

# Another look at the role of emotion in the organizational change: A process model

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## Abstract

The paper proposes a cognitive–emotional model of organizational change. It is argued that employees' emotions go through four sequential but distinguishable stages in the organizational change process. In the first stage, primary appraisal induces emotions that are high in arousal, mixed in hedonic tones, and are anticipatory. In the second stage, the mixed emotional experiences give way to either positive or negative emotions as a result of the secondary appraisal. The emotional experience then affects employees' coping behaviors in the third stage. In the fourth stage, discrete emotions that are evaluative and have distinct action tendencies are induced. Given this changing nature of employees' emotional experiences during the organizational change process, and considering emotions' influence on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, it is suggested that change agents adjust the timing and content of the information communicated in order to promote employee acceptance to change. Implications of this conceptualization are discussed, as are directions for future research.

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Changing times often are troubling for organizations. Besides the technical part of the task, change agents also must deal with emotions on the part of the change recipients. Frustration, anger, and fear are but a few examples of intense negative emotions that employees may experience when confronted with organizational change. Thus, understanding and managing the emotions of change recipients during the change process is a key challenge for both change agents and researchers. Rising to this challenge is a body of research that is devoted to understanding what emotions are present when changes occur, and how they affect the organizational change process (e.g., Brundin, 2002; George & Jones, 2001; Huy, 1999, 2002; Mossholder, Settoon, Armenakis, & Harris, 2000; Paterson & Härtel, 2002; Vince & Broussine, 1996). Several emotion-centered theoretical explorations on the change process have been offered, and it has been suggested collectively that not being able to induce and manage the content and intensity of the emotions evoked by change events serve as a key reason why some change programs fail (e.g., George & Jones, 2001; Huy, 1999; Paterson & Härtel, 2002). Thus, one of the most significant contributions of this paper is the examination of why

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and how the emotional experiences of employees change and evolve during the organizational change process. Second, we examine how change agents can adjust the timing and content of the information communicated to employees to promote the acceptance of change.

Prior research on emotion and change has examined emotions primarily as a static feeling state, and the notion that emotional reactions toward one key affective event may change overtime has been largely ignored. This is in sharp contrast to the emotion literature's longstanding consensus that emotion is a process (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Frijda, 1993; Gross, 1998; Lazarus, 1991a,b; Plutchik, 1980; Smith & Lazarus, 1993).

Building on Lazarus' (1991a; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) work on emotion and stress, we propose a process model of organizational change that focuses on change recipients' cognitions and emotions. The purpose of the paper is to integrate an emotional perspective into the explanation of individual reactions to change by highlighting changing emotional experiences of employees during the change process. We believe this model will help change agents to better understand and predict emotions that emerge at different stages of change, and ultimately, to manage those emotions through monitoring change program implementation, particularly, through better communication with change recipients.

The focus of the paper is on major planned organizational change, such as mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, organizational restructuring, and modifying the organizational culture. This is because major planned changes are usually emotional for employees, and organizations typically have more control in introducing and implementing change interventions, as compared to changes induced by sudden environmental forces. We first briefly review the organizational change literature with a focus on the role of communication in the organizational change process. We then briefly discuss Lazarus' transactional model of stress and coping and present a cognitive–emotional model of individual reactions to planned organizational change. Finally, we discuss the implications of the model and offer some suggestions for future research.

## 1. Organizational change and communicating information

Organizations have to change in order to adapt to environmental demands and to remain competitive. Despite the desirable feature of change to organizations, change agents frequently find that employees resist change. The notion of employees' resistance to change has long sparked researchers' interests (e.g., Coch & French, 1948). A remarkable amount of research has been devoted to examining how and why resistance to change occurs, and more importantly, how receptivity to change can be fostered. Information communication refers to management's proactive effort to keep employees well informed about the change effort.

The importance of information communication during an organizational change has been recognized by both researchers and practitioners (Richardson & Denton, 1996). At a time of uncertainty, information received about organizational change helps to reduce employees' anxiety and uncertainty (Miller & Monge, 1985), and enhance their levels of efficacy to deal with the change process (Terry & Jimmieson, 2003). Empirical findings supporting this assertion are abundant. For example, Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) found that direct and honest communication about the ongoing change reduced dysfunctional outcomes in a merger. Cameron (1994) found that greater information communication is one key factor that predicts downsizing success, as indicated by organizational improvement and effectiveness. Wanberg and Banas (2000) reported that information received about the change program was positively related to employee openness to change. Also, it has been found that employees who received managerial communications that helped them understand the events surrounding the change demonstrated increased psychological well being and job satisfaction (Terry & Jimmieson, 2003), as well as commitment after the change (Gopinath & Becker, 2000; Kramer, Dougherty, & Pierce, 2004).

In the business world, stories are shared in popular business magazines as well as academic publications. Delta Airlines successfully went through a major change in the early 1990s because of management's effort to furnish employees with timely and honest information regarding what was known about the change (Richardson & Denton, 1996). Agilent Technologies, an IT company, was able to layoff 8000 people and still maintain a high level of commitment and loyalty among employees, partly due to management's communication efforts (Roth, 2002). Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) reported that management's reluctance to share information with employees was associated with heightened levels of dysfunctional outcomes following a merger.

Based on the positive influence of communication on receptivity, it has recently been suggested that change agents should “talk about the change as openly as possible, as early as possible, and as much as they can in order to minimize

or eliminate resistance” (Fox & Amichai-Hamburger, 2001, p. 86; see also Richardson and Denton, 1996). The evidence in the literature certainly seems to support this assertion. However, prior research on communicating information about organizational change has not yet provided answers to why the information communicated earlier in the change process is better than communication that occurs later. Interestingly, some also have warned open and honest communication with employees about change programs may cause negative reactions from employees, and hinder management’s ability to respond flexibly to change (cf., Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). So, to what extent should practitioners answer the call for timely and relevant information to be communicated during the planned change process? We seek to provide answers by examining organizational change and emotion in a process model.

## 2. The transactional model of stress and coping

Lazarus’ transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus, 1966, 1991b; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) frequently has often been used as the theoretical framework for emotion in the change literature (e.g., Huy, 1999; Paterson & Härtel, 2002). According to Lazarus, person–environment interactions lead to individuals’ two stages of appraisals, primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. During the primary appraisal, individuals determine whether or not there is any personal stake in the encounter (Lazarus, 1991b). If the individuals decide that the situations are relevant to them, they progress into the secondary appraisal, where the locus of causality, coping potential, and future expectancies are evaluated (Lazarus, 1991b). Lazarus (1991a) also argued that through coping efforts, the person–environment relationship is changed, which shapes the meaning of the situation as perceived by individuals. He further suggested that, because emotions are reactions to the meaning of the situation, coping shapes subsequent emotions.

