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Critical sensemaking : challenges and promises

Aromaa, Eeva

Emerald

CRITICAL SENSEMAKING: CHALLENGES AND PROMISES

Eeva Aromaa and Päivi Eriksson

Business School, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

Jean Helms Mills

Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada, and

Business School, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

Esa Hiltunen and Maarit Lammassaari

Business School, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland, and

Albert J. Mills

Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada, and

Business School, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze current literature on critical sensemaking (CSM) to assess its significance and potential for understanding the role of agency in management and organizational studies. The analysis involves an examination of a selection of 51 applied studies that cite, draw on and contribute to CSM, to assess the challenges and potential of utilizing CSM. The paper reveals i) the range of organizational issues that this work has been grappling with; ii) the unique insights that CSM has revealed in the study of management and organizations; and iii) some of the challenges and promises of CSM for studying agency in context. This sets up discussion of organizational issues and insights provided by CSM to reveal its potential in dealing with issues of agency in organizations. The sheer scope of CSM studies indicates that it has relevance for a range of management researchers, including those interested in behaviour at work, theories of organization, leadership and crisis management, diversity management, emotion, ethics and justice, and many more. The main focus of the paper is restricted to providing a working knowledge of critical sensemaking rather than other approaches to agency. The paper outlines the challenges and potential for applying the CSM theory and reveals the range of problem-solving issues that CSM studies have been applied to. This is the first major review of the challenges and potential of applying CSM; concluding with a discussion of its strengths and limitations and providing a summary of insights for future work.

Introduction

In this paper, we lay out the growing importance of work on critical sensemaking (CSM) and its derivation in Weickian sensemaking. This entails an important comparison between Weick's notion of organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and Helms Mills (2003) notion of critical sensemaking. The comparison serves to delineate the fundamental epistemological differences and sociological foci between the two before going on to show the significance and importance of CSM within the organizational sciences.

Central to the paper, we will discuss and analyse a range of publications that cite, discuss and apply CSM to reveal i) the range of organizational issues that this work has been grappling with; ii) the unique insights that CSM have revealed in the study of management and organizations; and iii) some of the challenges and promises of CSM as a theory for studying agency in context.

An examination of selected publications on CSM over the past 15 years indicates a range of interests to management and organizational studies. Using the three criteria listed above, we focus our analysis on 51 recent publications, particularly applied studies that cite and draw on CSM. In addition to the wider review of CSM studies, we consider in more detail a further selection of studies that apply CSM in different ways. These studies include Thurlow's (2007) study of the role of language and discourse in organizational change; Hilde's (2013) examination of the sensemaking of Chinese immigrants to Canada when confronted with various policy requirements and practices; Hartt's (2013a) focus on the link between actor-networks and critical sensemaking in making sense of history; the work of Shenoy-Packer (2014) who examines the mediation of immigrants' workplace experiences and workplace aggressions in the United States; Russell's (2014) examination of how sense is made through restorative justice in a Canadian school system; and Ruel's (2018a) use of CSM as a way of weaving together a number of theoretical and methodological approaches to capture the complexity of discriminatory practices in the Canadian Space Agency.

The next section of the paper sets up an understanding of CSM through its early beginnings in the use of Weickian sensemaking to study organizational change. Having introduced four directions of CSM research in section three, we examine these studies to discuss the strengths and limitations of CSM in section four. The fifth section provides a thoroughgoing discussion of the challenges and promises of using CSM. The sixth section concludes the paper with a summary of insights for the future work of management scholarship and the potential contribution of CSM to our understanding of a reconceptualization of the role of agency in organizational contexts.

From weickian sensemaking to critical sensemaking

To understand the emergence of the CSM theory, we outline its early beginnings in the use of Weickian sensemaking to study organizational change, the emergent critique of the neglect of contextual factors and issues of power within Weickian sensemaking and the factors and debates that lead to the development of CSM. The etiology and development of Weick's notion of 'sensemaking' has been discussed at length elsewhere (Brown *et al*., 2014; Helms Mills *et al*., 2010; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) so we will only provide a brief outline, highlighting the points of relevance for this review.

Essentially, a long time in the making, Weick (1969) laid out the social psychological basis of his approach nearly two decades before he introduced the term (Weick, 1988) and a further decade before he laid out the contours of the approach, or 'recipe' as he called it (Weick, 1995). Since then the term sensemaking has almost become synonymous with Weick, despite the fact that it is used in a number of ways (including various spellings, e.g., sense making) by different scholars (see, for example, Gephart, 1984, who was focussing on 'making sense' shortly ahead of Weick).

Simply put, Weick (1995) sets out a series of social-psychological properties that allow the researcher to understand how organizational reality is produced as an outcome of individual (and collective) sensemaking. The properties include the *identity construction* of the sensemaker; the *cues* that people draw on to *enact* a particular sense of a situation by making sensemaking utterances *plausible*; and the *retrospective* (attaching a sense to something after the event), *ongoing* (feeling the need to constantly make sense of the environment) and *social* (drawing on the relevant sensemaking of others) influences on how sense is made.

In many ways, the sheer simplicity of the properties and Weick's oscillation between two key terms, properties and recipe, is likely responsible for much of the appeal of Weickian sensemaking. This oscillation has been noted as both a strength and a confusion in Weick's accounts of organizational sensemaking (Nord and Fox, 1996). Thus, while Weick's notion of sensemaking has been identified as promising to recover or reinvent agency in management and organizational studies (Nord and Fox, 1996), that promise has arguably foundered on its ability to cope with power (Helms Mills and Mills, 2000/2017). Nord and Fox (1996) have also noted that the idea of properties suggests a positivist notion of scientifically discernable cognitive activities that influence how people think, while the notion of recipe suggests an Interpretivist heuristic for understanding how organizational reality is constructed.

Working with Weick's (1995) properties to analyse organizational change Helms Mills (2003) noted that it did not adequately deal with the way that sensemaking is influenced by structural and discursive factors. Nor did it account for power (both structural and discursive) in its focus on the decision making of the individual sensemaker. This critique formed the basis of CSM that centrally includes (i) the notion of properties as an (interpretivist) heuristic for keeping the idea of agency as socio-psychological processes to the fore; (ii) Mills and Murgatroyd's (1991) notion of organizational rules as a way of capturing meso-structural influences on micro-senses and enactment of sensemaking; (iii) Unger's (1987) concept of formative context to assess the influence of macro-level pressures on sensemaking; and (iv) Foucault's (1979) theory of discourse to understand the mediations between all three levels of influence on the enactment of sensemaking (Helms Mills and Mills, 2000/2017; Helms Mills *et al.*, 2010). These ingredients were outlined in Helms Mills and Mills (2000/2017) and later developed further in Helms Mills et al. (2010). In terms of epistemological grounding Helms Mills et al. (2010) address the oscillating character of Weickian sensemaking and the problematic of the researcher's own sensemaking that is imposed on any study. They do this in three ways:

> [First], by seeking a triangulation of methodologies (interpretism, poststructuralism, and critical theory) to provide different frames of reference that can simultaneously ground and problematize (what we call) critical sensemaking's knowledge claims; second, by highlighting the heuristic as opposed to scientific character of the social psychological properties of

sensemaking; and third, . . . by taking a 'consciously reflexive' . . . approach that identifies the impossibility of 'coming to a foundational set of epistemological standards [. . .] while [maintaining] consistency with regard to the epistemological assumptions' we do deploy (Helms Mills *et al*., 2010, p. 181).

