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Emotional Aperture and Emotional Sequencing

Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks
Stephen M. Ross School of Business
at the University of Michigan

Quy Nguyen Huy
INSEAD

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Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks
University of Michigan
Ross School of Business
Management and Organizations
701 Tappan Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
Tel: 734.615.6351
Fax: 734.936.0282
E-mail: jsanchezburks@umich.edu

Quy Nguyen Huy
INSEAD
Strategic Management
Boulevard de Constance
77305 Fontainebleau
FRANCE
Tel: (33) 1 60 72 44 98
Fax: (33) 1 60 74 55 00/01
E-mail: quy.huy@insead.edu

*Both authors contributed equally to this paper; authorship order was randomly assigned.

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Abstract

Failure to recognize and regulate agitated organizational members' emotions triggered by strategic change can undermine a firm's performance. Organizational processes that detect, recognize, and respond appropriately to members' emotional responses are likely to enhance their receptivity to the change and facilitate strategic renewal. We develop a theory posited to improve members' receptivity to strategic change by introducing two novel concepts: *emotional aperture* and *emotional sequencing*. Emotional aperture involves the ability to recognize patterns in the distribution of specific emotions in groups and thus complements and extends emotional intelligence abilities focused on recognizing individual emotional expressions. Emotional sequencing involves attending to patterns of emotions, detected through emotional aperture, in a way that integrates the temporal dimensions that underlie members' affective experiences during strategic change. Employing these two concepts, leaders can facilitate strategic renewal in their organizations.

(Words: 135)

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We have very ‘disturbed’ managers. Managers who are forced to make workforce reduction decisions without any guidance, training, or support are becoming cynical ... Open hostility is surfacing as never before, and its focus is toward the company rather than toward the competition or the marketplace where such energies can be productively channeled. The amount of suppressed, covert hostility lurking just below the surface in many people is truly frightening. Unfortunately, much of the frustration, anger, and depression are taking its toll on the non-work lives of our people ... We have noted a marked increase in symptoms of depression among managers we have studied. Today’s survivors are often disillusioned, frustrated, bitter, and, most of all, lacking in hope ... One can’t help wondering what kinds of managers they will be like in the future as they populate senior levels at AT&T ...

(Excerpts from psychologists’ report on AT&T managers after break up of AT&T in 1984, in Moses, 1987: 35-36).

Attending to organization members’ emotions triggered by strategic change can help firms enhance the odds of realizing productive change and reduce unnecessary distress of their members (Huy, 1999, 2002; George & Jones, 2001; Liu & Perrewé, 2005). Although organizational life is replete with affect-inducing events (Dutton & Worline, 2006; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), widespread strong emotions are often elicited by strategic change, which refers to a qualitative change in an organization’s capabilities and market direction (Bartunek, 1984; Pettigrew, 1985). Strategic change demands a paradigm shift that challenges members’ basic assumptions about the organization (Bartunek, 1984; Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, & Mullane, 1994). These assumptions define inter-subjective reality and provide a way of dealing with ambiguous, uncontrollable events (Huy, 1999). Organization members are “emotionally invested” in these deep-seated assumptions that shape their cognitive structures for sense-making and meaning-giving (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Challenging this source of cognitive and emotional stability represents an attack on their identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) and thus gives rise to strong, dynamic affective experiences (Festinger, 1957; Kelly, 1955; Schein, 1992). Unaddressed, intense agitated emotions risk impairing other important change processes such as collective mobilization and learning (Huy, 2002). Thus, attunement and responding to the emotions experienced by organization members is critical during strategic change.

The relatively young literature on recognizing and managing recipients’ emotions in organizational change has generally focused on individual-level emotions and behavior (e.g., Huy, 1999;

George & Jones, 2001; Liu & Perrewé, 2005). This stream of research has provided critical insights into organization members' affective experiences, emotional attunement, and their respective consequences. More recent research on affective experiences within groups and in the larger organization (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Totterdell, 2000), however, suggests a need to expand our theorizing to these broader patterns of shared emotions that emerge within and between groups through social diffusion processes as we review later in this article. Indeed, many important questions emerge when considering emotions beyond the level of the individual. For example, how can we conceptualize the perceptual perspective required to recognize patterns of emotions distributed at the group level? What are the antecedents and moderators to this more holistic perspective on emotions in organizations? Once patterns of group emotions are accurately recognized, how can organization leaders respond to these emotions over the change process? It has been stated that organizations are coalitions of various groups with different interests (Cyert & March, 1992), and thus various groups are likely to experience different emotions and behave very differently when faced with the same change event. Many consequential organizational outcomes are likely to result from group emotional dynamics such as collective resistance to change, mobilization for change, or development of new competencies (Huy, 2002; Reus & Liu, 2004; Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). To address these dynamics propose a theoretical framework about emotional attunement and appropriate responses to dynamic distributions of emotions that arise within and between groups in an organization.

Given severe time and resource constraints that often characterize strategic change, there can be important enablers and barriers to organization leaders in recognizing patterns of emotions in groups and attending to them appropriately (c.f. Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). For individual-level emotions, scholars have posited that managers with emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004) are likely to perform related tasks more effectively (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; George, 2000). High emotion-recognition ability has been found to be positively associated with subordinates' perceptions of transformational leadership, which requires both recognition and management of emotions (Bass, 1999; Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005). However, whether people who are skilled at recognizing others'

emotions at the individual level will be similarly competent at recognizing these patterns at the group level remains to be investigated. The cognitive process through which such processing of group emotions is enabled, referred to here as *emotional aperture*, may in fact represent a distinct component of emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2005; Côté & Miners, 2006).

With respect to the management of change recipients' emotions, even at the individual level, key issues remain under-theorized with regard to temporal factors such as timing, pacing, and sequencing of emotion-attending actions. Although there are notable exceptions including Liu and Perrewé (2005), who have described how individuals' emotions and resulting behavior such as voice and exit can change over the course of a change process, a theory of how change leaders can integrate temporal factors with various emotion-attending actions to reenergize distressed and disoriented groups of change recipients remains largely under-developed. Considering temporal factors in emotion management is important to the extent that various clusters of emotions that emerge in response to change will require distinct attending actions. Groups who display positive emotions toward strategic change, for instance, are likely to require less emotion attending and can withstand a faster pace of change than groups that are severely distressed and may need a more attentive, gradual, and patient emotion management approach.

In this paper, we seek to develop a theory posited to improve members' receptivity to strategic change by introducing two novel concepts: *emotional aperture* and *emotional sequencing*. Emotional aperture refers to the ability to perceive and decipher the distribution of specific emotions clustered into groups within the organization. This ability involves, for example, detecting the relative proportion of specific emotions such as contempt, hope, and anger and identifying shifts in these proportions during strategic change. Emotional aperture also highlights how one's ability in recognizing individuals' emotions can be very different from, and does not necessarily translate into, an accurate recognition of patterns of emotions in groups. We draw upon research in cognitive and cultural social psychology to elaborate specific barriers to using emotional aperture in globally diverse organizations.

As accurate recognition without effectively attending to emotions is obviously insufficient to address the predicaments of distressed change recipient groups, we then propose the concept of *emotion*

sequencing, which integrates the temporal dimensions of various groups' evolving affective experiences with emotion-attending actions. We show how sequencing these actions helps revitalize groups that are initially distressed by strategic change and transform them into work communities that can perform productive actions for strategic renewal.