Along with many other theorists of emotion (e.g., Clark & Watson, 1994; Frijda, 1986; Plutchik, 1980; Scherer, 1994), Lazarus (1991a) argued that each emotion has its behavioral implications. For example, anxiety predicts avoidance or escape behaviors, and sadness predicts inaction or withdrawal. Although it has been suggested that positive emotions do not have clear action tendencies (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998, 2000a; Lazarus, 1991a), it has been argued that they do significantly influence behaviors, and do so in a way that builds human strength (Fredrickson, 1998, 2000a). For example, joy promotes individual playfulness, and by doing so, broadens people’s mindset, and even strengthens their social ties (Fredrickson, 2000a); interest that is felt in a novel situation encourages exploration, and thereby, increases the likelihood of obtaining new information and knowledge (Clark & Watson, 1994).

## 3. A proposed model

Building on Lazarus’ (1991a) theory of emotions, a cognitive–emotional model of individuals’ reactions to planned organizational change is proposed, and presented in Fig. 1. It is argued that, in a planned organizational change, individuals go through a cognitive–emotional process, in which they try to make sense of the change, struggle with their emotional tensions, and choose their ways of coping. It is argued that a change process typically involves an emotional episode that has four sequential but distinguishable stages. Following Lazarus (1991a), the first three stages are termed the primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and coping stage, respectively. The last stage is termed the outcome stage of the planned change. The model also includes factors that may influence the emotion process, specifically, the communication of information and individual attributions.

### 3.1. Emotion

Following prior research, emotions are examined along two dimensions: hedonic tone and level of arousal (Larsen & Diener, 1992; Russell, 1989). Hedonic tone refers to the pleasantness of emotions — while feelings of joy, trust, excitement, anticipation and surprise are commonly discussed as positive emotions; grief, fear, anger and disgust are usually deemed as negative emotions (cf., Fredrickson, 1998; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The level of arousal refers to the intensity of experienced emotions, which may range from high (e.g., “I’m so excited!”) to low (e.g., “I feel OK.”).

Where needed, we also discuss emotion in terms of uncertainty. Uncertainty is an inherent facet of emotion (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Whereas some emotions are associated with people feeling certain about a stimulus event (e.g., what has happened, what is going on, and what will happen next), others are associated with people feeling uncertain and disoriented. For example, it has been found consistently that emotions such as anger, disgust, happiness, and contentment occur with the sense of certainty, and emotions of hope, surprise, fear and worry are associated with the

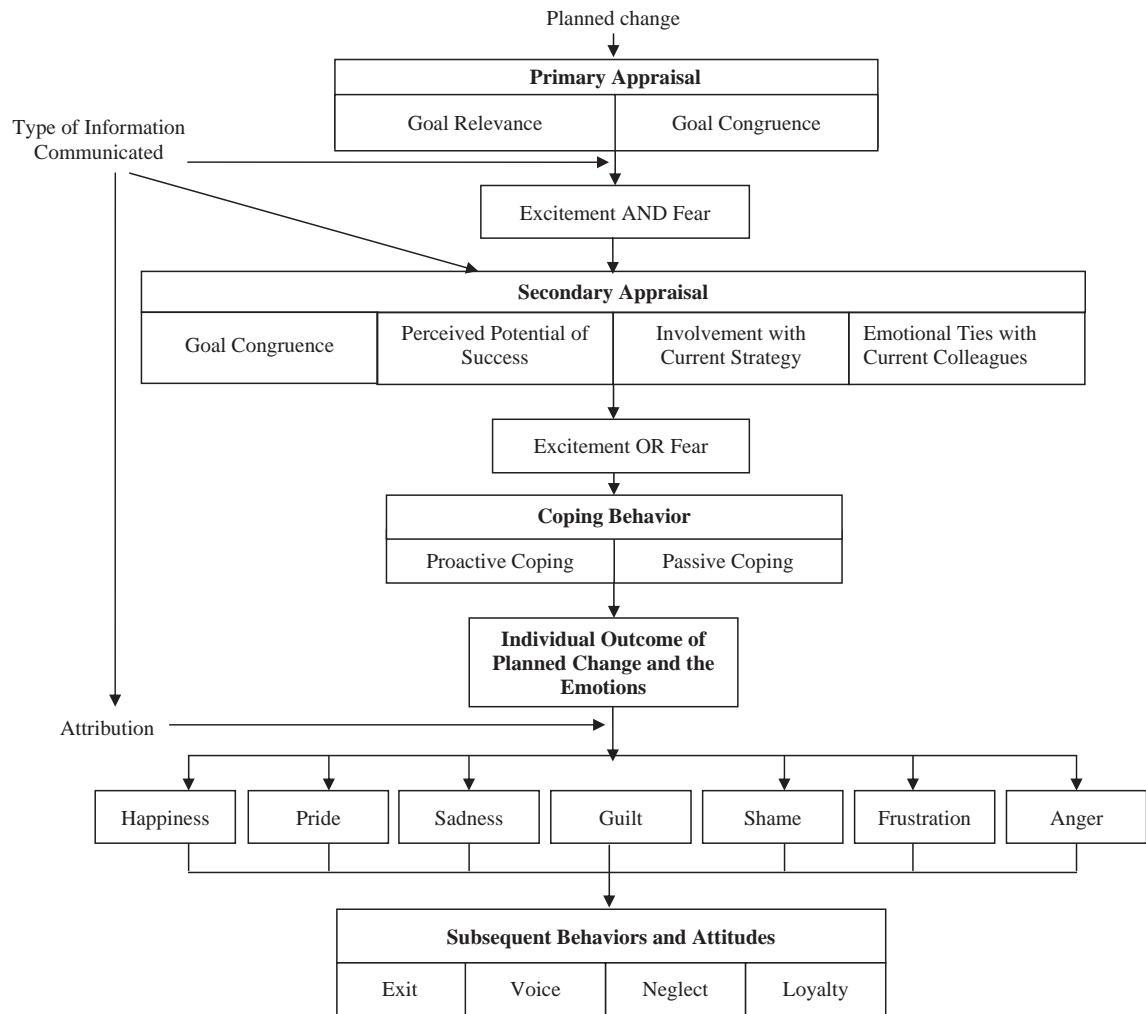


Fig. 1. A cognitive–emotional model of individual reactions to planned organizational change.

sense of uncertainty (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Similar discussion has been made by Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988) who distinguished between future-oriented and past-oriented emotions (see also, Barbalet, 1998; Jones & Rittman, 2002). They argued that future-oriented emotions are induced by the expectation of future outcomes and past-oriented emotions are induced by outcomes that have already occurred (see also Barbalet, 1998; LaMuth, 2002). It appears that future-oriented emotions are associated with a high level of uncertainty; and past-oriented emotions are associated with a low level of uncertainty. For example, fear is the result of anticipation of a threat or danger and is associated with people's feeling of uncertainty in terms of what will happen next, and regret is induced by failure of the past and a sense of certainty about what has happened. For the purpose of this paper, we term emotions associated with uncertain appraisals *anticipatory emotions*, and emotions associated with certain appraisals *evaluative emotions*.

