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MEDIATED SENSEMAKING

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We use a multi-case analysis of nine Most Trusted Advisors (MTAs) in six family firms to introduce the concept of mediated sensemaking—that is, the social position, orientation, and actions used by mediators to facilitate adaptive sensemaking that unfolds when someone begins to doubt the sense already made. Our data captures the mediation process through which MTAs help Family Business Entrepreneurs (FBEs) interrupt momentum in sensemaking by slowing down action and facilitating doubt. Interestingly, FBEs have no motive to slow down and doubt their own sensemaking, yet MTAs can induce them to do so. We unpack the social skills and tactics used by MTAs to accomplish this pacing. We synthesize our findings in a grounded theoretical process theory that captures how MTAs facilitate adaptive sensemaking by regulating the pacing and temporality of FBEs' sensemaking.

> The Family Business Entrepreneur] moves very quickly. . . . He does not always take the time to consider the point of view of other family members . . . He pretty much moves at the tempo he wants. . . . What we hope will happen from this pause and integration process is that the owner and the other family members will better understand the different issues. (MTA_2 Whirlaway)

> The Most Trusted Advisor raises issues and ideas. He probes. He asks questions, he's trying to get me to slow down; to think. . . . What he recommends that I do or consider is so different from what I am doing or considering that I go slower. Often his input makes me change direction. (FBE War Admiral)

> He brokers information so different voices can be heard. He acts as an intermediary that speaks on their behalf. (MTA_1 Whirlaway)

How do "outsiders" in the broader context influence local sensemaking? Some social worlds are more open to new cues and are thus less vulnerable to becoming entrapped in particular frames compared to others. Exploring the role "outsiders" play in regulating this vulnerability is essential to understanding adaptive sensemaking, which unfolds when someone begins to doubt the sense that he or she has already made (Christianson, 2009). Through adaptive sensemaking, an actor redrafts an "emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive . . . [and] incorporates more of the observed data" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005: 415). Adaptive sensemaking refers to puncturing an entrapped frame (Cornelissen, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014). The Challenger launch decision (Vaughan, 1996) reminds us how difficult that can be. The Morton Thiokol

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engineers tried to redirect sensemaking about whether a launch should occur, but they lacked the position and social skills to do so. Would the Challenger launch decision and the many studies of crisis sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) have turned out differently if an "outsider" had been able to nudge NASA sensemakers to adapt their frame?

Sensemaking is how people bring order and meaning to sense-impressions (Weick, 1995). It is a fundamentally "social process . . . [where] organization members interpret their environment in and through interactions with each other" (Maitlis, 2005: 21). Past work has paid limited attention to context (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011); sensemaking is largely a theory of local practice (Weber & Glynn, 2006). The research has thus focused on how adaptive sensemaking unfolds *within* a boundary and has overlooked how it also might unfold *across* boundaries. Specifically, past studies have focused mainly on how homogeneous groups (Uitdewilligen, Waller, & Pitariu, 2013) that are embedded in a bounded setting such as the cockpit (Weick, 1990) cope in dynamic environments (Christianson, 2009). The role of mediation on adaptive sensemaking has been largely overlooked. Although mediation is prevalent in many contexts (Obstfeld, Borgatti, & Davis, 2014), and can significantly affect sensemaking and its outcomes, we understand little about when and how it occurs and influences sensemaking. This neglect may reflect the ambiguous role played by mediators, who work with and influence the individuals who are sensemaking, yet are also "outsiders" who pay attention to the larger context in which sensemaking occurs and introduce new cues and perspectives into a local setting in order to facilitate adaptive sensemaking (Luscher & Lewis, 2008; Rerup, 2009).

In this paper, we rethink the structural and contextual underpinning of adaptive sensemaking by examining how mediators connect sensemaking across social worlds and boundaries (Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010; O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008; Quick & Feldman, 2014). We argue that mediators straddle the boundary between local sensemakers and the broader environment. They can be buffers and boundary spanners of sensemaking (Tushman, 1977). They also broker information and cues between subgroups in the local context (Obstfeld, 2005).

We define "mediated sensemaking" as the processes and prosocial orientation through which a mediator brings forward cues and points of view to generate pause, doubt, and inquiry among actors who are sensemaking within a bounded context. Mediated sensemaking contributes to our understanding of adaptive sensemaking by unpacking how "outsiders" or mediators play a role in this process. For instance, when the use of a frame is uninterrupted, a dysfunctional momentum can emerge in which sensemakers miss important cues (Barton & Sutcliffe, 2009). A mediator can help sensemakers interrupt and reverse this momentum by giving voice to weak cues and creating doubt. Mediating such interruptions among people that are higher in the hierarchy is important because these individuals are often surrounded by employees who either fear speaking up or are not given a voice. Continuous exposure to supportive information induces sensemakers to believe that they know what they need to know. They have little incentive to slow down and doubt their knowledge, which can lead to an illusion of control and hubris (Weick, 2001). Doubt-based inquiry encourages people to question the sense already made and generate new understandings (Kramer, 2007). "[D]oubt—experienced as not knowing—motivates a search for understanding. . . . Doubts . . .aris[e] when. . . continuance is interrupted, represent[ing] a potential inadequacy in [our] habitual ways of understanding and acting" (Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008: 908). When sensemakers engage in doubt, they think twice, question assumptions, and reconsider options, data, cognitive frames, and the sense already made.

Our study focuses on how Most Trusted Advisors (MTAs) within family firms (Strike, 2012, 2013) slow down Family Business Entrepreneurs (FBEs) to plant seeds of doubt that invite them to consider an issue from different points of view. MTAs are experienced individuals who advise wealthy families that own and operate a business. MTAs operate across boundaries—they are ordinarily not part of the biological family, yet their relationships with its members run very deep. FBEs have no motive to slow down and doubt their own sensemaking, yet MTAs can induce them to do so. We unpack the social position, orientation, and social skills used by MTAs to accomplish this pacing. MTAs are skilled in reading a situation and deciding if, when, and how to intervene. As mediators, MTAs inhabit intersecting social worlds and can thus create circumstances that are rich with potential, in which cues in one world are made available to be coupled with entrapped frames in another world. Overall, MTAs try to puncture entrapped frames.

As the opening quotes suggest, FBEs are decisive, move quickly, and often need to be slowed down against their will. They value speed because it creates first-mover advantages (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), yet, speed also needs to be tempered (Perlow, Okhuysen, & Repenning, 2002). For instance, delays

of just five minutes can help individuals contemplate competing options and make more ethical decisions (Gunia, Wang, Huang, Wang, & Murnighan, 2012). Further, when people slow down to register finer distinctions, they might see the liabilities of swift thinking (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006: 517). While studies of sensemaking have assumed that speed is preferable (Weick, 1995: 57), we explore how slower sensemaking allows sensemakers to doubt, which improves dispassionate investigation. To understand how this pacing unfolds, we study how MTAs mediate FBEs' sensemaking.

By introducing the concept of mediated sensemaking, we make two theoretical contributions. First, we show how mediated sensemaking is an overlooked part of adaptive sensemaking. We do so by demonstrating that mediated sensemaking depends on a mediator's social position, disposition, and actions; not all "outsiders" can mediate sensemaking. Our work thus investigates how structural and contextual features and endogenous skills shape the capacity to mediate sensemaking across boundaries. Our findings suggest that to understand the "larger social and historical contexts in sensemaking" (Weber & Glynn, 2006: 1639), it is necessary to understand how sensemaking occurs across boundaries and social worlds. Second, our focus lets us address a "key puzzle" by showing how mediators help entrepreneurs to "simultaneously know and doubt yet mobilize sufficient confidence to act rather than deliberate" (Weick, 2001: 358). Specifically, we document how mediators facilitate adaptive sensemaking by generating pause, doubt, and inquiry in the sensemaking process. These contributions help to unpack the idea that sensemaking can be a fairly mundane process, where mediators carefully pace but purposefully plant seeds that interrupt and invite people to make sense in a continuous, rather than episodic, manner. From this perspective, the making of sense is permanent and subject to ongoing updating that calls for unbroken effort to adjust frames.

ADAPTIVE SENSEMAKING AND MEDIATED SENSEMAKING

Sensemaking is "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" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014: 13). An actor's personal history and location in social structures shapes their sensemaking in ways that create different points of view (Lockett, Currie, Finn, Martin, & Waring, 2014). This plurality is aligned through social interaction (Maitlis, 2005: 21) wherein disagreements are negotiated. A mediator can influence these negotiations by building a richer diagnostic understanding of what is going on. In "classic sensemaking," people ask: "What's the story?" and "Now what?" (Weick et al., 2005). In "mediated sensemaking," the mediator helps the sensemaker to think differently about the sense that has already been made by regulating the pace of meaning making and by catalyzing attention to particular cues.

Sensemaking can be seen as a cycle of recurring activities that unfold over time (Louis, 1980). The process starts as people form assumptions that turn into frames for making sense of their environment. The sense they make influences how they will act. By frame, we mean the cognitive data reduction devices that enable people to negotiate a complex and confusing world (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Frames are used to simplify, label, and categorize cues to make specific interpretations and act.

Adaptive Sensemaking

Adaptive sensemaking is the "ability of sensemakers to [doubt] an initial frame . . . and to mobilize instead an alternative [or adapted] frame" (Cornelissen et al., 2014: 703) that reflects their revised "understanding of and response to an evolving situation" (Christianson, 2009: xii). The notion of mediated sensemaking extends several ideas in the literature on adaptive sensemaking. First, work on adaptive cognition and action has focused largely on nonroutine situations where ongoing activity has been interrupted (Christianson, 2009; Vera, Crossan, Rerup, & Werner, 2014). Yet sensemaking is "not so much characterized by interruptive episodes as by routine action" (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015: S25). Mediated sensemaking can be used for nonroutine or routine actions. For instance, if a mediator wants to influence the sensemaking within a boundary, it might be easier to slow down action and plant a seed of doubt during routine operations.

Second, although doubting is integral to adaptive sensemaking (Rudolph, Morrison, & Carroll, 2009; Weick, 2010), the extant literature has not treated pausing or slowing down as a separate activity that often precedes doubting. More generally, existing research has not effectively captured temporality and pacing (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; see Waller, 1999 for an exception). In contrast, mediated sensemaking shows

how the mediator facilitates pause and doubt. Further, because work on adaptive sensemaking has focused on internal processes, it has not addressed how a mediator on the "outside" of the boundary might affect adaptive sensemaking. It thus remains unclear how adaptive sensemaking unfolds, and how mediated sensemaking influences it.