Aside from two theoretical pieces where CSM is outlined in detail (Helms Mills and Mills, 2000/2017; Helms Mills *et al*., 2010) and other conceptual papers, the approach has also been pursued through a series of applied studies. The following section provides details of the growth of CSM and introduces the range of CSM studies in recent years.

Four directions of CSM research

Based on an extensive internet search focused on the names of selected key CSM theorists Jean Helms Mills, Albert Mills and Amy Thurlow and specific reference to 'critical sensemaking', we noted a growing interest in CSM. Our search identified over 130 publications, consisting of journal articles, conference papers, and masters and doctoral theses, books and book chapters. A closer look revealed that there were 51 articles, book chapters and dissertations that either deal with the CSM theory or apply CSM in more detail. Although the publication dates range from 2003 to 2018, the great majority were published in the past five years. Also of interest is the far reaching foci of the various publications ranging from crisis management to workplace bullying. This variety of foci sets up discussion of the types of organizational issues and insights provided by CSM. For instance, the sheer scope of CSM studies indicates that it has relevance for a range of management researchers, including those interested in behaviour at work, theories of organization, leadership and crisis management, diversity management, emotion, business ethics, restorative justice, and many more.

The more cited works are Helms Mills and Mills (2000/2017), Helms Mills (2003), Mills and Helms Mills (2004/2017) and Helms Mills et al. (2010). A significant minority of the 51 studies we reviewed was wrestling with the application of CSM and provided a number of useful insights. Most of the studies that cite CSM and its theorists also cite Karl Weick's work on sensemaking, in particular Weick (1995) and Weick et al. (2005). In some cases, as we discuss below, the dual citing of CSM and Weickian sensemaking was an outcome of theoretically blurred attempts to treat sensemaking as a generally understood, sometimes atheoretical, concept. In other cases, CSM was introduced to point out the limitations of Weickian sensemaking in terms of power and structure.[i]

We have analysed the studies that apply CSM with the help of two questions (see Figure 1.). The first question: 'Whose critical sensemaking?' directs attention to whether the objective and main emphasis of the study is on the sensemaking of the study participants or the sensemaking of the researcher. The second question: 'What is the purpose of CSM?' directs attention to CSM both as a theory to be developed further and as a critical lens to other theories (e.g. Weickian sensemaking, actor network theory).

What is the purpose of CSM?

Focus on CSM theory

Agency

How CSM contributes to the study of agency?

Theory

How to conceptualize CSM?

Whose critical sensemaking?   Study participant ——————————— Researcher

Contextual sensemaking

How the critical dimensions of CMS affect sensemaking?

Fusion

How to enrich other theories with CSM?

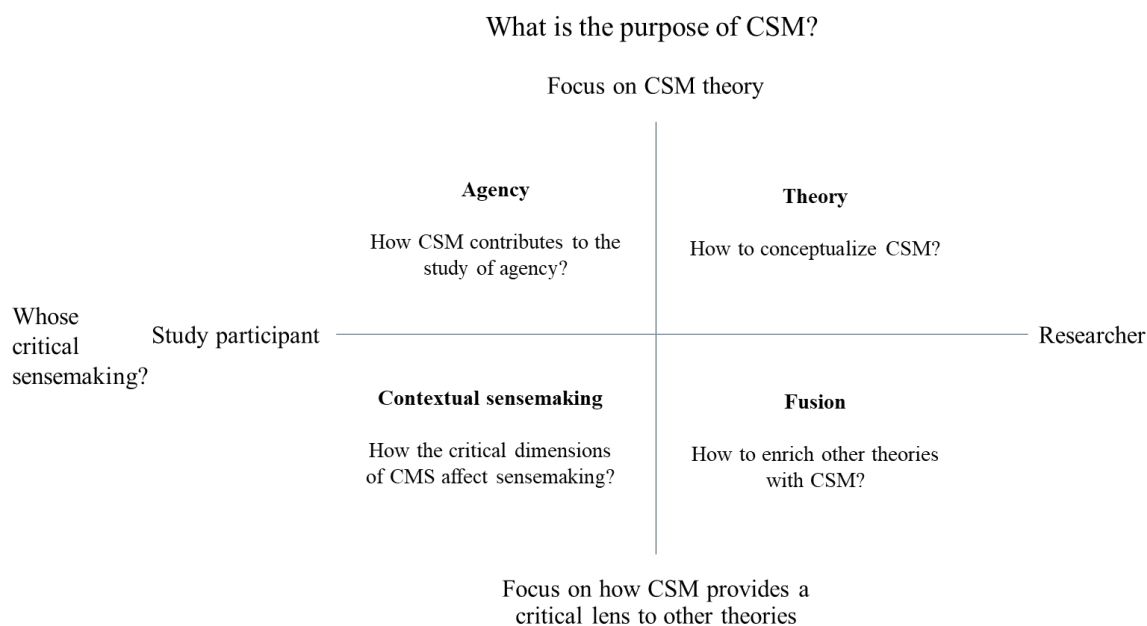Focus on how CSM provides a critical lens to other theories

Figure 1. The four directions of CSM research

We have used the two questions and the answers to them to outline four different directions of CSM research that we outline in Table 1. Identification of these four directions (Agency, Contextual Sensemaking, Theory and Fusion) allowed us to tackle the nuances of both empirical and theoretical contributions of the 51 CSM studies that we have reviewed. However, as we discuss in the analysis that follows, these directions are not mutually exclusive, but overlapping to some extent. Nevertheless, this categorization has helped us to offer an analysis that serves as a starting point for discussions presented at the end of this paper about the challenges and promises; strengths and limitations; and future opportunities of CSM research.

Table 1. Reviewed CSM research

The four directions of CSM research	Topical focus	References
Agency How CSM contributes to the study of agency? How formative context, rules and discourse/power become enacted in and around organizations?	Change, discourse, identity	Helms Mills (2003), Carroll et al. (2008), Thurlow (2009), Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009), Bishop (2014), Hartt (2014a), Thurlow and Helms Mills (2014), Montonen et al. (2018)
	Gender, intersectionality	Mills and Helms Mills (2004/2017), Helms Mills (2005); Hartt et al. (2012), Mercer et al. (2015), Paludi and Helms Mills (2013), Paludi and Helms Mills (2015), Cherneski (2018), Ruel (2018a; 2018b); Ruel et al. (2018)
	Experiences of immigrant professionals, care workers, researchers	Hilde (2013), Prasad (2014), Shenoy-Packer (2014), Tomkins and Eatough (2014), Hilde and Mills (2015), Hilde (2017), Hilde and Mills (2017)
Contextual Sensemaking How the critical dimensions of CSM (formative context, rules and discourse/power) affect sensemaking in and around organizations?	Organizational crises	O'Connell and Mills (2003), Mullen et al. (2006)
	Organizational change, strategy, identity	Thurlow (2007), Savage (2012), Murray (2014), Russell (2014), Jones (2015), Russell and Crocker (2016), Moilanen et al. (2018)
	Organizational emotion rules	Aromaa et al. (in press)
Theory How to conceptualize CSM?	Interconnections between structure, positivist and postpositivist	Helms Mills and Mills (2000/2017), Mills (2008), Helms Mills and Mills (2009), Helms Mills et al. (2010), Mills and Helms Mills (2010), Thurlow (2010)
Fusion How to enrich other theories with CSM?	Spirituality	Long and Helms Mills (2010)
	Global careers	Yue and MacMillan (2013)
	Actor networks	Hartt (2013a; 2013b), Hartt and Jones (2013), Hartt (2014b), Hartt et al. (2014), Hartt (2015), Hartt (2016), Hartt and Peters (2016)

