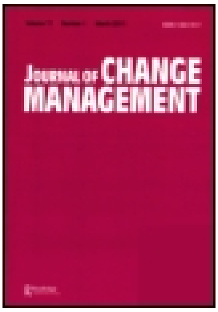

Journal of Change Management
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjcm20

Reflections: our Journey in Organizational Change Research and Practice

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Published online: 29 Apr 2009.

Journal of Change Management
Vol. 9, No. 2, 127–142, June 2009

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Reflections: our Journey in Organizational Change Research and Practice

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ABSTRACT *This commentary summarizes our research and practice on the topic of organizational change over the past 30 years. Our purpose in preparing this commentary is to explain how our efforts accumulated over this period to produce the questions we addressed, the answers our findings revealed, and the direction of our future efforts. We summarize our journey thus far relative to six signposts, namely: (a) the identification of five key beliefs underlying change recipient motivations to change; (b) an emphasis on change recipient active participation in the change effort; (c) the importance of diagnosis; (d) the importance of creating readiness for change; (e) the identification of strategies for influencing the five beliefs throughout the change process; and, (f) the assessment of reactions to organizational change. To give an idea of where our journeys will take us in the future, we identify five trips we plan to make: (a) examine the relative importance of the five key beliefs for influencing change recipient support; (b) expand our cognitive view of change motivation to include emotional reactions to change; (c) investigate the relationship between change recipient characteristics (such as regulatory focus) and reactions to organizational transformation; (d) explore the relationship between internal contextual variables (relations with local change agents and co-workers) during organizational change; and (e) focus on ethics in organizational change.*

KEY WORDS: Readiness, assessment, change recipients' beliefs, organizational diagnosis, change recipient participation

Introduction

No organization has ever been immune from implementing organizational changes. As W. Edwards Deming noted, 'It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.' In today's dynamic world, organizational leaders must be

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1469-7017 Print/1479-1811 Online/09/020127–16 © 2009 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/14697010902879079

vigilant about the context in which their organizations are situated, being particularly attentive to changes in the general and task environments. Also, in order to survive and prosper, they must be knowledgeable about *how* to implement *appropriate* organizational changes that will be embraced by their employees. Unfortunately, effective organizational changes are rare (Gilmore *et al.*, 1997; Burnes, 2004; By, 2005; Meaney and Pung, 2008). The most recent statistics, derived from a global survey of businesses by two McKinsey consultants, reveal that only one-third of organizational change efforts were considered successful by their leaders (Meaney and Pung, 2008). What is even more discouraging is that the 3,199 executives who responded to their survey indicated they devoted an average of six months to planning the transformations. As unfortunate as this is, we realize that still today, 'the best laid schemes o' mice and men, gang aft agley' (Burns, 1786).

The research we summarize in this 'Reflections' commentary was produced over a period of some 30 years. We consider this period to be a journey during which many people joined us and contributed to our growing awareness of the importance of our focal concepts and the ensuing investigations of them. Our theorizing, research, and practice over these 30 years has led us to identify and hone in on what we consider some of the most important issues that change agents need to incorporate in planning, implementing, and evaluating organizational transformations.

Where we've been

Many other organizational scholars (Kanter; 1983; Schein, 1987; Kotter, 1996) often adopted a change agent, leader-centric focus on change by emphasizing the strategic nature of transformational leadership including the creation of inspiring visions (Burns, 1978). In contrast, we chose a change recipient, employee-centric path in our work. The two paths are not mutually exclusive and cross each other frequently, and the questions asked and insights offered are often very similar. Leader-centric questions include: What do transformational leaders do? What should corporate visions look like? What are the most appropriate strategic directions for firms to take? What are the best new changes (such as Six Sigma) that leaders should introduce to enhance the effectiveness of their firms? While these are all important questions and keys to effective change, we were primarily interested in one related question: what do change recipients consider when making their decision to embrace and support a change effort or reject and resist it? Since changes must ultimately be implemented by change recipients, understanding their motivations to support organizational changes or not provides very practical insights into how to best lead change. Thus, from this vantage point, our journey to date is best viewed as a quest to understand the bases for individual motivations to support change efforts.

