational learning necessary during radical change. Huy's (2002) exploration of the role of middle managers' management of their resources during radical change contributes to the proposition that it is the middle managers who have to deliver change into an organisation and yet at the same time ensure the continuity of business as usual throughout the period of change.

Huy (2002) studied the impact of middle level managers' emotional commitment on strategic change during a period of radical change. The tensions of continuity and change being simultaneously present at organisational level enabling continuous adaptation (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997) also exist at the individual level. This involves balancing emotions at an individual level and emotion-management activity (Huy, 1999). In addition to contributing to the literature on organisational change, and the literature on emotional intelligence, Huy (2002) contributes to the literature on middle level managers by highlighting their very important and productive role as the main actors in delivering the key strategic outcomes of operational continuity and the development of new skills.

Middle level managers have predominantly seen their strategic role as that of implementing strategy (Mantere, 2008) which forms a key part of their role behaviours (Currie and Proctor, 2005; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Mantere (2008) conducted 262 interviews with middle level managers, analysing enabling conditions on strategic role expectations (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992) and found the expectation to implement as the most typical expectation in the context of

organisational strategy. Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) developed a generic and widely accepted model of how middle level managers may be involved in strategizing (Mantere, 2008) based on upward vs. downward activity and integrative vs. divergent activity, and from this, produced four categories of role expectation:

- i) Implementing deliberate strategy (downward, integrative)
- ii) Facilitating adaptability (downward, divergent)
- iii) Synthesising information (upward, integrative)
- iv) Championing alternatives (upward, divergent)

Expectations of a role, in other words, the contextual behaviours, prescriptive norms, descriptive beliefs and priorities (Biddle, 1979, 1986) come under pressure during strategic renewal, where a shift in roles, and the relationships between these roles is required, during the shift from deploying existing competencies to developing new competencies (Floyd and Lane, 2000). The inconsistencies in behaviours associated with the challenges of efficiently deploying existing competencies whilst experimenting with new competencies within the strategic renewal process produces strategic role conflict (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Burgelman's (1994) study of strategic renewal at Intel where some managers pursued a defence of the existing strategy and competency deployment, whilst others were exploring new opportunities that required new competencies,, showed that the renewal process involved different and sometimes conflicting behaviours (Floyd and Lane, 2000). In their theoretical examination of strategic role conflict within individuals and between individuals, Floyd and Lane (2000:160) linked middle level managers' roles to strategic renewal sub- processes: championing role during competence definition; synthesising and facilitating roles during competence modification; and implementing role during competence deployment. They argued that the difference in the norms, beliefs and priorities required with each renewal sub process creates tension over which role to enact, and that is strategic role conflict (Floyd and

Lane, 2000). Floyd and Lane (2000) suggested that middle level managers are more at risk of experiencing strategic role conflict than other levels of management due to their broad range of strategic roles, spanning complexity of information and numerous interactions:

- i) Middle managers are more likely to experience between individual strategic role conflict than managers at other levels;
- ii) Strategic role conflict between individuals of different management levels is more likely to occur when environmental conditions are dynamic;
- iii) Strategic role conflict between individuals is more likely to occur in exchanges within operating-level management than in exchanges within top management;
- iv) Strategic role conflict within top management is likely to be associated with increased strategic role conflict at the middle and operating levels of management.

This is unsurprising given middle managers positioning directly below the TMT and above first-line supervisors in formulating and implementing strategy (Wooldridge et al., 2008) and being situated to drive new thinking, and the quality and pace of implementation, or alternatively, to delay or even sabotage implementation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Guth and MacMillan, 1986). They are simultaneously agents of change and recipients of change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005). Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk and Roe (2011) examined and integrated TMT and MM research streams, and developed an interface model (Raes et al., 2011:110) that suggests that individuals in the TMT and at middle management levels rely on each other's relational and evaluating roles and associated behaviours for successful strategic formulation and implementation (Raes et al., 2011). They argue that middle managers are valued for their information as a basis for strategy formulation (Raes et al., 2011) as a study of 259 middle managers (Floyd and

Wooldridge, 1977) showed, they have the knowledge of who to talk to and how (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997).

Westley (1990) examined the strategic conversations of middle managers as a micro-level phenomenon based on Collins (1981) who proposed that conversations were the most basic or elemental unit for situating the routines that make up organisational life. Through understanding the dynamics of strategic conversation as being embedded in organisational ideologies, it follows that the micro-dynamics of strategic conversations simultaneously enact and create strategy as an interpretive system (Westley, 1990). This links to Patricia Shaw's (2002) exploration of organisational continuity and change emerging over time, where drawing on insights from the complexity sciences, (psychology and sociology), she developed theories of human organisation. Organising is a conversational process and organisational change is shifts in the patterning of conversations (Shaw, 2002: 124). By interpreting and redefining top managements' framing rules, in other words, sensemaking (Weick, 1995), middle level managers subsequently redefine organisational ideologies and strategy (Brunnson, 1985). Westley's (1990) findings were that the energy for strategic actions by middle level managers is grounded in strategic conversations, a view supported by others (Hoon, 2007; Rouleau, 2005).

Rouleau (2005) also sees narrative analysis of externally facing middle managers as an effective research method for examining the strategic roles of middle managers' micro-practices of sensemaking and sense giving during organisational change. Narrative sensemaking is a paradoxical, iterative, non-linear movement during which interpretations of the past are influencing expectations of the future which are in turn influencing interpretations of the past in the interactive future (Shaw, 2002). One single lived experience is created from a sense of continuity and change, stability and instability (Shaw, 2000). The paradoxical nature of narrative is that it makes sense of what we can draw on (the past) in such a way that shapes our experience of a meaningful present

(now) which includes where the story can go from here (future) (Shaw, 2000: 124). Middle level managers use strategic sensemaking and sensegiving at a practical and social level (Le Baun and Whittington, 2007) through their conversations. In Rouleau's (2005) examination of strategic change in a Canadian top-range women's clothing manufacturer, she found that middle managers used their history and experiences, tacit knowledge and shared procedures to assist their sensemaking and sensegiving as part of their professional, cultural and social praxis, to champion change through situated interactions in a specific historical context (Rouleau, 2005). The middle managers explain why the company has decided to make a new collection, choosing to present a positive image of the new collection rather than drawing attention to the difficulties behind the decision (Rouleau, 2005). Their strategic value lies in the detail and in their ability to interpret and sell strategic change due to their social context and interactions (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Rouleau (2005) highlights middle managers' ability to socially position themselves in their daily interactions and use their tacit knowledge of social structures to implement change. In a longitudinal case study of a recently privatised utility company in the UK implementing significant structural and strategic change, Balogun and Johnson (2004) showed through analysis and the empirical data how important middle managers are to the development of strategy, and how, on a daily basis, middle level managers shape their environment (Weick, 1995) and strategize at the micro-level (Johnson et al., 2003).

Balogun (2003) focuses on the role of 26 middle managers during strategic change implementation across three divisions in a privatised utility company, and how they balance business as usual with implementing change, going through personal change, and assisting others through change, to add to the growing positive view of middle managers as important strategic assets. Middle managers are found to be change intermediaries and their key task is interpretation (Balogun,

2003), which aligns with sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Data analysis showed that middle level managers' sensemaking is a social and informal process in terms of conversation and behaviour, as they interpret the change intent (Balogun, 2003). Critically, Balogun (2003) found that middle level managers do not just '*implement deliberate strategy*' but that the detail of change is created from the bottom up and that what middle level managers do is '*build realised strategy*'. However, her findings underlined a lot of the obstructions and constraints that middle level managers' face which is due to a general failure to see the strategic value of the middle level manager across most organisations because of the traditional and still widely held view of middle level managers as change resistant (Huy, 2001; Scarborough and Burrell, 1996). Guth and Macmillan (1986) found strong evidence that middle level managers would subvert and reduce the quality of strategic implementation, and would if necessary sabotage completely the strategy if their self-interest is at stake.

Balogun and Johnson (2004) examined the role of middle managers before and after a planned radical change and how they used sensemaking (Weick, 1995) to develop and change their schemata or interpretive frames of reference (Bartunek, 1984) shared among organisational members or its subgroups (Moch and Bartunek, 1990). Balogun and Johnson (2004) established two types of schemata, around the content of change and the process of change (Moch and Bartunek, 1990). They established that middle managers play an important role in developing new organisational structures designed by top management - in practice the decisions on how a new structure works are made by the middle managers through their sensemaking practices. The critical processes in the change context were the formal and informal lateral processes (Balogun and Johnson, 2004), and their findings suggest that the actions, behaviours, language of peers and their shared experiences and interpretations have a more direct impact on change outcomes and how change works in practice.

Balogun and Johnson (2005) continued to explore the lateral and social processes around sensemaking by middle level managers who were taking on new roles in a restructured utility organisation in the UK, increasing the evidence that middle level managers play a significant role in strategizing (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Huy, 2002) and contributing to more understanding around the micro-organisational social processes which acknowledge the strategizing role of others outside the top management team (Balogun et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson et al., 2003). Again their findings were consistent with previous findings, and that the key processes contributing to strategic change lay in the lateral social processes of interactions between middle level managers in their daily work practices.

Empirical studies have until recently mainly focused on the more vertical interactive processes and formal communication in the role of managers influencing and shaping interpretation (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Johnson, 1990; Isabella, 1990) and managing meaning (Pettigrew, 1985). Models of change have not typically included informal processes whereas change in the detail is less about command and control but more about facilitating recipient sensemaking processes and alignment of interpretation (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Improved understanding is needed around how middle level managers in their unique organisational positioning, make sense of and contribute to strategic change, in different change contexts (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Subsequent studies, such as that of Beck and Plowman (2009), show how middle level managers make sense of unusual situations due to their unique positioning close to the interpretations of strategic and frontline managers, and Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) showed that organisational change gets enacted through middle managers who mediate the sensemaking between top managers and frontline employees to affect both cognitions and actions.

In their 2000 book 'Building Strategy from the Middle - Reconceptualising Strategy Process', Floyd and Wooldridge consolidate

contemporary thinking in their championing of mid-level managers as contributors to strategic change and strategic process and the link to organisational competitive advantage. Hart (1992) identified strategic capability as critical to organisational success. Of the organisations that downsized in the 80s and 90s through removing the mid-level manager, 66% found productivity declined, 49% found profits did not increase, and in 86% morale declined significantly (Williams, 2001).

Nonaka (1994), building on earlier work (Nonaka, 1998) and a theoretical model of management called 'middle-up-down management' for the efficient creation of knowledge in business organisations that he based on the principles of creative chaos, redundancy and requisite variety (Nonaka, 1994), advocates that learning or knowledge creating comes from the middle managers. Their unique positioning in the middle of strategy and business operations provides the foundations for their cognitive understanding of what strategic concepts can be successfully implemented (Senge, 1996). The linkage is between strategic renewal, competitive advantage and middle level managers' organisational knowledge, i.e. the link between mid-level managers' strategic capabilities and organisational performance.

In contributing to strategic change beyond their traditional role of implementing deliberate strategy, middle level managers can improve organisational performance (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997). This is evidenced through Wooldridge and Floyd's (1990) study on consensus among middle level managers, where they measured their involvement in the strategy process. They had two specific paths in their research model through which middle level management involvement might improve organisational performance: improving the quality of strategic decisions and improving the commitment to deliberate strategy through more efficient implementation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Wooldridge and Floyd (1990) found evidence that the effect of improved decision making was stronger than the effect of

improved implementation on improving performance. In an article in the Harvard Business Review, Ros Kanter (2004) reports on a pilot study of 165 middle level managers working in five large corporations, and her findings that the people in the middle will make or break an organisation's growth strategy, i.e. middle managers' strategizing can be directly linked to improved performance. This report was also based on six focused research studies in the areas of innovation, change and corporate responsiveness to external environments across a hundred American corporations, including ten in-depth studies, over five years (Kanter, 1983). Kanter (1983) found that

'Managers who fostered innovative, growth-oriented accomplishments shared a set of personal qualities: thoroughness, persistence, discretion, persuasiveness and comfort with change....they worked through existing networks to uncover opportunities, build coalitions, and make change happen' (Kanter,1983:26).

In 2005, based on experience of working with numerous organisations over two decades, Jonathan Byrnes argued that the single most important thing a CEO can do to maximise company performance is to build the capabilities of the company's middle management team because if they are performing in high gear they will generate the right change initiatives and continuously improve them, creating new initiatives and innovations tailored to changing environments.

This is consistent with a view that middle level managers make a crucial contribution to organisational performance and change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Currie and Proctor, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994, 1997; Huy, 2002). In particular, there is an argument that the activities of middle level managers largely determine how renewal occurs in organisations (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007).

In summary, the middle level perspective has been evidenced as being critical to the development of emergent strategic initiatives or strategic renewal, due to their unique positioning and their strategic roles (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 2000). An important role is through their divergent behaviours when championing alternatives and facilitating adaptability (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). In addition their sensemaking and sensegiving roles are significant as they can result in both intended and unintended change consequences and contribute to the unpredictable nature of strategic change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Conway and Monks, 2011).

2.8 Sensemaking

2.8.1 Introduction

There is a growing field of research on sensemaking, looking at how sense is made in organisations (Clark and Geppert, 2011; Cornelissen, 2012; Hernes and Maitlis, 2010; Monin, Noorderhaven, Vaara and Kroon, 2013; Sonenshein, 2007), the impact of sensemaking on organisational processes that include strategic change and decision-making (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Rerup and Feldman, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010) and sensemaking as an explanatory mechanism for strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991).

Middle-manager sensemaking has been shown to be critical to the roles they perform (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010). Their agency is a basis for strategic renewal, a bottom-up process where strategy is adapted to a changing environment (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mantere, 2008). Of particular importance to strategic renewal are the middle level manager's practices of sensemaking, in terms of interpreting the intent to change, transmitting information, and gathering and diffusing new ideas (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). Viewing strategic renewal as a subset of change in the Strategy-as-practice arena, this section now reviews the sensemaking

literature, with a 'sensemaking perspective' (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014; Vaara, 2000; Weick, 1995) in relation to the strategic practices of middle management in the process of strategic renewal.

The world of S-as-p draws upon sensemaking (Johnson et al., 2007) and the critical importance of cognitions and actions (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). It is the process that people work through to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations, and is critically important in the study of organisations (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014:57).

Weick (1993, 1995) defined sensemaking as the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt the individual's on-going activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalise what people are doing (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). It is reality as an on-going accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs, and both precedes and follows decision making (Weick, 1993). Weick (1995:17) proposed seven properties of sensemaking:

- i) Grounded in identity construction;
- ii) Retrospective;
- iii) Enactive of sensible environments;
- iv) Social;
- v) On-going;
- vi) Focused on and by extracted cues;
- vii) Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.

Sensemaking is defined as the process of social construction, creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order to make decisions; defined another way, it is the process of creating mental models or schemata (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) to provide a conceptual framework for understanding ambiguity, emergence and uncertainty (Maitlis and

Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking is about language, talk and communication (Weick et al., 2005) and the interplay of action and interpretation rather than the influence of evaluation (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking goes beyond interpretation involving the active authoring of events and frameworks for understanding as people play a role in both construction and comprehension of events (Sutcliffe, 2013; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking is important in S-as-p (Johnson et al., 2007) because of its premise that cognition is shaped by action, and particularly interaction with others (Weick, 1995). Where the focus is on action then the core phenomenon is interpretation and not choice (Lant, 2002; Snook, 2001; Weick, 1993).

Sensemaking has several features (Weick et al., 2005): growing out of disruptive ambiguity (Chia, 2000) it starts with acts of noticing and bracketing (Chia, 2000); cognitive labelling and categorising (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002); it is retrospective and prospective (LeBaron and Whittington, 2007); it is presumptive (Paget, 1988); influenced by social factors and embedded in interdependence; and culminating in articulation, communication and action (Weick et al., 2005). Articulation is a social process of shared understanding, taking equivocal knowledge from the tacit, private, complex, random and past, and making it explicit, public, simpler, ordered and relevant to the present situation (Obstfeld, 2004).

Interpretation is also regarded as the quintessential knowledge-creation step mainly through externalisation (Tovstiga et al., 2004) linking knowledge-creation, learning and sensemaking, innovation and renewal (Tovstiga et al., 2004). Collective sensemaking is an important requirement for knowledge-integration processes (Grant, 1996; Nonaka et al., 2000) and is key to organisational learning which underpins strategic renewal (Volberda et al., 2001).

2.8.2 Timeline

In the 1960s and 1970s the roots of sensemaking research were growing out of challenges to pre-existing notions of an objective reality with notions of socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckman, 1966) and studies of how actors made sense of lived experience (Cicourel, 1974; Heap, 1976) in line with beliefs and expectations, and any subsequent impact (Salancik, 1977; Weick, 1967).

In the 1980s sensemaking research took a cognitive turn in looking at what initiated and underpinned sensemaking and why (Louis, 1980; Daft and Weick, 1984; Starbuck and Milliken, 1988), and significantly, the actions that followed sensemaking, which showed that actions following sensemaking could alter the environment (Porac, Thomas and Baden-Fuller, 1989) and could alter the events trajectory or create crises (Weick, 1988).

The literature on sensemaking developed, deepened and broadened during the 1990s, and it was in 1995 that Weick produced his ground breaking and influential work, *Sensemaking in Organisations*, creating a theoretical framework for core aspects of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). This led to extensive research on sensemaking in varied contexts and in methodologically rigorous and diverse ways (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Other literature sub-streams included the use of language in sensemaking (Boyce, 1995; Hill and Levenhagen, 1995) and sensemaking in relation to important organisational outcomes such as strategic change (Barr, 1998; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Thomas, 1996).

The focus in the sensemaking literature shifted from 2000 towards the social processes (Maitlis, 2005) including sensemaking and language (Cornelissen, 2012), narrative (Sonenshein, 2010) and discursive practices (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Rouleau,

2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). Research continues to broaden as scholars struggle to define sensemaking.

2.8.3 Defining Sensemaking

Although sensemaking is pervasive throughout the organisational literature it is used in numerous ways, and as a consequence there are varying definitions. Sensemaking has been referred to as 'sensemaking theory' (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013; Jensen, Kjaergaard and Svejvig, 2009; Stein, 2004) but there is no one theory that characterizes the sensemaking paradigm (Weick, 1995). Sonenshein (2009) refers to a 'sensemaking lens' as do Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007) and Vough (2012). Weick and most scholars talk of a 'sensemaking perspective' (Hsieh, Rai and Xin Xu, 2011; Schultz and Hernes, 2013; Weick, 1995) whilst others still refer to Weick's (1995) seven properties of sensemaking (Helms Mills, Weatherbee and Colwell, 2006; Mikkelsen, 2013; Weick, 1995).

The following definitions of sensemaking represent the variations, but not exclusively:

Balogun and Johnson (2004: 524) '*Sensemaking is a conversational and narrative process through which people create and maintain an intersubjective world*'.

Balogun and Johnson (2005:1576) '*Sensemaking is primarily a conversational and narrative process...involving a variety of communication genre...both spoken and written, formal and informal. However, more specifically, sensemaking involves 'conversational and social practices*'.

Gephart (1993: 1485) '*Sensemaking has been defined as the discursive process of constructing and interpreting the social world*'.

Maitlis (2005: 21) *'Sensemaking is a process of social construction (Berger and Luckman, 1967)...allows people to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity by creating rational accounts of the world that enable action.'*

Rouleau (2005:1415) *'Sensemaking has to do with the way managers understand, interpret and make sense for themselves based on information surrounding the strategic change. Sensegiving is concerned with their attempts to influence outcomes.....as discourse and action, sensemaking and sensegiving are two sides of the same coin – one implies the other and cannot exist without it.'*

Sonenshein (2010: 479) *'Both sensemaking and sensegiving are closely related to narratives...and can be treated as interchangeable with constructing narratives.'*

Cornelissen (2012: 118) *'Sensemaking refers to processes of meaning construction whereby people interpret events and issues within and outside of their organisations that are somehow surprising, complex or confusing to them.'*

Weick (1995: 17) *'Sensemaking is understood as a process that is (1) grounded in identity construction, (2) retrospective, (3) enactive of sensible environments, (4) social, (5) ongoing, (6) focused on and by extracted cues, (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.'*

Weick et al. (2005: 409) *'Sensemaking unfolds as a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances.'*

Maitlis and Christianson (2014: 67) *'A process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of*

interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn.'

Sensemaking is consistently defined as a process, with tensions between those who consider sensemaking as a cognitive process with the development and connection of schemata or mental models (Starbuck and Milliken, 1988; Hill and Levenhagen, 1995; Weick, 1995), or those who view sensemaking as a socially constructed process (Gephart, 1993; Maitlis, 2005; Weick et al., 2005). However there is a key ontological difference in defining sensemaking as to whether sensemaking takes place within or between individuals (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). This author would contend that it is both, within individuals and between individuals, and probably a mixture of both. However most of the research is dominated by the view that sensemaking has a collective nature and socially dynamic rather than individual's interpretive acts (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Weick et al., 2005).

2.8.4 Common Themes

Cornelissen, 2012; Sonenshein, 2010) that works sequentially (Weick et al., 2005). Cues, events or violated expectations are central to sensemaking and also shape sensemaking as individuals interpret and explain cues from their environment (Maitlis, 2005). Sensemaking is generally regarded as social, as making sense takes place within a sociomaterial context creating 'shared' and 'intersubjective' meaning (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gephart et al., 2010; Weick, 1995) that can possibly lead to action. The action-meaning cycle is continuous as provisional understandings are enacted and modified (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

2.9 Sensemaking Perspective

2.9.1 Constituents

Weick (1995), Weick et al., (2005) conceptualized sensemaking as confined to specific *episodes* from the point when organisational activities are interrupted to the point when they are either restored or permanently interrupted, and this distinctive and overarching constituent is a common theme in the way the sensemaking perspective is used in sensemaking studies (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

The four other major constituents of sensemaking define the sensemaking perspective: *events* that start the sensemaking; *processes* through which actors make sense of the interrupted activity; *outcomes* of the sensemaking; and *factors* that influence both the processes and outcomes (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

Events or cues that trigger sensemaking occur when there is a discrepancy between an expectation and reality, or a violation of that reality and this can be unexpected or constructed by actors noting or failing to note signs (Weick, 1993; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007). These events can vary in size and impact, from intuitive feelings that things are not quite right (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007) to major planned events such as a corporate restructuring (Luscher and Lewis, 2008). Major planned events can also lead to a range of major unplanned events (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). These are usually prevalent in crises (Weick, 1988). However most interruptions tend to be minor planned events such as a new policy or a software upgrade (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014), or minor unplanned events such as differences of opinions between actors or unresolved dissatisfaction within an organisation by more than a single actor (Bartunek et al., 2008). Minor unplanned events can escalate into major unplanned events if sensemaking fails to restore order (Barton and Sutcliffe, 2009).

The experience of discrepancy or violation is subjective and will vary in significance depending on influencing factors, such as individual, social or organisational identity (Corley and Gioia, 2004; Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann, 2006) and personal and strategic goals (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013). However even if there is significant interruption to identity or goals, sensemaking may not necessarily be instigated if group norms or organisational culture reduce mindfulness (Levinthal and Rerup, 2006; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2006) or events are accommodated, explained away or normalized (Weick, 1988).

2.9.2 Sensemaking Process

Sensemaking occurs through specific processes that actors are engaged in when trying to restore their interrupted activities (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014): creation; interpretation; and enactment. Weick (1995) determined that these were retrospective processes as actors first create what they then focus on for interpretation and act on those interpretations in an ongoing cycle from the moment when an organisational activity is interrupted until normality is restored or there is a satisfactory outcome (Weick, 1995).

Creation process involves bracketing, noticing and extracting cues from peoples lived experience of the interrupted situation which people then interpret (Weick, 1995). Interpretation develops the initial sense created into a more complete and clearer understanding of the interrupted situation. Enactment involves acting on this more developed understanding, and as these actions become integral to the environment, enactment can drive the cycle of sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). Although studies have evidenced all three processes of sensemaking, the vast majority of studies have treated creation and interpretation as synonymous and this has led to a view of sensemaking being interpretation, a process of cognition (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). Major organisational change is thought to create

'*cognitive disorder*' (Luscher and Lewis, 2008:221), and sensemaking therefore is viewed as restoring cognitive order.

2.9.3 Situational Factors

Within a sensemaking perspective, sensemaking is always influenced and shaped by varying factors within the sensemaking situation, and within the literature the main factors influencing sensemaking are context, language, identity, cognitive frameworks, emotion, politics and technology (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

The importance of context is evident, as the immediate action context surrounding the point of interruption influences sensemaking processes, how actors bracket, notice and extract cues from lived experience as well as how those cues are interpreted (Weick, 1995). Societal context is important as it impacts the justification of actions, the validation of information, and sets the norms and expectations that constrain explanations (Weick, 1995; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Maitlis, 2005). In addition to proximate contexts, broader institutional contexts such as culture or industry, within which the interrupted activity takes place also influences sensemaking processes and their outcomes (Weick et al., 2005).

As sensemaking takes place through individuals producing discursive accounts (Cornelissen, 2012) enabling actors to organise confusing cues into holistic and coherent interpretations of what is happening and how to act (Boudes and Laroche, 2009; Cornelissen, 2012) linguistic factors including discourse, narrative, rhetoric and stories (Abolafia, 2010; Cornelissen, 2012) do in various ways influence sensemaking. The use of metaphors can enable links between old and new experiences (Cornelissen, 2012). This discursive approach as opposed to the cognitive approach seems to be gaining momentum as the linguistic focus has increased during the last two decades, as the social sciences have taken a linguistic turn (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

Sensemaking is strongly influenced by the identity actors have developed (Weick, 1995) as the meaning of the situation is defined by the self that is most appropriate to deal with it, and the what or who the actor represents, more than from what is happening in the environment (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Patriotta and Spedale, 2009; Weick, 1995). Although there is also a view that identity is constructed through sensemaking (Kjaergaard, Morsing and Ravasi, 2011; Korica and Molloy, 2010; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008).

Cognitive frameworks as mental modes (Weick, 1995) or abstract representations of events (Bogner and Barr, 2000) influence what cues actors notice and extract, how they combine them and create an interpretation and decide on actions (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). Cognitive frameworks can be general such as cultural and ideological, or specific frameworks based on actors' internalisation and tacit knowledge based on their socialisation (Weick, 1995). Cognitive frameworks affect sensemaking in emerging conditions (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Cornelissen, Mantere and Vaara, 2014; Luscher and Lewis, 2008).

There is an increasing awareness that emotions influence sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013; Weick et al., 2005) however there are still very few studies (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Emotions play a role in the disruption necessary for sensemaking to take place (Dougherty and Drumheller, 2006). Positive emotions generated by changes can enable actors sensemaking around the changes (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), whilst negative emotions that are more prevalent during crises or organisational change, can impede sensemaking because they reduce cognitive processing capacity and the ability to notice and extract relevant cues (Dougherty and Drumheller, 2006; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Stein, 2004). Although Stein (2004) argued that the ability to tolerate the negative emotion of anxiety was crucial for successful sensemaking.

It is often common during change that top managers' interpretation of a situation takes precedence in an organisation (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). This is an example of how conflicting interpretations occur within different levels or groups of actors within an organisation about the same situation, which creates political struggle (Weick, 1995) as different groups will try to influence sensemaking for their own advantage (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). However there are very few studies in the literature on the politics of sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014), although there are indications that politics influence the legitimacy of different accounts and analyses of sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

Another situational factor which has been understudied is the role of technology in influencing sensemaking, particularly information and communication technologies (Gephart, 1984; Korica and Molloy, 2010; Orlikowski, 2000; Weick 1985), although the introduction of new technologies influence professional identities (Korica and Molloy, 2010) and the various communication channels that actors use must influence their sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

2.9.4 Causes of Sensemaking

Sensemaking was initially viewed as a response to large-scale environmental changes and other significant exogenous changes (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: 71) such as major technological advances, government regulatory changes, and other changes that made the environment dynamic and unpredictable and interrupting existing organisational routines. In addition organisational crises where disruption threatens organisational viability are powerful sensemaking triggers (Pearson and Clair, 1998; Weick, 1993), as are personal crises which threaten fundamental beliefs and result in sensemaking about the event, the self and beyond (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Park, 2010). There are many studies on crisis-led sensemaking at the organisational and societal levels as it occurs during the crisis (Christianson et al., 2009;

Weick, 1988) and also during the aftermath of a crisis which triggers sensemaking about responsibility and blame (Brown 2000, 2005; Boudes and Laroche, 2009; Gephart, 1984, 1993, 2007). Whilst other research highlights crises that trigger numerous cues for disaster that are noticed, acted upon and ignored (Weick, 1988, 1993, 2010).

Organisational and societal cultures have been found to enable or constrain sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Cultural practices and organisational structures that have institutionalised positive asymmetry, a cognitive tendency to normalise deviance and recast the worst as positive, will constrain sensemaking as the cues that could indicate a pending crisis and mitigate are reframed (Cerulo, 2006; Dunbar and Garud, 2009; Vaughan, 1996). Cultures that encourage sensemaking are more likely to be found in high reliability organisations, that are more likely to be working in a riskier environments, where there is sensitivity to operations and recognition of potential failures that make sure even weak cues trigger sensemaking, indeed sensemaking is a continuous state within the culture (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007).

Another major cause of sensemaking is identity threat, at an individual level where events interrupt and challenge the self or ability to do work that is central to their identity (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Maitlis, 2009; Weick, 1995) and at an organisational level (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Ravasi and Schulz, 2006) where organisational identity, organisational roots and heritage are threatened or disrupted. Although Martins (2005) suggested that where there is a strong organisational identity, actors may ignore cues that lead to sensemaking. Identity is the first of Weick's (1995) characteristics of sensemaking and therefore must be a key trigger at individual, organisational, industry and institutional levels. Studies have shown that people respond when identity is threatened or becomes ambiguous by sensemaking that is driven by strong emotions (Maitlis, 2009) and in these situations sensemaking could be defined as

trying to regain control and recreate predictability when people feel deeply threatened (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

Sensemaking is also triggered by planned changes which may directly focus on changing organisational identity or culture, or by transformational changes (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Mantere et al., 2012) such as a merger, or in response to environmental changes (Barr, 1998; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006), or when new leaders arrive with a new vision (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994), or because of failing performance (Sonenshein, 2010). In line with Martin's (2005) view that strong organisational identity constrained sensemaking, Nag, Corley and Gioia, (2007) also found that actors with shared strong organisational identity resisted and obstructed change. The considerable body of research on major planned change shows that changes in organisational structure, role and responsibilities create contradictions and paradoxes that initiate sensemaking in actors (Balogun, 2003, 2006; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Luscher and Lewis, 2008; Vaara, 2003).

Sensemaking begins with a violation of expectation or a significant ambiguous event or issue which creates questions around basic assumptions on how to act (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Maitlis and Christianson (2014) conclude that crises are powerful sensemaking triggers, but crises can also be created when organisational culture constrains sensemaking in threatening situations. There has to be a strong motivational force or event, when there is a threat to identity and negative emotions are aroused, to facilitate sensemaking and the construction of new meanings. This motivational force or event needs to be even more powerful if individual or collective identity is strong and positive, capacity is low or when they are highly invested in certain practices and beliefs (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: 77 – 78).

2.9.5 Constructs of Sensemaking

As the sensemaking literature expands so have the types or forms of sensemaking expanded, to account for context such as market or ecological sensemaking, or to account for cues or content such as interpersonal sensemaking or intercultural sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Of particular interest in this thesis is prospective and future oriented sensemaking, temporal orientation that challenges the key assumption of sensemaking being retrospective (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995).