Agency

The majority of the empirical CSM research in our review (25 studies) deal with the question of agency in three topical areas of study: change and discourse; gender and intersectionality and immigration. Some of the authors explore agency in relation to the CSM elements and the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of their study, such as gender and rules (Mills and Helms Mills, 2004/2017), critical discourse analysis and macro-level discourse (Cherneski, 2018), power and resistance (Carroll *et al.*, 2008) and intersectionality and identity (Ruel *et al.*, 2018). Others have emphasized CSM as a suitable lens to capture and analyze the contextual meaning of agency or the relationship between agency and power (Montonen *et al.*, 2018; Paludi and Helms Mills, 2013; Ruel, 2018a).

In seven papers, the notion of agency plays a central role in the study (Bishop, 2014; Hilde, 2013; 2017; Hilde and Mills, 2015; 2017; Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2009; Tomkins and Eatough, 2014). In these studies, the authors explicate the value of CSM to capture agency and address contextual agency, e.g. how the researchers view agency, and how the concept is important to the study. For instance, from the theoretical point of view, Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009) demonstrate competing perspectives on agency in the organizational change literature and how in each of these studies agency is conceptualized through a different ontology, and how with an approach of CSM, elements of two discourses of agency could be combined. In addition, they explicate how the concept of agency is important to their analysis (since sensemaking occurs at the individual level) and how they view agency in terms of individual's ability to enact meaning in relation to the local site of sensemaking and organizing.

Tomkins and Eatough (2014) stress the relevance of CSM to capture agency in context 'for it helps to focus on how and why some, and not other, experiences become subjectively meaningful for people, particularly in relation to the notion of identity' (p. 8). However, not all CSM researchers explicitly operate with the term agency, but rather study different aspects of identity. From this perspective, these studies are interested in how individuals enact formative context in their identity work and resist change and exclusion (Hartt, 2014a; Hartt *el al.*, 2012; Helms Mills, 2003; Helms Mills, 2005; Mercer *et al.*, 2015; Paludi and Helms Mills, 2015; Prasad, 2014; Shenoy-Packer, 2014; Thurlow, 2009; Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2014).

In the following, we will analyse the work of three CSM scholars on agency and related issues in more detail.

Hilde: Immigrant Experience and Sensemaking Contexts

Hilde's (2013) study moved the application of CSM from organizational change (Helms Mills, 2003; Thurlow, 2007) to the experiences of Hong Kong immigrants to Canada. Hilde's study looks at those generally outside of and peripheral to a particular institution, namely, Canadian government immigration policies and practices. Formerly herself a Hong Kong born immigrant to Canada, Hilde (2013, p. v) was interested in how professional immigrants from Hong Kong to Canada make sense of their immigration experiences and what that can reveal why a substantial number leave in their first year in Canada.

Methodological approach: Dissatisfied with survey and generalized accounts of immigrants' experiences of moving to Canada, Hilde (2013) wanted to get inside those individual experiences by focusing on how and why Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) immigrants make sense of their experiences as opposed to reacting to a series of structured questions. She wanted to understand how (specifically HKC) immigrants made sense of their experiences – especially in regard to issues of employment and profession – and how those experiences were shaped in the formative context (Unger, 1987) of Canadian immigration policy and informed by extant discourses of immigration. Like Thurlow (2007), Hilde combined CSM with critical discourse analysis to understand the interrelationship between 'the local and formative contexts of sensemaking' (Hilde 2013, p. v). She did this through a series of interviews with HKC immigrants, which were subsequently analysed for sensemaking cues (e.g., identity construction, issues of plausibility, etc.) and discursive themes.

Analysis: Hilde's (2013) findings suggest that in those cases where the individuals are outsiders (i.e., newcomers both to an organization but also to the country itself) their agency can be buried in 'realist surveys and interviews [that produce] a pre-packaged sense of the immigrant experience' (p. vi). She argues that focusing on the voice and reflections of immigrants enables us to see the hidden discourses at play and restore a greater sense of agency to those who are experiencing marginalization. Part of those reflections involves a process whereby immigrants are 'framed and structured within institutional guidelines in the quest for employment' (p. 178). These forces are reinforced by extant discourses of immigration (e.g., the notion of Western values; social integration and the importance of local Canadian knowledge and experience) that are utilized in materials to encourage compliance and the acceptance of lower expectations. Sadly, in Hilde's study this lead to two very different forms of agency – acceptance or flight[ii].

Reflection: Hilde (2013) suggests that critical sensemaking is a powerful but also an evasive approach. She noted that with less than a dozen empirical studies available for reference at the time of her study, 'it is extremely hard for novice researchers to master the wide range of elements and concepts in a short period of time' (Hilde 2013, p. 190). For future research, she suggests that an important research area of CSM could be to capture other power dynamics in a social setting. When CSM is conducted in group settings or naturally occurring incidents, the social dynamics may be more visible for analysis than in an interview setting. Due to the nature of discursive strategies, an individual actor does not operate in a vacuum, but also within others' existence.

Hilde recommends that future research on immigrant sensemaking should focus on a sample with more successful voices, so as to examine their discursive activities in a more critical sense. In a recent study, she revisits her data to understand, what she calls 'the in-between state of mind' that reveals how immigrants deal 'with competing senses of their situation in deciding how or whether to adjust to their new environment' (Hilde and Mills, 2017, p. 150). The findings of this study further 'indicate that immigrant experiences are often filtered through the competing sensemaking of the immigrants themselves and those of the so-called `host' community' (p. 150). This moves the idea of agency to a new level of abstraction that encourages the CSM researcher to examine influences on the cognitive senses of situation faced by people in the midst of change.

Shenoy-Packer: Making Sense of Microaggressions

The work of Shenoy-Packer (2014) examines 'the work realities of immigrant professionals (IPs) in the United States' with particular focus on the role of microaggressions and sensemaking strategies for dealing with them (p. 257). She is interested in revealing the 'what-is-not-being said subtexts underlying dominant-nondominant communication' and how immigrant professionals (IPs) navigate them (p. 271). As with Hilde (2013), Shenoy-Packer (2014) problematizes the "outsider-insider space that IPs have to negotiate as they continue to 'traverse the delicate liminality or the state of in-between-ness and ambiguity' (Beech 2011, p. 285) that exists amid their search for cross-cultural conciliatory permanent identities, affiliations, and community' (pp. 259).

