Articulating circumstance, identity and practice: toward a discursive framework of organizational changing

Guowei Jian
School of Communication, Cleveland State University

Abstract

The literature on organizational change abounds with models that map the trajectory of change with ordered stages or episodes. However, limited progress has been made in understanding the dynamic process of *changing* or *becoming* from one stage or episode to another. To enhance our knowledge of *changing*, this study intends to offer a discursive framework grounded in a process-oriented perspective of organization. The framework highlights key discursive dynamics of changing by integrating recent developments in several streams of research. It conceptualizes changing as discursive struggles over articulating multiple layers of meaning. These layers comprise the articulation of organizational circumstance, organizational and individual identities and organizational practice. To illustrate the utility of this framework, the author undertook a discourse analysis of real-time communication among members in a large US insurance corporation. The interpretation was grounded in data from a four-month ethnographic study. The analysis effectively demonstrates how organizational changing takes place in interrelated layers of discursive action. It also offers critique on potential discursive effects of stage models when applied by practitioners in managing organizational change programs.

In recent years a growing interest among scholars of organizational change is in understanding the dynamic, open-ended process of organizational changing or becoming (e.g. Buchanan, 2003; Grant et al., 2005; Jian, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Weick and Quinn, 1999).

Corresponding author:
Guowei Jian, School of Communication, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Cleveland State University,
2121 Euclid Avenue, MU 247, Cleveland, OH 44115-2214, USA.
Email: g.jian@csuohio.edu

This development reflects scholars' dissatisfaction with what Tsoukas and Chia (2002) called a 'synoptic approach' to change. The synoptic approach treats change as differences among static states while overlooking the action and flow in the process of transformation. By contrast, a shift in focus toward the process of changing intends to capture the doing and performing that makes change happen (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

Following this process-oriented path, the present study seeks to develop an integrative framework of changing that highlights key discursive dynamics. The framework conceptualizes changing as emergent in multiple layers of discursive construction and contestation. It draws upon several streams of research, including organizational communication and discourse theories (Grant et al., 2004; Jian et al., 2008; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Taylor and Van Every, 2000), sensemaking (Weick, 1979, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) and identity theories (e.g. Alvesson and Empson, 2008; Alvesson et al., 2008; Czarniawska, 1997; Gioia et al., 2000). To illustrate the proposed framework, the study takes an endogenous look at real-time communicative interactions among organizational members. The analysis was grounded in data from a four-month ethnographic study in a large US insurance corporation.

The contribution of this study to organization theories is three-fold. First, the study enhances our understanding of the way in which discursive actions transform organizational reality. The analysis illustrates how changing takes place in the dynamic interplay between micro communicative action (the small 'd' discourse) and macro Discourse (the big 'D' Discourse)[1] (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000; Jian et al., 2008). Second, the proposed framework is able to integrate several streams of research. It allows an in-depth analysis of changing as shaped in interrelated layers of articulation. The framework could serve as an integrative platform for future theoretical and empirical research. Third, the empirical analysis illustrates how synoptic stage models, as part of the discourse of management science, could be deployed in practice as discursive devices for the purpose of identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and discursive closure (Deetz, 1992).

The article begins with a brief contrasting look at research of organizational changing versus organizational change. It then focuses on developing a discursive framework of organizational changing. To demonstrate the framework's utility, the study applies it to analysing a change management meeting. The final section discusses the findings and implications for future theory building.

Organizational changing versus organizational change

As mentioned earlier, a synoptic approach has the tendency to conceptualize change as the differences between change states (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). It pays particular attention to the predicative relationships between change antecedents and outcomes. Missing from the synoptic accounts is the dynamic process of changing (Badham and Garrety, 2003; Buchanan, 2003; Chia and King, 1998; Collins, 2003; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). As Tsoukas and Chia (2002) incisively put, the synoptic approach does not show 'how change was actually accomplished on the ground' nor does it 'do justice to the open-ended micro-processes that underlie the trajectories described' (p. 570).

In addition, the synoptic approach often conceptualizes agency of change as lying in senior management and consultants who are positioned exogenous to the change process. Their role is considered to be administering interventions and gauging outcomes from outside. Taylor and Van Every (2000) argue that the assumption of an exogenous agency stems from a problematic ontological view of organization, which is to assume organizations as objects, containers or entities already given or formed in front of us. Consequently, the process of changing is blackboxed (Latour, 1987).

In response to the limitations of the synoptic approach, scholars call for a shift in focus toward organizational changing or becoming. To study changing, Weick and Quinn (1999) argued, is to

'[direct] attention to *actions* [emphasis added] of substituting one thing for another, of making one thing into another ..'. (p. 382). Tsoukas and Chia (2002) proposed that organizational becoming is about 'the reweaving of actors' webs of beliefs and habits of action as a result of new experiences obtained through interactions' (p. 570). Since their initial calls for scholarship on changing, a few empirical studies have emerged to unveil its complexity. For example, through rich ethnographic accounts, Badham and Garrety (2003) and Buchanan (2003) exposed the process of changing as one fraught with contradictions and uncertainties and as inherently polyvocal. Anderson (2005), drawing upon Bakhtin's (1981) work, demonstrated how changing took place through particular discursive work that allowed the translation between the past and future practices. In another recent study, Jian (2007) highlighted change-related meetings as critical communication events in which intense social interaction occurred and key stakeholders of change confronted and negotiated meaning with unintended consequences.

From different angles these empirical studies on changing directly or indirectly point to the complexity and consequential effects of discourse and communication. However, because each of these studies addresses particular issues related to changing, a systematic account of key discursive dynamics requires an integrative conceptual framework. The following section seeks to develop such a framework that highlights organizational changing as a multi-layered discursive process.

A discursive framework of organizational changing

The framework to be presented here conceptualizes organizational changing as constituted discursively in four interrelated layers of articulation: organizational circumstance, organizational identity, individual identity and organizational practice (see Figure 1). In the remainder of this section, I will first conceptualize organizational changing as a discursive process and then illustrate the four layers of articulation and their interrelatedness.
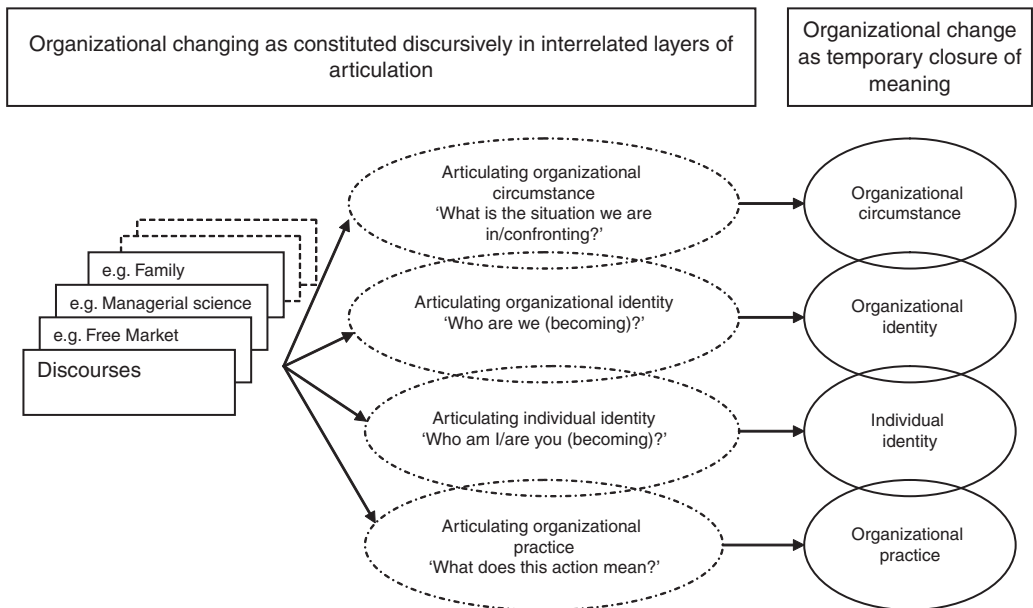

