

# WE'RE CHANGING—OR ARE WE? UNTANGLING THE ROLE OF PROGRESSIVE, REGRESSIVE, AND STABILITY NARRATIVES DURING STRATEGIC CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION

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**Data from a *Fortune* 500 retailer suggest that managers tell strategically ambiguous, interwoven narratives about how an organization changes and how it remains the same, thereby attempting to both unfreeze and freeze the existing meanings employees attribute to the organization. Employees embellish these narratives to make sense of and narrate responses to change (resisting, championing, and accepting), something patterned by time period and context. This study revises conceptualizations of managerial and employee discourse in fostering and hampering the implementation of strategic change by broadening consideration of both the sources and the types of meanings used to “construct” change.**

Implementing strategic change is one of the most important undertakings of an organization. Successful implementation of strategic change can reinvigorate a business, but failure can lead to catastrophic consequences, including firm death (Hofer & Schendel, 1978). One of the most important processes of strategic change occurs when managers use “discursive” and other “symbolic materials” to destroy existing meaning systems and establish new ones in an effort to set strategic direction (Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In fact, some scholars consider the very purpose of strategic change to be invoking a shift in cognitions about an organization and its environment (Bartunek, 1984).

Past change research using both narrative (e.g., Barry & Elmes, 1997; Brown, 1998) and “sensemaking” lenses (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) has supported the idea that strategic change requires a fundamental shift in meanings. This literature has converged on an examination of how managers “construct” meanings (i.e., interpretations of an organization) and disseminate them to others in an effort to influence those others about a new strategic direction. Scholars opting for a narrative ap-

proach to change have focused on the construction of meanings that “stand out from other organizational stories” (Barry & Elmes, 1997: 433) by differentiating the future from the past. Similarly, scholars taking a sensemaking approach have focused on how managers construct meanings for others that lead to a “preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). Practitioner models of change, such as those based on Kotter’s (1996) work, have also emphasized creating a sense of urgency about shattering outdated or misaligned meanings tied to an organization’s status quo, followed by the development and dissemination of new meanings expressed in a vision for change.

One common characteristic of many theoretical and practitioner models of change is that they explicitly or implicitly endorse Lewin’s (1951) basic three-stage theory of change. The three stages are “unfreezing” an existing state, moving to a new, desirable state, and then “refreezing” that new state (Elrod & Tippett, 2002; Hendry, 1996; Marshak, 1993). As Dawson noted, “The predominant models on the management of change remain rooted to the orthodoxy imposed by Lewin’s (1951) seminal work. Almost without exception, contemporary management texts uncritically adopt Lewin’s three-phase model of planned change” (1994: 2f). In fact, scholars have adopted Lewin’s model to explicitly focus on *meanings* during change, arguing that the change process involves managers first breaking down employees’ existing meaning constructions (unfreezing), then establishing new meanings (moving), and finally solidifying those new meanings (refreezing) (e.g., Corley & Gioia, 2004; Fiol,

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2002; Isabella, 1990; Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000). Although research that models change implementation as a set of meaning processes based roughly on Lewin's approach has led to important insights, this research is limited in two key ways. First, it studies only certain *types* of meanings constructed by managers and employees. Second, it overlooks the perspective and responses of *recipients* of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008).

First, existing research represents an unnecessarily narrow view of the types of meanings managers and employees construct during change by predominately focusing on positive or negative meanings of change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Piderit, 2000). This limited focus makes common a narrative in which employees resist change (drawing on negative meanings) and managers struggle to overcome these resistance efforts (through positive meanings). Dent and Goldberg (1999) characterized this story as a universally accepted mental model but questioned its empirical reality. Lewin proposed that resistance occurred at the systems level in organizations (manifesting in, for instance, roles, attitudes, behaviors, norms, and other factors). Yet organizational scholars have since largely viewed resistance more narrowly as occurring at the psychological level (Dent & Goldberg, 1999), thereby often implicating employees' constructions of change (the meanings they give to change) as the cause of resistance (Ford et al., 2008). As a result, scholars have developed theories about how managers overcome employee resistance by unfreezing employees' existing (negative) constructed meanings and then changing them (e.g., Corley & Gioia, 2004; Fiol, 2002; Isabella, 1990; Labianca et al., 2000). For example, Isabella's (1990) model draws from Lewin's work to explain how top managers unfreeze employees' existing constructions and alert them that new ones need to be adopted. Fiol adopted Lewin's three-stage model to identity change, theorizing that managers help employees destroy old meanings and replace them with a "new desired future state" (2002: 660). Labianca et al. adopted Lewin's model to argue that change involves disconfirming old schemata and then "new schema generation" (2000: 238). At a theoretical level, this argument focuses researchers on employees as obstacles to change as opposed to recognizing that employees may also maintain meanings consistent with promoting change (e.g., Kelman, 2005). At a practical level, the "managers-overcome-employee-resistance" tale may contribute to the failure of change initiatives because it encourages managers to direct energy toward the

wrong places (purported employee constructions that lead to resistance) using the wrong mental models (unfreeze-move-refreeze) (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). In this study, I took an inductive approach allowing for a variety of meanings (beyond "positive" and "negative") to play a role in change. This approach helps supplement the popular managers-overcome-employee-resistance story that has plagued theory development and practice (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford et al., 2008) by examining whether the meanings of change employees generate and maintain may not always hinder, but may actually help, change implementation.

Second, existing research overlooks the dynamic interplay between managers' and employees' meaning constructions. Instead, in examining discursive processes that provide linguistic, cognitive, and symbolic resources for strategic change (Jarzabkowski, 2005), scholars have taken a managerial perspective (Ford et al., 2008). For example, building on process-based approaches to change (e.g., Burgelman, 1983), researchers have addressed how managers engage in activities that constitute "doing" strategy work, such as constructing and disseminating meanings of change to employees (Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, & Humphries, 1999; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rouleau, 2005). Yet scholars have largely overlooked employees' subsequent reinterpretations of these meanings (Bartunek et al., 2006). Buchanan and Dawson (2007) criticized most work on change as single-voiced narratives that overlook its complex, political, and multiauthored nature. For scholars who theorize about change as a linguistic accomplishment that emerges from competing narratives (e.g., Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), it becomes essential to capture narratives beyond those coming from politically dominant groups (e.g., managers) (Dawson & Buchanan, 2005). Although less politically dominant groups lack formal power, they nonetheless shape change implementation through their alteration of its meaning. By accounting for the construction of meanings by both managers and employees, scholars can understand a wider breadth of meanings during change, as well as how meanings change over time and across organizational levels in ways that impact how strategic change gets implemented. Moreover, because meanings shape both social realities and actors' subsequent reactions to such realities (Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000), a more dynamic understanding of meaning construction may improve understanding of key employee responses important for change implementation. This may help practicing managers improve what frequently become unsuccessful change implementation at-

tempts (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990; Kotter, 1996).

By broadening investigation of the types of meanings actors construct during strategic change to extend beyond simply positive and negative, and by accounting for a wider range of actors constructing meaning (managers *and* employees), I reexamine critical assumptions in change implementation research. Scholars have found that managers exert downward influence on the meanings employees attribute to change through the unfreezing-moving-refreezing of negative meanings, which are replaced with more positive ones (e.g., George & Jones, 2001; Labianca et al., 2000), yet it is less clear what theoretical process explains how employees respond to these efforts, how they might reconstruct these meanings of change, and how this reconstruction might impact their responses when implementing change. Addressing these key questions affords the opportunity to reconsider and expand adoptions of Lewin's model of change that are based on meaning construction.

To develop these insights, I conducted a field study at a *Fortune* 500 retailer implementing strategic change. I began with the broad research question of how managers' and employees' meaning constructions differ, and how these differences matter for how strategic change gets implemented. Drawing from narrative (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Brown, 1998; Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Weick & Quinn, 1999) and sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) approaches to change, I examined relationships between the broader sources of meanings (managers and employees) and broader dimensions of meanings (derived inductively) used to construct change. As I describe below, the research affirmed key elements of existing views of change, but also led to some unexpected findings. Although my initial focus was to spotlight the frequently underestimated role of employees during change, my data revealed that researchers' current conceptualizations of managerial discourses during change were also incomplete. Prior research has emphasized that managers establish new meanings about an organization for employees by unfreezing and then altering their meaning constructions (Labianca et al., 2000). Indeed, I found that managers do construct these new meanings (through what I call "progressive narratives"). Unexpectedly, I also found that at the same time managers were establishing new meanings, they were simultaneously attempting to preserve existing organizational meanings (through what I call "stability narratives"). At this point, my attention shifted to explaining how and why managers simultaneously told progressive and stability narratives and to the

interwoven narratives' effect on employees' meaning constructions and implementation of change. As such, the study elaborates theory (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999) of meaning construction during strategic change by addressing not only the broader *sources* of meanings, but also the broader *types* of meanings. Ultimately, this elaboration affirms, challenges, and advances views of change based on Lewin's model.

### A NARRATIVE AND SENSEMAKING LENS

Two related lenses are especially useful for examining meaning constructions during change. A narrative lens focuses on discourse, often containing a sequential structure, that gives meaning to events (Pentland, 1999). This sequential structure captures how organization members understand events in relationship to other events over time (Gergen & Gergen, 1997) and in specific contexts (Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Narratives exist at both the individual and collective levels. As I describe in the Methods section, my primary focus in this study was "composite narratives," which involve researchers' construction of an event on the basis of a group of individuals' narratives about that same event (e.g., Dunford & Jones, 2000).

A sensemaking lens is closely related to a narrative one. For Weick (1995), sensemaking involves individuals engaging in retrospective and prospective thinking in order to construct an interpretation of reality. "Sensegiving" is a related process by which individuals attempt to influence the sensemaking of others (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Both sensemaking and sensegiving are closely related to narratives. In fact, many scholars have treated sensemaking/sensegiving as interchangeable with constructing narratives (Currie & Brown, 2003; Dunford & Jones, 2000; Gabriel, 2004). Scholars have argued that narratives are a tool that actors use to make sense of events (Bruner, 1990; Robichaud, Girous, & Taylor, 2004) and also that narratives capture the outcome of collective sensemaking (Brown, 1998). Furthermore, narratives can be

<sup>1</sup> Scholars have debated about differences among narratives, stories, sagas, legends, and myths. Boje defined stories as "oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experience" (1991: 111). Cunliffe, Luhman, and Boje (2004) noted that "narrative" and "story" are often used interchangeably, proposing the distinction that stories usually have coherent plot lines whereas narratives do not. But I followed Pentland (1999) in grouping all of these forms under the heading of "narrative," as these nuanced differences are not important for my theory here.

used to influence others, which is an example of sensegiving. Accordingly, I view a *narrative* as a discursive construction that actors use as a tool to shape their own understanding (sensemaking), as a tool to influence others' understandings (sensegiving), and as an outcome of the collective construction of meaning (Brown, 1998; Brown & Humphreys, 2003).

A narrative lens, informed by sensemaking/sensegiving, is useful for addressing my research question of how managers' and employees' meaning constructions differ, and how these differences matter during change implementation. First, narratives allow for multiple perspectives on change (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007) and broad types of meanings, both of which can play a vital role in change (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001). Second, narratives are inherently a temporal construction (Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004), and change is inherently a temporal phenomenon (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Third, when faced with a major interruption such as a strategic organizational change, individuals construct meanings both to enable their own understanding (Brown & Humphreys, 2003) and to influence that of others (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Capturing these understandings informs theory about how people use narratives to understand and influence change.

## METHODS

In a single-site case study, I used narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) and content analysis (Berelson, 1952) as two related approaches to examining the discourses individuals used to construct meaning (Gephart, 1993; Pentland, 1999). Narrative analysis focuses on the rich use of discourse embedded in context (Pentland, 1999), particularly emphasizing how protagonists interpret experiences (Bruner, 1990). Content analysis is a technique for understanding the factors that explain differences in interpretations (Langley, 1999). I first describe the case and then detail the data and analysis. By providing a rich description of the case in which meanings were produced, I provide more plausible and credible interpretations of the data (Hansen, 2006) and address calls to develop case studies that combine a narrative approach with a deeper study of organizational context (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007).

### Case Overview and Selection

This study took place at Retail, Inc.,<sup>2</sup> which was, at the time of the study, a *Fortune* 500 entertain-

ment and leisure products retailer with annual sales of \$4 billion and 35,000 employees. The company operated over 1,000 stores, primarily in the United States, and consisted of two divisions, each representing a different retail model: MallCo, which ran smaller, mall-based stores, and Big-BoxCo, which ran larger, freestanding stores. This research examines the implementation of "Project Convert," in which some MallCo stores were transformed into BigBoxCo Light stores. Table 1 gives a timeline of the change.