There has also been an expansion in sensemaking related constructs, and two specifically, 'sensegiving' and 'sensebreaking' have made a significant contribution to providing more insight into how sensemaking is accomplished (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Sensegiving is defined as '*the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others towards a preferred definition of organisational reality*' (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 442) and contextually is how organisational leaders and managers shape sensemaking in others (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). This sounds like a top down process but others in different levels of the organisation such as middle level managers or external actors can engage in sensegiving (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007) and through their own sensemaking interpretations can resist sensegiving influencing (Sonenshein, 2010). The other construct of sensebreaking is, in addition to sensegiving, also primarily viewed as a top down activity (Mantere, Schildt and Sillince, 2012; Pratt, 2000), and defined as '*the destruction or breaking down of meaning*' (Pratt, 2000: 464) which is important to sensemaking and sensegiving. Sensebreaking drives re-consideration and questioning of prior sensemaking and actions (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2014) and could be seen as in-between sensemaking and sensegiving as sensebreaking can create new meaning (Pratt, 2000). Sensebreaking and sensegiving play a key role in planned organisational change that triggers sensemaking from which change

follows (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). The strength of the sensebreaking and sensegiving and ensuing sensemaking can prove to be hard to reverse, as evidenced in a study of a cancelled merger, where the leadership's teams sensebreaking and sensegiving pre-merger were so strong that when the merger did not proceed they were unable to trigger sensemaking to return to the previous construction of the organisation (Mantere et al., 2012).

Other sensemaking constructs (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: 69) include: sensedemanding, the effort and acquisition of information to process (Weick, 1969: 40); sense-exchanging, negotiating different conceptions of the organisation to socially construct the organisational identity (Ran and Golden, 2011: 421); sensehiding, actively manipulating, hiding and marginalisation of particular ideas or voices (Monin et al., 2013: 262; Vaara and Monin, 2010: 6); sensespecification, explicit or implicit specification of norms, principles, exemplary decisions and actions, symbolisation and quantification (Monin et al., 2013: 262); and discrepant sensemaking, conflicting interpretations and accounts about the same event (Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008).

2.9.6 Shaping sensemaking and Intersubjective Meaning

Sensemaking is regarded as taking place within individuals and as different views are put forward and influencing and shaping of different understandings takes place, this creates collective meaning (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Meanings will be constructed differently by different actors in an organisation or understood in the same way, depending on their position, experience and background (Brown, 2004; Brown et al., 2008) and a lot of organisational activity revolves around collective sensemaking. Intersubjective meaning is when sensemaking occurs between individuals as a process of jointly engaging with and building joint understanding together (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Despite organisational leader's sensegiving, organisational members

engage in their own sensemaking and adopt, alter, resist or reject the sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994; Pratt, 2000; Sonenshein, 2010).

Maitlis (2005) identified four types of sensemaking: guided sensemaking, when there is constructed effort and active engagement in explanation and understanding; fragmented sensemaking, when issues are raised, accounts generated, and potential solutions discussed in an uncontrolled environment; restricted sensemaking, when stakeholders are accepting of accounts of issues with little challenge; and minimal sensemaking, when all parties await reactions and responses from others in response usually to an external trigger.

Unsurprisingly, most sensemaking is found to be restricted, with processes being controlled and driven by organisational leaders (Corley and Gioia, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994; Mantere et al., 2012; Monin et al., 2013; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). The top down approach again is most common in the literature (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), however some studies do identify fragmented sensemaking where the process is dominated by middle level managers (Balogun and Johnson 2004, 2005) and other actors (Walsh and Bartunek, 2011). Sensemaking occurred in formal, vertical processes with leaders but more sensemaking occurred in informal, horizontal processes that were uncontrolled (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005). Particularly relevant to this thesis is the consideration that it is not only leaders but middle level managers who play the integrative role in sensemaking as they are in a position to facilitate, blend and synthesise emerging constructions from differing managerial groups (Beck and Plowman, 2009) and their position at the interface between senior managers and other groups suggests that they may be continuously involved in sensemaking and sensegiving (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

Guided sensemaking occurs when different parties have legitimacy, expertise, and opportunity, and view the situation with equal importance and so are equally engaged (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence). In contrast minimal sensemaking is rarely seen but occurs when there is little engagement by any parties, and there is pervading inertia (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013). Some studies have shown however that there can be shifts in different types of sensemaking around an issue, where leaders restrict the process initially and then progress to guiding the process when other actors get involved (Gioia et al., 1994; Sonenshein, 2010).

2.9.7 Current and Emerging Themes

Sensemaking has gradually evolved from strong cognitive origins into a more social constructivist perspective (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014; Weick, 1995) with language taking precedence over cognition as the locus of sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Weick, 2012). More recent research reflects the discursive practices organisational actors use in constructing intersubjective meaning (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011), and narrative and metaphors have been highlighted as important sensemaking resources (Abolafia, 2010; Brown, 2000; Brown et al., 2008; Cornelissen, 2012). Of these, narratives form the most significant element of organisational sensemaking research, as a narrative lens reveals who and what and also the meanings being constructed in the process (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Brown et al. (2008) look at how narratives are used to define individual and collective identities, and that sensemaking is the process through which narratives are contested and collective accounts negotiated. Although agreements reached can be temporary and tenuous (Brown et al., 2008; Patriotta, 2003), others argue that organisational actors can construct truly shared narratives (Sonenshein, 2010). Co-construction of a collective narrative

has been shown to be achieved through a difficult and emotional process of discussion, debate and exercise of power (Abolafia, 2010).

The power of metaphor in the sensemaking process, a rhetorical device that connects cues and frames, a fundamental act of sensemaking (Gioia et al., 1994) has also been the focus of more recent studies showing how the use of metaphors can bring order to unfamiliar situations (Cornelissen, 2005, 2012; Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010). The use of discursive devices by sensemakers such as metaphors depends on their role-situated commitment and expectations of others, and shifts significantly depending on their relationship to the issue in question and their audience (Cornelissen, 2012; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

Particularly relevant to this thesis is the sensemaking research on the discursive practices of middle level managers that evidences the situated nature of their constructing meaning (Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). Their practices involve 'performing the conversation' and 'setting the scene', building networks of different parties for different occasions, which were accomplished through language and understanding the sociocultural context and its situated nature (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). The situated nature of discursive practices is also evidenced in the micro-practices of actors continuously modifying their practices within daily routines and conversations to relate to their audiences and changing context (Rouleau, 2005).

Actions are also integral to sensemaking as cognition follows action, and '*action precedes cognition and focuses cognition*' (Weick, 1988: 307). Actions drive sensemaking through creating more cues and learning follows from giving attention to the cues created by the actions (Weick, 1988). Provisional understanding from prior sensemaking can be tested through deliberate actions, such as medical students taking actions to rule in or out explanations for patients' medical conditions (Rudolph et al., 2009). Action and cognition are shown to be recursively linked as action feeds new sensemaking whilst also providing feedback

on the sense that has already been made (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Action also influences the sensemaking environment, as not only do actions assist in sensemaking but actions can also change what is encountered and change the situation that prompted the initial sensemaking (Orton, 2000). This reciprocal influence between action and sensemaking, known as enactment is important as this differentiates sensemaking from interpretation and is based upon the notion that actors play a key role in creating their environment (Orton, 2000; Weick, 1988, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Research on enactment during crises and unexpected events (Christianson and Sutcliffe, 2009; Shrivastava, 1987; Weick, 1988, 1990, 2010) shows how actions are necessary to sensemaking but that they can dramatically change the sensemaking environment, particularly when the environment is dangerous or changing rapidly. Weick et al., (2005) observed that in sensemaking, people must enact order into chaos.

Emergent studies at the macro-level show how enactment goes beyond organisational boundaries (Danneels, 2003; Weber and Glynn, 2006). Danneels (2003) examined enactment at the interface of organisations in the apparel industry and their customers, and shows how the enactment cycle through interpreting customer requirements, and adjusting and responding to these requirements was at first advantageous but became restrictive. There was a tension between understanding core customer needs and growing the customer base as changes occur in the market, evidencing that through enactment, organisations create environments that then constrain them (Weick, 1988). At the field level, a number of studies have shown that actions taken during sensemaking construct the operating environment through creating sets of meaning (Anand and Peterson, 2000; Anand and Watson, 2004), and enactment of new institutional logic through 'environmental sensemaking' (Nigam and Ocasio, 2010). This can lead to enacting successful markets and the construction of emerging

markets through 'market sensemaking' (Kennedy, 2008; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009).

Significantly, sensemaking research has influenced organisation studies and has shown how sensemaking enables other important organisational processes and outcomes (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) and in the context of this thesis those linking organisational sensemaking to strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994; Yu et al., 2005). Sensemaking has been shown to be an important process for learning, predominantly learning from error in high risk or crisis contexts (Catino and Patriotta, 2013; Christianson et al., 2009). It has also been shown to be important to learning in more conventional contexts for teams (Haas, 2006) and individuals (Ravasi and Turati, 2005; Rudolph et al., 2009). Research indicates that sensemaking is critical to learning in environments where ambiguity is high irrespective of whether this is due to a crisis or the operational context (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). High ambiguity makes it very difficult for sensemaking due to lack of clarity around cues, actions and meanings, and lack of clarity around the relationship between actions and outcomes (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), but this in turn creates more embedded learning due to the need for people to understand the situation, themselves and future sensemaking. Another stream of organisational sensemaking research shows sensemaking to be a key mechanism for creativity and innovation (Dougherty, Borelli, Munir and O'Sullivan, 2000; Drazin, Glynn and Kazanjian, 1999).

A common finding in the research is that the relationship between sensemaking and innovation, learning or change is affected by organisational context (Jay, 2013). Studies demonstrate that sensemaking based on a consistent pattern of synthesising paradoxical or competing logics enable innovation in an organisation and critically the organisation's capacity to renew itself (Christianson et al., 2009; Jay, 2013). This pattern of *'sensemaking processes that actively engages actors in belief structures generated by disruptive or unanticipated*

events' (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014:93) is evident across research linking sensemaking to change, creativity, learning and innovation, and this theme shows the important role of sensemaking in developing new understandings and new practices in organisations. Whilst traditionally sensemaking has been seen as creating order after a disruptive event, in organisational strategic change where disruption could be deliberate, both involve sensemaking processes that construct new meanings (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) and therefore it could be concluded that sensemaking is at the centre of strategic change processes.

2.10 Sensemaking and Crisis and Change

Sensemaking is emerging as a critical activity for strategy and change (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau, 2005) as it provides a micro-mechanism that produces macro-change over time (Weick et al., 2005). There are two dominant themes in the sensemaking literature, crisis and change. Sensemaking has been intrinsically linked to the crisis literature (Weick, 1988) which may have resulted in over-simplified models of sensemaking (Weick, 2010) that do not consider all the factors (Hernes, 2008). Crisis and change have common contexts and shared insights, and offer powerful occasions for sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), and understanding sensemaking around the concept of crises can influence our understanding of sensemaking during change (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Key foundational concepts of sensemaking are enactment, commitment, capacity, the importance and elusiveness of shared meanings as a process of social construction (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995), and the role of emotions in the process.

Others argue over to what extent meanings can be shared and how necessary it is before there is collective action (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Weick et al., 2005). Some see the extent to which

different meanings enable the same behavioural consequences as being more important (Donnellon et al., 1986; Gray et al., 1985). Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010:562) suggest that commitment, identity and expectations are particularly important shared meanings in change situations as they can have both negative and positive impacts. Commitment can both facilitate and inhibit sensemaking during organisational change due to the possibility of blind spots (Weick, 1988) preventing adaptation, which would impede strategic renewal. A shared identity is regarded as critical to sensemaking (Weick, 1995), giving shared understanding and meaning; however problems can arise within the process of identity transformation during organisational change when there is a loss of collective and individual identity as this can create change resistance (Chreim et al., 2002; Sonenshein, 2011). In addition, shared expectations during change of organisational outcomes can create the enactment and realisation of the expected outcomes, as shared meanings are created through the link between expectations and cues, and a filtering of cues against those meanings (Weick, 1995). Like commitment and identity there can be polarity, as expectations can be overly optimistic or pessimistic; however expectations can also change as new cues emerge (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010).

Sensemaking is incomplete unless there is sensegiving, a sensemaking variant undertaken to create meanings for a target audience (Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) findings were based on an ethnographic study of a strategic change effect in a public university identity where administrators were trying to move the image and identity of the university into the 'top 10 university' category (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). Sensegiving is defined as *'the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organisational reality'* (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 442), and it is employed by leaders and managers to shape understanding and action using rhetoric, conversational and narrative strategies (Drori and Ellis, 2011; Maitlis and

Lawrence, 2007). Put another way, sensegiving is an instrumental set of activities aimed at influencing the course of an interaction and establishing mutual understanding of issues requiring inter-organisational and intra-organisational collective action (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). Sensemaking and sensegiving are social processes, with cognitive aspects used in the construction of meaning for symbols and action that inform change (Maitlis, 2005; Weick et al., 2005).

The relationship between change and sensemaking is recursive (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Actors construct new organisational order through sensemaking in response to changes and use sensegiving to influence others (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005). The influence of interpersonal, sociocultural and institutional contexts for sensemaking are important as the dominant accounts and adopted practices follow negotiations that depend on power differentials (Helms Mills, 2003). Successful change is linked to successful sensemaking, and conversely when sensemaking or sensegiving fails the change initiative tends to fail too (Yu et al., 2005). Preoccupation with too narrow a set of cues by powerful sensemakers can drain the life out of a change programme through failed sensemaking (Yu et al., 2005), as can invested interests and narrow views on identity (Nag et al., 2007). In contrast, Mantere et al., (2012) found that once sensemaking was successful, when priorities changed it was then very difficult to reverse the sensemaking. The literature shows that sensemaking at all levels in an organisation can produce or inhibit change (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

While there are studies on the role of top managers' sensegiving during change (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007) of specific relevance to this thesis are the studies that have focused on the role of middle level managers' sensegiving, creating a schema for change in the absence of top management (Balogun and Johnson, 2004) and ascribing meaning to specific events

or changes (Smith et al., 2010). Middle managers are uniquely positioned to play a crucial role in how change is passed onto the frontline (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Drawing on the organisational interpretation literature and research on rare events and organisational learning, Beck and Plowman (2009) highlight how middle level managers frame and enrich the interpretation of unusual events in organisations.

2.10.1 Shared Meanings and Emotions

Two core themes are present in sensemaking contexts of crisis and change; shared meanings and emotions (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). In order to enable adaptive shared meanings and mitigate against potential polarity and conflicting shared meanings during change, Weick (1996) identified a need for wisdom and awareness (Weick, 2010) to improve adaptability. Wisdom meaning simultaneous belief and doubt, as ignorance and knowledge grow together, wise people are those who do not exercise extreme caution or extreme confidence as both can destroy the ability to sense complex problems (Weick, 1996).

Sensemaking is the construction of knowledge (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Weick's (1996) insight came from studies of disasters, the 1949 Mann Gulch disaster when 13 firefighters lost their lives, and in 1994 at South Canyon when 14 firefighters lost their lives in similar conditions when they failed to outrun exploding fires because they did not drop heavy equipment – they failed to adapt. Two actions associated with wisdom, updating and doubting, are essential to enable an adaptive rather than destructive role for shared meanings during crisis and change (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). In particular, the inherent action of updating based on new information (Christianson, 2009; Rudolph et al., 2009), and doubt (Weick, 2010), which drives questioning within individuals and collectives in order to try and establish shared meanings (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009).

Emotion has long been considered as getting in the way of cognition generally and sensemaking specifically (Shiv et al., 2005; Weick, 1993),

however, many change events generate emotion (Poole, 2004), particularly negative felt emotions where change is perceived as detrimental to individuals and collectives' well-being (Bartunek et al., 2006; Sonenshein, 2009) and can interfere with sensemaking. Felt emotions can also assist the process of sensemaking (Maitlis et al., 2010) and drive strategic renewal through shaping and reframing shared meanings resulting in new interpretations and organisational response (Sonenshein, 2009). Positive felt emotions are also likely to shape sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) as they are resources for building capacity and increasing individual and collective resilience (Fredrickson et al., 2003) as well as increasing the scope of attention and thought-action capability (Fredrickson and Branigan, 2005). Expressed emotions, negative and positive, in conscious and unconscious actions, and self-conscious emotions which emanate from individuals perceptions of how they are evaluated by others (Leary, 2007) also significantly influence collective sensemaking processes (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2009). Intensity of emotion appears to be the critical factor as to whether emotion has an adaptive or maladaptive effect on sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), and moderate intensity determines that emotions are noticed without having any adverse consequences on sensemaking (Maitlis et al., 2010).

2.10.2 Sensemaking and Strategy-as-Practice

The link between S-as-p and sensemaking and change grows out of the developing interest in the micro processes that underlie organisational change (Dutton et al., 2001; Reay et al., 2006) and the actors involved in strategic change processes (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). This link is evidenced by research such as Dutton et al.'s (2001) in-depth study of issue-selling micro processes that contribute to organisational change, and Reay et al.'s (2006) longitudinal study on individual actors instituting change in established ways of working which showed how the micro-practices of actors shape

institutional change. Reay et al., 2006 found that the actors legitimised new practices by accomplishing three interdependent, recursive, situated micro processes: cultivating opportunities for change; fitting a new role into prevailing systems; and proving the value of the new role. Organisational change involves sensemaking by all employees, and although the sensemaking and strategic change literature has been dominated by a focus on top management (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Thomas, 1996), a recent critical development in the literature shows, from empirical studies (Bartunek et al., 2006) and theoretical perspectives (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), that there could be competing enactments of organisational change as frontline employees sensemaking of change can be completely different to those of their managers (Bartunek et al., 2006; Sonenshein, 2011). Different shared meanings amongst different collectives can result in divergent actions (Sonenshein, 2009) and there are potentially a number of variations of shared meanings across different organisational levels (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010).

Significantly, the vital role of middle level managers in sensemaking during change has also been gaining more attention (Balogun, 2003; Balogun et al., 2003, 2005). Balogun and Johnson's (2004, 2005) studies of middle level managers in a recently privatised utility firm showed that they mediate the impact of top-down strategy through their sensemaking (Balogun and Johnson, 2005:1596), and that they demonstrate sensemaking and individual and collective schema change through processes of social interactions (Balogun and Johnson, 2004:543). Due to their unique positioning between top management and frontline employees and unique understanding of their differing interpretations, middle level managers mediate, frame and enrich interpretations (Beck and Plowman, 2009), and balance emotions within the sensemaking process (Huy, 2002). Huy (2002) developed his theory of emotional balancing from an inductive field study of an attempt at radical change in a large bureaucratic firm, which showed how middle

level managers balanced two opposing emotion-management patterns to facilitate adaptive change. The sensemaking literature demonstrates that the enactment of strategic change is through middle level managers (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Research shows that middle level managers mediate the sensemaking of top managers and lower-level employees, as they construct their own meaning around change articulated by top management and how it is passed on to front line staff (Balogun et al., 2003, 2005; Beck and Plowman, 2009). Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) defined change amongst recipients as a middle level manager's strategic 'sensemaking' process, which they identified in their longitudinal study of sensemaking, and the conditions associated with sensemaking in organisations.

There is an emerging and growing link between the S-as-p call for improved insight into the role of micro organisational social processes involving a range of actors outside the top team (Balogun et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson et al., 2003), and increasing evidence that middle level managers play a significant role in strategizing (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Huy, 2002), and that their sensemaking impacts on organisational change (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) and strategic renewal as they generate emergent outcomes through their routine practices (Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

2.10.3 Sensemaking and Middle Level Managers

Since 2005, in line with the growth in the S-as-p movement and growth in the sensemaking literature and strategic renewal literature, middle managers' important strategic role (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983) is now being given serious consideration (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007) in the formation of strategic change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Currie, 2010; Currie and Proctor, 2005; Rouleau, 2005). In their review of what is known about middle level managers and the sensemaking capabilities required in strategic roles (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011),

evidenced by empirical research through narrative of practice into the transformation of middle managers' identity during a restructure (Rouleau, 2010), and how middle level managers deliver change across organisational boundaries (Balogun et al., 2005), they found a growing focus is on the practices and practical knowledge that middle managers draw on in sensemaking during change (Balogun and Rouleau, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). Practices in this context are the specific activities of practitioners in shaping strategy formation (Hendry et al., 2010; Hoon, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) and which are reciprocally constitutive with tacit knowledge (Orlikowski, 2002). Put another way, practical knowledge, or knowledge in practice, is tacit and hard to explain or fully articulate (Tsoukas, 2005) but is enacted in practice (Orlikowski, 2002) which is key to sensemaking activity (Rouleau, 2005). Sensemaking in this context is a collective process within the nexus of interpretation and action (Weick et al., 2005) socially constructed by people (Allard-Poesi, 2005) to synthesise multiple interpretations of change (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007).

Utilising a number of empirical vignettes drawn from existing research into middle-manager sensemaking in practice within the context of change implementation, Rouleau and Balogun (2007) developed a strategic sensemaking framework (see Figure 6) and identified two generic forms of micro-practices: performing distributed conversations and enrolling networks, that middle level managers use to create renewal through building on their semantic and socio-cultural tacit forms of knowledge (Castillo, 2002). This is consistent with semantic and socio-cultural forms of practical knowledge being the most important for strategizing (Rouleau, 2005).

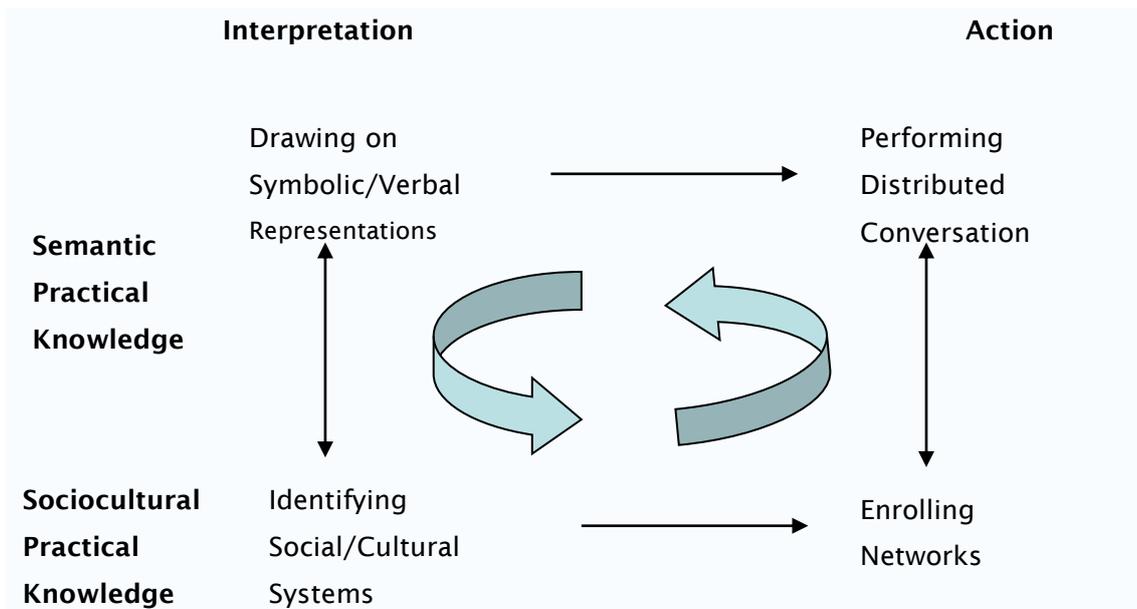


Figure 6: Strategic Sensemaking Framework. Source: Rouleau and Balogun, 2007

Using semantic knowledge, in other words, verbalisable knowledge that through special symbolism within a particular community requires no explanation (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007), middle managers mobilise language in their daily formal and informal conversations to engage their peers, stakeholders and customers in developing and aligning interpretations of change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Rouleau, 2005). This links to Shaw's (2002) work on conversing as organising (2002:11) where new patterns of relating, influencing and energising may emerge from joining conversations which are taking place between people (Shaw, 2002). Middle managers use socio-cultural knowledge in enrolling networks, drawing on their widely distributed internal and external networks to build alliances and coalitions (Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007).

This third-order explanation (Rouleau, 2005) is consistent with the S-as-p view (Balogun et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2003, 2006) that strategy grows out of daily practices (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007) (see Figure 7).

Semantic knowledge is important to middle level managers (Currie and Brown, 2003) in their sensemaking activity that underpins change (Balogun, 2003) and inherent change skill sets (Huy, 2002). Socio-cultural knowledge is linked to the middle managers social processes of interaction during change (Weick, 1995), and these sensemaking processes result in change consequences developing through time (Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

Through their social interactions and subsequent interpretations, middle level managers' continuous sensemaking activities make change implementation an emergent and unpredictable process (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Emergent change (Mintzberg, 1978, 1985) is a consequence of these social processes that occur vertically between middle managers and TMT and laterally between middle managers at peer level, with most emergent change outcomes evolving out of the informal interactions between middle managers in their daily practices (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). This is consistent with a view of strategic renewal as an ongoing journey (Volberda et al., 2001) and that strategy development and change is an emergent process (Harris and Ogbonna, 2002; Mintzberg, 1978; Pettigrew, 1985).

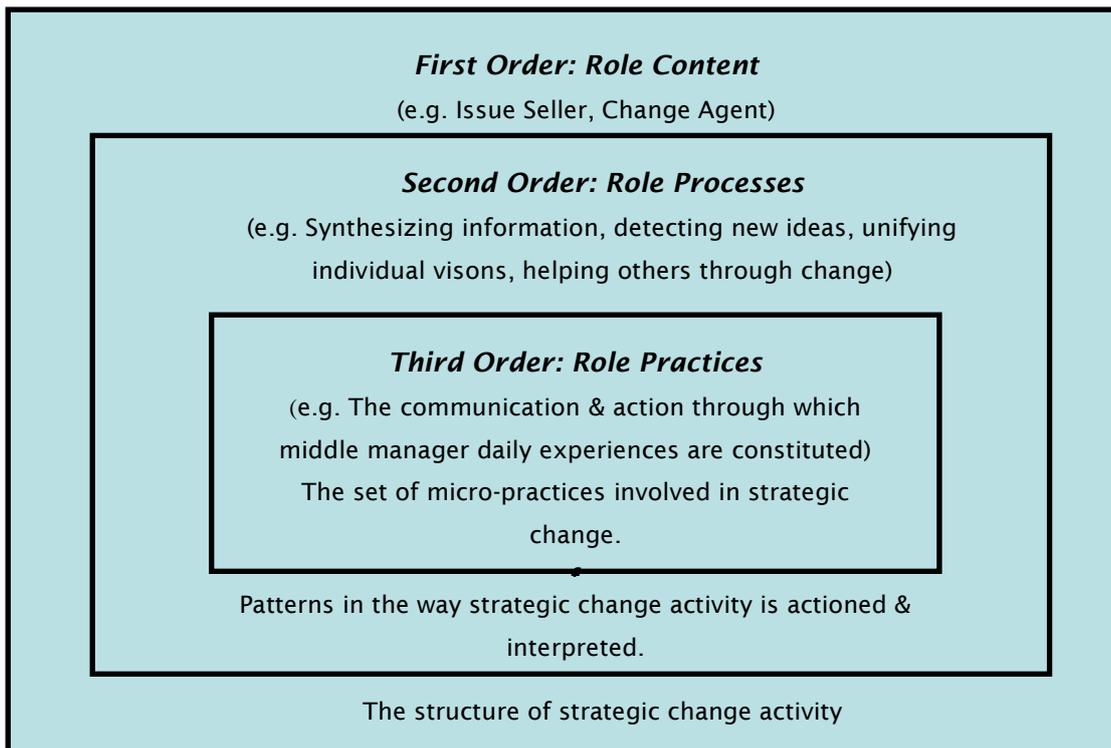


Figure 7: Third Order, Rouleau and Balogun (2007)

2.11 Sensemaking Challenges

As discussed previously there are tensions in the literature between the different assumptions of the nature of sensemaking. One view is that sensemaking takes place as a cognitive process in individuals heads, in which meaning based on experience was used to develop new schemas (Bingham and Kahl, 2013; Kaplan, 2008; Starbuck and Milliken, 1988) or changed interpretive schemes (Bartunek, 1984). The other view is that sensemaking is a process of social construction through the interaction between people and can be studied in the intersubjective world and how members of a society socially construct a sense of shared meanings (Gephart, 1996; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2006).

One of the core characteristics of sensemaking is that it is 'retrospective' (Weick, 1995:55) and this is the classic view prevalent in the literature. Whilst a 'prospective' view has often been debated (Gioia et al., 1994), recent research has looked at sensemaking as oriented

towards the future (Gephart et al., 2010) and taking account of the past, present and future (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013; Weibe, 2010). Weick (1969) argues that prospective sensemaking is derived from retrospective sensemaking and that thinking is not done in future tense but future perfect tense, when meanings of enactment are viewed as if they have already been done. However others, MacKay (2009) and Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) argue that thinking in the future perfect tense does not explain sensemaking when the future is ambiguous or unclear, and Gephart et al., (2010) believed that prospective or future focused sensemaking happens when intersubjective meanings are constructed to project images of future phenomena.

Although Weick (1995) claims that interpretation is not synonymous with sensemaking there is a lack of clarity in the literature around the creation and interpretation elements of sensemaking, and also that some researchers see enactment in all sensemaking processes (creation, interpretation and enactment) or enactment as a stand-alone process (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). Both sense and action are seen as symbiotic and circular as one (Thompson, 2007; Weick, 1995, 2009) or linear and two distinct processes (Christianson et al., 2009). The circularity of sense and action in enactment can be perhaps understood more through a more complex ontology of 'being' where people exist with others and things in a specific sociomaterial practice worlds (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). Sense and action are bound together in enactment (Weick, 2009) and actors act based on their being (Sandberg and Targama, 2007). There is an argument that enactment is too subjective and environments are enacted to reflect the wishes of organisational actors (Clark, 2004; Whittington, 1988) but conversely enactment is in response to disclosures from the environment and a continuous re-shaping (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014; Thompson, 2007).

Sense is also ambiguous, being treated mainly as the outcome of the sensemaking processes following interruption (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014), whereas Weick (1995) gave sense several different meanings

such as perception, meaningfulness, understanding, intellectual grasp or reflection. Sense was defined by Cornelissen et al., (2010) as a cognitive process. With the exception of Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) little has been explored around bodily senses. Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) created a new perspective that identified sensemaking as not purely an information-processing activity located in the mind or in language but one that draws on an intuitive and informed feeling in the body, of sensing, of 'embodied narrative sensemaking'. This is a departure from the more traditional notions of sensemaking and is the start of new thinking around the felt senses (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012; Whiteman and Cooper, 2011).

2.12 Future Trends in Sensemaking

Interest in sociomateriality and the roles of place and space in sensemaking is beginning to emerge in the studies of collective sensemaking (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012) and in studies of free spaces (Kellogg, 2009) and there are the beginnings of understandings around sensemaking as an embodied process (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012; Whiteman and Cooper, 2011), in which sociomateriality has a role. The neglect of the body is an important gap in sensemaking research (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

There are arguments for more exploration and a broader temporal orientation of sensemaking (Wiebe, 2010) and that the focus on retrospective sensemaking neglects the temporal embeddedness of sensemaking (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013). Gephart et al., (2010) suggest that constructing meanings that create images of the future is embedded in past and present temporal states and uses these orientations to give context to future states. This is in line with Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) who see prospective sensemaking based on interrelated cycles of retrospection. There is an argument for more work going forward on the importance of prospective sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). Change can be viewed on a spectrum through

different temporal lenses from no change to continuous (Wiebe, 2010). Maitlis and Christianson (2014) see that whilst epistemological differences around the nature of sensemaking may remain unresolved, work on temporality, when sensemaking starts and stops, and how sense is made and remade will provide additional insight.

Whilst sensemaking has developed a long way since Weick et al., (2005) made an observation that there was little empirical work on sensemaking, and more was needed, there are still many areas that remain under examined. The sensemaking efforts triggered by ongoing routine activities, minor planned or unplanned events are underrepresented (Feldman, 2000; Turner and Rindova, 2012). Taking this a step further sensemaking has so far limited itself to the restoration of order following a disruption, but within routine actions on a daily basis there is *immanent* sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014) where actors are involved in 'absorbed coping' where they know the practice and spontaneously respond to any developments therein (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011).

Conversely the larger contexts, politics, technologies, and cultural aspects affecting sensemaking have also been overlooked (Kuhn, 2000; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). In addition greater clarity and differentiation is required around first-order and second-order sensemaking, where first-order deals with the actors and second-order makes sense of the primary organisational sensemakers, however the two notions of sensemaking are different and need distinguishing (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

Few studies have addressed sensemaking as a distributed process, in groups, organisations and committees, and how individuals with different aspects are able to collectively construct new meaning (Weick et al., 2005). There are few studies that examine the relationship between sensemaking and key team processes, linking to the need to

examine embodiment and sociomateriality and also the link to institutions as a collective (Weber and Glynn, 2006; Weick et al., 2005).