Figure 1. A discursive framework of organizational changing

Organizational changing as discursive struggle over articulation

The study adopts a theoretical lens offered by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), which views the struggle over *articulation* being at the core of a changing process. *Articulation* refers to social actors' attempt to assign meaning to a signifier by positioning it within a particular Discourse or meaning system (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002). Take the example from a recent discourse study about staying-at-home mothers (Medved and Kirby, 2005). The meaning of household tasks performed by staying-at-home mothers can be articulated in myriad Discourses, such as child-rearing, work and labour, feminism, etc. When articulated within a corporate mothering Discourse, their meaning is associated with such managerial tasks as planning, budgeting and oversight (Medved and Kirby, 2005). Similar to the concept *intertextuality* in Fairclough's (1993, 1995) critical discourse analysis, *articulation* describes the meaning production of a text through its relation with other texts and Discourses (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002). However, different from intertextuality, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) used *articulation* to highlight the struggle and the moment of transformation of any given signifier from one with multiple meaning possibilities into one with a temporarily fixed meaning, excluding other possibilities. Organizational changing could be conceptualized as contestation over articulation. In this process, organizational actors struggle to fix meaning, though temporarily, with regard to organizational circumstance, identity and practice by substituting their preferred Discourses for other discursive possibilities.

Articulating organizational circumstance

Making sense of organizational circumstance is an essential element of organizing (Weick,1995; Weick et al., 2005). It involves bracketing and assigning meaning to the flux of sensory cues and events organizational members experience (Weick, 1995). Following Weick et al. (2005), I prefer the term *circumstance* to *environment* because the latter tends to have the connotation of 'being external' while *circumstance* has a broader and more general meaning referring to the conditions surrounding and/or internal to the organizing process.

Articulating organizational circumstance is an important layer of meaning formation during the changing process because the reason to change is often attributed to shifts in organizational conditions. Articulating a circumstance constructs a particular reality or situation that an organization faces. The resources for such construction are existing social and organizational Discourses, such as the Discourse of free market, deregulation, technology determinism or organizational culture, etc. Hence, articulating organizational circumstance is a process in which changes in the broader social and business Discourses are deployed to penetrate, shape or colonize organizational discourse while being reconstituted by it in the process. The agents of articulation include not only managers but also employees and other stakeholders, who wage discursive battles over the meaning of organizational circumstance. Rather than taking circumstance as real and given, a discursive approach seeks to reveal how a circumstance is brought into being in discourse. The approach attempts to enlarge and expose the discursive action through a microscopic analytical lens.

Articulating organizational circumstance is inseparable from other layers of meaning contestation that constitutes changing. In particular, what we see as opportunities or threats is informed by what kind of organization or individual we claim we are and we are becoming (Mills, 2003; Weick, 1995). For this reason, let me turn to the next layer, the articulation of organizational identity.

Articulating organizational identity

As Mills (2003) revealed in her rich ethnographic account, the concern with organizational identity preoccupied organizational members in the process of changing. The dominant approach to organizational identity is consistent with the conventional assumption about organization as an entity or object. Based on this assumption, organizational identity is considered representing the entity's central, enduring and distinctive properties (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Ravasi and van Rekom, 2003). By contrast, assuming organization as emerging from communication and discourse (Taylor and Van Every, 2000), studying organizational identity would switch from treating it as 'essence'-like substantive properties to examining its discursive construction about 'who we are' and 'who we are becoming' (Alvesson and Empson, 2008; Backer, 2008; Brown and Humphreys, 2006; Chreim, 2005; Czarniawska, 1997; Gioia et al., 2000; Humphreys and Brown, 2002).

Thus, articulating organizational identity is a discursive action in which managers and other organizational stakeholders contend to assign meaning to a collective with regard to its goals, values and beliefs within particular Discourses. Previous studies (Corley, 2004; Jian, 2007; Mills, 2003) noticed a hierarchical bifurcation in articulating organizational identity in the process of changing: top managers tend to employ strategic Discourses in terms of missions and purposes, whereas lower level employees are more likely to draw upon local, cultural Discourses that highlight cultural discrepancies between the organization's past and present values and practices (Corley, 2004). To understand this contestation, analysis should pay attention to the plurivocity (Boje, 1991; Humphreys and Brown, 2002) in organizational identity construction.

The contention that sustains the dynamic in articulating organizational identity partly comes from identity and identity work at the individual level (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). Articulating individual identity constitutes another significant layer in the discursive dynamics of changing.

Articulating individual identity

As Alvesson et al. (2008) pointed out, organization studies on individual identity has been under the strong influence of social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Research in this social-psychological tradition tends to treat identity and identification as relatively stable cognitive categories and properties (Alvesson et al., 2008). By contrast, a discursive approach attends to the articulation of individual identity—the dynamic discursive process of identity work. Seen as 'ongoing struggles' (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003: 1164), identity work is defined as the 'forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness' of the self (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 626).

The role of discursive identity work in organizational changing has been gaining attention in recent years (Alvesson et al., 2008; Beech and Johnson, 2005; Jian, 2008; McInnes et al., 2006; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). This development is not coincidental because the uncertainty and open-endedness that characterize an organizational changing process 'heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self identity and compel more concentrated identity work' (Alvesson et al., 2008: 15). Disjunctures in the discourse of identity and identity work have been shown to produce disturbances, disruptions and unintended consequences to the changing process (Beech and Johnson, 2005).

Efforts by organizational members to address identity questions are reflexively related to organizational practice (Alvesson et al., 2008). In other words, identity work at both the individual and collective level implicates how we construct meaning for our practice and *vice versa*.

Articulating organizational practice

Organizational practice is often associated with extra-linguistic actions. For example, many studies that take a synoptic approach to change often have a dualistic assumption about doing and talking and privilege the former. However, close examinations of practice have shown that extra-linguistic actions are only recognized and make sense as a form of practice when articulated in a discourse of doing or practice (Taylor and Van Every, 2000). Articulating organizational practice is the formative process of practice, which gives meaning to doing. Hence, a process-oriented discursive approach argues that organizational practice emerges in discourse and is always part of it (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

When new practices are introduced in the process of organizational changing, their meanings remain open-ended. Citing Beer (1981: 58), Tsoukas and Chia (2002) argued, 'for organizational action to be possible, that is, for recurrent behaviors to take place in accordance with established purposes—closure of meaning must be effected' (p. 573). Articulation of organizational practice is thus the process in which organizational members contest and negotiate to establish definitional control and closure of meaning over practice. For example, to anchor the meaning of downsizing, managers deploy the discourse of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) (Hammer and Champy, 1993). This also serves as an example in which organizational practices are colonized through articulation by the broader business and social Discourses, such as BPR, while reconstituting them in the process.