**Case selection.** Because extensive data were required to conduct this study, and data collection at multiple sites was not feasible, I used a single site. In selecting it, I was guided by theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the industry level, retail is a part of the service economy that represents a growing proportion of the world economy (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). I selected Retail, Inc., as a setting in the retail industry because it is comprised of many geographically dispersed units (i.e., stores), which makes extensive communication between stores and headquarters necessary, a characteristic that in turn lends itself well to the study of discourse within an organization. This setting provided an "extreme case" in which narratives were more likely to be visible than in other contexts. I was also provided with an unusual degree of access to Retail, Inc., via a personal contact. This degree of access led to building an information-rich case that helps manifest the phenomenon of change narratives in a detailed but not unrealistic way (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I selected Project Convert as a context within Retail, Inc., because it was a typical case (Miles & Huberman, 1994): it represented a type of change other retailers and organizations outside the retail industry perform frequently (e.g., integrating divisions, mergers, etc.). Also, most retailers and many large companies (e.g., multidivisionals) have centralized headquarters with dispersed units of employees, so their structures, and possibly some of the challenges they face in implementing change, resemble those at the focal firm. Retail, Inc. has senior/corporate managers who work at headquarters and are responsible for formulating and disseminating strategy to stores. Field managers and directors, considered members of management, are located throughout the country and are responsible for overseeing the operations of large clusters of stores. Their responsibilities include customizing strategies for their regions as well as disseminating instructions to stores. Both senior/corporate managers and field managers/directors issue directives about change to "employees"—the store managers

<sup>2</sup> All names of individuals and organizations are pseudonyms.

**TABLE 1**  
**Timeline and Milestones for Project Convert**

Approximate Time	Milestone	Description	Significance of Milestone
April 2002	Retail, Inc., hires strategy consulting company.	Strategy consultants hired to “rejuvenate” MallCo division. MallCo stores are not meeting customer demands and have performance variability.	Started first discussions about how to turn around the MallCo division. Helped get senior managers’ attention about performance declines at MallCo. Created urgency that strategic changes needed in MallCo division.
Most of 2003	Redesign Initiative starts.	New interior architecture of store designed, including internal architecture (store layout and color schemes) and product placement.	Store remodels would be a capital expenditure in the MallCo division, something which had not happened for the past twenty years. All stores in the MallCo chain informed they would receive some improvements/resources.
September 2003– January 2004	Marketing research firm assesses impressions of MallCo brand.	Set of possible names for MallCo brand developed and risks of changing name evaluated.	MallCo brand found to be “old” and inferior to BigBoxCo brand. Several alternative names for MallCo tested, and Retail, Inc. decides to test the “BigBoxCo Light” name in several stores.
March 2004	Project Convert officially created.	Project’s main changes involve a rebrand and remodel of stores as well as operational and merchandising changes.	Two separate projects merged into one, called Project Convert. More resources are allocated per store, but fewer stores will participate.
June 2004	Test of concept (phase I).	Seventeen stores are converted in four geographic areas.	Initial stores selected based on geographic isolation. Phase I considered successful.
September–December 2004	Test of concept (phase II).	Twenty additional stores are converted in three geographic areas.	Stores selected to represent competitive and customer makeup of other Retail, Inc. markets. Phase II also considered a success.
August–November 2005	Main implementation of Project Convert—Period 1.	First set of nontest stores participate in project. Store selection based on several criteria, including performance potential and subjective ratings by corporate managers.	Project Convert is now a full-blown strategy that is being implemented.
November 2005– January 2006	Main implementation of Project Convert—Period 2.	Second set of nontest stores participate in project. Store selection based on several criteria, including performance potential and subjective ratings by corporate managers.	Project Convert remains a full-blown strategy that is being implemented, with managers pressing to complete conversions by the end of the year.

and retail clerks responsible for implementing and adopting storewide change.<sup>3</sup>

**Case overview.** In the early 1990s, MallCo was the “cash cow” of Retail, Inc., bringing in steady profits that allowed the company to fund its growth at BigBoxCo, which had a smaller presence than MallCo and required significant capital expenditures to open a new store. As BigBoxCo stores started to achieve steady profits in the mid 1990s, sales at the MallCo division started to flounder. The outdatedness of MallCo’s stores, combined with increased competition from bigger stores belonging to other retailers and the internet, led to a multiyear downward spiral of performance. Retail, Inc., responded by closing underperforming MallCo stores, but with little investment being put into the MallCo division, those stores that sustained operations continued to have performance declines.

In 2003, Retail, Inc. charged an architectural design firm with developing the MallCo store of the future. The project, called the “Redesign Initiative,” involved updating the interior design (with new paint colors, for example) and changing the layout of the stores’ products. Managers reasoned that updating these interiors would improve sales. Although this project involved only minor modifications, MallCo store employees welcomed the Redesign Initiative because it provided some sorely needed resources for renovating stores, many of which had not seen any major investment for two decades.

While the store operations department at Retail, Inc.’s headquarters worked on the Redesign Initiative, the marketing department assessed the viability of the MallCo brand. Managers reasoned that a brand that had not seen updates for years might be in need of its own makeover. A marketing consultant recommended that the firm consolidate its brands by investing in one overarching brand for both divisions. The consultant’s research further concluded that the BigBoxCo brand was stronger than MallCo’s and that there would be minimal risk in eliminating the MallCo name and subsuming the brand under the BigBoxCo name as “BigBoxCo Light.”

In 2004, the Redesign Initiative of the operations

department combined with the marketing department’s plans for a branding change as one of the company’s six most important strategic projects; “Project Convert” was born. Retail, Inc. executives assigned a full-time Project Convert project manager in February 2004 and pushed to test the concept by the early summer. According to the strategy, the company would transform the entire chain of MallCo stores to BigBoxCo Lights, with the new name, remodeling, and new merchandising strategies. Unlike the previous Redesign Initiative, Project Convert would include extensive renovations, enhanced product selection, and updated marketing and operations strategies.

After a “phase I test” in June 2004, managers developed a more formal business plan that contained financial projections of how the converted stores would perform as well as cost estimates for the changes. According to the business plan, Project Convert had three main objectives (doc-010).<sup>4</sup> First, the project would “create greater consumer appeal,” partly through the consolidated name, leading to higher brand awareness. Second, the project would improve marketing and operational efficiencies by creating uniformity among stores in merchandising and operations. Third, the project would create additional sales through the acquisition of new customers. A “phase II test” was launched shortly after the business plan was created. After deeming phase II a success, Retail, Inc., initiated a more extensive implementation of the strategy.

### Sources of Data

Unlike most research on change, which only uses retrospective data (Van de Ven, 1992), this study includes both retrospective and real-time data. In total, I spent 15 months collecting data during the testing and implementation of the strategy, and after the project was no longer a strategic priority. I used five data sources: interviews, documents, archival records, observations, and surveys.

**Interviews.** I conducted 42 with retail clerks and store managers (collectively referred to as “employees”) and senior/corporate and field managers (collectively referred to as “managers”) from November 2004 to March 2006. Of the total number of interviews, 67 percent were with managers, and 33 percent were with employees spread across the East

<sup>3</sup> Although stores had managers, I treated them as “employees” because they were much closer to the retail clerks in status, power, and work context than to the corporate or field managers. There was a hierarchy whereby the clerks reported to the store managers, yet the two were both, like Bartunek et al.’s (2006) employees, “on the receiving end of change,” and so unlike the managers typically studied as sources of change (e.g., Burgelman, 1983; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> I refer to the various types of data using the following abbreviations: “int-#” refers to an interview and its assigned number; “sur-#” refers to an employee survey; and “doc-#” is a management document.

Coast, Central, and West Coast regions. Of the interviewees, 64 percent were with females, and 36 percent were with males. Appendix A lists the interview protocols. Individuals in a range of departments, levels, and geographic locations were interviewed, both during and after the change was implemented, a feature that mitigates retrospective biases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

For the employees, I generated a list of stores to sample that had one of the following change profiles: (1) stores that had completed implementation of the change, (2) stores soon to be implementing the change, and (3) stores with no announced plans to implement the change. Stores were selected to accommodate both geographic diversity and a reasonable travel schedule. An informant provided me with contact information for store managers, whom I called to schedule interviews. Store managers made staff available for my visit, and I approached each staff member in private to request an interview. All but one employee agreed to an interview. For managers, I used a snowball technique to identify all key managers at headquarters responsible for change and key field management (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I met with some informants multiple times. Although use of snowball sampling runs the risk of limiting informants to specific networks, I mitigated this risk by starting with informants in all key departments involved in the change. Interviews averaged around 40 minutes and were usually recorded and transcribed. When recording was not possible, I took extensive notes.

**Documents.** I collected 115 documents, including primarily internal ones (strategy plans, directives, and updates sent to stores) and public documents (press releases, articles, and web pages). Documents provide a running history of how strategies develop and change over time (Pondy, 1983). The internal documents were obtained from key informants, and the publicly available documents, from electronic databases such as Factiva. For the analysis, I relied primarily on core change documents, which are documents that key informants (and myself as field worker) viewed as most central to the change, such as those sent to stores or used in strategy sessions or company updates.

**Archival records.** These included ongoing project updates and financial reports. I relied on techniques similar to those used to obtain the documents but also obtained continuous updates about the change by being part of Retail, Inc.'s e-mail distribution list.

**Observations.** I observed eight hours of meetings in two cities (Central and East Coast regions) in which managers met with employees to discuss the change.

**Surveys.** I attempted to reach all 90 of the converting MallCo stores between May 2005 and January 2006 to solicit participation in a paper survey via company mail. Employees at 50 percent of the stores responded to my inquiry, and 159 out of a possible 414 surveys were returned from these stores (38.4%). I also attempted to reach the employees of 24 randomly generated nonconverting stores. Of these, 50 percent furnished respondents, and I received 51 out of 93 possible (54.8%) responses.<sup>5</sup> Respondents were store managers (20.9%), assistant store managers (18.4%), clerks (27.0%), and part-time clerks (33.7%). Seventy-two percent of respondents were female, and 28 percent were male. For the analysis, I relied on open-ended questions asking about the meaning of the change (see Appendix A); other questions from the survey were collected for another study. Responses to the survey were anonymous and were returned and tracked via a random identifier accessible only to me. Pretesting suggested the survey took about 30 minutes to finish.

## Data Analysis

**Construction of narratives.** I used individuals' discourse (managers or employees) to create composite narratives of group constructions of the change (Currie & Brown, 2003; Dunford & Jones, 2000; Eisenberg, Murphy, & Andrews, 1998). Composite narratives are constructed by a researcher and based on individuals' "discourse" (Currie & Brown, 2003). These narratives are useful for single cases with extensive data since they summarize collective constructions of meanings (Langley, 1999; Plowman, Baker, Beck, Kulkarni, Solanski, & Travis, 2007). Although narratives are sometimes more fully elaborated by one person or piece of discourse, most narratives are "fragments of stories, bits and pieces told here and there, to varying audiences" (Boje, 2001: 5). I captured these fragments in individuals' discourses and transformed them into composite narratives.

To construct the composite narratives, I devised a timeline to identify the sequential structure of the change and better understand the case context (see Table 1) (Langley, 1999). I next read the data, grouped into managers' and employees' segments, to develop inductive codes based on informants' discourse. I used memos to refine and reflect on

<sup>5</sup> One possible reason for converting stores' lower response rate is that employees at these stores were busier because of the conversion and therefore had less time to complete optional projects.

these emerging codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with the goal of creating a more abstract classification of the data. At this point I started recognizing a key pattern in both managers' and employees' discourse: they constructed the change as either something new and significant, or as something insignificant and consistent with the status quo. I reexamined the data set again in this light, finding several different applications for the wide lens of construction as significant/insignificant. Remaining open to disconfirming evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I reanalyzed the data to elaborate on the emerging themes and their variants. I went through several refinements of the narratives presented here, constantly moving between the emerging composite narrative and the raw data, to ensure I was creating a credible narrative.

**Analysis of meanings over time and across contexts.** Like the analyses in most qualitative projects, mine was iterative (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Narrative analysis affords an opportunity to examine managerial and employee meanings embedded in a rich context by such means as examining large fragments of discourse; content analysis provides an opportunity to hone in on specific meanings in those narratives to explain patterns (Langley, 1999). More specifically, I sought to understand more deeply how the meanings managers and employees constructed had evolved, including such elements as how their discourse shifted over the period the change was implemented and, for employees, how it differed by local contexts (i.e., stores).

I inductively derived codes about meanings from the narrative analysis, focusing on emergent core themes. A research assistant classified the raw data on these dimensions. Afterward, I reviewed her codes and resolved the handful of differences we had through discussion. For managers, the analysis used core change documents and interviews and showed the progression of meanings over time in a table. The core change documents contained constructions of the change that were sent to employees and disseminated through the formal communication channels at Retail, Inc. The managerial interviews provided a means of assessing variations in meanings among managers, as well as a way to examine how some meanings may have changed over time for some managers (those interviewed multiple times). For employees, the analysis used open-ended questions from the survey. This survey captured the meanings employees attributed to the change in a way that contained more variation around implementation date (for time period) and store (for local context) than the interview data. It was important to examine this variance as

possibly accounting for differences in meanings among the narratives. Given the large number of cases, I provide percentages of mentions (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) and illustrations of the types of meaning constructions.

**Analysis of employees' responses.** To address the last part of my research question, concerning how differences between employees' and managers' meaning constructions matter for change implementation, I developed an inductive classification of employees' narrated change responses. I read employee interviews and surveys with the goal of locating different patterns of responses (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001). I found that employees narrated three types of responses. I then returned to the data to search for patterns in these responses and how employees constructed the change, building from the content analysis described above.<sup>6</sup>

## FINDINGS

### Managers' Narratives of the Change

In this section, I tell two composite narratives to illustrate the major differences in meanings constructed by the managers studied here. On the one hand, the managers constructed Project Convert as a significant change that would rejuvenate MallCo; they constructed new meanings for what a postimplementation MallCo store would be. On the other hand, the managers constructed Project Convert as insignificant, holding on to meanings that preserved basic understandings of MallCo.

