RESEARCH NOTE

Employee emotions during organizational change—Towards a new research agenda

Patricia Klarner [a,*], Rune Todnem By [b,1], Thomas Diefenbach [c,2]

[a] Munich School of Management, University of Munich, Ludwigstr. 28, 80539 Munich, Germany
[b] Staffordshire University Business School, Brindley Building, Leek Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 2DF, UK
[c] Department of General and Strategic Management, Faculty of Management Technology, German University in Cairo, Egypt

Summary   In this research note, we address the role of employee emotions during organizational change processes. While prior studies have examined emotions during a single change, such research analyzes emotions and change as snapshot events. In addition, we lack sufficient knowledge of the role of employee emotions during repeated changes, despite the evidence that organizations increasingly need to adapt to dynamic environments. We address these shortcomings and offer a research agenda on emotions during change, which incorporates the so far neglected view of emotions as processes that unfold during and across organizational changes. Specifically, we illustrate the role of employee emotions during sequential and simultaneous changes and offer six suggestions for future research on emotions in such contexts.
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Introduction

Organizational change has been a prominent theme in organizational research. It can be triggered by external or internal causes and occurs in different types (Weick & Quinn, 1999). In this research note, we consider intentional organizational change and orchestrated change programs. According to Weick and Quinn (1999), intentional change refers to deliberate and planned series of actions by change initiators at higher organizational levels. Over time, an organization moves back and forth from change to stability.

Whenever intentional change is initiated, there will be proponents and opponents as no change is truly objective or value-free (Burnes & Jackson, 2011; By & Macleod, 2009). While change is planned by managers at the top organizational level, change recipients are employees at multiple hierarchical levels who need to implement and cope with the change (Porras & Robertson, 1992). Prior research has revealed different perceptions and understandings of change initiators (e.g., Diefenbach, 2005; Walsh, 1988) and employees' reactions towards change (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Kotter, 1995; Strebel, 1996). Employees' emotions at multiple hierarchical levels can impact their behavior during the change and the change's outcome (Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Paterson & Härtel, 2002). Several scholars have therefore emphasized the importance of better understanding recipient emotions during change (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006; Huy, 1999; Mossholder, Randall, Armenakis, & Harris, 2000).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +49 89 2180 3064;
fax: +49 89 2180 2886.
   E-mail addresses: klarner@bwl.lmu.de (P. Klarner),
R.T.By@staffs.ac.uk (R.T. By), thomas.diefenbach@guc.edu.eg
(T. Diefenbach).
   [1] Tel.: +44 1782 294161.
   [2] Tel.: +20 2 275 89990.

Recent studies have provided evidence of a complex relationship between employees' emotions and their reactions to change (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008). Researchers have used stage models from psychology to explain how emotions result in individual coping during a change (e.g., Huy, 1999; Kiefer, 2002). Nevertheless, these models neglect the procedural nature of emotions and do not explain how emotions evolve during a change process. In addition, prior studies often treat the organization's broader change context as a black box (e.g., Bell & Taylor, 2011) and tend to focus on single change events (e.g., Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Vince & Broussine, 1996). This is surprising, since it has long been stated that, over time, organizations are confronted with multiple changes that can occur sequentially or simultaneously (Webb & Pettigrew, 1999). However, we lack sufficient clarity on how employee emotions evolve during recurrent change (Liu & Perrewé, 2005). In this research note, we address these shortcomings and illustrate the role of emotions during organizational changes. We contribute to existing research in the fields of change management, organizational behavior, and human resource management by offering a new perspective on change and emotions that highlights their process characteristics. We offer six future research suggestions and illustrate them for two repeated change scenarios: sequential and simultaneous changes.

This research note is structured as follows: we first review existing research on emotions during change. Based on this review, we identify several areas of concern and propose a new research agenda on evolving emotions during change processes. It is our aim to stimulate a research program that opens the black box on employee emotions during repeated changes.

Emotions during organizational change

Among other factors, such as interests, values, and beliefs, individuals' reactions to change are a result of their emotions with respect to a change (Liu & Perrewé, 2005). Scholars have claimed that the term "emotions" has been inconsistently defined in the literature (Gooty, Gavin, & Ashkanasy, 2009). Yet, a predominant characteristic of emotions, especially in organizational behavior (Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and psychology (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2005), is that they are a cognitive response to events. They reflect the interpretation of events that occur in a work setting and may influence sensemaking in times of uncertainty (Tiedens & Linton, 2001), as is often the case during change. Emotions can influence the process of thinking, i.e., how employees deal with a given task (Forgas & Fiedler, 1996), and the content of thinking, i.e., what kind of information employees recall, select, interpret, and learn as a function of their affective state when they have to deal with ambiguous social situations (Forgas & George, 2001). Emotion-driven behavior becomes important in numerous contexts of social interaction (Scherer, 2005).