Mediated Sensemaking as a Form of Adaptive Sensemaking

Following Simmel's (1950) foundational work, mediation has emerged as an important social mechanism for managing adaptation in organizations (Obstfeld, 2005). It occurs when an individual (in a unique social position) is able to facilitate communication, attention, and idea generation within or across social worlds (Griffith, Fuller, & Northcraft, 1998). However, work on sensemaking has largely overlooked how actors' roles and positions in social structure shape their sensemaking (Cornelissen, 2012). Our experiences influence how we see the world and make sense of reality (Pratt, 2000; Weick, 1995). Identity influences sensemaking and affects how formal roles (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Sonenshein, 2010), hierarchical status (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), and professions (Lockett et al., 2014) facilitate the emergence of different cognitive frames. These positions are defined by how an actor controls economic, cultural, and social resources, and are reflected in organizational and professional status. Several recent studies have begun to address this gap (Battilana, 2011; Lockett et al., 2014), but not in regard to how a mediator can guide adaptive sensemaking through his or her position (see Adler & Kwon, 2002; Bourdieu, 1986; Kwon & Adler, 2014 for the possibilities afforded by social positions).

Social ties and embeddedness in social structures enable actors to use social relations for multiple purposes. For instance, a friendship can provide emotional support during a family emergency, or can offer work-related advice. Coleman (1988: 108) defined this feature of social life as the "appropriability of social structure." In short, the trust, respect, and obligation that other people have toward us because of our social position is a valuable resource that can be used (or misused) to accomplish work and mediate sensemaking.

Mediated Sensemaking Versus Sensegiving

Mediated sensemaking is related to, but distinct from, sensegiving, which is "the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). Sensegiving and mediated sensemaking are similar in that both bring new cues or knowledge to the fore (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Sonenshein, 2006). Yet there are four differences between them. First, in traditional sensegiving, the sensegiver is typically a senior manager who gives sense in a downward direction (Pratt, 2000); in mediated sensemaking, the mediator brings cues and perspectives forward from many directions. Second, sensegiving typically involves planned change initiatives (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015), whereas the mediator engages in both planned and spontaneous situations. Third, the sensegiver is visibly engaged in an overt activity, whereas the mediator can be subtler and less visible. Fourth, the sensegiver is usually an integrated participant in local sensemaking, whereas the mediator can be in either a peripheral or central position in the local context (Obstfeld, 2014). As an outsider, the mediator does not provide the more directive form of sensebreaking that alters a sensemaking trajectory (Pratt, 2000). Nor is the mediator sensegiving or sensemaking for or with the involved parties. Instead, the mediator is planting "seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring" (Weick, 1995: 50). Mediation is not a one-time event, but a process in which the mediator facilitates a longer, more thoughtful, process of adaptive sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010).

Mediated Sensemaking in Family Firms: The Role of MTAs

In family firms, the mediator's (MTA's) social position and relationship with family members is based on trust built up over years of repeated interactions. A successful MTA must have a reputation of integrity, discretion, and trustworthiness (Strike, 2013). By building this reputation and embedding it in social relations across family members and other stakeholders, the mediator is able to subtly guide the process of adaptive sensemaking. The primary role of the MTA is to help the family balance business and family dynamics. Because the two are often intertwined, the mediator tries to understand how actions will affect each; both the entrepreneur and family members often focus too much on one, at the other's expense. Rather than overtly providing advice, as many consultants do, the mediator shapes sensemaking processes by planting seeds for family members to consider and contemplate (see also Griffith et al., 1998).

MTAs are different from brokers, who take advantage of structural holes in the social structure (Burt, 1992). Brokers collect and channel scarce and unconnected information, advocate on another's behalf, and make sense of the world for us. Brokering is defined as "the process of connecting actors . . . in order to facilitate access to valued resources . . . [by bridging] a gap in social structure and [helping] goods, information, opportunities or knowledge flow across that gap" (Stovel & Shaw, 2012: 141). Brokers (and mediators) are characterized along two dimensions (Gould & Fernandez, 1989). First, they benefit the collective by connecting ideas, facilitating conversation, and updating points of view. Second, their self-interested activity becomes detrimental to the collective.

In contrast to the classic understanding of corporate life as self-interested (Miller, 1999), the MTA is an actor with a prosocial or other-interested orientation, who indirectly helps family members cooperate and reconsider the sense already made. Prior research has suggested that it is not uncommon for employees to be other-interested and enact prosocial identities where they see themselves as givers rather than takers (Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). For instance, during the 1981 Regan assassination attempt, a member of the secret service, Timothy J. McCarthy, turned into the line of fire and "took a bullet" to protect the President. Similarly, the MTA's actions are focused on benefitting the family and the FBE they serve. As noted by Obstfeld (2005: 104), "orientation" suggests a construct that falls somewhere between a highly specific attitude (e.g., toward a task) and a more general personality trait. The prosocial orientation of the MTA refers to their preferred means for approaching problems in our context. Although one can be more cynical about the MTA's motives, our data suggests that their actions transcend self-interest. What makes the FBE–MTA–Family triad so fascinating is that the MTA is committed to the well-being of the family beyond what one would expect.

By being prosocial and as objective as possible, the MTA eliminates most of the subjective and affective qualities that accompany the outlook of one party and that can undermine adaptive sensemaking. This orientation is especially important in family firms, where the dual nature of business and family generates an emotional context that can entrap people in cognitive frames and stall adaptive sensemaking. A foundation of mediated sensemaking is "uncoerced dialogue wherein validity claims are backed by good reasons, not a bigger stick" (Wright & Manning, 2004: 624). It involves an "ability to appreciate the perspectives of others and use this understanding to enact horizon-expanding discourse" (Wright, Manning, Farmer, & Gilbreath, 2000: 807).

Guiding sensemaking in a horizon-expanding and prosocial manner to puncture entrapped frames is a skill. It is required to make the parties willing to explore or consider seeds. Skilled mediators of adaptive sensemaking "empathetically relate to the situations of other people and, in so doing, are able to provide those people with reasons to cooperate" (Fligstein, 2001: 112). A skilled mediator is able to step into the role of the other person and impute the other's perspective and motivation to doubt and act (Obstfeld, 2014). Such role taking helps the MTA to adjust their conduct in an effort to bring unheeded cues forward and achieve cooperation.

We focus on how MTAs in several companies paced the sensemaking of their FBE and engaged in mediating sensemaking to help the entrepreneur and other stakeholders to engage in adaptive sensemaking. Our data led us to focus on two corollary research questions: (1) What social position, skills, and tactics enable the mediator to engage in mediated sensemaking? and (2) How are mediated sensemaking processes associated with adaptive sensemaking?

METHODS

We conducted an inductive multi-case study of six family firms and their nine MTAs (Yin, 2009). Inductive approaches focused on answering "how questions" are useful when the research aims to open new areas of inquiry (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007). We conducted a first-order analysis of the data to give voice to the perspectives of the MTAs and their families (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). During this analysis, the intertwined relationship between mediated sensemaking and adaptive sensemaking emerged. We also conducted a second-order analysis wherein we considered the impressions from our first-order analysis in light of prior research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This analysis revealed little work on how mediated sensemaking facilitates adaptive sensemaking. The purpose of this study is therefore to elaborate and develop new theory.

Research Context

The academic literature has focused primarily on widely held firms and regarded family firms as anomalous. However, family-owned firms hold much of the world's wealth. Outside the United States and the United Kingdom family firms predominate, and widely held firms are the anomaly

(Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001). Even in the United States, 35% of S&P 500 companies and 60% of all publicly held firms are family controlled (Astrachan & Shanker, 2003).

Family firms have to account for both family and business concerns. These include the emotionally complex relationships that are involved in operating the business (Salvato & Aldrich, 2012). Family firms require more cognitive effort than widely held firms (Mitchell, Morse, & Sharma, 2003) because they involve a wider range of actors with conflicting goals who create ambiguous stakeholder interests and more cues to capture and integrate.

Scholars have found that leaders fundamentally influence sensemaking processes (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). By the same token, family-firm owners are central to the sensemaking processes in their firms (Feltham, Feltham, & Barnett, 2005). Like other entrepreneurs, FBEs are driven; they often believe that they need to act quickly when pursuing new ventures (Busenitz & Barney, 1997), and that not acting swiftly is worse than not acting at all (Bird, 1989). FBEs can act quickly because they have sole or majority ownership and do not need approval from board members or other major shareholders. In focusing on business objectives, they often do not consider larger family interests (Carlock & Ward, 2010). FBEs frequently act in isolation from the family, and sometimes even from the MTA. One MTA explained[1]:

> Sometimes he will choose to consult with the family, but he can run that process at pretty much any tempo he wants to. FBE's behavior during meetings can be counterproductive. When there's conflict, rather than letting it work its way through to a resolution, he will get impatient and either take action himself or say "I'll take this off-line and deal with it." (MTA_2, Whirlaway[2])

The FBEs often did not feel they needed to validate their actions. They usually considered consensus to be a slowdown or interference before they took action. As such, the FBEs were at risk of being entrapped by a commitment to an existing frame. By planting seeds, the MTAs lowered the FBEs' commitment to an existing frame and facilitated a potential shift to an expanded frame.

[1] In order to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, we identify them by their role (MTA, FBE, daughter, or spouse) and respective firm (name disguised).

[2] Names of all firms have been changed to protect anonymity. The names used in this article were derived from the Triple Crown Winners of Horseracing.

Studying MTAs in this context exposes the interrelationships among the firms' actors and extends our understanding of the integration between the FBEs' focus and the various voices within the family firm. MTAs work behind the scenes with finesse to indirectly mediate people, activities, and meaning. No work is invisible (Star & Strauss, 1999), but mediation work is spread out over time, often occurs behind the scenes, and is therefore harder to track and observe empirically (Obstfeld, 2014). Longitudinal data collection allowed us to capture "constructs and relationships that may be too weak to notice . . . in traditional settings, thus facilitating the development of rich theory" (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010: 668).

Theoretical Sample

Six family firms served as our research sites. Table 1 provides an overview of the firms and the tenure of the relationship with the MTAs (see Strike [2013] for a more detailed discussion of the context). The MTAs skillfully traveled across several intersecting social worlds and boundaries (Bechky, 2003; Obstfeld, 2005), which allowed them to mediate sensemaking. Formally, the MTAs were often board members or engaged in managing the holding company of the family. Informally, they hovered in the background and dealt with issues and problems that the other board members and managers did not see or know about. This dual role is important because informal processes are usually outside the formal design of an organization, but ". . . managers should be looking for ways to provide for designs and roles that are consistent with—and that capitalize on these informal processes" (Nadler & Tushman, 1997: 111). MTAs represent such a role. We chose cases that would offer theoretical insights, replicate or deepen our knowledge about mediated sensemaking and the connection between the formal or informal social structure of boundary work (Bechky, 2003), and provide the greatest opportunity for discovery (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). According to Eisenhardt (1989), there is no ideal number of cases, but four to 10 suffice for abstracting common constructs.

The first author drew on her personal network to identify the initial two research sites and gain access to the MTAs and their families. She acquired access to the other cases through recommendations made by these MTAs and contacts at private symposiums for MTAs that she attended. The family firms in the study came from two North American cities. The firms' ages ranged from 30 years to over 100 years.