**Project Convert is a significant change that will rejuvenate MallCo.** Managers recognized that MallCo was in trouble when they commissioned research to assess the division's declining performance. Key branding and marketing research used

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<sup>6</sup> Although as author I inevitably made selections that shaped the research, thereby providing another construction of reality and not a transmission of it (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007), work by Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that my interpretations of the data are credible for several reasons. First, I used a prolonged engagement of 15 months with my research site. Second, I had the support of the company's management. I provided summaries of emerging findings to a key informant, usually monthly. I also held a three-hour feedback session with a broader set of managers, in which I made suggestions for improvements in future change efforts. I used both types of feedback for "member checking" and found that informants agreed with my main findings. Third, I used triangulation by collecting multiple types of data from multiple sources. Fourth, I used peer debriefing to bounce ideas off of outsiders to get their perspectives on the data.



negative adjectives, such as “old” (int-31). As one senior manager said, “MallCo solicited [*sic*] responses like ‘Blue Haired Lady’ and ‘Oldsmobile’ when people were asked what they think of MallCo” (int-32). These negative depictions of the MallCo brand were in contrast to the positive assessments of the BigBoxCo brand, which was constructed as a “more contemporary brand [that] provided [an] opportunity to . . . invigorate and update the mall brand” (int-32). Assumptions about the MallCo brand were affirmed by manager statements about the internal state of MallCo stores. As one manager noted, “A number of these stores haven’t been touched in many, many, many years . . . to get basically a major remodel, it’s a big deal” (int-7b).

The recognition that the MallCo brand was in need of improvement, combined with the belief that the BigBoxCo brand was strong, led managers to construct Project Convert as the creation of a “mini-BigBoxCo”—one that had the “look and feel” of a BigBoxCo store, and the BigBoxCo name, operations, and merchandise. Managers wanted MallCo to be run similarly to BigBoxCo stores through an updated product assortment and a pricing strategy aligned with BigBoxCo: “Our intention is to align the majority of prices across all BigBoxCo stores” (doc-021; doc-031). Managers presented these changes to employees as a major strategic initiative. In a memo to all employees, senior managers wrote, “One of Retail, Inc.’s *Big Six strategic initiatives* for 2005 is to convert selected MallCo locations to BigBoxCo Lights” (doc-059; emphasis added). As the Project Convert project manager noted, “We’re definitely going to be moving forward and MallCo will go away eventually” (int-5c).

Store employees were instructed to let customers know about how the store’s changing strategic positioning would benefit them. Managers instructed employees to tell customers “they will now benefit from higher discounts . . . and our expanded inventory of [product lines]” (doc-031). Managers in the MallCo division recognized the equalization of power that came from the strategic change. As one manager said, “[The change means] we’re all pretty much at equal footing. I was hired when MallCo stores were pretty much considered in company documents as the cash cow of the company. And gosh, you felt bad being milked. Now we’re actually getting to share something that we’ve been contributing to for so long” (int-17).

Another manifestation of the significance of the change came from the use of the words “old” and “new” to describe it. Managers used the referent “old” for MallCo and “new” for BigBoxCo Light in leading discussions with employees:

In what ways, if any, do you think the old MallCo is better than the future BigBoxCo Light?; In what ways, if any do you think the future BigBoxCo Light is better than the old MallCo?; What, if anything, do you think your old MallCo customers will like about the new BigBoxCo Light?; What, if anything, do you think your old MallCo customers will dislike about the new BigBoxCo Light?; In what specific ways, if any, do you think BigBoxCo is better than the old MallCo?; In what specific ways, if any, do you think the old MallCo was better than BigBoxCo? (doc-055)

***Project Convert is just a name change and is insignificant.*** Although managers had pitched Project Convert as a major change involving updated operations, merchandising, and marketing, I found managerial discourse also minimized the nature of the change. Managers wrote prior to the major rollout of the project that “different promotional offerings resonate with the mall shopper as opposed to the ‘big box’ superstore shopper. . . . MallCo and BigBoxCo Light are our mall format stores, and customer expectations of the experience differ from superstore visits” (doc-041). This quote illustrates how managers constructed BigBoxCo Light as *not* involving a major promotional repositioning; BigBoxCo Light and MallCo were going to be operated similarly, as “mall format stores.” Additionally, instead of focusing on major strategy changes, managers emphasized the name change and remodeling aspects of the project. A report updating executives on the project noted that the “main goal for store plans for 2005 stores [is to] give them a stronger BigBoxCo ‘look & feel,’” which included “remodels” and new logos that emphasized the “BigBoxCo affiliation” (doc-001). These changes were mostly constructed as cosmetic. In fact, internally, managers stopped using brand as a demarcation device (MallCo vs. BigBoxCo/BigBoxCo Light) and instead introduced language to separate formats: “superstore” (large, freestanding BigBoxCos) and “specialty” (the smaller, mall-based MallCo and BigBoxCo Light). In a memo to all Retail, Inc. members, a senior manager stated, “When we need to differentiate between formats in writing, we are using Retail, Inc. Superstores and Retail, Inc. Specialty” (doc-118). Consequently, managers minimized the change by labeling BigBoxCo Light as *specialty* (with MallCo) and not *superstore* (BigBoxCo). This was in contrast to the first narrative, which constructed BigBoxCo Lights as mini-BigBoxCos and grouped stores on the basis of brand, not format.

Another manifestation of how managers constructed Project Convert as insignificant came from descriptions of the imposition of the changes on employees. Managers minimized any disruption as

a result of the change and viewed the change as simply about altering the name of the store. As one senior executive put it:

I would not foresee that you need massive training effort to figure out [how] you take great [employees] in the MallCo environment and make them great [employees] in the BigBoxCo Light environment, which is part of why . . . I don't believe there was any huge explicit effort to look at what you need to do with staff because we are renaming it to Big-BoxCo Light. It's just . . . the same process they have done for decades on how do you evaluate whether somebody is any good at their job. (int-32)

Langley (1999) noted that narrative analysis often sparks additional questions, and I returned to the data to make sense of why there were two very different composite narratives about the change. Prior theory might suggest that the different managerial composite narratives could have arisen from managers' shifting interpretations of change over time (Isabella, 1990). This would explain the two patterns of discourse as a consequence of managers altering constructions of the change as it was implemented. Another possibility was that the differences in discourse signified disagreement among managers about the meanings of the change (Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986; Kuhn & Corman, 2003). As such, each narrative may have represented a subgroup that constructed the change differently from other subgroups. I examined these possibilities using content analysis (described in the Methods section).

The content analysis followed from what emerged in the narrative analysis and was based on the key difference in meanings emerging from the narrative analysis: construction of the change as significant or as insignificant. I label the first "significant constructions" and the second, "insignificant constructions." Significant constructions focused on a shift in strategic direction, challenges to existing meanings such as identities, or substantial new practices, whereas insignificant constructions focused on how the change did not dramatically alter the organization or was minor or cosmetic. Table 2 (interviews with managers) and Table 3 (managerial documents) summarize the analyses of managers' narratives, grouping them into significant and insignificant constructions. The tables show that all but one manager's discourse contained constructions of the change as both significant and insignificant, as did most of the core change documents. Although interviewees and documents varied somewhat in the degree of text coded as significant versus insignificant, most of the data contained both themes. Both themes also

remained constant for managers interviewed multiple times as well as in core change documents. This suggests that managers were not changing meanings over time, nor did they radically disagree among themselves about whether Project Convert was significant or insignificant. Rather, managers were simultaneously constructing two contrasting meanings.

To unpack the simultaneous construction of the change as significant and insignificant, I present illustrative instances of the use of both themes. Consider the following e-mail, sent to both employees and customers, constructing BigBoxCo Light as a "familiar friend" while simultaneously emphasizing its novelty. The e-mail first states that BigBoxCo Light is a familiar friend, but the word "new" appears six times:

We're unveiling a new look for a familiar friend. We're excited to announce that our MallCo store in [location] is becoming BigBoxCo Light—a new store with a vibrant new atmosphere and an extraordinary shopping experience. We're taking the best of MallCo and introducing many of the exceptional aspects of our sister store, BigBoxCo, to create Big-BoxCo Light. You'll continue to find a great selection of [products], convenient shopping, and the same commitment to service by the friendly staff you've come to know. At the new BigBoxCo Light, you'll also find a bigger discount . . . an expanded assortment, and selected BigBoxCo special offers and services. We are eager to introduce you to BigBoxCo Light. . . . It's a new store and a new experience. (doc-007)

On the one hand, the e-mail positions BigBoxCo Light as remaining the same, with managers noting that customers will *continue* to enjoy great selection, convenient shopping, and commitment to service. But the e-mail also presents the change as leading to a more positive store experience, with a bigger discount, expanded product assortment, and special offers—that a "new store" and "new experience" are on the way.

The dual constructions of familiarity and novelty were also presented to employees at meetings, where managers told them that simply "changing name, association and color" made customers more satisfied (meeting, 5/3/05). Managers told anecdotes of customers who "said 'the store was actually better,' but literally only the sign changed" (meeting, 6/15/2005). Managers relayed these anecdotes to employees to illustrate that BigBoxCo Light had not changed or improved, yet somehow customers were responding to a changed (and improved) store.

Managers also constructed the change as simultaneously significant and insignificant during

**TABLE 2**  
**Analysis of Manager Interviews along the Significance/Insignificance Dimension<sup>a</sup>**

Interview Number	Title	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
1	Field director	3/23/05	We as the MallCo chain have gone through a period of sales decreases . . . we had to do something in order to change that trend. And part of changing that trend was leveraging the BigBoxCo name, refreshing the stores . . . Attracting that mall customer that might be in there getting them to walk into our BigBoxCo Light store just as they would walk into a BigBoxCo store, but not necessarily a MallCo store.	It's basically the same other than the paint and some of the fixtures and the sign out front.
2a	Field manager	3/23/05	It's (sighs) the concept is a wonderful concept and I think it's a new identity to our brand to the customer and I think they're really identifying to that. Last week we were up in 8% [sales increase]. But we're running a 5% increase over last year. So a huge difference . . . we have a sense of pride about this now and it's new and exciting for customers.	It really hasn't changed other than the type—the sign that's on the front, the color of the walls, four different colors, as funny as that seems. And now we have some leather seating with little tables. But the internal structure (speaks in a hushed voice) is basically all the—it's basically all the same.
5a	Project Convert project manager	4/18/05	MallCo was facing declining in comp sales for five plus years . . . we were looking at a way to turn around [MallCo] and at the same time leverage our BigBoxCo brand that's been doing very well . . . that was a major . . . shift in direction for 2005.	So what's going to happen to your store and as far as the look and feel. What is the construction schedule going to look like? What preparations do you need to make?
5b		5/13/05	It was just a matter of . . . getting [the store] on board with [Project Convert] . . . There was a lot of changes. . . . [employees] don't know what BigBoxCo is in that market because they're not familiar with the BigBoxCo name brand because they are so isolated.	[Asked how employees' jobs are different after conversion] After they become BigBoxCo Light, they should be a [retail clerk] as usual . . . there's not anything specifically as far as like what it means for their job.
5c		8/26/05	Bringing the two different divisions together . . . That's been probably the most beneficial piece just because for so long they've been these parallel tracks and haven't had much interaction with each other. And so now bringing them in the same room, now that they share the same brand name and—talking about and creating that synergy of how they can work together more closely instead of look at each other as competitors.	And one of the big takeaways from this year is that some of these stores are just so old that with the limited scope of work that we do for BigBoxCo Light [we need to do more].
5d		11/18/05	The difference in before and after difference for these stores is so dramatic. . . . The BigBoxCo brand really seems to make a difference with this demographic base around here. So strong mall, a huge before and after difference, and the BigBoxCo brand recognition . . . are kind of the key factors [driving performance].	The main things that are BigBoxCo Light specific as far as compliance [is] to make sure that they have their BigBoxCo branded materials and supplies.