We propose that such an emotional revitalization represents a critical element of strategic renewal because reenergized, cheerful organization members are more likely to engage in exploration activities, take risks, and produce innovative offerings, all of which foster strategic renewal (Amabile & Barsade, 2005; Fredrickson, 1998; Huy, 2005; Isen, 1999). Strategic renewal refers to actions that firms take to refresh and transform their core competencies and product market domains to increase their performance (Crossan & Bedrow, 2003; Huff, Huff, & Thomas, 1992; Simons, 1994). A growing dynamic capability literature suggests a firm is likely to gain competitive advantage if it can realize adaptive change more reliably, rapidly, and with less cost than its competitors (Danneels, 2002; Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; Zott, 2003). Strategic renewal often involves managing and balancing the tensions between exploration and exploitation (Burgelman, 1994; Crossan & Berdrow, 2003; March, 1991). Performing both exploiting and exploring could generate intergroup conflicts due to competition for scarce organizational resources, as well as role conflicts among managers (Floyd & Lane, 2000), which could elicit strong negative emotions and opposing behaviors (Agarwal, Echambadi, Franco & Sarkar, 2004; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

We also theorize on the use and challenges of applying emotional sequencing in organizations undergoing strategic renewal. Together, our theory regarding attunement to distributions of emotions through emotional aperture and attending to these emotional clusters through emotional sequencing are intended to offer a framework for understanding the intertwined processes of attention and action that organizations face in navigating strategic change.¹

By focusing on a dynamic process to recognize dynamic patterns of emotions in groups, emotional aperture extends the literature on emotional intelligence at the individual level (e.g., Barrett &

¹ In this paper, we use the terms strategic change and strategic renewal interchangeably, and indicate distinctive nuances where appropriate.

Salovey, 2002; Côté & Miners, 2006), related concepts on individual-level emotion recognition (e.g., affective sensitivity: Campbell, Kagan, & Krathwohl, 1971; non-verbal sensitivity: Rosenthal, 1979; decoding facial emotions, Elfenbein, 2006; Rubin, Muniz, & Bommer, 2005), as well as contributes to the group emotion literature (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000). By proposing a dynamic organizational-level process of how to attend to these shared affective experiences during strategic change that integrates temporal dimensions, our emotional sequencing construct extends the nascent literature on organization-level emotional capabilities (Huy, 1999, 2002, 2005; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Reus & Liu, 2004) and the literature on the temporal dynamics of strategic change (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; Gersick, 1994; Huy, 2001).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we discuss the nature of distributions of group emotions within organizations and how these arise during strategic change. Next, we describe the distinct social cognitive skill that defines emotional aperture and specific challenges to using emotional aperture in culturally diverse organizational contexts. We then discuss the construct of emotional sequencing and the factors that inhibit change leaders from applying emotional sequencing effectively. We conclude with remarks and implications for future research.

EMOTION DISTRIBUTIONS AND STRATEGIC CHANGE

Emotions refer to psychobiological responses linking cognitive appraisals, physiological reactions, action tendencies, and subjective experience (Frijda, 1988; Lazarus, 1991; Zeelenberg et al., 2000) and are expressed through facial expressions and non-verbal behavior (Ekman & Friesen, 1974; Rosenthal et al., 1979). Emotions and change are intertwined to the extent that emotions are not aroused by the presence of favorable or unfavorable conditions, but by the actual or expected changes in these conditions (Frijda, 1988). Change arouses emotions that motivate action responses. Faced with a new event, people evaluate the significance of the event in relation to their own goals and concerns. If they appraise the potential consequence as beneficial, pleasant feelings are aroused. They experience unpleasant feelings if they appraise the consequence as potentially harmful (Lazarus, 1991). People then evaluate their own capabilities for dealing with the event. If they believe they have adequate resources,

they are more likely to respond actively (e.g., support or oppose). Otherwise, they may adopt a passive/avoidance approach, which can be interpreted as another form of resistance to change.

Emotion Distributions within Social Groups

Emotional aperture builds upon accumulating evidence showing the importance of emotional experiences that spread and develop into group-level clusters of shared emotions in organizations (Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Brief & Weiss, 2002; George, 1996; Lawler & Yoon, 1998; Sandelands & St. Clair, 1993; Totterdell, 2000). Several mechanisms can cause clusters of shared group emotions to form in the organization in response to change. Faced with an important organizational event, a large number of employees across various work roles can feel shared emotions if they have similar beliefs, which can lead to similar appraisals and ways of feeling (Schein, 1992). Organizational culture represents another subtle yet powerful form of control that “acts to inform, guide, and discipline the emotions of organization members” and contributes to shared emotional experiences (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 56). Moreover, members who strongly identify themselves with their organization are likely to experience similar emotions when faced with events that enhance or threaten the identity of the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Perceived threats (e.g., a hostile takeover) can increase the need for an organizational culture shared by those who believe they are confronting the same situation (Gump & Kulick, 1997). When a group’s appraisal of a situation suggests an important consequence for the group as a whole, similar emotional responses tend to follow (Makie, Devos, & Smith, 2000).

Finally, there is a primitive, non-conscious mechanism through which emotions become shared, termed “emotional contagion” (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994); this involves an innate propensity to adopt the emotional experiences of those around us. The mere perception of a person showing anguish, for example, can create a saddened facial expression and corresponding experience in the perceiver. These unintentional changes in our facial and body muscles, in turn, are sufficient to prompt a similar emotional state for the perceiver (for a recent review, see Niedenthal et al., 2005). These non-conscious contagion effects operate within groups and have been shown to produce group or sub-group clusters of shared emotional experiences in organizational contexts (Barsade, 2002; Bartell & Saavedra, 2000);

Totterdell, 2000).

A series of field and experimental studies on emotion contagion within work groups (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Savvedra, 2000; Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1992; Pugh, 2001; Totterdell et al., 2004) have shown the potential for it to produce a convergence of an emotional experience, creating a shared affective state with teams and sub-groups of larger collectives. Although groups may not reach complete convergence in their emotion states—particularly as the size of the group increases—the clustering of emotions into sub-groups with shared affect can emerge through networks (Totterdell et al., 2004). These collective affective states have been linked to important organizational outcomes including the groups' action and performance (Barsade, 2002; Brief, 2001; Janice & Barsade, 2001; Kelly & Barsade, 2001).

Particularly in large organizations inhabited by various groups with different roles, values, and interests (Cyert & March, 1992), some change events are not likely to affect these groups in a similar way. Some groups may feel enthusiastic because they see the benefits of the proposed changes. Others may feel angry and fearful because they feel disadvantaged by these changes. Change leaders can thus increase their effectiveness in managing strategic renewal if they can recognize various emotional patterns, and estimate the resources needed to explore the causes and address the needs of the members. Emotional aperture underlies this capability.

EMOTIONAL APERTURE

Emotional aperture entails expanding one's attention to detect and accurately recognize dynamic distributions of specific emotions that exist within an organization. By emotion distributions, we refer to the proportions of different specific emotions present within and between groups. For example, upon the announcement of a change initiative, 65% of the marketing group may show signs of hope while 35% may show fear.² Within manufacturing, however, the proportion of fear may be smaller but is flanked by

² For sake of example only, we describe organization members as displaying a single dominant emotion at any single instant of time. Recognition is more difficult when a person displays several contradicting emotions at once (Fong, in press).

a substantial group expressing contempt. During such tumultuous times, pressures for leaders to multi-task with fewer resources and less time place heavy demands on cognitive and temporal resources to attend to other's emotions (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). Such situations make it nearly impossible for supervisors to assess, let alone attend to, every subordinate's emotions. To address these challenges, emotional aperture is described here as an alternative holistic, cognitive-perceptual orientation (Nisbett et al., 2001) that further relies on relatively quick judgments (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992) regarding broader distributions of emotions in groups. Under resource and time constraints, it may be more realistic for change leaders to attend to the most critical emotion distributions as opposed to a minority of scattered individuals' emotional states.

As collective behavior drives many organizational actions, taking a broader perspective to detect the experiences that occur at the collective level seems necessary. It seems counterintuitive, however, to argue that one can devote less time in recognizing every individual's emotions by taking a more holistic approach. Time spent processing non-verbal cues and accuracy at detection are not necessarily positively related (Choi, Gray, & Ambady, 2005; Rosenthal et al., 1979), and we propose that a relatively accurate portrait of the emotional landscape in the organization can be derived from a brief but wider perceptual focus on emotional distributions. In fact, there is compelling evidence that brief 'thin slice' perceptions can lead to greater accuracy than judgments based on longer observations (Ambady, Bernieri, & Richeson, 2000; Ekman, 2004; Gottman, 1993). This suggests that quick, automatic evaluation and assessment of the emotional landscape between and within groups may provide critical information for effective coordination of relational and task resources.