It is argued in detail in later sections that emotions induced earlier in the change process are primarily anticipatory emotions, whereas those induced later are primarily evaluative emotions. It is also argued that whereas evaluative emotions have specific action tendencies, anticipatory emotions delay people's action tendencies, and prompt individuals to process more information before taking any action.

### 3.2. Primary appraisal

According to Lazarus (1991a), during the primary appraisal individuals make a global evaluation as to whether the stimulus event is goal relevant and goal congruent. Applying this to the change context, a change program may or may

not be perceived as relevant to an individual's well being. For example, a change of customer base, despite the strategic significance to the organization, may not be perceived as important by a service worker to the extent that she still practices the same type of daily routine in providing the service required. Conversely, a change in CEO may evoke a sense of unsettlement in every employee. Major planned changes such as mergers and acquisitions should be experienced by a majority of the employees as relevant due to the immediate impact on their career, work environment, and work relationships.

In addition, a change program may or may not be congruent with one's personal goals. For example, one manager may perceive a change program as holding the potential to solve deep-rooted problems in the organization, and thereby be passionate about it (Huy, 2002) and perceive goal congruence. Whereas another manager might perceive goal incongruence when the change program is expected to jeopardize the benefits of the department, or is not consistent with his or her personal strategic view (cf., Guth & Macmillan, 1986). At this stage of appraisal, employees will make only a general, global evaluation due to limited time and information available.

### *3.2.1. Planned change induces anticipatory emotions that are of high arousal and mixed affective tone in primary appraisal*

At the very beginning when a planned change is introduced, cues that signal "something new" are abundant. Even in the case in which employees have been actively involved in the planning of the changes and are well informed about it, the influences of change often go beyond what is anticipated. The changing environment enacts individuals' sense-making process by raising the questions of "Is there something significant happening?" and "Is it relevant to me?" For planned organizational change, chances are that the answer is "yes." Because emotional arousal varies in direct proportion to the importance of the goal and the degree to which the change affects the goal (Lazarus, 1991a), intense emotions are likely to emerge in this stage of change.

Moreover, Mossholder et al. (2000) suggested that the level of effort needed for individuals to alter their status quo is positively related to the level of emotional arousal. Because the level of perceived discrepancy between the current situation and the past should be highest when the change is first introduced, this suggests that the level of emotional arousal at this stage should be high. In addition, the level of emotional arousal is related to the level of control one has over the situation; when control is high, stressful situations are not likely to induce emotional reactions (Spector, 1998). Because the level of uncertainty inherent in the situation is high, and perceived control is low at the very beginning of the change, individuals are likely to react with high emotional arousal. Indeed, regardless of the level of communication involved, employees should experience high levels of psychological uncertainty early in the change process (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991).

In addition, because the outcomes of change are hard for individuals to predict at the very beginning, it is difficult for them to decide whether their goals are being facilitated or being thwarted. Therefore, induced at this stage of change are likely to be mixed emotions that are anticipatory in nature. Past research indicated that individuals can simultaneously experience conflicting emotions, and such joint experience occurs particularly in the midst of major changes in people's life when individuals are not sure what to expect about the future (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1997; Larsen, McGraw, & Cacioppo, 2001). The literature suggests that managers might see organizational change both favorably and unfavorably. On the one hand, they see it favorably because the changes may alter routinized patterns of action within the organization, enhance the awareness of important issues, and facilitate management's openness and willingness to listen. In this case, the change itself brings managers hope, making them emotionally excited and hopeful, and thus raising their expectations for possible future success (Dutton, Ashford, Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Huy, 2002). On the other hand, change also brings about employees' feeling of uncertainty about the future, which in turn leads to fear and anxiety (Sutton & Kahn, 1987).

Thus, it is proposed that individuals feel high levels of mixed emotions of excitement and fear at this stage. This is not to say that employees may not feel other emotions during this stage, rather a variety of mixed emotions that are of high arousal level and anticipatory in nature may be experienced (e.g., expectation, hope, surprise, anxiety, etc.). Excitement and fear is modeled here to represent mixed emotions induced by expected outcomes. It is also expected that, although emotions such as joy and anger could be experienced as very intense emotions, they are not likely to occur at this stage of change because they are best understood as past-oriented, evaluative emotions.

Based on the above discussion, it is argued that individuals at the primary appraisal stage are emotionally charged. Because different emotions indicate different action tendencies, the mixed feelings of individuals will cause confusion and discomfort, and make people hesitate to take any actions to react to the incoming change. In addition, individuals'



capacity to experience certain emotions is limited (Fredrickson, 2000b). When individuals experience a high level of arousal that is so different from what they usually have experienced, they are also likely to feel hesitant, and become reluctant to react. Rather, they tend to “wait and see,” that is, they are going to wait until there is more information available. Thus,

**Proposition 1.** *The primary appraisal of planned change induces an intense mixed emotional state of excitement and fear in employees, which makes them hesitate to react behaviorally or attitudinally to the change program in this stage.*

### 3.2.2. Communicating information matters for emotions in the primary appraisal stage

In the primary appraisal, whether excitement or fear dominates one's emotional state depends partly on the information available to employees. Thus, the level of communication in the change plan will influence the emotional reactions in this stage. One's emotional reactions to stressful events are partly a function of the perceived control in the situation (Spector, 1998). All things being equal, communication should provide information that enhances one's sense of control, and decrease one's tendency to react to stimulus events with negative emotions. Prior research found that the level of information communicated during the change process is important to the success of the change (e.g., Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). This is probably because good communication allows richer information for employees to make sense of the change and foresee the future, and thereby, promotes an increased sense of perceived control (Cobb, Wooten, & Folger, 1995).

In contrast, when employees are not provided information regarding the purpose and process of the change, rumors about the change are likely to pervade the organization, making the organizational climate tense and employees feeling more unsettled about the future (Semeltzer, 1991; Semeltzer & Zener, 1992). Thus, when there is a low level of information communicated, fear tends to hold more strength in employees' emotional experiences at this stage. However, if a flood of information comes all at once, the resultant reactions from employees will not be positive, either. This is because at the beginning of the change, individuals are likely to experience “threat rigidity” (Ross & Staw, 1986), which limits their capacity to process information.

Therefore, too much information may give employees the impression that things that are going on are beyond their understanding and control, and consequently, induce feelings of uncertainty and fear. So, the task of change agents at this stage is to provide global information regarding the change to the employees without much elaboration on detailed change procedures and its various potential outcomes. Due to the tendency for people to react to uncertainty with negative reactions, change agents also should emphasize the positive aspects of the event, reframe certain information to the extent that doing so is ethical, thus, encouraging positive perspectives among employees (Fox & Amichai-Hamburger, 2001). Thus,

**Proposition 2.** *Information communicated by change agents will affect the relationship between the employees' primary appraisal and subsequent emotional reactions. Specifically, global, positive information about the organizational planned change will induce excitement in employees while a high level of specific information, whether positive or negative, will induce fear in employees.*

### 3.3. Secondary appraisal

The secondary appraisal concerns the meaning of the change to “me,” in which individuals make sense of the change in terms of its relationship to the well being of self. The fundamental issue being evaluated at this stage is “What, if anything, can I do in this encounter, and how will what I do and what is going to happen affect my well-being?” (Lazarus, 1991a, p.134). At this stage of change, as more information becomes available for employees to understand the change, they also start to experience the change first hand in their daily work. This helps them to better comprehend what the change means to them personally. At this time, they are ready for a more detailed appraisal about the change program.