**TABLE 2**  
**(Continued)**

Interview Number	Title	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
5e		3/9/06	We have a lot of [MallCos] that aren't very profitable and it's really going through this year store by store to determine the life of them . . . We will put capital money into them to re-brand them . . . the ultimate goal would be a single brand.	To me it is largely based on size. So super stores twenty to twenty five thousand square foot box. Very different operating environment, much larger staff, larger inventory base, different systems.
7a	Project Convert communication manager	5/18/05	If I could take the best from BigBoxCo and put it into the—a size store that we have in the mall, this is what it would be. These are the things I would keep these are the nice-to-haves. These are processes that would have to change because currently we had two different inventory systems, two different POS systems.	Promotional efforts [at BigBoxCo Light] weren't really aligned with BigBoxCo anymore. They were kind of aligned with MallCo . . . We had sort of the small format stores and the big format stores instead of the BigBoxCo stores and the MallCo stores.
7b		10/3/05	A BigBoxCo Light battle . . . "It's won in the mind and the heart and not in what your store looks like." Because BigBoxCo Light really isn't about you have graphics and you have a handful of [type of product] . . . there's still a pretty big divide culturally between BigBoxCo and MallCo and that doesn't really exist in most other places in the company anymore.	Most everything that goes to the general population on Project Convert either focuses on look and feel or sales results and doesn't really answer the question of why are we doing this rebrand. That's actually not been a hot issue this year anywhere.
12a	Marketing manager (former Project Convert project manager)	5/4/05	We are going to really raise our revenues and probably drive some additional sales. . . . We've done a lot of study. . . . We have these ten years of negative comp sales at MallCo. It's an old brand. And we actually started doing something here.	It's pretty much the same . . . we didn't even extend some of the benefits that the store that the BigBoxCo employees have and the BigBoxCo Light don't. I'm sorry, to the BigBoxCo Light folks—because, again, the level of complexity is not—it is not that of BigBoxCo, it's that of MallCo.
12b		12/6/06	It was notorious that [name of competitor] beat us every time and still beat us in terms of awareness. And one of the reasons [is] because they have more stores than we do. . . . We just realized that in reality, we have more stores than [competitor], so eventually if we convert all the stores into big BigBoxCo single brand, we will also raise awareness.	It was very clear that the job wouldn't change because we're changing the brands. It was very clear it would be the . . . the same job but it would be called BigBoxCo.
16	Marketing specialist	5/13/05	The project is really to reenergize the mall stores, the existing MallCo locations . . . trying to convert it into BigBoxCo Light is about trying to bring what we'd like to think of as the BigBoxCo brand into the mall . . . the colors in the store, the inventory you see in the windows . . . trying to bring some new energy into the store, but also connect the two.	I think from the marketing perspective, I look at it as I tend to think of it as this is just to—to freshen up a deadbeat store.

**TABLE 2**  
**(Continued)**

Interview Number	Title	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
17	Store operations manager	5/13/05	There's some apprehension that MallCo's losing their identity. So I mean there'd be some mourning. There's a lot of pride with being associated with the cash cow in the field. So who am I? would be a question that would need to be answered. So I think there would be some apprehension that way. What is my identity now?	[asked about the change's effects on employees] I mean a lot of the longer term people like me if I was still in the field . . . the joining with BigBoxCo, it's one more thing. I still get to sell [type of products].
18	Store operations specialist	5/13/05	It does affect a lot more than just changing the name of the store on the storefront.	And all of our MallCo stores . . . have been having to change hats. . . . They're used to working at the [main store], with their MallCo nametag [and] going down to the kiosk [that MallCo also operates under a separate name in the mall] and changing nametags. . . . It's the same [with BigBoxCo Light].
21	Store training manager	6/9/05	n/a (not applicable; dimension not found in this interview).	We don't have any specific BigBoxCo Light materials right now. . . . If we created a different manual, it would not be significantly different because there's not that many operational differences.
22	Field manager	6/14/05	There was some resistance even with [employees] because we changed it into zones within the stores basically like what BigBoxCo does.	We're really not changing; it's still the same company. It's just changing the name for the branding.
23	Field manager	6/14/05	I think that people will be excited. I'm certainly excited that we're doing it and we're putting the money back into the MallCo operation.	It's little things. But just like even just brightening the store up and adding the paint and—and maybe making it a little younger and fresher store location.
24	Field manager	6/14/05	We're spending the money and we're investing in the brand and they [employees] play a huge role in the success of this as a company. . . . It's bringing us that much closer, the walls are slowly closing in. We'll all be in the same big company . . . the [store] managers here probably took my message from that meeting and are like, "Oh, I'm one step closer now. I really feel like I'm part of Retail, Inc. instead of MallCo."	We're doing a name change.
25	Field director	6/16/05	I remember the very day that they presented the new look of the store. And that day to me was like something's going to happen here that's going to be terrific. To me, that was the turning point . . . the image is . . . not old, it's new, it's good, it's Starbuckian (laughing) . . . the tone is set in the—in the store that they're excited, this is a great thing, look how we're going to . . . this is connecting us more with BigBoxCo.	It gives a different ambiance. And so that is a feel to the store. Even though nothing changes, the name changes.

**TABLE 2**  
**(Continued)**

Interview Number	Title	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
30	Vice president, store planning	10/6/05	MallCo did not have a store planning department because so little work has been done in MallCo that they—they didn't have any resources in maintenance or store planning or the architecture piece . . . there was a full blown store planning department for BigBoxCo. When I came on board and we started working—talking about the idea that BigBoxCo Light, my desire was to open up that group to be all encompassing. So that store planners for BigBoxCo Light are also touching the BigBoxCo so you're getting that sort of cross-pollination. Everyone's thinking the same.	I run the store planning, architect and construction group. . . . I manage [Tracy] who is the project manager for Project Convert. And the reason it landed in my world is kind of an odd place possibly for her to sit. Is that the bulk of the conversion was, store planning and construction . . . a lot of HR and operations, etc. at least initially haven't changed.
31	Senior vice president, MallCo	10/14/05	In a BigBoxCo Light store, one of my main concerns is that as we convert, there is an understanding, within the store . . . how it will differentiate us and how it will benefit a BigBoxCo customer . . . to service their needs in a way that they didn't think MallCo necessarily could do before. And a good example of that would be BigBoxCo is known for selection.	To take a look at the MallCo stores and understand how we could update. You know, how can we make these stores look better? What should the layout be? Should we change paint color, etc.?
32	President, Retail, Inc. (former president MallCo)	3/8/06	The biggest thing that is standing in the way of really leveraging a single brand is we don't have great incentives down through the field force other than we are one big happy company: why does a BigBoxCo person care that much about how MallCo does and vice versa particularly because culturally we sort of set them up as competitive entities a little bit like GM's five brand strategies . . . Now we have that connection that will try and drive more the cross fertilization and the stuff that needs to make a single plan work.	I would not foresee that you need massive training effort to figure out you take great [retail clerks] in the MallCo environment and make them . . . sellers in BigBoxCo Light environment. . . . I don't believe there was any huge explicit effort to look at what you need to do with staff because we are renaming it to BigBoxCo Light. It's just that fell into the same process they have done for decades on how do you evaluate whether somebody is any good at their job.
33	Chief marketing and product officer	3/24/06	I would describe that situation as really a turnaround. It was beyond realignment for basic situations. . . . MallCo had gone from realignment to turn around fairly rapidly, I would say in the last three or four years. So we knew we needed to do a number of things. We knew we were missing in terms of just basic requirements of a mall based store and being able to fulfill consumers' needs just on that level, we were underperforming.	A lot of things are very similar and expected [regardless of type of store]. The mall is more driven by things that are hot and topical and the need for convenience is much stronger in the mall based format than it is in the superstores.

<sup>a</sup> This analysis is based on interviews I was able to record and transcribe. Two sets of interviews were excluded: int-0 (HR director, 3/23/05) and a group interview with int-4 (operations director), int-5, int-6 (marketing research manager), and int-7 (Project Convert project manager) on 4/5/05.

**TABLE 3**  
**Analysis of Documents along the Significance/Insignificance Dimension**

Document Number	Description	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
1	Project Convert update to executives	2/05	Building the brand and marketing theme/message . . . Create market synergy.	2005 BigBoxCo Light Plans . . . BigBoxCo paint palette; BigBoxCo Carpet; Black & white photo graphic.
3	Project Convert logistics update	4/05	Please wait until your store converts to BigBoxCo Light to merchandise your [new type of product].	Install graphics, carpentry work (as required): install door kick plates . . . complete any graphic/signage work.
7	E-mail sent to employees and customers	8/04 (ongoing)	We're unveiling a new look for a familiar friend. . . . Our MallCo store . . . is becoming BigBoxCo Light—a new store with a vibrant new atmosphere and an extraordinary shopping experience.	You'll continue to find a great selection of [products] convenient shopping; and the same commitment to service by the friendly staff you've come to know.
10	Project Convert Concept Document	9/04	[preliminary goals of Project Convert]: Create greater consumer appeal (higher brand awareness and increased consumer reach); . . . Improve marketing efficiencies; Maximize investments in advertising and; Reduce marketing (collateral and signage) costs; Create operational efficiencies.	Due to the smaller size of the mall-format store; this new store does not offer a [signature BigBoxCo service].
11	Frequently asked questions (FAQ) sent to store employees	6/04 (until 8/04)	BigBoxCo Light will expand the selection at MallCo to include the hottest new [products] to better serve the needs of customers. In addition, we'll potentially add a selection of [additional products].	BigBoxCo Light will continue to be treated as part of MallCo financially and report to MallCo operations.
18	Employee update of operational details of the change	7/04	Not applicable; dimension not found in this document.	As long as we have MallCo stores in the market place, we will continue to see MallCards [MallCo corporate discount card] . . . we have decided not to replace existing MallCards. We don't want to penalize existing customers because of the name change. With the in-store system being MallCo [point of sale], existing customers can . . . do business as usual.
21	Updated Project Convert Implementation Guide and FAQ	09/04 to 12/04	As soon as the customer crosses the lease line he or she should feel that they are in a BigBoxCo store. This not only reinforces the message of the brand, it is fundamental to achieving the marketing efficiencies that are a goal in this test.	BigBoxCo Light systems will remain the same (i.e., MallCo) at this time.

**TABLE 3**  
**(Continued)**

Document Number	Description	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
31	FAQ sent to store employees	9/04 (until 12/04)	You should never make BigBoxCo Light seem worse or 'smaller' than BigBoxCo. Off course you want to mention that BigBoxCo Light is a small format store, but that they will enjoy most of the BigBoxCo benefits, such as [type of services], a large [type of products], and a knowledgeable staff.	In case [customers] ask you about BigBoxCo Light, you should tell them that we are changing the name of their store in an effort to better serve our customers. Reassure them that the same employees they have come to know will continue to help them.
41	Project Convert Communications Plan	4/05	One of Retail, Inc.'s "Big Six" strategic initiatives for 2005 is to convert selected MallCo locations to BigBoxCo Light . . . BigBoxCo Light will expand the selection at MallCo . . . to better serve the needs of customers.	We continue to offer our customers the excellent service and convenience of a mall based store. . . . Promotional activity at BigBoxCo Light stores will be aligned primarily with MallCo. . . . Customers are savvy enough to appreciate both the selection offered at a BigBoxCo superstore and the convenience and value of our mall-based BigBoxCo Light and MallCo.
48	Updated FAQ sent to converting stores	2/05 (ongoing)	Congratulations! . . . Loyal BigBoxCo shoppers will now have the added convenience of the BigBoxCo brand and experience at the mall. Branding our stores as BigBoxCo . . . strengthens our brand recognition as the world's largest [seller of products]. . . . Our customers will enjoy most of the BigBoxCo benefits.	The corporate structure of MallCo Company, Inc. has not changed; legally, it has merely adopted an additional name under which it will operate.
49	Meeting agendas sent to stores about Project Convert	3/05 (ongoing)	One of Retail, Inc.'s "Big Six" strategic initiatives for 2005 is to convert selected MallCo locations to BigBoxCo Light. . . . We'll be introducing [product] selection, "Select stores will receive a [new category of products]."	MallCo and BigBoxCo Light are our "mall format" stores, and customer expectations of the experience differ from superstore visits. . . . Our customers are savvy enough to appreciate both the selection offered at a BigBoxCo superstore and the convenience and value of our mall-based BigBoxCo Light and MallCo stores.
55	Presentation to a geographic market about Project Convert	3/05	Drive the growth of the mall segment of our businesses through capitalizing on the existing loyalty to and awareness of the BigBoxCo brand. MallCo has had 5+ years of negative comp sales and we wanted to look at ways of turning comp sales around. . . . Converting MallCo to a sub-brand of BigBoxCo would have no detrimental affects and would be a very positive move. . . . We found that the points of connection between MallCo and BigBoxCo were strong.	[It] is far more compelling to align the promotional activity at BigBoxCo Light with MallCo. We have seen from our research that different promotional offerings resonate with the mall shopper opposed to the "big box" superstore shopper. . . . It's amazing that a few changes can really change the shopping experience for the customer!



**TABLE 3**  
**(Continued)**

Document Number	Description	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
59	Company newsletter sent to all managers and employees	5/05	One of Retail, Inc.'s "Big Six" strategic initiatives for 2005 is to convert selected MallCo locations to BigBoxCo Lights; . . . [the change] strengthens our brand recognition as the world's largest [industry].	By rebranding as BigBoxCo Light, stores continue to offer customers the excellent service and convenience of a mall-based store.
61	Store newsletter sent to all employees	4/05	One of Retail, Inc.'s "Big Six" strategic initiatives for 2005 is to convert selected MallCo locations to BigBoxCo Light.	We continue to offer our customers the excellent service and convenience of a mall-based store.
67	Letter sent to employees at stores that just converted	2/05 (ongoing)	Congratulations on your Grand Opening as BigBoxCo Light! . . . MallCo shoppers will be delighted with the changes that we've made including . . . the addition of an expanded line of [products]; I am confident that you will be able to drive the additional sales needed as BigBoxCo Light!	We continue to offer our customers the excellent service and convenience of a mall-based store.
78	Strategic update sent to all managers and employees	1/05	Retail, Inc.'s 2005 Plan is simple yet ambitious. Our "Core 4" strategies remain the same as previous years. . . . To support these strategies, we have six strategic initiatives. These "Big 6" initiatives are . . . Convert MallCo to BigBoxCo Light.	The conversions include more than changing the signage outside stores. Paint, graphics, carpeting, and fixtures are part of the conversions.
104	Presentation from meeting in a geographic market between employees and managers	8/05	The single brand test is a result of our desire to drive the growth of the mall segment of our businesses through capitalizing on the existing loyalty and awareness of the BigBoxCo brand. . . . Customers will expect the superstores and BigBoxCo Light stores to be closely connected. . . . It will be very important that all of staff . . . is informed on this initiative as many customers will be asking questions. BigBoxCo Light should be portrayed positively and as another convenient shopping channel for BigBoxCo customers.	We have seen from our research that different promotional offerings resonate with the mall shopper opposed to the "big box" superstore shopper. Due to system limitations and space constraints, the BigBoxCo stores will not be offering these services that the BigBoxCo superstores offer.