Methodological approach: Shenoy-Packer (2014) uses interviews with IPs to ascertain their workplace experiences – especially of microaggressions[iii] – and their sensemaking strategies to deal with them. She asked interviewees two broad questions: 'How do IPs experience microaggressions?' and 'what sensemaking strategies do IPs use to navigate microaggression?' (p. 261). Her study revealed a range of strategies that IPs use to cope with microaggressions, including those that were compliant with insider expectations (e.g., giving-in and self-blaming) and those that involved some level of resistance or avoidance. The latter ranged from ways of making negative criticisms palatable (e.g., blaming ignorance by co-workers for failing to understand the IPs background), to developing coping strategies (e.g., creating dual selves). Somewhere in between there were attempts to understand the sense making of the aggressive co-worker through perspective-taking.

Analysis: Shenoy-Packer (2014) raises three key issues regarding agency and context. First, she draws attention to the impact of shocks to the system (Weick, 1995) caused by the perceived presence or increased presence of IPs and the reaction of insiders (i.e., those who are established members) who try to make sense of the changes. Second, Shenoy-Packer focuses on the insider-outsider (i.e., the latter being those who are newcomers to the organization) dynamic to reveal the different potentials for agency in contexts of inherently uneven power structures where the immigrant worker is initially marginalized and on 'whom the burden of mindfulness and successful identity negotiation often falls' (p. 260). This brings us to the third focus on the 'underlying power dynamics within discriminatory communicative spaces' (p. 270) that remind us that agency more often than not occurs in situations of power. Thus, for Shenoy-Packer (2014, p. 260) 'CSM enables us to understand how individuals make sense of their environment at a micro/local level [while acknowledging] the entrenched power relations in their broader workplace/social/macro contexts.'

Reflection: In drawing on insights from CSM, Shenoy-Packer (2014) makes us aware of the hidden aspects of sensemaking, i.e., aspects that may not be immediately obvious to the sensemaker. She refers to these forms of communication as the 'what-is-not-being said subtexts underlying dominant-nondominant communication' (p. 271). In explaining this aspect of sensemaking, she goes on to suggest that 'microaggressions are indirect, possibly unintentional' senses of a given situation (p. 259). Thus, our attention is directed to the role of confusion in the making of sense, leaving 'the victim wondering, Did what I think happened, really happen? Was this a deliberate act or an unintentional slight? How should I respond.'

This has implications for how we understand identity work and agency in CSM theory. It can involve cultural codes that also have to be learned as part of the sensemaking process, in the process `newcomers' may be influenced through the development of a 'learned helplessness' (Shenoy-Packer, 2014, p. 260) that may not be immediately obvious to the researcher studying sensemaking processes. As she further observes, 'the burden of mindfulness and successful identity negotiation often falls' on the marginalized sensemaker (p. 260). Such people 'may lack the sociocultural capital of cultural insiders, which forces them into unequal power relationships that engender specific communication strategies' (p. 260) that may lead to the muting or creation of dual selves as a coping mechanism.

Ruel: Multiplicity of I's in Intersectionality

In her dissertation, Ruel (2018a, see also 2018b), a former mission control manager with the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), focuses on how there are so few science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) -professional women managers in the Canadian space industry. In order to address this issue, she investigates the impact of workplace gendered discourses and power-relations on these professional women's identities. The goal of her study is to examine the discursive processes utilized by STEM-professional women, men, and transgender individuals in the Canadian space industry and reveal the disciplinary power-relations involved in the STEM-professional woman's experience of exclusion.

Methodological approach: Drawing on poststructuralism and intersectional feminism, Ruel (2018a) studies identity construction of the STEM-professional women managers by drawing on the concept of anchor point[iv]. In her research setting, she examines 'the relationship between the Canadian space industry's rules, meta-rules and social values (forms of context), an individual's range of anchor points based on intersectionality scholarship (forms of knowledge), and the experiences of discourses, critical sensemaking, and exclusion of individuals (forms of experience)' (p. 9). Her research data includes participants' narratives and stories told by women and men and gathered during unstructured interviews, because she emphasizes that identities categories are best left to the participants to identify in their own voice. The men's discourses are used to ensure the richness of data reflecting the complexity of the social reality and to triangulate the data. The research data includes a variety of documents including CSA demographic statistics, which showcase some of rules, meta-rules and social practices of the STEM-professional women exclusion from STEM management positions. The data also includes participant e-mails and corporate publicly available reports, which are seen as an integral part of the data triangulation process.

Analysis: By using CSM theory, Ruel (2018a) weaves together discourses, institutional rules and meta-rules, formative contexts, and critical sensemaking in order to reveal the consequences of power effects leading to STEM-professional women exclusion. Her findings based on the narratives and stories show a wide spectrum of productive and oppressive power-relations, where STEM-professional women's exclusion experiences - state of being, and of becoming the Other - are a mix of such productive and oppressive processes. In her study, she shows how the exclusion of the STEM-professional women is not an issue of binary relationships between black and white,

and men versus women exclusionary experiences, but is rather a much more complex phenomenon.

Reflection: Ruel (2018a) notes that the study of the influence of anchor points on the exclusion of STEM-professional women from management positions, within the space industry, was a complex task. She emphasizes that CSM theory provided her a way to tie together all parts of a complex theoretical apparatus, by first untangling theoretical elements to make it possible to analyze an extensive range of anchor points, along with the social- and self-identities, and their relationship to rules, meta-rules, formative contexts, dominant ideas and practices, and socio-psychological processes. Moreover, she highlights the confusion in relation to CSM and reflects how she explored some side research initiatives (e.g. Ruel *et al.*, 2018) to gain a better understanding of the CSM methodology. For her, agency is a complex relationship of oscillation between anchor points and discursive contexts. Her focus on anchor points adds an interesting element to agency by revealing how sensemaking can involve oscillation between different identity points in the process of making sense.

Contextual sensemaking

Ten papers in our review examine how CSM provides a critical lens to Weickian sensemaking through a focus on structural, discursive, and formative contexts. The focus of these papers is on how various contexts intersect with cognitive positioning to create sensemaking.

In the early studies, the role of CSM has been to enrich empirical studies based on Weick's seven properties by directing attention to how context, rules, discourse and power shape sensemaking based in contexts such as organizational crises (Mullen *et al.*, 2006; O'Connell and Mills, 2003). The more recent papers have abandoned the strict focus on Weick's seven properties and have drawn from the different elements of CSM theory. Also, in these later works, researchers' use interview data in addition to documentary data, which has shifted the focus of empirical analysis towards the critical sensemaking of study participants.