We identify four factors that are influential in the secondary appraisal: goal congruence, perceived potential success, involvement with current strategy, and emotional ties with current colleagues. Among these factors, goal congruence and perceived potential success concerns individuals' future expectancies, and the other two factors concern individuals' subjective evaluations of their coping potential. *Goal congruence* refers to one's assessment as to whether one's individual goals are congruent with the goals of the planned change. The goals include both individual goals,

such as personal or professional goals, and those that they hold personally for the organization (e.g., personal understanding of the organization's mission). To the extent that individuals perceive goal congruence, the expected outcome for the change is attractive. *Perceived potential success* refers to the degree of confidence that one has for the future success of the proposed change. Employees may perceive the same events differently (Lazarus, 1991b; Weick, 1979). For example, differences in the information available and the causal attributions made by employees can lead to differences in predictions of outcomes of strategic decisions (Guth & Macmillan, 1986). Thus, the degree to which perceived potential success is high, individuals' future expectancy regarding whether their effort will lead to desirable outcomes becomes more positive.

*Involvement with current strategy* refers to the investment in and faith for the current strategy. The higher the degree of one's psychological and actual investment and faith for the organization's current strategies, the more likely one will remain committed to those strategies, and the less likely one will perceive the change effort as beneficial or desirable (cf., Staw, 1981). It is reasonable to expect that when involvement with the current strategy is high, employees will perceive the change program negatively, which is likely to influence their self-efficacy in coping with the change. The *emotional ties with current colleagues* refer to one's concern for employees. Besides the formal structure of organizations, there is an important informal side as well (Barnard, 1938). During the daily interactions with subordinates, supervisors, and peers, employees are likely to develop complex emotional ties with some or even most of them (Fineman, 1999). When such emotional ties are strong, individuals may be unwilling to break them and form new ones. Also it is likely that employees will perceive establishing new ties as effortful and risky. Therefore, to the extent that organizational changes involve the breaking of emotional ties among employees, employees' perception of their future coping potential is diminished.

### 3.3.1. Emotions in the primary appraisal matters for the secondary appraisal

Emotions send critical information to individuals to help their adaptations to the environment (Frijda, 1986; Plutchik, 1980; Schwarz, 1990). One key aspect of the information that feeds into the secondary appraisal is the emotions experienced at the stage of primary appraisal. It is proposed that the level of arousal and hedonic tone of the emotions induced at the primary appraisal stage will influence secondary appraisal.

The relationship between hedonic tone and cognition has long been established. When people are in a positive rather than negative emotional state, they are likely to evaluate stimuli events more positively (Schwarz, 2000). Moreover, in ambiguous situations, such as organizational change, when the meanings of the ongoing events are hard for people to comprehend, individuals are likely to use their own emotional states as signals to infer their attitudes toward the events (cf., Schwarz, 1990; Vince & Broussine, 1996). Thus, employees who feel more excitement than fear should infer that they are supportive of the strategic goal, and that goals are congruent with their own.

Feeling positive (negative) also leads individuals to overestimate the likelihood of positive (negative) outcomes and events, and to underestimate the likelihood of negative (positive) ones (Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Nygren, Isen, Taylor, & Dulin, 1996). Also, it has been found that people in a positive affective state are more likely to choose a risky alternative with high possible gain (Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Mittal & Ross, 1998), whereas those in a negative affective state are more risk averse (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). In the change context, changes are almost always associated with risk and possibility for negative events (e.g., failure, daily hassles). However, for the reasons mentioned above, employees who feel more excitement than fear should perceive higher potential of future success of the change program than those who feel more fear than excitement.

A main reason why people prefer the *status quo* to anything new is that the new things are associated with uncertainty and lowered sense of personal control. Because people who are positive in mood are more likely to overestimate their control over the world and the outcomes they will receive (Taylor & Brown, 1988), the negativity of new things should be lowered. Thus, people may be committed to the current strategy, but, at the same time, they may feel that they will successfully cope with the changes. People may enjoy the current work relationships with their colleagues, but they may also see that they can establish new effective relationships in the incoming future.

Additionally, because feeling positive leads individuals to overestimate the likelihood of positive outcomes and events, and to underestimate the likelihood of negative ones (Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Nygren et al., 1996), people who feel excitement rather than fear should foresee fewer negative events in their work environment with a new strategy being implemented, and new relationships formed. Based on the previous discussion, for people in positive emotional states, the involvement with the current strategy and their emotional ties with current employees should have a less negative influence on their appraisal of the change program. Thus,

**Proposition 3.** *When excitement dominates in the primary appraisal, employees will perceive a higher level of goal congruence; they will perceive the change program as more likely to be successful; their involvement with the current strategy will be a less negative factor; and their emotional ties with current employees will be a less negative factor influencing their overall appraisal of the planned change; the reverse holds when fear dominates.*

Emotion is inherently motivational, and emotional arousal influences the degree of effort one puts into the task at hand (George & Brief, 1996; Lazarus, 1991a; Seo, Feldman Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). A critical function of emotion is to force one's attention toward events and objects that are of pressing concern to the individual, and to mobilize resources to address it (Clark & Watson, 1994). Kaufman (1999) proposed an inverted-U shaped relationship between level of emotional arousal and human cognitive performance. According to Kaufman, when emotional arousal is too low, little energy is devoted to information gathering and problem solving, and attention is focused on other matters than the task at hand.

An increase in emotional arousal gives impetus to individuals' increasing their effort levels, and helps them to develop a tighter mental focus on the problems at hand. As such, emotional arousal is facilitative to cognitive performance because it helps individuals develop effective coping strategies. However, such effects occur only to a certain point. After that point, increases in emotional arousal lead to a deterioration in cognitive performance because it starts to reduce the effort and attention devoted to the focal tasks. Therefore, partly depending upon one's level of emotional arousal, individuals are likely to evaluate the above-mentioned elements in the secondary appraisal with a different level of thoroughness. Whereas a moderate level of emotional arousal is likely to be associated with a high degree of thoroughness in appraisal, an extreme level of emotional arousal is likely to be associated with a decrease in thoroughness.

