

**Organizational Change Readiness Sentiments: Understanding Middle Manager
Sensemaking and Sensegiving**

by

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Abstract

Much has been written about managing change in the workplace, including how to develop change readiness in the organization. However, little is known about how middle managers form their change readiness sentiments, and subsequently influence their subordinates' readiness beliefs. Drawing on an inductive analysis of interview responses of 80 Indian and American middle managers, three related qualitative studies were conducted to better understand the change readiness sentiments' sensemaking and sensegiving behaviors of middle managers.

In the first paper, a qualitative examination of the initial thoughts and concerns of the middle managers about recently announced organizational changes was conducted. Content analysis of interview responses revealed the soundness of the five change readiness sentiments as proposed by Armenakis and colleagues (1993, 1999). Differences in the change sentiments of Indian and American managers were noted and explained in the light of differences in cultural dimensions.

In the second paper, I identified the various readiness cues that middle managers attend to. Additionally, I found that middle managers' sensemaking occurred in two stages – anticipatory and confirmatory, and that the managers depended on change readiness schemas based on both tacit and explicit cues. Finally, a temporal model of the change readiness sensemaking process is developed based upon the data.

In the third paper, I examined how middle managers consciously framed their change readiness sentiments. I found that middle managers employed three readiness framing strategies:

(1) diagnostic framing centered on change discrepancy; (2) prognostic framing focused on change appropriateness; and (3) motivational framing concentrated on efficacy, support, and personal valence. Additionally, middle managers were found to perform episodic and everyday actions to reinforce their change readiness frames.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to both my parents.

My *Achchan*, who did not live to see this day; however, I know he is watching me with pride.

My *Amma*, to whom I owe every bit of my existence.

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INTRODUCTION

“One should bear in mind that there is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer, than to introduce new political orders. For the one who introduces them has as his enemies all those who profit from the old order, and he has only lukewarm defenders in all those who might profit from the new order...”

Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

While implementing change successfully is undoubtedly a very challenging strategic activity, the business environment requires organizations (Vermuelen, Puranam, & Gulati, 2010) today to undergo change at an incredible pace (Piderit, 2000). Therefore, the capability of organizations to be aware and open to change has become very critical. This is more so since successful implementation of change is quite rare. It is estimated that about 70% of all organizational changes are unsuccessful (Franken, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009). This is in spite of the fact that academics as well as practitioners have been studying the phenomenon and dynamics of organizational change for years (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Kotter, 1996). Studies have focused on reengineering (Hill & Collins, 1999), total quality management implementation (Claver, Gasco, Llopis, & Gonzalez, 2001), changes in organizational culture (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993), and corporate identity (Corley & Gioia, 2003). One possible reason for the magnitude of failing change efforts may be that the researchers have not studied all the micro processes that affect change implementation, particularly those that occur within the organization. Several scholars have suggested increased attention to such internal dynamics (e.g., Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Reay, Golden-Biddle, & Germann, 2006) that explain how change is experienced at different levels within the organization.

I attempt to respond to the need for better understanding of the micro-processes underlying change efforts using a sensemaking perspective across three related empirical papers examining how middle managers experience change. In my efforts, I refer to Gioia and colleagues' (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994) definition of sensemaking as a process describing how individuals construe and interpret issues and events occurring around them and subsequently engage in behavior. I specifically focus on how middle managers' appraise their change readiness when called upon to implement a strategic change. In addition, I attempt to examine the similarities and differences between middle managers' experiences of change implementation across two different cultures, specifically India and the United States.

The outline of this dissertation is as follows. I begin with a general introduction to organizational change implementation by (a) situating my work within the domain of organizational change and change readiness, (b) defining key constructs, (c) explaining the motivation of this dissertation, and (d) offering a brief preview of the three papers. Then, I present each of the three studies that comprise this dissertation: (1) "Understanding Change Readiness Sentiments of Middle Managers of India and the United States," (2) "Middle Managers' Change Readiness Sensemaking: Cues, Catalysts, and Cultures," and (3) "Frames and Actions: Change Readiness Sensegiving among Middle Managers." Each paper has its own motivation, theoretical basis, and unique findings; however, together they offer a holistic view of change dynamics at the middle manager level. Each paper is a qualitative study based on interview responses collected from middle managers from multiple organizations in India and the United States. I hope to offer a comprehensive statement on middle managers' change implementation dynamics particularly focusing upon their cognitions and behaviors.