The key trend emerging from the review of the sensemaking literature is the shift from a cognitive perspective to a sociocultural perspective and the importance of discourse. Whilst the cognitivist approach remains dominant, the discursive trend is expected to grow (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). However sensemaking is a much used concept, and in itself is interpreted in differing ways as sensemaking related constructs proliferate without always being clearly defined (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Further research based on the same central process, in different ways, with different actors and across different contexts will deliver greater insight into the complexities of sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

2.13 Summary

This review covered the content versus process divide within the literature. Strategic management research still tends to be divided into two separate branches, and although there is a view that the deeply rooted divide is counter-productive and acts as a barrier to greater understanding of strategic management activities (Ketchen et al., 1996; Mellahi and Sminia, 2009; Pettigrew, 1992), process and content researchers draw on distinct theoretical branches whilst acknowledging and building on each other (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009). Content research appears to be still dominated by the RBV (Locket et al., 2009) and its offshoot, dynamic capabilities (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). However, there are those who challenge these dominant content research paradigms as not being adequate on their own to capture the complexity of strategic management at a global level (Peng et al., 2008). Strategy research took a decided turn towards process following studies by Bower (1970), Mintzberg et al., 1973, Quinn (1980) and Pettigrew (1985) (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mellahi and Sminia, 2009) as it became evident that findings from the content realm had limited effect

within actual strategy formation processes (Mellahi and Sminia, 2009) and that strategies were arrived at indirectly and sometimes unintentionally, in other words, strategy is emergent (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). The process research paradigm has subsequently been preoccupied with understanding how strategy is realised (Sminia, 2009), and understanding strategic change (Danneels, 2002). Emerging themes within the process approach are developing greater understanding of the critical change process of renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009), and in the micro-processes of strategic management (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

A dominant theme in the strategy process literature continues to be concerned with how strategic change occurs (Naranjo-Gil and Hartmann, 2007) and this review looked at the change literature. Thinking around change has shifted significantly from process models (Huy, 2001; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Weick and Quinn, 1999) to thinking beyond a single change model, dominated by planned change (Cummings and Worley, 2008). Strategic change has moved beyond viewing change as a shift in positioning along a strategic continuum (Naranjo-Gil and Hartmann, 2007) to more insightful understanding of the change phenomenon as complex, taking into consideration context (Pettigrew, 2001) in arriving at a deeper level of understanding of how change works. Within the change literature there are calls to explore the interactions of the dimensions of context, content, and process of change, and that the focus of research should move from '*change to changing*' (Higgs and Rowland, 2011: 310). Van de Ven and Sun (2011) argue that research is required into the interdependencies and interactions among various models, agents and changes, and that practice theories are lagging behind process theories of organisational change and development. This growing interest in the practitioners of change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Higgs and Rowland, 2005, 2006, 2011; Maitlis, 2005) links to the emerging theme from the process domain of Strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Formal

and informal changes to strategy emerging from day-to-day actions throughout the organisation can be relatively insignificant or so significant that they redefine a firm's strategic trajectory (Davila, 2005). Change activities that alter a firm's path - dependence broadly define strategic renewal (Volberda et al., 2001).

This review then takes us through a number of the key emerging themes from the process and change literatures. Although critical for the sustained success of organisations, strategic renewal has not received enough attention to distinguish it from the more general phenomenon of strategic change (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). Research that has focused on strategic renewal (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Huff et al., 1992) has tended to focus on the process issues, but, like all strategic issues, strategic renewal also has important content aspects as well (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). Agarwal and Helfat (2009: 282) propose that strategic renewal '*includes the process, content, and outcome of refreshment or replacement of attributes of an organisation that have the potential to substantially affect its long-term prospects*'. Strategic renewal can be viewed as a three-dimensional construct with content, context and process dimensions (Kwee et al., 2011; Volberda et al., 2001). The content dimension relates to the constructs of exploitation and exploration (Kwee et al., 2011). The context dimension reflects the interaction of a firm with its external environment when initiating strategic renewal actions (Kwee et al., 2011) such as internal growth or external growth strategic renewal trajectories (Capron and Mitchell, 2009). The process dimension deals with the temporal processes of strategic renewal actions (Kwee et al., 2011) such as institutional learning that enables exploitation, and the learning processes of intuiting, interpreting, and integrating that enable exploration (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003). The strong parallel between the strategic renewal interpreting process and sensemaking (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) and the parallel between the strategic renewal processes of integrating and institutionalising and sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) leads

this review into an examination of the sensemaking literature, as it is important to the complex construct of strategic renewal (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003). However, before examining sensemaking and sensegiving, as strategic renewal characterises the outcome of processes and practices (Floyd et al., 2011), this review first looked at the growing interest in micro-processes, also known as Strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2006) and then the strategic roles of the actors involved (Floyd and Lane, 2000).

Strategy-as-practice (S-as-p) is a growing field of research arguably within the strategy process research paradigm (Chia and MacKay, 2007) concerned with the doing of strategy: who does it; what they do; how they do it; what they use; and what implications this has on shaping strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This growing interest comes from an absence of human actors and their actions in most strategic theories, even in the RBV which is concerned with the internal dynamics of the firm (Johnson et al., 2003, 2007), and the contribution a practice perspective can make to broader constructivist shifts in strategic management research (Mir and Watson, 2000). The broad research parameters within S-as-p are the study of practitioners (those people who do the work of strategy), practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done), and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished) (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). It could be argued that S-as-p differs from traditional process research in its view of agency, and multiple-level focus on the production and reproduction of strategic actions, as opposed to a firm-level view to explain strategic change and firm performance (Jarzabkowski 2005, 2008; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington, 2007). It has also been proposed as a means of further studying social complexity and causal ambiguity in the RBV, and the dynamism in dynamic capability theory (Ambrosini et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007;

Regner, 2008). Whilst the focus within the S-as-p agenda has been mainly on micro-phenomena, there is recognition that these both shape and are shaped by macro-outcomes (Carter et al., 2008; Chia, 2004). However, at the heart of the S-as-p approach is the view that strategy is what people do, which places an important emphasis on the strategic practitioner (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2011). Most studies about practitioners tend to focus on the top team, however, more recently there has been recognition of the significant roles of other practitioners, particularly middle level managers (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2011). Consequently, this review also examined the differing roles of practitioners in the strategy process.

A major component of strategy process research has been the identification of the strategic roles (Floyd and Lane, 2000), and this review looked at the key roles relating to strategic renewal, change agency, and middle managers. Floyd and Lane (2000) described strategic renewal as an intensely social process involving certain crucial interactions between levels of management, and identified ten roles across three levels of management: top management decision-making roles of ratifying, directing and recognising; middle management roles of communication through championing, facilitating, synthesising and implementing; and operating managers' reactive roles of experimenting on receiving external information, conforming to higher managements' requirements and responding to both.

Recognition of the importance of the role of middle level managers within the strategic change formation process is also growing (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Currie and Procter, 2005; Floyd and Lane, 2000). Middle management agency is increasingly significant to the success of the important strategic renewal process (Floyd and Lane, 2000) as well as successful implementation of deliberate strategy (Mantere, 2008). Mantere's (2008) findings suggest that enabled agency in the fulfilment of their strategic roles enables better utilisation of middle level managers as a crucial strategic

resource. There is a growing body of research that shows that middle managers are critical mediators who facilitate organisational adaptation by both shaping senior manager strategic thinking and orchestrating the deployment of senior manager plans (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). Floyd and Lane (2000) see the middle level managers' role as critical and central to strategic renewal. In contrast though, if they are not motivated, middle managers can slow down or even sabotage strategy (Guth and Macmillan, 1986). This growing body of research emphasises the particular importance of the middle manager's strategic sensemaking and sensegiving role (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010). There is a view that sensemaking and sensegiving are intrinsic to strategy and the strategic renewal process (Gioia, 1994; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), which is why this review also examines the sensemaking literature.

Sensemaking as a research field has developed as a core process within the crisis and change literatures since Karl Weick's seminal article, 'Enacted Sensemaking in Crisis Situations' was published in 1988. Whilst the sensemaking literatures on crisis and change have developed with little explicit integration it can be argued that there are important parallels, and research on sensemaking and change has emerged from the work on sensemaking and crises (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). In line with the growing interest in the micro-processes that underlie organisational change (Dutton et al., 2001; Reay et al., 2006), the sensemaking literature considers those strategic change actors whose interpretive processes influence how organisations adapt (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). While the focus, as in most organisational theory, is on top management (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Thomas, 1996), the vital contribution and role of middle level managers in strategic change has been more recently recognised, specifically how middle level managers' mediate the sensemaking of those above and below them and how their sensemaking moves from espousing old cognitions to endorsing new ones (Balogun, 2003; Balogun et al., 2003,

2005; Beck and Plowman, 2009; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). Important work has also been done on the inter-related process of sensegiving which influences sensemaking and meaning construction (Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991), and again the important role of middle level managers in shaping the way members of an organisation give meaning to specific events or changes is being recognised (Rouleau and Balogun, 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Within the Strategy-as-practice field, there are growing calls for greater understanding of the middle managers' strategic sensemaking role in practice (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010), as well as the importance of these sensemaking practices in the critical change process of strategic renewal (Floyd et al., 2011). In all the literature reviewed, there is still scope for continued exploration and development, and the following gaps of relevance to this thesis have been identified.

2.14 Gaps and Questions

Overall, from the literature review, there are a number of key research themes that are growing and evolving. There are calls for more empirical research in the literatures on strategic sensemaking (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011), Strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), strategic renewal (Kwee et al., 2011) and middle level managers as strategic actors (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Within the sensemaking literature, the S-as-p literature, and the strategic renewal literature, there are calls for more insight into the practices of middle level managers.

The argument in this thesis is that middle level managers are critical success factors for a firm's performance, through their sensemaking role in the strategic renewal process. Middle level management is now a highly debated topic in the literature, being simultaneously recognised as a key driver of organisational performance (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) and resistant to change (Huy, 2001). Middle managers have a specific role to play in times of radical change as they are both recipients and implementers of change (Balogun and Johnson,

2004). Involvement of middle level managers has a number of positive effects, particularly on firm performance (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990) as they can, for example: provide continuity and reduce emotional anxiety during change (Huy, 2002); protect against organisational inertia (Huy, 2002); and remove decision-making constraints faced by the firm (Collier et al., 2004). On the other hand, non-involvement of middle level managers may lead them to oppose change, act ineffectively or sabotage implementation (Guth and MacMillan, 1986). Their involvement adds complexity to the decision-making process (Collier et al., 2004), however, a study of the extent and effect of middle level managers' involvement in the strategy formulation phase of internationalisation demonstrated the importance of outcome ownership, and that exclusion of middle managers from the strategy formulation phase could cause severe problems for the firm (Mair and Thurner, 2008).

As strategic renewal is arguably the most important strategic change process for a firm's success and sustained performance (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Kwee et al., 2011), and the practices of middle level managers arguably drive strategic renewal (Floyd and Lane, 2000), and that of these practices, middle level managers' sensemaking is arguably the most critical (Rouleau and Balogun, 2010), it could be considered an important contribution to emergent thinking by the additional insight this thesis offers.

This thesis is focused on adding to the literature where these domains of strategy and strategic management research interconnect, and by contributing to some of the gaps that they have in common, answering the call to achieve cumulative knowledge (Floyd et al., 2011) and understanding of the strategic practices of middle level managers, and particularly their sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1988), in the context of strategic renewal (Kwee et al., 2011).

2.14.1 Middle Level Managers

There is a growing body of literature on the important strategic role middle level managers play in the formulation and implementation of strategic change (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Currie and Procter, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2007, 2011). This is due to their intermediate position where middle level managers are important interfaces between disconnected actors and domains (Wooldridge et al., 2008) and important mediators between levels and units (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). They are regarded as agents of change (Conway and Monks, 2011; Currie and Procter, 2005; Huy, 2002) and a focal point from which to study processes associated with innovation and renewal (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Middle level managers' sensemaking is particularly critical to the strategic roles they perform (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011).

There are calls for building cumulative knowledge on middle manager strategic influences and underlying practical skills (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Whilst research by Rouleau and Balogun (2011) shows the importance of the presence of discursive competence for a middle manager to adopt a strategic role, discursive abilities remain under-researched.

2.14.2 Sensemaking

Rouleau (2005) advocates that researchers need to establish more empirical evidence around micro-practices of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving in various contexts and at different organisational levels, capturing the micro-practices and activities through which sensemaking occurs in daily activities (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). She also highlights the gaps in knowledge surrounding middle managers and their strategic roles particularly the different types of practical knowledge, such as sagacious and nonepistle (Castillo, 2002), used by

middle managers in their strategic sensemaking roles and whether the knowledge is context-specific versus generalisable and transferable (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007).

The main bodies of sensemaking research have developed separately on crisis or change, however there are common themes and contextual similarities which further integrated research could provide insight into what increases or reduces adaptive sensemaking in turbulent organisational change conditions (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Little has been studied around the role of politics and power in sensemaking during change and where the power relationships exist and what the political processes are through which dominant interpretations emerge (Buchanan and Dawson, 2007; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Sonenshein, 2011). In particular as power and politics will influence who plays a dominant role in influencing sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) and because a key challenge is to understand the optimal balance of actors in sensemaking, there are dangers in too many interpretations (Weick, 1995) and conflicting interpretations that limit action, as opposed to too few interpretations, that could limit understanding of complexity (Maitlis, 2005).

Given the primacy of cognitive processes over social and affective processes in sensemaking, Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) also identify a significant gap in the sensemaking literature around emotions and embodiment in line with a growing interest in 'embodied cognition' (Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008; Gibbs, 2006). Accepting that emotions are important to sensemaking, emotional processes are integral to embodiment and therefore it would be apparent that there must be bodily response to sensemaking cues and triggers (Maitlis, 2009; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). With enactment at the heart of sensemaking, this would indicate that embodiment plays a role, but this has been largely ignored (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) also found opportunities and challenges to investigate more embodied strategy practices including emotions, motivations,

identity and spatial and physical positioning. Mantere (2005) and Samra-Fredericks (2003, 2005) have alluded to the need for more empirical work on embodied strategy practices such as strategy know-how, motivations, and intent (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

2.14.3 Strategy-as-Practice

There are clearly research requirements around '*a multiple-level empirical investigation of strategy as practice*' (Jarzabkowski, 2004:551) utilising quantitative and qualitative techniques. According to Johnson et al., (2003) and with reference to Bowman et al., (1999) and Bate et al., (2000) little is known about organisational restructuring and the management activities involved in designing new organisational structures, and the link between micro and macro to develop understanding of strategic change phenomenon and the activities of the actors (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Whittington, 2007).

A Strategy-as-practice perspective is interested in developing a better understanding of the skilled practitioner (Denis et al., 2007; Whittington, 2003, 2006) and the practices and activities within the strategizing and strategic change roles of middle level managers (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson, 1990; Whittington, 1996, 2002; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1992). Little is known about the ways in which individuals construct and advance themselves as strategic actors (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), and improving our understanding of the strategic roles, practices, behaviours and attributes deployed whilst strategizing (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992) may lead to rethinking the way we develop the skills of middle level managers (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994) skills in general, and social skills specifically that visibly form practical, tacit knowledge (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007), along with improved understanding of the enabling social processes (Maitlis, 2005) and

interactions through strategic conversations (Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2005; Van der Heijden, 2005; Westley, 1990).

In the S-as-p field, there are specific calls for further development of a number of themes: analysis of the effects of strategic practices on the construction and variations of personal and organisational outcomes; systematic examination of the formation and interaction of practice bundles; material practices; and the intersection and variation of praxis, practices and practitioners at the macro level (Denis et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2007). In order to address some of these gaps, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) suggest that wider theoretical perspectives may be valuable, such as anthropology (Bourdieu, 1990) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967).

2.14.4 Strategic Renewal

As previously stated, strategic renewal, although critical for the sustained success of organisations, has received relatively little attention as distinct from the more general phenomenon of strategic change (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). There is support for more empirical research into the importance of the role of social processes and interactions in developing knowledge and organisational learning, and how strategic renewal can be viewed as a system of relational or social exchanges (Floyd and Lane, 2000). This aligns to recent calls for more work on strategy as emergent, shaped and mediated by social practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Orlikowski, 2000; Whittington, 2004), and to what extent the social contextual environment enables or disables strategic renewal (Thompson et al., 2008). The process of interaction between individuals and groups may vary in different change contexts and more understanding is required about the sensemaking of middle level managers, in their pivotal change role, and their contribution to renewal in different change contexts (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). The focus

has been on vertical interactions (Johnson, 1990) however there are studies that suggest that lateral and informal processes of social practice (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Isabella, 1990) are particularly important to sensemaking and yet they have received little attention to date (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Most emergent change outcomes come from middle managers' informal daily activities (Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

The literature fields of Strategy-as-practice, sensemaking, middle level managers and strategic renewal are all growing and expanding. Rouleau and Balogun (2010, 2011) identified that discursive competence was critical to the accomplishment of middle level managers' sensemaking. Pappas and Wooldridge (2007) identified the importance of network centrality to middle level managers influencing strategic renewal. Huy (2011) looked at how middle level managers group-focus emotions to influence strategy implementation. Specific areas requiring further exploration are identified by researchers where these fields interface, and include:

- The socio-cultural micro-practices deployed by middle level managers during change (Rouleau, 2005);
- Practices of emotional balancing and emotional management by middle level managers during periods of change within different organisational contexts (Huy, 2002; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010);
- Sensemaking practices of middle level managers (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011);
- Conversational practices as strategic activities (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2005; Westley, 1990);
- Organisational positioning influences on practices of middle level managers (Regner, 2003);

- Informal lateral and social processes and practices (Balogun and Johnson, 2005);
- Sensemaking during change and as an embodied practice (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010).

Further insight into some of these gaps identified should be addressed by the following questions:

2.14.5 How does a middle level manager's experience and organisational positioning influence their strategic practice?

Regner (2003) found that strategizing occurred in different contextual situations within organisations, and that innovative strategies (Johnson and Huff, 1997) at the macro level appeared to be generated from the activities at the peripheries of organisations, whilst strategic change was generated when the centre of the organisation accepted and implemented revised or new strategies (Regner, 2003). Further understanding is required of differing external and internal influences on middle level managers' strategizing in different environments (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992) and contexts (Jarzbkowski and Spee, 2009), as well as how a middle level manager's experience of and proximity to the organisation's external boundaries potentially increases the probability of strategic activity (Rouleau, 2005).

2.14.6 What motivates middle level managers to contribute to a firm's strategic renewal?

The findings of Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) from their work on strategic role conflict supported the unique positioning of middle level managers, but also exposed a lack of research into the practices, behaviours and attributes of middle level managers whilst strategizing. We need to understand more around the link between the commitment and motivation of middle level managers (Huy, 2002) to drive and support strategic change as opposed to actively resisting it (Guth and

MacMillan, 1986) and what practices they deploy (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010; Whittington, 2007). Motivation and commitment to the organisation may be linked to social relationships within the organisation, and provide us with insight into why some middle level managers are empowered while others are disenfranchised (Balogun, 2003; O’Creevy, 1998; Westley, 1990). Mantere (2008) identified eight enabling conditions for agency with respect to different role expectations based on Floyd and Wooldridge’s (1992) model, where agency is the ability to intentionally pursue interest that has organisational outcomes, and the ability to influence emergent strategy (Scott, 2000). These conditions of narration, contextualisation, resource allocation, respect, trust, responsiveness, inclusion and refereeing (Mantere, 2008) provide insight into the sociological constraints of role expectations on individuals, however, further insight into the enablers or disablers for middle managers’ sensemaking practices in driving strategic renewal (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005) should contribute to the sensemaking literature and the Strategy-as-practice literature (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010; Whittington, 2007) and the middle managers literature (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2000; Hoon, 2004, 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010).

2.14.7 What are middle level managers’ sense making practices within the strategic renewal process?

Findings by Balogun and Johnson (2004) suggest that the social context and social engagement between middle level managers is important to delivering strategic change. Due to their unique positioning, what is the interfacing role played by middle level managers with senior managers and operational staff to develop strategy and change (Currie, 1999).

More information is required around the working relationship with senior managers (Hoon , 2004) and what are the practices of middle level managers in balancing and managing emotions during periods of change in different organisational contexts (Huy, 2002).

All these questions are intrinsically linked, and the answers should contribute to understanding more about how middle level managers sense make and contribute to emergent strategy and renewal in different contexts (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). While progress has been made in the literature relating to many aspects of strategizing practices such as emotion and sensemaking (Drori and Ellis, 2011; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), situated strategic practices (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007) and people activity based strategic processes (Johnson, Langley, Melin and Whittington, 2007) gaps around middle level managers' strategizing practices remain.

The next chapter determines an appropriate methodology for the exploration of the research questions and to answer calls in the literature.

3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

The scope and purpose of this research is to provide further insight into the practices of middle level managers, and particularly their sensemaking role, that make them critical success factors to a firms' strategic renewal. The intention is to answer calls for deepening our understanding of the practices of middle level managers on influencing and changing strategic actions (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010), and contribute to the juxtaposition of the literatures on strategic renewal, Strategy-as-practice, middle level managers and sensemaking. This chapter evaluates and considers the thesis' methodology choice and justification, as well as its ontology and epistemology. The rationale for the qualitative research paradigm and its appropriateness for this thesis are presented.

3.2 Rationale for the Research

The important role of middle managers in strategy processes have been recognised for a considerable time (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1997; Nonaka, 1998). However, it has only been in the last decade that there has been a sizeable increase in the literature which discusses the role of middle managers in strategy processes, viewing them as key strategic actors (Currie and Procter, 2005). There is also increasing focus on the role of middle level managers emerging from within a number of key process themes in the strategy literature: Strategy-as-practice (S-as-p); strategic renewal; and sensemaking.

S-as-p as a research field has put human actors and their actions and interactions at the centre (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009 Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington et al., 2002) and the

middle level manager is increasingly being recognised as an important strategic practitioner (Hoon, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005). Within this domain, however, there are still too few empirical studies on understanding what middle level managers as practitioners do within their immediate locales as they engage in strategy-making (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), and this research should contribute to deepening that understanding.

Strategic renewal is arguably the most important change process, because the outcome of the micro-processes and micro-practices that drive strategic renewal can affect the long-term macro prospects of a firm and alter its strategic trajectory (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009) and its competitive advantage (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Strategic renewal results from complex patterns of social interactions (Floyd and Lane, 2000) and it can be argued that the information, knowledge, and social influence most relevant to the development of organisational capabilities are likely to be in the middle of the organisation (Floyd and Lane, 2000: 60). There are gaps within the strategic renewal literature on the impact of middle level managers on strategic renewal actions (Kwee et al., 2011; Mom et al., 2007), and this research should contribute to increased understanding of middle level managers' impact on strategic renewal in different contexts.

Sensemaking is important to strategic renewal (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). It is also evident that sensemaking is of particular importance in empowering middle managers to strategize (Balogun, 2005, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005). Middle manager's sensemaking role in practice can only be understood by capturing the micro-practices and activities performed (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007), subsequently there are increasing calls within the sensemaking literature to understand more about the discursive activities of middle level managers in strategic sensemaking (Maitlis and

Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010. This research should contribute to understanding those activities.

3.3 Research Aim and Objectives

This research sets out to provide further insight into the practices of middle level managers that influence strategic renewal. First of all, the research focuses on the experience and knowledge that middle level managers draw upon in practice to influence strategy, and whether their positioning within the organisation is a factor. This contextualisation around experience and positioning builds on previous work by Regner (2003) and Salvato (2003), who found practices at the periphery and the centre of the organisation that differed in their strategic value. The research then looks at what the motivating factors are that drive middle level managers to be involved in the strategic change process, going beyond the role expectations of strategic agency for middle level managers (Mantere, 2008). Finally, the research looks at the sense making practices of middle level managers within the strategic renewal process. In order to obtain relevant data, the researcher asked the following research questions:

- 1. How does a middle level manager's experience and organisational positioning influence their strategic practice?***
- 2. What motivates middle level managers to contribute to a firm's strategic renewal?***
- 3. What are middle level managers' sensemaking practices within the strategic renewal process?***

This research is timely because it is important to increase our knowledge of the everyday practices middle level managers engage in at the micro-level, that have the potential for far-reaching consequences at a macro-level on their organisation's competitive advantage and

sustained growth. It is also called for to address the gaps in the extant literature.

3.4 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy could be said to be the '*rules of the game or the logic of enquiry governing each approach*' (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005: 154), or how the data should be gathered, analysed and used. The research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of knowledge, and is influenced and guided by the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher, which underpins the research strategy and research methods chosen (Saunders et al., 2007). Epistemology concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study, whereas ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2007). The confidence provided by understanding different philosophical positions allows choice of the most appropriate sphere of activity in which to ground the research (Dobson, 2002).

The following sections evaluate different philosophies and determine the most appropriate for this research.

3.4.1 Positivism

Positivism reflects the philosophical stance of the natural scientist where the end product of research can be generalisations similar to those produced by physical and natural scientists (Remenyi et al., 1998), and quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2003). The majority of social scientists will use a quantitative (positivistic) methodology (Sarantakos, 2005), which will tend to be highly structured in order to facilitate replication (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Positivist ontological stances that suggest that reality is an objective and independent reality that exists beyond the human mind, and positivist epistemological stances of detached, objective and

non-emotional research methodology, has led to an emphasis on numerical measurement to validate the generalisability of findings (Holliday, 2007).

The positivist approach was considered not appropriate for the exploratory nature of this research as it is detached, and the researcher is expected to remain apart from participants (Remenyi et al., 1998). Independent reality and impartial quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis would not give the necessary insight into the research phenomenon (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) being studied.

3.4.2 Interpretivism

Researchers who are critical of positivism argue that rich insights into complexity are lost if reduced to law-like generalisations, while, in contrast, interpretivism advocates that it is necessary to understand the differences between humans as social actors (Saunders et al., 2007). Interpretivism seeks to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning within a particular context (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). It emanates from the intellectual traditions of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, where phenomenology refers to the way we as humans make sense of the world around us, and symbolic interactionism refers to how we are continually processing and interpreting the social environment (Saunders et al., 2007). The interpretive ontological stance is that reality is subjective and socially constructed and the interpretive epistemological stance is empathetic and attached, and understands different individuals and groups in different contexts (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007).

The interpretivist approach was adopted for this research because it appears to be appropriate to business and management research in that it recognises that business situations are unique and complex, involving a range of individuals and contextual circumstances (Saunders et al., 2007). This raises questions about the generalisability of research that

aims to capture the rich complexity of social situations (Saunders et al., 2007) and the approach has been questioned for lacking a clear philosophical history, and for not being sharply defined (Stahl, 2008).

Stahl (2008) argues that in the interpretivistic ontology, or from the non-positivistic perspective, reality depends on the observer, and is anti-realist, and that the difference between positivism and non-positivism is based on the difference between the underlying ontologies of realism and anti-realism. The main non-positivist ontology is interpretivism which is generally accepted to be based on the non-realist ontology of social constructionism (Stahl, 2008), which views reality as being socially constructed (Saunders et al., 2007).

This research is looking at middle level managers' sensemaking practices which are emerging as being important within the organisational field of development and change (Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010, 2007). Outcomes for this Strategy-as-practice research need to be related to the definition of strategy as a situated, socially accomplished flow of activity that has consequential outcomes for the direction and/or survival of the group, organisation or industry (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007). The contextual element is important to the analysis of meaning, as context directly influences actions. The contextualisation of these micro-actions are an important aspect of the Strategy-as-practice approach (Whittington, 2006), as the actors are performing within their social contexts and the defined norms and behaviours of the macro organisation, which will also depend on the different micro contexts (Seidl, 2007; Wilson and Jarzabkowski, 2004).

3.4.3 Qualitative Paradigm

A paradigm is a basic belief system that deals first with principles based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, representing a *world view* that defines for the holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). A paradigm is a world view – a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world, and helps with the understanding of '*what is important, legitimate and reasonable*' (Patton, 2002: 69).

In line with the epistemological and ontological stances, this qualitative research paradigm is a *socially constructed* qualitative enquiry (Patton, 2002:95) combined with interpretivism. The researcher takes a sensemaking perspective, a constructive practice (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014) and will seek to understand the participants' views of the situation, which are based on subjective meanings developed socially and historically (Creswell, 2014). There is a world out there to be made sense of, the specific constructions and construals that individuals make are critical and need to be considered (Marks et al., 2000). The researcher will inductively develop a pattern of meaning, interpreting or making sense of the discussion and interactions with the middle level managers. This pattern of meaning or interpretation will be shaped by the researchers experiences and background but the intent is to make sense of middle level managers sensemaking actions in the context of strategic renewal. This social constructivism approach is in line with the shift in sensemaking research where sensemaking is more explicitly constructed, social and retrospective (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

3.4.4 Research Approach

The decided research approach is important for three reasons as determined by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002). It firstly

informs the research design: the overall configuration and conceptual framework that explains what is being studied in order to provide answers to the research question. Second it facilitates the thought process and focus on what will work and what will not during the research. Thirdly, developing an understanding of the different research traditions helps with a pragmatic approach to the research design, and help to make sure it is fit for purpose. For this research the inductive approach was considered, where research is aimed at the development and furthering of already established theoretical propositions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). In contrast, the deductive approach advocates the implementation of preconceived hypotheses and generalisations (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Figure 8, adapted from Saunders et al., (2009) outlines the key differences between the deductive and inductive research approaches.

DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE RESEARCH

Deductive Approach	Inductive Approach
1. Translating theory to data	1. Meaning attached to events
2. Need to explain relationships	2. Attachment to the research context between variables
3. Quantitative methodology	3. Qualitative methodology
4. Highly structured approach	4. Flexible approach
5. Researcher detachment	5. Researcher attachment
6. Emphasis on definitive conclusions found	6. Emphasis on what was found

Figure 8: Source: Adapted from Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009:89

The inductive approach should support identification of regularities, patterns and representative perspectives that can be generalised. Sensemaking actions and practices could be considered to be causal events in the emergence of strategic renewal in organisations. This

research aims to uncover the mechanisms that generate empirical events, in this case the mechanisms that generate strategic renewal, with a focus on individuals and, middle level managers, and their action, social relations and situated practices within wider contexts (Sayer, 2000). This research will acknowledge the causal power of agents, the middle level managers, which is exercised through practical interaction with and relationship in the social environment (Sayer, 2000). This focus on causality, agency, practice and social interaction appears to be the most appropriate approach to fit with this research making a contribution to the Strategy-as-practice literature (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 1996, 2007). This research recognises that sensemaking practices will be diverse and differentiated within an extremely complex process set in complex environments. Indeed, complexity scholars have begun to view organisations (Beck and Plowman, 2009) as unpredictable complex social systems (Kauffman, 1995; Levy, 1994) in which rare and unusual events emerge from unexpected places (Balogun, 2006; Plowman et al., 2007).

3.5 Methodological Choice

Many research strategies have advantages and disadvantages; however it is important to choose the most relevant strategy or mix of strategies depending on the context and focus of the research. The main research strategies are experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research, and are not mutually exclusive as a combination can be used (Saunders, et al., 2007). Each strategy can be used for explorative, descriptive or explanatory research (Yin, 1994). Consideration needs to be given to construct validity, internal validity, external validity (also referred to as generalisation) and reliability (Yin, 1989). This is why the research design is so important to validity and reliability.

Reliability is the consistency of findings through the data collection and analysis procedures. Assessment of this reliability can be tested through three questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002): will the measures yield the same results on each occasion; will similar results be reached by other observers; is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data? The four threats to reliability identified by Robson (2002) are subject or participant error, subject or participant bias, observer error or observer bias. The research design should take into consideration all of these potential problems and try and find ways to overcome them by putting in controls such as different timings, anonymity, and structure to eliminate different or influenced interpretations of response, and one sided interpretation by the researcher.