Murray (2014) and Jones (2015) both used CSM theory in their dissertations to understand how context influences individuals' sensemaking. However, these authors demonstrated different epistemological understandings of context: whereas for Murray (2014) narratives create the context, Jones (2015) has understood context more as existing outside reality and put more focus on sensemaking in her empirical analysis. In two of the most recent CSM applications, Moilanen et al. (2018) focus on various understanding of power in the individual sensemaking trajectories unfolding over time. Aromaa et al. (in press) studied how the leader and the employees enacted three emotion rules with specific power relations when making sense of innovation through parodic performances. In the study by Savage (2012), focusing on organizational change, CSM theory played a minor but still important role: she used CSM only in the final phase of her study to understand her findings.

In the following, we will analyse work of two CSM scholars on contextual sensemaking in more detail.

Thurlow on Organizational Change

Thurlow's (2007) dissertation study of language, power and identity in organizational change was one of the earliest to adopt CSM. Studying the process of organizational change in a community college system and the merger of two hospitals, Thurlow set out to understand the influence of the language of organizational change and its significance in producing and maintaining a discourse of change. To that end, she fused Foucauldian discourse analysis with CSM to explore "the linkages between [the] broader social discourse and two local sites where the language of change is produced, reproduced, resisted, enacted and made meaningful by individuals in organizations' (Thurlow, 2007, p. 4). In particular, she was interested in how a sense of change is enacted and how this influences the experiences of those involved.

Methodological approach: Thurlow's (2007) application of Foucauldian discourse analysis was done through the analysis of various related organization texts (i.e., memos, internal reports, annual reports, media articles, government reports and advertisements). Her choice of Foucauldian discourse analysis is designed to reveal the discursive character of organizational change that can be seen to flow through and play a dominant role in management decision-making processes within specific organizations. This approach serves to reveal an important influence on the disruption and/or maintenance of practices and associated thinking. However, for Thurlow, analysis of the various texts does not speak to the experiences of the actors involved, either in terms of the way key actors (i.e., those with organizational power) develop 'individual narratives of change' or how various actors (powerful or otherwise) experience organizational change (p. 84). To address the latter, she engaged in a series of interviews across the selected organizations to try to understand how the sense of change is created, including issues of acceptance and resistance.

Analysis: Thurlow (2007) analyses a constant on-going sensemaking process that relies to some degree on the ebbs and flows of the sensemaking of various actors and discursive processes. This can be glimpsed in the process of change management where powerful actors seek to take an organization in an apparently new direction. She sees these key actors as engaged in reflecting on powerful discursive influences about the 'imperative of change'. This has several implications for agency. As Thurlow (2007, p. 191) argues, 'change is actually a discursive process, not about "changing" but about the mutual constitution of language and identity in a process of making sense of a discourse of change.' This provides one important level of agency as senior managers draw on the discursive character of change to convince the organization to move in a different direction. In Thurlow's (2007, p. 198) study, the privileging of key actors' sense of the need for a new direction 'appeared to be very much tied to consistency with a dominant narrative of change.' However, it also evoked other forms of agency as other actors sought to resist the proposed changes. For example, 'resistance, in this context, is seen as an individual process whereby individuals make sense of themselves in the tension between the identities presented in a discourse of, say, a good employee, and the identities required by other dimensions of their lives, i.e., parents, citizens, etc.' (Thurlow, 2007, p. 179).

At yet a third level, Thurlow (2007, p. 193) reveals how selected professional groups (e.g., doctors) can influence a sense of the changed organization through reference to 'identities available in discourses of efficiency, public accountability, globalization, nationalism and regionalism, and health care.' In other words, agency can lie in the interplay of practices and discursive influences: 'As local sensemaking happens within a broader context, the linkage between local action and

discursive effects on the level of grand discourse cannot be overlooked' (Thurlow, 2007, p. 169). However, as the last quote suggests, a focus on discourse alone does not help us to understand agency and the translation of powerful discourse into a diffused sense of change. CSM – focusing on how individuals make sense of change in the context of structural factors – provides a way of analyzing 'the relationship between discourse and agency in an attempt to connect the individual actions associated with change at the local level with the broader social discourse of change which operates on a global level' (Thurlow, 2007, p. 195). In other words, she perceives that the nature of how the language of change becomes privileged within organizations also illustrates the relationship between discourse and agency. This involves looking at the process of how individuals within organization make sense of meaning and language and eventually views the effects of language on individuals.

Reflection: Since her dissertation, Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009; 2014) have elaborated on CSM in two related articles, which emphasize that 'by addressing the issues of power and privilege in sensemaking, CSM offers insight into our understanding of the relationship between power and meaning' (Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2014, p. 248). Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009) further perceive that because CSM combines notions of sensemaking and organizational power in an analytic approach, it enables us to explore power structures and relationships. In her revision of CSM, Thurlow (2010) continues that through CSM with its focus on power relations, the relationship between individual actions and broader societal issues of power and privilege can be analyzed.

Russell: Institutionalization of restorative justice in schools

In this master's thesis, Russell (2014, see also Russell and Crocker, 2016) draws on CSM to explain why, a restorative justice approach to dealing with disciplinary problems, was adopted in a particular Canadian Elementary school. He draws on CSM to analyze how 'power can shape overall formative contexts and influence the individual sensemaking processes of those involved in a change process' (Russell, 2014, p. i).

Methodological approach: The approach taken centred around a case study analysis (drawing on the work of Yin) and interviews 'with several participants involved in the implementation process' (Russell, 2014, p. i). Russel frames his data collection and analysis through a criminology approach, specifically informed by critical sensemaking theory. He built his interviews around five key questions, asking: What happened? Why were restorative practices chosen? How was [restorative practice] . . . selected? Whose voices were heard in the change process? How did the different divisions (i.e., staff and teachers) understand the change.

Analysis: Russell contends that the methodological approach taken allowed him to 'identify key barriers and facilitations involved in the implementation of restorative approaches at [the] school.' (p. i) He concludes that the 'facilitating factors involved in the implementation of restorative approaches at this school . . . included strong leadership, strong grounding in restorative philosophy, surrendering control to teachers, and a commitment to ongoing sensemaking. Barriers included: strict regulation by the education system, the packaging of restorative approaches as a program, and closed-mindedness on the part of teachers' (p. i).

Reflection: Reflecting on the value and challenges of CSM, Russel argues that CSM offers 'a lens … [that] takes into account issues of power, context and the existing organizational rules of the organization'; [providing] 'a more analytical approach to answer [his] research questions' (p. 5). In particular, he agrees with Helms Mills *et al.*, (2010, p. 852), that CSM 'offers a social psychological means of understanding the process by which different meanings are attributed to the same situation.' (p. 33). And that 'individuals engage in sensemaking to make sense of situations that disrupt normal routines . . . [forcing] people to deal with or make sense of them' (Helms Mills *et al.*, 2010, p. 852, cited in Russell (2014, p. 33). Further, Russel (2014, p. 48) contends that sensemaking 'offers insights into how individuals interpret change through their own eyes.' He goes on to raise one specific problem area in applying CSM: how can CSM assist in identifying evidence of an ambiguous sensemaking situation where multiple interpretations occurred? He further suggests that this raises interesting questions about what sensemaking outcome that the CSM researcher should focus on in such situations.