TABLE 1
Summary Information of Case Studies

Case name	Generation currently managing firm	Number of family members currently active in firm/ board	Relationship with MTA (years)[a]
Sir Barton	Fourth	2	> 10
Gallant Fox	First & second	2	> 20
Omaha	Second	2	> 20
War Admiral	First & second	5	$MTA_1 > 20$ $MTA_2 > 10$
Whirlaway	First & second	6	$MTA_1 > 30$ $MTA_2 > 10$
Count Fleet	Fourth	Multiple	$MTA_1 > 20$ $MTA_2 > 10$

Notes: Reporting the size (e.g., turnover and number of employees) of these family firms is difficult because the majority are part of wealthy family conglomerates. Omaha has between $50–100 million assets under management.

[a] Where more than one MTA was identified by the family, MTA_1 was identified as the FBE's MTA; MTA_2 was identified as the next generation's MTA. In one case MTA_1 had recently left the family firm and joined another family firm.

All firms except Omaha had more than $100 million in assets under management. They operated in six different industries; although industry effects may exist, we found similar patterns across all industry types.[3] The MTAs have been with these firms from over 10 years to over 30 years.

Data Collection

Boundary-spanning mediators such as MTAs carry out subtle or hidden work that is unavailable for instantaneous observation. Two moves helped us trace the semi-visible MTA. First, we collected longitudinal data, which helped us gather a varied sample of stories and examples. Second, we approached the family firm through a "microscope" and a "telescope" to capture what happened both locally (e.g., between the MTA and the FBE) and more globally (e.g., between the MTA and other stakeholders) in the context. This helped us to capture how mediated sensemaking and adaptive sensemaking were intertwined across people and boundaries.

This paper draws on an extensive data set collected by the first author over a decade to explore the role of MTAs in family firms (Strike, 2012, 2013). She started to gain access to family firms and MTAs in 2001. The main fieldwork occurred in 2005 and 2007, and there were several site visits between 2008 and 2010. She attended private MTA symposiums in April 2006, October 2007, and November 2009 in two North American cities and one European city that North American MTAs and their families attended. Final data collection occurred in March 2013. This extended engagement, along with the use of multiple data-gathering approaches, helped us develop deeper insights into the boundary work done by MTAs (Quick & Feldman, 2014; Star & Strauss, 1999). Interviews were the primary source of data, but documents and participant observation provided important additional information. We increased the reliability and integrity of our data analysis by combining and triangulating these sources (Jick, 1979).

Open-ended interviews. The first author's initial contact with an MTA occurred in 2001. When she asked the MTA about his role, he replied vaguely, "I help the family with their planning and daily affairs, doing a bit of this and bit of that, whatever needs to be done." After a two-year collegial relationship during which she built trusting rapport with this MTA, he agreed to a preliminary interview in early 2003. This interview focused on the salient profile of the MTA, such as his role within the firm's board, and legal, financial, and administrative experience; however, we caught glimpses of other, more hidden, work processes through stories and illustrations. For example, the MTA described scenarios in which board members pulled him aside to raise concerns about actions that were being taken too quickly and without contemplation of all information and asked the MTA to intervene. These stories suggested that mediation was involved in the scenarios described (Simmel, 1950).

The first author conducted 45 interviews with 21 informants, which is a good sample size given the

[3] Industries are not reported in order to maintain anonymity.

subtle nature of the research. For each case study, she interviewed multiple informants to triangulate the data, add alternative perspectives, and mitigate biases. We offered complete anonymity both within and across cases to encourage candor. Each interview lasted between 60 to 120 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews began with background information about the firm, the family, and the MTA. Interviewees were then asked open-ended questions to identify the MTA's role in the firm, and the family's interactions with the MTA. In two firms, there was an MTA for the founder and another for the second generation. In a third firm, one MTA was leaving the firm and another was taking his place. In the first round of interviews, no questions focused on topics such as mediation, sensemaking, or doubt. These topics emerged unprompted in discussions and in the examples interviewees gave.

In September and October 2008, we revisited the interviewees to collect more data and conduct member checks with key informants to ensure the emerging framework reflected the MTA's role. Following the additional data collection and the constant comparison within and across cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the interview protocol was adjusted as theoretical concepts emerged. Specifically, in July 2009, September 2009, August 2010, and March 2013, our questions focused on understanding processes such as mediated sensemaking, pause, doubt, and adaptive sensemaking.

Participant observation. At the beginning of the data collection, the first author gained access to two private symposiums. The first was a private three-day symposium that she was invited to by an MTA. Approximately 40 MTAs and their families attended the symposium. The second symposium was attended by approximately 50 advisors, MTAs, and families. Both symposiums were held in North American cities. During the study, she gained access to an additional private MTA symposium held in Europe with over 150 participants that included only MTAs and their families.

The symposiums included formal presentations and panel discussions on topics such as investment strategies, family business research, and the challenges of the MTA role. The first author interacted with the participants, guest speakers, and symposium hosts between seminars, over dinners, and on taxi rides, which greatly helped our understanding of the MTAs' subtle role. Participants spoke freely about their roles and concerns during these discussions. The first author took extensive notes about these interactions and her own research insights. The symposiums exposed us to the issues MTAs face and helped us generate case study leads and interview questions.

It was difficult to gain access to the MTAs and their families. Many MTAs at the symposiums would not reveal who they worked for—not even to other MTAs. The symposiums were by invitation only and barred any outsiders. Guest speakers were strictly prohibited from soliciting the MTAs and their families. One guest speaker told the first author that it was considered an immense privilege to be invited to speak at these symposiums. Out of three private symposiums, the first author was able to gain access to only a small number of additional MTAs and their families. She was able to gain access only because the other MTAs whom she had already interviewed assured the families that it was "safe" to talk with her. Even when she was granted interviews, she often had to start by taking handwritten notes. The families granted permission to record the interviews once they realized that she was not looking for information that could harm their reputation.

Documents. We collected written data about the firms and families, including website information on the firm, industry, family, and interviewees; archival public data; and presentations and documentation from the private symposiums that the first author attended. We also gained access to private information on the firms and families, such as mission statements, annual reports, board minutes, internal memos and reports, and educational material from courses attended by the family and MTA. These documents provided secondary data source (Jick, 1979) and were useful for engaging interviewees in discussion.

Data Analysis and Coding

Our analytical approach integrated two methods—multiple case studies (the "Eisenhardt method") and in-depth inductive case research (the "Gioia method") (see Langley & Abdallah, 2011 for an overview). With its unique focus on both "depth" and "breath" in data collection and presentation (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012; Smith, 2014), this approach allowed us to shed light on (1) the MTA's position in the social structure, (2) his or her prosocial disposition to the mediation process, and (3) the actions and tactics used in mediating sensemaking. Our multiple case design (Eisenhardt, 1989) allowed us to compare and recognize relationships and "underlying logical arguments" within and across cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 25). It provided varied empirical

evidence and resulted in a more parsimonious, robust, and generalizable theory; we could confirm or disconfirm the conceptual insights that emerged as we retained only the relationships that occurred across multiple cases.

We also focused on regularities in patterns across cases and on uncovering processes of mediated sensemaking (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Our interpretive stance tried to capture what our informants knew (Gioia, 2004: 101), and focused on "depth of understanding of unique situations" (Langley & Abdallah, 2011: 212). In this way, we followed the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2013) by choosing "revelatory" cases that offered rich data and potential to develop new, distinctive insights into mediated sensemaking (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). We wanted to search for and capture informants' meanings and understandings of organizational events and processes to access the subtle or hidden aspect of mediation and its implications for sensemaking. In this way, we were inspired by recent calls to make hidden processes visible by unpacking and tracing how specific people take specific actions (Feldman, 2016; Jarzabkowski, Kaplan, Seidl, & Whittington, 2016).

Analytical phases. Our data analysis consisted of seven phases to ensure our findings were valid, rigorous, and well supported. First, we used an insider–outsider approach, where the second author assumed the role of devil's advocate to improve theorizing. As an insider with established relationships, the first author risked "going native" (Adler, Adler, & Rochford, 1986: 364), rather than maintaining the more dispassionate view required for rigorous qualitative analysis (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007: 10). Consequently, the second author adopted an outsider role as a more detached investigator. He relentlessly pushed for clarification and elaboration, asked critical questions, and identified themes that the first author either agreed with or found additional support for in the data. From this scrutiny emerged the higher-level theoretical perspectives of mediated sensemaking.

Second, we used constant comparison techniques to increase our understanding of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We compared any new data that we gathered with archival data, and interview data both within and across cases. Gradually, concepts such as boundary spanning, social position, social skill, and adaptive sensemaking emerged. We then compared our data with our notes on previous studies on sensemaking, social structure, and brokering, and we stayed informed about working papers and new articles that were published on these topics. In this way, we were able to form and incorporate latent theoretical perspectives as new data emerged.

Third, we presented the data in tables that summarized related case evidence and provided evidence regarding the underlying constructs.[4] This approach complemented the descriptions and emphasized the framework's rigor. We examined the tables for each case study to confirm whether the relationship existed by repeatedly examining the proposed relationships within the interview data and by checking for completeness (Yin, 2009). Confirmed relationships enhanced confidence. Disconfirmed relationships were refined, extended, or discarded.