In defining emotional aperture in reference to dynamic distributions, the construct explicitly takes into account temporal shifts in emotional experiences that occur during strategic change (Blount & Janicik, 2001; Eisenhardt, 1989; Hackman, 1993; Huy, 1999, 2002). Initial emotional reactions evolve over time as members evaluate and respond to the change (Isabella, 1990; Liu & Perrewé, 2005). Various patterns of specific emotions can shift in their proportional representation. Due to the passage of time and/or interventions, some members experiencing fear within a group may gradually evolve to a state of

hope; contempt may become more widespread within a group but diminish in another in response to perceived unfairness (c.f. Wiesenfeld, Brockner, & Thibault, 2000). These emotional shifts suggest that emotion distributions are not static and that using emotional aperture is a dynamic and ongoing process.

Recent research on analytic versus holistic perception provides insight into the basic perceptual issues involved in recognizing patterns in distributions of emotions (for a review, see Nisbett et al., 2001). People exhibit substantial variation in their ability to process social information holistically, which we propose is key in recognizing more encompassing patterns of emotional information. Masuda and his colleagues (2006) asked study participants to evaluate a picture depicting an individual surrounded by a group displaying an emotion different from the focal individual. A common response was to narrow one's attention on a single individual and fail to process information about the emotions represented in the larger group. A second experiment in their research using eye-tracking measurements further validates that holistic processing of emotions in social contexts is an underdeveloped ability, with large individual and cultural variability.

Below we develop propositions for each of four challenges to using emotional aperture in organizations: (1) overcoming deep-seated assumptions about the unimportance of attending to emotional information in professional contexts; (2) adjusting one's aperture of attention to focus beyond individual emotions and toward group-level patterns of displayed emotions; (3) recognizing proportions of specific negative (e.g., contempt) and positive (e.g., happiness) emotions; and (4) recognizing emotions expressed by culturally diverse groups.

Attending to Emotional Information at Work: The Initial Hurdle

The initial step of utilizing emotional aperture involves a perceptual focus that includes decoding social-emotional information, which is embedded in organizational behavior along with task-specific information (e.g., items on a meeting's agenda). Whereas the task of achieving accuracy at recognizing emotions serves as the initial stage in the operationalization of the broad concept of emotional intelligence (e.g., Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004), there exists an even more basic, yet under-appreciated initial hurdle to orienting one's attention to emotion-related information. Recent research suggests that there is a

widespread perceptual habit in most Western organizations to filter out much of what unfolds in the social emotional domain (for a review, see Sanchez-Burks, 2005). Although it is not uncommon or considered inappropriate to devote attention to emotion-laden cues such as someone's tone of voice, facial expression, or non-verbal gestures when one is outside the context of the workplace, the norms of professionalism in organizations create blind spots to these cues at work.

This reduced sensitivity to emotions in workplace versus non-workplace settings is explained by a pervasive work ethos called Protestant Relational Ideology (PRI) (Sanchez-Burks, 2002), a concept closely associated with beliefs about the moral importance of work that underpins the Protestant work ethic (PWE) (Weber, 1904/1930). Although these two belief systems have long been secularized and incorporated into organizational practices, they reflect common historical roots to the early work beliefs of the Calvinist Puritans. These early Western communities set in motion a mode of organizational behavior that exemplified the belief—novel at the time—that work is a moral obligation and should be conducted with restricted attention to emotional and relational concerns (Bendix, 1977; Lenski, 1961; Weber, 1904/1930). As a result of this deep-seated ideology, there is an assumption that social emotional issues will likely interfere with business effectiveness, and that to be professional is *de facto* to focus one's attention exclusively on tasks rather than emotions (Sanchez-Burks, Nisbett, & Ybarra, 2000).

In some workplace contexts, this assumption may be justified. For example, medical first responders are trained to make priority judgments for urgent care based upon unemotional evaluations of injury. Training involves increasing these medics' ability to ignore, for instance, the intense emotional cries for help based on the reasoning that the person crying out the loudest is unlikely to be the person in most serious need of help. However, there are other situations where attending to emotion-laden information can facilitate task-objectives, as illustrated in the post divestiture of AT&T (Moses, 1987). Nonetheless, prior research suggests a general tendency within Western-based organizations to decrease attention to emotional information upon entering the workplace. Remarkably, the same people who show impoverished attention to emotional cues at work may be highly attuned to such cues outside of work (Sanchez-Burks, Lee et al., 2003). This contextual variation in emotional attunement suggests that

emotional aperture is not necessarily tied to a personality trait, but rather a habit of perception that is unknowingly switched on or off in different contexts.

The implication of PRI for organizations undergoing strategic change is that there exists a deep-seated habit of filtering out precisely the type of information that is needed to respond to people's affective reactions. This bias in workplace cognition inhibits the necessary and initial step in emotional aperture of perceiving emotional information in others.

Proposition 1: *The strength of Protestant Relational Ideology within an organization will be negatively related to its members' level of emotional aperture by restricting overall attention to the emotions dimension of the organization.*

Thus, the first step in increasing emotional aperture is to overcome these culturally grounded ideologies that restrict attention to emotion-related information while in the workplace. Such a broadened perceptual focus to emotions is especially important to the management of emotions elicited by disruptive change to the extent the emotional reactions of its member's directly affect their receptivity and reaction to the change initiatives. Attention to collective emotions provides leaders with the information needed to attend to their employees' psychological well-being in a timely and appropriate manner (Fox & Hamichai-Hamburger, 2001; George, Jones, & Gonzales, 2001; Huy, 2002; Liu & Perrewé, 2005).

Dynamically Adjusting Emotional Aperture: From Individual Displays to Distributions in Groups

Orienting one's attention to include emotional information is a necessary but not sufficient step to recognizing distributions of emotions present in organizations. Emotional aperture departs from other constructs on emotional attunement and intelligence in that it involves switching from sensitivity to individual emotional displays to the ability to detect patterns of emotional clusters distributed within an organization. Emotional aperture describes a process of adjusting one's perception to recognize the broader array of emotional displays exhibited in a group. Through emotional aperture, accurate inferences are possible about the relative proportion of specific emotions in the collective at a given instant in time; for example, recognizing within manufacturing the prevalence of frustration and to a lesser extent contempt, but recognizing the prevalence of surprise and little anger within marketing.

Our focus on distributions of emotions does not downplay the benefits associated with a focus on individual emotional displays. Particularly with direct reports, accurate recognition of individual emotional displays can improve the quality of interpersonal interactions, negotiations, and perceived leadership (Foo, Elfenbein, Tan, & Aik, 2004; George, 2000; Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005). However, a managerial focus on individual-level emotions, perhaps those of the most outspoken or proximately close individuals, also could be misleading in regard to the distribution of various patterns of emotions in the organization. As noted, faced with strategic change, not every group necessarily feels similar emotion at the same time. Moreover, various emotional patterns can provide important clues about the need and urgency of attending to specific emotions. For example, whereas some frustration that change is not progressing fast enough may be healthy in the short run since it can motivate increased effort, contempt for the change leaders can be more worrisome since this affective state signals that the end of a relationship may be imminent (Gottman, 1993; Pelzer, 2005). Being attuned to the relative proportion of members who express contempt versus frustration, for instance, can provide clues about whether the organization is near a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) for massive opposition.

A challenge to this group-level aperture of attention, however, is a fundamental perceptual tendency in Western societies to analytically highlight individuating information at the expense of processing holistically social, contextual information (Nisbett et al., 2001). Thus, when perceiving a group of individuals, there is a tendency to narrow one's attention to information displayed by *individuals* and to perform a more detailed evaluation of these few individuals (Masuda et al., 2006). As a result, information embedded in the larger social context, such as emotional distribution, is automatically filtered out. Illustrating a wider aperture of attention, Japanese and other East Asian groups have been found to process social information more holistically (i.e., focusing on broad patterns exhibited within the group as opposed to focusing on a few salient individuals within the group) (Masuda et al., 2006).

In sum, research on holistic processing suggests that the skills in processing individual-level information may not translate into skills at processing group-level information. Moreover, individuals

appear to apply either a narrow or holistic perceptual focus in a particular context. This suggests the need to dynamically adjust one's aperture of attention from the individual level to the group level.