As we reflect on our journey to understand recipients' motivations to change, our contributions to the theory, research, and practice of change management seem to be woven around six interrelated themes that reflect signposts along the journey that say 'we were here.' Specifically, these signposts are: (a) the identification of five key beliefs underlying change recipient motivations to change;

(b) an emphasis on change recipient active participation in change efforts; (c) a concern for the effective diagnosis of the need for change; (d) the benefits of focusing on creating readiness for change rather than waiting to reduce resistance; (e) the description of key leadership strategies for influencing the five beliefs throughout the change process; and, (f) advocating for the ongoing assessment of reactions to organizational change and providing tools to help in these assessments. We begin our reflections with a review of the themes and the research relevant to each. We end with our plans for the next phase of our research, theory, and practice journey and hope to inspire other interested colleagues and students to join us: it can be a lot more fun to travel with a group.

Theme 1: Five Key Change Beliefs

The identification of five key change beliefs that seem to underlie change recipients' motives to support change efforts and therefore increase the likelihood of successful sustainable organizational change stands out as the biggest signpost of our journey. Our growing awareness of the importance of these five beliefs came from: (a) our experiences of working to help organizations implement change efforts; (b) our field research with various organizations in which we independently investigated the importance of one or more of the beliefs; and, (c) our content analysis of empirical research on organizational change efforts. The five beliefs are: (a) discrepancy; (b) appropriateness; (c) efficacy; (d) principal support; and (e) valence (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993, 1999). *Discrepancy* refers to the belief that a change is needed; that there is a significant gap between the current state of the organization and what it should be. *Appropriateness* reflects the belief that a specific change designed to address a discrepancy is the correct one for the situation. *Efficacy* refers to the belief that the change recipient and the organization can successfully implement a change. *Principal support* is the belief that the *formal* leaders (*vertical* change agents) in an organization are committed to the success of a change and that it is not going to be another passing fad or *program of the month*. Furthermore, we include as principals the *opinion leaders* who can serve as *horizontal* change agents. Finally, *valence* reflects the belief that the change is beneficial to the change recipient; there is something of benefit in it for them.

Our research suggests to us that these five beliefs play an important role in the three steps of the change process: diagnosis, creating readiness, and change adoption and institutionalization. Our empirical investigations regarding discrepancy and appropriateness in change contexts (see Armenakis *et al.*, 1979; Oswald *et al.*, 1994, 1997; Cole *et al.*, 2006), for example, revealed the importance of these two change beliefs for change recipient attitudes including job satisfaction and organizational commitment. We found that the more salient (appropriate) managers considered the strategic vision (against which discrepancy was assessed), the stronger their job involvement, affective reactions, and perceived competitive strengths. The task facing change agents is to anticipate, consider, and plan to influence and shape these beliefs in pursuit of readiness for change, implementation support, and change commitment.

Theme 2: Emphasis on Change Recipient Involvement and Participation

We are strong advocates of action research by involving change recipients in the diagnosis, interpretation, and remediation of challenges facing the organization. As such, change recipient participation in organizational change is a fundamental aspect of change efforts when we are advising organizations and also central to our research focus on how to increase the likelihood of sustainable change. In one of our first empirical studies (Armenakis *et al.*, 1979), we used the Survey of Organizations (Taylor and Bowers, 1972) in two separate organizations to survey organizational members regarding the major issues they perceived as needing attention (gap analysis). Appropriate intervention(s) were then designed to eliminate the gaps.

While we did not realize it at the time, allowing organizational members to participate in communicating the gaps worked to enhance their sense of discrepancy and make it more likely that appropriate changes were selected. Active participation in change efforts by change recipients also enhances valence by allowing them to participate in implementing difficulties they face and efficacy by allowing them to select changes they feel they can accomplish. These benefits of change recipient involvement in change efforts are particularly visible in the 'work out' process invented by General Electric in which a group of employees is empowered to analyze and propose solutions to problems that they deal with directly. Based on our successful use of this technique in our applied facilitation work in organizations, in Schaninger *et al.* (1999), we articulated how it could be used in smaller organizations for discrete problem areas. In addition, involving change recipients in the diagnostic process actually begins to sensitize them to the possibility of an impending organizational change, and can serve to encourage change readiness. In short, we believe that the merits of active participation in the change process are very high and without participation, *genuine* buy in to sustainable change is unlikely.