Validity is about whether the findings are really what they appear to be about and whether there is a causal relationship between two variables (Saunders, et al., 2007). The main threats to validity identified by Robson (2002) which need to be managed in qualitative inquiry are being aware that the history in a situation or of an organisation can influence findings; making sure that respondents have not deliberately distorted findings for fear of adverse repercussions; and ambiguity about causal direction, where it is difficult to determine cause and effect because influence is two way.

3.5.1 Methodological Options

A substantial part of the strategizing agenda is about understanding tacit, deeply embedded, and therefore hard to get at phenomena (Whittington, 2001). Most empirical studies that encompass micro, multi-faceted phenomena follow a common recipe and favour the case study or ethnographic study, which fall into the interpretive tradition (Balogun et al., 2003; Whittington, 2001). This research methodology needs to provide data that offer insight into tacit, embedded practitioner knowledge.

The experiment methodology can be used to study causal links between variables, but it has known issues around generalisability due to small and a typical sample sizes, it is not a feasible methodology for many business and management research questions, and was not considered suitable for this research. While the experiment is only infrequently used in management research, it has its roots in natural science laboratory research and the precision required means that it is the 'gold standard' by which the rigour of other research strategies are measured (Saunders et al., 2007).

The use of surveys was considered as a means of quantifiably validating any findings from the qualitative research undertaken in this study. As it is a deductive and quantitative approach it would not be suitable for providing insight required in this research concerning situated practice and the phenomena required.

In contrast, one of the most popular inductive approaches is grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is an approach to the analysis of qualitative data aiming at generating theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It can be viewed as theory-building through a combination of induction and deduction, and is effective when predicting and explaining behaviour (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Goulding, 2002). Grounded theory was not considered to be a suitable methodology as it ideally starts without a theoretical framework (Saunders et al., 2007), and behaviours are not the unit of analysis within this research.

Ethnography is another popular inductive approach, one favoured by strategy researchers (Balogun et al., 2003). Ethnography has its origins in anthropology (Bronislaw Malinowski 1884–1942) and is a strategy of cultural inquiry, exploring human behaviour, and understanding

complex societies, looking for rules, special language, values and hierarchies. However, this is a very time-consuming methodology due to the requirement of the researcher to become fully immersed in the social world being researched over a period of time (Saunders et al., 2007), and therefore not a practical choice for this research.

Another research strategy is action research which is normally used as part of a change management programme to address specific issues, and is research in action as opposed to research about action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005). There are several schools of action research: action research as a form of learning and development for the researcher (Reason, 1994); as a form of organisational development via researcher intervention (Chisholm and Elden, 1993); and as a method without prescriptive motivations (Eden and Huxham, 1996). The action research spiral (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002) starts with a specific objective (Robson, 2002) and to apply knowledge gained from one context to another. Whilst the collaborative element of this approach could be valuable in longitudinal strategic research (Balogun et al., 2003) it is not considered appropriate for this research because this study is not facilitating change in a client relationship.

An archival research strategy which uses administrative records and documents as a principal source of data was not considered relevant as this research is focused on the practice and the individual middle level manager. If a case study approach had been taken then looking at organisational data in combination would have been an option.

3.5.2 Case Study

The initial strategy for this research was a case study approach, as this research involves an investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 2002).

The case study is a popular strategy for explanatory and exploratory research where various combinations of data collecting techniques are deployed (Saunders, et al., 2007), and context is important (Yin, 2003). The case-study approach is particularly appropriate in new topic areas (Eisenhardt, 1989) when research and theory are at their formative stages and there is a requirement to look at sticky practice-based problems when the experiences of the actors are important and the context of action is critical (Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead, 1987). The case study strategy seemed to be a good fit with this research on specific actors and their practices in change contexts, and is the typical approach of processual research (Balogun et al., 2003). In order to be able to generalise findings and gain a deeper understanding of processes and outcomes, and contextual causality, and to answer how and why questions, a multiple case-study approach (Yin, 2003) was taken with the middle level manager as the unit of analysis (Yin, 2003).

While however, an initial case study was undertaken, facilitated through personal contacts within the said organisation, it proved extremely difficult to obtain commitment from other organisations. A single case study may have been acceptable if it had been critical, unique or representative of the phenomenon; however, the situation threw serious doubt on validity, reliability and generalisation due to the relatively small sample size of six interviews and one focus group within the case study. Also the practicalities of the accessibility issues and sample size had to be considered.

3.5.3 Methodology of choice: Interviews

The methodology of choice for this research is the semi-structured qualitative research interview (King, 2004) because it enables greater interaction (Sayer, 1992), and more opportunity for the respondent to explain (Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 1992). Interviews are one of the established qualitative methods used to illustrate the process of

sensemaking (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994; Maitlis, 2005), and the study of sensemaking is itself an exercise in sensemaking as it is challenging, interactive, emergent and evolving, which can be difficult to capture (Allard-Poesi, 2005). Interviews with questions that enable the participants to construct meaning and the researcher to interpret meaning, relying on the participants views and looking for complexity of views, is in line with a social constructivism paradigm (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured qualitative interviews are recognised as one favoured methodology in explanatory research (Saunders et al., 2007).

This study comprises respondent interviews directed by the researcher asking the same questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005; Robson, 2002) to middle level managers (see Appendix 1). However the interviewees were also encouraged to talk freely in response to provide depth and richness to the data. They were assured that the interviews were confidential (Saunders et al., 2007). As this research is both exploratory and explanatory then the use of qualitative interviews in the research design would be expected (Blumberg et al., 2005).

3.5.3.1 Purposive Sample

Consistent with qualitative research, a purposive sampling is used, because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2012). The middle managers have been selected with a variety of roles, and from different organisational backgrounds, to provide richness of context; however they are all involved in the formation of strategic change and strategic renewal within their organisations. The sample of middle level managers are purposive (Creswell, 2012; Miles and Huberman, 1994) because they are relevant as the chosen unit of analysis, they have the ability to

provide insight into the phenomena, sensemaking within the process of strategic renewal, and can therefore be considered representative and their responses real and true to life. The sample were chosen because they included individuals who mediated across organisational boundaries (Balogun et al., 2005; Rouleau, 2005), at different levels within their organisations, in positions with proximity to the centre and in positions with proximity to the organisational boundary, and included middle managers who worked in the external environment. Some of the middle managers were external actors. The middle managers were also selected from a range of different industries to provide additional contextual variation as methods that compare multiple instances of sensemaking, either within the same organisation or across organisations can provide additional theoretical insight (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

The sample were chosen because they all had experience of being involved in strategic change agency, and would be able to provide stories of their lived experience, with the intent of being able to compare and contrast, and the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives. Originally a 'change agent' was regarded as an expert facilitator in planned change (Schein, 1988), however change agency has become identified with the systemic self-organisation of learning, whilst the dispersal and decentering of agency as managing change has become synonymous with coping with the challenge of chaos (Fitzgerald and van Eijnatten, 2002). Change agency could be redefined as an emergent, self-organising and temporal process of communication and learning (Stacey, 2001; 2003) involving internal actors within organisations, as individuals, or in groups (Caldwell, 2006). Mantere (2013) asked how are individuals with strategic agency identified. The middle level managers in this study were identified because they were involved in implementing radical change strategies and were in influential positions with direct access to senior management for upward influence (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et

al., 2007). They also had a span of control with accountabilities for the management of direct or indirect resource teams of at least eight full time equivalents for downward influence (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). In addition the middle level managers were directly responsible for key strategic practices (Blackler, 2003) identified as those formal operating procedures involved in direction setting, resource allocation, and monitoring and control. They are theoretically valid and 'innately' practical being concerned with the doing of strategy (Grant, 1988; Jarzabkowski, 2003). The middle level managers comprised of operations managers, customer service managers, IT managers and project managers.

The purposive sample of 40 middle level managers were chosen to provide maximum variation with the purpose of documenting diverse variations and identify common patterns (Creswell, 2012). This will provide diversity of perspective and differential practice within a complex context and environment and allow for theory construction from the research topic (Danermark et al., 2002). The interviews are intended to provide explanatory depth and causal insight to the complex, inter-related and dynamic phenomena in this study (Sayer, 1992; 2000), and the agency of the middle level managers (Archer, 2007). The nature of purposive samples is not making claims of generalisability and in qualitative-inductive research this is a limitation. However, findings are linked to theory which can alleviate limitations.

The researcher was familiar with the phenomenon under study, had strong conceptual interest, and had taken a multi-disciplinary approach and experience in interviewing which point to the researcher being a valid and reliable information-gathering instrument (Miles and Huberman, 1994:38).

For consistency and reliability the same research questions were asked of each interviewee (See Appendix 3 for Interview Questions):

- These were designed to explore the core research questions.

- 1. How does a middle level manager's experience and organisational positioning influence their strategic practice?***
- 2. What motivates middle level managers to contribute to a firm's strategic renewal?***
- 3. What are middle level managers' sensemaking practices within the strategic renewal process?***

All the interviews were tape-recorded and immediately after the interview, transcribed verbatim in line with best practice (Robson, 2002; Saunders et al., 2007). The middle level managers' practices were coded in NVivo (Appendices 1 and 2) taking an inductive approach and not using a priori coding. Emergent themes were identified and aggregated (Appendix 2) from the first-order coding (Appendix 1). A small sample of 11 interviews was double-coded (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and any issues discussed and agreed.

The interviews were coded to identify middle level management practices across different contexts, industries and functions, and linked back to the literature. Practices were then aggregated into themes: identifying influences (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009); enablers and constraints for sensemaking practices that are antecedents of strategic renewal (Balogun 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005) and its sub processes of exploitation and exploration (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011). Practices of managing emotions (Huy, 2002, 2011; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009) were also coded, as were motivating factors. Floyd and Wooldridge (2000)

suggested that motivating factors could be the most important factor for adaptive organisations.

3.5.4 Limitations

The advantage of intensive interviews is that they provide rich insight and more detailed information than other methods. However, there are two key limitations that need to be considered. These are:

- i) Researcher bias could be limiting through their own preferences and values, and therefore the researcher needs to pay as much attention to what is not liked, expected, or understood or is in line with what was predicted or predictable before beginning the field research (Hochschild, 2009), and
- ii) The other issue is that results are not usually generalisable because small samples are chosen and random sampling methods are not used (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

Nevertheless, case-based studies can be considered as generalisable if examined in the light of extant theory (Yin, 1995).

Challenge to qualitative interviewing can be around the mechanics of conducting the interview such as unexpected participant behaviour or the researcher's ability to provide clear instructions, phrase and negotiate questions, deal with sensitive issues, and do transcriptions (Roulston, deMarrais and Lewis, 2003). Again relating to the potential for researcher bias, there are challenges to whether the phrasing of the interview questions lead to subtle persuasive questions, responses or explanations (Suominen and Jokinen, 2005). There is also possibility of researcher bias in interpreting the interview responses (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002), or if unable to develop trust or lacking in credibility, there is also a risk that value of the information given may be limited (Saunders et al., 2007).

There is recognition that interviews can be taxing as they can be difficult to conduct, and there is the lengthy process of transcribing audio tapes from the interviews, as well as a reliance on the interviewing skills of the researcher to draw out meaning from the participants (Creswell, 2012).

Indeed there have been discussions about qualitative interviewing highlighting the importance of reflecting on the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 2006; Nunkoosing, 2005; Weis and Fine, 2000). The interview could be ruled by the interviewer, serving the interviewer, with hidden agendas, leading to the interviewer's monopoly over interpretation and the potential for the interviewee to respond by deflecting or not answering the questions (Kvale, 2006). There is a risk about power and resistance, distinguishing truth from authenticity and that the interviewer can project their own self (Nunkoosing, 2005). Weis and Fine (2000) also questioned the interviewee's ability to articulate, and how open the interviewee would be dependent on their history and experiences. Points raised around the interviewer-interviewee relationship sensitise the researcher to the important challenges in qualitative interviewing that need to be anticipated (Creswell, 2012). There can be particular limitations to using interviews when studying practices, as they are specific and potentially artificial situations. People are asked to stop in the flow of their daily activities and reflect about their activities (Weick, 1995:25). The risk of interviewee or response bias could come from sensitivity to not wanting to reveal information that can lead to the creation of a partial picture, or from the nature of the individual (Saunders et al., 2007), or even because of the time factor involved (Robson, 2002).

Whilst there are issues around generalisations using qualitative interviews, there can be a high level of validity in carefully conducted qualitatively based interview studies, and the main reason for this

potential superiority of qualitative approach is the flexible and responsive interaction which is possible between interviewer and respondent, allowing meanings to be probed, topics covered from a variety of angles and questions made clear to respondents (Sykes, 1991:8, cited in Healy and Rawlinson, 1994:132).

3.6 Research Design

There is little or no established theory to draw on as Strategy-as-practice is an emerging field that focuses on the people who practice strategic management as an integral part of their job (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 1996). This research intends to answer calls to understand more about the practices of strategic actors (2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Mantere, 2005; Whittington, 2003), and particularly strategic renewal practices in the exploration sub-processes of intuiting and interpreting (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003) (see Figure 9).

At the individual level, *Intuiting* is the preconscious recognition of the pattern and/or possibilities inherent in a personal stream of experience and *Interpreting* is the explanation of an insight, or idea to one's self and to others (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003:1090). Ideas are generated by individuals who have access to divergent information, and are motivated to attend to and reconcile divergent information with existing knowledge (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). The exploration, intuiting and interpreting, or put another way, sensemaking (Weick, 1995) activities are causal events that lead to emergent strategic initiatives (Burgelman, 1983; Mintzberg, 1978). This sensemaking could be considered to be prospective sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014) as it would be 'future oriented' where actors are '*constructing intersubjective meanings, images and schemes in conversations where these meanings and interpretations create or project images of future objects and phenomena*' (Gephart et al., 2010: 285).

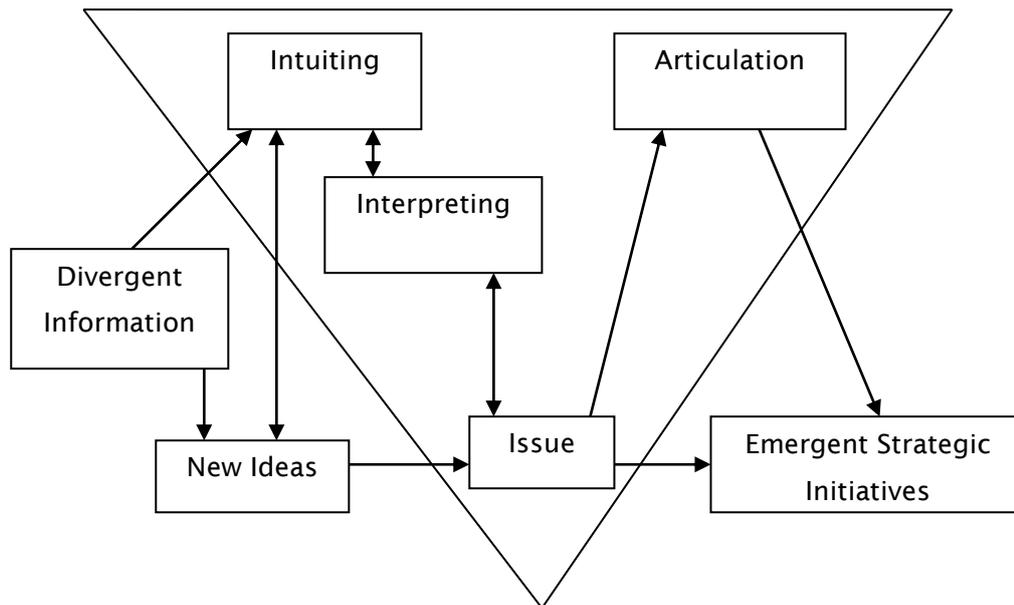


Figure 9: Triangle of Exploration as a Strategic Renewal Sub-process
 Source: Adapted from The Development of Emergent Strategic Initiatives, Floyd and Wooldridge 2000:118.

Emergent strategic initiatives are the building blocks of strategic renewal (Burgelman, 1983, 1991; Hart, 1992; Huff et al., 1992), and are divergent because they have the potential to change core organisational capabilities and shift the basis of competitive advantage, or how the firm competes (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). It has to be noted, though, that not all emergent initiatives are strategic, and the focus of this research is on the events that give rise to emergent divergent strategic initiatives, as opposed to incremental improvements to products, processes or services (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

The sample selection was based on the individuals being at a middle level management position or grade within the organisation. Middle level managers were those who gave and received direction (Stoker, 2006). They were also selected because their organisations were going through strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kim and Pennings, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Volberda et al., 2001). Some of the respondents worked in the same organisation as the researcher (Anteby,

2008), however the selection was across a number of different organisations and industries, and included external actors (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Forty intensive interactive interviews, semi-structured and under a confidential protocol with a purposive sample (Kuzel, 1992; Morse, 1989) were conducted. Respondent interviews were directed by the researcher asking the same questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005; Robson, 2002) to middle level managers involved in strategic change.

The majority of the organisations were going through restructuring in response to external changes and developing new operational models or downsizing: social housing; utilities; police; pharmaceutical; IT and MoD. The insurance giant, consultancy and travel company were involved in merger and acquisition; whereas the pharmaceutical and IT organisation were responding to intensifying global competition.

The sample was split 50:50 male: female. Ages ranged from 25 years to 60 years, with a mean of 40.3 years and a median of 39 years. The average standard deviation was 7.6. The intention of the cross-section in the sample was to try and ascertain an element of generalisability, in order to apply the results of the research beyond those examined in the study (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Considering these organisational contexts from a 'sensemaking perspective' (Weick, 1995), the broad categories of events that triggered sensemaking by these middle level managers are predominantly major planned events or minor planned events, or a combination of both major and minor planned events, with some minor unplanned events evolving as a consequence. In line with most of the research in the sensemaking literature, this study is based on planned organisational change initiatives (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991).

Table 2: Summary Middle Level Managers (MLM) by Industry and Function

Industry	MLM	Function	MLM
Social Housing	13,15,17,18,19,21,22,26,27,29,31,32,33,34,37,38,39,40,41	Operations	17,21,22,25,27,32,
Utilities	35	Facilities Management	15,28
Police	36	Finance	11,35
Insurance	11,14	HR	19,33
Travel	24	Strategic Planning	13
Pharmaceutical	12	Policy	29
Outsourcing	28	Customer Services	31,36,37,38
Consultancy	1,3,4,5,6,7, 8,9,23,30	Resource Planning	26
IT	2,16,20	IT	2,14,16,18,20,40,41
MOD	25	Project Management	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,12,23,24,30,34,39

Table 3: Summary Middle Level Managers (MLM) by Experience and Education

Experience	MLM	Education	MLM
< 10 years	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,22, 26,27,40	Post Graduate	1,4,5,6,7,8,11,15, 16,23,32,33
10 – 15 years	11,13,18,19,20,28, 29,30,31,34,39,41	Graduate	2,3,9,13,18,20,26, 27,29,30,34,35,36, 38,40,41
15 – 20 years	2,14,15,23,24,33, 36	Non-university	12,14,17,19,21,22, 24,25,31,37,39
> 20 years	1,12,16,17,21,25, 32,35,37,38	Professional Qualifications	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11, 12,16,18,19,20,23, 28,30,32,33,34,35, 37,38,39,40,41

The sensemaking triggers for middle level managers working in the small consultancy organisation which was bought out by one of their large global customers were threats to identity (Weick, 1995). These triggers were both at an individual level where the established identity is under threat and the important roles of individuals (Petriglieri, 2011), and at an organisational level where the threat was to understanding who they were collectively (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Maitlis, 2009).

The interview protocol was that all respondents were clear on the purpose of the research interviews; that they would all be anonymised; and that all conversations were held in the strictest confidence.

The interview design was developed with this research aim in mind; semi-structured with three high-level questions and a series of supporting questions (King, 2004) (See Appendix 1). The interviewees were directed by the researcher to answer specific questions as in a respondent interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005; Robson, 2002), but encouraged to respond in an informal way.

Interviewees were given the opportunity to talk freely and in-depth in relation to the topic area (Saunders et al., 2007) to add to the intensity and richness of the data. On average the interviews lasted for about an hour. As there is little or limited theory, and no 'a priori' hypothesis (Eisenhardt, 1989), theory building from the field data will follow best practice (Eisenhardt and Brown, 1997).

3.6.1 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this research is the practices of middle level managers in the process of strategic renewal, in answer to calls for more research into the exploitation and exploration strategic renewal actions of middle level managers (Beck and Plowman, 2009; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Kwee et al., 2011; Mom et al., 2007). Managers in the middle can be regarded as the 'clutch' of strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). In the strategic renewal process, middle level managers can facilitate divergence of interpretation by surfacing conflicting views, and convergence in later stages of interpreting by synthesising disparate views (Beck and Plowman, 2009). Both divergence and convergence are key to interpretation of rare and unusual events (Park, 2007), which can originate internally or externally (Isabella, 1990), such as strategic surprises (Cunha et al., 2006; Lampel and Shapira, 2001) and major change events (Brown and Humphreys, 2003).

The definition of middle level managers by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) using Pugh et al., (1968) to aid comparison across organisations is the one used in the criteria for selection of the interviewees: *middle managers are organisation members who link the activities of vertically related groups and who are responsible for at least sub-functional workflow of the organisation as a whole* (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992: 157). This is particularly relevant as this research involves interviews with a purposive sample of 40 middle level managers from a range of

different organisations in order to bring diversity of organisation into the sample.

As many managers can be classified as 'middle managers' care has been taken to ensure that the middle level managers in the sample have been identified to be involved in strategic renewal. Care has also been taken relating to their positioning within the organisation; they are middle level managers in either boundary-spanning roles at the periphery of the organisation, or in the corporate heart of the organisation. They are all middle level managers reporting at senior management or executive level and have accountability for a function or operational team. Practical consideration of access has also been taken into account in the selection process.

3.6.2 Theoretical Lens

Emergent strategic initiatives are born when a middle level manager's interpretation of an idea links to a strategic issue facing the organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) as illustrated in Figure 9. The strategic renewal sub-process of divergent and convergent interpretation by middle level managers is a key process in the emergence of strategic initiatives, as tacit knowledge and interpretations are articulated (see Figure 9) in interactions with others within a developing or emergent social network, where original ideas become more explicit (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Divergent and convergent interpretation is usually in response to rare and unusual events (Park, 2007) or internal organisational change that interrupts well-practiced patterns (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). The interpretation of unusual events in organisations by middle level managers (Beck and Plowman, 2009) is also a fundamental sensemaking process (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), as both processes give rise to shared meanings and emergent adaptation.

In parallel, within the sensemaking literature there are calls for more insight into the sensemaking practices of middle level managers (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2011) which contributes at two other levels to sensemaking research (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2011; Weick, 1995) and Strategy-as-practice research (Balogun et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2003, 2006).

Therefore within this research design, it is relevant to use sensemaking as the theoretical lens through which to review the strategic renewal practices of middle level managers. Vigilant sensemaking and sensegiving by middle level managers (Maitlis, 2005) would appear to be the causal mechanism of richer divergent and convergent interpretation which drives strategic renewal within an organisation in response to change events (Beck and Plowman, 2009).

In summary, this qualitative research (Fleetwood, 2005) within the Strategy-as-practice domain (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006) is characterised as inductive, emerging and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analysing the data (Creswell, 2014). This inquiry seeks to develop understanding and construct meaning from interactions with actors involved in strategic renewal, in other words taking a socially constructivist world view. The unit of analysis is the middle level manager (Ahearne and Kraus, 2012; Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Stoker, 2006) through a sensemaking lens (Balogun, 2008; Balogun et al., 2014; Maitlis, 2005; Mantere, et al., 2012; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Weick, 1995) for the purpose of understanding sensemaking practices that generate the antecedents of strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kim and Pennings, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Volberda et al., 2001).

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

The patterns in the data show that before strategic renewal emerges, there are a number of sensemaking actions that create divergent activity. Divergence appears to be stimulated by external sensemaking activities, experiences, ideas and knowledge. Thinking space and reflection are important to facilitate sensemaking, and the culture of the organisation enables or constrains the whole process. Formal practices are generalisable across most organisations, however motivating factors and informal practices are differentiated by individual actors. It would also seem that once motivated, informal mechanisms can lead directly to engagement with strategic renewal. However informal practices inform formal practices, and for a change to be adopted by an organisation, there needs to be engagement through formal mechanisms.

In order to illustrate this emergent pattern (Johnston and Smith, 2011), the author has produced a proposed model of the identified causal mechanisms or antecedents to strategic renewal.

An emergent model of the antecedents to strategic renewal, developed through the author's sensemaking and interpretation of the data and verbatim, Figure 10, compliments the Triangle of Exploration as a Strategic Renewal Sub-process, (see Figure 9) (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000), and provides insight into the sensemaking actions preceding intuiting and interpreting.

Middle level managers drew heavily on their background, skills and experience (110 references) to inform their sensemaking, and experiential factors that give rise to actual practices (Crawford and Wright, 2011).

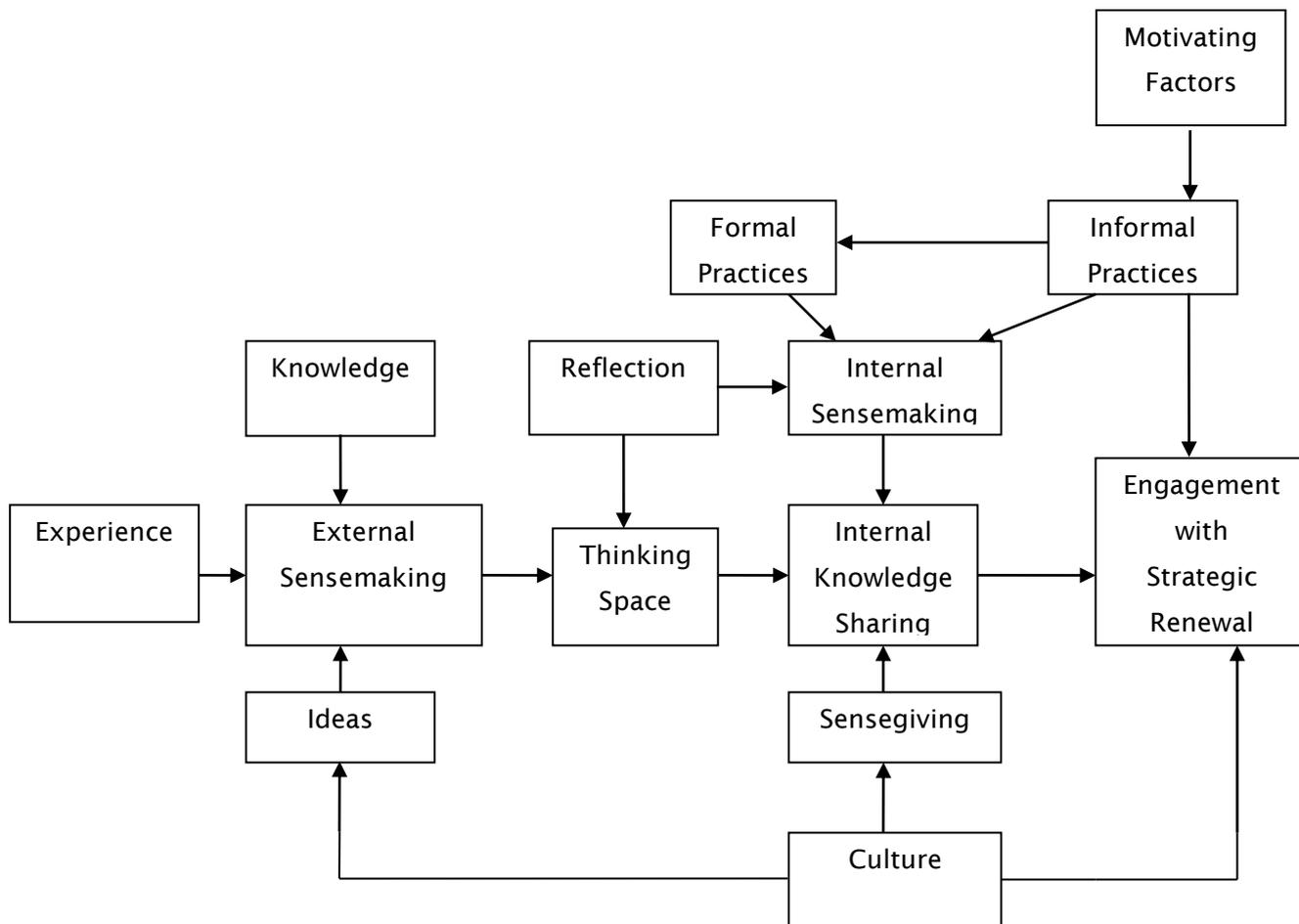


Figure 10: Emergent Model of Antecedents to Strategic Renewal

4.1.1 Experience

Hernes and Maitlis (2010:27) suggested that meaning is made ‘*in an ongoing present in which past experience is projected upon possible futures*’. The middle level managers drew upon their past experiences, different backgrounds and skill mixes to sensemake at an individual level and through interactions with each other to create shared meaning, constructing accounts that allow them to understand the world and act collectively (Maitlis, 2005). Collective experiences, which combined with differing external influences and internal influences, enable retrospective interpretation of the event (Gioia et al, 2002), taking account of the past but also the present and future (Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013; Wiebe, 2010). These interrelated cycles of

retrospection (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012) use past and present temporal orientations to construct meanings that create images of the future (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Each middle level manager has a unique combination of experiences, skills, external influences and internal influences which creates an individual lens on the environmental cues. Coded as background skills and experience, as first order code and as background, experience, skills and influences as second order code. Experience, developed through time, based on background, skills and influences form the basis of middle level managers cognitive 'cause maps' (Weick, 1979) which reflects their identity and what they believe.

MLM 16 'I think 90% of the change that I manage is based on things I have done in the past, so my experience is absolutely essential. In fact it's one of the things on which I sell myself that if I go into an organisation to do an assignment I don't need to be learning things, I need to have information but I don't need to be learning things because I've done most of it, if not all if it before. So quite often I'm drawing on my experiences to inform what's required for that organisation.'

4.1.2 External Sensemaking

External sensemaking represents the sensemaking process that combines external influences with experience and knowledge to enable sensemaking at an individual level. The external environment creates influences and provides infinite streams of events and inputs that surround any organisational actor, in addition to informative data that is incorporated in the sensemaking process (Weick et al, 2005:411). Perceived shifts in the external environment can present challenges to organisational routines and be the triggers to engage in sensemaking (Daft and Weick, 1984; Weick, 1993). Coded as external and sensemaking as first order code, external influences and sensemaking as second order.

4.1.3 Knowledge

This then links to knowledge gained from the external environment and the internal environment as an enabler of sensemaking. Two sources of knowledge: tacit such as experience; and explicit knowledge from internal and external influences upon which the middle level managers habitually draw upon in action (Tsoukas, 2011). Floyd and Wooldridge (1992:86) surmise that strategic renewal involves individual learning, organisational knowledge creation, and knowledge transfer. Knowledge from the external environment could be cues creating 'disruptive ambiguity' (Weick et al., 2005:413). Coded as knowledge building at first order and exploration practices at second order. Knowledge, experience, culture and motivating factors are enablers or constraints for middle level managers in driving strategic renewal (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005).

4.1.4 Ideas

Ideas is a broad terminology for new thinking or change initiatives that are cues emerging from the internal environment which could be in response to changes in the external environment. These could be anticipated and planned interventions such as senior management sensegiving, or changes in daily practices and interactions (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), structural transformations that disturb existing understandings of the organisation (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Mantere et al., 2012) or new leaders sensebreaking in order to challenge the existing norms. Coded as change management, mechanisms, noticing change, issue identification and directed at first order, and issues and events at second order.

4.1.5 Culture

In line with the sensemaking perspective, sensemaking never takes place in isolation but always in specific contexts (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). The immediate action context in which an activity has been disrupted, influences the process of sensemaking, how actors put together, notice and extract cues from their experiences, as well as how cues are extracted (Weick, 1995: 43-49). The immediate social context is also critical to sensemaking because it provides the norms and expectations that constrain explanations (Weick, 1995; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Maitlis, 2005). Also broader institutional contexts such as industry influence the sensemaking process and outcomes Weick et al., (2005). These contexts all contribute to the culture of the organisation. Organisational culture is the context in which sensemaking takes place, and where the internal influences come from. The organisational culture had an enabling or constraining effect on the sensemaking practices of the middle level managers. The more bureaucratic, with command-and-control leaderships tended to be blame cultures which constrained sensemaking capability, in contrast to the more interactive, dynamic and positive cultures that encouraged innovative thinking and sensemaking practices. The culture of an organisation was found to be key to enabling sensemaking, encouraging pro-active responsiveness to external and internal cues. Coded as constraints, enabling factors and expectations as first order and internal influences and enablers and constraints at second order.