Finally, I generalize across the findings from each of the papers, and report on how they offer meaningful perspectives to change implementation. This will hopefully enable me to capitalize on the breadth and depth of the dissertation and offer general recommendations beyond what any of the papers could offer separately.

A wide range of published research on organizational change exists. Rather than exhaustively reviewing this body of work, I focus this discussion on elaborating important theoretical concepts I invoke in my dissertation, including organizational change, change readiness, middle managers' role in change implementation, sensemaking and sensegiving, framing, and cultural differences between India and the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Change

Organizations today are required to change at an incredible pace (Piderit, 2000). However, some estimate that more than half of organizational change efforts are unsuccessful (Fay & Luhrmann, 2004) and many major change projects are seldom declared substantial successes (Taylor-Bianco & Schemerhorn, 2006). Beer and Nohria (2000), for instance, noted that despite the effort that management put into change programs, only 30% were successful. Clegg and Walsh (2004) reported on the ineffectiveness of 12 organizational development initiatives applied in 898 manufacturing companies across four countries suggesting the lack of success in change implementation is prevalent across cultures. One reason organizational change initiatives may fail is they often lead to increased feelings of anxiety, negative emotions, uncertainty, and ambiguity among employees (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Kiefer, 2005). A major organizational change poses a particularly critical and difficult setting that triggers organization-wide sensemaking since change symbolizes

incongruity (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988). Under such situations, creating and sustaining rationality is of utmost importance (Weick, 1995). However, dynamic contexts accompanying an organizational change intensify experiences of complexity, ambiguity, and equivocality (Luscher & Lewis, 2008). In such contexts, sensemaking and sensegiving become exceptionally difficult yet vital for managers and employees. Some studies have suggested that these negative feelings point to an individual's unwillingness to support changes (Judson, 1991). Huy (2002) blamed failed change initiatives on managers' inability to cope with changing demands of the organization. According to Kavanagh and Ashkanasy (2006), change efforts fail because people implementing the changes underestimate the importance of this cognitive–affective nature of organizational change at the individual level.

In line with recent research on strategy and change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Knights & McCabe, 1998; Whittington, 2003), this study treats managers as active agents who respond to pressure for changes by shaping and modifying the change initiative. Managers serve a significant cognitive function in organizations by interpreting events (sensemaking) and using those interpretations to frame meaning for other organizational members (sensegiving). Sensemaking among managers refers to how they comprehend, interpret, and make the information regarding the change meaningful to themselves. In contrast, sensegiving involves managers' efforts to communicate and influence how others comprehend and interpret the change so as to encourage support. Hopkinson (2001) posits that sensemaking and sensegiving are not distinct domains, and Rouleau (2005) suggests that “one implies the other and cannot exist without it” (p. 1415).

Change Readiness

A key issue in managing an organizational change project successfully is setting up a working environment that supports the change (Boukenooghe, Devos, & Broeck, 2009). Researchers have referred to this as creating change readiness (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Change readiness is a “cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort” (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993: p. 681), and plays a crucial role in mitigating resistance to change and thus in reducing the failure rate (Eby, Adams, Russell, & Gaby, 2000; Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002). According to Schein (2004), failed change initiatives are often traceable to the organization’s inability to effectively foster change readiness before attempting to implement the change. Holt, Armenakis, Harris, and Field argued that *readiness* occurs “when the environment, structure, and organizational members’ attitudes are such that employees are receptive to a forthcoming change” (2007a: p. 290).

