

# INTERTEXTUALITY OF ORGANIZATION AND CAREER IN CONSTRUCTING THE “REALITY” OF CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT

This study envisions that both organizations and careers can be perceived as texts and examines the intertextuality of organizations and careers as organizations and individuals construct and reconstruct change through narrative. The study, exploratory in nature, investigates individual/career texts in the context of change and proposes an intertextual lens through which to juxtapose these texts with organizational texts.

## INTRODUCTION

This study envisions that both organizations and careers can be perceived as texts and examines the intertextuality of organizations and careers as organizations and individuals construct and reconstruct change through narrative. The study, exploratory in nature, investigates individual/career texts in the context of change and proposes an intertextual lens through which to juxtapose these texts with organizational texts.

The study is based, in part, on Cochran's characterization of “careers as texts” (1990, ¶ 24) and his assertion that “in pursuing a career, we live meanings, and lived meanings make a career narratable, intelligible, and coherent.” Simultaneously, the premise set forth by Taylor (2004) and others that organizations are texts bolsters the study, building on a paradigm in which Rhodes (1997, p. 4) (and similarly, Ford, 1999) asserted, “Organisations can ... be understood as socially constructed verbal systems in terms of stories, discourses, and texts.”

The paper reviews some of the literature on narrative texts of organizational change, interweaves stories from 15 research interviewees, and examines the intertextuality of these individual/career “texts” of change in relation to texts of change from the organizational perspective.

Cohen and Mallon (2001) are among scholars who connect individual and organization and hint at careers as texts. Noting the tendency for research using the positivist approach to “fall into the trap of thinking in binaries” (Mensinga, n.d., p. 6), such as individual vs. organization, Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 52) stated that “the conceptual power of the notion of career is precisely that it recursively links the individual to the organization and the wider, changing social world.” The authors went on to critique the “inadequacy of positivistic approaches (the stock-in-trade of much career theory) and the need for theoretical approaches which more adequately capture the dynamic ways in which individuals enact their careers.”

A key feature in a historical review by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 1-2) tracing historical epistemological influences on narrative inquiry was the role of change in the work of influencers including John Dewey and his writings on the nature of experience, Johnson and Lakoff on embodied metaphors, MacIntyre on narrative unity, Geertz and Bateson's roots in anthropology, Polkinghorne in psychology, Coles in psychotherapy, and Czarniawska in organizational theory. Change took primacy in Geertz's work for example - “change in the world, change in the inquiry, change in the point of view, change in the outcomes” (p. 6). Bateson, who also emphasized adaptation, stressed the

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individual role in change. Change is an act of “human agency,” and “improvisation and adaptation to change allow the past to be connected to and have continuity with the future” (p. 7). Clandinin and Connelly contrasted these two viewpoints: “Geertz focuses on understanding the changing world; Bateson focuses on understanding how one understands a changing world” (p. 8). In the psychiatry field for Coles, narrative generates change, Clandinin and Connelly noted.

This study takes the theoretical stance that no single objective reality exists. Instead, pluralistic, relativistic, and subjective reality (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) is constructed through language (Ford, 1999), with various scholars arguing for a label to describe such language, among them “current and historical stories, discourse, narratives, and arguments” (Ford, 1999, p. 483), and “conversation” (Ford & Ford, 1995, p. 541). Reality is socially constructed in organizations, including within the context of organizational change. In the same way, individuals establish their own realities, also through language, by building storied constructions of selves and careers (Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Tamboukou, 2003). Thus, the theoretical framework of this narrative-inquiry study mirrors that of Bryant and Cox (2004, citing Guba & Lincoln, 1998): “A constructivist approach to gain an understanding of how individual employees interpret and talk about their experiences of organizational change.”

This constructivist perspective buttresses the blunt question that impels Ford's 1999 article (p. 480) on organizational change: “What might be the implications for organizational change management if we took the idea of organizations as socially constructed realities seriously?” In 1995, Ford and Ford (p. 542) maintained that “change is a phenomenon that occurs within communication.” Later, Ford (1999, p. 480) specified language as discourse, writing that through the traditional “structuralist-functionalist” perspective, “successful change ... depends on the ability

to accurately mirror or represent reality and to choose and implement interventions appropriate to that reality.” As a counterpoint, Ford asked, “But what if we consider organizations as socially constructed realities in which the reality we know is interpreted, constructed, enacted, and maintained through discourse?” (1999, p. 480).