4.1.6 Reflection

Reflection is the first of two important steps in the middle level managers' sensemaking process that create actions for strategic renewal, proposed through interpretation of the data in this study. Middle level managers would individually and with other actors 'reflect' on what they had discovered or what was happening in situ. Reflection could be considered to be a characteristic of the retrospective nature of

the sensemaking process. Reflection mirrors shared understanding and shared meanings (Mantere, 2005, 2008; Mantere and Vaara, 2008) and interpretations of any cues or disruptions, and is part of the iterative, cyclical and interrelated creation, interpretation and enactment processes. Reflection also includes actors mirroring to each other, through discourse and language, informing internal sensemaking as a sub-process of constructing inter-subjective meaning (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gephart et al., 2010; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). Coded as sensemaking and critical success factors at first order and sensemaking practices and critical success factors at second order. Defining sensemaking leads to a variety of meanings, however one key ontological difference that is reflected in various definitions, concerns whether sensemaking takes place within or between individuals (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). In this study, sensemaking is identified as taking place between individuals in creating inter-subjective meaning as reflection, and also within individuals. Reflection then leads to the need for individuals to 'think' as part of individual sensemaking.

4.1.7 Thinking Space

The second but arguably the most important additional step in the sensemaking process identified in this research was the need for 'thinking space' by middle level managers. This defines sensemaking as taking place within individuals (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), as an individual's interpretive act. This is not the same as the creation by organisations of creative spaces or 'free spaces'. These are usually small designated areas with comfortable seating, special lighting effects and access to soft drinks that are outside direct control that have been created to 'allow' interaction beyond that involved in daily work in the hope that this enables innovation and change (Kellogg, 2009). A recurring comment was the need by middle level managers as part of

their own sensemaking, to have 'thinking space' or time to think to themselves alone and away from the organisational environment to create their own meaning and to think through what the future could look like, their role, their identity and how they could shape their future. The author would argue that this 'thinking space' is future oriented, and a necessary sub process in prospective sensemaking, even though the dominant view is that people's future actions are derived from retrospective sensemaking and thinking in future perfect tense (Weick, 1969; Gioia et al., 2002; Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013). In line with others who question this view (Gephart et al., 2010; MacKay, 2009; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014; Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012), this research indicates that 'thinking space' is important to the notion of prospective sensemaking. 'Thinking space' or the time to think alone in one's mind, away from usual environments shapes future actions. Coded as sensemaking and critical success factors at first order and sensemaking practices and critical success factors at second order.

4.1.8 Informal Practices

Whilst informality has been recognised as an element in the process (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Beck and Plowman, 2009; Maitlis, 2005) there have been few empirical studies at detailed level of practice. This research evidenced clearly that sensemaking was strongest within informal practices. Informal practices, such as the conversations in the pub or around the water cooler are known (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011), however this research shows that it is the sensemaking practices identified as being informal, or uncontrolled, which are the most important, as this is where new thinking is generated. Informal sensegiving from middle level managers evolves from informal sensemaking which creates a collective narrative that in turn becomes legitimate or formal. Iterative informal sensemaking and sensegiving strongly influenced internal sensemaking and formal sensemaking practices. Informal practices are diverse, unique and variable as they involve different combinations of actors and social networks. Social

networks are important to informal practice. Coded as intellectual debate, relationships, managing emotions, intermediary and social networks at first order, and sensemaking practices at second order. This important process of informal practices involving sensemaking and sensegiving could be described as the construct of sensebreaking, which defined by Pratt (2000:464) as '*the destruction or breaking down of meaning*'. Sensebreaking can motivate people to re-consider the sense they have already made, to question their underlying assumptions, and re-examine their course of action (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2014).

4.1.9 Formal Practices

In contrast formal practices are generic and tend to be common across all organisations. Sensebreaking and sensegiving from the top team takes place predominantly through formal practices which are controlled practices. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991: 442) defined sensegiving as '*the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organisational reality*'. This study of middle level managers showed that their informal sensemaking practices only led to legitimate recognition and adoption through formal practices. It was only through the formal practices that emergent strategic initiatives could be realised, however the initiatives were not created through formal practices. Coded as exploitation, prioritising, pressure to perform, skill exploitation, work distribution and doing at first order, and exploitation practices and sensegiving practices at second order.

4.1.10 Internal Sensemaking

The combination of formal and informal sensemaking and sensegiving practices, and reflection between the actors created the construction of intersubjective meaning (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gephart et al., 2010; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) which the author has labelled internal sensemaking. This is when actors engage with an issue and

mutually construct and build their understanding of it together (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Coded as problem solving, differentiators, building trust, opportunity to influence, peer pressure and intellectual debate at first order, and internal influences and sensemaking at second order.

4.1.11 Sensegiving

Sensegiving is part of the sensemaking process (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007), and is implicit in all elements of this proposed model, however this is recognition that sensegiving is also driven by the social context and internal influences that are culturally embedded in each organisation. Coded as sensegiving at first and second order. Internal influences in different contexts (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) reflect the culture as an enabler or constraint in driving strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011).

4.1.12 Internal Knowledge Sharing

Internal knowledge sharing is the description the author has given to the combining of internal sensemaking and sensegiving with individual's own prospective sensemaking actions within their heads to create collective sense. Individual identity and different identities are connected, and combine to form a shared knowledge base. Knowledge shared enabled sensemaking, emerging from prior knowledge gained from learnings in different contexts as well as the learnings and knowledge gained in the current situational context. Collective sensemaking is generated in an on-going, iterative manner, as actors shape each other's meanings through conversations in repeated cycles of sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Knowledge sharing enables actors to better understand themselves, their situation and how

to make sense of the future, and is particularly critical when ambiguity is high (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Rudolph et al., 2009). Coded as knowledge sharing, knowledge limitation awareness and recombining at first order, and sensemaking and sensegiving practices at second order. The internal knowledge sharing is the formation of shared mental cause maps, interactively developing convergent cause maps and the development of sensemaking by socially embedded actors using language to engage in understanding of the situation (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

4.1.13 Motivating Factors

Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) suggested that motivating factors were most important in driving strategic renewal, and Mantere (2005) suggested that motivations are important in championing strategy. Whilst there is evidence that a clear reward and recognition strategy in place in organisations provides motivation, this research showed that the social environment and emotional attachment were key drivers of a 'motivation' to want the organisation to thrive and prosper. There was recognition by most middle level managers that strategic renewal is linked to organisational survival, and that they can play a part in that. The level of engagement in informal sensemaking practices depended on motivation. Emotional attachment was the strongest motivational factor for individuals, and this supports developing understanding on the role of individual emotion in the sensemaking process and how negative and moderately intense emotions, such as a recurring theme of frustration, are most likely to signal the need and provide the energy that fuels sensemaking (Maitlis et al., 2013). Coded as reputation, genuine concern, values, motivation, emotional involvement and team at first order and motivating factors at second order.

4.1.14 Engagement with Strategic Renewal

The model links to the strategic renewal processes of interpreting, intuiting, integrating and institutionalising (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003) and illustrates an intensely social system (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Strategic renewal is emergent (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2013) when middle level managers have gone through intensive sensemaking at an individual level and within a number of networks, leading to a process of internal knowledge sharing that creates emergent strategic initiatives. Coded as strategic initiatives at first order and emergent strategic initiatives at second order, they are the *outcomes* of sensemaking. This illustrates that sensemaking practices of middle level managers are antecedents to exploitation and exploration sub-processes of strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011). This is in line with a consistent pattern of how sensemaking enables creativity and innovation in organisations and an emerging theme is the importance of sensemaking in the development of novel understandings and practices in organisations (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) and driving strategic renewal.

4.2 Review

This thesis intends to contribute to research gaps found in the juxtaposition of key emerging themes in the strategy process and change literature (see Figure 11). The intention is to answer calls for deepening our understanding of middle level managers on influencing and changing strategic actions (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010). A common theme is the emerging importance of the practices of middle level managers and specifically their sensemaking practices in driving strategic renewal.

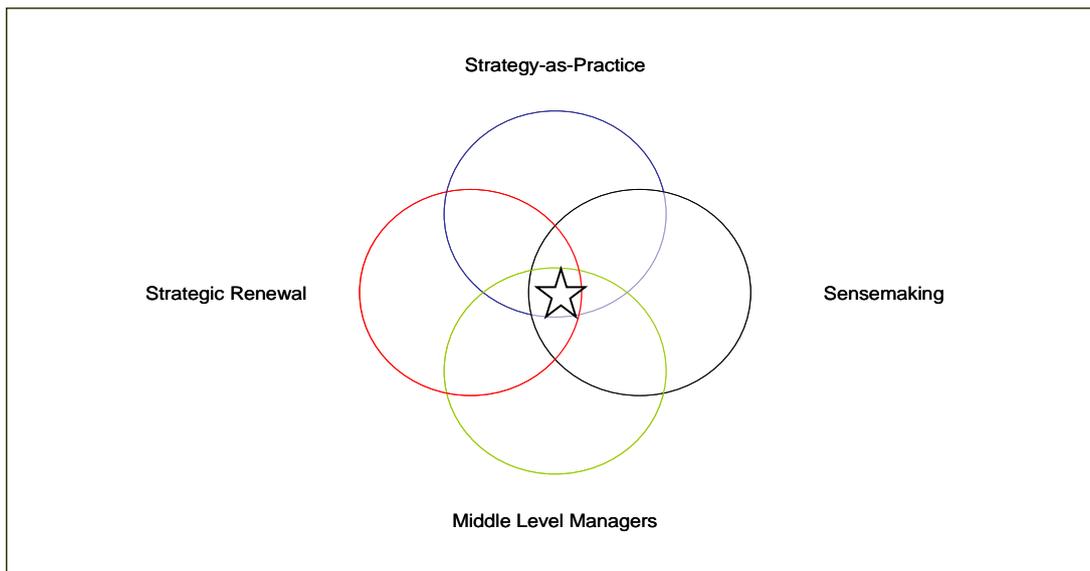


Figure 11: Focus of Thesis. Source: Author

Results from a number of studies (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) indicate that middle level managers can be the drivers of organisational strategy (Mantere, 2008). There is an evolving paradigm shift in thinking around strategic change, and a developing research agenda on the roles of middle level managers (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997). Many of the hypotheses remain untested (Balogun, 2003; Conway and Monks, 2011; Mantere, 2008) as the strategy literature has until recently underplayed the role of middle level managers therefore there is little empirical evidence (Mantere, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011).

The strategic change literature has been dominated by top team focus however there have been broader challenges to the effectiveness of linearity and top down change (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Sammut-Bonnici and Wensley, 2002; Senge, 1997). Change is notoriously difficult and most change initiatives fail due mostly to the linear paradigm of change as sequential (Kotter, 1995). Most successful change approaches across most contexts were those built on

assumptions of complexity and classified as emergent (Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

Most research has been carried out at the macro-content level and to some lesser extent at the macro-process level (Paroutis et al., 2013), so more recently there has been a shift in research focus from macro to micro-processes and activities that lead to strategic outcomes. The theoretical and empirical challenge at the micro level has been taken up by researchers looking at 'strategizing' or 'Strategy-as-practice' (Paroutis et al., 2013). Strategizing refers to all work associated with the practices and processes of conceiving, maintaining, renewing and executing strategy (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Strategy-as-practice has focused on the micro-processes and activities that lead to strategic outcomes (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2003) and this has led to an emerging interest in middle level managers as strategic practitioners and their contribution to strategic change (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Middle manager agency is a basis for strategic renewal, a bottom-up process where strategy is adapted to a changing environment (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Mantere, 2008). Of particular importance to strategic renewal are the middle level managers' practices of sensemaking, in terms of interpreting the intent to change, transmitting information, and gathering and diffusing new ideas (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). Strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2010) is viewed as a subset of change within Strategy-as-practice, and within the change process lie the two dominant themes. Common to both these themes are the sensemaking practices of middle level managers.

Sensemaking is emerging as a critical activity for strategy and change (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau, 2005).

Sensemaking is the rich process by which people give meaning to

experience and the creation of individual and cognitive frameworks through which they are able to understand and predict. It is more than interpretation through a schema which discerns patterns through which to see the strategy, but is also about the creation of the schema through emergent sensemaking and knowledge construction, sensemaking in the context of strategic renewal (Kwee et al., 2011). Strategic renewal is arguably the most important, because the outcome of the micro-processes and practices that drive strategic renewal can affect the long-term macro-prospects of a firm and alter its strategic trajectory (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009) and its competitive advantage (Floyd and Lane, 2000). Middle level managers' sensemaking practices are important to strategic renewal (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) as they frame and enrich the interpretation of unusual events with their unique proximity to the interpretations of frontline and senior managers.

This researcher has interpreted the data and conversations from a sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995; Vaara, 2000) that is social constructivist in nature looking at the language used (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Weick, 2012) in response to the interview questions.

4.3 Areas Identified for Future Research

Areas identified for further research included: the middle level managers practices leading to strategic renewal, the antecedents of strategic renewal, specifically sensemaking practices that create strategic renewal; practical knowledge used by middle level managers in their strategic sensemaking role and in this context specific versus generalisable and transferable; the impact of middle level managers on strategic renewal actions of exploitation and exploration; and the link between interpretation and exploitation.

4.4 Specific Research Gaps

Within the literature juxtaposition between Strategy-as-practice literature, Strategic Renewal literature, Middle Level Managers' literature and Sensemaking literature we find calls for developing an understanding of external and internal influences in different contexts (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), and balancing and managing emotions during change within different contexts (Huy, 2002; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009).

We find calls for identifying enablers and constraints for the sensemaking practices of middle level managers in driving strategic renewal (Balogun 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005), and their sensemaking practices that are antecedents to exploitation and exploration sub-processes of strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011).

4.4.1 Answering Calls

The research in this thesis is a qualitative study to provide additional insight and add to the literature, and will answer calls in Strategy as Practice literature (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington et al., 2002); in Strategic Renewal literature (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011); in Middle Level Management literature (Balogun, 2005, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005) and in Sensemaking literature (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010).

4.5 Initial Findings

The first 11 interviews were analysed by 45 codes (see Appendix 1), or structures, a set of internally related objects or 'practices' (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011; Sayer, 1992:92) which were aggregated into 12 Causal Themes (see Appendix 2) which can also be expressed in the term 'mechanism' (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011; Sayer, 1992) and 'one event or outcome' where there is external and visible impact (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011; Sayer, 1992).

There did however appear to be an anomaly with the findings from one of the middle level managers, MLM2, who worked for an Information Systems provider. Whereas the other ten interviews suggested possible saturation as the same and similar mechanisms were being seen across them all, MLM2 relied predominantly on formal practices whilst being heavily engaged with the external environment to drive strategic renewal. Therefore the following 29 research interviews deliberately included seven MLMs working within an information systems environment to stretch the diversity of the data in line with saturation theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, 2009).

The practices of the Middle Level Managers (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010; Whittington, 2006; Balogun, 2014) were aggregated by sensemaking (Samra-Fredericks, 2005, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010) and sensegiving (Drori and Ellis, 2011; Balogun et al., 2014) themes. Themes were aggregated by exploration strategic renewal actions and exploitation strategic renewal actions using coding rules in Kwee et al., 2011 where exploration actions are associated with search, variation and risk-taking (March, 1991; Kwee et al., 2011) and where exploitation actions are associated with refinement and efficiency (March, 1991; Kwee et al., 2011). In addition themes were aggregated based on the genesis of emergent strategic initiatives from within strategic renewal sub- processes (Floyd and Lane, 2000).

Actions that do not relate to strategic renewal, but are part of daily operations such as extending production capacity have not been considered as strategic renewal actions and have therefore not been coded (Kwee et al., 2011).

Initial findings found a commonality of sensemaking practices amongst middle level managers in different contexts where sensemaking takes place in the interplay of interpretation and action (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010). It also became clear during the coding process and identification of themes that practices were divided between formal and informal sensemaking actions. A third level of coding of formal and informal was then applied. The formal practices that involve *interpretive* (Crossan et al., 1999; Crossan and Berdrow, 2003; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007) sensemaking (Samra-Fredericks, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010) and sensegiving (Smith et al., 2010; Drori and Ellis, 2011) appear to be more linked to *Exploitation* within the strategic renewal context (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003; Kwee et al., 2011; Lechner and Floyd, 2012) than informal practices. These formal practices were prevalent across the different contexts, and all the middle level managers interviewed used these sensemaking actions.

4.6 Data Analysis

A common view held by the Middle Level Managers (MLMs) was the importance of informal sensemaking practices and mechanisms that take precedence over the formal mechanisms (see Table 4). It would seem that *Intuiting* sensemaking and sensegiving practices are stronger and have greater causality than formal practices. Formal practices, being *interpretive* practices appear to be more likely to precede emergent strategic initiatives (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). This section provides a more detailed analysis of the practices relevant to the research gaps identified in the literature.

4.6.1 Findings by Theme

Table 4 summarises the overall findings by theme, and identifies middle level manager practices by formal themes, interpretive and explorative (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; March, 1991), and informal themes, intuitive and exploitive, as causal mechanisms for strategic renewal (Crossan and Hurst, 2006; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Formal themes are those that are structured and embedded in the organisation, for example, documented in organisational records; and meetings (Ahearne et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2009; Whittle et al., 2013). Informal themes are those that are embedded in informal networks, for example: social networks at multiple levels within the formal structure; and not documented (Ahearne et al., 2012; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1999; Huy, 2001; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). Sensemaking practices where the managers understand, interpret and create sense for themselves and others of their changing organisational context and surroundings (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Weick, 1995) were found to be mostly informal, whereas sensegiving practices, where the managers deploy their understanding and knowledge to legitimately influence others to understand the value of change (Huy, 2002; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011) were found to be mostly formal. A total of 471 informal practices were referenced, compared to 287 formal practices.

Forty- five codes were merged into 12 causal mechanism themes and emergent strategic initiatives were identified. The themes were related to the research questions, and the gaps in the literature:

- i) External and internal influences in different contexts (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009);
- ii) Enablers and constraints for middle level managers' (MLMs) practices in driving strategic renewal (Balogun, 2003; Balogun

and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005);

- iii) Balancing and managing emotions during change in different contexts (Huy, 2002; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009);
- iv) Sensemaking practices of middle level managers (MLMs) as antecedents to exploitation and exploration sub-processes of strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011).

The themes were:

Background, experience, skills and influences;

Enablers and constraints;

Motivating factors, what motivates the MLM to want to drive change;

External influences;

Internal influences;

Sensemaking practices;

Sensegiving practices;

Exploration practices;

Exploitation practices;

Managing emotions;

Issues;

Critical success factors.

These themes were then identified as being formal or informal.

Formal linking to exploitation and interpretive sensemaking, where they would be routine and repetitive. These could also be linked more to implementation. Informal linking to exploration and intuiting sensemaking, and where they would be learning and change-focused. These could also be linked to emergent strategic initiatives (see Table 4).

Table 4: Themes of Formal and Informal Middle Level Managers (MLM) Practices or Mechanisms

Theme	Formal	Informal	MLM Refs
Background experience, skills and influences	University Professional Qualifications	Knowledge Learnings	110
Enablers and constraints	Recruitment IS/IT Cost Organisation Size Red Tape Volume of work Bureaucracy Structure Policy and Procedure	Body Language Tone Culture Politics Time Confidence Ability to see the bigger picture Momentum Space to think Diversity Group think	83
Motivating factors	Performance Management Reward & Recognition	Success Feedback Empowerment Commitment Continuous improvement Work Relationships Culture Shared vision Shared values Sustainability	79
External influences	Regulations Customer /Client Meetings Internet Benchmarking Accreditation Contractors	Industry networks Market Factors Research Reading	87
Internal influences	Communications Intranet	Internal network Business partners	25

Theme	Formal	Informal	MLM Refs
	Briefings		
Sensemaking practices	Risk Management Meetings Planning Information Analysis Gathering insight Testing Organisational health check Workshops Process mapping	Instinct Conversations Issue recognition Managing emotions Knowledge sharing Navigating Judgement/evaluation Conscious positioning Listening Learnings Experiences Choosing your battles Negotiations Socialising Unblocking Questioning Understanding importance Awareness Symbolic signs Reason and understanding	252
Sensegiving practices	Reports Project Documents Presentations Meetings Emails Briefings Programme/project management Process maps	Influencing Managing emotions Explaining Conversations Visioning Moving things forward Creating logic Aiding rational thinking Acceptance of transience Acceptance of change as normal	165

Theme	Formal	Informal	MLM Refs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions Shaping Dealing with issues Unblocking Straight talking 	
Exploration practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing new technologies Integrating processes Integrating technologies Establishing new processes Establishing new services Implementing new customer channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal sensemaking practices Informal sensegiving practices Motivations Enablers and constraints 	44
Exploitation practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recombining Process re-engineering Restructuring Quality Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal mechanisms 	52
Managing emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensegiving Giving time Managing resistance Managing fear Managing inertia Finding the positives Involving Finding common ground Unpicking concerns Allowing expression of feelings Empathising Understanding the individual Leading by example 	87

Theme	Formal	Informal	MLM Refs
		Diluting groupthink Winning hearts and minds Coping strategies	
Issues or events	Loss of government funding Redundancies Legal Changes Merger & Acquisition Financial focus only	Lack of confidence No openness or honesty Frustrations Internal focus Ignoring problems Not escalating effectively Firm sub-sets from informal networks	37
Critical success factors	Testing Key partners	Good network Drive Involvement Culture Knowledge Momentum Do what you say you are going to do Strong shared values Space to think strategically	29
Emergent strategic initiatives	Implementing new skill sets in-house Introducing new technology New standard operating model Establish contact centre Unique training programme to market Differentiated parent company guarantee in	Re-ignite an inert environment	13

Theme	Formal	Informal	MLM Refs
	PFI Market Commercial focus on market rental properties.		

A common view held by the Middle Level Managers was the importance of informal sensemaking practices and mechanisms that take precedence over the formal mechanisms (see Table 4). It would seem that *Intuiting* sensemaking and sensegiving practices are stronger and have greater causality than formal practices. Formal practices, being *interpretive* practices appear to be more likely to precede emergent strategic initiatives (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007).

MLM 6 *'I eavesdrop and overhear passing conversations and just by being involved in little 'water cooler' type discussions you have, they are good for knowing what's going on and in real time – also it has better content than what's said in a big group.'*

MLM 2 *'I think those informal mechanisms are more powerful than the most structured formal mechanisms.'*

MLM 14 *'we discuss day to day things but whenever there is an initiative or strategic goal we go quite formal we sit and listen to understand where we are headed.'*

MLM 15 *'when you are in a formal environment there is the need to stick to an agenda you don't have time for casual conversation.'*

MLM 41 *'it might be stories about things of what not to do, actually very much it's about telling stories, I am a genuine believer in the story and the power of it and taking people with you – when I present I tend to use*

that story structure, a bit more informal, rather than bombarding people with facts and jargon.'

MLM 39 'they don't really keep an eye on how they're operating to be able to inform their strategy. Its business as usual and they keep doing it because it's the way they have always done it. So we dig out how it truly is and it's usually a fair old mess; and then we're able to help the business make clear decisions and clear strategy on how to improve and make themselves more efficient.'

MLM 35 'The formal ones can sometimes stifle some people because they don't want to be seen as putting their head above the parapet, whereas if you just have a bit of an informal chat with someone you work with or someone more senior to you it tends to then grow and develop more organically as it hasn't been forced.'

4.6.2 Links to Theory

The themes categorised as formal can be identified as interpretive practices, and the themes identified as informal can be identified as intuiting practices, and are all sub-processes of strategic renewal in the development of emergent strategic initiatives (Floyd and Lane, 2000:118). Themes were divided into interpretive and intuitive aligned to the literature in Table 5.

Table 5: Middle Level Managers Practices linked to Literature References

Formal <i>Interpreting</i>	Literature Reference	Informal <i>Intuiting</i>	Literature Reference
Reports, briefings	Crossan and Berdrow, 2003.	Experiences, learnings	Crossan et al., 1999

Formal <i>Interpreting</i>	Literature Reference	Informal <i>Intuiting</i>	Literature Reference
Presentations	Kaplan, 2011;	Inertia	Huff et al., 1992
Meetings	Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Kaplan, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Whittington, 2006; Whittle et al., 2013.	Influencing	Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Wooldridge et al., 2008; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010
Workshops	Johnson et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2010; Heracleous and Jacobs, 2011	Understanding	Hoon, 2007; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Westley, 1990
Plans	Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011	Conversations	Maitlis, 2005; Sonenshein, 2006; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010; Balogun, et al., 2014
Project documents	Samra-Fredericks, 2010; Thomas et al., 2011; Vaara et al., 2010	Knowledge	Samra-Fredericks, 2005
		Symbolism	Gioia and Longenecker, 1994; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010

Formal <i>Interpreting</i>	Literature Reference	Informal <i>Intuiting</i>	Literature Reference
		Shaping	Weick et al., 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Smith et al., 2010;
		Socialising	Suominen and Mantere, 2010

Middle level managers continuously balance interpreting and intuiting:

MLM 15 *'Informally it is through my network so if I have a problem with something I will go to Asset Management, but it's the corridor conversations that actually have quite an effect whereas actually sitting down in a formal meeting very often it doesn't. I think this is because people are less defensive whereas when you are in a formal environment there is the need stick to an agenda you don't have time for casual conversation and I think when you are in a corridor you have done your social chit chat and then you say "have you thought about" or "I came across this situation and I'm sure we could do this better.'*

Informal practices appear to be more linked to *Exploration* in the context of strategic renewal (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003; Kwee et al., 2011; Lechner and Floyd, 2012). There also appears to be a strong element of drawing on the subconscious for sensemaking that precedes *intuiting*. Also a link between *exploration* and innovation – fun practices enable and drive creativity and innovative strategic thinking. There appears to be a link between knowledge-sharing and sensemaking, which emerges from a combination of practices, knowledge, attitudes and skills.

MLM 35 *'The informal ones are much more about the relationships you have with your senior management colleagues. It's the cup of coffee/ cigarette chat/ by the bike shed chat, those are often much stronger ones, it means you can plant a seed and watch it develop.'*

MLM 36 *'If you just have a bit of an informal chat with someone you work with or someone more senior to you it tends to then grow and develop more organically as it hasn't been forced.'*

This tension between exploitation (routine and repetition) and exploration (learning and change) was identified by March (1991). Recognising and managing the tension between exploration and exploitation is a "primary factor in system survival and prosperity" (March, 1991:71) and one of the critical challenges of strategic renewal (Crossan, Lane, and White, 1999). Although the tensions have been long recognised, there is little research that addresses the issue (Crossan and Hurst, 2006).

MLM 24 *'Again through being with the company for 15 years and seeing many, many change programmes, transformations or lots of trumpets and fanfares of we are going to do this different we are going to create this whole magical environment for you to work in and then to see it break down and filter off into nothing because there isn't sustainability in it.'*

MLM 28 *'Loads of things, absolutely loads of things to many you have to do this and you have to do that without adapting to the market environment. We spend a lot of time discussing internally without looking at it externally or how the client views us and we are in a market that is entirely reliant on its clients and how the client perceives us'.*

The next section contains an analysis of the data. The data have been differentiated by formal interpretive themes and informal intuitive themes, and analysed by industry sector, by function, by organisational size and type of strategic renewal, and by external and internal focus.

4.6.3 Formal Interpretive

Formal *Interpretive* Themes were evidenced (see Appendix 4) and identified linking back to the literature. Practices identified as formal and interpretive included reports and briefings (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003), meetings (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Kaplan, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Whittington, 2006; Whittle et al., 2013), workshops (Heracleous and Jacobs, 2011; Johnson et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2010), plans (Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011) and project documents (Samra-Fredericks, 2010, Thomas et al., 2011; Vaara et al., 2010). In addition a number of additional formal interpretive practices were identified including process mapping, benchmarking and intranets.

A total number of 287 Formal practices were identified, and are consistent amongst middle level managers in that they all demonstrate the same interpretive practices. Formal practices are those that are more exploitative practices as they are predominantly routine and repeated (March 1991).

MLM 22 *'We compile reports. It's analysing the work the team are doing, see how much they are actually doing, the organisation itself has loads and loads of reports that we can drill into and we can see exactly how the work is being done.'*

MLM 35 *'They didn't keep up to date with all the policies and procedures and the change in the market about how you sell. If they had been a bit more strategically aware they would have noticed that the rest of the Industry was moving away from direct selling and more to events selling (it was that door knocking that got them where they were). You need to be aware of what's in your market, what other people are doing, what's the regulatory impact, then what can I do.'*

4.6.4 Informal Intuitive

Informal *Intuitive* Themes were evidenced (see Appendix 5) linking back to the literature. Practices identified as informal and intuitive included experiences and learnings (Crossan et al., 1999), inertia (Huff et al., 1992), influencing (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Wooldridge et al., 2008; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010), understanding (Hoon, 2007; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Westley 1990), conversations (Balogun et al., 2014; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010; Sonenshein, 2006), knowledge (Samra-Fredericks, 2005), symbolism (Gioia and Longenecker, 1994; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010), shaping (Rouleau, 2005; Smith et al., 2010; Weick et al., 2005) and socialising (Suominen and Mantere, 2010). In addition a number of additional informal intuitive practices were identified including networking using social media, storytelling, building trust, team working, coaching, and instinct or a sense of knowing (gut feeling).

MLM 35 *'You can get a gut feel can't you?'*

MLM 19 *'I have to be honest there is the occasional grapevine which is always strong in any organisation that I have ever worked in, the informal mechanisms are often stronger than the formal on many occasions.'*

MLM 39 *'Informal is generally the way to find out and by having a decent network. You find out senior people have look outs all over the place and have their spies who feed through.'*

MLM 32 *'Through informal networks like quite frankly gossiping and through listening and hanging around where people are making tea in the kitchen and listening to what's going on, and through asking questions and being very challenging on occasion.'*

The informal intuitive practices evidenced are differentiated because they are unique to each middle level manager and are unique to each organisation as they are influenced by individual and collective background, skills and experience, in addition to motivating and enabling factors that are embedded within organisational culture. These mechanisms are more explorative as they are learning and change mechanisms (March, 1991). A total number of 471 informal practices were identified.

MLM 19 'I work from whatever the current term is, blue sky thinking, seeing what's changing and what's likely to change in the future and where we should position ourselves. I back that up with soft intelligence talking to people and the movers and shakers within various organisations, understanding where they are moving to strategically and how we can position ourselves.'

4.6.5 Findings by Sector

In order to understand whether industry influenced causal mechanisms, and whether there was any variance, the data was analysed by industry sector. Table 6 shows findings for each sector within the sample. Where there was more than one middle level manager in a sector the average was used; the number of references in each theme per middle level manager were aggregated and then averaged to give a mean number of references.

The strongest emergent finding in this study is the high number of informal strategic sensemaking practices engaged in by middle level managers across most sectors. Informal sensemaking and sensegiving practices are more valued and used more frequently, and in many cases twice as much as than formal practices. The exception is in the public sector, where formal practices for sensemaking and sensegiving are more common, and this might be expected in a highly regulated environment with command and control leadership styles.

Table 6: Industry Sectors and Themes

Sector	BSI	IF	EF	EXP	EP	I	SMP	SGP	E	M	EI	CSF	ESI	F	INF
Social Housing	4	1	0.4	1	2	1.4	8	5	2	2	3	1	0.2	9	16
Utility	5	0	1	3	0	2	12	8	5	1	4	2	0	9	23
Police	4	0	2	2	1	1	13	10	7	6	4	1	1	8	28
Insurance	9	2	2	5	4	2	26	6	4	2	8	0	3	15	23
Travel	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	5	4	4	3	0	2	4	16
Pharmaceutical	13	1	3	12	0	7	80	7	13	5	19	1	17	11	69
Outsourcing PFI	2	3	2	0	0	3	5	6	3	1	3	1	1	9	13
Consulting	8	0.4	1	3	1	2	39	6	12	6	8	2	3	11	32
IS	5	2	1	4	4	2	10	7	4	3	4	1	1	17	29
Defence	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	3	0	1	0	0	9	5

Key to table headings - Appendix 3. SMP and SGP are split into higher-level sensemaking and sensegiving.