Fourth, we analyzed the data within and across cases to obtain common pattern evidence through multiple lenses. We collected and analyzed the data concurrently, adjusting our data collection as we proceeded. We became sufficiently familiar with each case study that the unique patterns of each case would emerge before we analyzed across cases (Eisenhardt, 1989). As themes and relationships emerged, we looked for similarities, patterns, and differences among the cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

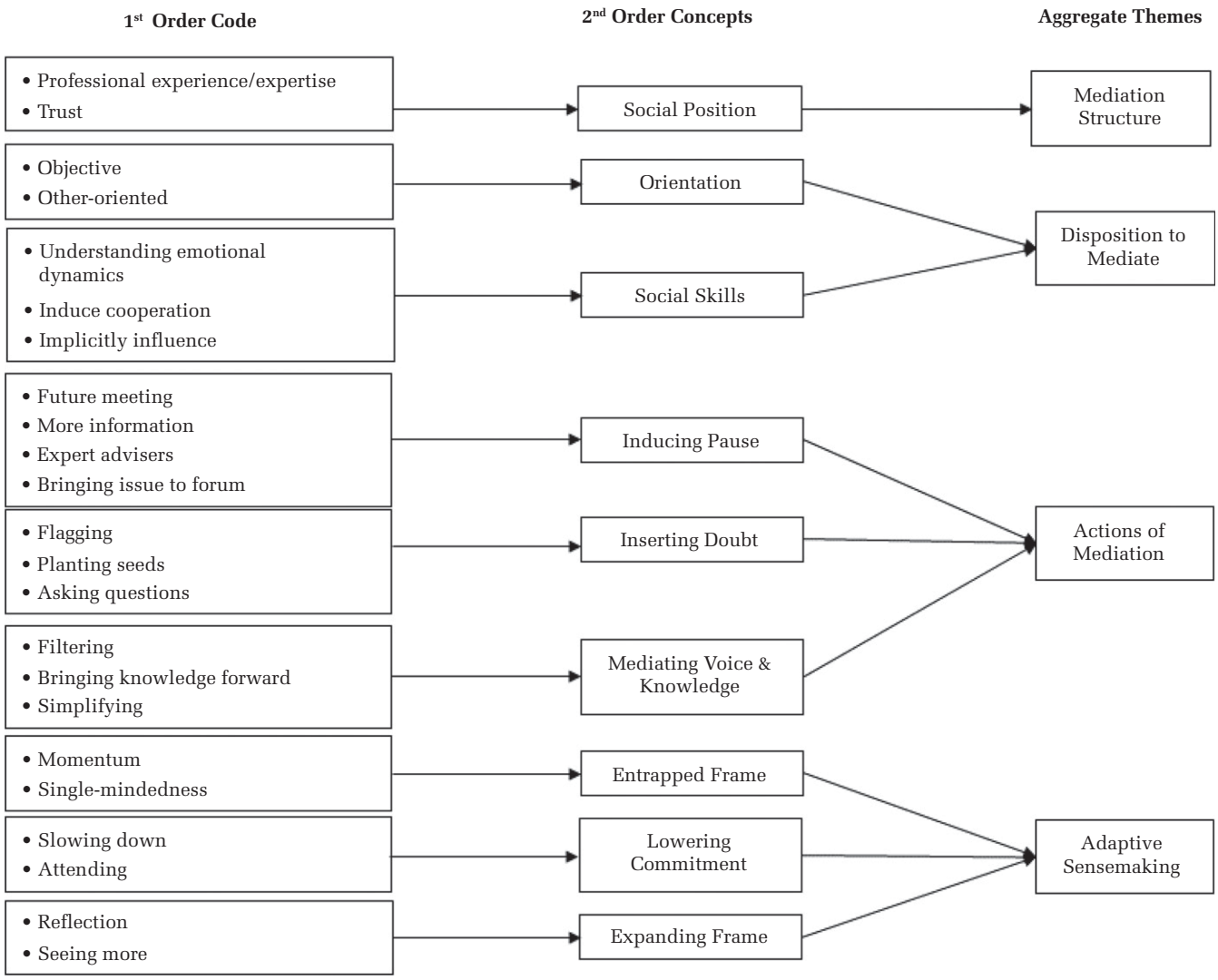
Fifth, per the Gioia method (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006: 241), we developed a data structure and coded the data into 23 first-order codes (see Figure 1). These codes reflected the informants' language and unveiled key elements of their meaning systems, but did not reveal the relationships in the data. We retained only the codes that were supported across cases.

Sixth, we used axial coding to identify relationships among the first-order codes to develop second-order codes. We combined the data to explain the findings and systematically develop categories and sub-categories. We drew diagrams to sort the logic between the relationships that we uncovered (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We derived nine second-order concepts, which we identified by searching for key words, their underlying meaning, and the context within which they were embedded. Themes repeated by multiple informants within and across cases indicated patterns (Pratt et al., 2006: 240).

Finally, we integrated the concepts around core themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 146). We developed aggregate dimensions of recurring second-order themes into a higher theoretical perspective and derived four aggregate themes. These themes converged

[4] Due to space constraints, these tables have been removed in the published version of the manuscript.

FIGURE 1
Data Structure



on a well-defined framework that helped validate the concepts, verified relationships and patterns, and increased our understanding of mediated sensemaking.

INTERTWINING MEDIATION AND ADAPTIVE SENSEMAKING

The emergence of adaptive sensemaking, especially how individuals lower their commitment to an entrapped frame, is a puzzle. We encountered several answers to this puzzle. We noticed how technological disruptions and regulatory changes forced the FBEs to update their frame. More importantly, we also noticed how the MTAs skillfully mediated the sensemaking of the FBEs. When that happened, cues and voices representing the extended family were coupled with the sensemaking process of the FBEs. When such coupling occurred, the FBEs' sensemaking became a self-reinforcing loop of adaptive sensemaking. In effect, mediated sensemaking and adaptive sensemaking became intertwined and the changes that ensued in the FBEs' sensemaking expanded their frame. For instance, one FBE said that the MTA's "questions made me rethink my commitment which got me to do better [on specific opportunity]" (FBE War Admiral).

Our FBE–family–MTA triads shared many similarities. They involved an experienced family business

entrepreneur who was motivated to act on opportunities, the larger family community whom the FBE often did not involve in "deals," and an MTA who occupied a position in both worlds, which allowed him to travel between them. On some occasions the FBEs turned to the MTAs for a second opinion, but more often the FBEs were not motivated to be slowed down. They had already sized up the situation and wanted to move forward. In these situations, the goal of the MTAs was to find a way to not only get the FBEs to slow down in order to lower their commitment to their existing frame, but also to insert doubt and to mediate the voice of the larger family firm community. However, the defining feature of mediated sensemaking was the MTAs' "outside" role, which allowed for moving cues and knowledge across social worlds and boundaries so that the FBEs would consider expanding their frame.

To unpack the entangled and often hidden relationship between mediated sensemaking and adaptive sensemaking, we begin with a first-order analysis that gives evidence for the coded themes in our data structure with representative quotes from our informants. The second-order analysis that follows offers our interpretation of the first-order findings summarized in a grounded process theory of mediated sensemaking. The first-order narrative explicates how mediated sensemaking facilitates adaptive sensemaking. It clarifies how the process unfolds around three components. The first component is mediation structure, which captures how the social position of the MTAs regulate their ability to mediate. The second component is disposition to mediate, which captures how the prosocial orientation and social skills of the MTAs regulate their ability to mediate. The third component is actions of mediation, which captures how the MTAs engage in actions (inducing pause, inserting doubt, and mediating voice and knowledge) to facilitate adaptive sensemaking. Adaptive sensemaking captures how the MTAs help the FBEs to adapt their frame.

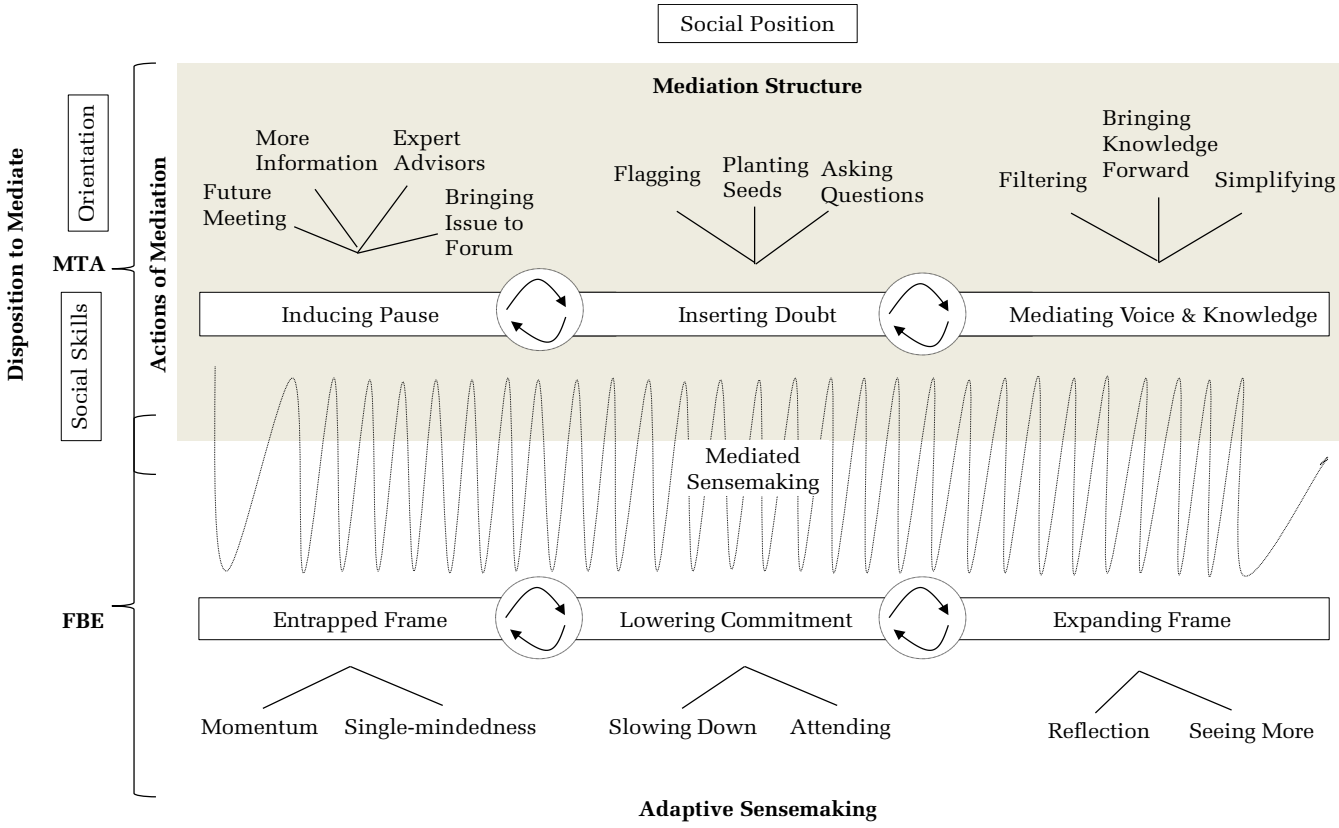
Figure 1 presents our data structure. It depicts the first-order codes (left side of the figure) grounded in the tongue of our informants, the second-order concepts (middle of the figure) that allowed us to aggregate the data to a conceptual level, and the four aggregate theoretical themes that emerged from our analysis. The first-order findings narrative describes the emergent concepts and themes sequentially as they appear in Figure 1. We illustrate their relationships in Figure 2, which depicts the dynamic flow of the findings graphically and illustrates how the mediation structure, the MTAs' social position, and the adaptive sensemaking of the FBEs are intertwined. The MTAs are portrayed in the upper part, and the FBEs in the lower part of Figure 2. The social structure connects the MTAs and the FBEs. Within that structure, the MTAs' social position and disposition to mediate regulates the mediation. This conceptualization allows us to depict how actions of mediation are linked to changes in the FBEs' frame. Figure 2 is a stylized and linear presentation of a "messy" process. Our key informants confirmed the soundness of Figure 2 but mentioned that inducing pause, inserting doubt, and mediating voice and knowledge, as well as entrapped frame, lowering commitment, and expanding frame were intertwined. In our grounded theory model, we graphically capture this reality by further unpacking the "squiggly lines" in Figure 2 that connect the MTAs and the FBEs.