Theme 3: Effective Organizational Diagnosis

The medical metaphor is highly relevant to change research. Just as it is unlikely that a disease can be cured if diagnosed incorrectly, change efforts designed based on faulty diagnoses are unlikely to be successful. Organizational diagnosis consists of recognizing problem symptoms (unacceptable profits, high employee turnover and absenteeism) and identifying root causes of these symptoms. Organizational change efforts are initiated because change agents feel there is a need for change, which we label as *discrepancy*, which is reflected in the gap between the organization's current state and its ideal or hoped for state. To psychologically embrace a change, change recipients must also believe that a discrepancy exists, otherwise proposed changes are interpreted as arbitrary and non-rational. Therefore, accurate and effective diagnosis is critical.

After deciding that change is needed, change agents must next decide what kind of change to implement. Ideally, efforts to decide the nature of the change should focus on what is best; although we know that decision makers often satisfice (Simon, 1957), have to make political concessions or may even have valid disagreements about the appropriate course of action. However, change recipients must also believe that whatever change emerges as the one to be implemented is *appropriate* to correct the root cause of the problems facing the organization. In Harris and Mossholder (1996), we demonstrated that congruence between change recipients' values and those they perceived to be guiding organizational changes was positively associated with their attitudes toward the organization. Cole *et al.* (2006) found that change recipient assessments of appropriateness related positively to their organizational commitment and negatively with their role ambiguity. In addition, they found that appropriateness, vision salience, and change execution interacted to predict job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and role ambiguity.

It is felt that a thorough organizational diagnosis should be conducted in order to provide the basis for discrepancy beliefs and to minimize the likelihood of making a mistake in implementing an intervention that is not appropriate to deal with root causes. Our work on cognitive psychology (Armenakis *et al.*, 1990) explored how change leaders (and change recipients) process information. Specifically, we dealt with bias in diagnosis and how the incorrect use of models and heuristics can lead to mistakes. Misdiagnosis can result in identifying the wrong problem to solve and then deciding on a solution that is not appropriate. Often we learn of change leaders who, for whatever reasons, are attracted to *fads* (Abrahamson, 1996) that are publicized as producing positive effects for some organizations. The wholesale implementation of an intervention without careful consideration of its appropriateness can lead to a failed organizational change. Thus, without a systematic and thorough organizational diagnosis, a change agent can never be sure that what works in one organization will be appropriate for their own organization.

In two qualitative research/consulting projects we described how a diagnosis was conducted to identify the specific issues that needed attention within each organization. In one organization in which a standardized pre-fabricated questionnaire (quantitative methodology) was administered annually, our qualitative methodology revealed the standardized questionnaire included subscales that were not relevant for the organization and omitted issues that the respondents thought were important and needed attention. Thus, the *wrong* gaps were being assessed and some interventions implemented would not be appropriate (Gregory *et al.*, 2007). In another qualitative research/consulting project we identified the major issues qualitatively and then explained how we employed *action groups* to verify the importance of the issues we identified and then incorporated the suggestions provided by the action groups on how to correct the issues (Moates *et al.*, 2005). Thus, we demonstrated how to identify discrepancies and match appropriate interventions to deal with them, all the while increasing the likelihood of change recipient buy in.

Diagnosis can also be used to shape efficacy beliefs. In Pond *et al.* (1984), for example, we assessed collective *efficacy* by including a sub-scale on the diagnostic instrument to collect the beliefs of how difficult the participants believed implementing changes for selected gaps would be. By assessing this in an organizational diagnosis, change agents can initiate those changes the recipients identified as *easy* and accomplish what Weick (1984) described as 'small wins' and others have identified as 'low hanging fruit' and thus build momentum to tackle those larger changes assessed as more difficult.