MLM 14 ‘We have a lot of off record chats, to be able to achieve off record dialogue you have to really understand your relationship with your management and managers so that’s part of building a good team and being part of a good team is actually understanding your influencers, your blockers and all other types of people we have in it, and have a good sense for the people you work with. By that it is having enough sense to know what is good to be spoken about off record and how candid can you be, with most cases with my manager I am very candid and we speak about quite heavy things in reference to where we see strategic things working and not working.’

There are more middle level manager sensemaking practices than sensegiving practices across all sectors. Whilst there is a link between high levels of informal sensemaking practices and strategic renewal across all sectors, there are particularly high numbers of sensemaking practices in the insurance industry, pharmaceutical industry and consultancy industry, where the external environment is highly competitive and the need for engagement in strategic renewal is strong.

'Specifically I think we have a very strong customer feedback loop and we also have outside businesses that actually test how our customers use our websites and things like that, that active role of gathering data on our behaviour forms up how we start to understand how to form our marketing strategy.' MLM Insurance

'If there is a requirement to change anything because it is not working or because we need to improve something or it is down to lessons learnt and we need to change our approach, then there is a good reason for that change.' MLM Pharmaceutical

'Well we meet in the pub after work and chat! It's about when you come into the office, I am not in the office that often so when you see someone you haven't seen or a peer you say let's go out for a coffee for 20 minutes , so that 20 minutes is a good informal way to chat and catch up and talk about change'. MLM Consultancy

'What we have is a management knowledge tube where we store all the deliverables. We also have escapes four times a year- we go away somewhere and share with each other what we have done and what we have learned'. MLM Consultancy

One anomaly in the findings is the more extreme results from the middle level manager in the pharmaceutical industry. This may be because there was only one interviewee in this sector. However this particular middle level manager is a home worker and is not embedded in an organisation; therefore they draw heavily on their skills, experience and influences as well as extremely high levels of sensemaking and exploration practices that result in high levels of emergent strategic initiatives.

'I learnt through my own errors that you are not to do that in this industry.' MLM Pharmaceutical

'There is no blame, it is just purely about addressing things that may not have happened in the past but what we are going to have to do is put it right now.' MLM Pharmaceutical

'It is all about being able to address the lessons learnt in the sensible way, but making sure we know going forward what the right policy is and not to mix, to make sure people get a clear understanding of what they are supposed to be doing, some of it is they have learnt too much in a short time and they have forgotten what they were supposed to do in the first place.' MLM Pharmaceutical

'Also some of the time you have to retrospectively go back and look as well. Now what we are addressing is we have found things recently but we are now trying to understand how big an issue it is.' MLM Pharmaceutical

'I am very remote... currently there have been weekends where I have spent the entire weekend with that thought of something that is going on at work, really preventing me from even watching a television programme because I can't concentrate on looking at a television programme because there is a problem going on at work that I am trying to resolve and trying to work out how to find the answer. And invariably by the end of the weekend I have sussed it out somewhere along the line but it might be four o'clock in the morning where I wake up and go, I know what to do now.' MLM Pharmaceutical

The high level of change reflects a high level of emotional management. There is also evidence of the importance of enablers for high levels of sensemaking as an antecedent mechanism for strategic renewal. The link between drawing on background, skills, influences and the need for an enabling environment for sensemaking is strongest in the Pharmaceutical and Consultancy sectors.

There are slightly more exploration practices, such as networking:

'Part of my approach to my role is about networking. I have a pretty extensive network within the organisation and also outside the organisation. I make a conscious effort to speak to people in other areas of the business.' MLM 29;

than there are exploitation practices such as recombining:

'Just from listening and knowing when something works well or doesn't work well – there is a big change in everything at the moment so if it's not broken why try and fix it. So we look back and think that worked well so why try and change it. It's trial and error really and bringing things we did previously back into the picture'. MLM 41

at similar levels across industry with the exception of the Insurance and IS sector. Internal and external influences are relatively similar. Events also occur at a similar level, the highest being in Pharmaceutical and no events at all were identified in Travel or the MoD. Varying motivational factors were found across all industries apart from the MoD.

4.6.6 Findings by Function

In the next section the data was analysed by the business functions that the middle level managers worked in to see if there were any variances due to functional area.

Table 7 shows findings by function. Where there was more than one middle level manager in a function the average was used. Numbers have usually been rounded up or down; however fractions have been used where the number has been less than one to illustrate that there was some evidence, albeit limited.

Table 7: Functions and Themes

Function	BSI	IF	EF	EXP	EP	I	SMP	SGP	E	M	EI	CSF	ESI	F	INF
Operations	3	0.3	0.2	2	2	1	7	5	2	1	3	1	0.2	7	13
Facilities Mgmt	3	2	1	3	3	2	5	5	3	3	2	1	1	9	16
Finance	9	1	1	4	1	2	25	6	5	2	8	1	3	9	23
HR	5	1	1	0	1	2	10	7	4	3	3	1	0	9	20
Planning	2	0.3	0.3	1	1	1	5	2	1	1	1	0.3	0	5	10
Customer Service	5	0	1	1	1	3	11	6	4	3	3	0.3	0.3	7	18
IS	5	2	1	3	4	2	10	7	4	3	4	1	1	16	18
Project Consultants	9	1	1	5	1	3	51	7	14	7	10	2	3	10	41
Internal Project Mgmt	5	1	0.2	2	0.3	1	10	4	3	3	3	1	1	10	14

Project managers were differentiated between those employed on a consultancy basis, external actors, and those employed directly, internal actors. A similar pattern emerges when looking at findings across functions. More informal sensemaking practices than formal practices and the importance of middle level manager’s informal sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic renewal are present. More formal practices are evident in IS middle level managers.

MLM 19 *‘I have to be honest there is the occasional grapevine which is always strong in any organisation that I have ever worked in, the informal mechanisms are often stronger than the formal on many occasions.’*

MLM 41 *‘In terms of the business side of things it’s more informal, which is quite good I think and also more immediate / flexible because of that. Whereas IS have to be a bit more formal.’*

Again there are more sensemaking practices than sensegiving practices, with the highest incidence in Programme Managers who are more engaged with the external environment. Motivating factors are highest

for this function too, as are exploration practices, whilst being similar across all other middle level managers.

MLM 8 'The perspectives, and experiences, and knowledge and challenges you face on the client side, and the variety of client sites that you then face inevitably give you a lot more perspective on strategizing internally than you would normally get if you were only internally faced.'

Middle level managers in programme management and finance demonstrate more sensemaking practices than those in other functions; however the overall findings are consistent with findings by industry sector in the importance of informal sensemaking practices.

4.6.7 Findings by Size and Change Type

Table 8 shows findings based on organisational size: micro firms, where there were less than ten employees; small enterprises where there were less than 50 employees; medium enterprises with between 50 and 249 employees; and large firms with 250 employees and more, as classified by the EU (Curran and Blackburn, 2001), and global for multi-national organisations. The strategic renewal type is based on four trajectories of industry change (McGahon, 2008) dependent on threats to core activities or core assets: Radical change where everything is under threat; Creative change where the industry is constantly redeveloping assets and resources; Intermediating change where relationships are fragile as activities are threatened; and Progressive change where incremental testing is implemented and adapts to feedback (McGahon, 2008).

The anomaly again is the large organisation undergoing radical change which is a defence organisation in the public sector in that formal interpretive practices are more prevalent than informal intuitive practices, and no emergent strategic initiatives are identified. All the

Table 8: Findings based on Size and Strategic Renewal Type

Size	Strategic Renewal Type	BSI	IF	EF	EXP	EP	I	SMP	SGP	E	M	EI	CSF	ESI	F	INF
Medium	Radical	6	1	1	4	1	3	34	5	12	5	8	2	3	9	30
Large	Radical	7	1	0	3	0	5	15	3	11	1	4	1	1	16	18
Large	Radical	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	3	0	1	0	0	9	5
Global	Creative	13	1	3	12	0	7	80	7	13	5	19	1	17	11	69
Micro	Intermediating	5	1	0	3	2	1	9	6	3	4	5	0	1	13	18
Small	Intermediating	12	1	0	3	0	0	35	7	11	6	10	2	3	12	28
Large	Intermediating	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	5	4	4	3	0	2	4	16
Large	Progressive	4	1	0	1	2	1	8	5	3	2	3	1	0.2	9	16
Global	Progressive	2	3	2	0	0	3	5	6	3	0	0	1	1	9	13
Global	Progressive	9	1	2	5	5	2	26	6	4	2	8	0	3	15	23

Key – see Appendix 3.

other organisations, irrespective of size and type of strategic renewal show the same pattern with more informal practices identified. The only organisation going through creative change evidences the highest level of sensemaking and the highest level of emergent strategic initiatives. High levels of sensemaking were identified in the medium size organisation going through radical change, the small organisation going through intermediating change and the global organisation going through progressive change.

4.6.8 Findings by Level

Middle level managers are those managers in an organisation that give and receive direction (Stoker, 2006); and they work between the outer edge of an organisation and the inner edge (Mintzberg, 1996), and they work at various levels in an organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). In this section the data was analysed by the different levels at which the middle level managers worked.

Table 9 shows findings based on Middle Level Managers' levels being the number of levels below the CEO at which the manager worked (Dulewicz and Herbert, 1999).

Table 9: Analysis by Middle Management Level

Level	BSI	IF	EF	EXP	EP	I	SMP	SGP	E	M	EI	CSF	ESI	F	INF
Level 1	8	1	1	2	2	1	23	8	7	4	7	2	2	14	24
Level 2	6	1	1	4	1	4	32	6	10	4	8	2	2	9	31
Level 3	4	0.5	0.3	2	2	1	8	5	3	3	3	1	0.2	9	16
Level 4	5	1	0.4	2	2	2	11	5	4	3	3	1	1	10	17
Level 5	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	3	0	1	0	0	9	5

Key - see Appendix 3.

Again the findings support the greater use of informal practices at all levels of middle level managers, however levels 1 and 2 draw on their experience more and demonstrate significantly more sensemaking practices than levels 3, 4 and 5. Levels 1 and 2 are very similar, with the same levels across the causal themes, and the same levels of emergent strategic initiatives. Levels 3 and 4 also show similarities across all causal themes but in reduced references. However there is significant variance at level 5, which shows very low levels of strategic practices across all causal themes and of these more are formal mechanisms than informal mechanisms.

'A lot of my strategic work comes from my intuition; I can read intuitively into lots of situations. A lot of it is about reading people, reading information and piecing together in quite a complex way, all the things, interconnections between the different information.' MLM Level 1

It's kind of that influencing, that talking, that sowing the seeds, telling stories...yeah, it's going to be a year to two years...and we're not going to get it right, we're going to make mistakes you know...'. MLM Level 3

4.6.9 Findings by External and Internal Focus

In this section the data is analysed by whether the middle level manager is an internal actor or external actor (Jarzabkowski, 2004).

The final analysis is to see if there is any variance in causal mechanisms between middle level managers that are working in external environments, extra-organisational actors shaping strategy praxis (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Sminia, 2005) and those working internally within the same organisations – Table 10. This would indicate that middle level managers that are also external actors are more engaged with the strategic renewal process than middle level managers who are solely internal actors. There is a demonstrable link between three times as many sensemaking practices and three times as many emergent strategic initiatives, and again, consistent with

Table 10: Findings by External and Internal Actors

Focus	BSI	IF	EF	EXP	EP	I	SMP	SGP	E	M	EI	CSF	ESI	F	INF
External	7	1	1	3	1	2	32	5	10	5	7	2	3	11	29
Internal	4	1	1	2	2	2	12	6	3	2	3	1	0.2	11	18

findings across all middle level managers higher levels of informal mechanisms. This is a clear differentiation. There are also more motivating factors and enablers for external actors.

'Everybody can genuinely feel that they have an influence on that. And certainly I do, having been around from the start when our strategy was, you know, we wrote it on a blank piece of paper. The first one we-

we sort of wrote up on a-, on a big wall in-, in the French Alps and-, and covered it in post-it notes'. MLM External

'Many of my colleagues have a real bearing on-, on strategy, both the kind of tangible strategy and also the kind of, you know, informal cultural side which-, which for us is-, is very important and retaining the right-, the right talent' . MLM External

'I have invested quite a lot emotionally to some extent in the organisation thus far so I kind of care where it goes in the future and I feel that things I have said in the past have helped to contribute to how the organisation has changed'. MLM External

4.7 Summary of Findings

The strength of engagement with strategic renewal appears to be not only linked to the more informal practices but also to the level of interaction with the external environment as a pattern emerges from the initial analysis. Those middle level managers who are engaged extensively with the external environment demonstrate more informal sensemaking practices and greater causality for emergent strategic initiatives than those internally focused. The combination of experience and knowledge and external sensemaking could be seen as sub-processes of intuiting (Floyd and Lane, 2000) and emerging sensemaking (Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2010, 2007).

MLM 7 'If I only engaged with a single environment you'd have less experience and therefore your skills and abilities to influence change would grow more slowly...so engaging with external environments....bringing it back into a single environment...it's quite powerful.'

MLM 5 'Everything we say and we do is born from our experience of delivering change and transformation in complex environments. The interaction with our external environment is very influential on how the organisation moves forward...so we bring that experience to bear on our strategy...'

External influences were contingent mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992) and were referenced predominantly by those middle level managers who had high levels of interaction with the external environment, and insight gained from exposure to different sources of knowledge.

Those middle level managers who had low levels of interaction with the external environment had low levels of external influence, but conversely had more internal influences, which could be described as conditions (Sayer, 2000). Internal influences were common to all middle level managers across all contexts, and were mechanisms based on communication, informal and formal communication at an individual level, and formal communication at an organisational level.

MLM 14 'When you are in middle management you have to have a lot of trust in the people you have above you to work toward your goal and vice versa. If you don't feel that you can ask the Director to ask about why our project is stalling or why was funding pulled, why is a business or Director being obstructive? And you don't get an honest answer then I feel that this will send up the emotional hackles.'

MLM 13 'We have an internal news reel on our intranet's one main area; otherwise it's just listening to the gossip which is a really powerful mechanism. The informal communication is always more honest.'

Middle level managers who had more internal influences were more strongly involved with managing emotions, whereas middle level

managers who had more external influences were more strongly involved with sensemaking practices resulting in more emergent strategic initiatives.

Issues as causal mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1978; Crawford and Wright, 2011) were also predominantly internal issues. The internal issues were often relatively small but caused high levels of frustration amongst the middle level managers. Frustrations, and a build-up of shared frustrations, appeared to be a strong causal mechanism for informal sensemaking amongst middle level managers.

MLM 27 'The challenge I have is when I have a line manager that doesn't /is not willing to be as open or honest as I am with my staff, and I do like to discuss things and understand the detail and that does make it more frustrating I think.'

MLM 28 'Frustration....with loads of things...too many. We spend a lot of time discussing internally without looking at it externally or how the client views us and we are in a market that is entirely reliant on its clients and how the client perceives us.'

MLM 21 'I think we handled it very poorly at the beginning we launched into a consultation without really thinking through deliverability of that, what are the implications to then backtrack'.

Events within the external environment tended to be large issues that the organisations and the middle level managers had to react to and were causal mechanisms that could force emergent strategic initiatives.

MLM 35 'If you don't do something when legislation is changed you can get anything up to a 10% turn over fine e.g. FFE 10.5 million (fine- is very current), that was because they didn't keep up to date with all the

policies and procedures and the change in the market about how you sell.'

MLM 22 *'At the moment the situation in the external environment is going to get worse before it gets better so I think everyone is desperate to stop things escalating too far.'*

Enablers and constraints play a key role in enhancing or inhibiting sensemaking (83 references). Motivating factors (74 references) are particularly important as they are potentially causal or contingent mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992) and could be the most important characteristics of adaptive organisations (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

MLM 35 *'If you care about what you do and you care about the people that work for you, you have to be able to influence strategy to make sure that one the company is heading in the direction that you feel comfortable with and two the people that are working for you; you can actually communicate that strategy in a passionate way because it's a strategy you believe in.'*

Essential conditions of reality that must exist for intuiting and sensemaking to be possible (Crawford and Wright, 2011) include time to reflect, or thinking space.

MLM 4 *'Personally reflect on what's happening.'*

MLM 7 *'Processing it through my brain'.*

MLM 9 *'I always make a general reflection on how I feel and I can reflect for the future...stopping time to reflect'.*

MLM 27 'Being able to have time to think, I do have quite a creative process around strategy and I have to put myself into different environmental situations in order to try and stimulate that creative intuitive side of me. Being in the country side is a means for me to thinking about bigger picture issues.'

An appropriate organisational culture is an essential condition of reality (Crawford and Wright, 2011) and is a key enabler or a constraint, and this can be linked to size (Mintzberg, 1979), leadership behaviours (Higgs and Rowland, 2005, 2011), and type of change (McGahon, 2009). Organisational politics, including those of middle level managers as part of influencing, will impact on culture and sensemaking (Hope, 2010); however whilst acknowledging power and politics adds levels of complexity, political practices as causal mechanisms have remained out of scope. The word politics was only referenced 14 times contextually and therefore it was not seen to be a major component.

MLM 19 'It is a very exciting environment, it is one that drives the fact that nothing is impossible we are always looking for the ability on how to do something as opposed to that can't be done.'

MLM 32 'Leadership and culture are absolutely critical'

MLM 23 'Encouragement from leadership and a positive can do culture with acceptance of managed risk taking.'

MLM 28 'We have an organisation that likes to think it drives success and in actual fact it is such a politically governed environment that if anything, every single entity spends its life putting hurdles in everyone's way.'

MLM 30 'Too many layers, bureaucracy which is a huge limitation.'

Other enablers identified included:

- i) shared mind-set;
- ii) demonstrable opportunities;
- iii) a competitive environment of continuous improvement;
- iv) self-awareness;
- v) accountability;
- vi) learning culture;
- vii) Diversity;
- viii) attitude;
- ix) success;
- x) change as usual;
- xi) good Information Systems;
- xii) emotional attachment.

MLM 6 *'And again going back to that emotional investment I have invested thus far so I don't want to walk away from it; The emotional attachment.'*

Constraints identified included lack of diversity creating strong bonds but restricting innovation and inhibiting growth, short-term financial drivers causing issues if prioritised over long-term strategy, perception or reality of secrets, blame culture and group think that can build stress and emotion.

Managing emotion (82 references) linked to internal factors and sensemaking and sensegiving mechanisms were common across middle level managers in all contexts. Managing fear is a key practice, as is managing resistance which is associated with fear. Middle level managers recognised issues and built trust, with strong informal sensemaking being central to managing emotions.

MLM 35 *'In the nicest possible way, the inertia you can probably deal with in a different way but the distrusters and people who are saying*

we're not going to change and we're going to be quite vocal about that – they are the ones you need to get to quite quickly and nip in the bud, because they are the ones who are normally the influencers in their group. Every organisation usually knows who they .are'

MLM 27 'A lot of the big things that I do is I often try to make it quite personal particularly with my direct reports and I am very open with them about saying no, change is difficult and recognising that everyone reacts to it differently.'

MLM 24 'We gather a lot of information and get a lot of resistance to change people think they are open to change but they are not.'

MLM 11 'I guess its being able to read individuals and understand what makes them fear or resist or be committed and sort of tailoring your approach to those individuals and how they work.'

Exploration (learning and change) and exploitation (routine and repetition) practices (March, 1991) were balanced across most contexts with exploration practices being more prevalent in creative strategic renewal and amongst programme managers with an external focus.

Middle level managers in all contexts evidenced more sensemaking practices (253) than sensegiving practices (164) with an informal bias found in both mechanisms. Sensemaking practices were linked to intuiting (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003) as there was a strong element of drawing on the subconscious for sensemaking that precedes intuiting and exploration (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

MLM 13 'I would as an activity just think'.

MLM 14 *'I actually look around at people; I actually look to see how Directors are how often their doors are open and how often their doors are closed.'*

MLM 15 *'It's actually networking that's how I find out most about what's going on.'*

MLM 18 *'We meet on and off site to work through ideas.'*

MLM 27 *'A lot of my strategic work comes from intuition. I can read intuitively into lots of situations.'*

Sensegiving was found in both informal and formal practices and was more aligned to interpreting (Crossan and Berdrow, 2003). Sensegiving was also used by middle level managers as an internal influencing practice.

MLM 14 *'By role modelling, I think the most important thing you can do if you believe in something is to actually role model it.'*

MLM 15 *'I have influence but I haven't got power and sometimes people don't get the difference.'*

MLM 41 *'It might be stories about things of what not to do, actually very much it's about telling stories, I am a genuine believer in the story and the power of it and taking people with you – when I present I tend to use that story structure, a bit more informal, rather than bombarding people with facts and jargon.'*

MLM 13 *'First of all you establish how they are going to be impacted and then you need to explain to them the reasons behind it, being very straight and honest.'*

MLM 34 *'We write reports for our boards or people that we talk to who are senior stakeholders as we have done through the course of the change programme here, so that you provide the information and try and influence the change basically.'*

A high level of complexity (Bhaskar, 1989) is apparent within the sensemaking actions, and many are inter-related and inter-dependent, across all 12 themes which have been actually found (Archer, 1995), and divided into formal exploitive and informal intuitive change domains.

4.8 Key Findings

The proposed model in Figure 10 gives a summary of the key findings of this study. Informal practices appear to have greater causality of emergent strategic initiatives within the exploration sub-process of strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) and more sensemaking practices were found in middle level managers with the closest proximity to the external environment, linking directly to an increase in emergent strategic initiatives.

MLM 7 *'Well I guess in a way kind of everything that you do should be kind of forming it because even those little tiny conversations you are having are giving some view about what the markets doing or the company is doing, so what you need to be responding to'.*

MLM 1 *'To stop people becoming too rigid in what they're doing and to be very open to their external environment is incredibly important'.*

MLM 1 *'I think you've got to maintain a lively interest in the external environment, both within your sector and within society as a whole so that you can see where trends are going.'*

MLM 11 *'I think that actually because I am in the middle in some respects, I am actually in the doing bit of the business so when you actually create things and have to implement them you get a lot of realism so as opposed to theoretically trying to work out where a customer wants to be I can actually commission work to see where a customer wants to be and then I can influence on how we actually strategically and tactically deploy a change to meet the customers or business needs'.*

MLM 6 *'and it's really exciting and challenging and you learn so I think it's about your future - so to be part of shaping your future and the rest of the firm is really exciting.'*

Middle level managers who spent most of their time interacting with the external environment were more exposed to ideas and knowledge that stimulated divergent thinking; informal practices being the strongest vehicle for sensemaking.

MLM 7 *'If I only engaged with a single environment you'd have less experience and therefore your skills and abilities to influence change would grow more slowly...so engaging with external environments...bringing it back into a single environment...it's quite powerful.'*

In addition, almost 30 critical success factors for strategic renewal were identified during the analysis. These have been aggregated into four strategic renewal success structures, (see Figure 12), which appear to have to exist in order for causal mechanisms to be realised through emergent strategic initiatives. These four structures that appear to be critical to strategic renewal are Leadership, Culture, Knowledge and Middle Level Managers Sensemaking.

Leadership	Culture
Drive Credibility Trust Team building	Shared values Open and honest Thinking space Flexible
Knowledge	Middle Level Manager Sensemaking
Continuous improvement Sharing knowledge	Informal social processes Networks Influence

Figure 12: Identified Critical Success Factors for Causality in Strategic Renewal. Source: Author.

In the next chapter these findings, that informal mechanisms appear to be important to middle level managers' sensemaking and strategic renewal, are discussed. What has been drawn from these findings, contributions to theory, methodology and practice, the limitations of this study, and implications for practice and future research are also addressed.

5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion

Research has increasingly shown growing evidence of the importance of middle level managers' activities in influencing strategy (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007), and particularly strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000) which is arguably the most critical strategizing (Melin, 2007). The findings of the research in this thesis should contribute to developing a greater understanding of the impact of middle level managers on strategic renewal actions, particularly exploitation and exploration (Mom et al., 2007).

In this research the aim is to understand the causality of strategic renewal through the sensemaking 'actions' of middle level managers. It is also from the researcher's sensemaking perspective an opportunity to not just 'apply' a theoretical perspective but to contribute, to extend, modify or reshape a particular perspective (Hacking, 2000).

The examination of the strategic practices of middle level managers has only recently started gaining momentum (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Hoon, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). Studies that have actually involved middle level managers have mainly been based on their strategic implementation roles in top driven change (Ahearne, Lam and Kraus, 2014; Canales, 2013; Conway and Monks, 2011; Huy, 2012) or sensemaking roles during strategic change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Hope, 2010; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2011). Pappas and Wooldridge's (2007) study on middle level managers identified relationships between network centrality and divergent activity. In general though, despite so many calls for understanding the role of middle level managers in strategic renewal, the focus in that domain of the literature has remained with the

top team (Kwee et al., 2011). Reference to middle level managers has been made in relation to group studies (Lechner and Floyd, 2012; Lechner et al., 2010).

In the Strategy-as-practice field of research which continues to expand (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd and Bourque, 2010), there has been a trend towards the study of organisations through a discursive lens (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Fenton and Langley, 2011; Hardy et al., 2000; Hendry, 2000; Kwon et al., 2009; Mantere and Vaara, 2008; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011; Vaara, 2010; Vaara et al., 2004, 2010). This trend continues with studies on power and discourse (Carter, Clegg and Kornberger, 2008; Hardy and Thomas, 2013), top team strategizing (Kwon, Clarke and Wodak, 2014), and strategic sensemaking (Abdallah and Langley, 2014; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Kaplan, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011; Whittington, 2006). Relatively rare though are explorations of the role of emotion in strategy-as-discourse (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Liu and Maitlis, 2014; Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2004) and balancing tensions and the management of paradoxes (Dameron and Torset, 2014).

The future state for Strategy-as-practice literature is defined in a review of the existing literature focusing on six major bodies of discursive scholarship: post-structural, critical discourse analysis, narrative, rhetoric, conversation analysis, and metaphor (Balogun, et al., 2014). Balogun et al., (2014) suggest that future discourse studies have the potential to integrate understanding of strategizing across theoretical domains of sensemaking, power and sociomateriality. Liu and Maitlis (2014) have a core focus on the sociomaterial nature of displayed emotions but linked to sensemaking. Abdallah and Langley (2014) and Kwon et al., (2014) have a core focus on sensemaking with links to power and subjectivity. Dameron and Torset's (2014) core focus is subjectivity with a link to sensemaking. Hardy and Thomas' (2013) core

focus is on power bringing together subjectivity and sociomateriality. The future direction of Strategy-as-practice appears to be to connect discourse studies to other strategizing practices (Balogun et al., 2014), building on calls by Fenton and Langley (2011) to consolidate linkages and explore them more deeply as a contribution to understanding the practices of strategy.

This apparent shift away from a focus on middle level managers, would explain why there are fewer emergent studies in the literature, however, there still remain many calls in the literature to be answered (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Huy, 2002; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009). The complexity of strategic renewal continues to pose many unanswered questions (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Volberda et al., 2001). Therefore this thesis contributes to the literature and to creating a greater understanding of the criticality of middle level managers to initiating, driving and delivering strategies that contribute to organisational performance.

5.2 Research Questions and Contributions to the Literature

This chapter discusses results in relation to the core research questions.

5.2.1 How does a middle level manager's experience and organisational positioning influence their strategic capability?

The findings answered the calls in the literature for more understanding of middle level managers' external and internal influences in different contexts (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1991; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) as well as how middle level managers' experience and positioning in terms of proximity to the external environment increases the probability of strategic activity (Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005).

The findings from this study evidenced that middle level managers in different industry and functional contexts drew heavily on their background, skills and experience to inform their sensemaking. Experiential factors were found to give rise to actual practices (Crawford and Wright, 2011) of sensemaking, which were found to be causal mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1989) within the exploration sub-process of strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

These factors were stronger in those middle level managers in positions closer to the top team and also in those who worked in boundary spanning positions with extensive exposure to external influences. These findings are consistent with existing research showing boundary-spanning managers to be more strategically active than their non-boundary spanning counterparts (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). They also provide evidence that organisational positioning influences the practices of middle level managers, as proposed by Regner (2003). Middle level managers who spent most of their time working in the external environment and in multi-contexts were most likely to be involved in sensemaking activities that drive strategic initiatives. Those middle level managers who were more experienced and in higher level positions were also highly likely to be involved in the development of strategic initiatives, whereas in contrast, those middle level managers who were positioned at lower levels with arguably less experience to draw on were less likely to be involved in the development of strategic initiatives. Middle level managers in middle and lower positions and embedded internally were still involved in sensemaking, but were more involved in sensegiving practices, primarily managing emotions (Huy, 2002).

External experiences and internal influences, which will be dependent on and are inter-related to organisational position, clearly affect middle level manager's sensemaking practices. Strategic sensemaking occurs

through the ability of middle level managers referring to a complex mosaic of underlying knowledge (Samra-Fredericks, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007) built out of these experiences and influences. Findings show that it is through sensemaking activities that strategic initiatives emerge. This elaborates on existing theory on middle level managers contributing to different change outcomes in different change contexts (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011) and specifically strategic renewal (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007).

These findings also contribute to the literature, as we can see higher levels of sensemaking and causality of strategic initiatives amongst middle level managers who are closest to the external environment, and we can see higher levels of sensegiving and managing of emotions and resistance to change initiatives in middle level managers whose focus is internal. This would suggest that causal mechanisms for strategic renewal initiatives within an organisation start with sensemaking interaction with the external environment. This is in line with views that change occurs at the periphery or the edge of a system (Regner, 2003; Rouleau, 2005; Sammut-Bonnici and Wensley, 2002; Wheatley, 1993). Then, internally middle level managers use sensegiving to influence the sensemaking and construction of meaning of others towards a preferred redefinition of organisational reality (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) and shape the way in which the members of an organisation give meaning to specific events or changes (Smith et al., 2010). In contrast to studies that have shown sensegiving as a social strategy to guard against change (Drori and Ellis, 2011) these findings elaborate on the work that has already been done on sensegiving as a social process in support of change (Maitlis, 2005; Weick et al., 2005).

As we also see high levels of sensemaking relating to emergent strategic initiatives in middle level managers in higher levels within the organisation, it could be argued that these middle level managers are

the most likely to share sensemaking with their respective top teams and therefore could be subject to senior management 'sense fixing' and leadership influencing from the top of the organisation (Higgs and Rowland, 2005, 2011). This is also in line with arguments that sensegiving reflects leaders' and stakeholders' varied interests (Drori and Ellis, 2011; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007).

5.2.2 What motivates middle level managers to contribute to a firm's strategic renewal?

This research has evidenced that middle level managers' sensemaking activities are causal mechanisms for a firm's strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011), and that this is dependent on experience and organisational positioning in different contexts (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Findings relating to other dependencies involved in middle level managers' strategizing also answer calls for further insight into what enables and constrains middle level managers' strategizing (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Guth and Macmillan, 1986; Fenton-O'Creevy, 1998; Westley, 1990) and what are their motivating factors. Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) indicated that motivating factors were of particular importance.

It emerged that enabling factors, for example, were motivating factors, and that constraints, for example, were demotivating factors; this was consistent across all contexts. The social context of the firm provided the most motivating factors; feelings and emotional attachment motivated middle level managers' strategizing activities, which is in line with the strategy as practice view of strategy as a situated socially accomplished activity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). Social motivation would appear to be consistent with Floyd and Lane's (2000) view that strategic renewal is an intensely social process. Motivating factors that are socially situated would also be consistent with sensemaking as a

social process of constructing and reconstructing meaning (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). The social process of sensegiving (Drori and Ellis, 2011; Maitlis, 2005; Weick et al., 2005) could also be socially motivated.