Proposition 2: *People who have higher levels of general holistic cognitive processing will show higher levels of emotional aperture such that they will be more likely to detect various clusters of emotions distributed in a collective.*

Recognizing Proportions of Negative and Positive Emotions

During emotionally turbulent times, accurately recognizing distributions of specific emotions (e.g., contempt, pride, sadness, hope, anger) within different groups of the organization is critical to delivering an appropriate organizational response. Mere attention to patterns of affective experiences alone does not guarantee accurate recognition of group patterns of specific emotions. Specific emotions such as joy, anger, or fear have more adaptive value than global affective states (pleasant / unpleasant), in part because experiences of specific emotional states are less subject to misattribution error (Schwarz & Clore, 2006). In comparison to a global affective state or mood, emotions are typically associated with a causal object, which allows more targeted intervention and thus more tailored regulation (Barrett & Salovey, 2002). For example, within the same category of negative emotions, anger is linked to an appraisal of a personal offense and the urge to attack; fear is linked to the interpretation of immediate personal danger and the urge to escape (Izard, 1991).

To misread which specific emotion is more prevalent within particular departments or the organization as a whole, or to infer, for example, that more destructive contempt rather than mobilizing frustration describes the emotional state of particular work groups, can reduce managers' effectiveness in leading strategic renewal. Although attending to negative emotions is intuitive and important, recent research has demonstrated a similar importance in accurately assessing positive emotions, such as hope and attachment (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson et al., 2003; Huy, 1999, 2002).

To illustrate the predictive power of specific negative emotions, we highlight contempt since it is as an important emotion in strategic change contexts yet is rarely discussed. Pelzer (2005) argued that contempt in organizations is an often overlooked emotion that nonetheless wreaks havoc. Contempt arises

when people place themselves on a higher plane than the target of their emotion (i.e., change leaders), thus implicitly denying the targets' legitimate authority. Darwin's (1872) study of emotions underscored contempt as a potent emotion, which entails scorn and disdain. Later research further confirmed Darwin's proposition that contempt is a basic emotion with a distinct facial and body expression (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Matsumoto & Ekman, 2004). One needs to view only a brief video clip of an interpersonal interaction to detect contempt; and if its presence is detected, the relationship will likely be antagonistic or end within a short period of time (e.g., Gottman, 1993; Herzog, 1998).

As a result, leaders' ability to detect shifting proportions of contempt during strategic change provides them with a valuable barometer about the effectiveness of past actions and the likely success of their proposed changes. Contempt signals that change recipients feel that those who lead change have inferior ideas, low competence, or unbecoming conduct, and therefore cannot be trusted. For those unwilling or unable to exit the organization, undesirable behavior such as quiet disobedience or even sabotage can result (LaNuez & Jermier, 1994). Emotional aperture can be used to gauge the evolution of the proportion of specific negative emotions such as contempt within various groups in an organization. Beyond assessment of global negative versus affective states, recognizing specific emotions provides more fine-grained action implications. For example, both contempt and anger are negative emotions. However, whereas anger is more amenable to resolution, contempt appears to be an emotion and signals a clear and irrevocable dissolution of a relationship (Gottman, 1999). Thus, misreading one negative (anger) emotion for another (contempt) can be disastrous.

Despite the utility of recognizing specific negative emotions since they signal a problematic state of affairs, many people seem handicapped in their ability to accurately detect negative emotions (for a review, see Barrett, 2006; Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). In their meta-analysis of 97 separate studies, Elfenbein and Ambady (2002) found that whereas accuracy rates for detecting positive emotions ranged from 68% to 79%, detection rates for negative emotions ranged from 43% to 67%. For example, contempt had the lowest rate of detection accuracy (43.2%), followed by fear (57.5%), as compared to 79% for happiness. This relative handicap at recognizing specific negative emotions may stem in part from the

lower frequency with which people encounter expressions of negative emotions. Given their potentially negative consequences in social interactions, it may be common for people to try masking their expressions of negative emotions even when they are felt. This camouflaging behavior is likely to be amplified in organizational settings since expressions of negative emotions in front of higher-level people can be particularly penalizing (Argyris, 1993), further inhibiting the ability to accurately decipher negative emotions. This perceptual handicap at recognizing negative emotions relative to positive emotions will adversely affect emotional aperture by increasing the probability of underestimating the proportion of negative emotions displayed in groups.

Proposition 3: *The level of emotional aperture for assessing the proportion of negative emotions that exists in organizations will be lower than for positive emotions such that the prevalence of negative emotions will be underestimated.*

Unique Challenges of Culturally Diverse and Globally Situated Businesses

Given the increasingly global and culturally diverse nature of organizations and the frequency of various forms of strategic change (e.g., global acquisitions, strategic renewals, and alliances), cultural differences in emotional displays can present a challenge to high levels of emotional aperture. Although some degree of universality in non-verbal displays of emotions exists (Ekman, 1972; Haidt & Keltner, 1999; Mesquita & Frijda, 1997), enough cultural-group variation remains to produce differences in accuracy at recognizing the emotions of people who come from a cultural/ethnic background different from the perceiver. Empirical research has shown that this variation emerges in the form of a relative handicap at decoding the emotions expressed by cultural groups different from one's own cultural group (Beaupre & Hess, 2006). This disadvantage is important enough to produce accurate versus inaccurate assessments. For example, in social psychology experiments people can recognize emotional expressions with an average accuracy rate of 58% with an average disadvantage associated with assessing emotions from culturally diverse backgrounds of 9.3% (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2003). This suggests that people may have no better than chance-rate probability (50%) when they attempt to decode the emotional response of members from different cultural backgrounds (Marsh, Elfenbein, & Ambady, 2003).

This disadvantage is posited to come from one's relative exposure to culturally similar individuals versus dissimilar individuals (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2003; Beaupre & Hess, 2006; Elfenbein, 2006). For example, Chinese people living in China are less accurate than Chinese people living in the United States at decoding emotional displays of Anglo-Americans; Africans living in the U.S. are more accurate at decoding African and Anglo-American faces than at decoding Chinese faces (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2003). Moreover, training directed at recognizing emotions in facial expression shows greater improvement for emotions expressed by out-groups relative to in-groups, further bolstering the idea that lack of exposure to certain groups decreases accuracy (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2003). Although this disadvantage has only been demonstrated in relation to recognizing individuals' emotions within a culturally diverse organization, information gleaned from cultural in-group members will skew one's inferences about the emotions being experienced by culturally diverse groups. Such a bias presents another barrier to accurate emotion recognition.

Proposition 4: *(a) Accuracy at recognizing proportions of specific emotions in groups will decrease as the level of ethnic/cultural diversity in the target group increases. (b) This relationship between accuracy and diversity will be moderated by the level of experience the member has with ethnic/cultural diversity.*

Thus far, we have proposed emotional aperture as an ability to accurately recognize patterns of emotion clusters in groups, and elaborated specific challenges to using emotional aperture effectively in culturally diverse organizations. We have assumed that attending to emotions in organizations relies on accurate perception of the shifting distributions of specific emotions that arise during the change process. Our theory highlights the need for flexibility in the actions leaders take during change so as to take into account the differing clusters of emotions that exist in different parts of the organization. Moreover, our theory suggests that sensitivity to the ongoing shifts in emotion distributions provides valuable information to leaders to craft a tolerable pace of change for various groups. We will next discuss a model of emotion regulation that focuses on emotional sequencing, which can help increase organization members' receptivity to strategic change.

EMOTIONAL SEQUENCING

Emotional sequencing refers to the order in which specific emotion-attending actions are given a high level of attention by change leaders in relation to other emotion-attending actions to deal with a work group's emotional evolution during strategic change. Emotional sequencing involves actions calibrated to information about the dynamic shifting of specific emotions in various groups, obtained through change leaders' emotional aperture. Leaders can thus rebuild the emotional energy (Quinn & Dutton, 2005) among demoralized groups or maintain high energy in a timely and sensitive way. Emotional sequencing relies on appropriate *timing* of various types of emotion-attending actions (Albert, 1984). Good timing captures windows of opportunity in which an action could benefit from better receptivity and more bountiful resources. Through timing, managers also can plan their emotion-attending actions so that the pressure to do multiple things at the same time is lifted. Redistributing actions and change events allows managers to balance various groups' change load and sustain their capacity to change.