Theme 4: Creating Readiness for Change

The early work on organizational change referred to employee negative reactions in terms of resistance (Coch and French, 1948; Lawrence, 1954). In contrast, Lewin's (1951) three stage model of change (unfreezing, moving, and freezing) labelled the first stage as *unfreezing*. We were introduced to the term of *readiness* by re-interpretations of the Coch and French study by Bartlem and Locke (1981) and Gardner (1977). We prefer using the term *readiness* instead of *resistance* because readiness is more congruent with the roles that coaches and champions play in introducing change. In other words, it fits better with a *positive* approach to framing change. We defined readiness as the cognitive precursor of the behaviors of resistance to or support for organizational change (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993). Using the Prochaska (Prochaska *et al.*, 1992) stages of change, we found that participants who were in the contemplation (ready for change) and action (actively changing) stages with regard to the introduction of a new leadership development program were more receptive to the program and more likely to positively evaluate its content and delivery (Harris and Cole, 2007).

Our readiness model is intended to provide change agents with the perspective of what they need to do in order to plan a proactive program to shape the five key beliefs and, therefore, convince change recipients to buy into an organizational change. We argue that it is the responsibility of change leaders to take the necessary actions that will *sell* the change recipients on the merits of an organizational change. Rafferty and Griffin (2006) have provided empirical support that systematically planning change reduces change recipient uncertainty. We proposed a readiness model which was centered around the change message that directly dealt with the five key change beliefs (although, at first, they were not as explicit about the five message components as they were later on), the influence strategies useful in persuasively *selling* that five-pronged message to change recipients, the importance of the perceived attributes of the change agents (global, local and opinion leaders), characteristics of change recipients, and an assessment element to gauge the progress made in the readiness creation process. The model serves as a guide for planning and executing a program to create change readiness.

In our case demonstration article (Armenakis and Harris, 2002), we explained how we used our readiness model to assist a top management team create readiness for an organizational transformation (see Figure 1). The company was a global information technology (IT) business unit (BU) of a large multinational corporation. The IT-BU employed a workforce of over 1,500 with projected sales of $500 million. We described how they coached the president, and participated in a management strategy meeting and an executive team meeting. On the day of the official announcement the president delivered his readiness speech (in person to some of the employees, and electronically to those employees located in other locations throughout North America and Europe). The speech addressed all five components of the readiness message. Our case demonstration included some of the benefits the IT-BU realized and lessons we learned during our involvement with this IT-BU that we hoped would be beneficial to others applying our model. As described below in another case demonstration (Armenakis *et al.*, 2007b), we continued working with the IT-BU and conducted

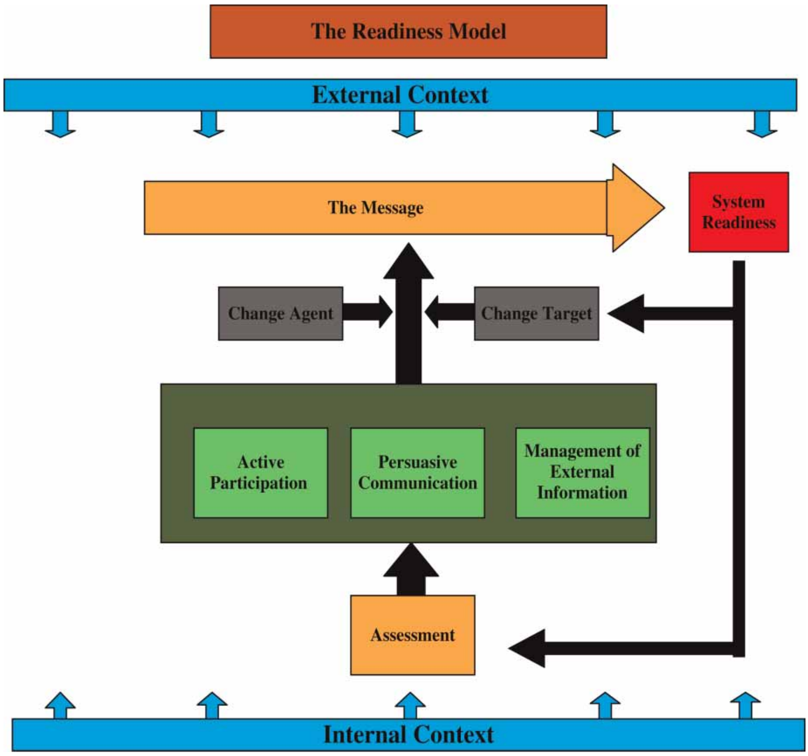

Figure 1. The readiness model

an assessment of its performance during the tumultuous period when the dot.com companies faced perilous challenges (in 2001) and the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist activities.