TABLE 3  
(Continued)

Document Number	Description	Date	Illustrative Example	
			Project Convert Is Significant	Project Convert Is Insignificant
118	Store newsletter sent to all employees	1/06	The changes we have announced to our field organization in support of our single brand strategy are significant and comprehensive. . . . It will take all of us working together to get the benefits we anticipate. . . . This team will be asking you to help identify longer term opportunities, such as what processes can be streamlined, policies unified, reports consolidated.	(Not applicable, dimension not found in this document).

interviews with me. For example, a field director described the significance of the change by making comparisons with other firms but ended by declaring that nothing changed.

When you walk in the stores it feels better . . . it's not cheap looking anymore. Before it felt just like a RadioShack or Ritz Camera. They're just—ew. You feel like you're walking in 20 years ago. . . . [At] smaller market meetings [I presented to] store managers and [saw] how excited they got, the fact that we were going to do this and they could be a part of it. And you could just see that their eyes were all excited too. This is going to get market share for the entire company, it could pull us into the number one spot [in our industry]. I keep using the word cool. . . . But it's just—it gives a different ambience. . . . *Even though nothing changes, the name changes.* (int-25; emphasis added)

### Employees' Narratives of the Change

I found that employees similarly used the significant-insignificant dimension to construct the meaning of the change, but also added another dimension: positive-negative. These two dimensions (positive-negative; significant-insignificant) are illustrated using four different narratives.

**Project Convert significantly improves the store.** This narrative (significant-positive) welcomes Project Convert as a major transformation of MallCo. A BigBoxCo Light transformation is seen as the panacea that will elevate stores' performance. As one employee said, "I'm really excited. . . . If you had a choice, would you go to a MallCo or a BigBoxCo Light? I love BigBoxCo. . . . And so I feel like BigBoxCo Light, a lot of people are going to be, 'Oh, wow. it's like a little BigBoxCo'" (int-11).

Constructing the store as a mini-BigBoxCo was seen as leading to more customers. As one employee said, "The name will draw customers from other large stores that have the ability to get the customers the products they want and to make it an enjoyable shopping experience" (sur-11806). These employees, like the managers, constructed MallCo as outdated and considered a shift to BigBoxCo Light as contemporizing the store and attracting new business: "Using the new brand to bring new (and younger) customers into the stores that previously would not have done so, under the MallCo brand. Increase sales . . . by increasing its market share under the newer brand" (sur-31098). Beyond the new marketing and branding of BigBoxCo Light, employees welcomed the new merchandising strategy. One employee remarked, "Bring[ing] in [type of] merchandise . . . would really help . . . because it would be another source of revenue, and no one else in the mall sells [this]" (sur-11756).

**Project Convert destroys MallCo.** A second narrative (significant-negative) constructs the change as detrimental to the MallCo division, eroding its sense of identity. Employees "mourn" or "grieve" the loss of MallCo. As one employee put it, "It's sort of sad that, you know, the MallCo name will go away because it's been there for a long, long time" (int-20). A field manager noted that her store employees were "saddened by the fact that the MallCo name could potentially be going away" (int-23). An employee offered a more biting assessment:

There was a reason I applied to MallCo [and] not BigBoxCo in the first place. Despite being a mall-based chain, MallCo still retained the feel of a local, neighborhood [store], where the bags said "America's favorite . . . store since 1933." Now, all of the

new things, from our new sign to . . . to our new paint, to our new cash wrap, to the new, random quotes pretentiously painted on our walls where our overstock used to be serve as pretentious reminders that we're not there to share our love of [products] with our customers, we're here as employees of Retail, Inc., to make money. The [project] has succeeded in its objective of giving our store the "look and feel of a BigBoxCo," but is a failure in that that is not something any of us wanted in the first place. (sur-12130)

Beyond the mourning of MallCo and its lost identity, these employees also saw the major changes as upsetting their work routines, being disruptive to their stores, and involving work tasks that "will burn everyone out" (sur-12057). For example:

There are a ton of changes. For example carpeting, new lights, new shelves, new displays . . . just to name a few. We had to convert everything that said MallCo into BigBoxCo. And all these changes took place during mall hours when customers should have been the priority . . . [changes] . . . interrupted everything! (sur-11110)

**Project Convert is not ambitious enough to make a difference.** A third narrative constructs the change as not being ambitious enough (insignificant-negative). This narrative focuses on the insignificance of the change in a way that remains skeptical over whether the project will rejuvenate the organization. One employee remarked, "Before the conversion I was excited . . . after conversion the business ran mostly the same. . . . Since then I think I enjoyed being viewed as MallCo more" (sur-31106). Employees who told this narrative frequently fingered customers' perceptions of the store as indicating that the change would not make a difference. For example, an employee said that customers were disappointed at the insignificance of the changes and mocked the concept of a BigBoxCo Light: "Many people don't seem to understand the concept of a 'Light' store, they're always disappointed that we don't have nearly as much stuff as a regular BigBoxCo does. We usually get a surprised reaction or people laugh at us" (sur-190380). Another employee noted that he frequently fielded questions about why his BigBoxCo Light store did not have the same amenities as a BigBoxCo. Employees said that when they answered these questions, the customers reacted with, "So you are not a *real* BigBoxCo?" (sur-31149). This mocking underlies employees' constructions of the change as failing because it raised customer expectations but delivered essentially the same products and services. As one employee constructed the change,

Customers see the name "BigBoxCo" and expect more. . . . And when I explain that we are a BigBoxCo Light they seem almost disappointed and tell me that it was a waste of time and money. This leads me to question and wonder, what is the point? Our store is just not big enough to carry the name BigBoxCo, we need a physically bigger store. (sur-11109)

**Project Convert preserves my work environment and job routines.** A final narrative (insignificant-positive) constructs the conversion as involving insignificant changes but takes comfort in them. This narrative focuses on the continuity in job routines and tasks. For example, an employee noted, "I think Project Convert was a great idea. . . . The changes were not that bad. . . . I don't think it's that hard to convert. It doesn't affect my job—basically we are still being run like a MallCo, just a name change" (sur-31105). This narrative decouples the effects of the change from the day-to-day impact on employees. For example, an employee noted, "I think it was a good move. We have a lot more traffic and a number of customers who come in and say 'Oh! I did not know there was a BigBoxCo here!' It has been good for business. . . . Besides physical store changes and traffic increase, *nothing has been affected*" (sur-31101; emphasis added). Similarly, another employee added, "It is a good idea. . . . I do not think it will affect my job" (sur-11460).

As with the managers' narratives, I was left with the question of how to explain different constructions of meaning. Content analysis allowed further examining the data. I relied on the same dimension of significant/insignificant used for the managerial analysis, which also inductively emerged from the employees' narratives, but also added a positive (constructs change as beneficial or desirable) and negative (constructs change as detrimental or undesirable) dimension that was consistent with what emerged from the analysis of employees' narratives. Prior research suggested that the variation in employees' meaning constructions might reflect differences over time. For example, research that has adopted Lewin's model for meaning constructions (e.g., Fiol, 2002) suggested that the significant-negative meaning would be constructed early in the change, when employees were not "unfrozen" and had negative views of a major uprooting of the status quo, and that significant-positive meanings would occur later, after employees had embraced the change. Accordingly, I content-analyzed employees' constructions of the change over the two periods of three months each that entailed the main change implementation: the first period was August to October 2005, and the second was November 2005 to January 2006. A sec-

ond pattern I sought to examine was how the four types of meanings might vary because of work context differences. Research on both narratives and sensemaking (Gephart, 1993; Hansen, 2006) contains claims that local contexts (such as stores) provide symbolic materials that lead individuals in different contexts to narrate their work experiences differently. The most important difference among the stores was that some had announced plans to convert to BigBoxCo Lights, and others had not.

Table 4 contains an overview of the content analysis and reports the frequencies of the meaning constructions by time period and context, along with illustrative examples. I used frequencies as a way of reducing and summarizing the large amount of employee data (Miles & Huberman, 1994), to facilitate examining patterns of meanings by time period and context. I also present illustrative examples of the meaning patterns in Table 4, to continue to provide voice to my informants (Pratt, 2008).

I found that employees' constructions of Project Convert had different patterns by time period: as the change project progressed (i.e., going from period 1 to period 2), employees at both converting and nonconverting stores more frequently constructed the change as significant—although this was mostly driven by significant-positive (for converting stores) and significant-negative (for nonconverting stores). Moreover, during the earlier time period, employees at converting stores more frequently constructed the change as insignificant-positive and insignificant-negative, whereas employees at nonconverting stores less frequently constructed the change as insignificant-negative. When comparing local contexts, I also found that employees of converting stores more often constructed the change as significant (positive or negative) than did their counterparts at nonconverting locations. At nonconverting stores, the change was constructed as more negative as it progressed. Although I uncovered four types of narratives employees used, the subsequent content analysis helped relate these patterns to time period (when employees implemented the change) and local context (whether or not a store had announced plans to convert to BigBoxCo Light), showing that (1) significant constructions were more common later in the change and more common at converting stores, (2) that insignificant constructions were more common earlier in the change for converting stores, and (3) more negative meanings were constructed at nonconverting stores later in the change.

## Meanings and Employee Change Responses

A final part of my analysis focused on understanding employees' narrated responses—how employees saw themselves responding to the change in view of the meaning they made of that change. Inductively, I identified three responses: *Resisting* captures statements about subverting the change, such as reducing work effort or raising objections to new practices. *Championing* captures statements about making the change a success, such as promoting the change to others. *Accepting* captures statements about making necessary adjustments to implement the change, such as learning new procedures. I now illustrate the primary patterns I found and key differences.

**Change resisting.** I found change resisting in two primary forms. First, some employees who constructed the change as significant-negative narrated their response as resisting. The change led to a large transformation, but one that undermined a familiar and comfortable status quo. Some of these employees, primarily those in stores without announced plans to convert, resisted the change because they saw it as threatening their job security. By observing other stores selected to convert to BigBoxCo Light, these employees interpreted the push to depart from the status quo as a potential indicator that their stores would be closed and their jobs lost. As one employee put it:

BigBoxCo feels corporate . . . [the change] does not cause cohesiveness but exclusion. By our store not converting, we feel the store will be closing, which does not foster a lot of confidence in the job; i.e., not as dedicated. (sur-11754)

Employees with significant-negative constructions at converting stores also narrated resisting but in a different way. Their concern was less about job security and more about the loss of identity (MallCo) or the significant tasks of converting to a BigBoxCo Light. Consider two examples:

I could feel pride for my store and the MallCo name, but not for BigBoxCo. While the remodel has improved the store's appearance, and the compatibility of the 2 stores is more readily apparent to customers, I can see no other advantage to giving up the MallCo brand. . . . We do have to deal with lots of ongoing customer questions, and that is the greatest effect . . . it will take time before we actually think of ourselves as a "BigBoxCo." We are all loyal to the MallCo brand, as are many of our customers. (sur-31298)

I don't like the fact that we have changed to a BigBoxCo Light. It's confusing to our old MallCo customers. . . . Our store is too small for the amount of stock we've been getting in our shipments; and peo-

**TABLE 4**  
**Summary of Employees' Constructions of the Meaning of the Change by Time Period and Local Context<sup>a</sup>**