**Proposition 4.** *Emotional arousal has an inverted U shaped relationship with employees' ability to effectively evaluate the meaning of change programs to them.*

### 3.3.2. *The secondary appraisal influences the hedonic tones of subsequent emotions*

When one's positive expectations about change in the primary appraisal is confirmed in the secondary appraisal with more detailed and current information, individuals' emotional states move toward the positive side. If the negative expectations carry more weight from evaluating this information, then the emotional state moves toward the negative side. Either way, the ambiguity is reduced, and the emotional state is no longer mixed at this stage.

Considering the four elements in the secondary appraisal, it is argued that each has an influence on whether individuals' emotional states will move toward excitement or fear. As discussed earlier, the hedonic tone of emotional reactions are a function of individuals' positive or negative evaluations of the objects or events (Lazarus, 1991a; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Events that are perceived as positive induce positive emotions, and events that are perceived as negative induce negative emotions.

It has been found that events that relate to positive outcomes (e.g., goal achievement, coping with challenges, and receiving recognition) induce enthusiasm in employees, whereas events that interfere with one's job performance, (e.g., receiving conflicting instructions from different managers, or inadequate resources for task performance), tend to induce frustration (Basch & Fisher, 2000). Therefore, it is argued that, to the extent that the change program is perceived as goal congruent, and as most likely to be implemented successfully, individuals' emotional states should be excitement. Otherwise, fear will be experienced.

If individuals have devoted much time and energy to the implementation of the current strategy, and have psychologically identified with it, it will be emotionally challenging for them to accept the fact that the *status quo* is going to be changed. As evidence, studies found that the more individuals are involved in a course of action, the more likely it is that they will tend to escalate their commitment, even when there is frequent and obvious negative feedback of the chosen course of action (Ross & Staw, 1986; Staw, 1981). Therefore, involvement with the current strategy predicts negative emotions toward change.

Emotional ties with current subordinates, supervisors, and peers should predict fear with planned change. Dirks, Cummings, and Pierce (1996) found that individuals are likely to form feelings of psychological ownership in connection with their work. It is reasonable to expect that, when employees expect that the change initiatives will alter the current status of relationships, or will do harm to those who have strong ties with them, they are likely to perceive the changes as threats, which will further evoke negative emotions. Thus,



**Proposition 5a.** *During the secondary appraisal, when the perceived goal congruence is high and when the perceived potential success is high; employees will experience excitement; when the perceived goal congruence is low and the perceived potential success is low, employees experience fear.*

**Proposition 5b.** *In secondary appraisal, when the involvement is low and when emotional ties with current colleagues are weak, employees will experience excitement; when the involvement is high and the emotional ties with current colleagues are strong, employees will experience fear.*

### 3.3.3. Specific information helps foster accurate appraisal at the secondary appraisal stage

As discussed earlier, employees are ready to digest detailed information about change in the secondary appraisal stage, and start to make sense of the personal implications of the change by weighing the pros and cons of the situation in a more elaborate fashion. It is noteworthy that individuals' cognitive appraisal does not always reflect the objective world, and it is especially so under the influence of intense emotions. Nonetheless, employees' accurate appraisals of the situation are beneficial to both individuals and organizations.

Accurate appraisals help individuals to form realistic views of their situation, their coping potential, and what to expect about the future, all of which helps in carrying out effective coping strategies. Accordingly, one key task of change agents at this stage is to help employees to appraise their situations accurately. It is suggested that communicating information that addresses specific concerns of individual employees is more effective than general, global information about the change program.

As discussed earlier, goal congruence, success potential, involvement of current strategy, and emotional ties with current colleagues represent four important components of one's secondary appraisal. All of these components are associated with individuals' personal interpretations of their immediate situations. Thus, whereas general information about change programs is helpful for employees initially, more specific information that is immediately relevant is more helpful at this next stage. Information communicated to employees should be carried out by middle managers and supervisors, who know the employees personally, and who are able to communicate specific, relevant information because they are aware of their immediate concerns (Richardson & Denton, 1996). Thus,

**Proposition 6.** *In the secondary appraisal stage, communication that addresses specific concerns for employees is more effective than general communication about the change in inducing employees' accurate appraisal about the situation.*

### 3.4. Coping stage

Individuals respond to changes differently. They may try to cope actively through actions such as information gathering and issue selling. Alternatively, they may engage in more passive forms of coping behaviors, such as expectation adjustment or cognitive reappraisal. As an example of positive coping behavior, individuals may "read the wind" and actively identify and seek favorable contexts for issue selling (Dutton et al., 1997). Or, they may try to adapt to change by adjusting their original expectations, rather than changing the environment.

It is proposed that whether individuals choose to actively or to passively cope is influenced by the emotions elucidated in the secondary appraisal stage. The literature suggests a general positive relationship between positive emotions and a more positive outlook of the situation (Fredrickson, 1998; Staw & Barsade, 1993). When people perceive a stressful situation positively (e.g., when they feel hopeful), they are more likely to take actions to change the current situation, and tolerate frustration and failure along the way. Moreover, positive emotions also have been associated with flexibility and innovation in problem solving (Staw & Barsade, 1993).

There are times when people are passive in stressful situations because they do not have the resources required to actively cope. When people are able to identify multiple routes to cope with a stressful situation, they are more likely to find a way to actively cope and solve the problem with the resources at hand. Finally, positive emotions, such as joy, have been proposed to be associated with social play, which strengthens relationship ties among people (Fredrickson, 2000a). Such ties are likely to provide individuals with additional resources for coping (e.g., social support), which makes proactive coping more possible. Therefore, positive emotions are likely to lead to proactive coping behaviors.

In contrast, negative emotions have been linked to a narrower thought–action repertoire (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). Individuals in negative emotional states tend to perceive the world as worse than it really is (Staw,

Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). For example, they may perceive others as less likable and helpful, therefore, avoiding social connections and help seeking. Thus, individuals under the influence of negative emotions might be more likely to choose passive coping options (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999). It has been found that students under prolonged frustration reported that they would use passive coping strategies such as dropping a course (Wong & Weiner, 1981). Similar findings were reported in Luce, Bettman, and Payne's (1998) study on consumer research, where they found that negative emotions resulted in increased choice of avoidant behaviors. Passive coping behaviors have also been found to be more prevalent in adults who suffer from depression symptoms (Ogul & Gencoz, 2003). We argue that the relationship between negative emotion and coping also applies to the emotion of fear. In particular, fear is associated with a sense of uncertainty and low control, which will reduce individuals' efficacy in proactive coping, leaving passive coping behaviors the only alternative. Thus,

**Proposition 7.** *Excitement is positively related to proactive coping behaviors; fear is positively related to passive coping behaviors.*

### 3.5. The outcome stage of planned change

After a period of emotional turmoil and individuals' carrying out coping attempts, the implications of the change to individuals becomes more clear at the outcome stage of planned change. For example, some may be promoted, demoted, or relocated and others may lose part of their administrative power, or gain more political access to top management. The outcomes that employees experience are frequently out of their control and due to situational forces. However, individuals' coping behavior also plays a significant role. For example, it has been found that some employees actively seek information in order to better make sense of what is going on in the change process and reduce uncertainty associated with the situation, whereas others avoid information seeking, or do so simply for the reason of interacting with peers (Kramer et al., 2004).