Given the urgency of the need to change, a readiness creation program may not have the luxury of time. In Armenakis *et al.* (1993), we presented a typology of readiness programs (low readiness/low urgency, low readiness/high urgency, high readiness/low urgency, and high readiness/high urgency) matched to the salient characteristics from the readiness model. Our intent was to draw attention to the need for change agents to consider what *the* appropriate influence strategies were for the change readiness program under each of these conditions. Schein (1979) opined that the major reason change programs fail was that there was insufficient planning for unfreezing. Perhaps one reason for the lack of success expressed by the respondents to the global survey by Meaney and Pung (2008) was that planning and executing for creating change readiness was insufficient.

Theme 5: Managerial Influence Strategies

In our work on creating readiness and, later, institutionalizing change, two common themes have been present. First, is the emphasis on the five change recipient beliefs. Second is an articulation of the influence strategies that change agents could use to shape the five beliefs (see Figure 2). One of these, active

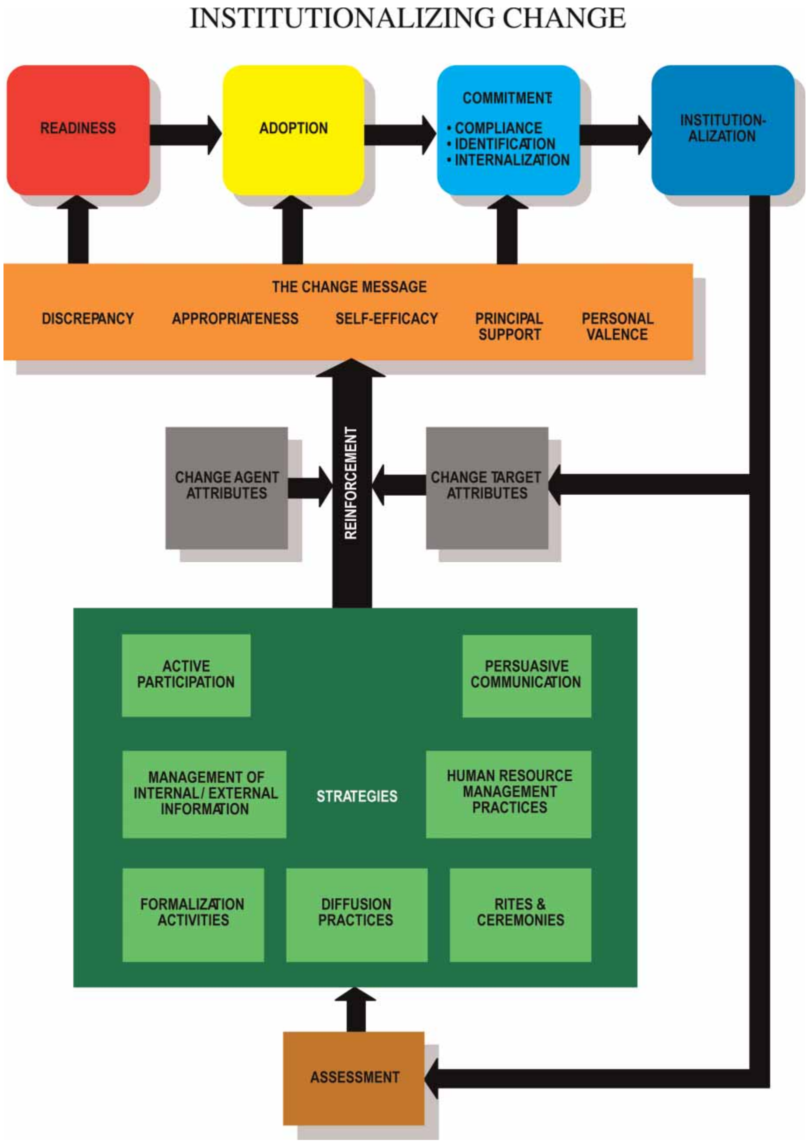

Figure 2. The institutionalizing change model

participation, has already been addressed as a major theme in our work. The others we have identified are persuasive communication, management of internal and external information, formalization (structure and procedures) activities, human resource management practices, diffusion practices, and rites and ceremonies. By (2007) and By *et al.* (2008) have introduced the role of implicit communication as a strategy for conveying the change message. These are all forms of learning strategies that can be used to teach individuals new concepts that they can use to improve their performance. In our research, for example, we have examined several human resource practices that can serve to encourage change or create a supportive climate for change including high potential management development programs (Harris and Feild, 1992), expatriate programs (Borstorff *et al.*, 1997), and work-life benefit programs (Muse *et al.*, 2008).

Persuasive communication entails transmitting the message components to change recipients using tactics such as making speeches, sending memos, and so forth. With today's technology, change agents have numerous options from which to choose (email, video transmissions) which are quite efficient in transmitting the message components. However, persuasive communication may not be as effective as active participation (*viz.*, enactive mastery, vicarious learning and participative decision making) because the *self-discovery* aspect of active participation is such a profound event. Admittedly, persuasive communication can be executed in a short time, certainly less time than active participation but the use of persuasive communication may need to be bolstered by the management of information (from internal and external sources).