The literature on emotions during change can be divided into two parts. First, studies in change management primarily focus on employee behavior as a result of emotions evoked during change (e.g., Avey et al., 2008; Saunders & Thornhill, 2002). Second, studies in organizational behavior and human

resource management have used psychological stage models to explain the relationship between emotions and employee behavior during change (e.g., Huy, 1999; Liu & Perrewé, 2005). In the following, we review both types of studies and derive several shortcomings to these approaches.

Change management and employee emotions

According to the traditional understanding, employees have to adapt to organizational change and learn new strategies to achieve redefined goals while being resilient to setbacks during change (Avey et al., 2008). Employees' adaptive behavior is driven by their emotions (Scherer, 2005). Prior studies on employees' emotions during change (George & Jones, 2001; Huy, 2002; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Mossholder et al., 2000) often characterize emotions in terms of hedonic tone or pleasantness (Larsen & Diener, 1992): they are classified as either positive emotions, such as joy and excitement, or negative emotions, such as fear and grief (Liu & Perrewé, 2005). In the context of organizational change, positive emotions include being confident about change and enhance trust, while negative emotions include feeling stressed or insecure about change, leading to mistrust (Saunders & Thornhill, 2002).

Several studies on emotions during change have examined the behavioral outcomes of employees who show negative or positive emotions. First, failure to emotionally adapt to change leads to resistance among employees (Spiker, 1994). Resistance to change can result from negative emotions and the belief that change is unnecessary (Ford et al., 2008; Kotter, 1995; Lines, 2004). It leads to a withholding of participation during the change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Kiefer, 2002; Strebel, 1996). Second, individual coping can result in support of the change. Avey et al. (2008) found that positive emotions can help employees cope with change, as they broaden the perceived options for employees, offer an open approach to problem solving, and supply energy for adapting to new conditions. Positive emotions may increase the level of commitment and emotional engagement (Staw & Barsade, 1993) to the organization, resulting in loyal behavior even in times of disruption (Anderson & Guerrero, 1998; Liu & Perrewé, 2005).

While prior studies often argue for the benefits of positive emotions, negative emotions frequently prevail in change (Huy, 2002; Kiefer, 2005; Maitlis & Sonensheim, 2010). Besides their potential detrimental effects, negative emotions can function as warnings and may be valuable for work life (Elfenbein, 2007). For example, they signal that action needs to be taken and stimulate quick and full individual responses (Spoor & Kelly, 2004). Thus, the deterministic view of many studies that describe positive emotions as beneficial to change and negative emotions as detrimental does not fully capture the role of emotions during change.

Overall, our review highlights three areas of concern related to studies on emotions during organizational change. First, extant research's orthogonal definition of emotions as positive or negative entails theoretical and empirical problems (Bell & Taylor, 2011; Fineman, 2006). Positive and negative emotions should rather be seen as continual and mutually informative (Fineman, 2006; Lazarus, 2003), implying that several emotions can coexist (Elfenbein, 2007;

Piderit, 2000). For example, one can imagine that the announcement of an organizational restructuring creates mixed emotions, e.g., fear related to uncertainty about lay-offs (e.g., Sutton & Kahn, 1987) mixed with hope for improvement in the organization's performance (e.g., Huy, 2002). While it has been acknowledged that several emotions are evoked during change (George & Jones, 2001; Vince, 2006), prior studies have not studied such a mix of emotions. We lack sufficient knowledge of how change triggers different emotions within an individual and how, in turn, such emotions lead to different employee coping strategies.

Second, extant studies on emotions during change treat change primarily as a snapshot event, which is surprising, given the evidence that change evolves as a process (Piderit, 2000; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Characterizating change as a process implies that employees can show several emotions that can evolve during change, and we need more research on how this occurs.

Third, extant research on emotions during change often focuses on a single change, neglecting that organizations increasingly have to change in a repeating fashion (Vermeulen, Puranam, & Gulati, 2010). In sum, prior studies on emotions during change remain silent on the procedural and repetitive nature of change and fail to examine emotions as continual constructs.