Theory

Six theoretical papers have a main focus of conceptualizing CSM as a theory. Perhaps unsurprising, all these papers emanate from the work of Helms Mills, Mills and Thurlow. In Mills (2008) the focus is not so much on the theorization of CSM as on encouraging critical researchers to re-engage with the debates on the relationship between agency and structure. Largely a friendly critique of Weick's sensemaking, the paper encourages researchers to revisit Weick's work with a critical eye 'to learn from [Weickian] sensemaking and how [we] can overcome some of its apparent deficiencies' (p. 29). Mills (2008, p. 29) goes on to contend that we need to revisit the agency-structure debate if we 'want to understand how structuration is structured; discourse is discursive; postcolonialism is posted; isomorphism morphs; techniques of the self are technically possible; gendering is gendered; local is localized; or praxis is practiced.'

Thereafter, Helms Mills and Mills (2009) outlined the trajectory of critical sensemaking as originating from a focus on organizational rules to one on how sense is made of such rules. Drawing on Weickian sensemaking and its fusion with organizational rules, Helms Mills and Mills (2009, p. 175) contend that using 'Weick's sensemaking properties, we can see how (organizational) identity can constrain an individual's sensemaking.' This was leading up to 2010 which proved to be an expansive year in terms of theorization of CSM. Thurlow's (2010) encyclopedic account focused specially on context and power to differentiate between CSM and Weickian sensemaking: 'Critical sensemaking puts the sensemaking in context by including issues of power and privilege in the process of understanding why some language, social practices, and experiences become meaningful for individuals and others do not' (p. 257). These links are reinforced as Mills and Helms Mills (2010) apply CSM to the study of gender discrimination.

Finally, Helms Mills, Thurlow, and Mills (2010) mapped out the overall ontological, epistemological and methodological differences between Weickian and Critical sensemaking (see above). In the process they set out to define CSM through its differences with Weickian sensemaking.

Fusion

Ten papers in our review have addressed the question of how CSM can be integrated or fused together with other theories and conceptual frameworks. In these studies, the role of CSM has been to direct attention to how context, rules, discourse and power play out in theoretical discussions on spirituality (Long and Helms Mills, 2010) and empirical research based on critical career theory (Yue and MacMillan, 2013). This is a recent direction of CSM research; using CSM as a critical lens to enrich theoretical discussions within a specific research community. In these papers, the focus has been on researchers' rather than study participants' critical sensemaking.

On the other hand, CSM studies on agency, which have a strong empirical focus and an interest in the sensemaking of study participants, have also emphasized the capacity of CSM to provide a critical lens to other theoretical discussions. Examples of these are Helms Mills (2003) and Thurlow (2007) on organizational change, Hilde (2013; 2017) on immigration and Ruel (2018a) on intersectionality.

Starting from the dissertation of Hartt (2013a), most of the studies aiming to fuse or integrate CSM with other theories have focused on actor network theory.

Hartt: Critical Sensemaking, History and the Non-Corporeal Actant (NCA)

Hartt's (2013a) interest in CSM involves a complex weaving of CSM, actor-networks and history. The primary interest is in explaining the role and production of history. Starting from his dissertation, Hartt's research sets out to understand how certain accounts of the past contribute to particular organizational practices and, in turn, become shared accounts or histories. His undertaking involved archival research of an airline company (Air Canada) and an exploration of the way that stories of the past are made sense of and developed through networks of relationships.

Methodological approach: Hartt's (2013a) work is grounded in ANTi-History (Durepos and Mills, 2012) – an approach to history that views historical accounts as outcomes of the knowledge production of networks of actor relations (Latour, 2005) rather than actual accounts of the past. The question then is not so much 'what is history?' as 'how is history produced?' The two questions are related, with the latter explaining the former. From that perspective, he sets out to trace the sets of relations that constituted a specific storyline (or history) and how certain actors came to make sense of that story. This involved archival research on Air Canada and a focus on a particular story viz. the company's 1967 decision to hire Yves Pratte as the Chairman and CEO of the airline. This particular decision was chosen because of the controversy involved. Pratte, a lawyer, was the first CEO (and senior manager) from outside the ranks of the company. Pratt was also the first Francophone to lead the airline. The decision was made by the government of the day in the face of union and senior management opposition who had expected the deputy Chairman to succeed the out-going Chair. In tracing sets of relationships Hartt (2013a) drew on actor-network theory (Latour, 2005) to attempt to follow sets of human and non-human (e.g. pilots and airplanes) actors in the construction of the (idea of) the airline. Hartt then used CSM to examine how key groups of actors – unions, government, and airline management – made sense of the process.

Analysis: Hartt's (2013a) findings led him to two important insights. First, his work points out the instability of histories. He uncovered three strongly held and competing histories of the Pratte appointment, each serving to inhibit the development of one dominant history of the airline at a particular point in time. Second, he conjectures that histories themselves could be non-embodied yet powerful actants (i.e., influences on human actors). For example, the idea that we are making history can powerfully influence how we behave and how we feel about a given situation. He refers to these influences as Non-Corporeal Actants, or NCAs. An NCA is a presence that does not wholly rely on individual sensemakers or non-human actors. It is, for want of a better word, a thought practice, which is realized through the on-going sensemaking of networks of actors where discrete bits and pieces of a storyline are more-or-less reproduced through a series of relational and sensemaking activities. For example, the idea of an airline precedes the actual experience of working for an airline and while those who come to constitute an airline may be said to socially construct its boundaries and purpose they do so in part by drawing on fragments of the idea of an airline. Mignolo (1991) captures this well in his idea of Latin America and how it is kept alive through various concrete practices and disparate, often unconscious ways of thinking. This provides fresh insights by pointing out the powerful influence of non-embodied ideas. It also points to the potential for agency in the intercedes between competing discourses (Dye and Mills, 2011) and in the reproduction of an NCA.[v]

Reflection: Hartt (2013a) explains that he initially brought together ANT (Callon, 1999; Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005; Latour, 2005; Law and Hassard, 2005; Venturini, 2010) and CSM because of his dissatisfaction with the explanations of effects found in empirical work using either ANT or CSM separately. While either of the narratives of ANT and CSM were complete and compelling to him in the beginning, he wanted to demonstrate how the black boxes (i.e., established ideas) of both ANT and CSM may illuminate each other. CSM was helpful in providing a perspective to actor-network theory of 'individual choice that situates a source of power and influence in the process of sensemaking' (Hartt 2013a, p. 84). In relation to ANT, the role of CSM was to 'build a plausible understanding of how we make sense of our decisions from within a social existence' (p. 84). When reflecting on his study, Hartt argues however that the social of CSM could be described by the assemblage of ANT. In a similar way, the translation produced by a network could be viewed as the result of the choices of the individual sensemaker as described by CSM.

Hartt (2013a) suggests that it was the interaction of a post-ANT approach informed by ANTi-History (Durepos and Mills, 2012b) combined with CSM analysis that led him to elevate the status of ideas to actants without bodies, i.e. non-corporeal actants that he calls NCAs. According to him, the concept of NCA is important because it encourages us to think more critically about the role of ideas, beliefs and values in the formation and character of networks and in the processes of making sense of things. He further notes that exploring the interaction of ANT and CSM required devising seven deconstructing moves of interrelating ideas from to be able to perform the qualitative analysis in his study.