The strategies included in the model are available to change agents to plan the readiness, adoption and institutionalization phases of change. Some situations may not require all strategies. However, one important point must be understood by change agents. Organizational change is very complex and not to be taken lightly. All strategies should be considered and applied if by doing so increases the likelihood of success. Whatever strategies and tactics are going to be used should be thoughtfully designed to reinforce the five components of the change message. Obviously, this requires much planning but if the adoption is to be extended, change recipients must believe the five components. Change agents must devote the time to this reinforcement. Admittedly, change efforts are planned and implemented *in addition* to the everyday activities of satisfying the demands of the job. *Cutting corners* may produce sub-optimal results. Furthermore, some organizations may undertake more than one organizational change simultaneously. We argue that application of the model can help in understanding the magnitude of the changes and can give information regarding prioritizing the changes and, if necessary, sequencing the changes.

One thing that is clear in our work on strategies for change is that their influence is moderated by the attributes of the change agent. In exploring the individual experience of organizational culture, Harris (1994) highlighted the generative role of individual interpretations of the beliefs and values of important others in the organization, particularly leaders in interpreting and changing culture. The schemata that change recipients have of their leaders are shaped by the actions and words of those leaders, including all of the strategies for change they employ. In addition, the impact of those actions is heavily moderated by the credibility of the change agents. We have found an excellent treatment of the dimensions of credibility and how to develop and maintain it (Kouzes and Posner, 1993). If change agents lack credibility then there is a likelihood change recipients may not believe the change message.

Theme 6: Assessment of Change

The components of the change message can be used to plan the most effective way to create readiness, to assess the extent to which the change recipients are ready, and to track the adoption and institutionalization process. The methodology employed can be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of the two. The information obtained using the five components can provide useful insights about why a change effort may not be proceeding as planned. When someone reports that a change effort has not achieved its objectives, one way to answer the question *why* is to analyze their sentiments about the five message components and then, refer back to the readiness or institutionalization model and make the necessary modifications. We have asked ourselves the following question: When people report that a change effort has failed, does this mean the change effort is over and in effect we accept *surrender*? Our philosophy is, why not consider the set back as a temporary defeat, conduct a retreat and analyze the situation, revise the organizational change process based on an assessment of the situation, and continue the implementation of the organizational change?