Armenakis and colleagues (e.g., Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis, Harris, & Feild, 1999) have identified five key change sentiments that influence individuals’ support for change. These sentiments have been referred to as discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, valence, and principal support, and are all influenced by change agent communication and change institutionalizing activities (Armenakis et al., 1999). *Discrepancy* expresses the perceived justification of the need for the change (e.g., achieving competitive advantage, growth, and survival). For organizational members to accept a change, it is necessary for them to believe that a change is needed; that there was a discrepancy between the current and ideal states of the organizations (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Discrepancy suggests that a performance or opportunity gap (Katz & Kahn, 1978) exists that a change could help bridge. *Appropriateness*

refers to the degree to which the specific proposed change offers a plausible panacea for the shortcomings currently facing the organization. *Efficacy* refers to the capability of the individual and the organization to make the change happen successfully. Support for the role of efficacy in organizational change situations has been found in previous research (Amiot et al., 2006; Armenakis et al., 2007; Eby et al., 2000; Jansen, 2004; Jimmieson et al., 2004; McGuire & Hutchins, 2006). *Valence* refers to possible enhancement of individual goals. Compatibility between individual goals and the proposed change is a key dimension of change appraisal (Liu & Perrewe, 2005). Every organizational change effort requires resources and commitment to see it through. This aspect is captured by *principal support*, which reflects the support provided by change agents.

The five change sentiments were conceived theoretically drawing from social psychology (Katz & Kahn, 1978), social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), motivation (Vroom, 1974), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) theories and research. The five sentiments and their importance were also demonstrated in practical projects such as consulting efforts as well as other field experiences. Armenakis, Harris, and Feild (1999) content analyzed a variety of publications in both academic as well as practitioner journals, and identified the five sentiments as being salient to change recipients' evaluation of a change proposal. Armenakis et al. (2007a) assessed the relative validity of these five change sentiments by surveying articles published in 12 scholarly journals known to publish organizational change research during the period 1997–2006. The review identified 42 articles in which at least one of the five change sentiments was referred to. The study results provided evidence that researchers and practitioners have found one or more of the five sentiments to be of significance in organizational change management efforts.

Armenakis et al. (2007b) reviewed work by organizational researchers over the last 60 years to identify the five employee sentiments related to change success. They examined the literature and found 41 publications dating between 1948 and 2006 that included one or more of those sentiments. The information obtained from the assessment of these sentiments is stated to serve as useful in revealing the degree of buy-in among change recipients and areas in which deficiencies in supportive beliefs exist that could negatively influence the change. By assessing these sentiments, change agents can better plan and execute the activities that follow during the change implementation process (Armenakis et al., 2007b). In a similar effort, Holt et al. (2007b) found that most employee change-related concerns were composed of four of the five sentiments (in this case, discrepancy was excluded).

While the five sentiments have guided several case analyses (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al, 2007b), with the exception of Holt (2002), little empirical research examines the adequacy of the five sentiments, or their relative importance. Holt (2002) rigorously studied the sentiments in multiple change recipient samples consisting of organizational members from different levels, and concluded that the five sentiments effectively represented most of their change concerns. Several studies have examined the role of the five sentiments in predicting critical change outcomes, both at the organizational as well as individual levels. While some studies examined the importance of discrepancy and appropriateness in change scenarios (Armenakis, Bediean, and Niebur, 1979; Cole, Harris, & Bernerth, 2006; Oswald, Mossholder, & Harris, 1994), others studied the collective role of the five change readiness sentiments (e.g., Brown, 2009). Credo, Varma, Harris, and Vitale (2008) found that employee engagement during change was associated with the five change readiness sentiments, and Varma and Harris (2008) found that the readiness sentiments were correlated to the post-merger organizational

identification. Collectively, the readiness sentiments were positively related to affective commitment to change (Brown, 2009), as well as to the pleasantness associated with change (Harris & Gresch, 2010).

Middle Managers

Building positive employee beliefs and attitudes is critical for successful change implementation (Armenakis et al., 1993; Eby et al., 2000; Elias, 2009) and middle managers have been suggested to be in an empowered position to create such a foundation (Huy, 2001). It is clear that middle managers are responsible for accomplishing the core tasks of their organizations (Osterman, 2008), and the role of middle managers in implementation of successful organizational change initiatives is also well documented in the literature (Balogun, 2003; Duck, 2001; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Kanter, 1983; Kotter, 1996; Mills, 2002; Neelankavil, Mathur, & Zhang, 2000; Piderit, 2000; Valentino, 2004; Weenig, 1999). Since uncommitted middle managers can quickly derail a change initiative (Duck, 2001; Hallier & James, 1997), change is most effective when it is sponsored by top management in conjunction with middle management (Mourier & Smith, 2001).