By this point, I have presented the four layers of articulation that constitute changing. Before applying the framework to an empirical analysis, several points are worth mentioning. First, the interrelatedness among layers suggests that any given segment of talk-in-interaction may perform more than one layer of articulation. For instance, a segment of talk that constructs an organizational identity may simultaneously cast a certain individual identity and implicate a particular conception of an organizational circumstance. When not layered in one instance of talk-in-interaction, the four layers of articulation do not follow a particular linear sequence because they are mutually implicating and their relationship is best described as reflexive. Furthermore, it needs to be noted that Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) emphasize the temporariness in the fixation of meaning. It is temporary because organizational members continuously interact with changing circumstances and reflect upon their experience. Such interaction and reflection furnish contingencies and new interpretations that challenge the dominant discursive structure and make changing an open-ended process (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

To further illustrate this framework, I will use it as a lens to examine an empirical organizational changing discourse. In the following, I will first detail the methods of data collection and analysis, and then present my analysis and findings.

Methods

Midwestern Life[2] is a large US insurance company and an affiliate of a US-based international financial corporation. Employees of the company were not unionized at the time of the study. In the late 1990s, according to its documents, the company struggled to compete and improve its standing in the US life insurance market. An outside consulting team was hired to conduct a comprehensive financial evaluation and recommended reduction of operational costs through restructuring, reducing workforce and changing some of its human resource policies and employee services. As part of a change implementation plan, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Steve Bennett, held several all-employee meetings at Midwestern Life's headquarter. In two of these

meetings, the CEO, with his senior management team, announced changes in human resource policies and employee services, such as holiday and work schedules, closing of library and fee increase for the corporate fitness centre among others. Immediately following each of the two meetings, an employee survey was conducted soliciting employee feedback on these changes and on the way these meetings were conducted. A week after the second all-employee meeting, the CEO, with his management team, held a 'leadership' meeting with the company's middle managers to talk about employee survey feedback gathered after the all-employee meetings. This study focuses its analysis on this 'leadership' meeting.

I chose to analyse this meeting for two reasons. First, the meeting occasioned discourses from several players: a discourse of change articulated through the CEO talk, discourse from employees in the form of 'survey feedback' and discourse from middle managers through their interaction with the CEO at the meeting. Second, 'talking about feedback' is an important sensemaking (Weick, 1979) activity in which active articulations of meaning take place. It is, in a sense, what I call 'double-loop interpretation', which is managers' interpretation about employees' interpretation of change initiatives and management presentation. The meeting offers a valuable opportunity for researchers to investigate how meanings evolve in different layers in discourse and constitute the process of changing.

An interpretation of the meeting discourse is not possible without an in-depth understanding of what took place in the broader process of changing. The data of this meeting, including the audio recording and transcript, were part of a larger data set collected during this changing process through multiple qualitative methods. I conducted more than 500 hours of participant-observation over a four-month period and attended two all-employee meetings and three management meetings. I also conducted seven in-depth interviews with staff members of the Communication Services Department and collected organizational documents such as newsletters, meeting handouts, memos, email exchanges, employee survey results, websites and external media coverage of the organization.

From the 'leadership' meeting I selected five excerpts for detailed analysis and presentation in this study. It has to be acknowledged first that the selection of data is certainly bound by the theoretical perspective a researcher takes and the constraints of the limited journal space. Given my theoretical interest expressed earlier and based on the extensive empirical material that was gathered, I found the five excerpts most significant and compelling in demonstrating how organizational actors contested and managed different layers of meaning that constituted changing. Presented chronologically, the excerpts reflected key dynamics in the flow of the meeting discourse in which discursive contestations took different turns. Taken together, the five excerpts demonstrated the temporal flow in which the discursive process evolved. In addition, following Tracy (1997), with a focus on analysing the textual meaning of the discourse, a simpler way of transcription was followed than the sophisticated systems used by conversation analysts. The transcribed particulars include words, overlapping and laughter.

My analysis and interpretation of the meeting discourse data were guided by the theoretical framework presented earlier in the article. My overall goal was to offer an understanding of the discursive dynamics that constituted the changing process. My analysis focused on the four layers of articulation. Specifically, for each act of articulation, I raised the question, what were the Discourses that were employed? This question guided me to look for Discourses or systems of thought that organizational members drew upon to anchor meaning. Second, I questioned, what were the key signifiers or nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), such as the stock market, which emerged in talk-in-interaction and what was their role in a Discourse and their relationship with other signifiers, such as a holiday schedule of the company? When

articulated through a Discourse, what meaning potentials of a signifier were excluded or made possible? These questions led me to examine in detail the struggle over the articulation of certain signifiers that emerged as significant, such as the meaning of negative employee feedback. Finally, I raised the question, how was a particular meaning brought to a temporary closure?

Before presenting the analysis and findings, two points need to be acknowledged. First, to account for the complexity of changing in progress requires the capture of real-time interaction with rich and detailed analysis. Doing so presents its own methodological and analytical predicament. Being close to action in flight, the microscopic examination is constrained to a finite time and space. Since changing often occurs in multiple places simultaneously and extends over time, such an account is inevitably limited in scope. Second, I want to acknowledge my role as a participant-observer in the research process and its enabling and constraining effects on my data gathering and interpretation. I entered Midwestern Life as a corporate communication intern and revealed soon after to my managers and coworkers my interest in studying organizational change. On the one hand, as an intern with actual work assignments and the opportunities to collaborate with others, I was able to gain a high-level of trust. I observed first-hand people's reactions to and interpretations of change and experienced myself the implementation of change and its impact on work processes. On the other hand, I was not an insider who had to endure the uncertainty and fear of layoff. So I do not purport to make any interpretation 'objective' or 'representative' of an insider's view. Rather, my interpretation was constructed from an interpretive and critical framework (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985)—a lens that I use to offer alternative ways of understanding the dynamics in organizational changing. In the following, I will present my analysis and findings.

Analysis and findings

Midwestern Life held its monthly 'leadership' meetings at its headquarters in an auditorium with rows of fixed seats and a small stage in the front. The usual attendees were members of the senior management team and middle management from various departments. Usually, the CEO and members of his senior management team took turn to debrief middle managers on current projects or issues. Questions, comments and discussion usually followed the talk of each senior manager. In this particular meeting, the CEO began by stating that the purpose of the meeting was to talk about the employee survey feedback resulted from the previous week's all-employee meetings and that 'there were four clear themes throughout the feedback that we got … And I'll give them to you one at a time'. The following analysis will focus on five selected excerpts from this 'leadership' meeting and examine how organizational changing took place in discursive actions. The first excerpt that follows took place at the very beginning when the CEO spoke about Theme #1 by quoting directly from the employee feedback survey interspersed with his own comments. The talk in this excerpt resembled a conversation with a represented voice of employees (feedback survey quotes) who were physically absent.