Meaning	Period 1	Period 2	Illustration of Meaning
<i>Converting stores</i>			
Significant—Positive	45	52	Converting to BigBoxCo Light has had a very positive affect on our store: employees, and customers. It has energized our staff to see the company invest the time and money to convert the store. . . . BigBoxCo is a name that is widely recognized by consumers. MallCo is older and a lot of consumers see them as old. . . . We now carry more [specific products] and [specific products] than we had previously. It has affected me in a positive way. The sales have gotten better. Gift certificate sales have skyrocketed. My job is more fun now because employees and customers are excited about the change. (sur-11002)
Insignificant—Positive	53	29	I was extremely happy. . . . We will still be the same company so it won't affect my job. However the store should do well. (sur-14812)
Significant—Negative	43	43	It was and has not been as smooth transition. Implementation of the transition from the corporate level was not very well done. Communication between the store/[headquarters]/Distract office was problematic at best. . . . Customer base is "expecting" the same experience they would at larger BigBoxCo stores. Therefore, long-term success is speculative at best. Our store now does more "support" work. For traditional/larger BigBoxCo stores by taking returns from their stores (though a completely different inventory system) and often spending time researching inventory at the BigBoxCo stores. For customers, tracking down the [products] and subsequently calling the BigBoxCo store to "hold" the merchandise for customer. We do not receive compensation for this time (since no actual sale is conducted at our location) and actually selling and engaging our customers is often secondary due to the "nature" of the BigBoxCo customer. We are very much the "ugly stepsister" in this scenario. (sur-31098)
Insignificant—Negative	53	24	I was excited about conversion, but don't think that the company was willing to spend the money to do it correctly. . . . There were no major policy changes and the store does not look that different. We desperately needed new wall fixtures, floor fixtures, and carpet, all of which are over a decade old. The company did not want to spend the money so the new things look out of place. Like putting a new collar on an old mangy dog. (sur-14814)
<i>Nonconverting stores</i>			
Significant—Positive	32	35	The BigBoxCo Light conversions are a good direction for the company. I foresee a great deal of customer excitement. . . . Customer curiosity alone should increase traffic and sales. (sur-31273)
Insignificant—Positive	41	41	The brand recognition that we will receive if converted to a BigBoxCo Light will definitely help store traffic. . . . The biggest change is the name and any system alterations. As far as the job itself, it will remain the same. Same tasks and objectives. (sur-11542)
Significant—Negative	14	31	[I'm] Afraid that customers will see us as just an offshoot of a big store—where they don't get the same customer service as we provide. [I'm] afraid of customers in 50+ age range feeling a abandoned. (sur-31225)
Insignificant—Negative	18	38	Customers—and staff!—Have to confront change. That's always hard— . . . . Don't know specific details of changes, other than signing. Haven't seen any effects [on my job] to date. (sur-31454)

<sup>a</sup> Numbers refer to the percentage of surveyed employees who constructed the change using both dimensions of the cell (e.g., "significant" and "positive"). Employees could be counted as constructing meanings on more than one set of dimensions.

ple see the word “BigBoxCo” and think we can get any [type of product] in the world. They don’t understand why our computer data base is so limited. . . . It will burn everyone out because we can’t get [specific tasks completed]. (sur-12057)

I also found that some employees who constructed the change as insignificant-negative narrated resisting, emphasizing not how the change uprooted the status quo but quite the opposite—the change was not ambitious enough. One employee said:

The virtual excitement among the store usually died down when we saw how little the look of the store changed based on what we were led to believe by [home office] pictures and prospects. Since the changeover not too much has changed other than more customers asking questions about “Where MallCo went.” (sur-31126)

The employee constructed the change as executed in a way that was less significant than she was led to believe it would be. Additionally, she noted that her excitement (and that of her colleagues) faded. Consider a final example, in which the employee noted that the project did not change much about the store. He went on to question to efficacy of the change:

My feelings about my store converting to a Big-BoxCo Light are that the name change will help the bottom line marginally but in the long run customers will realize that the content of the store is almost exactly the same as a MallCo. If you are going to do something, you cannot do it halfway and expect people to be satisfied; you have to give them something to make them want to come to a store in which they have a limited comfort level. (sur-12117)

**Change championing.** The dominant pattern of change championing came from employees who constructed significant-positive meanings. These employees constructed Project Convert as leading to a beneficial transformation of their stores, and they wanted to help by doing whatever they could to make the change successful. One employee noted:

The level is different. There is more excitement by customers and employees. . . . This conversion will affect my job by adding to the work load. We will be more focused on customer service and keeping the shelves full of product. I will need to be more conscious of my employees and the things they are saying and doing. My store will be affected in only good ways. (sur-180165)

Notice that this employee constructed the change as leading to a higher “work load,” but unlike the resisting employees, this employee articulates en-

gaging in responses (such as increasing customer service) to ensure a smooth implementation. Consider a second example:

I am very happy with our conversion. . . . I believe our store looks so much brighter and more welcoming. . . . We lost everything that had MallCo on it. We received a beautiful store remodel. We are now able to offer [new products]. And I believe we might start getting some different store promotions that maybe MallCo won’t have. (sur-31430)

This employee went on to construct a problem with the change—“I do however think it has highly confused our customers”—but also saw herself behaving in ways that rectified this problem and therefore worked to make the change successful: “I believe that with us continually talking with our customers that they will also adjust to the changes.”

**Change accepting.** The primary patterns for change accepting coincided with either insignificant-positive or significant-positive constructions. Those who constructed the change as insignificant-positive often talked about how their jobs would remain the same and said that adjusting to it would not be an imposition. For example, one employee noted: “I was extremely happy. . . . We will still be the same company so it won’t affect my job. However the store should do well” (sur-14812). Notice that the employee constructed the change as positive, even suggesting that the “store should do well.” The employee concluded that though the store would improve its performance, the company and her job would remain the same. Those who constructed the change as significant-positive and who saw themselves as change-accepting similarly noted that they would be able to adjust to the change, even if that change was significant. Consider this example:

BigBoxCo is a more recognizable name. [BigBoxCo Light] is a closer link to other BigBoxCo stores. [The change] cuts down on BigBoxCo/MallCo paperwork and verbal association. . . . I came to work with a positive attitude and a commitment to do only great-quality work and meet the needs of every customer. I came to learn all aspects of the job and be an asset to my fellow employees and the company. (sur-12014)

## NARRATIVES AND STRATEGIC CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION

In this section, I summarize the results of the analysis and blend my findings with existing theory to develop a narrative model of strategic change implementation. As the findings summarized

above demonstrate, managers simultaneously constructed change as both significant and insignificant. Employees also relied on these dimensions but added the additional dimension of positive or negative. Employees' meaning constructions were patterned by time period and local context and helped explain how employees narrated their responses to change. These findings, examined with existing theory, help ground a model of change that not only affirms, but also challenges and advances, meaning research within the Lewinian paradigm.

### Types of Narratives during Strategic Change

Since the organizational studies literature has largely conceptualized narratives as a way to portray a new understanding of an organization and break down existing cognitive schemata (Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), I turned to narrative research in psychology to unpack the wider variation of narratives I found. Although psychologists research "self-narratives" (narratives that relate self-relevant events, such as marriage, over time), they provide a broad framework for classifying narratives helpful in elaborating my findings. The basic framework these scholars use is to examine narratives in a way that establishes directionality along a good-bad evaluative dimension (MacIntyre, 1977). For example, Gergen and Gergen (1997) classified narratives into three types: "progressive," "regressive," and "stability." Progressive narratives link experiences or events in a way that moves toward the "good" evaluative dimension. The progressive narrative is akin to the strategic change narrative in organizational studies: managers tell a story about how an organization will improve by adopting a new direction (e.g., Barry & Elmes, 1997). A regressive narrative links experiences in a way that moves toward the "bad" evaluative dimension. This is akin to the resistance-to-change narrative in organization studies; employees construct a change as leading to a significantly worse organization because they bemoan the loss of something they value and thus resist the new way of life brought by the change (e.g., Nadler, 1981). Both progressive and regressive narratives construct change as leading to a significantly new organization, but they differ as to whether this change is good or bad.

Gergen and Gergen (1997) identified a third narrative that is largely absent from the organization studies literature. Their stability narrative links experiences in a way that keeps the evaluative dimension the same. This narrative, applied to change, suggests that employees or managers tell narratives

about how their organization is *not* undergoing major change and about how the status quo is being preserved. Stability narratives can be a means of reducing uncertainty by constructing meaning that is familiar. Current approaches to narratives during change emphasize new constructions of an organization (Barry & Elmes, 1997), yet managers also try to reduce uncertainty during change (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). They may attempt to accomplish the latter with stability narratives. Accordingly, the progressive, regressive, and stability typology captures how managers use discourse to portray both change and continuity and how employees subsequently respond to this discourse in very different ways. I now elaborate by describing a narrative model of strategic change implementation.

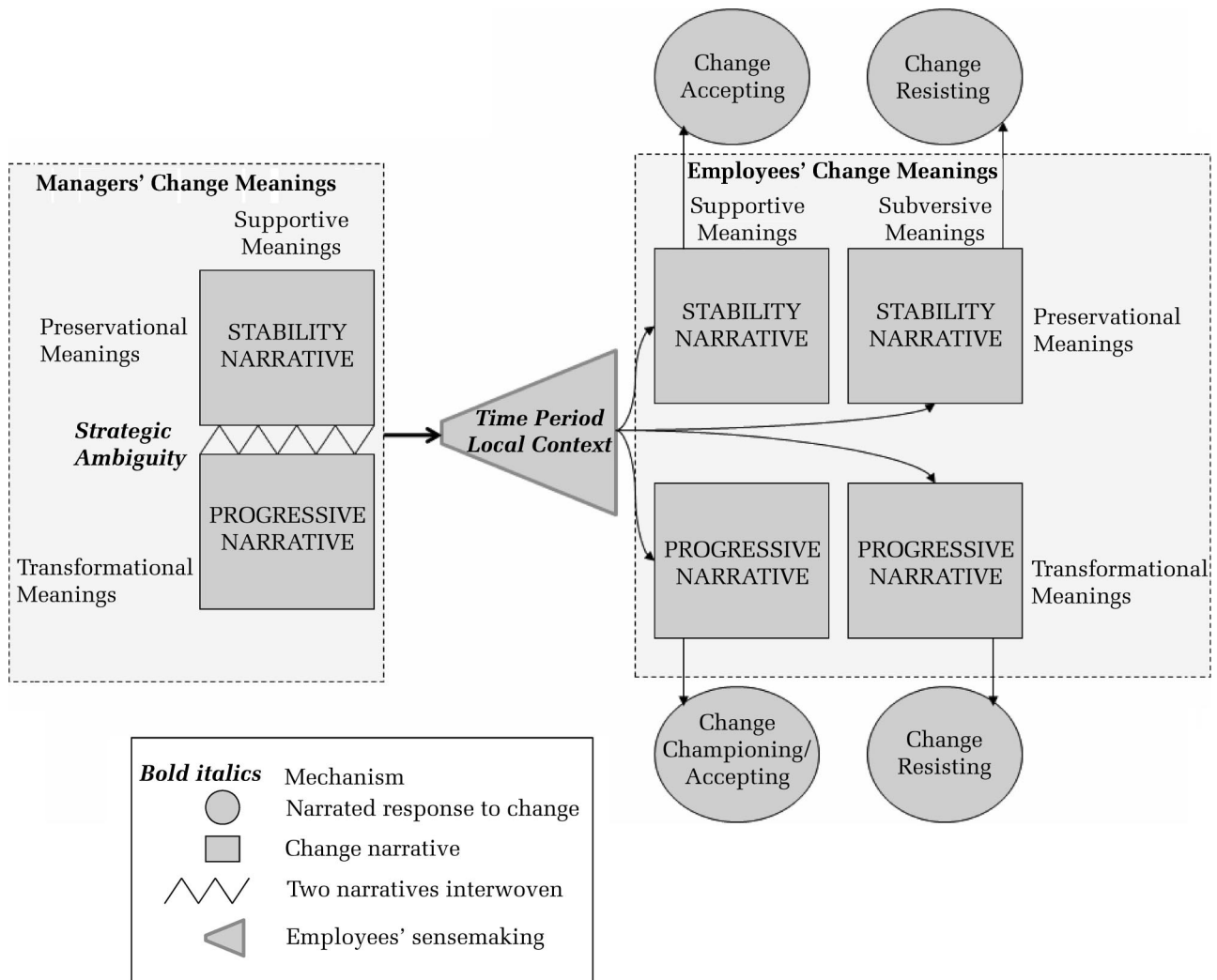
### A Narrative Model of Strategic Change Implementation

**Managerial narratives.** Figure 1 provides a summary of how narratives influence strategic change implementation. The model shows that meanings attributed to change vary along two theoretical dimensions. The first dimension, preservational or transformational, accounts for the change-as-insignificant theme in the data, whereby change can be constructed as preservational, characterized by small and minor adjustments (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997) that preserve existing meanings about an organization. The first dimension also accounts for the change-as-significant theme, whereby meanings can present change as transformational, characterized by phenomena that are wide in scope and involve new organizational meanings (Bartunek & Moch, 1987; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

The second dimension classifies meanings as either supportive—that is, consistent with managerial intentions—or subversive: undermining managerial views of a change (Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Gabriel, 1995; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Managerial discourse about change is supportive, but it can be preservational (a stability narrative) or transformational (a progressive narrative).<sup>7</sup> Employees' narratives also vary by being transformational or preservational, but they additionally vary on whether

<sup>7</sup> One potential reason why managerial narratives did not vary along the supportive/subversive dimension is that managers were often publicly constructing the change for employees, and they therefore may have held back from constructing it as negative. Another possibility is that, since managers largely formulated the strategy, they tended to view it in a positive light.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Summary of How Narratives Influence Change Implementation**



they are supportive or subversive, leading to progressive, regressive, or stability narratives.