Linking to social motivating factors, sensegiving mechanisms of middle level managers in this study have included managing and balancing emotions across different contexts, answering calls in the literature (Huy, 2002; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009), and identifying managing emotions as a strategically important sensegiving practice. Managing emotions was seen to centre on managing resistance, or viewed another way, as managing others' ambivalence (Piderit, 2000) and sensemaking (Balogun, 2006; Conway and Monks, 2011). Huy (2010) contends that social-emotional factors have been overlooked in the strategic change literature and empirical research has under examined how emotions influence strategic outcomes. Emotions can provide valuable information that facilitates sensemaking (Maitlis et al., 2010; Sonenshein, 2009). Social-emotional factors in motivating and enabling causal mechanisms of sensemaking could also explain why one of the most interesting and contributory findings of this study is the greater importance of informal practices in driving emergent strategic initiatives within the strategic renewal sub-process of exploration (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Motivational enabling factors were more evident in more commercial and dynamic organisational contexts than in the public sector type organisations which were inherently bureaucratic. The situated context or culture of the organisation enabled or constrained middle level managers' strategizing depending on how emotionally attached to the organisation they felt. Therefore the context for middle management strategizing will have an influence on the outcome (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). A culture of shared values, norms and beliefs, open

communication, and behaviours that support innovation was very motivational and engendered commitment. This could be expected, as sensemaking is a collective-based process which is socially constructed with people (Allard-Poesi, 2005) and can only be developed with others in joint action (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007). Emotional attachment supports commitment which serves as a foundation for sensemaking (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). It is apparent that socio-cultural context is important to middle level managers' sensemaking (Rouleau, 2005) and builds on previous work on understanding interpretive practices based on socio-cultural knowledge (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007).

It was also evident that diversity within the organisational culture in which the middle level managers were situated increased divergent activity and innovation. A multilevel analyses of innovative behaviours in teams with different levels of diversity showed that heterogeneous teams tend to have perceived high levels of goal and task interdependence which related to positive innovative behaviours, as opposed to more homogenous teams (Van der Vegt and Janssen, 2003). There is also a view that the value of external influence or knowledge sharing, which has already been evidenced in this study as a strong causal mechanism for strategic renewal, also increases when work groups or social networks are more diverse (Cummings, 2004).

Findings indicate that the more bureaucratic cultures and blame cultures more commonly associated with command and control leaderships and the public sector were found to constrain strategizing because of the lower emotional attachment and stress-related emotions. Sensemaking and sensegiving practices in more bureaucratic contexts were more formal than informal, which led to lower levels of emergent strategic initiatives, if any. In these contexts where more formal practices are managed, sensegiving proves to be an effective control strategy (Drori and Ellis, 2011) and tends to preserve the status quo, inhibiting middle level managers strategizing behaviour.

The clear link between managing emotions and motivations within the sensegiving and sensegiving cycles would indicate that both emotions and motivations are important enablers of and constraints to middle level managers' sensemaking and the strategic renewal process (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Huy, 2011; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau, 2005). This supports Floyd and Wooldridge's (2000) view of the importance of motivational factors in driving strategic renewal, and calls in the literature to develop increased awareness of the importance of managing emotions to achieve change and renewal (Huy, 2011; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009).

5.2.3 What are middle level managers' sensemaking practices within the strategic renewal process?

The findings indicate that middle level managers' sensemaking practices, the rich process by which people give meaning to experience and the creation of individual and cognitive frameworks through which they are able to learn and predict (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau, 2005) are causal mechanisms for emergent strategic initiatives, and middle level managers' sensegiving practices influence (Weick et al., 2005) the legitimacy and embedding of these initiatives. Both activities are inter-related and evidence sensemaking practices of middle level managers as antecedents to exploitation and exploration sub-processes of strategic renewal, answering calls in the literature (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011).

In understanding and identifying the sensemaking practices of middle level managers as strategic actors (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington et al., 2003) what emerged from this study was the importance of informal sensemaking practices rather than formal practices in the causality of strategic initiatives. Strategic initiatives, defined as proactive, temporary

group undertakings intended to create economic value for the firm (Burgelman, 1991; Lechner, Frankenburger, and Floyd, 2010; Lovas and Ghoshal, 2000) have become an important focal point in the study of strategic renewal (Lechner and Floyd, 2012). It also emerged that exploration and exploitation practices were balanced in relation to emergent initiatives across different contexts with the exception of the organisation going through creative strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). Informal sensemaking was strongly linked to exploration, and formal sensemaking was strongly linked to exploitation.

These emergent findings that informal sensemaking is important to the successful generation of strategic initiatives within the exploration sub process of strategic renewal is a contribution to new thinking being developed in the strategic renewal literature (Lechner and Floyd, 2012). A recent study by Lechner and Floyd (2012) found informal influence activities to be important causal mechanisms for exploratory initiatives, and suggested that other forms of informal influence activities may be important to the success of all initiatives. The findings in this thesis, that informal sensemaking by middle level managers is a critical causal mechanism and success factor for strategic renewal, elaborates on emerging literature (Lechner and Floyd, 2012).

The study reported in this thesis also found that high levels of informal sensemaking and sensegiving then gave rise to formal authority and formal sensegiving as antecedents to strategic renewal exploration and exploration sub processes. Middle level managers are embedded in formal structures and multiple informal networks (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1999; Huy, 2001; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007) and research suggests that both these elements are important in strategy processes (Pettigrew, 1992; Soda and Zaheer, 2012). A very recent study suggests that social networks as informal structures can play a role in middle level manager's implementation of adaptive strategy (Ahearne, Lam and Kraus, 2014). This current study suggests that social

networks as informal structures play a role in the informal sensemaking practices of middle level managers in strategic renewal. It also suggests that external networks and higher level networks strongly influence sensemaking. Social interactions are critical to developing new ideas (Nonaka, 1994) and strategically active managers' sensemaking and sensegiving is influencing others through others (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). As social interactions and processes involve talk in all its forms, this work also contributes to increasing interest in discourse as consequential for sensemaking, developing in the Strategy-as-practice field (Balogun et al., 2014).

The strategy literature until recently has underplayed the role of middle level managers; there is little empirical evidence in this area (Mantere, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011) and many of the hypotheses remain untested (Balogun, 2003; Conway and Monks, 2011; Mantere, 2008). This thesis contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence about the praxis of middle level managers as strategic actors in different contexts and the effects of internal and external influences on practice (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009): by providing evidence of enablers and constraints for middle level managers sensemaking practices in driving strategic renewal (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005); by providing evidence of balancing and managing emotions during change in different contexts (Huy, 2002; Sanchez-Burks and Huy, 2009); and by providing evidence that sensemaking practices of middle level managers are antecedents to exploitation and exploration sub-processes of strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011). These contributions sit within the juxtaposition of Strategy-as-practice literature (Fenton and Langley, 2011; Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007, 2010; Mantere, 2013; Whittington, 2007), middle level manager literature (Ahearne et al., 2014; Balogun, 2005, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004;

Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005), sensemaking literature (Balogun et al., 2014; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2010; Weick, 1995, 2010), and strategic renewal literature (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Canales, 2013; Crossan and Berdrow, 2003; Drori and Ellis, 2011; Kwee et al., 2011; Lechner and Floyd, 2012).

5.3 Contributions to Theory

This study has advanced the literature by finding that informal practices of middle level managers are more likely to lead to strategic renewal, and link to first, generation of ideas; second, transformation of ideas as antecedents to strategic renewal; and third, that more formal practices lead to new capabilities across firms. This study also identified two sub processes of middle level management sensemaking within the strategic renewal sub process of intuiting: '*reflection*', retrospective and intersubjective; and '*thinking space*', prospective and at the level of the individual.

This demonstrates that generative mechanisms are practice based micro-phenomena that result in macro-phenomena (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This provides further evidence of the increasingly important strategic role played by middle level managers (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Rouleau and Balogun, 2014) through an evolving cycle of intuiting and interpreting (Beck and Plowman, 2009). It also gives us greater insight into middle level manager's sensemaking activities as antecedents for strategic renewal (Burgelman, 1994; Lechner and Floyd, 2012; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). Furthermore proposing new 'versions' within the umbrella construct of sensemaking (Floyd et al., 2011) of 'informal' and 'formal'.

5.4 Contributions to Methodology

The findings validated the effectiveness of taking a social constructivist approach combined with interpretivism in this qualitative study of the praxis of strategic practitioners (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Findings also validated taking a sensemaking perspective through which the practices of middle level managers in different contexts were analysed (Fleetwood, 2005).

Informal practices and sensemaking practices were identified as generating events, emergent strategic initiatives (Danermark, 2002). Conditions and other sensemaking practices identified such as motivations and external factors were also found to have causality. This evidences and reflects the complexity of the strategic renewal process and the complexity of different environments (Beck and Plowman, 2009).

5.5 Implications for Practice

There are practical implications from this study as well as theoretical. Middle level managers are potentially critical success factors for strategic renewal, and their increasingly important role in emergent strategizing is compounded by over 30 years of shedding managerial levels, pushing core managerial responsibilities down to middle management (Osterman, 2009).

First is to emphasise to middle managers the importance of accessing new information and growing new knowledge through informal networks as a conduit for divergent thinking (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). Of particular importance is the cultivation of external sources in providing novel insights (Choi, 2002; Kanter, 2004; Krackhardt and Stern 1988; Rouleau, 2005). For senior managers it is important to have an understanding of the social networks of middle level managers (Ahearne et al., 2012) and their internal network position (Pappas and

Wooldridge, 2007). Senior managers should also facilitate networking, for example, through the organisation becoming members of external groups, and providing opportunities internally for informal sensemaking, such as social events. In addition, the working environment could incorporate areas or provide time for 'thinking space' and soft seating for informal collaboration.

Second, it is important that there is a mechanism to encourage the development of exploratory initiatives, by collaborating with middle level managers and enabling them to share knowledge and influence decision-making. Effective group influence activity within strategic initiatives can help an organisation be more agile in capability learning (Gupta, Smith and Shalley, 2006). The organisation's ability to renew its capabilities is closely associated with its capacity to successfully develop and manage a portfolio of strategic initiatives (Lechner and Kreutzer, 2010; McGrath, 1997) and furthermore, if middle level managers are not motivated to successfully influence decision-making around an exploratory initiative, it may fail irrespective of merit (Lechner and Floyd, 2012).

Third, it is clear that the cultural environment within an organisation needs to be a motivational culture that recognises socio-emotional factors (Huy, 2011). Develop skills amongst top managers and middle managers in emotional awareness, and develop, maintain and continually refine organisational routines that enable managers to balance and manage emotions to achieve organisational change and renewal (Huy, 2002, 2010). In addition, put in place a diversity strategy to ensure that middle level management teams are heterogeneous (Van der Vegt and Janssen, 2003), bringing into the network a broader range of experiences and knowledge from differing cultural contexts to create more innovative emergent strategic initiatives (Cummings, 2004).

The capacity of an organisation to capitalise on its middle managers' strategizing capabilities will depend on the extent to which they are included in the strategy-making process from the start (Canales, 2012).

5.6 Limitations, future research, and conclusions

As with any research, this study is subject to limitations that include possible respondent bias as the sample was purposive (Hair et al., 1995), and although results are considered as generalisable because the size of the sample exceeded the minimum limits for generating theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) the sample could still be considered small and not generalisable (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Another limitation may be related to the process of identifying emergent strategic initiatives in this study, as the possibility of other initiatives existing cannot be ruled out (Lechner and Floyd, 2012).

This research set out to investigate the importance of middle level manager's sensemaking practices as antecedents of organisational strategic renewal, and evidenced this across different contexts. Although there have been many calls for understanding more about the practices of middle level managers as strategic actors (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 200; Mantere, 2005; Whittington, 2006) there have been relatively few studies, with the focus remaining on the top team. In the middle management literature, middle managers are still viewed mainly in their strategic implementation role (Ahearne et al., 2012).

The direction in the Strategy-as-practice literature (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006) has diverged between the 'practice' turn (Schatzki, 2001) and the 'linguistic' turn (Rorty, 1992); however both 'practice' (Whittington, 2006) and 'discourse' (Vaara, 2010) scholars have extended their work inward on strategists, at the micro-level. The

growing body of Strategy-as-practice has started to highlight linkages between discourse and social practice in strategizing (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). Moving forwards, it is now important to place strategy discourse in context and acknowledge the social practices of strategizing in which such language is embedded (Balogun et al., 2014; Mantere, 2013). Sensemaking literature has also moved in a similar direction, with Rouleau and Balogun (2011) linking discursive activities, and drawing on contextually relevant verbal, symbolic, and sociocultural systems as critical to middle manager sensemaking.

In the strategic renewal literature the focus is on strategic initiatives, and the challenges of exploring new or exploiting existing capabilities (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Jansen, Van Den Bosch, and Volberda, 2005; Teece et al., 1997). With a link to sensemaking, a recent study on strategic renewal looked at behaviours and group influence activities, including rational justification, use of formal authority and coalition building because they used the full range of influence tactics identified in the literature, and because they capture both formal and informal tactics (Lechner and Floyd, 2012).

Following on from this research on strategic practitioners and practice (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006) which ascertained that middle level managers sensemaking practices (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau and Balogun, 2007, 2011) are antecedents to strategic renewal, it would be a next step to look at the role of discourse. Discourse in sensemaking has largely remained underexplored (Balogun et al., 2014), and whilst this study has defined the 'what' from a Strategy-as-practice perspective, it would be valuable to understand the 'how' through understanding the social discourse that shares and shapes cognition (Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013) as it crystallises

specific ideas and acts as a resource in strategic sensemaking (Balogun et al., 2014). Middle managers have also been shown to consume strategy discourse through instrumental, playful and intimate tactics (Suominen and Mantere, 2010).

This could be viewed as informal discourse. Informal as opposed to formal tactics (Lechner and Floyd, 2012; Suominen and Mantere, 2010) are new phenomena starting to be identified in the strategic renewal and sensemaking literatures. The power of informal practices as antecedents has been identified in this thesis. A discursive perspective on how these complex social processes generate crucial organisational outcomes, and how they get transformed from informal to formal sensemaking and sensegiving would inform strategy practitioners and their strategy work (Balogun et al., 2014; Mantere, 2013). In addition unpacking informal discourse in informal practice will also provide further insight into the role of emotion (Huy, 2012; Liu and Maitlis, 2014) in sensemaking. Unpacking formal discourse in formal practices will provide further insight into the role of power (Hardy and Thomas, 2013) in sensegiving. Future research would elaborate on a recent study of strategists' discourses where they depict strategizing as an informal activity, driven by their experience and their intuition (Dameron and Torset, 2014). As there are evident tensions within sensemaking between sensemaking and sensegiving and informal and formal practices, they may mutually constitute one another through a dualistic relationship, or in other words a paradox (Dameron and Torset, 2014; Smith and Lewis, 2011). With the apparent paradoxical nature of sensemaking, it may therefore be appropriate to use a paradox lens in the face of strategizing complexity (Luscher and Lewis, 2008; Poole and Van de Ven, 1989; Quinn, 1988; Smith and Lewis, 2011).

The process leading to, and following the birth of new terms should be of particular interest as they are windows into the dynamics of a strategic organisation (Mantere, 2013).

2.7 Summary

While the concept of strategic renewal has been around for some time, its adoption has been somewhat emergent. There have also been relatively few studies on middle level managers' sensemaking, despite calls to the contrary (Mantere, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011).

This study contributes to the literature by providing more insight into internal and external influences in different contexts (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1991; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) on middle level manager's sensemaking (Rouleau and Balogun, 2007); enablers and constraints for middle level manager's sensemaking in driving strategic renewal (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis et al., 2010; Rouleau, 2005); and middle level managers' sensemaking practices as antecedents to exploitation and exploration sub-processes of strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Kwee et al., 2011). These practices cast sensemaking as a prospective process (Gephart et al., 2010).

Significantly, this study contributes to new thinking in the strategic renewal literature relating to the emergence of informal practices as important causal mechanisms for exploratory initiatives (Lechner and Floyd, 2012). It would appear that not only do middle level managers contribute to strategic development in organisations, but they are potential critical success factors for strategic renewal (Osterman, 2009).

Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Questions

My 'unit of analysis' is the middle level manager as strategic actor.

My research is focusing on the interface between the middle level manager and the strategic environment, looking at their practices, attributes and behaviours. How middle level managers make sense of and contribute to strategic renewal.

The three key research questions to be addressed in this thesis are;

1. How does a middle level manager's experience and organisational positioning influence their strategic capability?

Research so far indicates that the extent to which an actor becomes involved in strategizing depends on their position in the organisation, i.e. are they at the external edges of the organisation with a lot of interaction with the external environment, or are they in the centre of the organisation with a lot of interaction with the internal environment. It would seem that those closer to the external environment are more likely to initiate and drive strategic change than those in the centre, because they can sense changes in the external environment.

I therefore need to know the following information:

- Which function or department do you work in?
- What is/are your external environment/environments?
- What percentage of work time is spent working in the external environment(s)?
- What percentage of work time is spent interacting with the external environment(s)?

- What percentage of your time is spent in managing change?
Probably 80-90% is about this.
- How many years' experience do you have in role?
- What are your skills and competencies?
- Do you have any unique expertise?
- Are you interested in influencing strategy and if so why?
- What are the activities that generate strategic information?
- To what extent do you use the information you gather from your interaction with your working environment to influence change?
Please give examples.
- To what extent do you use your experience to influence change?
Please give examples.
- What is it about your position in the organisation that enables you to think strategically?
- What are the activities you do that are specific to your position?

2. What motivates MLMs to contribute to a firm's strategic renewal?

What contextual factors contribute to strategizing practice? Some middle level managers get involved with strategizing and others do not, while others can actively resist change within their organisation, so what are the factors around them that encourage or discourage them to get involved?

I therefore need the following information:

- 2.1. What organisational vehicles or feedback mechanisms are available for you to have a voice? These can be formal and informal.
- 2.2. Does your organisation encourage you to be involved in contributing to organisational success, and if so, how?
- 2.3. What is it about your environment that makes you want to drive change?

- 2.4. What is it about your environment that stops you getting involved?
 - 2.5. What do you think are your unique contributions to organisational success? Please give examples.
 - 2.6. What activities do you do that contribute to strategic change?
3. **What are MLMs' sense making practices within the strategic renewal process?**

This is to understand the sensemaking and behaviours that happen within a change environment, and to reveal the causal relationships that nurture change or create strategically damaging resistance, to understand how behaviours support the strategic view.

I therefore need the following information:

- How do you find out what is happening in your organisation? What are the mechanisms?
- How do you interpret/make sense of change? What activities do you undertake?
- How do you manage reactions to change in your environment, such as fear, inertia, resistance, commitment? What activities do you undertake?

I haven't been directly affected by change since a long time ago otherwise I tended not to be, I don't really have a great deal of personal fear about it and I suppose the way you rationalise it anyway is that of the change results in redundancy then that's life, by the time you have been there 10 years you realise the redundancy pay-out is going to be quite reasonable. It is that you have to be sensitive to other people's fears and the best thing to do is be honest about it as soon as you can. Honesty and openness is the main thing when talking about managing fear.

- Can you openly discuss change issues with your line manager? With other senior managers? What are the forums for this?

- What activities do you do with your peer groups to interpret/make sense of change?
- How do you work with your juniors to explain changes?
- How do you manage feelings and emotions around change?
- How do you demonstrate commitment to change?

First Order Codes

Background and experience	Intellectual debate	Relationships
Building trust	Intermediary	Reputation
Change management	Internal	Sensegiving
Command and control	Issue identification	Sensemaking
Constraints	Knowledge building	Skill exploitation
Conversations	Knowledge limitation awareness	Skills
Demonstrating commitment	Knowledge sharing	Social networks
Differentiators for CA	Managing emotions	Strategic initiatives
Directed	Mechanisms	Success criteria
Doing	MLM background	Team
Emotional involvement	Motivations	Values
Enabling factors	Noticing change	Visibility
Events	Opportunity to influence	Work distribution
Expectations	Peer pressure	
External	Pressure to perform	
Genuine concern	Prioritising	
Goal setting	Problem solving	
Influencing Factors	Recombining	

Second-Order Codes

Theme	MLMs	References
BSI	29	110
CSF	14	29
E	27	83
EF	10	16
EI	29	87
EP	15	52
ESI	10	13
EXP	13	44
I	16	37
IF	12	25
M	25	79
SGP	30	165
SMP	30	252

BSI Background, experience, skills and influences

CSF Critical success factors

E Enablers and constraints

EF External influences

EI Managing emotions

EP Exploitation practices

ESI Emergent strategic initiatives

EXP Exploration practices

I Issues and events

- IF Internal influences
- M Motivating factors
- SGP Sensegiving practices
- SMP Sensemaking practices

Formal *Interpretive* Themes

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
<p>Background, Experience, Skills and Influences</p>	<p>‘My main skills are people management, project management, managing change. I don’t pitch myself as an in depth technical person, I know enough about the world of technology to be able to manage those people who are technical specialists. It’s mainly the projects and people side of it. I used to be very technical in my earlier career but I made a decision to get away from that, get into the management side.’ MLM 16</p> <p>‘Primarily business change, project and programme management. I have an executive MBA from Cranfield in 2003.’ MLM 23</p> <p>‘I’m a qualified accountant; I’ve done quite a lot of commercial finance. I’ve been involved in acquisitions especially in Sanctuary with my last roll. I’ve also worked in a financial controller’s role which was looking at reporting and ensuring the business operations are performing to their best capabilities. More recently dealing with change and transformation.’ MLM 30</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Internal Influences	<p>'We have our own intranet which obviously tells us things which are well published and for information purposes that is possibly the fastest way to find out if an initiative has been launched, but that's usually just the here and now.' MLM 14</p> <p>'The direction from the company that tends to influence if we tend to go down certain paths.' MLM 28</p> <p>'We have an internal news reel on our intranet.' MLM 13</p>
External Influences	<p>'By having a strong knowledge of who we are and how we are doing and benchmarking ourselves against that we then look at steps to improve it, either from a best of breed perspective so who we believe is the best in the digital world is down to who's the best in the insurance world, who has the best reputation, who satisfies the customer based on this information. We then start to form ideas of where we need to be part of the insight is to also look at opportunity and risk.' MLM 14</p> <p>'Competitor and customer provided information, benchmarking, and commercial feedback.' MLM 23</p> <p>'We adhere to our trade body standards that were accredited with, which enables us to continually develop.' MLM 33</p> <p>'If you don't do something when legislation is changed you can get anything up to a 10% turn over fine.' MLM 35</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Exploitation	<p>‘Process mapping, benefit realisation, escalation of current issues and proposals for change, change pilots.’ MLM 40</p> <p>‘Understand the business by undertaking process mapping which is what we have done for the last year. That has enabled us to surface the way that the business truly runs to allow the senior people in the organisation to make informed decisions about a better way or a better approach with our recommendations on where to take the businesses.’ MLM 39</p> <p>‘What can we do that works without having to re-invent the wheel?’ MLM 21</p> <p>‘What do we need to define the future state of IS, what’s that future state going to look like, how do we design that organisational structure, how do we get from where we are to that point and bring people along in terms of motivation and training?’ MLM 16</p> <p>‘Working groups where actually we are looking at particular policies and actually which policies should be changed and what is the direction of the change.’ MLM 17</p> <p>‘I’m so proud of my projects. Last year was our most successful year, we took out almost 1 billion across the group in terms of the cost phase and that will continue in years to come. In our team we contributed over 500 million of that of overall cost reduction. I myself have done two successful projects in addition to my previous successful project (three in total) total over 100 million in terms of cost savings. It really does make sense to drive harder.’ MLM 30</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Exploration	<p>'When we established a new customer service centre for the housing business, a lot of the thought around the design of that was informed by experience of working with that business over a number of years and interacting with colleagues in previous projects.' MLM1 3</p> <p>'Understanding where the rule of the SME is working and how it is evolving so how do we do business? It's not a tactical situation it's more of a strategic role is to make sure we understand insight to be able to project the future roles for the business.' MLM 14</p> <p>'I have never seen so much change in my life as I have in this job with acquisitions coming on board from divisional changes, restructures, etc. You have to embrace it.' MLM 18</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Issues and Events	<p>‘With the welfare reform at the moment the situation is going to get worse before it gets better so I think everyone is desperate to stop things escalating too far.’ MLM 22</p> <p>‘A good example is we’re cutting 20% of staff because more posts are being created at the call centre that should give people on the front line more opportunity to see customers. The down side is if you hate customers which a number of the staff in Exeter do that’s the last thing you want thrown at you.’ MLM 32</p> <p>‘They didn’t keep up to date with all the policies and procedures and the change in the market about how you sell. If they had been a bit more strategically aware they would have noticed that the rest of the Industry was moving away from direct selling and more to events selling (it was that door-knocking that got them where they were). You need to be aware of what’s in your market, what other people are doing, what’s the regulatory impact, then what can I do.’ MLM 35</p> <p>‘They tell you things that nobody needs to know; what they don’t tell you are the important bits and I think this is because we are very finance-driven.’ MLM 28</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Sensemaking Practices	<p>'Although you do analysis to support change often there is very little for you to analyse and sometimes this is why you need to make the change so I would say a lot of it is gut feel.' MLM 13</p> <p>'They don't really keep an eye on how they're operating to be able to inform their strategy. Its business as usual and they keep doing it because it's the way they have always done it. So we dig out how it truly is and it's usually a fair old mess; and then we're able to help the business make clear decisions and clear strategy on how to improve and make themselves more efficient.' MLM39</p> <p>'We've got one-to-ones and appraisals, team meetings, actually just having good relationships with line managers and things like that so you can, at any point you need to discuss anything, there is a two-way communication going there.' MLM 22</p> <p>'Looking at organisational health which is not only about performance it's about meritocracy and continuous change.' MLM 28</p> <p>'Putting together a business plan.' MLM 36</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Sensegiving Practices	<p>‘We compile reports. It’s analysing the work the team are doing, see how much they are actually doing. Sanctuary itself has loads and loads of reports that we can drill into and we can see exactly how the work is being done.’ MLM 22</p> <p>‘So what I am doing is ensuring the expectations and communications are being managed correctly.’ MLM 18</p> <p>‘Well there is a lot of “doing the do”, a lot of stand-up delivery.’ MLM 19</p> <p>‘All the information including detailed process mapping and ratio analysis and also a large-scale operating model re design.’ MLM 30</p> <p>‘How much is it going to cost us if we don’t react to this change; and that’s how you can get people influencing and aware of what you’re doing, because you can say if we don’t do this it’s a 15 million pound hit/ 20 million pound hit - numbers like that get people’s interest quite quickly!’ MLM 35</p> <p>‘On-going communication to understand the changes, explanation of benefits and drivers for change.’ MLM 40</p> <p>‘First of all you establish how they are going to be impacted and then you need to explain to them the reasons behind it, being very straight and honest.’ MLM 13</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Enablers and Constraints	<p>'It's a very remote organisation and a very inward looking organisation; it's also an organisation that is stuck probably at about 20 years behind at best. It's a closed structure - predominately male - it doesn't provide opportunities for talented people.' MLM32</p> <p>'Too many layers, bureaucracy which is a huge limitation.' MLM 30</p> <p>'Volume of work and time.' MLM25</p> <p>'I think IT and cost in some cases.' MLM 14</p> <p>'I guess that's external red tape, it's about the way things have always been done so most people are averse if it means that you want to do something different. People are comfortable with the status quo and occasionally we suffer from that we are pushing against well we don't do that here.' MLM 19</p> <p>'In actual fact it is such a politically governed environment that if anything every single entity spends its life putting hurdles in everyone's way.' MLM 28</p> <p>'Too many layers, bureaucracy which is a huge limitation.' MLM 30</p> <p>'Policy and Procedures or where some things are run from the centre.' MLM 31</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Motivational Factors	<p>'Very much through a clear plan and targets and rewarding performance.' MLM 32</p> <p>'There's recognition and feedback for that, so rewarding success and celebrating success within team meetings, it's just so different. People want to deliver.' MLM 41</p> <p>'We all know what the base salary is, then there's a company bonus on top of that which is very transparent and linked to company performance, and everyone gets the same depending on how the company does. And then there's an element of personal bonus, which is based on your personal performance.' MLM 8</p> <p>'We do recognition stuff and prizes are handed out.' MLM 15</p>
Managing Emotions	<p>'Explain to them the reasons behind it, being very straight and honest.' MLM 13</p> <p>'I communicated about restructures and change about once a month, probably eight of those months a year the message would be - there is no change nothing's happening - we need to keep what we're doing.' MLM 36</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Critical Success Factors	<p>'We do a lot of testing and what we do is we don't actually go live we bring in people and pay them to go through some of the changes specifically things that I thought from experience through past experience of the test/learn process. We then actually do commission the work and this is actually the idea you have to be quite empirical in the way you work, you have to actually try, test and learn and then evolve the model.' MLM 14</p> <p>'Strategically positioning ourselves with particularly one of our key partners the Local Authority and turning it round from the Local Authority slugging us off at public meetings to them inviting me to join their strategic board.' MLM 32</p>

Formal <i>Interpretive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Emergent Strategic Initiatives	<p>‘Optimise the website journeys very specifically on “quote and buy.” The reason we have done this is because we saw that in many cases our “quote and buy” funnel has fallen off so we are not getting the rates we want. So actively understanding one thing drives the response to then look for a solution which might be an external solution and that’s exactly the case, so a day-to-day thing drew off something that we are now going to resource.’ MLM 14</p> <p>‘There was no induction programme that would match anything existing within the organisation before I started writing it.’ MLM 19</p> <p>‘An example is where we have noticed poor quality training course offerings in the marketplace in 2010-11 and used this to build our own offer and launched this to the market in 2012.’ MLM 23</p> <p>‘We are talking about completely changing the way we operate.’ MLM 24</p> <p>‘Our local offer strategy, which I designed and implemented right from the beginning. The structure of that and applying it to a large organisation (it was a policy that was designed for a small organisation, so applying it to a national context was quite a difficult exercise).’ MLM 27</p> <p>‘How can we get from where we are a Social housing company who are loathed to charge people anything, to a professional market service where the staff are really empowered. As soon as I start delivering that they will think this is great, we’re making money for the company.’ MLM 36</p>