Different behavioral choices in coping should influence the change outcomes for individuals. Through proactive coping behaviors, individuals may enhance the chances of achieving desired outcomes. For example, Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, and Welbourne (1999) found that managers who actively cope during organizational change processes are more likely to experience job satisfaction, receive salary increases and promotions, and have higher job performance. In contrast, passive coping behaviors, due to their focus on the "self" in the person–environment relationship, tend to leave the aversive environment unchanged despite the coping effort (cf., Latack, 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Therefore, other things being equal, proactive coping behaviors are more likely to yield desired results for individuals. As indirect evidence, individuals who use passive coping strategies during the organizational change process experience more psychological distress and health problems following changes (Callan, Terry, & Schweitzer, 1994; Terry & Callan, 1997; Torkelson & Muhonen, 2003), which suggests that they might be less effective in their job performance. Thus,

**Proposition 8.** *Employees who cope proactively are more likely than those who cope passively to obtain desirable change outcomes.*

It was argued earlier that emotions experienced at the primary appraisal stage are anticipatory emotions, which are associated with a sense of hesitancy in employees' action tendencies. It is argued that emotions at the outcome stage should be evaluative emotions because the personal meanings of the change have been determined at this stage. What was going to happen happened, and what was not clear becomes clear. At this stage, some may see that their long-lasting dreams about the organization or about themselves have come true. Therefore, they feel content and joy. Others may feel that their hearts do not belong to the organization any longer because their jobs changed and their friends at work left, which induce feelings of sadness. Still others may experience frustration coping with the new challenges brought about by the change. All these feelings are associated with being certain about what has happened and are evaluative type of emotions.

#### 3.5.1. Attribution and emotions in the outcome stage

Emotions are associated with the fulfillment of motives (Jones & Rittman, 2002; Lang, 1995). The resulting emotions at this stage also have to do with individual attribution processes, whereby individuals' trace the causality of

certain outcomes. In his seminal work discussing the cognition–emotion process, [Weiner \(1985\)](#) proposed an attributional view of the emotion process, linking specific emotions to the attributions made by individuals for an event. Weiner’s framework proposes that outcomes experienced by an individual trigger a general positive or negative emotion based on the perceived success or failure of the outcome. Such outcome-dependent emotions include happiness, sadness, and frustration.

Individuals seek causes for their outcomes thereby generating a different set of emotions dependent on the attribution made for the outcome. Such attribution-dependent emotions are determined by the perceived cause. When individuals attribute the outcomes to external forces, it is termed external attribution. When individuals attribute the outcomes to self, it is termed internal attribution. Pride, guilt, and shame have been termed “self-conscious emotions” ([Lewis, 1993](#)), which are related to internal attributions of outcomes.

Joy is also argued to be related to internal attribution, because people tend to attribute success, which induces joy, to internal causes (e.g., [Nurmi, 1991](#)). On the contrary, anger and frustration are reactions to the environment or other people that interfere with one’s goal directed behavior ([Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989](#)), indicating an external attribution. Sadness is associated with experiencing an irrevocable loss. In the context of change, sadness should also be related to internal attribution, because when the loss is viewed as caused by the organization, anger or frustration would result. Thus,

**Proposition 9.** *Attribution processes moderate the outcome–emotion relationship such that external attributions of outcomes are positively related to feelings of frustration and anger; internal attributions of outcomes are positively related to joy, pride, sadness, guilt, and shame.*

### 3.5.2. Information communicated matters for individuals’ attributions

Attributions are influenced not only by one’s disposition, but also by situational factors ([Weiner, 1985](#)). To the degree that employees have received adequate and honest information, and have seen what has been going on in the change process, they will feel that they knew what to expect, therefore, they are more likely to attribute the outcomes that occur to themselves (e.g., they have been capable of handling the challenges related to the change). Otherwise, they will blame the organization for not providing needed resources or giving unreasonable request or tasks. Thus,

**Proposition 10.** *The quality of general and specific information communicated in the primary and secondary appraisal stages, respectively, is positively related to employees’ internal attributions for the change outcomes.*

### 3.5.3. Emotions at the outcome stage triggers EVNL

As the change process progresses, the emotional states of individuals become more steady and lower in arousal. Emotions that have specific action tendencies emerge. Although it appears that the emotions stop changing at this point, the influences of such emotional processes do not end. Momentary emotional states can have long lasting effects on individual attitudes and behaviors ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)).

We discuss the attitudinal and behavioral reactions to change using the EVNL (i.e., exit, voice, neglect, loyalty) framework ([Hirschman, 1970](#)). The reactions of exit, voice, and loyalty were first examined by [Hirschman \(1970\)](#) as organizational responses to economic decline. [Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn \(1982\)](#) extended the notion to include neglect and used these reactions to explain romantic involvements. Subsequently, they were used by researchers to explain workplace employee behaviors ([Withey & Cooper, 1989](#)). It has been shown that the four concepts are both conceptually and empirically distinguishable and provide a useful set of categories for thinking about and understanding people’s responses to stressful situations. It is argued that this framework can be meaningfully used to explain individuals’ reactions to change. Therefore, they are proposed to be possible behavioral outcomes of individual attitudinal resistance to change in our model.

Exit is defined as one’s intention to leave the organization, or actual turnover. Voice refers to individuals’ efforts to let their opinions and attitudes be known by the change agents. Neglect is defined as withdrawing efforts, attentions, and concerns relating to work, and being mindless, apathetic, or cynical. Loyalty is defined as individuals’ behaviors of withholding personal opinions, and being supportive and patient about the change. We discuss the relationship between emotions and EVNL in detail below. It is argued that the emotions of anger and shame are related to exit, anger and frustration are related to voice, sadness is related to neglect, and happiness, pride, and guilt are related to loyalty. It

should be noted that the discrete emotions discussed here are but a few examples of emotions that people may feel at this stage. In reality, many more emotions are likely to be experienced.

Emotions have relational meanings, and such meanings are important mechanisms to explain the relationship between emotion and behavior (Lazarus, 1991b). The mood maintenance argument maintains that positive emotions promote individuals' desires to maintain and prolong the current state (cf., Staw et al., 1994; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In the change context, joyful and proud employees may still encounter problems with work after change, but they should be more resilient and understanding (cf., Fredrickson, 1998, 2000a). Thus, happiness and pride should be positively related to staying with and commitment to the organization (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002); that is, loyalty.

Sadness results from an irrevocable loss (Lazarus, 1991b). Different from anger that is action provoking, sadness is associated with the loss of motivation to act (Oatley, & Johnson-Laird, 1987), and abandoning of goals (Parrott, 2001). Thus, it should be related to neglect. Guilt is a result of having transgressed a moral imperative against another person (Lazarus, 1991b). In the change context, guilt may result from having received favorable outcomes with little or no effort (Weiss, Suckow, & Cropanzano, 1999), having failed to exert effort to meet the challenge brought about by the change, or dealing with changes in a self-promoting or self-centered way. Because guilt frequently involves active behaviors designed to repair the situation to reduce the guilt (Andersen & Guerrero, 1998), guilt should be related to loyalty.