In turn, appropriate sequencing of interventions depends in part on the *pacing* of various emotion-attending actions. Pacing refers to the speed of an activity, or how quickly an action unfolds. Diverse types of emotion-attending actions display different pacing characteristics (e.g., rapid for eliciting hope when recipients are ready for energetic action, gradual for displaying sympathy when recipients are in a mourning phase). Appropriate sequencing of emotion-attending actions associated with different pacing characteristics is important because it helps to create a more tolerable change rhythm for recipient groups. Rhythm refers to a pattern of variability in the intensity and frequency of organizational activities. The rhythm of change provides a dynamic equilibrium that permits an already distressed work group to vary its activities over time while not changing too much or too fast (Sastry, 1997). Excessive speed in changing can lower the group's competence. Therefore, Sastry (1997) recommends a long enough settling-down period after dramatic changes to rebuild a group's capacity to change. In fast-changing environments, organizations should discipline themselves to change according to various groups' internal temporal structures and capabilities. Optimally, organizations should respond less immediately to the external environment, and craft a dynamic internal change rhythm that permits various groups to alternate

between rapid and moderately paced changes without losing synchronization. Thus, attunement through emotional aperture and actions manifested in emotional sequencing are tightly coupled.

Emotional sequencing represents a collective capability inasmuch as organization members can cooperate to pool their skills and resources to attend to the emotional well-being of particular groups when needed. This cooperation is supported by organizational practices and routines that attend to the group's emotional well-being, as opposed to individuals' discretionary and idiosyncratic emotion management actions. These emotion-attending actions shape the organization's emotional capability to respond to emotions in the organization (Huy, 1999, 2005). In this regard, an organization's emotional capability is greater than the sum of the emotional intelligence of its individual members. It represents the collective knowledge and skills demonstrated in situated actions to manage emotions in times of need. Leaders' emotion-attending actions integrate the temporal dimensions that underlie members' affective experiences during disruptive change.

Faced with the prospect of negative change as illustrated in the divestiture of AT&T (Moses, 1987), people can experience patterned emotional states including: shock associated with surprise and denial behaviors; anger associated with appraisal of unfairness of the negative outcomes; sadness associated with acceptance of the perceived negative outcome; and depression associated with the perceived lack of means to improve the undesirable situation (Kübler-Ross, 1969). While some individuals may have the inner resources or personal social support structures that help them recover and see the situation in a new light, others may not. Leaders who display high emotional aperture can recognize various clusters of specific emotions among different groups, which allow them to craft interventions and develop emotion-attending activities. For example, groups who initially experience positive emotions such as enthusiasm about strategic change require different emotion-attending actions than those who experience distressed emotions. Although these cheerful groups may not require much time to mourn about the past, they may feel frustrated that ambitious change is not progressing fast enough or disappointed by the initial change results. Left unattended, these emotions risk leading to gradual discouragement and premature abandon of their change projects (Huy, 2002). Actions that re-

elicit enthusiasm about change and dampen dejected emotions can help maintain these championing groups' persistence. Because of space limitations, we will focus on the critical scenario in which groups initially experience distressed emotions about change. We want to illustrate how emotional sequencing can be tailored to a particular situation by theorizing the social-psychological mechanisms that underlie the emotional evolution of a distressed change recipient group.

Drawing on emotional capability practices (Huy, 1999), we suggest the following temporal sequence of emotion-attending actions to reenergize severely distressed groups, which can be recognized through the use of emotional aperture. First, change leaders should allocate adequate time to display sympathy to distressed recipient groups (gradual, slow pacing). For any emotion-attending action to be well received, continuously paced actions to generate a climate of authenticity are critical. Once recipients are calmer, the focus should shift to activities that elicit hope to energize collective action (moderate to fast pacing). As these groups are mobilized for change, leadership can intensify actions that elicit positive affect including fun to foster more creativity (appropriate timing). As these groups become reenergized and creative, organizations can focus on increasing members' attachment to their organization to maintain their loyalty and intrinsic motivation (moderate and continuous pacing).

Emotional sequencing does not posit that change leaders perform only one emotion-attending activity at a time, in a linear sequence. Various types of emotion-attending actions can occur at the same time, across various groups and even within a group, with varying levels of intensity. Emotional aperture enables leaders to recognize the various arising emotions among different groups and provide information necessary to dynamically calibrate and adjust the process of emotional sequencing. Leaders can then orchestrate the priority, timing, and sequencing of various emotion-attending actions and allocate requisite organizational resources. In particular, a *larger proportion* of organizational resources are devoted to the execution of the focal emotion-attending action type, which we will discuss in turn.

Display of Sympathy to Increase Receptivity to Change

Strategic change challenges members' self-identity and meaning and creates high uncertainty about their future roles and privileges within the organization, which triggers anxiety or fear (Argyris,

1990). Prolonged and extreme fear of an unknown with ominous implications can degenerate into depression, which blocks all learning efforts when people perceive that they cannot achieve valued outcomes, feel irrevocable loss, or are pessimistic about potential improvement in their situation (Schein, 1996). Emotion affects strategic change initially through a stage in change process referred to as receptivity (Huy, 1999). Receptivity shapes and is shaped by the continuous sense-making and meaning-giving activities among members of the organization. People seek to understand the proposed change and to influence each other to socially construct a new meaningful reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Receptivity to change is necessary for mobilization and learning and is characterized by gradations of willingness to accept change—from passive acceptance to enthusiastic endorsement. Resistance to change represents the converse of receptivity and ranges from moral outrage that can translate into extreme actions, such as sabotage, to quiet cynicism and withdrawal behavior.

Faced with stressful change, the first emotion-related action is for leaders, through their activated emotional aperture, to be aware of and recognize the rich range of emotions that could be triggered, the potential effects of employees' emotional states on important organizational outcomes, and what to do about them. This heightened sensitivity in emotional aperture can be followed with sensitive attending (i.e., leaders' demonstration of sympathy with people whom they seek to change). Emotional reconciliation, which refers to the process of bringing together two seemingly opposed values people feel strongly about, is an important step in the process. Genuine efforts expended toward achieving a new synthesis and understanding increase recipients' receptivity to proposals for change. Albert (1984) suggests change agents try to frame the proposed change as a juxtaposition of additions and deletions. If employees can be reassured that the change represents an addition to or an expansion of existing values, it will be easier for them to accept it. The more continuity is perceived to exist between the past and the future, the less the change will be regarded as radical. On the other hand, the valued elements from the past that must be "deleted" have to be mourned to facilitate transition.

One of the first steps to full emotional reconciliation may be adequate emotional grieving. Freud (1917) described grieving as a process in which emotional energy is withdrawn from a loved entity before

it can be directed elsewhere. “When the work of mourning is completed,” he said, “the ego can become free and uninhibited again,” (cited in Parkes, 2002: 370). Bridges (1980) describes the evolution of emotional patterns among members who experience loss in strategic change by noting that “endings” come first, then “neutral zones,” and finally “new beginnings.” The endings phase is characterized by disenchantment, where organization members recognize that “positive feelings toward past situations cannot be replicated in the future.” But the outcome of change is more critical in the second phase, or the neutral zone, when “individuals feel disconnected from people and things of the past and emotionally unconnected with the present.” This phase is marked by disorientation (the past is no longer appropriate but the future direction is not yet clear) and frightening disintegration (everything is collapsing).

Passage from one phase to another is not automatic. Applying emotional aperture to recognize these emotional shifts on a timely basis allows leaders to time their emotion-attending actions to various groups’ emotional pace, in which receptivity to a new type of emotion-attending action arises. In particular, regulating emotional states during the transition between the ending phase and the neutral zone is important. Research on grieving suggests that people are likely to get out of the grieving mode more quickly if they can find a secure base in which they feel safe enough to let go of the cherished entity, relinquish avoidance behaviors, begin to face the pain of loss, and reorient themselves (Parkes, 2002).