In our work with the newly created information technology business unit (a change intended to improve performance is described above in the section on Creating Readiness for Change), after six months of operation (and after the dot.com bubble burst and the terrorist activities in 2001) the president asked us to conduct an assessment of the top management team (TMT) members to get their opinions about the unmet revenue projections. In our case demonstration (Armenakis *et al.*, 2007b), we conducted telephone interviews with 17 top executives. Our content analysis of their responses to open-ended questions (such as. what are you having success with and what are you struggling with?) we classified their responses into our five beliefs' framework. Based on our analyzes, it became clear that the TMT was saying the original strategy was no longer appropriate and that they questioned their efficacy to make it successful given the changes in the external environment. We argued that the TMT members were not *resisting* the organizational change, in the traditional meaning of earlier change researchers but were issuing a *warning* that needed to be heeded. Our feedback to the TMT and the discussion of their responses to our general open-ended questions, resulted in the president presenting to the board of directors, of the multinational corporation, a revised strategy that would allow the IT-BU to achieve a better fit with the changed external environment. He was given permission to revise the strategy and merge another unit with the IT-BU.

In our work on creating readiness for change and institutionalizing change efforts, we have emphasized the importance of assessing the five beliefs among change recipients. Assessments at various stages of change efforts are important (as in the IT-BU case) because change agents must attempt to get some feedback regarding whether or not the change sentiments are supportive of change. In other words, is the change effort influencing change recipient beliefs? The assessment methodology can range from observation of and interviews with change recipients or something more quantitative like organizational surveys. Some empirical assessment of change recipient readiness exists in the literature (Eby *et al.*, 2000) but the assessment instruments do not include our five beliefs. Recently we have published two psychometrically sound organizational surveys of the five beliefs that may be considered candidates from which to choose (see Armenakis *et al.*, 2007a; Holt *et al.*, 2007). The survey by Holt *et al.* (2007) was developed using an inductive methodology while the Armenakis *et al.*

(2007a) survey followed a deductive methodology. Each survey includes less than 30 items so they can be used separately or combined.

There are many factors that can be used to categorize differences among change recipients that may affect their experience of the five beliefs. These differences can be social differentiation (their group memberships) and individual personality differences (openness). The importance of examining these change recipient characteristics in empirical investigations seems to be gaining momentum (Walker *et al.*, 2007; Self *et al.*, 2007). In our models of creating readiness for change and institutionalizing change, we included change recipient characteristics in the model primarily to alert change agents to the possibility that acceptance to a change readiness program may be uneven because of these individual differences. Furthermore, where possible a change agent should incorporate these differences in their planning of change.

Continuing the Journey: where we are going

Some of our primary stops along our journey to understand change motivation have been summarized. Yet we have not reached our destination and our journey continues along at least five avenues. Specifically, we are pursuing efforts to: (a) explore the relative significance of the five change beliefs (are some more central to change recipient buy in than others and in what contexts?); (b) examine the relationships between the five key beliefs and emotional reactions; (c) investigate the relationship between change recipient characteristics (regulatory focus) and reactions to organizational transformations; (d) address the relationship between internal contextual variables (relations with local change agents and co-workers) during organizational change; and (e) merge a consideration of ethics with change management. We briefly explore each of these below.

Relative significance of the Beliefs

It has been stressed that the planning, implementation and evaluation of organizational change should include all five beliefs. However, our curiosity has led us to question whether change recipients consider each to be equally important. Some of our previous research suggested that some beliefs may be more important than others (Cole *et al.*, 2006). However, this research did not examine all five beliefs simultaneously. In the context of a merger, our preliminary findings seem to suggest that the beliefs of principal support and valence are more powerful predictors of subsequent identification with the post-merger organization and appropriateness and valence more powerful predictors of disidentification with the new organization (Varma and Harris, 2008). While this research suggests some relative significance, more research is required in different change contexts and with different dependent variables (change support) to fully map the relative importance of the five beliefs. Questions such as ‘Are some beliefs more important at different stages of a change effort?’ remain to be addressed. Greater understanding of the relative importance of the beliefs can help guide change agents’ decisions about how to best use their resources to shape change support.