On the other hand, shame is associated with the meaning of failing to live up to an ego-ideal (Lazarus, 1991b). Shame arises when individuals' perceive themselves to be inferior, or have lost face (Ferguson & Stegge, 1995). It is also associated with a focus on other people's opinions of the self and a sense of being exposed and observed (Ferguson & Stegge, 1995). In the change context, it could be the result of failing to cope with certain challenges, being demoted, and so forth. Because this emotion is a result of, or is associated with, publicly observable events, people who experience shame are likely to leave the organization after the change.

Frustration arises from the experience of having one's goals interrupted or blocked, and is associated with one's expectation that the obstacles are unlikely to be overcome (Roseman, Weist, & Swartz, 1994). In the change context, frustration may arise when one's ability to perform effectively is hindered by the new structure, policy, or work relationships immediately after the change. Due to the perception of an inability to deal with the problem, people who are frustrated are likely to voice their opinions.

Anger is a reaction to one's perception of others having committed a demeaning offense against him or her (Lazarus, 1991b). Anger tends to induce powerful motive states to engage in active behavior to remove obstacles or to oppose and resist (Oatley, & Johnson-Laird, 1987). Thus, being associated with external attributions, anger should promote people's feelings that the organization or the change agents have unfairly treated them, which will then prompt voice behavior or turnover intentions and/or behavior.

**Proposition 11.** *Emotions of anger and shame are related to exit; frustration, happiness, and pride are related to voice; sadness is related to neglect; and happiness, pride, and guilt are related to loyalty.*

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

As in any other type of person–environment encounter, when facing a major organizational change in the environment, people engage in an ongoing sense-making (i.e., cognitive appraisal) process in which different meanings may be generated at different stages when the change unfolds (Weick, 1979). This cognitive process is also an emotion eliciting process (Lazarus, 1991a; Weick, 1979), because when the change is introduced, the meanings of the change to individuals cannot be fully anticipated. However, during the period when the events unfold, the ambiguity and uncertainty related to the change gradually fade away, and the “meanings” (i.e., the possible gains and losses it brings to organizations and individuals) gradually surface, until the whole change episode seems to go to its end, emotions of different affective tone, intensity and orientation will be generated, which gives rise to different attitudinal and behavioral reactions.

##### 4.1. Practical implications

This paper takes a cognitive and emotional approach to model the planned organizational change process. Based on the understanding of emotion as a dynamic phenomenon, four stages of change are proposed in which cognition and



emotion together influence individuals' experiences of change and their subsequent behaviors and attitudes. It is argued that the dynamic emotional experiences of individuals play a significant role in informing and directing one's reactions to change. Taking into consideration the fact that emotional experiences change over the course of organizational change, it is argued that the emotions experienced at the beginning of change are of high levels of arousal and are anticipatory; those induced and felt at the later stages are of relatively lower level of arousal and evaluative. In addition, emotions at the beginning are associated with a low level of action readiness or action tendency, and those at the later stage have more specific action tendencies. These messages have important implications for change implementations in terms of when and how information should be communicated in the best way possible to facilitate acceptance to change programs.

First, consistent with the calls in the literature for timely and honest communication (e.g., Fox & Amichai-Hamburger, 2001; Richardson and Denton, 1996), the model suggests that information has to be communicated early in the change process. Emotions induced in the primary appraisal process are anticipatory emotions; therefore, there will be hesitancy on the part of employees to react in a specific way. This means that employees' level of acceptance of change is highly malleable at this stage. For example, the change agents have opportunities to change employees' emotional reactions through generating positive events that foster a positive outlook of the change. However, at the later stages, evaluative emotions with more certain appraisals are induced, and people are more ready to react. Accordingly, it will be harder to change employees' vision of the change at this stage.

Moreover, as suggested in the propositions, the emotions induced at the beginning of the change have a strong influence on the secondary appraisal, and consequently, the coping process. This suggests that the management of emotions at the very beginning is of critical importance. To the extent that change agents lose control of employees' emotional reactions in the primary appraisal stage, it is likely that they will have even less of a chance to be able to monitor and manage emotions, attitudes, and behaviors emerging at later stages. In addition, as is suggested by the model, the information communicated does not have a direct influence on individuals' choice of coping behavior, as they are more of a product of emotions that are induced in the primary and secondary appraisal processes. Because individuals' choice of coping behaviors is important to their perceptions of outcomes, as well as subsequent attitudes and behaviors, it appears to be important to manage emotions, and to do so at the very beginning. Thus, change interventions that occur at earlier stages should be more effective.

Second, change agents need to consider individuals' need for time regarding their sense making and emotional adaptation to organizational change. Communicating information matters at both the primary appraisal and secondary appraisal stages, but, the emphases should be different. For the primary appraisal stage, the employees are occupied by a sense of emotional disorientation. They are confused by their own feelings that are induced by the ambiguous situations, and they are hesitant to act. Therefore, the change agents' task is to reframe the issues in a way that promotes a positive outlook, and thus, more excitement (rather than fear) among employees.

Additionally, they should manage the level of intensity of emotions felt at this stage. Because very high levels of emotional arousal may be dysfunctional, change agents should try to calm people down to a certain degree. This can be accomplished through a general communication about the change, not detailed information, because, at this stage of change, people are not yet ready for digesting detailed information and how this information is relevant to them. However, in the secondary appraisal stage, since people have been exposed to more detail and more certain information, they have developed a sense of what the change means to them personally. At this stage, change agents should focus on communicating information with employees on areas of particular concern to them at a more personal and specific level, and helping them solve problems that are more relevant to their individual needs. In this regard, Cornett-De Vito and Friedman (1995) pointed out that employees' need for information during organizational change evolves over time. They pointed out that at the onset, employees prefer information that reduces their uncertainty, and as the change moves on, realistic, accurate, and timely information becomes critical.

This provides additional evidence that employees need time to adjust, and that management should monitor the content of communication to fit the employees changing needs for information. Thus, it appears that change agents need to have the "temporal capability" in the management of change; the ability to recognize and attend to individuals' need for time to adjust cognitively and emotionally (Huy, 2001).

Third, the model also suggests the possibility for change agents to proactively intervene employees' emotional experiences toward the direction of facilitating change. For example, in change interventions, where dramatic attitudinal changes are desirable, it is necessary for employees to engage in thoughts about the change, to dwell on issues such as the influence of the change on their jobs, new behaviors expected, and new roles and responsibilities



(Thompson & Hunt, 1996). In such cases, change agents might try to induce rather intense emotional experiences among employees at the primary appraisal stage. By increasing the levels of emotional arousal and subsequent cognitive effort devoted to information processing and decision making, dramatic attitudes and behavior changes in employees may become possible (cf., Thompson & Hunt, 1996).