In the context of strategic change, feelings of loss can be attended to with fair interpersonal treatment by powerful members (Bies, 2001; Brockner et al., in press). This interpersonal treatment may include the following: There should be focus on shared meaning construction, not just explaining the solution the leadership has produced; people can be helped to find their new roles in the new order or to develop newly required competencies; and inclusion should be encouraged and mistakes and losses openly acknowledged (Bridges, 1984). In order to pass through this phase of change successfully, members will need sufficient time to reflect on the past and develop new perspectives for the future. They have to come to terms with issues such as “what went wrong, why it needs changing,” and thinking about the new beginning. This meditative period does not have to be devoted to emotional grieving alone. Less aggrieved groups can use opportunities to make sense, to achieve a deep understanding and acceptance of

the implications of this change, and to reflect and discuss whether and how they can revise and adapt their work practices and private lives (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Staudenmayer, Tyre, & Perlow, 2002). It is possible for these groups to understand the business logic conveyed top-down without achieving an emotional acceptance of the proposed change.

Change agents who rush grieving groups through this reflective, seemingly unproductive, phase risk a backlash. This is what seems to have happened to AT&T employees in the post break-up period (Bridges, 1984). The organizational structural change was achieved, but the cultural and emotional shift was far from completion. As described, covert anger and depression was widespread and destructive (Moses, 1987). As employees were rushed through the implementation process, the grieving process was short-circuited. Bypassing the grieving phase may lead to an organization paralyzed with survivor sickness (Noer, 1993). Members learn to live day by day, devoid of creative energy. In contrast, in another case of massive corporate downsizing and work relocation, Huy (2002) found that change managers established ways to formally mourn the closing of employees' cherished work sites. They set up "heritage and succession" rituals and "last suppers" served by managers. Change recipients felt more at peace after these mourning ceremonies, because they felt that they had been treated with respect.

As a result, pacing of sympathetic actions during this phase is likely to be slow, patient, gradual, and highly customized if it occurs at all. Various work groups display very different patterns of emotions and likely progress at different paces during the reconciliation period. Emotional aperture can allow leaders to recognize different groups' emotional evolution and pacing and as a result, synchronize various emotion-attending actions. To the extent that the active participation of these groups is critical to inter-group coordination and collective mobilization for change, leaders may have to slow down the pace of change of other change-eager groups to reduce the risks of dis-synchronization in groups' actions that can in turn generate unpredictable organizational dynamics (Huy, 2001; Sastry, 1997). Active monitoring of the shifting of these groups' emotional patterns and attending to them when appropriate is critical.

Proposition 5: *Distressed groups that do not benefit from slow, gradual, patient pacing and organizational support to mourn and reflect about reconciling the past with the present are likely to display both low receptivity to strategic change and lower action synchrony with other groups.*

However, for a leadership's display of sympathy to be appreciated by change recipients, an overarching corporate climate of emotional authenticity has to be present.

Authenticity as Cornerstone of Emotion-Attending Actions

Organizational authenticity refers to the organization's ability to facilitate the variety of authentic emotions that can be legitimately displayed, and felt, in an organization. To the extent that organizations under stressful change only recognize a narrow range of emotions, employees are likely to experience emotional dissonance, which is the internal conflict generated between genuinely felt emotions and emotions displayed in organizations (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). For instance, during a process of strategic change, Huy (2002) observed that the chief operating officer of one large company sent a confidential memo to all managers stating, "Expressions of cynicism [about change] will not be tolerated. We are in positions of leadership and must display enthusiasm at all times [to everyone]." While trying to curtail a full range of emotional display might not be overly dysfunctional in a stable, low emotive context that relies on working routines and little change, as leaders can speed up execution by muting doubting critics, it is questionable whether this form of emotional suppression fosters major learning and recipients' voluntary cooperation with leaders during strategic change.

During strategic change, it would seem necessary for managers to deliberately relax emotional display rules and express more authenticity to restore some continuity in their subordinates' lives. Huy (2002) has described how certain middle managers encouraged employees to express a wider range of emotions, both personal and work-related, than had been traditionally allowed. They organized emotion management "information sessions" for small separate groups of 20 to 40 recipients. Employees were encouraged to verbalize in small groups, outside the scrutiny of their superiors, their private feelings about the ways in which the change had affected them. Then managers invited each group to make a drawing about how the change felt collectively; and they displayed the drawings around the room. It was

only then that individuals started to realize how similar their feelings were, and they started to laugh and joke about them. A process consultant showed them Bridges' (1980) transition model and explained that it was "normal" to have these feelings. The sessions elicited pleasant low-activation emotions such as calm and attenuated their fears and feelings of helplessness. The sessions also helped recipients to accept their own emotions and gave them the additional energy to continue their work. The recipients reported that they felt more at peace and had more sympathy for their peers and superiors. These emotion-attending actions seemed to help reduce absenteeism and a decline in employee morale.

Our arguments are congruent with Brockner's (1992) suggestion that emotional pain on the part of change recipients could become harmful if denied or derogated as insignificant. Freedom to express feelings should be granted, and layoff managers should display sensitivity and honesty toward the people involved. Attention to details in the layoff procedures is essential to project a sense of fairness, justice, and respect (Bies, 2001; Grunberg, Moore, & Greenberg, 2006). Heedfulness may enhance affect-based trust in management when the latter is perceived to be honest and caring about the welfare of all stakeholders. In turn, change recipients are more likely to act in a constructive fashion to the change (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1997).

Emotional authenticity is likely to increase recipients' psychological safety because it conveys a climate of mutual respect in which people feel comfortable being themselves (Edmondson, 1999). Calm people are more likely to make associations among ideas and to see more complex relations than do agitated people (Isen, 2000). Conversely, excessive agitation and emotional demands on recipients could lead to emotional numbness and low sensitivity to new ideas and experimentation (Morris & Feldman, 1996). The more members feel free to display authentic emotions within norms of civility and mutual caring (c.f. Martin et al., 1998), the higher their level of learning is likely to be; conversely, suppressed emotions may lead to higher emotional dissonance, burnout, and lower levels of learning.

Proposition 6: *Distressed recipient groups who do not benefit from continuously paced actions to elicit emotional authenticity are likely to be slower in achieving receptivity to strategic change and learning than groups who did.*

Whereas emotional aperture involves visually recognizing non verbal emotional expressions, eliciting emotional authenticity engages members to express their emotional states with words and other artistic expressions (e.g., drawings), so that leadership can attend to them more sensitively. Emotional aperture and emotional authenticity complement each other as means of emotion recognition. The more emotional authenticity exists in a group, the less emotional aperture is needed to recognize emotions accurately, although the latter is still helpful to have. But a high emotional aperture skill is required to achieve accuracy in recognizing emotions in groups who display low emotional authenticity.

Whereas displays of sympathy and authenticity could reduce employees' agitated emotions and allow them to mourn and reflect on the implications of the strategic change, there is a point when collective action is necessary to advance change. Through emotional aperture, leaders recognize groups may wish to transition from the mourning phase, for example, and are receptive to experiencing a different emotional state such as hope. Hope facilitates mobilizing people for collective action to realize ambitious change goals.

Hope and Collective Mobilization

Collective mobilization refers to an organization's ability to rally and propel various groups to undertake joint action and realize common change goals (Simonin, 1997). It requires voluntary collaboration among members that goes beyond simple compliance. Adherence to the spirit of the change goals is necessary to overcome unforeseen complications. This requires profound understanding of the change rationale, as well as commitment to minimize inconsistencies in execution (Amason, 1996).

Arousing hope encourages people to take action in strategic change. Hope refers to the belief that individuals have both the will and the means to accomplish goals. Hope buffers people against apathy and depression and strengthens their capacity to persist in adversity (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope works as an antidote against anxiety and depression: People seek to restore their belief that they have control over threats that may arise, either by changing objective circumstances or by altering the psychological impact of the situation (Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996). Aspinwall and Taylor (1997) found that perceptions

of personal control were positively related to persistence in pursuing challenging tasks (see also Lee, Peterson, & Tiedens, 2004).