Mediation Structure

Social position. The MTAs' professional expertise and experience provided the foundation for the initial relationship with the FBEs and their families. The MTAs were lawyers or tax accountants. It was through their tax expertise that they began to work with the family as advisors; over time they built a relationship. Tax implications affect not only the firm but also the family, so the MTAs became privy to information that overlapped the firm and the family. They brought a broad array of operational and financial experience. Their value resided in knowing the questions to ask and the implications that various issues would have for the family.

The MTAs' derived their social position through trust. Omaha's FBE explained that "the key component of all of this is one word, trust. If that doesn't exist, forget everything." Through the development of trust, the MTAs became privy to the most intimate details and "sacrosanct" areas of the family. The trust accumulated over time into a resource that raised the MTAs into a position where they gained the ear of the FBEs and the family. One daughter at Whirlaway considered the MTA as a close part of the family: "I love him. I think he's great. I trust him entirely. He's like an extended part of the family, another brother." Professional status as developed through expertise and experience, and personal status within the family firm social structure created access to the FBEs and enabled the MTAs to guide the FBEs. MTA_2 of Count Fleet, one of the youngest tenured MTAs, stated:

FIGURE 2
Process Overview of Findings



> A trusted advisor is somebody who is trusted with very intimate details about the family. There's a question of trust and expertise and recognition that whatever the family does might have a consequence. There is the financial side, a tax side and a legal side; with a family these issues are not local, they are global. You need broad expertise, broad knowledge and broad access to the family to address these issues.

Disposition to Mediate

Orientation. The MTAs' orientation was prosocial and other-oriented. The FBEs and the MTAs maintained that giving objective advice that was in the best interest of the family was a key task of the MTAs. For example, the FBE of Gallant Fox, who had been with his MTA for over 20 years, described the importance of having an advisor who put the family's interests first:

> Our trusted advisors are not self-interested. It's the family first. They are totally dedicated. It's loyalty to the extreme. You can't buy that. You can't go out and hire someone and say "I always want you to think about my interests." They should do that but, when they go home at night, are they really thinking about your interests or are they thinking about something else. Getting somebody who is that loyal. . . it doesn't happen every day.

The FBE might not agree with the advice, but he still wanted the MTA's unbiased view. However, if the advice was not intended to help the family and the business, the FBE was smart and could "see through the bullshit." The FBE would not stay with the advisor very long if the MTA did not focus on the FBE's interests.

Social skills. The MTAs used their standing to implicitly influence and induce cooperation by recognizing and understanding the emotional dynamics within the family firm. For example, a daughter at Whirlaway explained how their MTA_2 understood the qualities and temperaments of family members:

> A lot of different personalities come up and [the] MTA sees it. He knows who his players are. With the heating up between my brothers, he was great. He does everything. He manages the fights. He understands the family dynamics and the different family members.

The MTA then used this understanding to approach each family member individually and to induce cooperation both across the generations and between the same generations. He helped the next generation realize that they were stronger in both thinking and working together as a group when handling a potentially emotional situation. That insight was more important than the answer itself. Overall, the MTAs' orientation and social skills allowed them to recognize and utilize those opportunities to interact with the FBEs and the larger family social structure.

Actions of Mediation

Inducing pause. The MTAs interrupted the FBEs' momentum in order to slow down the thinking and actions of the FBEs. Inducing pause was necessary to induce the FBEs to consider a larger pool of cues and information. The FBEs tended to be very quick and often impulsive. For example, MTA_1 of War Admiral, who had been with his FBE, for over 30 years, noted:

> I have to slow [the] FBE down when he is being impetuous... Slowing down is tricky. For example, there was a family issue where they were moving too quickly and not in the right direction. I thought that they should have some more information that I had that they didn't know.

This information was delicate in nature and needed to be conveyed sensitively and at the right time and place. The FBEs did not want to be bothered with details that might interrupt their momentum, such as when they pursued new ventures. As such, inducing pause required skill because it involved reading a situation and deciding if, when, and how to intervene.

Inserting doubt. While inducing pause, the MTAs often encouraged the FBEs to hesitate or question their convictions or actions to generate new understandings, to shift to another frame, or to consider an alternative interpretation. In using reflective questioning, the MTAs helped the FBEs to think differently about the sense that had already been made, thereby interrupting sensemaking trajectories. Inserting doubt was a starting point for critical thinking; a method for creating working hypotheses that the FBEs could explore though imagination or creative action. To illustrate, the spouse of War Admiral's FBE explained:

> I might be in a situation and I am very emotional about it; whereas [the] MTA who is very close to me is not so emotional and he can just raise some very interesting questions. It's enough to make me rethink it. I think all that another person can do is to ask the right questions.

The FBEs and other family members found it difficult to be critical because they were passionate about many issues surrounding the family and business, but the MTAs' questions helped them to formulate criticism. Further, because some cues are only discernible in hindsight, the FBEs sometimes did not understand the significance of particular seeds. From their perspective, the questions and seeds represented more noise than signal. As a result, the FBEs often needed time to reflect and think.

Mediating voice and knowledge. An important reason for inserting pause and doubt was related to the FBEs' status. As the head of the family and the firm, the FBEs were often surrounded by family members who were sometimes reluctant to speak up when the FBEs felt very passionate about proceeding on an issue or with a new venture. The MTAs would incorporate other points of view by bringing forward stimuli and weak cues. For example, Omaha's MTA explained:

> In family enterprises, important information gets blocked ... A trusted advisor is in a position where they can say things other people might not be comfortable saying. They find ways to voice information that needs to be heard.

The MTAs would speak on behalf of both family members and employees, especially for those on the margin who felt they were not given a voice because they lacked credibility or were intimidated by the FBEs. They would introduce other forms of information that the FBEs might not consider and attempt to encourage the FBEs to consider the implications of their potential actions, the positives, the negatives, concerns and possible consequences of moving forward. The MTAs would ensure that they would raise only issues that the FBEs would view as significant. Otherwise, the MTAs would be seen as just "throwing up roadblocks."

Adaptive Sensemaking

Entrapped frame. Each FBE in our study had successfully developed multiple business ventures. However, while past successes facilitated potential future successes, they increased commitment to frames that could entrap the FBEs in a trajectory of sensemaking by obstructing the ability to consider events outside of already established frames. The FBEs often worked with a gut feeling vis-à-vis what they believed they could make work.

> Entrepreneurs think differently. They consider it a waste of time to delay and to check in with family members . . .. Because they have successfully built one or more businesses they feel they know it all. They think they call all the shots and they don't have to worry about other people and their opinions. They don't see why they should change their thinking because it worked so well in the past venture. (MTA_2 War Admiral)

Lowering commitment. Consequently, the FBEs needed to slow down in order to move away from these frames. Inducing pause in the FBEs' actions helped the FBEs to attend to alternative perspectives, query their initial sensemaking and plans for action, assess risks and implications that they would otherwise ignore, and eventually lower their commitment to their beliefs about what would work. For example, Sir Barton's FBE_1 described how she would slow down when their MTA gave them "pause:"

> We tend to drive pretty hard and that's where [the] MTA would say "hey, people need to breathe" . . . [the] MTA gives us pause on some things, so that can be very good, and frankly, it can be frustrating at times. But most of the time it's worth stopping and listening to [the] MTA's thoughts.

This FBE's 24/7 focus on the business meant her thinking was often far ahead of that of the executive team in her firm, but it also meant that she did not always consider the implications to the business that the executive team might be pondering for a given course of action.

Expanding frame. However, the FBEs needed not only to break out of their entrapped frame, but also to update and revise their initial frame or mobilize alternative frames in order to develop a more comprehensive sense of the initiative or issue under scrutiny. Expanding one's frame encompasses integrating and reflecting on cues and others' points of view. To illustrate, the spouse from War Admiral's FBE explained how their MTA encouraged reflection. "In this world, everything is so instantaneous and it changes overnight. What is happening is that people don't take any time for reflection. And I think this is the most important thing that the MTA brings." This reflection enabled the FBEs to develop a deeper, broader understanding of their actions and potential consequences.

PATTERNS OF MEDIATION

We further assessed the MTAs' mediation actions by examining the FBEs' initiatives that were being mediated and discovered several patterns of mediated sensemaking. As noted above, the MTAs would not mediate initiatives that they regarded as minor. For example, the MTA of Gallant Fox noted:

> If you go with a whole bunch of minutia then when they see you coming they say "Oh my God, I am going to have to spend another half day with him talking about crap," so if you are going to be effective and be sure you are heard, you can only broker key issues.

A major initiative addressed a very sensitive issue or had wide-reaching implications for the business or the family. Sensitive issues were ones where a family member might feel vulnerable or personally wounded, or where the FBEs might react temperamentally. Wide-reaching implications for the business meant that the business would be significantly affected monetarily, while wide-reaching implications for the family meant that family relationships or the welfare of the family was at risk of being seriously adversely affected. We therefore identified each initiative as either a new one that the FBE was currently making sense of, or one that had already been implemented or taken place. We classified each initiative as *pending* or *established*, respectively.

Based on this assessment, we analyzed the perceived urgency of an initiative. The FBEs could move initiatives at any tempo they chose, so we focused on how quickly the FBE planned to move ahead. *Pending* initiatives fell into three categories: whether the FBEs were moving forward *immediately* (that day), *very quickly* (within the next day), or *quickly* (within the week). For *established* initiatives, the FBEs moved forward steadily along the same trajectory. We provide examples of *pending* initiatives below and subsequently discuss *established* initiatives.

For each *pending* initiative, the MTAs would first use various tactics, depending on how quickly the FBEs were moving, to slow the FBEs down or induce pause. When the FBEs wanted to move forward *immediately*, the MTAs proposed setting up a future meeting. As MTA_2 of Whirlaway, who had been with the family firm for over 10 years, expressed: "If it was something that was moving along extremely quickly and I wanted to slow it down I'd just say 'let's have a meeting and talk about it in a couple of days'." Yet such meetings usually allowed the MTAs to postpone actions for only two to three days. Otherwise, the FBEs viewed the MTAs as hindering action and moved forward if the meeting was too far in the future.

When the FBEs were moving *very quickly*, the MTAs could induce the FBEs to pause by proposing to gather more information or to seek additional advice from others; these tactics could be used to slow down the FBEs for up to a week. Because the FBEs

were inclined to generate interpretations that were based on minimal information, and they were willing to accept plausible understandings in order to move forward, they were not interested in developing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding that might provide contrary evidence. The MTAs therefore had to ensure that the FBEs would consider the information as relevant and timely. FBE_2 of Sir Barton explained:

> [The] MTA would add steps which tend[ed] to make the process a little longer. Due diligence and risk assessment is always a part of all our major evaluations, but he has added a much more comprehensive look. For example, more detailed forecasting of the implications, tying it back into the covenants, and taking it to a much more detailed level than we had done in the past before he was with us.

In following up on this example, the MTA for this firm clarified how he would add steps to the process to induce pause and amass more information.