Informal *Intuitive* Themes

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Background, Skills, Experience and Influences	<p>'You don't have trouble with cupboards but you do with people sometimes.' MLM 15</p> <p>'I think 90% of the change that I manage is based on things I have done in the past, so my experience is absolutely essential. In fact it's one of the things on which I sell myself that if I go into an organisation to do an assignment I don't need to be learning things, I need to have information but I don't need to be learning things because I've done most of it, if not all if it before. So quite often I'm drawing on my experiences to inform what's required for that organisation.' MLM16</p> <p>'You can learn it; it's not a unique skill. It's a unique knowledge.' MLM 35</p> <p>'My experience of what I've done before and what's worked and hasn't worked, so you can see where the failings may be due to your past experience gained in the past.' MLM 31</p> <p>'It is all my own experience and I haven't gone out and done degrees I haven't actually done any formal training on housing at all. Sometimes that can be good sometimes that can be not so good so I am reliant on people that have done that more formal training when it comes to particular policies.' MLM 17</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Internal Influences	<p>‘I have influence but I haven’t got power and sometimes people don’t get the difference.’ MLM 15</p> <p>‘You need people below the surface really not necessarily taking the kudos but making sure the organisation is going in the right direction. You need a lot of those people and you let the people in the positions to make decisions take the credit for things.’ MLM39</p> <p>‘I have to be honest; there is the occasional grapevine which is always strong in any organisation that I have ever worked in, the informal mechanisms are often stronger than the formal on many occasions.’ MLM19</p>
External Influences	<p>‘That active role of gathering data on our behaviour forms up how we start to understand how to form our marketing strategy to deal with the customers’ changes.’ MLM 14</p> <p>‘I have quite a wide network outside of Sanctuary in the housing world that’s actually more about what’s happening in housing currently.’ MLM 17</p> <p>‘The other external pressure is customers and other stakeholders and how they impact how we do business and how we structure ourselves and position ourselves.’ MLM 33</p> <p>‘I have in recent years have made a conscious effort to go on Linked In, I have subscribed to Management Today and get outside influences, because it’s easy to get sucked into an organisation’s way of thinking.’ MLM 36</p> <p>‘My role can be heavily influenced by changes driven by external factors.’ MLM 40</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Exploitation	<p>'Because I mentor, we meet every month and have a team meeting, and then we also meet on our own which is a really good way of doing it because actually by the time we get to our team meeting we are generally all singing from the same hymn sheet.' MLM 16</p> <p>'I get on extremely well with people I can identify very quickly their strengths and weaknesses, how I can build an effective team that can perform at the top level (quartile) performance. How I motivate that team is around individual's strengths and weaknesses and people's likes and dislikes frankly, so I try and identify what motivates them in particular and then providing them with the opportunity to use those strengths to the benefit of the business and themselves. So providing them with quite a high level of job satisfaction and a lot of opportunity to innovate and never ever blaming anybody for any mistakes but using them for learning.' MLM 32</p>
Exploration	<p>'I think it's more informal at the moment, it's more unstructured, and it's not a repeatable process.' MLM 41</p> <p>'With his role across all the different businesses it helps his thinking, re - where parts of the business might sit better so hopefully as we're setting up new companies and changing the way people work.' MLM 39</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Issues and Events	<p>‘The most significant change was when a group of us were relocated from a site in Hertfordshire to Worcester and we went down the pub and talked about it. For some people it was bad news for others good news.’ MLM 13</p> <p>‘He’s someone that skirts over issues, not great on detail, so doesn’t like to discuss elephants in the room as often left unaddressed really which can be a bit of a challenge.’ MLM27</p> <p>‘Managers, there’s not a lot of joined up work. In some respects joined up working works sometimes but in other areas there’s not enough- they don’t get the right people round the table; it hinders change if you don’t involve the right people you’re going to get the wrong change.’ MLM 29</p> <p>‘So ultimately its organisational difficulties that stops work from filtering down to us. It’s the only example that I can think of, where, within our team we tried to engage with a section and basically a brick wall came up.’ MLM 34</p> <p>‘I am a visionary person so I can often see where things need to go. If I’m not in a position where I can make that happen I find that quite frustrating. I can often very quickly see what needs to happen when other people can’t, I find that very difficult when other people are not progressing towards what I would a see as a common sense resolution of those issues.’ MLM27</p> <p>‘Frustration and most of it is with the corporate entity rather than what the segment is up to.’ MLM 28</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
	<p>‘...and seeing the frustrations and the obstacles that have been put in the way of doing things efficiently. The sticky plasters we have put in place to fix things quickly without getting to the root cause.’ MLM 24</p> <p>‘There are some basics which I think are missing and because we miss those little basic things it then means we miss some of the bigger goals as well.’ MLM 19</p> <p>‘Loads of things, absolutely loads of things, too many. You have to do this and you have to do that without adapting to the market environment. We spend a lot of time discussing internally without looking at it externally or how the client views us and we are in a market that is entirely reliant on its clients and how the client perceives us.’ MLM 28</p> <p>‘The whole place was just imploding quite frankly and going down the pan when I arrived.’ MLM 32</p> <p>‘I had a major challenge on my hands when resources were trying to be cut based on this principal of, you need one business partner for 800 staff.’ MLM 33</p> <p>‘Offshore providers and there’s definitely a culture there of <i>not</i> escalating trying to fix something, so you don’t escalate to the point where it could be an impossible task.... Right up until the last minute and it all goes horribly wrong and you’ve missed the deadline, and they’re like “OK we missed the deadline, we did our best”, and I’m like “No guys, please just tell me and then I can help you!” - I’d rather know and then I can help.’ MLM 41</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
	<p>'It can be divisive. If you're not careful with that, informal social networks can create cliques or subsets of firms that are better connected purely because they're better connected through that informal social network. I think we step on a fine line with that one actually.' MLM 8</p>
Sensemaking	<p>'Although you do analysis to support change often there is very little for you to analyse and sometimes this is why you need to make the change so I would say a lot of it is gut feel.' MLM 13 SMP</p> <p>'Otherwise it's just listening to the gossip which is really powerful mechanism. The informal communication is always more honest.' MLM 13</p> <p>'We have a lot of off record chats. To be able to achieve off record dialogue you have to really understand your relationship with your management and managers so that's part of building a good team and being part of a good team is actually understanding your influencers, your blockers and all other types of people we have in it, and have a good sense for the people you work with. By that it is having enough sense to know what is good to be spoken about off-record and how candid can you be. With most cases with my manager I am very candid and we speak about quite heavy things in reference to where we see strategic things working and not working.' MLM 14</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
	<p>'It's the corridor conversations that actually have quite an effect whereas actually sitting down in a formal meeting very often it doesn't. I think this is because people are less defensive whereas when you are in a formal environment there is the need to stick to an agenda - you don't have time for casual conversation.' MLM 15</p> <p>'I compare and contrast analogies to similar work/experiences in the past. I look for patterns, values and commonality.' MLM41</p> <p>'I go with gut feel a lot and intuition, perhaps subconsciously is how you do that stuff; I don't really know how I do it.' MLM 41</p> <p>'Informal is generally the way to find out and by having a decent network. You find out senior people have look outs all over the place and have their spies who feed them.' MLM39</p> <p>'Through informal networks like quite frankly gossiping and through listening and hanging around where people are making tea in the kitchen and listening to what's going on, and through asking questions and being very challenging on occasion.' MLM32</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Sensegiving	<p>'I think that actually because I am in the middle in some respects, I am actually in the 'doing' bit of the business so when you actually create things and have to implement them you get a lot of realism, so as opposed to theoretically trying to work out where a customer wants to be. I can actually commission work to see where a customer wants to be and then I can influence on how we actually strategically and tactically deploy a change to meet the customer's or business' needs.' MLM 14</p> <p>'It might be stories about things of what not to do, actually very much it's about telling stories, I am a genuine believer in the story and the power of it and taking people with you - when I present I tend to use that story structure, a bit more informal, rather than bombarding people with facts and jargon.' MLM41</p> <p>'I think you have to be to be successful at what you want to do, you have to be able to adopt and influence new strategies and create them as you go on otherwise the business will not change and the people will not change.' MLM 20</p> <p>'The informal ones are much more about the relationships you have. It's the cup of coffee/ cigarette chat/ by the bike shed chat, those are often much stronger ones. It means you can plant a seed and watch it develop.' MLM 35</p> <p>'Absolutely I am interested in influencing strategy because you can't complain about the environment that you find yourself working in if you can't influence it.' MLM21</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Enablers and Constraints	<p>'Sometimes you just beaten down by "no". You come up with all those good ideas, you make changes that you think are for the better and you are then told "no you can't do it like that, that's not how we do it".' MLM15</p> <p>'I think there's a lot of localised politics with a small p that I think gets in the way of achieving outcomes... what I see is people being very subjective and not stepping back and saying what are the essential things that need to be done to sort this problem out they just get, they allow themselves to get drawn into the minutiae. So it's that politics bit that gets in the way.' MLM16</p> <p>'It's very, very busy and sometimes although you see things you want to get involved in you physically haven't got the capacity to do it.' MLM 38</p> <p>'Where there is a culture of negativity I don't like that- and I think that stops people doing what they should be doing.' MLM 36</p> <p>'The formal ones can sometimes stifle some people because they don't want to be seen as putting their head above the parapet, whereas if you just have a bit of an informal chat with someone you work with or someone more senior to you it tends to then grow and develop more organically as it hasn't been forced.' MLM35</p> <p>'Extremely political aren't they? It's worse than the private sector I think people, it can be quite a shock...because you haven't got a market imperative and so people build empires don't they...? Empires often built on the number of staff they have, so within this sector I think negotiation has been the key.' MLM 35</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Motivating Factors	<p>‘Opportunity - it’s an organisation with a lot of potential, which I think others can see but I definitely see it as well.’ MLM13</p> <p>‘There’s a great deal of empowerment due to the fact that if you have good ideas they will flow up to the top, they search for good ideas on our intranet, they do competitions for it.’ MLM 14</p> <p>‘In this particular environment it’s because I can always think we can do better than we are doing at the moment, we are doing a fantastic job but when I look around you think we can always do this better and I think that’s the environment we have here - that everyone wants to do their best.’ MLM38</p> <p>‘It is going to get bigger and better and take on new things and I find it exciting to be part of it and I’m very proud of it, and I want to contribute and add as much as I can along the way.’ MLM 37</p> <p>‘It’s knowing that I do have a voice and it’s knowing that I have the same goals as the organisation.’ MLM 36</p> <p>‘People get de-motivated by things that are tedious, convoluted and long-winded and they see no point.’ MLM 35</p> <p>‘We were all very influential in organisation success but they have recently changed that system to competency-based, which I think has lost the drive of making people succeed toward the organisation.’ MLM28</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
	<p>'It is a very exciting environment; it is one that drives the fact that nothing is impossible we are always looking for the ability on how to do something as opposed to "that can't be done".' MLM 19</p> <p>'It's about that constant interaction and that building of relationships and connection with people and I think that people work for people they don't necessarily work for organisations they come to work for a social aspect as well.' MLM 19</p>
Managing Emotions	<p>'About recognising the emotion in there and being sympathetic, I have been through it, I think nearly everybody these days has been and you try and recognise their fears and mitigate them and you give them the tools to get out of it, that's what I do anyway listening and offering them tea.' MLM15</p> <p>'It's about talking to people and finding out how they feel about the change and making sure they understand the change, it's about having their 1-2-1's and discussing things. I have some staff who can't cope with even the change of desk; it's about supporting them and helping them through it.' MLM17</p> <p>'Fear is the biggest thing that you have to deal with, it strangles innovation and you need to empower people and give them the confidence to do things.' MLM18</p> <p>'Coaching and mentoring - again it's about understanding why people are afraid of change what it is they are afraid of. Sometimes it's just lack of knowledge... understanding why they feel like this and being able to work on that, so are they frightened, or is it just nervousness of the unknown?' MLM20</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
	<p>'I think open honest communication is key to facing resistance and fear to change'. MLM40</p> <p>'Be open and transparent with people and tell them what you are doing and I think the fear factor comes when people think you are not telling them anything.' MLM 38</p> <p>'You have to be sensitive to other people's fears and the best thing to do is be honest about it as soon as you can. Honesty and openness is the main thing when talking about managing fear.' MLM21</p>
Critical Success Factors	<p>'I have been doing my job a long time and I have a lot of contacts, it's all about networking and I have lots of contacts outside of the business as well so it's actually from that point of view, it means that I feed into a lot of different places.' MLM15</p> <p>'There comes a point when they're either on the train or not. There are always certain people who are resistant no matter how much cajoling and influencing or giving them a positive message, etc.' MLM 39</p> <p>'You need to take responsibility and leadership to make it happen.' MLM 37</p> <p>'I honestly don't think it has anything to do with position within an industry or an organisation, I think everybody has the ability to think strategically. It's how you have the ability to influence with your strategic thought; I do think that matters. I do think you have to be at a certain level to get taken seriously in an organisation from a strategic thought process.' MLM 35</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
	<p>'There are all sorts of informal mechanisms, because you know of things that are happening months, sometimes even years before they actually happen, so there are all sorts of ways in which you find out information, but really it's all about networks isn't it, it's who you know.' MLM 33</p> <p>'We can't stand still. There's no way this business would survive if we stood still.' MLM 29</p> <p>'Having knowledge is key.' MLM28</p> <p>'Informal is generally the way to find out and by having a decent network. You find out senior people have look outs all over the place and have their spies who feed through.' MLM39</p> <p>'The perspectives, and experiences, and knowledge and challenges you face on the client side, and the variety of client sites that you then face inevitably give you a lot more perspective on strategizing internally than you would normally get if you were only internally faced.' MLM8</p> <p>'I used to row, and when you have eight of you it's really important to work together to be in time. When you do the boat lifts and you feel it, suddenly it's a step change and it goes up and forward – and when you've got that...' MLM 41</p> <p>'Without the people element being correct and managed correctly then change doesn't happen or it's not successful.' MLM 18</p>

Informal <i>Intuitive</i> Themes	Illustrative Evidence
Emergent Strategic Initiatives	<p>‘So allowing people to contact Global Insurance Co in the way they like and choose to has an active role, it might be a simple solution by one of our team but it just might change how the whole business runs.’ MLM 14</p> <p>‘What we are trying to do within this programme is to re-ignite the engagement, motivation and influencing that we can put into place.’ MLM 24</p>

Empirical Studies

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
William Guth and Ian MacMillan, 1986	Middle management motivation to implement strategy when their self-interest is at stake.	An empirical study of middle managers interventions in organisational decisions	Using 300 reports from 90 middle managers studying a Master's degree in business to using expectancy theory of motivation (Lawler 1976) These managers were asked to write short descriptions on cases when they had taken a position on a decision and when they intervened by resisting the decision. Interventions were classified by departmental impact and organisational impact. Interventions were also classified by whether they were successful or not.	Strong evidence making it clear that middle level managers were prepared to intervene in organisational decisions and were successful at resisting decisions, even the more organisationally challenging decisions.	The importance of middle management support for strategy and how they can lower the efficiency with which decisions are implemented if not completely stopping them, if they perceive an inability to execute strategy; they perceive a low probability that the strategy will work or that the outcomes will not satisfy individual goals.	This study highlights again the importance of middle level management in strategizing and how they can redirect, delay or reduce the quality of implementation but can stop the strategy. However it did not provide any detail on how and what practices middle level managers deployed or any detail linking the relationship between commitment and organisational performance.

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Frances Westley, 1990	How does inclusion or exclusion of middle managers in conversation and communication with senior managers during strategic decision making impact on middle managers, and what are the implications on related micro-processes?	Transcribed interviews with middle managers in a large multi-divisional manufacturing company representing superior-subordinate interactions over strategic issues.	Building on Collins' and Hochschild's theories around inclusion v exclusion, domination v submission and analysis of the conversations using the framing rules and feeling rules whilst understanding the ideological context.	The dynamics within the various conversations help ground Collins' theory around the framing rules and feeling rules. Middle managers respond differently depending on the levels of domination between middle managers and their superiors, and the balance of domination depends on the level of inclusion. Exclusion is the ultimate domination. Energy levels in middle managers are affected by various levels of domination/submission, inclusion/exclusion, and how this energy is deployed, whether it is to the benefit of the organisation or the individual.	Supports Collins' and Hochschild's theories. Middle managers who gain access to their superior's framing rules have the ability to change the rules around strategic initiatives, thereby influencing and changing the ideology with new meanings and purposes.	There is a need to demonstrate the link between energised middle managers and strategic action and how these actions have ideological/contextual impacts. What is the transformation process from middle managers' involvement in strategic conversations to energised actions to organisational impact?

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Steven Floyd and Bill Wooldridge, 1992.	Validation of previous research to develop a theoretical typology of middle level management roles in strategy, to include measures of the organisational type (based on Miles and Snow , 1978) and level of strategic activity.	To validate the typology collected, large amounts of information from 25 diverse organisations via documentation and interviews, and a survey of 259 middle level managers.	25 projects were set up to examine the theoretical consistency between strategic type and four identified roles. A frequency questionnaire captured strategic activity. A principal components analysis followed by varimax rotation was used. To reduce threats to validity control variables were used.	The results supported the link between middle management involvement and the content of strategy. Prospectors differed significantly from other groups, whilst Analysers and Defenders were not significantly different. Synthesising across strategic types was not significantly different, but there were differences in implementation activity levels. Pervasiveness of loyalty was found in middle level managers' strategic roles (Guth and Macmillan, 1986) Synergy was found between providing information to top management and influencing strategic direction (Dutton and Duncan, 1987).	A theoretically grounded typology. The usefulness of measuring the roles of championing, facilitating, synthesising and implementing against strategic type of Defender, Analyser, Prospector and Reactor. Prospectors were found to have higher levels of upward and divergent forms of strategic involvement. Facilitating was the role that was most difficult to measure as most difficult to recognise. Differences in implementation across strategic types were a new discovery, matching the differences for facilitating and championing suggesting these three roles reinforce each other enhancing overall strategizing.	Building on these findings, work is required around the patterns of involvement in Reactors proving inconsistent. The role of middle level managers in strategizing needs continuing investigation: what are the differing external and internal influences on their contribution, in differing environments and competitive states?

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, 1998	What is the role of middle level managers on the success or failure of employee involvement practices and the outcomes depending on the support or resistance of middle level managers	A postal survey study of 155 organisations to examine data on middle level management resistance and its correlates relating to management practices that give employees influence over how their work is organised and carried out. Practices such as quality circles, suggestion schemes, consultative committees, problem-solving task forces/project teams.	Random samples of UK companies were chosen across five industry sectors: public utility; automotive manufacturing; pharmaceutical; soap and cosmetics; and retail. These were chosen to provide diversity and ensure generalised results rather than industry specific. MDs/HRDs were asked to classify 7 possible outcomes of EI on a 3 point scale. Hypotheses were tested using a series of regression analyses. Factor analysis allowed the construction of a new set of variables with low intercorrelations.	Of the 114 organisations making significant use of employee involvement practices, 49% said middle management resistance had been a barrier to a moderate extent and 14% to a great extent. The extent to which middle managers are given the capability or power to take effective action lowers the level of resistance. Lack of senior management support increases middle level management resistance. Middle management resistance is a significant barrier to employee involvement but it is a symptom of problems at	Understanding the context in which middle level managers resist. This study highlights the key correlates of this resistance, and system failures within organisations drives this resistance rather than it being a matter of individual beliefs and attitudes, whilst not denying the importance of individual differences.	It would be helpful to understand more about the complex interaction between middle level manager's attitudes and behaviours and organisational systems. What are the causal relationships that create resistance from middle level managers when it is clear that this impacts on strategies.

				the organisational level.			
Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap	
Graeme Currie, 1999	What is the role of middle managers within the business planning process and what is the level of influence upwards and downwards on business planning processes.	The development of strategic business planning within a UK NHS hospital, setting out a detailed annual financial plan as part of a 3 year rolling plan plus a 5-year strategic plan, reviewed every 3 years. This involves a group of senior managers and a group of middle managers.	Qualitative case study with ethnographic principles, interviewing and observation and collection of relevant documentation. Narratives were developed around the senior management group and the middle management group.	As expected the two groups had different objectives in their involvement in the planning process, however it was essentially a top-down process, seen by the senior management as a vehicle by which they can mitigate change resistance from middle managers by involving them with an acceptance that middle managers were important to implementation due to their closer proximity to the sharp end of the business. Middle managers were generally receptive to business planning where it made operational sense, however willingness to implement reduces considerably with central imposition. Where middle managers failed to see efficiency measures as adding value they did not work to the plan. However if threatened by external forces there was evidence that middle managers would act strategically but not to plan.	Initially middle managers were involved more influentially in the business planning process as anticipated in process literature (Mintzberg and Waters,1985 and Pettigrew et al,1992)and middle managers influence typology (Floyd and Wooldridge,1992) however as this became a more imposed process within the NHS, due to the non-negotiable imposition of resource related targets from government, middle managers found ways around the plan to deliver what they perceived as value and of strategic importance at the operational end.	More understanding of the value that middle managers add to the development of strategy and change due to their unique positioning within the organisation. How can the interfacing role between the operational end of the business and senior management be exploited for strategic benefit.	

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Huy Nguyen Quy, 2002	The role of middle managers involved in change projects and how they handled their own emotions and the emotions of those working for them.	A case study of a large organisation undergoing radical change.	A three-year field study using grounded theory looking at the success or otherwise of the various change projects and the level of emotional balancing involved. Huy uses the Circumplex Model of Emotions (Larsen and Diner, 1992) and identifies patterns validated using the case replication method (Yin, 1994).	Change is complex and the emotions of those involved are complex. Huy identified two key patterns; one being where the manager is emotionally committed to change, and the other where the manager manipulates emotions to ensure operational continuity. These are two simplified extremes which ignore the great spectrum across the divide.	Middle managers, when committed, can seize the moment during a period of radical change within their organisation to drive their own goals. The results demonstrated the influence of middle managers and the importance of managing emotions within the workforce to realise change. There is also evidence of others close to the work frontline driving change through being emotionally supportive. The study scratches the surface of the importance of the relationship between emotional theory and successful organisational change.	There is an established link between the micro-level of emotions and macro-level organisational strategy and reveals the emotional balancing role that middle managers play in strategic change by championing change whilst ensuring continuity. This work by Huy whets the appetite of the requirement for more study into the role of middle managers as strategic actors and how their behaviours and activities support the activity-based view. There is also more work required around emotional theory and mid-level managers in strategic change.

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
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<p>Julia Balogun, 2003</p>	<p>How is the process of change implementation experienced by middle managers, what are the different aspects of their role as implementation progresses; what helps them in their role and what obstructs them?</p>	<p>A longitudinal, real-time case study of the process of change implementation in the core division of a recently privatised UK utility. The changes involved structure, systems, working practices and culture in moves to become more customer-focused whilst driving down cost. The old core division was streamlined into three with one smaller core supplied on an internal supplier-customer basis by two service divisions. The focus was on the middle managers' experience rather than the process.</p>	<p>The study tracked the implementation process from a middle managers perspective and started when the middle managers were appointed in the new structure, four months into the transition phase. Diaries were used as primary data collection and they were required to answer five questions for each time period: what is going well and why, what is going badly and why, what problems do they foresee, what are the significant events, and the rumours? Diaries were supplemented with interviews and focus groups together with documentation. Data was transcribed and coded.</p>	<p>The activities coded were part of wider activities which were either sensemaking or co-ordination and management. Four change implementation roles emerged from the data analysis: undertaking personal change, keeping the business going during the transition, implementing the changes needed and helping others through change. The findings show that middle managers were change intermediaries rather than recipient or implementer as they had to absorb, interpret and translate the change for themselves and their teams in behaviours and practices. The findings show that interpretation is the key middle</p>	<p>The findings inform theory in revealing the complexity of the middle management role around change and the success critical nature of their sensemaking and self-management. The findings also support the importance of the social, informal processes of communication (Isabella 1990) and are consistent with others on the impacts of downsizing and delayering.</p>	<p>The growing research findings that evidence the importance of middle managers to strategic change open up a huge amount of additional research potential around the skills, competencies, and support requirements of middle managers and how we grow their strategic capability. Also, what enables and what constrains their success as intermediaries? What makes some middle managers resist change and engage in political pursuit of their own agendas?</p>
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Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Christina Hoon, 2004	How middle managers impact on a process of implementing strategic personnel development.	A longitudinal case study of a large public administration in Germany in the middle of changing its strategic direction and general administrative reform of management and provide a more professional service with scarce resources. The process under study is the initiation, formulation and implementation of strategic personnel development.	Data-gathering was through semi-structured interviews, documentation reviews, observations and notes about decision events and crisis events as well as informal discussions. Following were the three main steps as suggested by Eisenhardt (1989) of groundwork, analysing data and shaping of hypotheses.	Middle managers were proven to be the actors who led the strategic initiative. They recognised the external issues and understood how to communicate these strategic issues. The middle managers explored and communicated within the external environment enabling them to become internal experts. They used support activities to influence outcomes. Communication was key, and particularly with top management, both informally and formally through establishing a steering committee for	Adds to the strategy process literature in confirming the committee as the structure that formally interconnects the middle and top management. A positive inclusive relationship driven by middle managers' tactics with top managers is seen to deliver strategic results. Prior strategic decisions and successful implementation energised the middle managers to initiate further actions.	More information is required around the relationship between top and middle managers to establish how they work best together to enable successful strategic outcomes for an organisation.

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Julia Balogun and Gerry Johnson 2004	How do middle managers interpret change and how do their interpretive frameworks or schemata develop and change.	Longitudinal, qualitative study of sensemaking during an organisation changing from hierarchal to decentralised. The decision had been made by top management and middle managers as change recipients were expected to implement the change.	Examination of the process of development and use by middle managers before and during change. What are the patterns of schema change? How does middle manager sensemaking inform the process? What is the relationship between schema change and restructuring?	<p>strategic decision making. The final decision making authority was top executive and the audit trail on</p> <p>middle managers had shared understanding/sensemaking purpose. The organisational model broke the common identity and created clustered schemata and a process schema was introduced. Shared but differentiated sensemaking with some latent old schema in places.</p>	Supports the findings of Labianca et al, 2000 where comparison of behaviours and actions relating to old and new schemata gives way to adoption of the new as the new is reinforced and the old is no longer reinforced. In addition a replacement process took place with the middle managers replacing old with new. Also in different divisions, different clusters of middle managers used different schema change models and there was evidence of lateral and vertical conflict/tension. Multiple informal conversations played as significant a role in schema change as formal processes.	To understand the handover of change control from top managers to middle managers and the lack of effective transition planning in restructuring. More understanding is needed about the relative roles of senior and middle managers in differing change contexts. Also the importance of social relationships during change.

Authors	Research	Study	Research	Findings	Contribution	Gap
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	Q/Focus		Method			
Graeme Currie and Stephen J Proctor, 2005	What are the expectations of and the experiences of middle managers during role transition and their contribution to developing strategy, and what interventions could develop strategic capability in middle managers?	Developing the work of Floyd and Wooldridge (1992, 1994, 1997, 2000) this is a case study of middle managers' role transition in the UK NHS where they are subject to internal professional pressures and external political policy change.	Three case studies in three hospitals evaluating different strategic interventions: skill mixing, service development and a local pay project to improve operational efficiency. Different middle managers were identified specific to the strategic intervention and operational core. Taped and transcribed semi-structured interviews with middle managers and executives plus observations and documentary evidence.	Different levels of strategic contributions were found amongst the middle managers depending on the level of involvement in the formulation of strategy, the strength of influence and power from the doctors and the interactions between themselves and cross-organisationally. Unsurprisingly job insecurity also influenced response as did the amount of support provided. Disillusionment and disaffection were the results of role conflict and role ambiguity where middle managers could not meet contradictory and unclear expectations. Within the UK NHS, middle managers were inhibited from strategic proactivity by the uncertainties and changing pressures. Their role was more to support change than to drive change. Where middle managers were valued for their skills and experience this mediated role conflict and ambiguity and had the potential to develop strategic capability.	The findings add to the theory in that whilst underlining the dynamic experiences of middle managers, they demonstrate that in a professional bureaucracy middle managers do not enjoy the autonomy of Floyd and Wooldridge's findings, and that role transition brings role conflict and role ambiguity. In this environment middle managers are restricted from contributing to strategy.	Understanding how the valuing of middle managers could assist in their development as strategic actors. Also how do stakeholders influence the capability of middle managers to perform more strategically, and what are the role specifics that lead into strategic drive?

Authors	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Julia Balogun and Gerry Johnson, 2005	The social processes of interaction between middle managers as they make sense of top-down change initiatives and how their sensemaking affects organisational changes and outcomes.	Middle managers who were both the target and agent for change within the core business division of a recently privatised utility in response to impending regulatory change.	A group of 26 middle managers were selected as diarists to keep details and answers to five questions: What is going well and why; What is going badly and why; What problems do you foresee; What have been the significant events; What rumours are circulating? The diarists were also interviewed and formed focus groups. Documentation was also collected.	A wide range of interlinked counteracting and congruent change consequences were identified as a new working relationship developed between the divisions. The change recipients' interpretations through on-going social interactions created both intended and unintended outcomes. Old schemata informs and sense making triggers lead to social processes of interaction resulting in developing schemata leading to emergent change outcomes. If the meanings and interpretations are consistent with those intended they will behave in a way that is consistent with intended outcomes leading to congruent change consequences. If the meanings and interpretations differ this may lead to counteracting change consequences.	The importance of individuals' interpretations through social processes. This analysis shows that as change progresses, most of the reported interactions that contribute to the emergent change outcomes occur informally between middle managers in their everyday work. The framework provides explanation and empirical evidence to account for how intended and unintended consequences arise out of inter-recipient sensemaking. It links social processes of interaction to the outcomes of implementation interventions.	The lateral and informal processes which have been seen to be influential on change outcomes have not received any focus and are not evident in typical change models. There are gaps around how managers intervene in sensemaking processes and which interventions are most successful and why. More work is required to understand more about how middle level managers make sense of and contribute strategically to different types of change in different change contexts.

Author s	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Alesia Slocum, 2005	How middle level managers' different uses and modes of time influence their adaptation to strategic technological change.	A longitudinal study of the middle level managers involved in the implementation of new sales force technology in a global logistics company.	Analysis of time related to this case incorporating strategic change, schema theory, structuration theory and Strategy-as-practice. 42 interviews were conducted over a three year period using structuration theory as a lens (Chesley and Huff, 1998; Giddens, 1984). A schema comparison was conducted as defined by Balogun and Johnson (2004). Time was seen as something people strategically 'do' rather than 'have' (Jarzabkowski, 2004;	Two reconceptualisations of time were involved between the point when an initial schema was held to a different point when a different schema was held. Already held schemata were considered when given new structures. The data showed this happening recursively. Their schemata visibly changed over time. Change was found to be a process of middle level manager sensemaking and sensegiving (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). Time is used recursively by middle level managers, giving them an expanded role in the strategic change process.	Synthesises the meta theory of structuration and combines it with theories on strategic change, schemata, and on Strategy-as-practice. Confirmed that middle level managers change their thoughts and actions over time, but also shows how people change their thoughts and actions regarding time. Demonstrates the process of strategic change through the changing perceptions of time in practice. The cognitive processes of the middle level managers studied were a vital part of the change process.	The middle level managers were recipients of the strategic change in the form of having to use new technology. Whilst they demonstrated sensemaking and sensegiving cognitive processes and practices relating to time and their strategic role in the adaptation to and implementation of the change, more understanding is required of middle level managers' practices in strategizing during periods of strategic renewal.

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Author s	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Saku Mantere, 2008	How and why role expectations of middle level managers' impact by enabling or constraining their strategizing agency.	A study of 262 middle level managers across 12 organisations to understand how organisational strategy is realised in practical work activities in role. Exploring the interactions between top managers usually based centrally, and middle level managers based peripherally, and taking a middle level manager's view only.	Hermeneutical research involving semi-structured interviews of middle level managers responsible for a functional area of strategic relevance, using a storytelling approach. This data was analysed together with contextual documentation. The micro-narratives were coded and analysed at three stages, adopting the Floyd and Wooldridge (1992:194) categorisation of middle level managers' activity in the strategy	Identified eight enablers of middle level managers' agency, and how these are linked to middle level managers' ability to meet role expectations. Enabled agency enables middle level managers to more successfully fulfil their crucial strategic roles.	How key the enabling conditions are to middle level managers' ability in their role to strategize, and the importance of the relationship between top managers and middle level managers from not only a dialogical view but a key insight is the extending to a reciprocal perspective of role expectations as well: That enabling middle level management agency is an outcome variable for micro-strategizing (Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003) and is therefore a legitimate concern in strategy practice.	More exploration is required around different contextualisation (Regner, 2003) and what other factors contribute to strategizing practices of middle level managers. Also to understand more the reciprocal perspective. Also what other influences in addition to top managers are factors in strategizing practice for middle level managers.

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Author s	Research Q/Focus	Study	Research Method	Findings	Contribution	Gap
Graeme Currie, 2010	What is the role of middle level managers' in strategic change in the public sector? Addressing a gap in the literature about middle level managers' roles in specific contexts and specifically the public sector (Dopson and Stewart, 1990).	A case study of middle managers involved in strategic marketing activity in an acute trust based hospital over a two year period, 85 interviews, observation and analysis of documentation .	A processual approach (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Pettigrew et al., 1992) and typology of influence upon strategic change (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997) to investigate the role of middle level managers in the NHS. Looking at the upward and downward influences of middle managers, allowing for an enhanced role using the Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992 framework.	The data came from the change narrative of the central directorate where responsibility for the marketing lies with the business development team, and the change narrative of middle managers from seven clinical directorates involved in a series of marketing workshops.	Some aspects of deliberate strategy were realised, but some were not due to middle manager resistance to deliberate strategy (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997). Emergent strategy was subject to middle managers who embraced the role of 'part time marketeer' when it fitted with their perception of important contextual features (Pettigrew et al., 1992) and addressed operational issues. Middle level managers also took on boundary spanning roles (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997).	This contributes to the growing assertion that middle level managers can add value to organisations (Frohman and Johnson, 1993; Smith, 1997) and this study shows that middle managers can take on an enhanced role. More work is required on the skills middle level managers need to enhance their boundary spanning capability.

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