Excerpt 1

1   CEO: This was theme number one. 'The changes are bad and Steve
2   was mean' ['in how he explained them'
3   Audience: [hah hah hah

4	CEO:	['or in how he answered our questions'.
5	Audience:	[hah hah hah
6	CEO:	And if you read the comments there, that's what you'll see. OK, 'We got
7		three holidays, that was nice; but those three extra holidays are hardly a tradeoff
8		for the day after Thanksgiving'. I'm not sure if there is a math skill involved in
9		that, [I don't think so.
10	Audience:	[hah hah hah
11	CEO:	I'm sorry, I don't mean to be mean.
12	CEO:	'This will create hardship for many families in regard to traveling plans and
13		family plans'. 'I can hardly imagine the volume of business actually conducted
14		on that day could warrant staffing the Company at full length'.
15	CEO:	'I felt worse after the meeting morale-wise than before, it seems like there
16		is no hope with the stock market scare'. Well, the stock market closed at 8900, I
17		think, yesterday, it's recovering quite nicely, what it'll be tomorrow, I don't know.

It should be noted first that the meaning potentials of a change in organizational practice (holiday schedule) and employee feedback about it are multiple. They are elements or signifiers waiting to be articulated with numerous meaning possibilities (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). However, the selection from these meaning potentials is subject to their positioning in a particular Discourse. This excerpt clearly displays at least two Discourses—market and family—competing to articulate the meaning of a change in organizational practice, which was to eliminate the day after Thanksgiving from the company holiday schedule. On the one hand, the CEO drew upon a market Discourse, which refers to a system of thought that values and foregrounds the role and functioning of a free market in determining organizational choices. This market Discourse was clearly demonstrated in his presentation in the previous week's all-employee meetings. During the meetings he emphasized the importance of following the schedule of the stock market as the insurance industry was re-positioning itself with an identity of financial management in the late 1990s. In the market Discourse, the stock market is a privileged signifier (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002) dictating the ordering of relationships among, and the meanings of, other signifiers including the holiday schedule. Such ordering force was further naturalized by the CEO talk. For example, the 'stock market scare' in line 16 refers to the talk given by the CEO during the all-employee meetings. The CEO warned of the potential of losing capital value of the company in the stock market and of being bought by another company if changes were not made. In line 16–17, the CEO dispelled the scare tactic accusation by arguing that the stock market has its own logic over which he had no control. Additionally, the connection between the articulation of practice and organizational identity is very clear. The symbolic value of turning the day after Thanksgiving into a work day is significant in the market Discourse, gesturing an organizational identity shift to a market-oriented company, and it was meant to be interpreted by the Wall Street financial analysts for higher market valuation.

By contrast, having the day off after Thanksgiving had been a privileged signifier in a family Discourse. A family Discourse is a system of thought that embraces family values and domestic needs. The Discourse of a family-friendly company had been constructed throughout its recent history. The company had been named one of the '100 best companies' by *Working Mother Magazine* for over ten consecutive years. Thanksgiving Day, which is a traditional family holiday taking place on a Thursday, is one of the most privileged signifiers in the larger family Discourse in the US culture. Having the Friday off after Thanksgiving Day had allowed people to travel and unite with their families for a four-day holiday weekend. Eliminating this Friday from the holiday schedule symbolically undermined the family Discourse.

   In this imagined dialogue with a represented employee voice, the CEO's opening talk not only displayed different Discourses at work vying for legitimacy but also subtly constructed an interpretive frame for understanding the feedback of dissenting employees through his use of humour and counter-argument, such as the joke of 'math skills' and 'being mean' in line 8 and 11 and his comments on 'stock market' in line 16 and 17. In this interpretive frame, the 'negativity' of the feedback on change was *re-presented* as an indicator of the negativity and lack in those dissenting employees, rather than representing employees' perceptions or attitudes toward the change initiatives or the CEO presentation at the all-employee meetings. In other words, the CEO's opening remarks articulated employee feedback about the policy changes and his earlier presentation into the feedback about employees themselves, such as their lack of knowledge about the financial market and appreciation of company policies. These remarks began the active construction of the 'dissenter' identity that evolved throughout the rest of the meeting.

   However, the CEO's interpretation of the feedback did not go unchallenged. Excerpt 2 demonstrated the interaction between the CEO and Rick Smiths, the Deputy Director in the Annuity Group. In this interaction, Smiths articulated a different interpretive frame for making sense of the employee feedback. The excerpt began when the CEO solicited comments from the audience after sharing the negative employee feedback.

Excerpt 2

1   Smiths: 'Yes, I happened to be talking to somebody about the comments, about
2   the feedback, and I appreciate the comment made about 0 hour or over 40 hours,
3   and my initial reaction was that, that was, I think we've got to be careful to not
4   come across as threatening people.
5   CEO: Yes. I wanted to comment on that. I did
6   comment on that. We've got some people in the organization who are working 37
7   ½, but I think it was true that everyone that started after a certain time has been
8   working 40, and certain areas have moved people from 37½ to 40, and I've made
9   the comment that I think, you know really, we've got to act like a financial
10   service firm, we've got to deal with the competitive market place that we are in,
11   and I really do believe that people would rather, people that were working 37½
12   hours would rather work 40 than work 0. I think some people took that as a threat
13   that they would be fired if they refused to work 40, which is not what I was saying.

In this excerpt, Smiths proposed an alternative interpretation of the feedback, which was to take the feedback as reflecting the negativity in management communication, in this case, the threatening tone of the CEO at the all-employee meeting and the potential negative consequences on morale. It is noticeable that intense discursive identity work was at play (Tracy and Naughton, 1994) on the side of the middle manager. For instance, 'happened to' and 'talking to somebody' in Line 1 intended to dissociate himself from the ownership of the expressed opinion. 'I appreciate' in line 2 was used to demonstrate that he understood the CEO's comments from the perspective of a senior manager and that he was not challenging the meaning itself. 'My initial reaction' in line 3 was employed to tone down the potential face threat to the CEO and the use of 'we' in line 3 as a way not to attribute the action of 'threatening' directly to the CEO but management in general. 'Come across' was employed to emphasize that he understood that the threatening tone in the CEO's message was unintentional. Here, the intensive use of these linguistic devices offers evidence of the

difficult identity work of a middle manager that Smiths gingerly conducted: on the one hand, he needed to align with the senior management as a 'cohesive' team in front of the 'people', the employees, while representing the 'people' and voicing their concerns to the senior management on the other. As evident in existing research, middle management experiences heightened feelings of instability and insecurity (Thomas and Linstead, 2002) as they have increasingly become the victims of mass corporate layoffs (Aronowitz and Difazio, 1994). The discursive efforts invested in identity work by Smiths demonstrated this sense of vulnerability.

The CEO's reaction to Smiths' comments demonstrated a continuing struggle between the market Discourse and the family Discourse over the meaning of change in an organizational practice, the working hours. In the family Discourse, working hours is a signifier that symbolizes flexibility and corporate responsiveness to employees' life concerns. Working hours in the market Discourse, by contrast, is one that symbolizes efficiency and labour costs. Just like the change in company holiday schedules, the move was discursive and subject to the dictating symbolic force of a market Discourse. In lines 9 and 10, 'a financial service firm' and 'competitive marketplace', again, as privileged signifiers in the market Discourse, functioned as discursive resources to help arrest the meaning of the reformed practice, the streamlined working hours. They are also instances of the articulation of organizational identity and organizational circumstance here. 'We've got to act like a financial service firm', the statement articulated who we were (not) in the past and who we should become in the future. 'We've got to deal with the competitive market place that we are in', the statement brought into existence not only the organizational circumstance but also established a causal relationship between the circumstance, the need for change and the desired organizational identity.