Psychological stage models of emotions

While studies in the change management literature are often concerned with the behavioral outcomes of change emotions, other studies — mainly in human resource management and organizational behavior — have used psychological stage models (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) to explain the relationship between triggers for emotions, employee emotions, coping behaviors, and change outcomes.

The literature has identified several triggers for employee emotions during change. Fox and Amichai-Hamburger (2001) suggest that it is not only a change program that arouses emotions among employees, but that the trigger of the change itself — whether a crisis or an opportunity — may also generate strong emotions. Unpredictable changes and crises can threaten employees' motivation (Leana & Barry, 2000; Leana & Van Buren, 1999). In such a situation, employees create their own interpretations of the change and its consequences (e.g., Bovey & Hede, 2001; Maitlis & Sonensheim, 2010).

Other studies have examined the relationship between employee emotions and their coping behavior during change (Huy, 1999; Liu & Perrewé, 2005). For example, Liu and Perrewé (2005) propose a cognitive-emotional process that individuals go through in a planned change. Individuals are supposed to try to make sense of the change and solve emotional tensions during emotional episodes, which is explained by psychological appraisal theory (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). First, *primary appraisal* occurs when individuals evaluate whether the change program is relevant to their well-being or personal goals. If individuals consider the change situation relevant, *secondary appraisal* follows. In this stage, employees receive more information on the change and they start to experience it in their daily work

lives. Secondary appraisal is influenced by the degree of congruence between an individual's goals and the change's goals, an individual's degree of confidence for the success of the proposed change, an individual's psychological and actual investments and faith in the organization's strategies, and the emotional ties that an individual develops with subordinates, supervisors, and peers in daily interaction.

The appraisal process results in an individual emotional response which is then translated into a specific coping behavior (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Individuals experience change in different ways and thus vary in their willingness and ability to adapt to change (Bovey & Hede, 2001). According to Liu and Perrewé (2005), individuals may respond to change by coping actively, by means of their actions, or they may cope passively by, for example, adjusting their expectations.

The types of emotions and individual coping strategies of employees ultimately affect the outcome of a change (Paterson & Härtel, 2002). First, different behavioral coping strategies can influence *employees*' change outcomes. For example, proactive coping behavior is more likely to enhance employees' job satisfaction and job performance (Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999). In contrast, passive coping strategies during change are related to higher psychological distress and less effective job performance (Liu & Perrewé, 2005). Second, individual coping strategies can influence the *organizational* change outcome. Emotional engagement as a result of positive employee emotions can affect the emotions and motivation of other team members, ultimately positively influencing the change (Bakker, Van Emmerik, & Euwema, 2006). Conversely, resistance to change is often demonstrated by disengagement and deviant behavior, which hinders effective change (Avey et al., 2008).

Overall, while studies that have used psychological stage models have provided insights into the emotions during change, these studies show similar areas of concerns to the ones identified for change management studies on employee emotions. First, studies using psychological stage models still divide emotions into positive and negative and do not examine multiple emotions that may coexist during a change process (e.g., Elfenbein, 2007). Second, studies using stage models examine how employees cope with emotions resulting from *the* change, which implies that change occurs as a snapshot event, triggering certain emotions among employees (e.g., Liu & Perrewé, 2005). While these studies provide an initial conceptualization and analysis of change emotions, we share a recent criticism of Bell and Taylor (2011) who point out that stage models are limited to account for the complexity of organizational phenomena. By applying stage models to organizational change, prior studies neglect that emotions evolve during a change *process* (MacKenzie, 2000; Van De Ven & Poole, 1995). Planned change, such as organizational transformation, takes time (Kotter, 1995), and several events throughout the change process can trigger different emotions and coping behavior among employees. For example, one can imagine that the announcement of a change and communication of hurdles during its implementation can trigger several employee emotions. Thus, in order to understand emotions during change, they need to be studied from an evolving perspective (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Third, studies on employee emotions and resulting coping behavior focus on single organizational change. However, employees may