While Van der Velde, Jansen, and Vinckenburg (1999) characterized middle management work as “communication, traditional management, networking behavior, and human resource management” (p. 162), Floyd and Lane (2000) defined middle managers as “a nexus for information flows within the organization” (p. 157), and Balogun (2003) stressed their role in helping organizations implement new initiatives. Although the need for middle managers is recognized, the literature regarding middle management, their roles, and their future in organizations has been characterized as “thin” (Beckwith, Glenzer, & Fowler, 2002: 412),

“mixed” (Nair, 2003: p. 389), “contradictory,” “confusing” and “inconclusive” (Thomas & Linstead, 2002: 72). Thus, further study of middle managers and their roles seem warranted.

Middle managers typically head a function, a team, or a department. Kanter and Stein (1979) posit a broad definition where ‘middle’ stretches from those with supervisory responsibilities of first line employees to managers below top management. Huy (2001) describes middle managers as “managers two levels below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals” (p. 73). Jaeger and Pekruhl (1998) define middle managers as managers who range from first line supervisors all the way up to heads of departments. According to Huy (2002), they act as intermediaries between top management and the front line. On one hand, they’re close to the customers, and frontline employees –closer than senior managers are –so they know better than anyone where the problems are. However, they’re also far enough away from frontline work that they can see the bigger picture, which allows them to see new possibilities, both for solving problems and for encouraging growth (Huy, 2001).

A serious dynamic of any organizational change is located at the level of the middle manager. Middle managers implement change initiatives in order to align employee behavior with executive intent (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). They are required to transform a strategic vision into an operational reality. Middle managers are both change recipients as well as change agents. As a recipient, middle managers have to accept and implement the changes in their own roles and responsibilities. At the same time they are also expected to be an agent of the change and ensure that the proposed change is accepted at the lower levels. They are particularly called upon for the latter role, since they are “a nexus for information flows within the organization” (Floyd & Lane, 2000, p. 157). As an agent, middle managers are ordered by senior managers to instigate change, while the operating level may expect their managers to act as a recipient in the

face of change (Floyd & Lane, 2000). Having to cater to these multiple expectations, and balance their responsibilities, makes a middle manager's role during change very challenging. As Sims (2003) put it, "they are stuck in the middle" (p. 1209). However, Williams (2001) points out that "middle management represents one of the most overlooked, ignored resources in most organizations' strategic change efforts" (p. i). In their job of managing change, middle managers are embedded in the nexus of sensemaking and sensegiving. Middle managers may be told by senior managers to instigate change, but frontline workers may expect their middle managers to act as a predictable force in the face of change (Floyd & Lane, 2000). At the same time, middle managers may be sought out by peers as a sounding board to help make sense of an impending change (Huy, 2002; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2002). Middle managers also may be the target of change themselves and have the same emotional and communication needs as others (Balogun, 2003) or may feel open to change, aloof from change, opposed to change, or indifferent about the change effort (Turnbull, 2001). In each of these cases, the middle manager must assume a different position with the organizational message. During change, middle managers may be expected to initiate it, interpret its impact, provide leadership, help people learn needed new skills, execute change plans, or adapt new technologies (Higgs & Rowland, 2001).

Balogun and Johnson (2004) point out that middle managers have to make sense of a change they did not propose and then influence others that are further removed from the decision making. They are required to be agents of decisions they receive from their superiors, irrespective of what they themselves think about such decisions. They are required to put together a convincing story about what they are doing for the benefit of their superiors and also another for their subordinates, and occasionally, they are not convinced by the stories they themselves make (Sims, 2003). The dual sensemaking and sensegiving roles are not easy.

Labianca, Gray, and Brass (2000) found that employees watch their managers closely, while being skeptical of management's commitment to change. Middle managers' stories are vulnerable to subordinates' own change schemas and subsequent response. Mocking the aspirations and apparent pretensions of those in authority is always quite common, and it is particularly easy to do to middle managers (Sims, 2003).