In addition, the CEO's construction of the identity of 'dissenters', which began in Excerpt 1, continued in this segment of talk. It was accomplished by switching the root of negative meaning intention from the speaker, the CEO, to the listeners, the 'people', as shown in line 11, 'some people take that as a threat'. Again, employee feedback about change initiatives was turned into feedback about employees themselves.

After sharing 'theme one' of the employee feedback, the CEO presented 'theme two', which, in sharp contrast to 'theme one', showed employee support for the changes and praised the CEO's presentation at the all-employee meetings. The contrast between the two themes spurred discussion about why employees reacted in polarized ways to the same presentation and change initiatives. Here is an excerpt of this discussion in which John Wiley, a Manager and Senior Analyst from the Sales Department, offered his interpretation followed by the reaction of the CEO and another middle manager, Donna Hemphill, in Claim Processing.

Excerpt 3

1   Wiley: ...for example, Stan [Director of the Actuarial Group] may have a more
2   professional [group of employees] or Tim [Director of Information Technology]
3   may have a more professional group of employees, their spouses are at home. On
4   the other hand, some of the other people who are in the Processing Units have a lot
5   of people who, where both parents are working or they are single parents, and
6   you've got to recognize that you're going to get different groups of comments
7   from different sets of people. I think that the first list is more reflective of the
8   people who are not professionals, who, you know, don't make some of the income
9   levels; the other list is more reflective of the people
10   CEO: Yes, I think, I think clearly

11   that is a case of, uh, unbalanced, that would be clearly a case
12   Hemphill: I think you also need
13   to consider that in a lot of the operating units we've been working the day after
14   Thanksgiving and matching the stock market schedule all along where some of
15   the rest of the areas
16   CEO: That's right. Other observations or comments?

In this segment, organizational actors attempted to assign meaning to, or to articulate, an organizational circumstance—polarized employee opinions toward change initiatives. First, Wiley offered his interpretation of why comments in theme one and two were so polarized. His interpretation was based on different needs of employees who work in 'professional', 'high skilled' areas, such as information systems and actuarial departments versus those with 'low skilled' jobs such as processing insurance claims. He suggested that salary levels and family needs were associated with their jobs and made people see things differently. However, Hemphill as a manager supervising one of those non-'professional' groups, as Wiley implied, immediately challenged Wiley's interpretation by saying that many of her employees actually supported this new holiday schedule because of their past work practice. This exchange between Wiley and Hemphill brought out the complexity that underlay employee reactions to change initiatives. The Discourse of family re-surfaced in Wiley's comments, speculating the negative consequences of some of the change initiatives on low-income families. However, Hemphill resisted Wiley's sweeping generalization by arguing that not everyone in the non-'professional' groups was against the changes. Hence, the meaning of the polarization in employee feedback remained open.

Also interesting to consider in this exchange between the two middle managers is the resurfacing of identity work. Wiley's use of 'professional' became noticeable. Hemphill's quick reaction to Wiley could be partially interpreted as a defense of a 'professional' identity of the people she led in the 'processing unit' including herself. The use of 'we' in line 13 is a marker of membership category (Sacks, 1992) and an action of seeking alliance. For some, 'professionals' is not a 'neutral' occupational category defined by income-levels, training and skill types, as Wiley might have suggested, but may imply an unequal dichotomous relationship with non-'professional' and suggest that 'professionals' follow the norms of the financial market while the latter did not. For Hemphill, the 'professional' identity she and her group shared and her position in relation to change (i.e. for or against change) were on the line and worthy of defending.

Did the CEO's responses to both comments bring closure to the meaning of the polarized reactions? They clearly did not. Lines 10, 11 and 16 appeared to be positive confirmation to both Wiley and Hemphill's comments. However, since the two comments were in disagreement, one interpretation about the meaning of lines 10, 11 and 16 could be that they were polite acknowledgement that their comments were heard. Another interpretation could be that the CEO did agree with Wiley on his interpretation but after hearing Hemphill's reaction, the CEO realized that she had a point. What was interesting and significant was the absence of a continued exploration of these conflicting expressions. Conflicting expressions are signs of complex problems. Engaging the conflict bears possibility toward new understandings and solutions. However, the CEO's move can be interpreted as a form of conflict avoidance. To understand his avoidance, Deetz's (1992) comments on managerial reactions to organizational conflicts offer some insights,

> The managerial move efficiently coordinates but often does so by distorting or suppressing some conflicts. For example, conflicts over principles are difficult to mediate, therefore value conflict tends to be suppressed through naturalization, neutralization or subjectification or distorted through commodification and translation of 'principled' interests to economic ones.

> Many conflicts, such as that between home and work, have elements beyond managerial control and tend to be avoided or pushed off to the home for resolution. (p. 226)

Wiley's account certainly brought up a home/work conflict and a family Discourse. The effect of avoiding such conflict is to marginalize a family Discourse, intentionally or not, or to push it away when it is difficult to be articulated within, or together with, the Discourse of market.

As the meeting moved on, the CEO brought up his own interpretation of the polarized employee reactions toward his all-employee meeting presentations and change initiatives, as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 4

1   CEO: As we were preparing for this meeting, Mary Jo Lucas reminded me that
2   we had put something up at this meeting, maybe four months ago, about change
3   and peoples' ability to deal with change and how you have to help them through it,
4   and it was, let me just show you on these things. When there is a lot of change
5   going on, people go through four thought cycles. First, they feel betrayed that
6   things are changing, then they deny whether they need to change, then they, once
7   they stop, they get past that, past the denial of changes, and then they kind of
8   search for identity. Well, you know, 'Is this a Company that I want to work for?'
9   You know, we have people that are in that kind of mode, and then ultimately they
10   start searching for solutions, and that really is what's happening, and I think that's
11   why we've got, another reason why we've got such bi-polar reaction to the same
12   presentation. Some people are already here and they know that we've got an issue
13   that we've got to deal with, and they've come to grips with the fact that, you
14   know, this, we can make this an excellent operation, we can return it to its
15   prominence, and they are starting to search for solutions. And they know that the
16   things that are being done are part of those solutions that they've got to go
17   through. But we've got a lot of people that are still back here, and we've got to
18   help them through.

Line 2 refers to an earlier leadership meeting in which the CEO under the advice of the corporate communication manager Mary Jo Lucas cited a social psychological stage-model of organizational change. The significance of this instance of talk lies in understanding what the stage-model did as part of the larger social scientific Discourse in articulating the meaning of an organizational circumstance (the polarization of opinions toward change) and the identity of dissenters and managers. First, the model helped make sense of the conflicting feedback on change initiatives. As Weick et al. (2005) stated, 'sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalizes what people are doing' (p. 409). The four psychological states offered a plausible interpretation of employee reactions to change. However, this interpretation was not neutral or equal to other interpretations. In the form of scientific knowledge, it claimed authority and superiority over other interpretations that had been articulated in earlier dialogues (see Excerpt 2 for example). The claim of superiority of the 'scientific' interpretation was evident in the CEO talk in line 10 'that is really what's happening'. Presented as truth claims as in lines 4–10, the psychological states were depicted with a sense of inevitability and predictability, and therefore, were subject to managerial intervention in the form of psychological counselling or 'help them through' as expressed in line 18.