experience several emotions throughout changes, and the emotions experienced in prior changes may impact the appraisal processes triggered by a subsequent change (e.g., Kiefer, 2002). In order to understand employees' appraisal processes, it is important to examine employee emotions during repeated changes. In sum, we need more studies on emotions during change that consider the evolving character of emotions during a change process, as well as the broader context of repeated change.
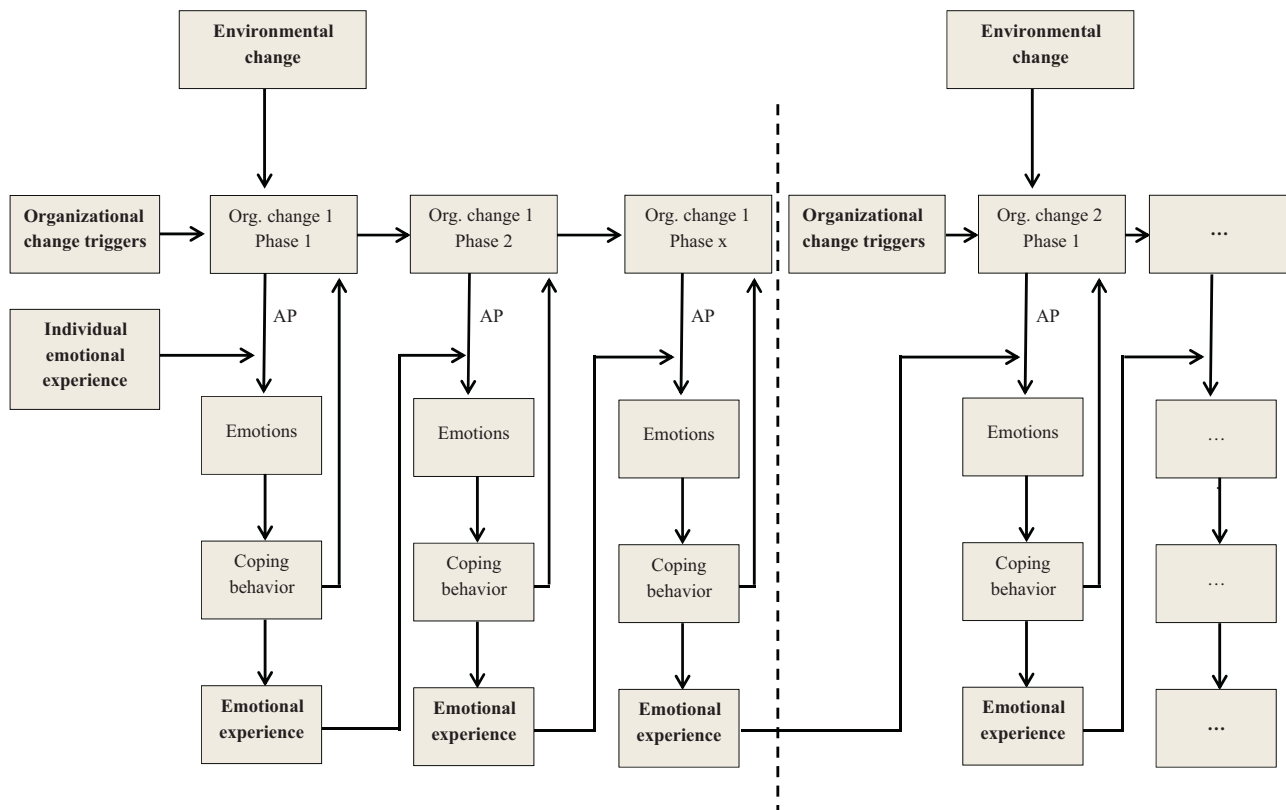
Emotions during organizational change processes

Building on the identified gaps in the extant literature, we develop a process approach for emotions during change. Repeated changes can occur in a sequential way, with one change following after another, or simultaneously, with multiple orchestrated changes occurring at the same time (Stensaker, Falkenberg, Meyer, & Haueng, 2002; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Based on these perspectives, we develop a new view on emotions during *sequential* and *simultaneous* changes.

Two approaches for investigating emotions during organizational change

A new research agenda on emotions during change requires a dynamic conceptualization of *change as a process* that unfolds repeatedly over time (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). In addition, it

requires a definition of *emotion as a process* (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2005; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). We therefore propose the psychological component process definition of emotions (Scherer, 1987, 2005, 2009) as highly appropriate for examining the dynamic nature of emotions during change. This definition of emotions explicitly acknowledges that appraisal processes change rapidly when an individual obtains new information or re-evaluates an event (Scherer, 2005). Consequently, emotions are, "rarely steady states. Rather, emotion processes are undergoing constant modification allowing rapid readjustment to changing circumstances or evaluations" (Scherer, 2005, p. 702). Defining emotions as a process is especially apt for analyzing emotions during organizational change, as a change process unfolds in several phases (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999), all of which are defined by different stimulus events that may trigger emotional responses. Studies on employee behavior have found that organizational members interpret key events related to a change as it unfolds in phases (Isabella, 1990). If employees pay attention to different events occurring during change phases, such events may serve as stimuli for different appraisal processes throughout the change process (e.g., Scherer, 2005). Thus, a phase analysis of organizational change may detect different emotional patterns, which studies on emotions during change characterized as a single event (Liu & Perrewé, 2005) cannot reveal. Fig. 1 illustrates our first approach for investigating unfolding emotions during different phases of a change and across sequential changes (e.g., Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Luecke, 2003).