Ford (1999, p. 488) underscored the individual role in socially constructed reality during organizational change, “Within conversationally constructed realities, the idea that organizational change can occur independent of individual change becomes problematic; ... changing the conversations that constitute an organization necessarily changes the conversations that constitute individuals in the organization” (p. 488).

In situating the individual as the originator of reality and identity construction during organization change, both Taylor (1999) and Ford (1999) provided a jumping-off point for considering social construction of the self and career and “the now well-accepted idea that our identities are continually being made and remade through the stories which we tell to ourselves and others, about various aspects of our lives” (Cohen, n.d., ¶ 2). Taylor (1999) and Ford (1999) also support the theoretical underpinning that “meaning is constructed through the telling of the story” (Walker, 2003, p. 16). Similarly, Lambert (2003) called stories “the large and small instruments of meaning, of explanation, that we store in our memories. We cannot live without them” (p. 1). Further, Polkinghorne (1988) described narrative:

A form of “meaning making” ... Narrative recognizes the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts of the whole. Its particular subject is human actions and events that affect human beings, which it configures into wholes according to the roles these actions and events play in bringing about a conclusion. (p. 36)

Reflecting Luhman's 1998 assertion that a goal of organization studies should be to

promote individuals' understanding of the process of social construction of reality, this study examines meaning in participants' stories while questioning and comparing the way individuals create meaning through organizational-change stories and meaning construction by organizational leaders regarding change. As in Cohen's and Mallon's (2001) description of individuals "gaz[ing] backwards and invest[ing] past events with meaning that resonates with the present" (p. 56), I explored how study participants may have imbued their past experience of organizational change with meaning. Based on the notion set forth by Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Tamboukou (2003, p. 22) that "in performing narratives we can create new possibilities for identities and actions," participants may have looked at their careers in new ways in the context of the organizational change they experienced. For readers, too, stories offer the opportunity to ponder "vicariously" (Walker, 2003, p. 22) the experience of others and consider how it might relate to their own. In setting forth these stories and my interpretations of them, I, too, have created a storyline, a social "reality" of change.

Employing an entrepreneurial context and ascribing to Kristeva a characteristic of discourse known as intertextuality, O'Connor (2002) referred to narrative sensemaking as an "ability to locate and adjust a taken position relative to distinct but interconnected plot-lines in which the communicator and relevant organization figure as primary, secondary, and minor characters" (¶ 3). For O'Connor, intertextuality captures "the explicit and implicit ways in which terms refer to one another" (¶ 3). The "intertextuality of storylines" (¶ 41) that O'Connor discussed with reference to entrepreneurial stories can also apply to stories of careers and organizations and how they interrelate. In many cases, the observer need not delve too deeply to discover what O'Connor characterizes as "intertextual dilemmas" (¶ 41) and "intertextual complexity" (¶ 49). Just as O'Connor portrays clashes among characters' use of language to construct

reality in her studies of entrepreneurial narrative, so, too, can the observer consider competing individual/career versus organization/management views of reality construction of organizational change. As O'Connor notes, the degree of intertextuality in these situations does not always "bode well for a productive business interaction" (¶ 48).

Intertextuality, along with "fragmented identities and social rules" are features of postmodernism (Cohen & Mallon, 2001, p. 65), as are Clandinin's and Connelly's "narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (2000, p. 17). As Cohen (2006, p. 9) noted, "Post-modernism asks: What is the point of trying to decipher the book of life when there are no longer any authorized versions?"

The study's postmodernism epistemological orientation is grounded in Taylor's (2004) observations that key assumptions and critical applications of postmodernism to organizational communication include the notion that organizational cultures/identities are fragmented and de-centered; that organizational knowledge/power/discourse are inseparable and their relations should be deconstructed; that organizational communication involves complex relations of power and resistance; and, as a result of the representationality of organizational-communication knowledge, communication should be reflexive.

## METHODOLOGY

I collected stories from 16 individuals using narrative interviews (Czarniawska, 1998). These individuals were former job-seekers who recently successfully changed jobs or careers and organization members from several organizations in the process of major change or that had recently undergone major change. Using in-depth, loosely structured interviews, I asked participants to tell their career stories and to describe how they had

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experienced organizational change.

Since the intent of the study was not to gather generalizable results, I did not attempt to recruit a representative sample across demographic groups. With recent research suggesting that 12 participants in a qualitative study yield appropriate data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), I achieved theoretical saturation, also known as redundancy (Patton, 2001, p. 246) after interviewing 16 participants.