One of the consequences of invoking the scientific Discourse is that the earlier debate over the problematic nature of the change initiatives was now replaced with a discussion about the psychological fitness of the employees. What was accomplished here discursively was what Deetz (1992) called a form of discursive closure—the discursive moves that function to suppress or avoid certain conflicts and marginalize certain discourses. The appeal to a scientific Discourse avoided the debate over the central conflicts between home and work and between interests of management and labour. Rather, the focal debate was directed toward a psychological problem of certain employees, begging for managerial intervention. As in line 11, 'bi-polar' constructed an organizational psychosis to be understood and cured, and the psychological stage-model offered the diagnosis and the vocabulary to articulate individuals, who disagreed on, doubted or questioned the change initiatives, into a category of subjects (Rose, 1999) at the root of this psychosis. As a result, the conflict between management and employees over substantive issues in organizational practice, such as working hours and holiday schedules, was reconstructed into a psychological problem of dissenting employees to be cured by managers.

A clear shift in the meeting discourse took place after Excerpt 4. Before Excerpt 4, the meeting discourse took a competitive form in which specific change initiatives were articulated through competing Discourses (i.e. family Discourse versus market Discourse) as shown in Excerpt 1, 2 and 3. After Excerpt 4, however, the meeting discourse was largely articulated within the scientific Discourse in the form of the psychological stage model, and was about how managers could help employees move forward from the stages of betrayal or denial. Representative of this segment of the meeting is the following excerpt between Rosa Jones, a Project Manager from Marketing and the CEO:

Excerpt 5

```
1      Jones: All the way back, our reason for number one is something that everybody,
2      whatever state they're in, can grab onto and understand. I think that people are
3      starting to understand where we are.
4      CEO:                          That's a good suggestion, because we've got
5      a goal but it isn't a very catchy theme, to say 'we want to be in the top five',
6      'we want to be in the top three'. That's a good suggestion, and maybe we ought
7      to have, you know, everybody send in their notes or have a contest, or
8      something.
9      Jones:    Get something to grab onto. That's, that's, we're on the way back to be
10     number one. Whatever it is we're trying to do might make some sense, and people
11     can start to understand that along with the barb wire and pain and stuff that
12     they're going through, they're going somewhere.
```

This excerpt represented a rather dramatic topical shift in the meeting discourse from debating and making sense of the feedback on specific change initiatives to searching for ways to 'counsel', 'communicate with' and 'motivate' employees. Why such a shift? What made this shift possible? To a large extent, the answer lay in the powerful effects of the CEO's discourse in articulating the identity of managers as counsellors and that of dissenters as psychotic patients through the psychological model as discussed in Excerpt 4. Specifically, the dissenting employees suffering 'denial' and 'betrayal' were in need of counselling by their managers. As the CEO said later in the meeting, managers 'have to communicate through with them to bring them through this so that they get on board with what we're doing here'. As a result, the middle managers no longer had the

choice to dissent or speak for the dissenting employees because doing so would put themselves in the position of 'patients' and would jeopardize their identity as a manager qua psychotherapist or counsellor. Consequently, the only discursive option left for the middle managers was to take on the counselling role and work on their new identity.

Excerpt 5 demonstrated not only active identity work of being a 'counsellor' at the individual level but also the articulation of an organizational identity—'to be number one'. As the psychological model prescribed, those who were once in denial or betrayal would then search for a meaningful identity to motivate themselves. By constructing an organizational identity for employees—'to be number one' in the industry, Jones was simultaneously constructing her own identity as a 'counsellor' to address employees' psychological needs. The significance of this construction lay in the fact that the scientific Discourse in the form of the psychological model and the market Discourse joined force to dominate both the identity work of middle managers and the articulation of organizational identity as well. In line 1, 'our reason for number one' refers to the logic of the market Discourse, which, as Rosa Jones suggested, was universal and gave meaning to people. Line 2, 'get something to grab onto', suggested that the psychological truth claims as invoked by the CEO earlier was already taken as a rather objective psychological reality and became a decision premise consumed by middle managers like Rosa Jones. In this reality, employees were depicted as being desperately in search of or awaiting, an identity, which had to be constructed and bestowed by managers based on a market Discourse. The CEO's comment in lines 4–8 was a telling one because it implied a conception of employees' voice, which was not to define their own identity or what their interests were but to help decorate with 'catchy' trappings an identity already constructed or chosen for them by managers. From this point on, the meeting became one in which attendees continued articulating and reinforcing these identities within the psychological model and the market Discourse. What became absent was the family Discourse, which was prominent in the earlier part of the meeting but receded completely by this point.

In summary, the five excerpts from the change management meeting have displayed organizational changing as taking place in a flowing stream of talk-in-interaction. In this process, employee feedback survey changed from a document with contradictory results to a meaningful diagnosis of an organizational psychosis; 'counsellors' and 'patients' emerged as new identities for middle-managers and dissenting employees, respectively; also stemming from the talk was the 'number one' 'financial service firm' as the desired organizational identity; finally, the individual and organizational identities implicated a temporary closure to the meaning of changes in organizational practices, such as holiday schedules, as gestures of being market-friendly instead of family-friendly. Overall, the analysis has demonstrated organizational changing as a discursive process. In this process, organizational actors struggle to articulate the meaning about the circumstance they are in or confronting, the practices or actions they are to perform and their identities as individuals and as a collective.

Discussion

The ontological shift in views of organization from being fixed entities to emerging processes (Chia and King, 1998; Taylor and Van Eevery, 2000) has spurred strong interest among scholars to explore the process of organizational changing. The purpose of the present study is to offer a framework that accounts for the discursive dynamics of changing. The study contributes to the growing scholarship on organizational changing in several aspects. First, it enhances our understanding of how organizational changing takes place in discourse (Ford and Ford, 1995; Grant et al., 2005; Tsoukas, 2005). Drawing upon Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the study theorizes the process of

changing as a contestation waged discursively. In this process, various Discourses are deployed through talk-in-interaction and contend to arrest the meaning of organizational circumstance, identity and practice. As the analysis has shown, change in working hours or employee survey results did not possess any inherent meaning in themselves. Rather, their meanings were actively articulated, contested and interactively worked out. Organizational talk, instead of being marginal activities *about* change, was shown to be discursive actions that *constitute* changing. Examining the interplay between organizational talk-in-interaction and macro Discourses can bring to light the intensive discursive actions that move an organization forward.

Second, the study offers a framework that integrates multiple layers or dimensions of 'becoming' that constitute organizational changing. In previous studies, the fluid and discursive nature of organizational practice, circumstance, individual and organizational identities have been more or less examined separately in relation to organizational changing. For example, Beech and Johnson (2005) explored how disrupted identities and the ensuring identity work at the individual level reflexively influence the process of changing. Gioia et al. (2000) argued for a view of organizational identity as fluid, changing and adaptive that can facilitate ongoing change. These studies often foregrounded a particular subject area, such as identity, while treating organizational changing as its background. By contrast, this study foregrounds changing and, to capture its complexity, draws together the multiple dimensions previously isolated in respective subject areas. Moreover, the analysis demonstrated the interrelatedness of these analytical layers. For example, the CEO's talk constructed individual identities for managers and dissenting employees as 'counsellors' and 'patients', respectively. This was done by deploying a social scientific Discourse in the form of a social psychological change model. The desired organizational identity, being 'number one', was constructed to function as a resource for managers to 'counsel patients'. Hence, identities at the individual and organizational levels were tied together in the structure of the social scientific Discourse.