Figure 1 Emotions during sequential organizational changes. The figure illustrates the dynamic unfolding of emotions during organizational change. It highlights that different emotions can evolve during and across change processes.

Fig. 1 shows that each change has to be studied in context. Environmental and/or organizational factors trigger organizational change (Weick & Quinn, 1999), which starts with "Phase 1". For illustrative purposes, we number the different change phases starting from one to the final phase, named "x". The outcome of each phase determines the following phase, as symbolized by the arrows between successive phases. As each change is unique, the phases through which change unfolds may vary across changes. Therefore, we do not propose a limited number of change phases but rather emphasize what constitutes a phase. In line with Scherer's (2005) definition of emotions and our focus on the unfolding of emotions during change, we define a change phase by the occurrence of a specific stimulus event, which triggers employee emotions. For example, the announcement of a change functions as a stimulus event that initiates employees' appraisal processes ("AP"). Such appraisal processes can lead to a mix of coexisting emotions ("emotions") (Elfenbein, 2007). Emotions related to a stimulus event in the initial change phase then trigger employees' coping behavior, i.e., their response to the change phase (e.g., Liu & Perrewé, 2005). Employee coping ultimately impacts the change phase (e.g., Huy, 1999). This process repeatedly occurs during a change process, as appraisal processes are initiated whenever a new stimulus event occurs. In contrast to existing studies on emotions during change, we thus emphasize that several events may serve as stimuli for *new* emotional episodes during the change process (e.g., Scherer, 2005), e.g., when the change initiators communicate that the change takes longer than planned or requires more cost cutting measures than initially announced. Field researchers may identify change phases by analyzing a company's communication about a change and monitoring shifting employee emotions during a change process. Whenever employees are provided with new information about the change, they may re-evaluate the original stimulus event (Scherer, 2005) and undergo new appraisal processes, consequently showing different emotions.

In addition to illustrating emotions during different phases of a change process, Fig. 1 incorporates the context of repeated, sequentially occurring changes ("Org. change 1", "Org. change 2") (e.g., By, 2005). For illustrative purposes, only two changes are displayed in Fig. 1. The boundaries between these changes are considered permeable, indicated by the dotted line in Fig. 1, as past emotional experience could impact subsequent change processes. Conceptualizing employee emotions during repeated changes reveals that individuals' emotional experience with change may impact the appraisal process in each change phase, as well as across changes. The more often employees encounter certain events, the more adept they become at interpreting their meaning and new events (Elfenbein, 2007). We argue that this enables employees to accumulate emotional change experience throughout different phases of the change process and across repeated changes. Kiefer (2002, p. 45) terms this experience as the "individual experience of change", which results from the "continuous experience of different emotions over time, connected with the interpretation of ongoing events". Scherer (2009) speaks of individuals' emotional schemata, i.e., those strongly relevant stimulus features which, once they have underwent appropriate appraisal, will be stored in an individual's memory. The more

diverse emotions an individual experiences across changes, the more diverse such emotional schemata may become. Diverse emotional schemata may thus form *employees' emotional experience* which — through comparison of event stimulus features to existing schemata — can influence emotions regarding future change events. Besides dispositional and situational factors, emotional experience can thus impact the appraisal processes (e.g., Smith & Kirby, 2009).

Fig. 2 illustrates our second approach to investigating emotions during change, which covers the process of simultaneous changes (Kiefer, 2002). Planned changes are usually communicated at the initiation date and the timing of a new change's announcement indicates whether changes occur sequentially or simultaneously. Studying the announcement date of changes helps to identify the stimulus events related to the initiation of each change of an orchestrated program of multiple changes, each of which may trigger employee emotions. In addition, researchers need to examine the information provided to employees about the changes in order to examine potential stimuli for different emotions.