Emotions and the Five Change Beliefs

An important reaction by change recipients is emotion (Liu and Perrewé, 2005). In our original investigations of emotions in change contexts (Mossholder *et al.*, 1995, 2000), we used a mixed methodology (qualitative, consisting of open-ended responses and quantitative, comprising responses to items using a Likert response format). We analyzed the open-ended responses using the Dictionary of Affect in Language (Whissell, 1989) to express emotion in terms of pleasantness and arousal. Our findings indicated that the emotions of top-level managers in a *Fortune* 500 manufacturing firm were related to their assessments of organizational change activities and job attitudes. However, in this research, we did not relate the emotional reactions to the five change beliefs. Liu and Perrewé (2005) argue that cognitive evaluations of change (our five beliefs) should relate in predictable ways to change recipient emotional reactions. In a preliminary study, Harris and Gresch (2008) reported a positive relationship between appropriateness, valence, and efficacy and the pleasantness dimension of the emotional reaction to change. They also found a curvilinear u-shaped relationship between the appropriateness and valence, and the arousal dimension of emotion. Specifically, arousal increased as the beliefs became either more positive or more negative. Obviously, we feel further research along this line could be productive in our advancement of change theory and practice.

Change Recipient Characteristics

Although we have conducted some investigations regarding change recipient characteristics (Walker *et al.*, 2007; Oreg *et al.*, 2008), we realize that multiple change recipient characteristics may affect how individuals react to organizational change. Since expanding our knowledge of these individual characteristics can broaden our understanding of change motivation, we are interested in broadening the characteristics we examine. One of our current investigations, for example, analyzes regulatory focus as a change recipient characteristic (Brown *et al.*, 2008).

Internal Contextual Variables

The success of an organizational change effort can also be influenced by the internal context (organizational conditions that influence employee beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviors). Damanpour's (1991) meta-analysis revealed the role of several internal contextual variables (formalization and managerial attitude toward change) and innovation. Johns (2001) has argued that an unfavorable organizational context can negate a well executed change process. Thus, we have undertaken research to assess the role of various internal contextual conditions in change recipient reactions to organizational change. Among contextual variables, we have investigated cynicism (Bernerth *et al.*, 2007; Walker *et al.*, 2007), leader-member exchange (Self *et al.*, 2007; Brown *et al.*, 2008; Mehta, 2009), team member exchange (Mehta, 2009) and perceived organizational support (Self *et al.*, 2007).

Ethics in Organizational Change

Our approach to organizational change is guided by an adherence to ethical principles. Ethics has always been a critical issue in the management and change of organizations. Frankel (1987) assembled an annotated bibliography of published research that related to ethics in organizational development and change. Unfortunately, we have witnessed numerous examples of ethical and unethical actions among high ranking executives of all types of organizations. Organizational change is normal and a requirement to achieve and sustain organizational effectiveness. However, organizational change must be planned, implemented and evaluated ethically. While we think our research, which establishes the importance of the beliefs in change and encourages change agents to design change efforts around these beliefs, enhances the likelihood that their efforts will be considered ethical, that connection has not been made explicit. Doing so and further examining the ethics of change is one of our goals. Change programs can be designed to eliminate unethical practices and implement interventions aimed at making organizational practices satisfy a standard of ethics. In Armenakis and Wigand (2008), for example, we have conducted research on diagnosing organizational practices and determining the extent to which organizational practices are ethical.

Bon Voyage

We have appreciated this opportunity to reflect on where we have been and where we plan to go in our journey to better understand organizational change. We look forward to sharing our future adventures with others and enjoying the contributions of others (Bouckenooghe, 2009) who have joined the journey.

Acknowledgments

It has been a pleasure for us to have the opportunity to work in a departmental organizational culture in the Management Department at Auburn University that encourages scholarship and collegiality. We recognize the contributions of our departmental faculty, our colleagues at other universities, our PhD graduate students, and our practitioner colleagues. We are indeed fortunate to have been able to collaborate with these individuals during our journey. We look forward to continuing our collaborations with them and jointly investigating challenging issues facing the topic of organizational change. During our journey we have received support from several professorships, namely, the Edward Lowder Professorship in Management, the Torchmark Professorship in Management, the Celita Everett Professorship in Management, and the James T. Pursell, Sr. Eminent Scholar in Management Ethics. We would also like to thank the organizations and leaders who have allowed us to help them implement change and those who allowed us to study their change efforts. Finally we are indebted to the major sources of change in our own lives, our wives Wilma and Nancy and our children Andrea, Ashley, John and Daniel for their love, understanding, and support without which this journey would have been more difficult, if not impossible.

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