Similarly, the MTAs sometimes encouraged the FBEs to seek the advice of other advisors. The MTAs would use this tactic when they did not believe they had the necessary expertise, when the advice needed to come from someone else, or when the MTAs needed more voices to slow down the FBEs and encourage them to rethink the initiative. MTA_1 of War Admiral explained:

> [The] FBE thinks most issues are urgent, but they really are not. I point out to him why it's not urgent and encourage him to speak to other people. . . . to talk to another advisor, another sounding board. And sometimes I may talk to the other advisor first to discuss the issue with him.

The FBEs placed more weight on their MTA's guidance when the MTA had been with the family for a significant period of time and had developed a strong social position.

When the FBEs moved *quickly*, the MTAs could also induce pause by bringing an initiative to forum to seek consensus. Such action meant arranging for a family meeting or placing the initiative on the agenda for the next board or family meeting. The MTAs needed to have a strong social position with the entire family in order to facilitate the discussions at these meetings. This tactic was typically utilized for delays of up to three weeks, and for initiatives that had wider implications for other family members and the business. As FBE_1 of Sir Barton reflected:

> He's always saying "We have got to talk to your sisters about this situation." And whether it was the downsizing of one of our plants or an acquisition, I would just be saying "No, we are here to run the business and let's do it" and [the] MTA will slow us down [and say] "we've got to involve them."

While the FBE was unhappy with the pushback she received, she would rather have buy-in even though she did not want to invest the time or energy to get it. As the MTA_1 of Whirlaway explained: "it will be a lot easier to get [something] done if everybody has an opportunity to say what they have to say, the group takes action and then we don't have to spend time afterwards rehashing it."

To be clear, while inducing pause was the first mediation action for *pending* initiatives, the process could include multiple types of pauses. Once the MTAs slowed down the FBEs using pause tactics for *immediate* actions (setting up a future meeting), they might use another pause tactic for a *very quick* or a *quick* initiative, depending on where the FBEs were in their sensemaking.

Inserting doubt varied along a spectrum anchored by *narrow* and *broad*. *Narrow* inserting was *direct*, such as asking very specific and pointed questions about a situation or raising a red flag. It was used when the FBEs had been moving along *immediately* (that day) or *very quickly* (within the next day) and the MTAs had been able to slow down the FBEs for only a short time. In War Admiral, for instance, the family wanted to move forward quickly on an initiative. Their MTA asked them to meet first with another advisor because he had information surrounding the initiative that the family needed to know, but felt that someone else should impart the information. He contacted one of the family's external advisors who dealt more with the family's personal issues, and agreed that he should be the one to share the information with the family. The external advisor "threw up a couple of red flags" that prompted the family to start thinking about the implications further, thereby inserting initial doubt into the merits of their actions. Inserting doubt enabled a shift between frames by initiating a search for understanding. Conversely, *broad* inserting of doubt was *subtle*, such as the planting of seeds, when the FBEs were moving *quickly* (within the week) or for *established* initiatives when the MTAs had a longer time before the FBEs would move forward.

We found that in contrast to *pending* initiatives, with *established* initiatives the MTAs' first course of action was to insert doubt. A telling example of an *established* initiative where the MTA inserted doubt is Sir Barton's first international foray. Sir Barton's FBEs had acquired a business in the UK, a significant move for the firm, and the FBEs were strongly

committed to the operations. After their MTA joined Sir Barton, he began to question the FBE about the acquisition, planting seeds of doubt: "This company is taking a lot of your time. Where do the long-term pieces fit in? What are the benefits to the company? Is it taking your management team time away from other more pressing issues? Are there significant upsides?" The U.K. business was not part of the family firm's core capability. It was taking time and energy away from the core business, but the FBEs were emotionally attached to the business. The process of planting seeds, questioning, and flagging potential issues continued for several years. Eventually, the FBEs began to question the benefits of the business. They paused. They wondered whether there were other things they could do to make it more successful. They began to see the consequences associated with holding onto the firm. As FBE_2 of Sir Barton explained:

> Sometimes as an owner, it's difficult to be detached and so that's where as a Trusted Advisor he has really helped us think through the importance of having that detachment so that you can be a bit dispassionate about the venture so that you aren't missing opportunities to get out of something while there is still value there.

A similar example played out when the FBE of Count Fleet wanted to quickly move forward on an acquisition and was willing to pay more than necessary. His MTA_1 explained:

> I said "let's look at the competitive landscape and who you are competing against." I view it as planting seeds. It's bringing those perspectives to them to say "let's look at the environment; let's not look at just you and the vendor. Let's consider what their motivation is in trying to get rid of this and let's try to put ourselves in their shoes." Giving them something to think about. I find that's the best way to get things done; to plant seeds.

Here, the MTA injected doubt into the sensemaking process. He invited the FBE to think about what he knew and to update his knowledge by recombining it with the information that the MTA offered. A seed does not specify what sense will be made; it merely suggests a possible direction for the sensemaking process. What the seed will become depends on local contingencies.

Interestingly, while the MTAs focused on gathering more information to deepen and broaden the understanding of the issue, they would simplify the information, or "*eliminate the clutter*" when discussing it with the family. MTA_2 of Whirlaway explained:

> If I come in with something that is very dense, then people feel they are being forced to address a very complicated issue. If I can do a good job of eliminating the clutter we can have a simpler discussion which will get us to the same place, but it [doesn't] force them to have to process sixteen aspects of something when really only one or two [matter]. We can have a slow discussion about two issues as opposed to a quick discussion about sixteen.

By simplifying the information, the MTAs aided the family to put concerns into perspective in order to think more clearly about the core issues or initiative. Although inferior simplifying can result in missing important details and their implications, the MTAs enhanced simplification by embracing the complexity of the issue. They developed a comprehensive understanding of the issue, the family firm, its dynamics, and its capabilities by attending to more ideas, information, and a greater variety of interpretations in order to sense future complexity.

When the MTAs brought forth new stimuli and cues they anticipated future concerns, provided perspective, and broadened understanding of the issue or initiative. In turn, when others initiated the mediating by approaching the MTAs, they prevented the fragmentation of ideas and people that could otherwise result in multiple narrow accounts and an emergent series of inconsistent actions. As in the example above, bringing forth unobserved cues and stimuli could be facilitated in a group forum. However, mediation was usually private between the MTAs and the FBEs, especially when initiated by the MTA. As War Admiral's MTA_1 explained:

> If you want to make a point when you are in a meeting with ten people and you want to give the FBE something to think about that may be different than what he's expressed to the meeting it may be not good to make that point in front of ten other people. You may want to pass him a note. You may want to wait until after the meeting and ask him to reconsider or point out to him something else that he may want to think of that might modify the position slightly.

In one example, the next generation approached the MTA with a sensitive issue that they did not know how to address with the FBE. Not wanting to appear confrontational, the next generation turned to the MTA to aid in bridging. Sometimes the MTA could raise the issue directly with the parents; at other times, the issue would be so sensitive the MTA

needed to approach the issue indirectly. Employees also approached the MTA. The MTA of Count Fleet explained:

> They don't necessarily come to me as the father confessor, but I have enough of a dialogue going on with them that I can get a sense of whether things are going well or whether there's an intervention that would be needed. So [they will] come to me if there is something that they think is wrong within the business but they don't think FBE will listen to them or they are hesitant to approach him.

Integrating such fragmentation when the FBEs were moving quickly was challenging; by passing the FBEs a note or asking for a future meeting, the MTAs gained time to pull together people and ideas. Alternatively, when the issue was less significant or sensitive, the MTAs encouraged family members, board members, and employees to speak with the FBEs about their views and concerns rather than funneling them through the MTAs. Here, the MTAs would coach others about how to approach the FBEs with respect to finding the right words and the right timing, because "you have to pick your time; if you pick the wrong time, they are not going to hear you or they are not going to understand you."

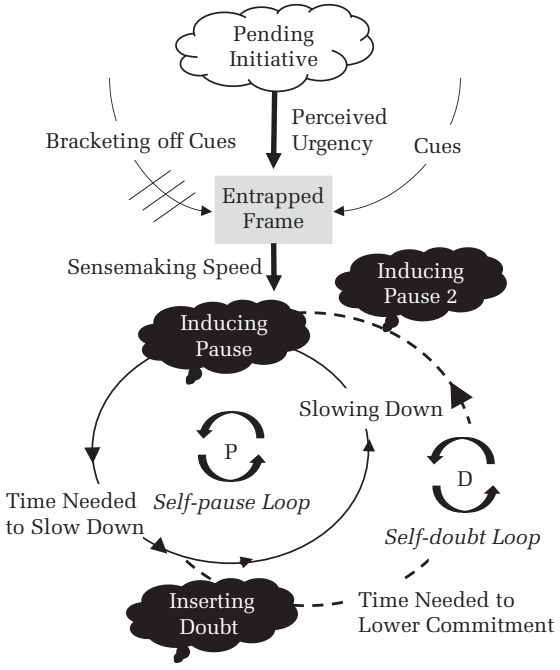
AN EMERGENT PROCESS THEORY OF MEDIATED SENSEMAKING

Our analysis highlighted the urgency that influenced the pace of FBE sensemaking. Consequently, a key impetus for mediated sensemaking is for the MTAs to slow down the FBEs' sensemaking trajectory in order to facilitate adaptive sensemaking. However, while the MTAs' actions initially seemed straightforward and linear, it was quite challenging to lower the FBEs' commitment to established frames and to redirect their trajectory of sensemaking. We analyzed the interdependency of the phases of mediation. Because mediation actions involve coordinating the three phases (1) *entrapped frame-inducing pause*, (2) *inserting doubt-lowering commitment*, and (3) *mediating voice and knowledge-expanding frame*, we focused on the intensity of the interdependence and the coordination tactics with which they were managed. Below, we develop a grounded process theory that is based on an amalgamation of experiences across MTAs.[5] By building on causal loop diagramming methods that are commonly used in system dynamics research to articulate process theories (e.g., Perlow et al., 2002; Rudolph et al., 2009), our emergent theory unpacks how mediated sensemaking unfolded over time.

Figure 3 shows the initial set of relationships that drove the FBEs' sensemaking speed. First, the FBEs' entrapped frame increased the speed of sensemaking because of the FBEs' single-minded focus and drive. Second, the entrapped frame was influenced by cues and the perceived urgency of taking action. The cues were those that the FBEs were willing to consider in their sensemaking versus the cues that they bracketed off. The actions of the MTAs began in this depiction with inducing pause. How pause is induced was determined by the sensemaking speed of the FBEs. To capture this process of slowing down, we depict the MTAs inducing pause and slowing the FBEs down in Figure 3. Since slowing down cognitively requires time, we reflect the pace of slowing down as "time needed to slow down."