As shown in Fig. 2, the first change is initiated ("Org. change 1") in Phase 1. In Phase 2 of the first change ("Org. change 1, Phase 2"), a second change is initiated ("Org. change 2, Phase 1"). Thus, two appraisal processes are illustrated in Fig. 2, marked in dark grey: cognitive appraisal occurs in response to events during the second phase of Change 1, as well as in response to events in the first phase of Change 2. Conceptualizing emotions during sequential and simultaneous changes reveal several future research areas, which we present in the following section.

Towards a new research agenda

Based on our two approaches for investigating emotions during changes, we derive six suggestions for future research, which together constitute a new research agenda for this field.

First, prior research suggests that employees' coping with change only affects the ultimate change outcome (Huy, 1999; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Maitlis & Sonensheim, 2010). However, we need to understand what impact employees' coping behavior has throughout the change process, rather than only at the end of the change. Employee coping in each change phase may impact the respective change phase's outcome and thus determine how successful the change progresses. For example, if employees show resistance towards change in the initial change phase, this may slow down the change process in this first phase and determine the effectiveness of the overall change process. A new change phase begins when employees receive new information about the change, which stimulates new appraisal processes and coping behavior (Scherer, 2005). This process continues until the change has been implemented, which in turn results in employee coping behavior at the end of the change. It is thus important to examine how employee coping during each change phase impacts the outcome of the respective phase and the subsequent phases of a change process. Overall,

(1) *Future studies need to examine the unfolding and outcomes of emotions during an organizational change process.*
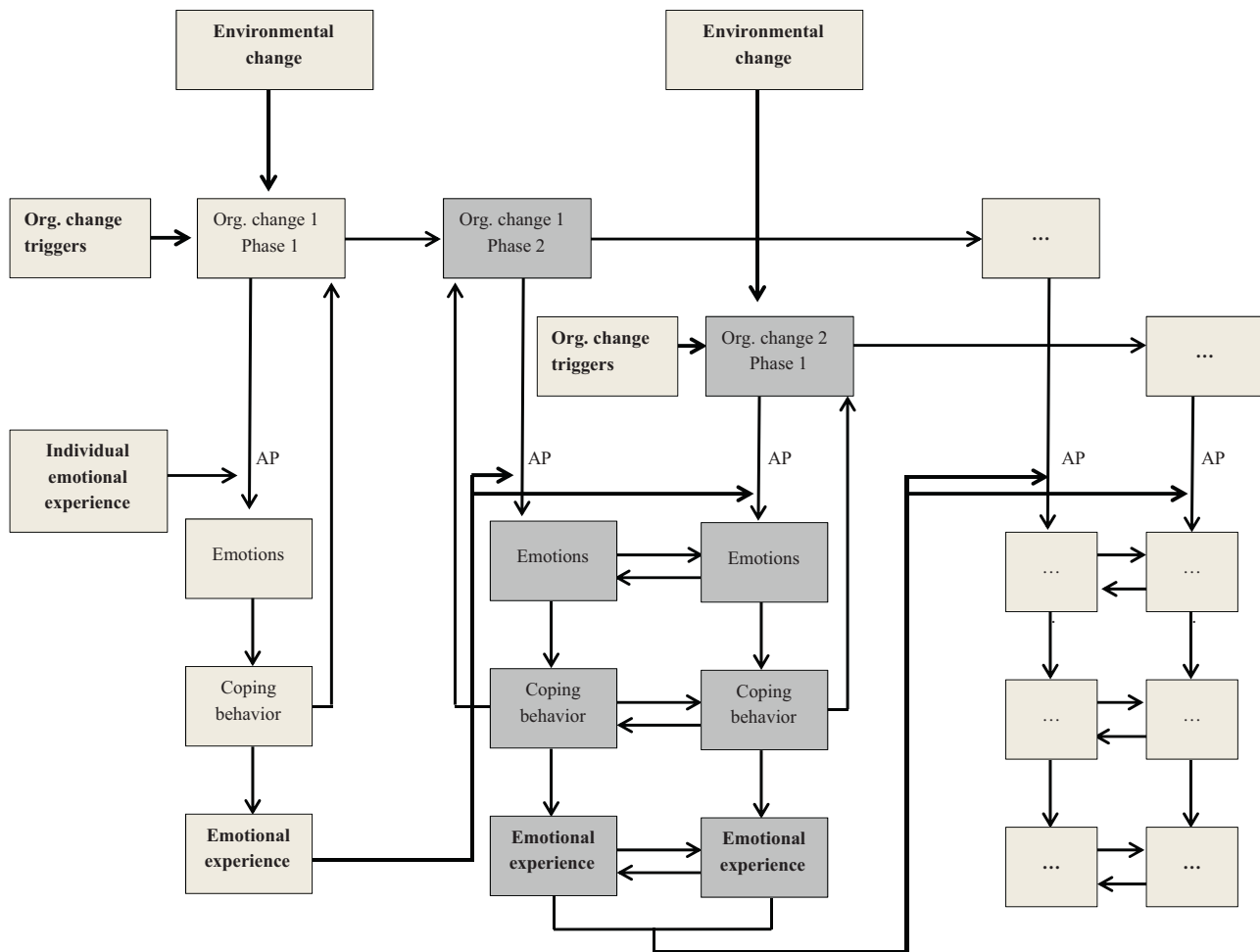
Figure 2   Emotions during simultaneous organizational changes. The figure illustrates the dynamic unfolding of emotions during simultaneous organizational changes. It highlights the multiple dynamic processes related to emotions during at least two simultaneously occurring changes that future research needs to explore.