Before the rest of the model is unpacked, it is important to explain why managers may convey preservational meanings alongside transformational ones when the fundamental goals of strategic change are to convince a firm's employees that existing interpretations are no longer valid and to devise a new, unequivocal strategic direction for the firm (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kotter, 1996). One possibility is that stability narratives are a result of managerial confusion. Managers may struggle to bridge old and new ways of understanding change (Bartunek, 1984), and the conflict between meanings that ensues may be unintentional. Although this possibility cannot be emphatically ruled out, I relied on multiple data sources (including documents vetted by Retail, Inc.'s communications department to ensure managers' intentions

were expressed), multiple analytic techniques, and member-checking. All of these suggested that the creation of both transformational and preservational meanings was intentional. Furthermore, content analysis eliminated other possibilities that would suggest that manager meanings simply changed over time or that there was disagreement resulting in some managers telling exclusively progressive narratives and others, exclusively stability narratives.

A more plausible explanation comes from the concept of strategic ambiguity. According to this concept, managers are intentionally equivocal about meanings to promote "unified diversity" (Eisenberg, 1984)—a condition that allows employees and managers to have multiple interpretations of a change while believing that they agree on meanings. For example, by providing equivocal interpretations of the (in)significance of change, man-



agers were able to appeal both to employees who welcomed shattering the status quo and were excited by progressive narratives that stated a new direction for the firm (Kelman, 2005) and to employees whose fear of uncertainty might be assuaged by stability narratives stating that little would change (Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994). This argument suggests the purposeful use of equivocal discourse and offers a contrast with prescriptive calls for managerial clarity of meanings (Kotter, 1996). The strategic ambiguity argument is also consistent with Padgett and Ansell's (1993) explanation of the rise of Cosimo de' Medici in Florence through "robust action," in which leaders' actions can be coherently interpreted from multiple perspectives, as opposed to sending a clear and singular message. Equivocal discourse could be another mechanism to instill a sense of continuity for some employees and a sense of change for others. Scholars have suggested that managers may temper radical change to make it more acceptable to employees (Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, & Mullane, 1994), but I find evidence of an alternative approach in which managers present multiple simultaneous constructions of change—transformational and preservational. Put another way, the managerial narrative during strategic change is neither the strategic change narrative of transformation (Barry & Elmes, 1997), nor the uncertainty-reducing narrative that conveys stability, but rather a set of interwoven narratives that affirm both themes. In conveying these narratives, managers are proactively equivocal in their attempt to exercise greater control over employees' interpretations (Padgett & Ansell, 1993). I represent these interwoven narratives with a jagged line in Figure 1.

**Employee narratives and responses.** Figure 1 also shows the types of narratives employees tell during strategic change. It shows that employees' narratives vary on an additional dimension (supportive or subversive). More specifically, employees' progressive narratives capture meanings similar to those of managers narrating how the organization is undergoing a beneficial transformation. I find these narratives are patterned with prochange responses, such as championing or accepting. On the other hand, the regressive narratives, although also constructing the change as involving a key transformation, instead attach a subversive meaning to this transformation, thereby constructing the change as leading to an organizational decline. These employees more likely narrate resistance to the change.

Employees also tell two types of stability narratives: the supportive stability narrative latches onto managers' construction of the change as a negligi-

ble modification, with the organization maintaining its positive state. These employees more likely narrate supporting the change, as they accept the status quo. Conversely, the subversive stability narrative constructs the organization as remaining the same, but in a state that is not acceptable. These employees more likely narrate resisting the change for its insignificance. Although both stability narratives (supportive and subversive) construct the organization as only minimally changing, they differ in their construction of the status quo as either positive or negative, which can lead to very different responses.

What might explain the telling of these four narratives and their related narrated responses? Prior theory and the analysis within this study support the explanation that employees embellish managerial narratives by making sense of them, a process also influenced by time period and local context. Employees are presented with managerial narratives as a set of symbolic resources they can draw on to construct their own meanings (Swidler, 1986). Managers present a repertoire of meanings, including constructions of a change as both significant and insignificant, as opposed to an unequivocal single meaning (Eisenberg, 1984; Padgett & Ansell, 1993). Employees select from these meanings to elaborate their own construction of meaning as they make sense of the change. Yet, by adding a negative valence (i.e., subversive meanings), some employees produce very different constructions of the change than the managers have offered. In Figure 1, the funnel (central triangle) signifies employees' sensemaking. It shows that although managers simultaneously present preservational and transformational constructions supportive of the change to employees, employees do not always adopt these meanings in their entirety—they select part of the interwoven narrative (e.g., significant/insignificant) and then may embellish it with a valence. The outcome of this process is four possible employee narratives.

The findings from this study suggest two potential mechanisms to explain some of the differences in employees' narratives, and I represent these mechanisms in *italic* inside the funnel: time period (when was the change implemented?) and local context (was a given store centrally involved in the change?). I found that transformational meanings were more common later in the change (period) and in converting stores (context), that insignificant meanings were more common earlier in the change for converting stores (period), and that more subversive meanings were constructed at nonconverting stores (context) and later in the change (period).

One explanation for greater instances of transfor-

mational meanings in the later period is that, although managerial discourse was similar to that in the earlier period, and the types of tasks required of employees were the same, employees based their meaning constructions on the broader change context (all of MallCo), as opposed to the local context (their store). This broader change context included more (i.e., an increasing number of stores chain-wide) of the same type of change (conversions). The accumulating number of stores participating in the change in the later period made more salient the fact that the change was not an incremental adjustment, but rather a systematic strategic change involving many parts of the division. Also of interest, employees at stores with announced plans to convert were more likely than the employees at nonconverting stores to construct transformational meanings (either supportive or subversive), as their local context had stronger cues of significant organizational change (e.g., new procedures and products). Finally, one potential explanation for the increase of subversive meanings among employees at nonconverting stores in the later period of the change could be that these employees felt increasingly excluded or disconnected from the change. Although these conclusions warrant further investigation, they suggest that meanings can vary by level of context (e.g., an entire division versus a particular location) and time period for the same change.

**Two narrative pathways to strategic change implementation.** The findings suggest two narrative pathways managers simultaneously use to implement strategic change and along which employees subsequently construct their own meanings and narrate responses to change. In the *transformational pathway*, managers unfreeze employees by constructing a new, better organization for them (using a progressive narrative), and employees then construct transformational meanings. However, as Figure 1 suggests, the transformational meanings employees produce can take two forms: the new organization as a better replacement for the old (and hence, they tell a progressive narrative) or as a worse replacement (and hence, they tell a regressive narrative). For employees who construct the new organization as worse, their transformational meanings offer a radical departure from those of managers. The broader theoretical process of the transformational pathway is that managers unfreeze employees through the progressive narratives, employees' constructions of the organization move through an altered interpretation, and the content of this movement (the organization is better or worse because of the change) explains patterns

in how employees see themselves responding to change.

In the *preservational pathway*, the managers' stability narrative constructs the change as consistent with the status quo, thereby *freezing* employees' existing meaning constructions. Consequently, employees do not construct new meanings for the organization and instead construct the change as consistent with the status quo. However, employees add an interpretive dimension to the existing meanings they endorse: if employees are satisfied with the status quo, they tell supportive stability narratives that suggest that the change preserves what they value about their organization. However, if employees are dissatisfied with the status quo, managers' freezing it and employees' construction of the organization as remaining the same lead to a subversive stability narrative. The broader theoretical process for the preservational pathway is that managers attempt to freeze employees' meanings and that these meanings freeze either a positively or negatively constructed status quo.

## DISCUSSION

By considering the narratives of managers *and* employees, as well as allowing for a broadened meaning space, I have elaborated theory around two pathways by which meaning constructions influence strategic change implementation. This elaboration has implications for understanding core assumptions in change, particularly Lewin's (1951) often-used theory of meaning constructions, as well as for understanding employees' construction of meanings during organizational change.

### Reconsidering Lewin's Three-Stage Model

Although for many scholars, Lewin's model of change implementation is *the* model of change implementation (Dawson, 1994; Elrod & Tippett, 2002; Marshak, 1993), the findings from this study not only affirm, but also challenge and elaborate upon this approach. The transformational path shown here affirms and elaborates research on how managers unfreeze existing meanings and construct new meanings for employees (Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Isabella, 1990; Labianca et al., 2000) by using discourse to create "instability in members' ways of understanding the organization, and [to] demand that they make some new sense out of it" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 434). Yet my findings indicate that employees do not directly import managerial narratives about change, but rather, they embellish them. For example, my findings suggest that successfully unfrozen employees may tell a narrative describing how

their organization will take a turn for the worse, effectively narrating resistance to change. This suggests a potential danger of unfreezing employees—the movement in meanings may be in a very different direction than management hopes for and expects. When existing interpretations become unfrozen, managerially sanctioned narratives are only one possibility. As a result, strategic change is a series of multiple, sometimes conflicting narratives (Dawson & Buchanan, 2005), in which understanding all narratives becomes vital to explaining how strategic change unfolds.

The findings from the current study also challenge research within the Lewinian paradigm by emphasizing managers' strategic and simultaneous use of progressive and stability narratives. Contra Lewin's idea of unfreezing employees, in the preservational pathway, managers use discourse to first freeze meanings, and employees then affirm constructions of the change that preserve the status quo (Weick & Quinn, 1999). From a Lewinian perspective, the simultaneous use of the preservational pathway is antithetical to the purpose of change (which is to *unfreeze* the status quo), but my findings suggest that managers hedge their bets by being strategically ambiguous to balance the need to promote change with minimizing uncertainty. As a result, strategic change implementation is not a singular process but rather a set of simultaneous processes that, though on the surface seem contradictory, work in concert in a delicate balance of change and continuity. Such an approach offers a view competing with that of research suggesting that managers seek alignment during change through general clarity about the change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). Instead, managers do not seek unitary meaning, but "equifinal" meaning (Donnellon et al., 1986), in which different interpretations of change evolve, all leading to similar and supportive responses. However, although managers may seek equifinal meanings that lead to supportive responses, employees further embellish these meanings and thus build a wide range of meanings and responses to change—some supportive, some subversive.

### Employee Constructions of Meaning

This study also sheds new light on the role of employees' meaning constructions during strategic change implementation. Prior research has focused on how managers provide employees with information about change (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991; Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, & Prashant, 2004), exhibiting a "sender" orientation in which it is assumed that meaning is a function of how managers transfer an interpretive reality to employees. Accordingly, scholars have not focused enough attention on

understanding how employees embellish these meanings of change (Bartunek et al., 2006).

Although managers exercise control over formal systems, employees have agency whereby they can construct different types of meanings that can alter the meaning of a change and their response to it. I found that some employees embellished either a managerial stability or progressive narrative by adding a negative valence to that narrative. This suggests that although managers use discourse to exercise influence over employees during change implementation, employees also have some agency to construct their own meanings that deviate from those of managers—often with consequences for how employees narrate themselves responding to change. As a result, the managerial narrative of change is only one account of "what really happened" (Dawson & Buchanan, 2005), as a number of narratives coexist and compete to be heard. As narratives compete, at least two distinct clashes arise. Employees who embellish management's progressive narrative clash on whether the new direction of an organization is positive or negative; and employees who embellish management's stability narrative clash on whether the status quo is positive or negative.

Additionally, though narratives have been viewed as tools whereby employees can undermine management (Murphy, 1998), the current study sheds light on the breadth of these subversive meanings and identifies some of their consequences for change. For example, I found that employees created subversive meanings because they constructed the change as either doing too much or too little. These two types of subversive meanings suggest that scholars need to focus not only on employees' positive or negative attitudes about change (as is common in most research focusing on resistance (Armenakis et al., 1993; Piderit, 2000)) but also on the significant-insignificant dimension, which substantially refines *why* employees have negative constructions of change. Understanding this "why" part of subversive meanings offers a richer picture of employees' constructions of the meaning of a change, as it shows that similar evaluations of the change (positive or negative) occur for very different reasons. It also helps practicing managers tailor change implementation tactics to very different constituencies: those employees who think the change goes too far and those who think the change does not go far enough.

I have also illustrated several patterns of meaning related to narrated employee responses. Previous research has focused on how psychological states, such as commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002), and individual differences, such as self-esteem (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), explain employee responses to change. Scholars, particularly those studying resis-

tance, have also focused on mechanisms such as the use of clear communication (Miller et al., 1994) to reduce change resistance. My approach is more in line with Heracleous and Barrett's (2001) interpretive approach: the two pathways of change lead to a similar array of narrated responses to change, but also explain how these responses have different meanings and different implications for change. For example, constructing oneself as accepting a change because of a stability (supportive) narrative is different from constructing oneself as accepting a change because of a progressive narrative, with the latter perhaps leading to a more sustained support of the change, since one has bought into management's construction of the change as a positive and beneficial transformation (versus the change as not altering the [positive] status quo and having few costs). Alternatively, an employee may construct him- or herself as resisting because a change goes too far (regressive) or not far enough (subversive-stability). This outline broadens Piderit's (2000) point that not all resistance is negative by suggesting that the implications of employees' responses can change depending on the meaning constructions to which their resistance is related. For managers, this suggests that not all change resisters and acceptors are "created equal." By understanding the underlying meanings employees construct, versus just a manifested response, managers can better tailor narratives and other mechanisms for managing change to groups of employees. At the same time, this outline suggests that some employees may want to go further than managers in pushing for change, a point scholars often miss when they assume all deviations from managers' agendas are intended to undermine change (Ford et al., 2008; Piderit, 2000).