On the other hand, considering the negative influence of highly intense emotions on people's ability to focus on the task, it might also be desirable to focus their communication effort on shortening the period of time when extreme emotional arousal is experienced, or to try to lower the level of emotional arousal to a certain point during the primary and secondary appraisal stages. Optimal human performance requires an intermediate level of emotional intensity (Kaufman, 1999). When the emotional intensity is too low, performance suffers from insufficient physical and mental arousal, but when an emotional intensity is too high, this may cause a person to be so aroused that thinking and physical self-control become disorganized (Buck, 1988; Yates, 1990).

Therefore, it would be desirable if change agents could induce a moderate level of emotional arousal among change recipients. This is not to suggest that change agents manipulate employees' emotional experience without consideration of ethics. For example, although a sense of guilt may promote loyalty, as suggested by the model, guilt should be an emotion that is naturally experienced by employees, rather than an emotional state that change agents try to invoke.

Fourth, if different emotions emerge at different stages of change and these emotions have different behavioral implications, then identifying such emotions may help managers assess which stages of change the organizations are undergoing, and then provide tools that can most effectively deal with problems at hand. Individuals' emotional reactions not only could be a strong force for resistance to, or acceptance for, change (George & Jones, 2001), but also serve as an indicator as to whether changes have been institutionalized (Mossholder et al., 2000). To the extent that change agents know what the employees are feeling, they will know what to expect from them and what appropriate managerial response is needed.

Finally, this model has important implications for human resource management practice. Above all, it suggests that individuals at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy should be allowed to play a more active role in the change process. Furthermore, one important way to do so is to let them have as adequate information as possible so that accurate appraisals can be facilitated. Guth and McMillan (1986) noted that managers can intervene in strategy implementation in two ways, at two different stages in the decision-making process: they either intervene by taking a position during the decision-making process, or they intervene by resisting decisions after the decision has already been made. The same seems to be true for operating level employees. A main reason why people resist the change process is that they find it is hard to deal with their own emotional tension (cf., Huy, 2002; Waldron, 2000).

Frequently, the reason why people leave the organization during or after a major planned change is not because the organizations changed for the worse, but because people cannot handle the emotional turmoil that they have to experience during the process. With the increasing importance of human capital to an organization's success, individual employees' cooperation in change is becoming increasingly critical. Employees' willingness to accept change depends heavily on whether adequate information is communicated in a timely fashion. It was suggested that timely communication reduces individuals' sense of uncertainty in the primary appraisal stage, and fosters positive emotions in the secondary appraisal stage. Thus, it is to the benefit of the organization for management to communicate information about change motives and plans with employees in a timely fashion.

#### 4.2. Theoretical implications

The current model also has important theoretical implications. First, the model emphasizes the importance of understanding emotion as being a dynamic, rather than static, feeling state. To date, research has had a tendency to assume that people's emotional experiences do not change. We argue that this is simply not true. Future research that seeks to model people's emotional experiences in change processes should view emotion as a more complex phenomenon than has been currently acknowledged. Prior research on emotion and change have suggested that change agents should manage emotions in the change process, but has failed to distinguished the changing nature of emotional experiences of employees throughout the change process. Therefore, previous work has failed to recommend to change agents that, not only do emotions need to be managed, but that they have to pay attention to the different kinds of emotions, and the different levels of emotional arousal employees face at different stages of change.

Prior research on communication and change also has suggested that change communicating information helps foster change acceptance. However, when communication is examined in conjunction with emotion (as a process), it becomes evident that change agents should not only communicate information, but they have to communicate well. The effort they put into communication may not yield desirable outcomes if they communicate the wrong type of information with the wrong emphases at the wrong time. Therefore, communication during organizational changes should be viewed as an ongoing process, not a one-time event (Kramer et al., 2004; Napier, Simmons, & Stratton, 1989). This contributes to the change communication literature by suggesting that change agents need to consider both time and content in their communication effort. Additionally, in applying Lazarus (1991a) work into the organizational change model, we also extend his work by (1) explicitly arguing that emotion induced in each of the appraisal stage serves as input in the following appraisal, or coping effort, and (2) examining the uncertainty dimension (i.e., anticipatory versus evaluative) of emotion in the appraisal and coping process.

#### *4.3. Directions for future research*

The paper suggests several possible directions for future research. First, we argue that at the primary stage, individuals experience simultaneously excitement and fear, and we argue that different emotions are associated with different behavioral implications. It has been suggested that “how these different emotions eventually play out behaviorally may have to do with factors such as differences in emotional strength, changes in strength over time, and opportunities provided by the work environment for different behavioral reactions” (Weiss et al., 1999, p. 791).

In this paper, we discussed how individuals’ secondary appraisal influences this dynamic emotion–behavior relationship; that is, to the extent that individuals’ appraisal of the change is favorable in the secondary appraisal, the strength of positive emotions increases, and further enhances positive behavioral reactions in the coping stage. We also examine how effectively communicating information helps to move employees’ emotional experience in a more positive direction. Future research may look into other dispositional and situational factors that influence this process.

Second, for purposes of parsimony, we have not discussed dispositional variables’ influences on individuals’ reaction to the change process. However, it is likely that many such variables play a role in this model, and in multiple places. For example, emotional intelligence may have an effect on how individuals’ react to a change event in the primary appraisal stage. An emotionally intelligent individual is better at tracing the source of one’s emotional experience, differentiating mixed emotions experienced at the same time, and prioritizing emotions that have critical implications for one’s adaptation to the environment (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Therefore, emotionally intelligent individuals should better be able to monitor their emotional experiences, such that functional reactions are induced. Other variables that are influential may include positive affectivity, emotional stability, openness to experience, and so forth. In addition, whether, individuals’ tend to make internal or external attributions in the change context also is affected by many individual difference variables such as self-efficacy. Future research is needed to incorporate these variables into the examination of individuals’ cognitive and emotional experience to change.

Lastly, the model suggests that both positive and negative emotions are possible in a planned change process. Partly due to the traditional organizational development literature’s emphasis on individual resistance to change, which assumes individuals do not like change, negative emotions and experiences such as anxiety, frustration, uncertainty, and stress have been the focus in the literature (Coch & French, 1948; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991; Vince & Broussine, 1996). However, several empirical studies have demonstrated that individuals do experience positive emotions during organizational change, such as excitement, joy, and hope (Brundin, 2002; Huy, 2002; Mossholder et al., 2000), and a willingness to sacrifice for the organizational well being (Guth & Macmillan, 1986; Huy, 2002). This positive possibility should be incorporated into the general conversation in the organizational change literature. In all, individual cognitive and emotional experiences in the change process deserve even more attention than it currently has had, and much remains to be done. Research in this area will surely provide valuable information for effective change interventions.

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