Second, prior studies on emotions during change have failed to study emotions during repeated changes, and we aim at filling this important gap and propose two future research suggestions for emotions during subsequent organizational changes. Specifically, emotional experience could impact individuals' cognitive appraisal during each subsequent change phase, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Yet we lack a deeper understanding of the construct of employees' emotional experience in change. In particular, it remains unclear how individuals' emotional experience develops over time, and how it specifically impacts cognitive appraisal processes during one change process and during subsequent changes. Thus,

(2) *Future research needs to examine how emotional experience, accumulated over different change phases and across changes, affects the appraisal processes.*

We suggest that researchers start examining employee emotions and their emotional experience during two sequential changes. This should reveal interesting insights on how changes are related not only at the organizational level of analysis (e.g., performance outcomes) but also at the micro-level (employee emotions). In addition, empirical research needs to be conducted on employee emotions during broader planned change programs. Overall, the analysis of employee emotions provides researchers with interesting terrains. Yet it is important to set clear boundaries on the analysis of emotions during changes. Researchers can define distinct periods of repeated changes and examine emotions during such change periods. Each change period ends when an organization enters a period of stability, thus not initiating any new changes for a while (Klarner, 2010; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Third, while illustrating avenues for future research, Fig. 1 also constitutes a simplification of repeated changes. Emotions unfold in a complex process and can vary widely (e.g., Smith & Lazarus, 1990), not only within a change but also across changes. For the sake of clarity of Fig. 1 and due to our aim of illustrating the unfolding of emotions during and across changes, we have not added any boxes for additional organization- or group-level influences on employee emotions. Yet we would highlight these influences through our third suggestion:

(3) *Future research on emotions during repeated change needs to examine the role of change timing and emotional contagion.*

Organizations differ in how they change, which is, among other factors, determined by different timing of repeated changes (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Change timing depends on the speed of environmental changes and the frequency with which organizational triggers cause change (e.g., Vermeulen et al., 2010), which should be considered when studying emotions during changes. For example, organizations that plan and initiate changes at a quick pace may confront their employees with constant uncertainty about their jobs, which may in turn result in change fatigue (Abrahamson, 2000; Kotter, 1995) and harm the implementation of repeated changes. Future research should examine how the timing of subsequent changes impacts employees' emotions and their coping behavior over time.

In addition, future studies need to examine the role of emotional contagion during repeated changes. Emotional contagion describes the process in which emotions spread among individuals (Barsade, 2002; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). Hareli and Rafaeli (2008) have highlighted the reciprocal interpersonal influence of emotions, suggesting that a person's emotion can shape the emotions of other people. Thus, change recipients can react to and draw inferences from other individuals' emotions (Cote, 2005). For example, change leaders' emotions could influence the emotions of change recipients as well as groups or teams (Barsade, Ward, Turner, & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Felps, Mitchell, & Byington, 2006). Consequently, it matters what emotions are displayed by change leaders and change recipients, and how these emotions are assessed, communicated, and transferred within an organization during a change process. While prior studies have mainly examined emotional contagion during a single change, future research could explore how emotional contagion affects employee emotions during repeated changes.