Once slowed down, the MTAs inserted doubt by questioning the FBEs and raising red flags to point out hazards that the FBEs might not have considered. Once they did so, the FBEs began to think about the questions and concerns raised, thereby lowering their commitment to the entrapped frames. As

FIGURE 3
Inducing Pause Loop and Inserting Doubt Loop

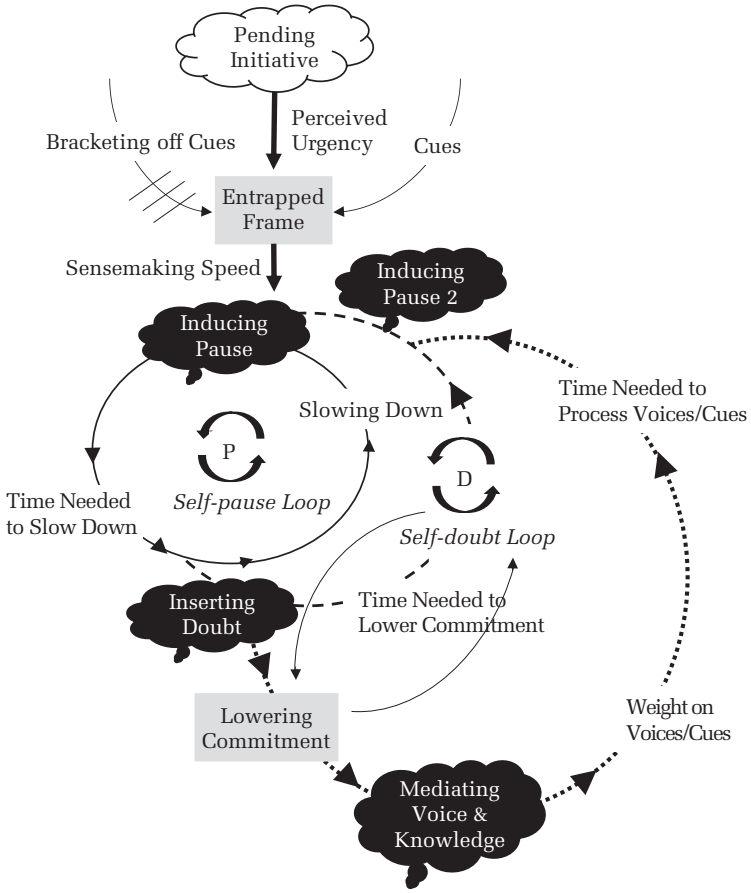


[5] The emergent model depicts pending initiatives. Established initiatives follow a similar process, but begin with inserting doubt as opposed to inducing pause.

incorporating doubt was an ongoing process that required time, we labeled the pace of this process as "time needed to lower commitment." Inserting doubt led to two feedback loops. First, it fed back to the FBEs beginning to raise their own questions, creating "D," the self-doubt loop shown in Figure 3. Second, through the self-doubt loop and the FBEs raising their own questions, it slowed the FBEs down further as they thought about the questions and concerns, creating "P," the self-pause loop. As the FBEs began to reflect, the MTAs might slow the FBEs down again. In this way, the MTAs induced further pause, thus allowing more time for the FBEs to raise questions and for the MTAs to gather information and begin mediating the voices of the board and family. This is reflected in Figure 3 with the variable "inducing pause 2."

The MTAs mediated voices by working with family, board members, and employees to ensure they all understood the implications of the issue. They would either speak on their behalf or encourage others to speak out at board meetings, as opposed to simply going along with the wishes of the FBEs. The MTAs would also encourage others to speak one-on-one with the FBEs, as they knew that members would say different things outside a meeting than they would say in front of everybody else. We portray the mediation of voices in Figure 4 with the variable "mediating voice and knowledge" and the FBEs' pace of processing the voices and cues as "time needed to process voices or cues." When the MTAs could not work directly with the FBEs because the FBEs had made up their minds, the question became how to use other people, such as board members, the spouse, and the next generation. The MTAs would point out to family members that they had a responsibility to speak up, because it was unlikely that a lonely voice would have considerable influence. Consequently, the MTAs would pull out more ammunition than just their own advice. Increasing the voices of the individuals that the FBEs respected and

FIGURE 4
Mediating Voice and Knowledge Loop



cared for increased the weight the FBEs placed on the concerns, which in turn caused an increase in the FBEs' doubting and slowing down. We reflect this in Figure 4 as "weight on voices or cues."

The recursive voices and interactions with the board members and family members formed a feedback loop, "V," that reinforced the concerns and potential implications that were raised, which we depict in Figure 5. This feedback loop, which we label "reinforcing voice loop," pushed the FBEs toward an expanding sensemaking frame by integrating various voices and concerns. We depict the integration with the label "integrating voices or cues." The reinforcing voices fed into the self-doubt and self-pause loops. The self-pause loop gave the FBEs the time they needed to reflect on the voices and cues being raised, which drove them toward an expanded sensemaking frame. To capture the pace of reflection, we add the link "time needed for reflection." Our final variable is the FBEs' resulting sensemaking frame, which we label "expanded frame." This frame is positively influenced by the FBEs' integration of voices or cues and reflection.

DISCUSSION

Our study advances the field of sensemaking by empirically developing a phenomenon, mediated sensemaking, that prior work has largely overlooked. Mediated sensemaking shows how sensemaking processes can be shaped, updated, and redirected. Past work has portrayed sensemaking as a social process (Maitlis, 2005), but as a "theory of seemingly local practice, sensemaking appears to neglect, or at least lack an explicit account of, the embeddedness of sensemaking in social space and time" (Weber & Glynn, 2006: 1639). As such, prior research has focused on how adaptive sensemaking unfolds *within* a boundary, but has overlooked how it also unfolds *across* boundaries. It has examined managers, employees, and other stakeholders within a local context, but has focused little on how outsiders affect sensemaking (Luscher & Lewis, 2008).

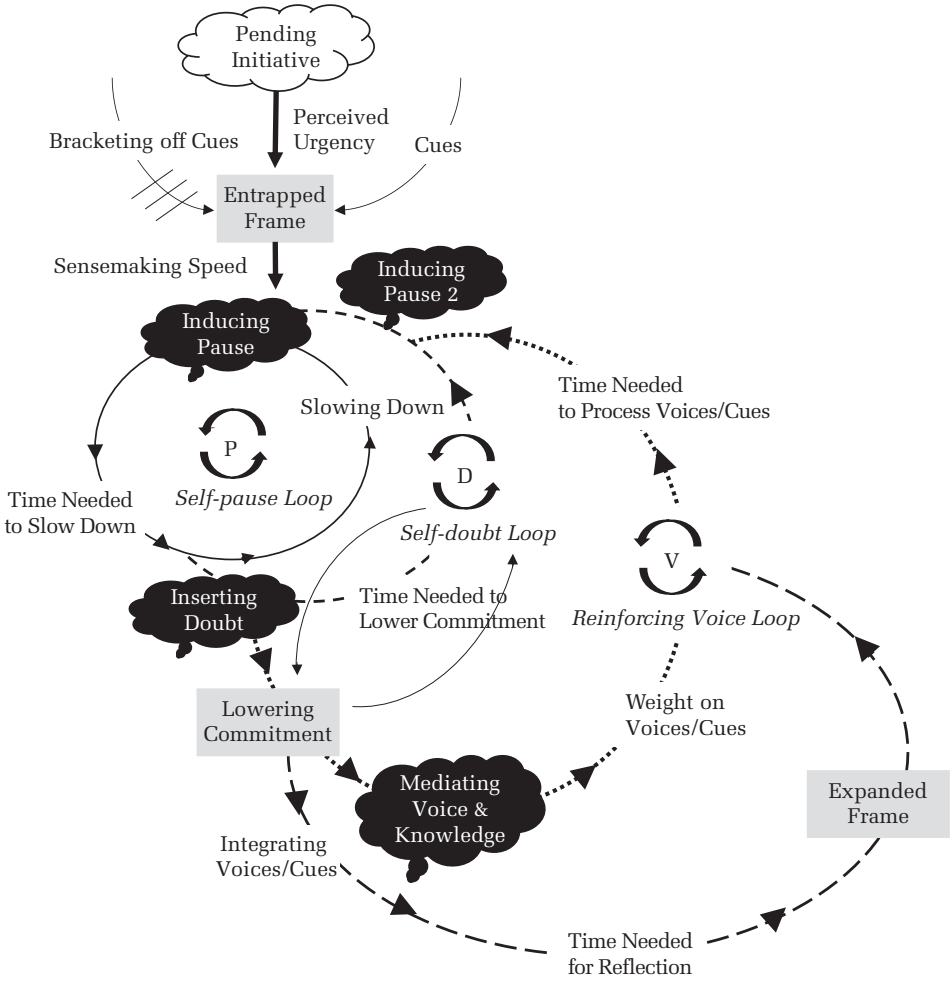
> The "invisibility" of [mediated] social phenomena ... stems from the fact that it is more spread out over time and space as compared to more localized individual or dyadic phenomena and therefore less available for instantaneous observation ... [It] is inherently more complex and ... difficult for ... the social scientist to detect, track over time, and theorize. (Obstfeld, 2014: 4)

Overall, we contribute theoretically to a broader understanding of sensemaking by making a prior hidden aspect of adaptive sensemaking more visible (Feldman, 2016). We also illustrate that sensemaking is not only an episodic phenomena triggered by interruptions such as accidents and major planned initiatives. Following Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015), our study shows that sensemaking can be a fairly mundane process where mediators carefully pace but purposefully plant seeds that interrupt and invite people to make sense in a continuous, rather than episodic, manner. From this perspective, the making of sense is permanent and subject to ongoing updating that calls forth the need for unbroken effort to adjust frames. Sensemaking is also purposeful rather than random, because the mediators carefully rather than haphazardly pick the moment when they choose to interrupt the sensemakers. Specifically, the temporal view of adaptive sensemaking summarized in our grounded model adds value in three ways. First, it shows how outsiders—mediators or boundary spanners—influence (adaptive) sensemaking. Second, it shows how positional features (Lockett et al., 2014) underlie sensemaking. Third, the outside person on the "periphery" in mediated sensemaking is not sensegiving in the traditional sense (Pratt, 2000), but facilitates a longer, more thoughtful, process of adaptive sensemaking.