A final point is that scholars working within the Lewinian paradigm have proposed that a failure to unfreeze employees can lead to resistance (Labianca et al., 2000). By unfreezing and subsequently moving employees' constructions of meaning, managers can overcome resistance. Yet the findings from my study question this view on two fronts: (1) employees can come to see themselves accepting a change even if they tell a stability narrative and subsequently construct the organization as not changing, and (2) even employees whose constructions get unfrozen and subsequently moved may nevertheless move in a way that leads to a regressive narrative and resistance. These points suggest the importance of accounting for both broadened sources and types of meanings that can better explain when and how resistance may arise, as well as the important idea that employees may accept change even if their meanings are frozen by managerial discourse. For practicing managers, these arguments suggest that not all employees need to be unfrozen; some employees construct a change

(regardless of its objective features) as consistent with a positive status quo.

### Limitations and Future Directions

As with any case study, the goal here was not to provide statistically generalizable conclusions but rather to expand and generalize theories (Yin, 1994). Nevertheless, a way of enhancing the credibility of a case study is to identify similar patterns from other cases (Stake, 1995). In fact, the patterns I have described at Retail, Inc. are similar to those in several well-documented cases. For example, Charlotte Beers drove change at Ogilvy & Mather by introducing new meanings around brand stewardship (i.e., a progressive narrative) but also by emphasizing the preservation of the company's core values (i.e., a stability narrative) (Sackley & Ibarra, 1995). Similarly, during the HP and Compaq merger, managers told progressive narratives about creating a new culture while also telling stability narratives about maintaining the "HP way" and preserving Compaq's keynotes of dynamism and speed (Perlow & Kind, 2004).

This study also raises key questions about purposeful ambiguity. The premise of strategic ambiguity suggests that managers appeal to both employees welcoming and employees shunning change, yet the use of interwoven progressive and stability narratives holds the potential to create so much ambiguity that resistance is sparked and the entire change process is undermined (Larson & Tompkins, 2005). If managers implement change by appealing to those who both support and want to alter the status quo, how do managers construct multiple meanings without introducing so much equivocality that they undermine the change process? Along these lines, future research can examine the functional role of interwoven narratives.

Another direction for future research is to more systematically examine the relationships proposed in the theory I developed, such as those between managerial and employee narratives, and between employee narratives and responses. As a case study within the interpretive paradigm, the purpose of my study and the type of data I collected were not ideal for establishing causal relationships. Instead, I emphasized developing, versus testing, theory (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007). As such, future research should test the proposed model and properly quantify its relationships. Additionally, future research may find additional dimensions of meanings as well as different types of narrated responses. For example, although I found both relatively active (championing and resisting) and relatively passive (accepting) types

of responses, there may be an even wider variety of responses in other settings.

## Conclusion

Strategic change involves altering employees' construction of meanings by using a discourse that sets a new direction for a firm, yet I also found that strategic change involves the creation of a discourse of stability. Accordingly, I developed theory around how managers interweave narratives to implement strategic change, and how employees embellish these interwoven narratives to make sense of the change and to narrate their response to it. The examination of these narratives helps unlock the patterns and consequences of important differences in meanings for strategic change implementation.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview and Survey Protocols

#### Interview Questions for Store Employees

##### General background information (everyone)

1. Can you tell me about what you do for Retail, Inc.?

2. How long have you worked in this position? What did you do before taking this position? Can you tell me about your other experience in retail?
3. What is effective communication to you?

#### **Questions if Project Convert implemented at location**

1. Can you tell me about the Project Convert initiative? What is it? How did you first find out about the initiative? **Probe:** If you had to explain Project Convert to a new employee, how would you explain it?
2. How did you address or explain Project Convert to customers? How did you address or explain Project Convert to your staff (for managers)?
3. What role did you play in implementing Project Convert? **Probe:** if manager (did you share communications packet with employees?) if retail clerk (did your manager share communications packet with you?)
4. How has Project Convert affected your job, and the company?
5. Would you describe Project Convert's roll-out as a success? Why or why not?
6. What concerns do you have about Project Convert?

#### **Questions if Project Convert NOT implemented at location**

1. Have you heard anything about the Project Convert? What is it? **Probe:** If you had to explain Project Convert to a new employee, how would you explain it?
2. How did you first find out about the Project Convert?
3. What, if any, preparations are you taking for implementing the Project Convert?
4. Have you received any communications from Headquarters about the Project Convert? What did these communications say?
5. What do you think the Project Convert will mean for your job, and the company?
6. Have you had to answer questions about the Project Convert to customers or staff? How did you explain the issue to them?
7. What concerns do you have about Project Convert?

#### **Interview Questions for Managers**

*Note: Since I interviewed employees with different role responsibilities at Headquarters, I often modified the following interview protocol to the person's role.*

1. Can you tell me about what you do for Retail, Inc.?
2. Tell me about your role in Project Convert? When and how did you first get involved?
3. What was the origin of Project Convert? How has Project Convert evolved over time?
4. Why is the company converting stores to BigBoxCo Lights?
5. How do you see store employees implementing Project Convert? What role do store managers play? What is working and what is not working at the store implementation level? (probe: specific behaviors).
6. Can you tell me about the communications process between Headquarters and the Field? How does it work?
7. What have been your biggest communications obstacles in implementing Project Convert?
8. How would you describe Project Convert to a new employee?
9. What differences are there between a MallCo and BigBoxCo employee?

#### **Survey Questions for Employees**

1. What are your feelings about your store converting to a BigBoxCo Light? (nonconverting stores: What are your feelings about BigBoxCo Light conversions?) What are the pros and cons of converting to a BigBoxCo Light?
2. What are the reasons why some stores are converting to BigBoxCo Light stores?
3. What types of changes are involved in a store converting to a BigBoxCo Light?
4. How will this conversion at this store affect your job and store? (nonconverting stores: How does the conversion of some stores to BigBoxCo Light affect your job and store?")



**APPENDIX B**  
**Employee Surveys and Interviews<sup>a</sup>**

Interviews			Surveys								
Interview Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status
3	Store manager	Y	512	Asst. store manager	N	12014	Retail clerk	Y	31297	Store manager	Y
8	Store manager	N	513	Store manager	N	12017	PT retail clerk	Y	31298	Asst. store manager	Y
9	Retail clerk	N	514	Missing	N	12057	Retail clerk	Y	31311	Asst. store manager	Y
10	Store manager	Y	515	Retail clerk	N	12059	Retail clerk	Y	31337	Asst. store manager	Y
11	Asst. store manager	Y	516	PT retail clerk	N	12060	PT retail clerk	Y	31338	Asst. store manager	Y
13	Store manager	N	518	PT retail clerk	N	12062	PT retail clerk	Y	31339	Store manager	Y
14	Store manager	Y	524	PT retail clerk	N	12081	PT retail clerk	Y	31341	Store manager	Y
15	Retail clerk	Y	525	PT retail clerk	N	12117	Retail clerk	Y	31342	Asst. store manager	Y
19	Retail clerk	N	526	PT retail clerk	N	12125	PT retail clerk	Y	31345	Store manager	Y
20	Store manager	N	528	PT retail clerk	N	12129	PT retail clerk	Y	31372	Store manager	Y
26	Store manager	Y	529	PT retail clerk	N	12130	Retail clerk	Y	31389	Store manager	Y
27	Asst. store manager	Y	530	Retail clerk	N	12131	Retail clerk	Y	31390	Asst. store manager	Y
28	Store manager	Y	531	Retail clerk	N	12132	Retail clerk	Y	31413	Store manager	Y
29	Asst. store manager	Y	11001	Retail clerk	Y	12133	PT retail clerk	Y	31417	Store manager	Y
			11002	Store manager	Y	12134	Missing	Y	31418	Asst. store manager	Y
			11003	PT retail clerk	Y	12135	Retail clerk	Y	31425	Store manager	Y
			11008	Asst. store manager	Y	12154	PT retail clerk	Y	31430	Asst. store manager	Y
			11038	Retail clerk	Y	12155	PT retail clerk	Y	31431	Asst. store manager	Y
			11061	Missing	Y	12159	Retail clerk	Y	31454	Asst. store manager	N
			11062	PT retail clerk	Y	12160	Retail clerk	Y	180113	Store manager	Y
			11065	Retail clerk	Y	12165	Retail clerk	Y	180114	Asst. store manager	Y
			11109	PT retail clerk	Y	12167	PT retail clerk	Y	180119	Store manager	Y
			11110	Retail clerk	Y	12181	PT retail clerk	Y	180120	Retail clerk	Y
			11112	PT retail clerk	Y	14044	Retail clerk	Y	180131	Asst. store manager	Y
			11113	PT retail clerk	Y	14045	PT retail clerk	Y	180132	Missing	Y

**APPENDIX B  
(Continued)**

Interviews			Surveys								
Interview Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status
			11114	Retail clerk	Y	14049	Retail clerk	Y	180133	PT retail clerk	Y
			11122	Retail clerk	Y	14050	PT retail clerk	Y	180134	Retail clerk	Y
			11123	Retail clerk	Y	14051	Missing	Y	180135	Store manager	Y
			11125	PT retail clerk	Y	14121	PT retail clerk	N	180137	Asst. store manager	Y
			11132	PT retail clerk	Y	14125	PT retail clerk	N	180138	Store manager	Y
			11266	PT retail clerk	Y	14153	PT retail clerk	Y	180156	Store manager	Y
			11325	Retail clerk	Y	14154	Missing	Y	180157	Asst. store manager	Y
			11329	Retail clerk	Y	14155	Retail clerk	Y	180158	Store manager	Y
			11438	Retail clerk	Y	14156	PT retail clerk	Y	180164	Asst. store manager	Y
			11458	Retail clerk	Y	14157	PT retail clerk	Y	180165	Store manager	Y
			11459	Asst. store manager	Y	14812	Store manager	Y	180188	Store manager	Y
			11460	PT retail clerk	Y	14813	Asst. store manager	Y	180196	Asst. store manager	Y
			11530	Asst. store manager	Y	14814	Asst. store manager	Y	180197	PT retail clerk	Y
			11541	PT retail clerk	N	31001	PT retail clerk	Y	180198	Store manager	Y
			11542	Retail clerk	N	31003	Asst. store manager	Y	180303	Retail clerk	Y
			11543	Retail clerk	N	31017	Missing	Y	180357	Store manager	Y
			11566	Retail clerk	N	31033	Store manager	Y	190319	PT retail clerk	Y
			11567	PT retail clerk	N	31034	Asst. store manager	Y	190325	PT retail clerk	Y
			11576	PT retail clerk	N	31069	Store manager	Y	190326	PT retail clerk	Y
			11617	Retail clerk	N	31077	Store manager	Y	190342	Missing	Y
			11625	Retail clerk	N	31098	Store manager	Y	190343	PT retail clerk	Y
			11629	Retail clerk	N	31101	Asst. store manager	Y	190344	Missing	Y
			11630	PT retail clerk	N	31102	Store manager	Y	190349	PT retail clerk	Y
			11631	PT retail clerk	N	31105	Store manager	Y	190352	Retail clerk	Y

**APPENDIX B  
(Continued)**

Interviews			Surveys								
Interview Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status	Survey Number	Position	Status
			11632	PT retail clerk	N	31106	Asst. store manager	Y	190361	Retail clerk	Y
			11637	Retail clerk	N	31126	Asst. store manager	Y	190362	PT retail clerk	Y
			11638	PT retail clerk	N	31142	Store manager	Y	190364	Retail clerk	Y
			11639	PT retail clerk	N	31145	Asst. store manager	Y	190373	PT retail clerk	Y
			11648	PT retail clerk	N	31149	Store manager	Y	190377	Retail clerk	Y
			11752	Retail clerk	N	31150	Asst. store manager	Y	190378	PT retail clerk	Y
			11753	PT retail clerk	N	31165	Asst. store manager	Y	190379	Missing	Y
			11754	Retail clerk	N	31200	Store manager	Y	190380	PT retail clerk	Y
			11755	Missing	N	31201	Store manager	N	190421	PT retail clerk	Y
			11756	Retail clerk	N	31205	Store manager	N	190422	Retail clerk	Y
			11769	PT retail clerk	Y	31209	Asst. store manager	N	190423	PT retail clerk	Y
			11770	PT retail clerk	Y	31210	Store manager	N	190424	Retail clerk	Y
			11806	PT retail clerk	Y	31225	Store manager	N	190425	Missing	Y
			11807	Retail clerk	Y	31229	Store manager	N	190445	PT retail clerk	Y
			11860	PT retail clerk	Y	31230	Asst. store manager	N	190446	Retail clerk	Y
			11861	PT retail clerk	Y	31233	Store manager	N	190447	Retail clerk	Y
			11862	Retail clerk	Y	31234	Asst. store manager	N	190655	Missing	Y
			11913	PT retail clerk	Y	31241	Store manager	N	a31200	Asst. store manager	Y
			11985	Missing	Y	31273	Store manager	N	cm200006	Store manager	N
			11988	Retail clerk	Y	31278	Store manager	N	missing	PT retail clerk	Y
			11989	Retail clerk	Y	31280	Asst. store manager	N	missing	Asst. store manager	Y

<sup>a</sup> “Y” in the “Status” column indicates a store announced as converting to a BigBoxCo Light. “N” indicates a store not announced as converting. “Asst.” is “assistant.” “PT” is “part-time.”



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