Besides these suggestions for studying emotions during sequential changes, we propose three future research suggestions for the study of emotions during simultaneous changes (Fig. 2). First, it remains unclear whether the appraisal processes related to stimulus events at simultaneous changes occur in separate or interrelated ways. For example, Bartunek et al. (2006) have found that recipients who are involved in several changes may become confused by the intermingled nature of contradicting messages of several changes. Employees may have difficulties making sense of conflicting events related to simultaneous changes. So far it remains unclear how employees respond to different stimuli events (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991) related to simultaneous changes. This raises questions, such as: Do individuals evaluate each change separately or together? How do they respond to conflicting stimuli events resulting from multiple simultaneous changes? How are cognitive appraisal processes influenced by the individual's emotional change experience, as opposed to short-term stimuli of simultaneously occuring changes? Researchers need to study these questions by examining how employees relate to different changes. Thus,

(4) *Future research needs to examine the appraisal processes that occur in relation to simultaneous organizational changes.*

Second, it remains unclear how emotions that occur in response to simultaneous changes affect employees' coping behavior. In their analysis of strategic changes at three major companies, Stensaker et al. (2002) examined excessive change, defined as a situation when an organization either pursues several changes simultaneously, or when new changes are introduced before the previous change has been completed. They found that middle managers and employees on lower hierarchical levels experience symptoms such as stress, frustration, and job dissatisfaction in times of excessive change. This resulted in different coping mechanisms, such as exiting the organization, sabotaging change initiatives, or showing difficulties with performing even routine tasks. The consequences of these reactions could result in failure to implement change successfully. The study is one of the few that identified several emotions during excessive changes and resulting coping mechanisms. Yet it remains unclear how coping processes evolve, especially when multiple emotions are evoked by several simultaneous changes. In sum,

(5) *Future research needs to further explore how employees cope with emotions evoked from multiple simultaneous change processes.*

Third, the different emotions experienced during the simultaneous changes may constitute the individual's emotional experience. Yet we lack sufficient knowledge of how different emotions that coexist during simultaneous changes build employees' emotional experience. For example, how are emotions of different pleasantness incorporated into emotional schemata (Scherer, 2005) if such emotions occur at the same time? Thus,

(6) *Future research needs to examine how an emotional experience with change forms during simultaneous change processes.*

Conclusion

In this research note, we argue that a static, orthogonal definition of emotions is problematic since it does not capture the process dimension of emotions (Scherer, 2005) and their continual and mutually informative nature (Fineman, 2006; Lazarus, 2003). We offer a component process definition of emotion (Scherer, 1987, 2005, 2009) as an alternative view that incorporates the dynamic, evolving dimension of emotions and allows for multiple emotions to coexist. In addition, psychological stage models of emotions cannot fully account for the complexity of change (e.g., Bell & Taylor, 2011). Finally, studying emotions during a single change does not explain the need to change repeatedly (Vermeulen et al., 2010). Based on our definition of emotions (Scherer, 2005; Smith & Lazarus, 1990) and change (Kiefer, 2005) as ongoing processes, we illustrate two change scenarios — sequential and simultaneous changes — and derive six future research suggestions that constitute a new research agenda for emotions during change. Scholars examining employee emotions during *sequential* changes are advised to analyze how emotions evolve within and across different change processes; to

study how emotional experience accumulates over time and impacts cognitive appraisal; and to examine how the timing of changes and emotional contagion impact employee emotions and their coping behaviors. Research on emotions during *simultaneous* changes has to explore the processes and interrelations of cognitive appraisal and behavioral coping related to multiple changes, and how employees build emotional experience if confronted with several changes at the same time. This research notes contributes to research on change management, organizational behavior and human resource management by identifying the shortcomings in extant studies' definition of emotions and instead applying a psychological definition of emotions as a process. Our future research suggestions open the black box of change emotions during repeated changes. A better understanding of how emotions unfold during and across changes can lead to more focused managerial interventions intended to effectively manage the change process (e.g., Kiefer, 2002).

While sequential and simultaneous changes illustrate two possible scenarios in organizations, we acknowledge that there are further ones, depending on the specific timing of changes (Pettigrew et al., 2001; Van De Ven & Poole, 1995). We propose these two scenarios as a starting point to examine the complexity of emotions during repeated changes, and future research is needed to develop models for emotions during different unfoldings of changes. In addition, multiple groups of employees can display emotions (e.g., Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Not only the recipients of change but also the change decision-makers and the change implementers may show emotions. Across changes, the decision-makers may differ, as do the change agents and change implementers. Future research may examine how emotions of various groups of employees evolve over time.

Our suggestions are of course only tentative ones, and researchers need to explore several others to enhance our understanding of emotions during repeated change processes. We hope that this research note paves the way for more studies on emotions during and across repeated organizational change processes.

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