Mediated Sensemaking as a Distinct Sensemaking Phenomenon

Two core features distinguish mediated sensemaking from "classic" sensemaking. First, it incorporates both local and more macro contextual features, thus demonstrating hidden effects of the larger social context on local sensemaking and accounting for elements that have remained peripheral (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). It implies inclusion and incorporation of the relationship between periphery and center (Weick, 1995: 104). Mediated sensemaking reminds us to look more broadly at how people within a boundary are influenced by people that are either on the outside of, or are able to straddle, that boundary. By studying how mediators connect sensemaking across boundaries (Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010; O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008; Quick and Feldman, 2014), mediated sensemaking emphasizes how boundaries matter. A mediator legitimately inhabits or is able to travel across several intersecting social worlds (Bechky, 2003; Obstfeld, 2005). From one perspective, the MTAs are inside the boundary of sensemaking; they have a formal role in the family business and have access to key actors to whom they

FIGURE 5
Full Emergent Process Model of Mediated Sensemaking



provides advice. From another perspective, the MTAs are outside the boundary; they are not part of the family. However, although the MTAs are not part of the center, they are also not peripheral. They are always relevant and, seemingly, appreciated. This ambiguous role helps the MTAs facilitate adaptive sensemaking. Simon (1957) showed that the informal organization complements the formal organization by legitimizing its authority and facilitating the enactment of tasks that can be accomplished only partially through the formal organization (Gulati & Puranam, 2009). Our study embellishes this general insight in the context of sensemaking: individuals who can oscillate between social positions on different sides of a boundary (e.g., formal vs. informal) can mediate action and sensemaking processes that are valuable to the firm, but that are inadequately captured in the formal structure. Our study offers a more encompassing understanding of sensemaking by capturing how it is intertwined in the formal and informal social structure.

Second, our findings show that although mediators (MTAs) influence the sensemaking process, their other-oriented (Grant et al., 2008) orientation does not fit into classic accounts of "self-interested" sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) in which the sensegiver is fairly directive (Pratt, 2000). Often, the sensegiver has a personal stake in a particular account. In contrast, the MTAs in our study did not attempt to further their own interests, but instead indirectly brought forward unattended cues. Although MTAs are motivated actors, their focus appears to differ from that of the sensegivers described in previous studies.

Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) argued that "process facilitators" (routines, practices, and structures) can provide organizational actors with time and opportunity to engage in sensegiving. By the same token, we argue that mediators provide the various stakeholders of the family firm with the social space, time, knowledge, and opportunity to engage in adaptive sensemaking. Speechwriters might exemplify what mediated sensegiving looks like because they directly influence what other people will say. Their work involves telling, authoring, and directing. The MTAs' influence is more implicit, indirect, and open ended. Mediated sensemaking is also different from "joint sensemaking" (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012) because the MTAs and FBEs are not directly working together to make sense. The MTAs in our study planted seeds, but did not actively make sense other than reading situations and deciding if, when, and how to intervene.

The MTAs' role suggests that mediated sensemaking provides another way to understand how mediated voice and dissent might unfold in organizations. Dissent and voice are often ineffective because what people say is either not persuasive or they are not given a voice (Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013). Because MTAs help the voice of people on the margin to be heard, mediated sensemaking outlines ways to promote dissent and voice in contexts where leaders or other actors express strong opinion and are directive. The onus is often on people in the minority to persuade the majority or their leader (Vaughan, 1996). Mediation lets the minority voice their concerns (Griffith et al., 1998; Rerup, 2009).

The Role of Mediated Sensemaking in Adaptive Sensemaking

Mediated sensemaking enables adaptive sensemaking by facilitating update and doubt (Christianson, 2009; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). Our study answers a key puzzle of adaptive sensemaking; namely, "How do people simultaneously know and doubt, yet mobilize sufficient confidence to act rather than deliberate?" (Weick, 2001: 358). Individuals balance the tension between action and deliberation along a continuum between "thinking before acting" and "acting before thinking" (Vera et al., 2014). Weick (2001) proposed two means to simultaneously know and doubt. First, actors must believe they can improvise. Berliner (1994: 241) defined improvisation as "reworking precomposed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation." Improvisation involves creative recombinations of what is already known, so it is an ideal way to expand existing knowledge while still doubting the usefulness of particular recombinations. Basically, actors will continue to act rather than deliberate if they believe their existing knowledge can be recombined into useful solutions. Second, actors need to remain "attentive, wary, and willing to explore" (Weick, 2001: 375). It is not clear, however, whether sensemakers develop these means on their own or through social interaction. Further, after actors experience success or positive feedback—as the FBEs in our study did—it can be challenging to remain attentive, wary, and willing to explore. Mediated sensemaking adds to Weick's insights in three ways.

First, it enables a mediator to subtly influence the sensemaker to mobilize social support. Past work on sensemaking set a fairly low threshold for capturing when ongoing activity has been disrupted and sense reestablished. For instance, an episode of sensemaking is resolved when a plausible account for moving forward is produced (Weick, 1995). Mediated sensemaking can redirect sensemaking on the fly. With its focus on a higher threshold of updated sense to guide action, it suggests that sensemaking during crises (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) might have turned out differently if mediators were involved. Because the MTAs plant seeds, raise questions, and bring cues and doubt forward, the FBEs can think about what they already know and update that knowledge. Momentum in sensemaking can represent a form of false learning; when a sensemaker has made sense of a situation, it is tricky to explore other alternatives because they are considered inferior to the sense already made (Denrell, 2008). The mediator may make it easier for a confident leader to reconsider "inferior" scenarios.

Second, mediated sensemaking specifies how knowing and doubting is accomplished simultaneously by: (1) inducing pause, (2) inserting doubt, and (3) mediating voice and knowledge. As shown in our grounded model, the MTAs deployed these means through dialogue and social interaction to introduce more reflection. Our findings show how the MTAs helped the FBEs distance themselves from customary, habitual, and unreflective ways of acting (Tsoukas, 2009).

Third, the finding that the MTAs induce pause before they insert doubt highlights an issue that Weick (2001) and subsequent work on adaptive sensemaking (Christianson, 2009; Rudolph et al.,

2009; Uitdewilligen, Waller, & Pitariu, 2013) has not acknowledged: in an action-oriented, entrepreneurial context, sensemakers are more likely to rebalance knowing and doubting if they are slowed down. This suggests, as shown in our grounded model and called for in several recent reviews (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), that we need to pay more attention to the role of pacing and temporality in sensemaking. Today, speed is privileged over deliberation (Partnoy, 2012; Perlow et al., 2002). Executives are told that they must learn "to exploit short-lived opportunities with speed and decisiveness" (McGrath, 2013: xi). The FBEs in our study needed impartial actors to facilitate an environment for improved sensing by slowing down the pace of activity. Mediation is necessary because expanded sensing and deliberation of alternative frames does not happen by chance (Cornelissen et al., 2014). Practices need to be developed so that regular opportunities for doubt and deliberation occur.

Pacing and inducing pause to insert doubt and adapt sensemaking might also be useful in other contexts. For instance, pause is integral to healthcare settings, where employees call "time outs" to validate that the surgical team is performing the scheduled surgery on the correct body part on the right person (Dillon, 2008). Yet until now, the role of a mediator in purposefully interrupting the sensemaker's momentum has remained unrecognized. On this issue, our study extends Rerup's (2009) account of attention mediation in Novo Nordisk. The mediator ("Facilitator") in Novo Nordisk is a formal role with specific deliverables. Yet, unlike Novo Nordisk, many small and medium-sized firms do not have the resources to hire 10 or 20 people to mediate attention. Nor are all environments and all levels of management (e.g., owners in family firms) conducive to such formality. In contrast to Rerup (2009), who argued that it is necessary for an organization to design and develop mechanisms to proactively interrupt trajectories of sensemaking, we show that there might be other, subtler approaches to increase attention quality. Our data do not reveal what it costs to maintain an MTA, but it appears that subtle advice processes offer an overlooked approach to improve attention quality (Strike, 2013).

Boundary Conditions

Family firms are a special context, and thus may be a boundary condition for our findings. However, we selected this context because its uniqueness helped us to identify and develop the idea of mediated sensemaking; unconventional contexts are useful for examining understudied processes and phenomena (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010). The core of mediated sensemaking concerns how the MTAs guide those with formal power to slow down, doubt, and adapt sensemaking. We believe that all executives sometimes need to gain other perspectives about important issues. Thus, we consider the family firm environment a boundary condition, rather than a feature that is inherent to the theoretical process. In other words, it was more interesting to study mediated sensemaking in an environment where the executive owns or started the company. It is possible that this fact entrenches the FBEs to a degree that does not occur in traditional organizations; however, our study provides more than a context contribution (Heath & Sitkin, 2001). Because adaptive sensemaking occurs in almost any context, we believe mediated sensemaking is essential in different ownership structures and that our findings transfer to mainstream organizations.

Future Research Directions

In our study, we did not trace precise outcomes. Other scholars should assess the causal link between mediated sensemaking and results by exploring contexts in which mediated sensemaking might unfold, and further conceptualize mediated sensemaking by incorporating mediating structures into theories of sensemaking. These moves could capture new and overlooked dimensions of mediated sensemaking, including the short-term and long-term dynamics of mediated sensemaking. While our grounded theory did not capture performance dynamics of specific mediators, it points to three areas that help a mediator sustain a long-term role in mediating sensemaking: (1) social position in the mediation structure, (2) disposition to mediate (orientation and social skills), and (3) use of specific tactics and actions. Future work needs to investigate how structural features and endogenous skills influence the mediation of sensemaking over time.

We focused on only some aspects of the pacing and temporality of sensemaking. For instance, we addressed how pause and delay induced positive effects. However, pause and delays are not always positive (Rudolph et al., 2009). For instance, NASA experienced two shuttle disasters because information and dissenting opinions traveled too slowly or were never voiced (Starbuck & Farjoun, 2005; Vaughan, 1996). Scholars need to capture which factors dictate when adaptive sensemaking should be fast, slow, or a combination of both. If, for instance, sensemakers are less confident and action-oriented, mediators might attempt to

influence actors to doubt less and act faster and more confidently. Future work needs to investigate the conditions under which slow processes of adaptive sensemaking are superior to fast approaches.

In this study, we showed that mediation generates adaptive sensemaking (e.g., by slowing down, creating doubt, and mediating voices), but mediation and adaptive sensemaking might be achieved in other ways. We believe the process of mediated sensemaking is not limited to what we have uncovered in this particular study. For instance, is mediated sensemaking only accomplished though human intervention? In what ways do materiality, signs, symbols, artifacts, technology, and boundary objects (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012) influence mediation of sensemaking? When cues and sensemaking are distributed across multiple sensemakers, various forms of technology might help to connect and mediate sensemaking across boundaries.

Although past studies have provided a wealth of insight on sensemaking, there is room for expanding these accounts by exploring how mediators are implicated in the process. Specifically, our study shows that less conspicuous processes and phenomena in organizations are important to study but that they usually go undetected because scholars are typically advised to capture processes and phenomena that are "transparently observable" (Eisenhardt, 1989: 537). By engaging in extensive data collection and analysis for a decade, and combining two qualitative methods (see Langley & Abdallah, 2011), we identified an unrecognized and difficult-to-trace phenomenon—mediated sensemaking—that reveals a new lens for studying adaptive sensemaking. Studies of boundary work (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Obstfeld, 2005) and updating (Christianson, 2009; Rudolph et al., 2009) provide a starting point for imagining how this lens might become a perspective that incorporates the larger context (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011), including the embeddedness of sensemaking in social space and time.

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