The strengths and limitations of CSM

In analysing the application of CSM we initially reviewed over 51 publications that either referred to CSM in particular and the CSM works of Jean Helms Mills, Albert Mills and Amy Thurlow. With few exceptions, those researchers who have adopted the CSM theory in their empirical studies are drawn to the relationship between agency and power to analyse specific acts of sensemaking. As we have shown in our analysis, this factor is characteristic of the majority of studies that utilize CSM.

In the major examples we have discussed earlier, researchers have given preference to one or other of the following – the influence of dominant discourses, formative context, organizational rules – in dealing with issues of power. The choice made seems to have relied on the specific focus of the research. At one end of the spectrum Hilde (2013; 2017) applies, what we might call, a classic approach to an understanding of how Hong Kong Chinese immigrants to Canada make sense of their identity that is mediated through a series of organizational rules that shape a sense of the immigrant, the formative context of long-established Canadian immigration policy, and a dominant discourse of Canadian professional identity. At the other end, Shenoy-Packer (2014) largely focusses on organizational context and cultural nuances that shape the communication patterns or cues.

As Russell (2014) suggests however, strategic research choices in relations to CSM may also be the result of attempts to understand and rationalize the different levels of analysis. He goes on to ask how do CSM researchers make choices about what levels of analysis to choose and how many levels to choose. On the basis of our review, we see these choices as part of the inevitable process of research design that leaves open rather than closes down the search for cues to how certain senses are produced. It also leaves open the characterization of agency. In Thurlow's study (2007), the main focus is on the influence of change discourse on corporate language followed by an interest in its influence on how employees come to make sense of the process they are being asked to engage in. Ruel (2018a), while also drawing centrally on discursive contexts and their influence on discriminatory senses of self, uses the heuristic of sensemaking properties as an organizing principle to discuss disparate influences together, including identity anchors, which she adds to strengthen the notion of agency.

Ruel (2018a) notes that there is uncertainty whether there is a specific order in applying CSM. She noted that 'there was no need for an iterative – first, second, third – step function in applying CSM to the data in this research. I could easily work with the relationship between anchor points and CSM, independently from whether I was examining the relationship between anchor points and rules and formative contexts' (p. 231). Relatedly, Hilde (2013; 2017) contended that the depth and width of CSM theory are both its strengths and its weaknesses. She continues that 'researchers also need to deal with epistemological and ontological issues, and to make sense of whether the various natures of the diverse elements of the methodology are compatible with the problem at hand. Depending on the problem at hand, pulling all elements together, like a perfect storm, can be far from easy. Owing to all these complexities and perhaps due to the short word limit prescribed by journals for publishing articles, CSM may be a less favourable methodological choice for researchers when compared to a single-layer analysis.

An important focus in the reviewed studies is linking agency to action is context. Here researchers have tended to seek out activities that provide plausible explanations of certain sensemaking outcomes. For Shenoy-Packer (2014) the focus is on organizational culture and the socio-politics of sensemaking. Through examination of these dynamics, she reveals the influence of context on shaping the communicative rules that shape and privilege the ability of some over others to make authentic sense of given situations.

While the influence of the past is implied in discussions of organizational rules, organizational culture and formative contexts both Russell (2014) and Hartt (2013a) raise questions about the role of history. Also Russell (2014, p. 8) asks: 'How do we deal with sensemaking over time?' Hartt (2013a) goes further by providing a way of fusing history and sensemaking. Reflecting on the use value of CSM, he identifies the absence of actor-network influences in CSM and its potential fusion with actor-network theory, which lacks a focus on agency. This adds a major new influence for consideration, namely, how agency is shaped by, and in, actor-networks over time.

As we have seen, Hartt provides several new insights to the application of CSM. First, and foremost, he argues that we need to consider the role of actor-networks and their relationship to the performance of sensemaking; that sensemaking possibilities are embedded in series of relationships. Second, he contends that powerful sets of recurring ideas such as tropes (or ways of thinking), beliefs (ways of seeing the world), and meta narratives (including history itself) become, over time, actants – non-corporeal actants – in their own right. Thus, history for example, can be viewed as a sensemaking outcome at one level (viz. a belief that X occurred in the past) but also a way of thinking about the past that powerfully shapes our ability to make retrospect sense of the present.

The challenges and promises of using CSM

Having outlined the growth and directions of CSM research, we continue to discuss the challenges and promises of using CSM. As we illustrated in the previous section, researchers have published a number of applied studies of CSM that offer insights into the challenge and the promise of CSM. Not surprisingly the most detailed and extensive efforts are to be found in doctoral, and sometimes masters, theses but also in a number of articles as well. One of the challenges seems to be that a number of these works evoke both Weickian sensemaking and CSM as if they are somehow similar or equivalents.

One of our discoveries, that might count as a challenge, was the development of an umbrella term effect (Hirsch and Levin, 1999), whereby CSM is evoked as a description of various research that has little to do with CSM. In some cases, the researchers conflate Weickian sensemaking and CSM, referring to their research as drawing on Weickian sensemaking yet citing both Weick and Helms Mills et al. (2010) or other papers that specifically draw from CSM. Kane-Frieder et al. (2014, p. 31), for example, cite Helms Mills et al. (2010) to state that 'sensemaking is an ongoing process'. In other cases, CSM is evoked as a critique of Weickian sensemaking's lack of concerns with power, before moving on to focus exclusively on Weick's work on sensemaking, as if CSM is simply Weickian sensemaking with issues of power added on (see, for example, Bond, 2013). In fact, while Weick's attempt to incorporate power into sensemaking focusses on cognate strategies

(see Weick *et al.*, 2005), Helms Mills et al. (2010) focus on the role of structural rules and role, formative contexts and dominant discourses.

The conflation of Weickian sensemaking and CSM can also be found in the study of Adrot and Moriceau (2013, p. 28), who cite Weick (2010) and Weick and Roberts (1993), but also Mullen et al., (2006) and Helms Mills and Weatherbee (2006) to make the point that 'sensemaking can be a key to efficient crisis management'. This serves to obfuscate the differences and reduces the potential for developing a notion of sensemaking that does not rely on purely cognitive thought processes. Nonetheless, Adrot and Moriceau (2013) offer an interesting comment on performance and sensemaking when argue that while words provide a certain number of cues, performativity (i.e., performing an enacting sense) transmits 'not only informational or cognitive, but also emotional, affective, embodied and situated' sense (p. 28). They further point out that performance is simultaneously 'an action and a sense' which may serve to literally send mixed messages (p. 29). Finally, they contend that:

> Performativity takes into account the dynamics of power and hierarchy. Sensemaking takes place in the form of a metaphorical conversation between members, during which power relationships are rarely established. From the perspective of performativity, to the contrary, the performer plays his [sic] hierarchical role and the spectator's interpretation of the situation is from the beginning imprinted by hierarchical positions and power games (Adrot and Moriceau, p. 29).