Thirdly, findings from the analysis contribute to the understanding of identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) through the disciplinary effects of scientific Discourses (Foucault, 1979, 1994; Holmer-Nadesan, 1997; Rose, 1999). As Rose (1999) argued, psychological knowledge as a Discourse, while producing truth claims and rational knowledge, was employed as a governing technology or bio-power (Foucault, 1988) exercised over individuals. Psychological knowledge helps transform individuals into governable subjects. For instance, Holmer-Nadesan (1997) examined how psychological knowledge and practice associated with personality testing function 'as a form of government by providing authorities with a technique for engineering the workplace and for disciplining unruly employees' (p. 189). In the present study, it is the social psychological stage model of organizational change employed by the CEO that functioned as both a dividing and normalizing practice. As the analysis demonstrated, the power effects of the psychological model were seen in discursively transforming negative employee feedback about change into dissenting employees' psychological inertia (i.e. feeling betrayal or denial). At the same time, it effectively articulated employees into a particular type of subjects (i.e. patients) while limiting identity options for middle managers to one particular identity (i.e. counsellors).

Furthermore, this study offers a critique, in addition to the ones mentioned earlier in the article, about the synoptic stage models of change. That is, when seized in practice, a stage model can become a device that functions to render discursive closure (Deetz, 1992). Discursive closure refers to discursive practices that suppress potential conflicts and marginalize or exclude certain discourses (Deetz, 1992). In this case, the stage model was used as a discursive device that disqualified dissenting employees as psychologically maladjusted and, as a result, marginalized and excluded the family Discourse and suppressed the conflict between work and family. Put in another way, what the stage model offered in practice was its authority rendered from the appearance of a

'scientific truth claim'. The normative look of the stages allowed practitioners to impose a sense of certainty about change and led them to overlook other productive possibilities or potential pathways of change. In this sense, a stage model of organizational change becomes an accomplice in advancing the interests of certain organizational stakeholders while marginalizing others.

Overall, the discursive framework in this study presents a promising platform upon which future research of organizational changing could be developed in many directions. As reviewed earlier in this article, research has been gradually emerging in the area of individual identity and identity work (Alvesson et al., 2008). However, understanding about other layers and their interrelatedness is in need of further exploration. Additionally, since meetings are ubiquitous in organizations (Tracy and Dimock, 2004), especially in the process of changing, different types of meetings and the connection of these meetings as chains of continuous conversations may present opportunities for exciting empirical work. As Boden (1994) said, 'meetings remain the essential mechanism through which organizations create and maintain the practical activity of organizing' (p. 81). The present study focused on a 'leadership' gathering which represented only one type of meetings. It took place in a lecture-like speaker-audience set-up and was attended by senior and middle managers. Future research could look at meetings of different sizes, both regular and impromptu, and in different administrative and professional areas in the changing process. Especially, a promising line of research would be to investigate how the discursive dynamics may vary in different forms of meetings and how the variations lead the fluid process of changing into intended or unintended directions.

In conclusion, the present study advances our theoretical understanding of organizational changing through a discursive lens. The framework offered here conceptualizes changing as constituted in four analytical layers of articulation: organizational circumstance, individual identity, organizational identity and organizational practice. Through a close examination of an organizational meeting, the study sheds light on the discursive dynamics of changing that has eluded the conventional synoptic approach (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). It is hoped that the proposed framework could serve as the basis for future research to continue unravelling the complexity of organizational changing.

Notes

1. I use discourse in the remainder of this article at two levels: little 'd' *d*iscourse and big 'D' *D*iscourse (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000; Jian et al., 2008). Little 'd' *d*iscourse refers to talk-in-interaction. For example, Fairhurst (1993) examines little 'd' *d*iscourse in the form of everyday conversations taking place in offices and meeting rooms between supervisors or managers and their subordinates. Big 'D' *D*iscourse, however, refers to systems of thought and fields of knowledge (Foucault, 1972) or what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) called 'an articulated totality' that attempts to fix meaning in a particular domain. An example of big 'D' Discourse could be the 'enterprise' Discourse in Doolin's (2002) study of organizational control of hospital clinicians in New Zealand. In this case analysis, the 'enterprise' Discourse refers to the ideology and rationality associated with market-oriented entrepreneurship, accountability and self-regulation.
2. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the company and its members.

References

Albert, S. and Whetten, D. A. (1985) 'Organizational Identity', *Research in Organizational Behavior* 7: 263–95.

Alvesson, M., Ashcraft, K. and Thomas, R. (2008) 'Identity Matters: Reflection on the Construction of Identity Scholarship in Organization Studies', *Organization* 15(1): 5–28.

Alvesson, M. and Deetz, S. (1996) 'Postmodernism and Critical Approaches to Organizations', in S. Clegg, C. Hardy and W. Nord (eds) *Handbook of Organization Studies*, pp. 191–217. London: Sage.

Alvesson, M. and Empson, L. (2008) 'The Construction of Organizational Identity: Comparative Case Studies of Consulting Firms', *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 24: 1–16.

Alvesson, M. and Karreman, D. (2000) 'Varieties of Discourse: On the Study of Organizations Through Discourse Analysis', *Human Relations* 53: 1125–49.

Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H. (2002) 'Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual', *Journal of Management Studies* 39(5): 619–44.

Anderson, D. (2005) '"What You'll Say Is...".: Represented Voice in Organizational Change Discourse', *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 18: 63–77.

Aronowitz, S. and Difazio, W. (1994) *The Jobless Future: Sci-tech and the Dogma of Work*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ashforth, B. and Mael, F. (1989) 'Social Identity Theory and the Organization', *Academy of Management Review* 14: 20–39.

Backer, L. (2008) 'Narrating Organizational Identities By Way of Evolutionary Tales: Talking Shell from an Oil to an Energy Company', *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 24: 33–43.

Badham, R. and Garrety, K. (2003) '"Living in the Blender of Change": The Carnival of Control in a Culture of Culture', *Tamara: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science* 2(4): 22–38.

Bakhtin, M. (1981) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Beech, N. and Johnson, P. (2005) 'Discourses of Disrupted Identities in the Practice of Strategic Change: The Mayor, the Street-Fighter, the Insider-out', *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 18(1): 31–47.

Beer, S. (1981) *Brain of the Firm.* Chichester: Wiley.

Boden, D. (1994) *The Business of Talk: Organizations in Action*. Cambridge: Polity.

Boje, D. (1991) 'The Storytelling Organization: A Study of Story Performance in an Office Supply Firm', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 36: 106–26.

Brown, A. and Humphreys, M. (2006) 'Organizational Identity and Place: A Discursive Exploration of Hegemony and Resistance', *Journal of Management Studies* 43(2): 231–57.