Leaders can arouse hope through such means as establishing meaningful change goals, creating small wins to rekindle self-confidence, frequent and cheerful interaction between change leaders and employees, and uplifting ritual devices, such as rousing speeches and award ceremonies (Kanter, 1983; Kotter, 1995). Leaders also can arouse hope by promoting participation of and active consultation with change recipients right from the beginning of the change (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990), thus enlisting some supporters in recipient groups who in turn champion their cause inside their respective units (Huy, 2002). Because hope energizes positively, the pace of hope-eliciting actions can be moderate to fast, bearing in mind that prolonged extreme excitement also can be harmful (Kaufman, 1999).

Proposition 7: *Distressed recipient groups who experience hope about a better future through strategic change are likely to join collective mobilization and increase cooperation among groups. These groups likely benefit from moderate to fast pacing of hope-eliciting actions.*

We also caution that hope can decline quickly and turn into cynicism if members do not perceive their leaders as authentic and align what they say with what they do (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997). Moreover, whereas hope helps improve current action focus, it could also reduce the range of search behavior or induce optimism that would evolve into complacency, escalating commitments, and eventual failure (Miller & Chen, 1996). To counter this pressure toward organizational simplicity, the change process has to be balanced with continuous learning and adjusting from interim feedback, which allows leadership to detect early mistakes and rectify them before they become insurmountable. In addition, collective action can take place without much learning and innovation by relying on past routines. Through emotional aperture, leaders identify groups that also need to act in a creative way. Through emotional sequencing, leaders devote heightened attention to creating an emotional context that fosters creative actions by eliciting positive emotions associated with flow, which we elaborate next.

Positive Emotions Associated with Flow to Increase Organizational Learning and Innovation

Learning conceptually links interim change outcomes back to the change, receptivity, and mobilization to underscore the ongoing adjustment between action and cognition (Huy, 1999). Strategic change is by nature risky and unpredictable, and the presence of active learning is likely to improve the chance of its realization. Scholars have described that such a learning process is often interactive, emergent, involving collective sense-making and sense-giving (Gioia et al., 1994; Bartunek, 1984).

Beyond dissatisfaction with underperformance that promotes learning (Argyris, 1993; Miller, 1990), experiencing positive emotions associated with flow can also foster creative learning (Amabile et al., 2005; Quinn, 2005). Flow represents an intense state of consciousness in which one's entire affective, cognitive, and physical resources are totally invested in the task at hand. Motivated artists and researchers experience this state when they are totally immersed in their tasks and lose their sense of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Flow typically accompanies emotions that result from the motivated search for pleasant experiences (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). These emotions fuel intrinsic motivation, which represents one of the necessary preconditions for creativity (Amabile, 1988). Positive emotions permit the rapid generation of multiple images so that the associative process is richer. A happy person engages more often in exploratory behavior, which is necessary for creative discovery (Amabile et al., 2005). By contrast, sadness slows image evocation (Damasio, 1994). Therefore, leaders can create emotional contexts that elicit flow conducive to creativity by combining actions, such as establishing tasks with clear goals, optimal challenges, and frequent feedback; allowing employees autonomy in tasks that require creativity; developing meaningful work (i.e., work that is compatible with a person's preferences and values); and reducing pressures and distractions on employees (Mainemelis, 2001).

Organizations can further create a playful context that encourages experimentation and tolerates mistakes during strategic change. Playfulness fosters safe experimentations and, like jokes, institutionalizes expressions of taboo issues and negative emotions within a legitimate forum (Lee, Edmondson, Thomke, & Worline, 2004; Weick & Westley, 1996). Playfulness induces a state of relative emotional equanimity and fosters learning. Since these actions are largely self-sustaining, at least over a reasonably long period of time, their enactment can be continuous but moderately paced.

Proposition 8: *Distressed recipient groups that benefit from leaders' actions that elicit positive emotions associated with flow are likely to experiment and learn creatively. These actions can be continuous and moderately paced during strategic change, once groups become receptive to change and are ready to participate.*

Through emotional aperture, leaders can recognize those groups in which cheerful emotional displays and energetic behavior suggest that a "can do" climate has been re-established. Effective strategic renewal leaders strive to maintain such a climate and retain innovative employees to sustain creative organizational learning. This environment can be created by increasing members' emotional attachment to their organization.

Attachment to Organization and Enhancing Organizational Learning

Whereas emotional attachment to previous corporate strategy or work habits can impair members' ability to learn new competences and renew the company's strategy (Burgelman, 1994), attachment to the organization as a cooperative work systems (Barnard, 1968) can help retain and engage experienced and innovative employees to maintain organizational learning and innovation (Dougherty & Bowman, 1995). Beyond satisfactory economic incentives, which rarely elicit and sustain people's intrinsic motivation in the long run, managers can develop emotional rewards through caring behavior, which can create a strong sense of attachment with their work groups or their organization (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). An emotional embodiment of high-level purpose is necessary for the institutionalization of distinctive competence (Selznick, 1957).

In order to maintain a sense of identity, individuals need to feel a basic level of security and comfort, which can be achieved through attachment to symbolic objects that bridge their internal and external worlds (Winnicott, 1965). Members identify more strongly when their work group or organization's identities evoke positive affect, and disengage if such collective identities elicit negative affect (Harquail, 1998). This suggests that building emotional attachment to an organization's renewed values and goals in the later stages of strategic change can be important. Organizational actions that elicit attachment to organizations include: (1) actions compatible with socially desirable traits that enhance

employees' external recognition and self-esteem (e.g., protection of the environment, charitable causes, and company success); (2) actions that demonstrate that the organization cares about the long-term development and welfare of its employees and their significant others, such as development on the job, education, health concerns, and family benefits; (3) personnel selection, training, and retention processes (Selznick, 1957). As these actions seek to build long-term social relations, they are likely to be more effective if they are enacted consistently rather than abruptly and rapidly, at a moderate but steady pace.

Proposition 9: *Distressed groups that benefit from organizational actions that elicit attachment to their organization are likely to retain intrinsically motivated members. These actions are likely to be effective if they are performed at a continuous, steady and moderate pace, once groups become receptive to strategic change and learn creatively.*

Although eliciting emotional attachment to the organization is desirable throughout a change process, it seems particularly important for leaders to devote a higher attention to eliciting such attachment than to other previously described emotion-attending actions in the later stages of strategic renewal for at least two reasons. First, renewed organizational innovation likely prompts competitors to lure away the company's most creative members to learn more quickly about the focal company's new offerings. Second, members who have developed soon-to-market offerings may feel a heightened need to leave the company and create their own firms if they feel that their personal growth needs cannot be fulfilled adequately by staying with the organization (Agarwal et al., 2004).

Proposition 10: *Groups that are distressed and alienated by strategic change are likely to be reenergized if the following emotional sequencing process is performed: display of sympathy; hope about a better future; fun at work; emotional attachment to the organization; and emotional authenticity throughout the entire process.*

Challenges of Emotional Sequencing

We have proposed an example of emotional sequencing that is tailored to a particular situation, that is, how to alleviate the emotional turmoil of distressed groups and reenergize members to enable strategic renewal. We have elaborated one exemplar of emotional sequencing to describe the underlying

mechanisms that determine the appropriateness of various emotion-attending actions that comprise such a particular sequence. Through emotional aperture, change leaders can customize various types of emotional sequencing to address the evolution of various groups' emotional and task needs.

Although we argue how such customized emotional sequencing can help strategic renewal, we also note that its widespread enactment in organizations faces a number of barriers. Because emotion sequencing involves both accurate recognition of recipients' emotions (via emotional aperture) and reacting to these appropriately, some change leaders may perceive that such sequencing can consume substantial time and personal efforts, time that they may not have because they are overwhelmed with other tasks. Furthermore, these leaders may already be emotionally fragile, and receive little psychological support from their superiors (Huy, 2002). Attending to repeated negative emotions from many people can be "toxic" and harm the leaders' own well being (Frost, 2003).