They go on to add, 'a performance involves conventions about interpreting rules, where power, hierarchies and positions are pervasive' (p. 29). From our perspective this has direct implications for critical sensemaking in terms of organizational rules as sensemaking outcomes that have been established through processes where performance may feature strongly. We shall return to the issue of performance but also emotionality later.

Insights for future research

To return to Nord and Fox (1996), the need for an agentic turn in management and organizational studies continues to be pressing. Focus on the individual in social action has been greatly weakened through its methodological associations with objectivism, realism, and positivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and the various postpositivist reactions and so-called turns in the social sciences (Prasad, 2005). The very possibility of the individual in social science has been overwhelmed and barely glimpsed through such things as context, structuration, actor-nets, discourses and the like to the point where we have difficulties in understanding how 'structuration is structured, discourse is discursive . . . [and] isomorphism morphs' (Mills, 2008, p. 29). While Weick (1995) very much kick started the process he largely abandoned the numerous insights over the past several decades largely provided by postpositivist research. His overemphasis on the cognitive – realist – base of sensemaking is largely achieved at the expense of the various interactions and dynamics that come to constitute the processes through which actors in context come to make sense.

CSM, as we have tried to show in this article, is an attempt to capture the individual sensemaker in context. The challenge has been to produce plausible accounts that are not centred in realism

but which, nonetheless, recognise at least small r realism in trying to capture a sense of the embodied actor. The balance has been, and will continue so, to capture a sense of the cognate being without centering cognition in strictly biological explanations. The idea then shifts to the notion of a decentred cognition, but cognition nonetheless, that is always in flux as the individual encounters a series of socially constructed activities and performances. This has been largely dealt with in CSM research in two ways: first, Weick's original list of socio-psychological properties has been utilized as a heuristic – a useful construct for understanding human interaction; second, almost all researchers – Hartt's (2013a) archival approach is an exception – centrally focus on agency through interviews. It is then left to individual researchers to try to determine or deal with the extent to which they highlight or decenter cognition. Hilde (2013), for example, gives centrality to her interviewees while Ruel (2018a) draws on a number of theoretical reference points (discourse, anchor points, etc.) to talk to interviewees and interpret their responses. Nonetheless, it remains a challenge for future research.

The focus on agency-in-context, on the other hand, is encouraging a new generation of research questions that potentially broaden the idea of agency, including anchor points (Ruel, 2018a), emotionality (Aromaa *et al.*, in press), socio-politics (Shenoy-Packer, 2014), and actor-networks (Hartt, 2013a).

Finally, through our focus on researcher reflections on their own sensemaking we note some important differences that need to be addressed in further research – that is the issue of reflections on the researcher's own sensemaking and how that sensemaking influences the way they report on other's sense of events, etc. The work of Hilde and Ruel in particular has gone further in reflecting on this aspect of critical sensemaking. Certainly, our own sensemaking in this article was framed by a focus on trying to capture developments within CSM research. That focus engaged various aspects of sensemaking, including identity work (our positioning as chroniclers and authors of developments in the field), plausibility (shaping our submission to meet the demands of academic requirements), retrospection (being influenced by previously successful submission), extraction of cues (being overly drawn to *applied* CSM examples), ongoing sensemaking (tending to reproduce extant aspects of CSM), social sensemaking (being overly drawn to types of argument/studies that appear to be favoured by critical scholars), and enactment (our interest in seeing the article accepted and cited). We write in a context where we are expected to publish and to have our research recognised through citations, etc. Thus, power lies in the rules of our respective universities, the discourse of writing and publication, the formative context of academia that places performance expectations on our work. Perhaps our future work together will focus on detailing the various processes of sensemaking that led to this or other papers – but that is an another enactment in the making!

Notes

[i] In fairness, Weick was quick to accept this criticism, arguing that 'Helms Mills . . . improves the conversation by closer attention to power, activities and rules' (back page testimonial to Helms Mills, 2003 – see also Weick *et al.* 2005).

[ii] A recent detailed account of Hilde's work can be found in Hilde (2017) and Hilde and Mills (2015; 2017).

[iii] Shenoy-Packer (2014, p. 259) defines micro-aggressions as 'brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults.'

[iv] In her dissertation (Ruel, 2018, p. 6) defines how `the term identity anchor point was reconstructed from Glenn's (2004) original usage, where anchor points represent intersecting identity categories that are discursively created and recreated. Anchor points are not just identity categories, however; anchor points encompass the act of their creation via discourses, the power-relations among individuals, and critical sensemaking processes.'

[v] Hartt has since explored the interconnections of actor networks, CSM and NCA's in a number of works, including Hartt (2013b), Hartt (2014b; 2015); Hartt and Jones (2013), Hartt and Peters (2016), Hartt *et al.* (2014), Hartt (2016).

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About the authors

Eeva Aromaa, MHSc, is a Doctoral Student in the area of innovation management at the University of Eastern Finland Business School, Finland. Her work on the social processes of innovation, emotions, critical sensemaking, co-creation and circular economy has been published in peer-reviewed journals. She works on her doctoral thesis which focuses on the role of emotions in critical sensemaking in the context of small service company innovation management. Eeva Aromaa is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: eeva.aromaa@uef.fi

Päivi Eriksson, DSc (Economics and Business Administration), is Professor of Management in the area of innovation management at the University of Eastern Finland Business School, Finland. Her research focuses on the social processes of innovation and change in different organizational contexts. Her book on *Qualitative Methods in Business Research with Sage Publications* (2nd edition in 2016) covers all major qualitative approaches used in business research.

Jean Helms Mills is Professor of Management at Saint Mary's University, International Reader at The Swedish School of Social Sciences-University of Helsinki, Professor at Jyväskylä University and Docent at The University of Eastern Finland. Jean has been Senior Research Fellow at Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, since 2008. Her work on historiography, critical sensemaking, gender, culture and change has been presented at numerous conferences and published in various journals. Jean is Co-Editor of *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Associate Editor for *Gender, Work and Organization* and past divisional Co-Chair of the Critical Management Studies Division of The Academy of Management.

Esa Hiltunen, DSc (Economics and Business Administration), is Senior Lecturer at the University of Eastern Finland Business School, Finland. His research focuses on innovations in the service sector, work and management renewal, employee-driven innovations and qualitative research methodology. He is also interested in health and well-being business research and development.

Maarit Lammassaari, MSc (Economics and Business Administration), is a Doctoral Student in the area of innovation management at the University of Eastern Finland Business School, Finland. Her PhD dissertation focuses on top management sensemaking in the context of private health care service organizations.

Albert J. Mills is Professor of Management at Saint Mary's University and Professor of Innovation at the University of Eastern Finland Business School, Finland. His main research interests are gender and diversity, management and organizational history, Canadian management theory and business research methods – contributing to the development of ANTi-history, critical sensemaking and the sociology of management knowledge. His 45 books and edited collections include *Insights and Research on the study of Gender and Intersectionality in International Airline Cultures* (Emerald, 2017). *Ageing, Organizations and Management* (Palgrave, 2017) and *The Oxford Handbook of Diversity in Organizations* (2015, Oxford University Press).