Buchanan, D. (2003) 'Getting the Story Straight: Illusions and Delusions in the Organizational Change Process', *Tamara: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science* 2(4): 7–21.

Chia, R. and King, I. (1998) 'The Organizational Structuring of Novelty', *Organization* 5(4): 461–78.

Chreim, S. (2005) 'The Continuity-Change Duality in Narrative Texts of Organizational Identity', *Journal of Management Studies* 42(3): 567–93.

Collins, D. (2003) 'Guest Editor's Introduction: Re-imagining Change', *Tamara: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science* 2(4): iv–xi.

Corley, K. G. (2004) 'Defined By Our Strategy or Our Culture? Hierarchical Differences in Perceptions of Organizational Identity and Change', *Human Relations* 57(9): 1145–77.

Czarniawska, B. (1997) *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Deetz, S. A. (1992) *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization: Developments in Communication and the Politics of Everyday Life*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Doolin, B. (2002) 'Enterprise Discourse, Professional Identity and the Organizational Control of Hospital Clinicians', *Organization Studies* 23(3): 369.

Fairclough, N. (1993) 'Critical Discourse Analysis and the Commodification of Public Discourse', *Discourse and Society* 4(2): 133–68.

Fairclough, N. (1995) 'Discourse Analysis in Organization Studies: The Case of Critical Realism', *Organization Studies* 26(6): 915–39.

Fairhurst, G. (1993) 'The Leader-Member Exchange Patterns of Women Leaders in Industry: A Discourse Analysis', *Communication Monographs* 60: 321–51.

Ford, J. and Ford, L. (1995) 'The Role of Conversations in Producing Intentional Change in Organizations', *Academy of Management Review* 20: 541–70.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (Trans. A. M. S. Smith). London: Tavistock Publications.

Foucault, M. (1979) *Discipline and Punish* (Trans. A. Sheridan) New York, NY: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1988) 'Technologies of the Self', in L. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hutton (eds) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michael Foucault*, pp. 16–49. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Foucault, M. (1994) *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences.* New York, NY: Vintage.

Gioia, D. A., Schultz, M. and Corley, K. (2000) 'Organizational Identity, Image, and Adaptive Instability', *Academy Management Review* 25(1): 63–81.

Grant, D., Hardy, C., Oswick, C. and Putnam, L., eds (2004) *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Discourse.* London: Sage.

Grant, D., Michelson, G., Oswick, C. and Wailes, N. (2005) 'Guest Editorial: Discourse and Organizational Change', *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 18(1): 6–15.

Grant, D., Wailes, N., Michelson, G., Brewer, A. and Hall, R. (2002) 'Rethinking Organizational Change', *Strategic Change* 11: 237–42.

Hammer, M. and Champy, J. (1993) *Reengineering the Corporation*. New York, NY: Harper.

Hogg, M. and Terry, D. (2000) 'Social Identity and Self-categorization Processes in Organizational Contexts', *Academy of Management Review* 25(1): 121–40.

Holmer-Nadesan, M. (1997) 'Constructing Paper Dolls: The Discourse of Personality Testing in Organizational Practice', *Communication Theory* 7(3): 189–264.

Humphreys, M. and Brown, A. (2002) 'Narratives of Organizational Identity and Identification: A Case Study of Hegemony and Resistance', *Organization Studies* 23(3): 421–47.

Jian, G. (2007) 'Unpacking Unintended Consequences in Planned Organizational Change: A Process Model', *Management Communication Quarterly* 21(1): 5–28.

Jian, G., Schmisseur, A. and Fairhurst, G. (2008) 'Organizational Discourse and Communication: The Progeny of Proteus', *Discourse and Communication* 2(3): 299–320.

Jian, G. (2008) 'Identity and Technology: Organizational Control of Knowledge-Intensive Work', *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 9(1): 62–71.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso.

Latour, B. (1987) *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

McInnes, P., Beech, N., Caestecker, L., MacIntosh, R. (2006) 'Identity Dynamics as a Barrier to Organizational Change', *International Journal of Public Administration* 29: 1109–24.

Medved, C. E. and Kirby, E. L. (2005) 'Family CEOs: A Feminist Analysis of Corporate Mothering Discourses', *Management Communication Quarterly* 18(4): 435–78.

Mills, J. H. (2003) *Making Sense of Organizational Change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pettigrew, A., Woodman, R. and Cameron, K. (2001) 'Studying Organizational Change and Development: Challenges for Future Research', *Academy of Management Journal* 44: 697–713.

Phillips, L. and Jørgensen, M. W. (2002) *Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.

Ravasi, D. and van Rekom, J. (2003) 'Key Issues in Organizational Identity and Identification Theory', *Corporate Reputation Review* 6(2): 118–32.

Rose, N. (1999) *Governing the Soul of the Private Self*, 2nd edn. London: Free Association Book.

Sacks, H. (1992) *Lectures on Conversation,* vols 1 and 2. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sveningsson, S. and Alvesson, M. (2003) 'Managing Managerial Identities: Organizational Fragmentation, Discourse and Identity Struggle', *Human Relations* 56(10): 1163–93.

Tajfel, H. (1974) 'Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour', *Social Science Information* 14: 101–18.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1986) 'The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior', in S. Worchel and L. W. Austin (eds) *The Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, pp. 7–24. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Taylor, J. and Van Every, E. J. (2000) *The Emergent Organization: Communication as Its Site and Surface.* New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Thomas, R. and Linstead, A., (2002) 'Losing the Plot? Middle Managers and Identity', *Organization* 9(1): 71–93.

Tracy, K. (1997) 'Discourse Analysis in Communication', in D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen and H. Hamilton (eds) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tracy, K. and Dimock, A. (2004) 'Meetings: Discursive Sites for Building and Fragmenting Community', *Communication Yearbook* 28: 127–65.

Tracy, K. and Naughton, J. (1994) 'The Identity Work of Questioning in Intellectual Discussion', *Communication Monographs* 61(4): 281.

Tsoukas, H. (2005) 'Afterword: Why Language Matters in the Analysis of Organizational Change', *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 18: 96–104.

Tsoukas, H. and Chia, R. (2002) 'On Organizational Becoming: Rethinking Organizational Change', *Organization Science* 13: 567–82.

Watson, T. (2008) 'Managing Identity: Identity Work, Personal Predicaments, and Structural Circumstances', *Organization* 15(1): 121–43.

Weick, K. (1979) *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, 2nd edn. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Weick, K. (1995) *Sensemaking in Organizations.* London: Sage.

Weick, K., Sutcliffe, K. and Obstfeld, D. (2005) 'Organizing and the Process of Sensemaking', *Organization Science* 16(4): 409–21.

Weick, K. and Quinn, R. E. (1999) 'Organizational Change and Development', *Annual Review of Psychology* 50: 361–86.

Biography

Guowei Jian is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Cleveland State University, USA. His research interests include organizational communication and discourse, organizational change, information and communication technologies at work and intercultural communication. His recent research appears in *The Handbook of Business Discourse*, *Discourse and Communication, Communication Research*, *Communication Monographs* and *Management Communication Quarterly*. *Address*: School of Communication, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Cleveland State University, 2121 Euclid Avenue, MU 247, Cleveland, OH 44115-2214, USA. Email: g.jian@csuohio.edu