The clarifying questions that Taylor (1999) asked in his research provided a foundation for the questions I used. He asked his subjects if change had occurred in their organization and requested that they describe their position within the organization. Taylor endeavored to discover - with minimal influence from him - what had been most salient about the change the subjects had experienced. He asked for clarification in cases of confusion, as well as specific examples or elements that especially stood out. This study focuses on an interview question that asked participants for an account of the change their organizations had undergone.

### **DATA ANALYSIS: CAREER TEXTS THAT CONSTRUCT THE "REALITY" OF CHANGE**

This portion of the paper intertwines the stories of 15 of these narrators as "slice-of-life" tales from the aspects of organizational change that participants chose to share. Interviewee change stories appear nearly verbatim with only minor editing intended to aid readability. Pause words (such as "uhh," "umm," and "you know"), and repeated words and phrases have been deleted. Explanatory phrases have been bracketed to create clarity or to mask the participant's identity. Typographically, the narratives appear indented and in italics. They are thus presented in a relatively natural state, stories, as Rhodes expressed, of people "whose story has been written and fixed in the text like a dead butterfly pinned on a board" (2000, p. 25) and are open to the observer's

interpretation. I acknowledge that my interviewees' stories can be interpreted in myriad ways. Even as I commit my research to this documentation, I continue to consider meanings that may be contrary to my interpretation. That is why I wanted the narratives to stand in a natural state so the reader could also form his or her own interpretations. I also acknowledge that the texts of "the organization" are, in fact, crafted by individuals.

To protect their identities, the interviewees are identified only by their job titles, as follows:

- o Computer programmer analyst for a local-government agency
- o Production control specialist for a large aerospace firm
- o Manager of construction services for a university
- o Career specialist at a community college
- o Contract manager for a social service agency
- o Recent neuro-psychology master's degree graduate seeking a job
- o Labor analyst for an entertainment attraction
- o Senior communications consultant for a large entertainment/media conglomerate
- o Cost accountant for a manufacturing firm
- o In-house attorney for a cruise line
- o Innovation manager for a telecommunications firm
- o Speech pathologist at a community hospital
- o Senior project manager for strategic planning and business development for a specialty pharmaceutical firm
- o Contract and supplier manager for a large entertainment/media conglomerate
- o Global product lead for a large software company

A significant overall finding of the study is that the lived experience of the study

participants in terms of experiencing organizational change, making sense of change, and learning from the experience aligns well with the literature and the study's aim to examine intertextual complexities and dilemmas (O'Connor, 2002) between careers and organizations.

Story data are presented here, followed by a concluding section examining the intertextuality of these individual/career "texts" of change in relation to texts of change from the organizational perspective. The missing link in the data presented is, of course, the organizational texts. Some of the individual/career stories/texts provide clues about the meaning organizations may have intended to convey in their organizational-change texts. Certainly, these texts can be seen as individually constituted "realities" in which the text-creators have interpreted, constructed, enacted, and sometimes maintained the organizational change text (Ford, 1999, p. 480).

The lack of organizational texts in this study, however, sets up tantalizing possibilities for future research that juxtaposes organizational and individual texts in search of their intertextuality.

As Ford mentioned in his summation (1999) of organizational language, a commonly cited permutation of language used in organizations is narrative or story (Dunford & Jones, 2000, p. 1208) - in fact, "a story of stories" (Ford, 1999, p. 487). Even more relevant to the current study, narratives are acts of sensemaking in the face of change. Taylor (1999, ¶ 5) referred to this storytelling as "identity construction," going on to write that "the stories people tell about organizational change reflect their sensemaking of the change" (¶ 15).

Dunford and Jones (2000, p. 1208) wrote that "narratives are especially likely to be of significance during times of strategic change." The authors also pointed to the mental processes that narrative generates in times of change: "Strategic change involves

the constituting of a new reality in the minds of organizational members" (p. 1209). In the following stories, while recognizing that the language/texts/stories leaders may have used to implement change are unknown, we can observe some ways in which individuals have attempted to interpret and make sense of change. The stories provoke questions about how organizational leaders may have attempted to construct new realities in the minds of the narrators and where the organizational change texts and the organization members' texts intersect - in other words, where intertextuality occurs. The first two stories can be interpreted as representing a low level of intertextual complexity. For the individual characters who tell these stories, the labor analyst and the contract manager, the organizational-change texts to which the narrators respond do not seem to conflict significantly with the way these individuals construct the meaning of their careers. The labor analyst describes a shift in his employer's approach to talent selection and management:

*Since I've been there, I can tell you the entire human resources department has revamped. ... When I was hired on, it was sort of a good ol' boy type system. "You work well with me, so I'm gonna go ahead and promote you." No opportunity for external candidates. And if you weren't part of the friend faction then you weren't gonna be moving up within the company. So we were losing a lot. So we weren't bringing any talent in, any really good talent in, by recruiting - by offering those higher-up-level positions. But we were losing what talent we did have, that did finally trickle in. Because they weren't part of the same groups that were hired. And ... you come in, you're new, you're not gonna be associated as fast. You would have to be there ... a good two to three to four years before you'd be accepted, and then you'll have the opportunity to live up. So ... everything was revamped from an HR standpoint. ... Before ... anybody could come in and move up with the management, and now ... they want someone [with] a degree ...*

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*which ... wasn't really a big qualification in the past.*

Expanded job responsibilities are the focus of the contract manager's story: *With my ... direct supervisor quitting, it really didn't create too much a vacuum because she left on family medical leave last year to give birth. ... So about a month into the job, I took over all of the duties [of] the program director duties along with the contract manager duties, so I've had experience doing it for at least a little bit, so when she quit, it wasn't too much of a shock because she didn't really seem to be that invested in the job anymore and was more focused on her son.*

In the next story, signs of intertextual dilemma emerge. Unlike the contract manager, who appears not to be especially rattled by the expansion in this job duties, the new graduate is less sanguine, though acknowledging that her boss's expectations have provided her with a learning experience:

*My boss kind of expects me to do more than what my job really entails, so we've had discussions about that, and ... he's the boss. He feels like I should be doing all these extra things, so ... I'm still stuck doing it. ... Most of my other bosses have always understood when I've said ... this is a little bit not really my area or something that I should be doing, but he hasn't really, so it's been kind of a learning of difficult bosses.*

Sometimes individuals struggle to make sense of instability and frequent turnover in senior management, as in the case of the production control specialist, who faces an intertextual dilemma in that the organization's change text fails to familiarize her with the company's new leadership:

*Our whole management left this year, just about. Both our VPs left at the same time. Our president left. I mean for years and years ... we had the same president of the company, and he kept saying he was gonna retire because his wife wanted to*

*move up closer to their kids, and of course, he was way beyond retiring age when he finally did, and so it sort of changed the whole flavor of the place because everybody had been used to, was very familiar with, his management. The environment is ... flavored by the management. ... It doesn't affect me quite as much as just the fact that then the lower management had shifted ... We just got a new president last year and we just got ... an interim vice president. They've been trying to find a vice president for operations because he got into big trouble, our vice president did. He actually got told to leave, and we've been waiting for ... six months for them to select a new vice president, and they still can't do it, and so they've given us a vice president ... that's retiring from the other side of town ... I don't even know where the guy's from that's been our acting vice president. I don't know if he's from some other organization. I don't know if he's HR or something because he doesn't seem to be very well acquainted with ... operations or ... any of the things that we do. I think it was just a matter of pick a body and put it in there for them.*

Amid the “network of conversations that constitute the realities called organizations” (Ford, 1999, p. 486), leaders use language to implement change (Taylor, 1999, ¶ 81). Ford (1999, p. 486) elaborated that “change managers work with and through conversations to generate, sustain, and complete conversation in order to bring about a new network of conversations ... that result in the accomplishments of specific commitments.” In contrast to the production control specialist, who in the foregoing seems to express bewilderment at the shifts in leadership, the contract and supplier manager has the organizational power and position to craft a “new network of conversations” designed to provide stability for his team and create a text that the team can maintain if he moves on:

*The first eight years that I was with the*

*company, I was basically within the same team organization. ... [but] ... I probably had five different direct leaders, although my job function didn't really change. The group that I was in didn't change, but the leadership did change quite a bit, which presented some struggles. So when I was promoted to the management portion of the group, my view was trying to stabilize as much as I could, structure, setting processes, and ... basically getting a system set up so that ... when I walk away from it, it can be maintained, as opposed to what I had experienced in the past, which was kind of all over the place.*

Organizational change and the language used to implement it often focus on shifting the way the organization interacts with its customers. The global project lead describes a full-circle shift from telephonic to electronic communication with customers, and back again. Her story suggests intertextuality with the organization's data-driven focus on improving customer service:

*When I first came in to [name of company], we were your typical inbound call center. All issues came in via phone. We had little ticketing authorization systems, where you would enter in the issue, and then you would work it from a very paper reality, looking through hard manuals, looking through things that are laying around the office, and trying to figure out customers' issues. Then we went and transitioned into a paperless company, where everything was put in some kind of data warehousing, into a library, or available online somewhere, somehow, which made life a lot easier, and time-wise it was much better for us. Then we also transitioned from an inbound call center to an inbound electronic ticketing center, where all of our issues came through the computer. We no longer were communicating with the customers by phone. That went on for quite a while, and at the same time we were handling sort of more of a global scale. We started having customers*

*working different hours. Outsourcing was becoming large. So a lot of companies, even though they were based in the United States, their servers may be based in India, or somewhere else in the world. So then we started focusing on more of a global work scale. Then from there, when working with customers from around the globe, we found out that electronic ticketing systems are not always the best way to go. So even though we still work our issues electronically, and they come in to us, we are now transitioning back to using the phone more. Certainly we've gone from a self-service perspective with the customer to more customer-service focused. We want to be more interactive with the customer. We're finding that we're able to retain the customer base better. They seem to like the warm fuzzies. It's quite interesting because we're starting to see the same trend globally, and we thought that it was just the U.S. customer thing. But definitely, our customers in Australia - very much the warm fuzzy types. They want to talk to somebody on the phone. They want verbal communication and interaction. So that was an interesting finding ... actually, we had just analyzed the data not two or three months ago, and that was very prominent in our data, and a big gap appeared in terms of customer satisfaction. The majority of our highest customer-satisfaction scores come out of the Australia customer base. So, we started looking at the regionalization of the customers, and where our customer-satisfaction scores are sitting in terms of phone use and verbal communication. We find that in Australia, definitely our highest. In the United States, where we haven't quite made the transition to the use of the phone heavily, we have the lowest customer satisfaction ratings.*

The senior communications consultant similarly describes a former employer's drive to meet its customers' needs set against a backdrop in which the organization's change

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text apparently attempted to overcome the industry's negative reputation:

*[Name of company was] really the first leading branded timeshare company... And they really helped ... change the face of timeshare in terms of making it more personable. Timeshares always had a bad reputation. With [name of company] ... you get this strong reputation for hospitality sideshow, but you know what? We're gonna do right by our customers. Sort of changing the way that sales were done, or the sales process was handled. It was less aggressive, less confrontational, more of an education process. But [when] I joined the company ... it was more internally focused in terms of ... [structure]. They said, "... We need to change it. We need to make more of a customer relationship management company, CRM." And so they reorganized how people reported, with the end of goal of having people more thinking about the needs of the customer ... So really helping the company with that, communicating how those organization needs [were] changing. ... We needed to find a way to maintain that, which involved understanding customers more ...*

While none of the foregoing stories overtly suggest intertextual disconnects between organization and career texts, the following set more clearly illustrate how the lived meanings that individuals derive from their careers (Cochran, 1990) intersect with organizational change texts. As the speech pathologist discovers, organizational change can result in not only new texts, but also competing texts outlining managerial expectations, in turn, creating tension in her career text:

*When I think of change, I think of starting this new team in 2003 in a community hospital because there are lots of issues that are unique. Before, we were in a university teaching academic setting, which is set up for teams and unusual specialized*

*programs that are meant more for a community benefit than for profit. So ... [now] we're expected to do an annual conference. And yet our smaller community hospital doesn't have a very good audiovisual department. So here we're trying to get sophisticated audiovisual, not just equipment, but conversion, like getting video to CD-ROM to put in PowerPoint, and nobody in the AV department knows how to do this; whereas, in [a large university hospital], there were infinite number of resources where this could be done because everybody [there] is expected to present conferences and papers and presentations. ... In starting a team in a local community hospital or a local more suburban community hospital, these are the hurdles that I noticed. ... So you have the administration on the one hand saying, oh we can't afford this... And then we have an academic surgeon on the other hand saying, well, of course, you're going to present for two hours at the annual conference. And the administrator is saying, well, oh my gosh, you're spending how much time preparing for this conference? So that's the dilemma. When something is new, I have felt in the middle of being pulled by two sets of expectations.*

Other narrators' stories may reflect nuances of individual "buy-in" to the organization's intended linguistic construction of the change reality. The cost analyst, for example, seems to indicate a degree of cynicism with his "blah, blah, blah" language in the following; yet his overall support for the organization's commitment to change for the better seems positive:

*They're very quality oriented. ISO 9000, blah, blah, blah, certified. So quality and continuous improvement ... are core to the organizational culture. ... In terms of change ... the ownership structure went from a publicly traded company subject to infinite government regulation to a privately held company that can be more flexible. We'll see if that pans out. But what I have seen from my experience,*