Managers also could expose themselves to potential lawsuits if their emotion-regulating actions backfire and cause grave psychological damage to any of their employees. Moreover, some managers may have a low emotional aperture, do not feel adequately trained to play the role of a psychological coach, and may feel uncomfortable or ineffective in emotion regulating. Under these conditions, managers may be required to expend intense efforts to attend to their subordinates' emotional well-being. Aside from this near impossible challenge, such individualized, customized emotion-regulating behaviors can be perceived as inconsistent with the logics of standardization of procedures and impersonal relations that govern members' respective duties in a bureaucratic organization (Weber, 1947).

The dominant "bureaucratic" model holds that organizational effectiveness relies on impersonal administrative rules (Crozier, 1963). Emotions are assumed to interfere with an effective application of administrative rules since they can cloud managerial objectivity. Traditional bureaucracies attempt to keep personal life separate from workplace concerns, so that if an employee experiences difficulties balancing the two, it is up to the individual to resolve these issues, not the organization. In the extreme, organizations are deemed successful to the extent that they eliminate "all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation" (Weber, 1947: 216).

Proposition 11: *Personnel supervisors who exhibit low levels of emotional aperture or are socialized to the logics of standardized rules and impersonal relations are likely to display low ability or low willingness to enact emotional sequencing in strategic change.*

The barriers for managers in attending to various groups' emotional patterns are easy to identify. As noted, these members may have a low emotional aperture that prevents them from accurately reading various groups' distributions of emotions. As discussed earlier, there are a variety of factors that can lead to low emotional aperture. However, even with high emotional aperture and the accurate assessment of emotions within the organization, managers may not engage in emotional sequencing if they fail to adapt to the temporal agenda of other members. Senior managers may feel constrained by the investors' timetable and quick delivery of improved performance. These managers may exhibit low *temporal adaptability* (Blount et al., 2006), which refers to the degree to which people attend to the pace of activities around them and value the experience of social synchrony (i.e., matching the pace of one's own activities to coordinate with the pace of surrounding others, to be flexible with their time, and tolerate delays) (Blount & Leroy, 2006). Moreover, their personal predispositions can lead them to attach a high value to *time urgency*, which refers to a tendency to track time closely, frequently monitor clock time, make schedules, and set deadlines (Blount et al., 2006; Landy, Rastegary, Thayer, & Colvin, 1991).

Furthermore, managers may conduct change activities according to their own belief systems. The idea that they should complete strategic change quickly is appealing. Rapid change is believed to create minimum misalignment between various parts of the organization that need to pull together in a common direction (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Speedy actions are tempting when serious underperformance requires initiating strategic change. Rapid, coercive, commanding change actions can prevent formation of resistance among threatened groups (Biggart, 1977). Fast-paced change is believed to shorten the disruptive period of uncertainty and risk associated with major change and overcome inertia (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004). Change leaders also may believe that the organizational value derived from a "long" emotional grieving and reflective period is inferior to the net benefits of a fast and sweeping change. In other words, they are likely to value task achievements over emotions.

Proposition 12: *The more the organization leaders value task achievements, time urgency, and display low temporal adaptability, the less likely they are willing to devote adequate time and resources to perform emotional sequencing in implementing strategic change.*

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This article discusses the management of strategic renewal through the lenses of emotional aperture and emotional sequencing. We propose adjusting emotional aperture to go beyond recognizing individual emotion and highlight that focusing on the broader distribution of shared emotions across groups is critical to navigating strategic renewal. Dynamically adjusting emotional aperture to meet situational organizational demands is neither natural nor easy because basic cognitive and cultural biases often impede individuals taking this more holistic perspective. We also explain why it could be challenging to use emotional aperture effectively in culturally diverse organizations. Research showing the power of shared emotions (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000) suggests a need to conceptualize perceptual attunement to this level of aggregation. We propose emotional aperture as one such construct.

In addition to the research implications described in our propositions, there are a number of empirical tasks on emotional aperture ahead. We assume that attention to distributions of a group's emotions is a related but distinct ability from attention to an individual's emotions. Empirical tests are needed to validate this assumption and establish emotional aperture as a potentially important enrichment to general non-verbal sensitivity and emotional intelligence abilities for deciphering individual emotional displays. Moreover, our theory of emotional aperture further delineates moderating conditions of its utility to change leaders. For example, the ability to recognize distributions of emotions in groups should be useful only for leaders that manage large groups rather than a few subordinates where ongoing attention to each individual is more realistic. Interpersonal effectiveness, therefore, should not be enhanced by emotional aperture per se. Thus, the importance of emotional aperture is likely to increase with the number of subordinates and with the cultural diversity of organizations (e.g., proposition 4).

Organizations in which leaders can widen the aperture of their attention to recognize emotion patterns benefit from more critical information needed for timely action, compared to organizations that

have very few leaders who can perceive emotions in such a holistic manner. Through increasing one's emotional aperture, leaders can begin to productively adjust their attention to the dynamic emotional evolution of various groups, so as to actively engage them in the strategic change process. This more holistic perceptual lens for group emotions also complements Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions that explains how the interplay between cognitive focus and emotional experiences help individuals avoid common biases (e.g., Johnson & Fredrickson, 2005).

In practice, adjusting one's emotional aperture may well need to be nearly automatic. Relying too heavily on individual-level emotional response will not provide the information needed to evaluate the broader emotional landscape. We further propose that increasing emotional aperture is a skill that can be developed. Recent research provides promising data that training can increase abilities in deciphering individual emotional displays (Elfenbein, 2006). Though it remains an empirical question, we anticipate similar benefits for emotional aperture training. Through increased levels of emotional aperture, leaders may better recognize not only distributions of negative emotions but also those groups in which positive emotional displays and energetic behavior suggest that a "can do" climate has been re-established and where further action is required.

Emotional sequencing refers to the temporal order in which change leaders devote high attention to a specific type of emotion-attending action, in relation to other types of action, in regard to a particular group to address the latter's evolving emotional and task needs during strategic change. To illustrate the customizing nature of emotional sequencing, we have provided a theoretical elaboration of the various social-psychological mechanisms that help convert distressed groups into energized participants who enable strategic renewal. In the beginning of strategic change, leaders' patient, gradual display of sympathy and creation of emotional authenticity help reduce employees' agitation and improve their receptivity to the change. Once this is achieved, arousing hope with a moderate to fast pace energizes collective mobilization. To reduce the risk of unreflective and obstinate action, continuous adjustment employing interim feedback is necessary; such learning can be enhanced by continuously paced actions, which can create a corporate climate of emotional authenticity. Creative learning can then be fostered

with continuous and moderately paced actions that elicit positive emotional responses associated with flow at work. In the concluding phase of strategic change, reenergized and creative employees are more likely to remain with the organization if they are sustained with moderately paced actions that elicit emotional attachment to their organization. Applying effective emotional aperture allows leaders to recognize shifts in various groups' emotions and time various types of emotion-attending actions when the focal group becomes receptive to such an action. Finally, we have theorized about the challenges of performing customized emotional sequencing activities within organizations.

Organizations can develop a repertoire of emotion management actions as contingent procedures, which can be imparted to personnel supervisors. These procedures enable the organization to transcend the need for a large number of emotionally intelligent individuals in influential positions who might work at cross-purposes and apply their emotional skills to maximize their personal benefit (Jackall, 1988). Managers can be trained to recognize emotional patterns through use of an enlarged emotional aperture. The managers then can initiate and facilitate emotion-attending routines in an appropriate sequence to relieve change recipients' distress and encourage positive contribution during the change process.

Currently, emotional sequencing actions have not been widely and skillfully practiced in organizations. Many organizations have been formally designed as emotional vacuums and display, at least on the surface, unemotional and instrumental business logic (Weber, 1947). While this Cartesian mode of management may produce satisfactory performance in machine-like organizations (Mintzberg, 1979) and allow, at best, modest innovation in slowly changing environments, skillful emotional aperture and emotional sequencing seem necessary to create organizational contexts that foster successful and sustained strategic renewal (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998). This requires leaders to systematically allocate organizational resources to develop skills in emotional aperture and emotional sequencing, which, with time, will shape the organization's collective emotional capability and foster renewal and change. Future research can test the propositions that we have developed, validate if the proposed sequence of emotion-attending actions does facilitate strategic renewal, and generate additional refinements and boundary conditions to our nascent theory.

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