*again, is a commitment to improving processes, real-time information, accuracy of information reported. And I guess that's the reason why I like the company so much. They truly are dedicated to change for the better.*

The senior project manager expresses similarly positive buy-in with regard to changes wrought by turnover and corporate acquisitions, also illustrating a positive correlation between her personal career text and the organization's change text. She constructs her identity and her career text, connecting her challenge-seeking personality to her employer's ever-changing text while also predicting a continuity of alignment with the future texts of both her career and the organization:

*We retired [former company name] two years ago, almost three years ago now. ... And ... there's been a lot of turnover, a lot of additions. We just bought another company, [name of company] ... in October. And so ... I envision changes, probably through the next 8 to 14 months. ... If you can't deal with change, this is not the company to work for. [In] the pharmaceutical industry, as well as the healthcare industry ... people are constantly evolving and just constantly changing. And so, it's actually one of the nicer components of somebody with my personality, somebody that's always looking for a challenge.*

As the global product lead's story of her company's globalization effort demonstrates, individuals can accept and help implement the organization's change text - in this case, a text of "set[ting] a global expectation and a global process" - while recognizing the obstacles in doing so:

*A big change for us right now is our whole globalization focus. We are a 24/7, 365-day-a-year-company, and we actually have just recently aligned our product spaces, and we are actually managing more remotely now. I am a global product lead for the world in a particular product, so my responsibility*

*is to ensure that [the] product application suite, that we have the right talent working the product to help the customer issues; that we have vacations covered, holidays covered, from a global perspective. I'm also responsible for reporting the metrics from a global perspective in those product areas, and we're also working to align our business processes, which has been a huge challenge for us. There's definitely cultural barriers that we're having to tear down. ... There's so many factors involved. Simple things like ... the workloads. In the U.S., we're very much worker ants. We're used to high-volume, high-impact, critical issues, constantly having to prioritize, whereas some of our other global centers who have just come on line recently, with especially India that's only a few years old. They're more ... "Just have a few issues," and "I kind of can work at my own pace," and "I gotta take training for this, and "I need to take training for that before I can move on to this task." Whereas in the U.S., the expectation has just always been there, you just do, do, do, do. You learn by fire. "Training's not available. We're not dumping any money into you, so figure it out, otherwise go find a job somewhere else." There's definitely a different mindset. Also, one of the challenges we're finding globally is the engineers' perceptions of themselves and their work. I do find that in the U.S., we seem to be a little harder on ourselves about what we accomplish in our everyday work, whereas in Egypt, for example, ... we have people who have only been in the company for six months, and they expect to be promoted. They are the best of the best of the best of the best, and they're not getting any better than what they are, and they need to go all the way to the top. Their expectation is truly they want to move. Their goal is to get into management. So what we're finding is all these engineers that we've hired into our Egypt office, they all*

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*expect to get to a manager level, and it's just not something that's gonna happen in a year. We're starting to have attrition occur because the expectation is not matched with the company set. So, it's been interesting.*

The global project lead goes on to describe the additional challenge of required government holidays in Europe that dictate vacation times and create difficulties with workload coverage. She closes with these words:

*I mean, it seems like everywhere in the globe, we have these little cultural expectations, but we're dealing with an American-based company. So as management and directors are involved, we're trying to sort of set a global expectation and a global process, and it's been quite tough.*

The computer programmer analyst draws a positive connection between her career text and the change - through growth - that her organization has experienced. We might speculate that her statement that "one of our goals ... is to make people's lives easier" represents intertextuality between her career text and the organization's change text and that the aspects of the organization's change text that appeal to the computer programmer analyst enable her to construct a career identity:

*Within our project, we started off very small working with a select group of health departments. And it kind of started off with testing pilot counties, and then it kind of has grown and grown bigger and bigger. And then we now have full participation around the state. And that has changed based on workload and demand and your time and things like that. And it's also been good, in a sense that [there's] more networking, more contacts, more one-on-one involvement with people. I really like that. Getting to meet with people and kind of work hands-on. So, one of our goals at work is to ... make people's lives easier. ... I really don't believe in having to do manual reports and manual input over and over*

*again. It's just too time consuming, and staff's time can be better used.*

The in-house attorney's story illustrates how her former firm's text of growth and specialization negatively affected her career text:

*The first change that [the law firm] went through was an organizational change, primarily in the way that it marketed itself to clients. That affected the lawyers because initially the firm was divided into corporate law and litigation. Then, about two years after I started, the firm decided to market itself in discrete categories of what types of services they offer. For example, there was an ERISA employment and tax section. There was a class-action defense section. There [was] a white-collar crime section. So it just divided. So you really needed to decide what practice areas you wanted to focus your career into. I realized there were only ... maybe one or two groups that I was interested in out of the maybe ... 10 or so that were available. So at that point, it became more and more clear that that was not the firm that I wanted to work for for my entire career. ... Also, the firm went from a relatively small firm to expanding a lot, and it grew from both the lower end of the lawyer totem pole - like by hiring more first-year associates - to bringing in some very, very well-respected-within-the-industry-partners, and their groups. So the firm went through some expansion. ... The [name of city] office, when I first started there, especially when I was a summer associate, we were all very close. There was an open-door policy. Everyone was on the same floor. Then later, when they started to expand, we went to two floors, and there was a noticeable difference with the interactions between all the attorneys, like the partners and the associates, and the partners and the rest of the staff. So you felt ... more distant; it was becoming more of a big-firm type of atmosphere, and I didn't particularly like that. I was sold on the idea of being able to work with all the different partners and*

*having ... a closer type of relationship with them. So, that changed.*

Stuart's research (1995) reinforced that "when change is understood as a language shift, resistance can be seen as an issue of language maintenance" (Ford, 1999, p. 495). Apart from resistance, the following three stories suggest frustration, cynicism, and bitterness at management's perceived disregard for the individual. The observer may well question the effectiveness of organizational language shifts and maintenance that resulted in these constructions of reality and note intertextual dilemmas between organization and career text.

The innovation manager describes the atmosphere when her large telecom firm merged with a similar telecom giant. Her career text intersects with that of senior managers and how their path influenced her actions. The organizational-change text provoked by the merger affected the innovation manager's career text because she could have advanced within the merged organization, but she chose to leave instead:

*There's just so many unknowns. I mean the company's gonna protect themselves, and they're not looking out for you. ... Just like all the other 60,000 employees. So I'd say that unknowns is what really makes you scared enough to start taking care of yourself and watching out for number one. And I know that sounds conceited, but in today's world I found, especially working around the senior management there, they were constantly, especially after the merger, ... dropping like flies. But some of them that you thought were icons in the business were taking offers overseas to European telecoms or just jumping ship. You're like, "Gosh, if they're doing it, maybe I should too down here..." My next step would have been a director ... and quite honestly, looking around the company, I had no desire to be at that [step]. Because they got paid maybe 20*

*grand more and had twice as many headaches, and they were there before I got in in the morning and there after I left.*

The career specialist expresses frustration over an organizational textual shift in which employee responsibilities now include marketing their community college and, for the career specialist, the college's vice president's "threatening" and "patronizing" text represents intertextual conflict.

*With enrollment being down the last seven semesters, we finally have the attention of the administration, and they're trying a bunch of new initiatives to boost enrollment. They're doing mass mailings. They just revamped our website, gave it a new look. We're offering the 11 courses now in eight weeks in a term, which we've never done before, and that's something that's got a lot of people up in arms, because like a math-prep course, a lot of people feel like how are they gonna succeed in eight weeks when they can't do it in 16, and a lot of people, especially the faculty, are not happy about it, and I understand ... that we're competing ... with these for-profit schools, and we've gotta be innovative and ... if we don't, we're gonna really lose tons of people. ... Competition is really just pushing us to make some changes, much needed changes, but a lot of people aren't good with change, especially in education. Things move slowly. The VP is trying to [get] buy-in, but he did it in kind of a threatening way, which people didn't take to. We all had to attend ... a customer-service workshop, and if we missed it we had to watch it on CD, and he showed some letters that came in that were derogatory, and then he showed one positive one, but it was really ... kind of saying you guys are not doing the best job you could be doing. It was kind of real patronizing. ... Just because a couple people aren't good doesn't mean we all are bad..., but that ... wasn't too much fun. ... Right now*

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*they're tying enrollment into our raises, so they've never done that before, so if enrollment's not up, we don't get a raise. That's the new thing; we're responsible for marketing now. ... We've never been held responsible for marketing before, so you feel this pressure. Not only if we don't ... help enrollment, we're not getting a raise, but we gotta be out there marketing.*

For the manager of construction services, a former employer's relocation and cost-savings efforts resulted in a textual shift that the narrator interprets as dishonest and unethical to the extent that he reconstituted his career text by leaving the organization:

*[When] I was at the large shoe distributor, ... sort of a combination of things happened at the same time. It was a ... management change that created a ... whole new environment, a whole new atmosphere. Previously it had been a more like a family thing. Everybody felt protected, I think... And then they moved to the southern suburbs, and there were a lot of hourly people who had worked in the offices, mostly the office people. ... So when they moved, they said, okay well, we know we're putting you out, but... and most of them didn't have automobiles. Anyhow they provided bus service ... just ... 3 or 4 stops, and they would come to our office and drop everybody off, and at the end of the shift, they would take everybody home, and the*

*new folks stopped that... That was just sort of indicative of everything else chang[ing] with the atmosphere, and so the hourly folks decided it was time to have a union, and I got involved in the union fight as part of management and got to sit in with some of the top-level meetings and was ... pretty close [to totally] blown away by the insensitivities shown - just the lack of ethics and lack of honesty. I mean, they were flat out lying, and announced in a meeting, "we're gonna lie." ... I guess if ... the top guy and the second top guy want to talk like that at the bar, that's bad enough, but if they announce it at a meeting with 15 of us, how crooked are they really if they're willing to admit this much to the world almost ... how crooked are we? So that was another thing; I said I really don't think I wanna be working for these guys. They started cutting back ... and I said ... somebody's gonna go, and that's when I had a chance to go working for myself.*

## CONCLUSION

Although organization texts are missing from this study, clues to their intertextuality with individuals' career text emerge in the stories of organizational change that the study's narrators present, suggesting a next research step that truly juxtaposes career texts with organization texts and explicates the intertextuality of the two.

**Table 1: Matrix of intertextual dilemmas in career vs. organization stories**

| Theme of organizational change text | 'Character' telling change story | Lenses through which to view intertextuality   | Theme of individual/career text  |  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Organizational restructuring        | Labor analyst                    | How does the organization (management, leadership) tell the change story? What is the change text? | Neutral buy-in   |  |
| Instability in senior management    | Production control specialist    |  | Confusion  |  |
|                                     | Contract and supply manager      |  | Creation of new organizational text  |  |
| Growth                              | Computer programmer analyst      |  | How does the individual tell the change story and construct the meaning of his/her career? | Positive buy-in  |
| Growth/globalization                | Global product lead              |  |  | Buy-in with acknowledgement of challenges  |
| Growth/specialization               | In-house attorney                |  |  | Dissatisfaction, departure   |
|                                     | Senior project manager           |  |  | Positive buy-in  |
| Growth/merger & acquisition         | Innovation manager               |  |  | Bitterness at perceived disregard for the individual, rejection of career advancement within organization, departure |
| Product/marketing shift             | Career specialist                |  |  | Confusion, dissatisfaction   |
| Shift in customer focus             | Senior communications consultant |  |  | Positive buy-in  |
|                                     | Global project lead              | Neutral buy-in   |  |  |
| Quality improvement                 | Cost accountant                  | Positive buy-in  |  |  |

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|                                      |                                  |   |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Expanded individual responsibilities | Contract manager                 | Neutral buy-in  |
|                                      | Graduate student                 | Dissatisfaction   |
| Relocation & cost-cutting            | Manager of construction services | Bitterness at perceived disregard for the individual, departure |

Table 1 summarizes the intertextual dilemmas that the stories suggest. Through the subjects' stories, the observer gains a sense of the recursive links between the individual to the organization (Cohen and Mallon, 2001) and Polkinghorne's (1988) characterization of storied individual experiences as parts of the whole (organization). In providing glimpses - through the study's narrators - into Cochran's "lived meanings" that "make a career narratable, intelligible, and coherent" (1990, ¶ 24), the study has further illuminated the concept of careers as texts; indeed, in some cases, "the dynamic ways in which individuals enact their careers" (Cohen and Mallon, 2001, p. 52), especially in the face of change, aligning with Clandinin's and Connelly's characterization of Bateson, who observed that individuals engage in "improvisation and adaptation to change allow the past to be connected to and have continuity with the future" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 7) and Cohen's (2006) notion of career identities continually refashioned through stories (Cohen, 2006) and even reinvented and dynamically enacted (Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Tamboukou, 2003).

The stories in this study suggest that intertextuality emerges in change situations because "changing the conversations that constitute an organization necessarily

changes the conversations that constitute individuals in the organization" (Ford, 1999, p. 488). The stories reveal that organizations experience varying degrees of success in meshing their "pre-existing, ongoing, and encompassing story lines" (O'Connor, 2004) with those of their organization members.

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