Sensemaking

Sensemaking can be defined as "the meaning construction and reconstruction by the involved parties as they attempt to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of intended strategic change" (Gioia & Chittipedi, 1991, p. 442). It is a vital organizational phenomenon (Weick, 1995), and refers to making sense of events and experiences (Gioia, 1986). According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), sensemaking is a process of social construction where organizational members interpret cues signaled from the environment. It allows individuals to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity through interaction with others, and becomes particularly important in critical and dynamic contexts (Maitlis, 2005).

During change, old behaviors break down since employees have to take on new job positions, new working customs, and new technologies (Balogun, 2006). In these situations, employees adapt to changes by adopting a conscious sensemaking mode. Managers' sensemaking plays a central role in organizational change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Isabella, 1990). When managers face a change they move into a conscious sensemaking mode (Brown, 2000) in order to cope with the intense cognitive disorder caused by the change (McKinley & Scherer, 2000). They use sensemaking processes to try to resolve the uncertainty and ambiguity that often follows initiation of planned change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). As a result of the sensemaking process, managers create new understandings and interpretive frames. The process

of interpreting the change brings with it a certain power to affect the change (Knights & McCabe, 1998); however, the interpretation of change initiatives is precarious (Whittington, 2003). According to Isabella (1990), a considerable amount of cognition and interpretation accompanies the change process. Individual perceptions and interpretations of change-related events and information are shaped by the interpretive schemes or schemata applied to them (Taylor & Crocker, 1981). Understanding how members make sense of organizational change requires understanding interpretation and interpretive schemes (Isabella, 1990). Lau and Woodman (1995) use the term change schema referring to the “sensemaking framework containing organized knowledge of change attributes and relations among the attributes” (p. 538).

Sensegiving and Framing

The middle manager’s role is not limited to making sense of “what is going on,” but also to influence the sensemaking of others. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) have termed this role as sensegiving. When an organization faces a major change, shared and individual meanings and interpretations are questioned and exposed to reconstruction. Organizational members become unsure of how to interpret all the events happening around them, and this uncertainty is magnified if the change includes organizational characteristics they are affectively attached to. Under such a situation, managerial sensegiving plays a major role in making the collective transition (Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, & Humphries, 1999; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Creating sense and meaning is both a cognitive and social process (Weick, 1995). According to Bartunek et al. (1999), sensegiving is an interpretive process.

Managers are required to communicate their understandings, particularly in the midst of organizational change, in a way that provides their subordinates with adequate workable

certainty. They are frequently expected to create and develop narrative stories about organizational situations for their subordinates to believe in (Sims, 2003). A sensegiving approach focuses primarily on how accurately and adequately managers disseminate change related information to lower-level employees (Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001; Kramer, Dougherty, & Pierce, 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman, & May, 2004; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991; Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, & Bordia, 2004; Zhu, May, & Rosenfeld, 2004). Using persuasive language and symbols and constructing narratives are some of the sensegiving strategies that managers use (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Such sensegiving behavior is expected to influence subordinates' interpretations (Maitlis, 2005). Individuals' perceptions of the characteristics of a change influence the degree to which the change is adopted (Rogers, 2003). Depending on how they interpret and evaluate the proposed change, employees experience emotions and form attitudes and intentions that influence their decision to support (or resist) the change (Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, & Walker, 2007).

Several studies have argued that sensegiving is a critical organizational activity (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dunford & Jones, 2000), particularly among middle managers (Balogun, 2003). According to Maitlis and Lawrence (2007), sensegiving plays a rather crucial role in achieving support and enthusiasm for change. However, little is known regarding the fundamental issues – the whys and wherefores - regarding sensegiving (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007).

Framing refers to the processes by which actors influence the interpretations of reality among various audiences. Frames simplify and condense the “world out there” by selectively punctuating and encoding events in order to render them meaningful (Hunt, Benford & Snow, 1994), keeping some elements in view while hiding others (Williams & Benford, 1996). Framing ability is the capacity to be articulate and persuasive more or less on demand (Fairhurst, 2010).

The social movement literature addresses framing in terms of three basic questions: What is the problem and who is responsible (diagnostic framing)?; What are the solutions (prognostic framing)?; and How can action be encouraged (motivational framing)? (Benford & Snow 2000; Snow, et al., 1986).

Diagnostic framing identifies some condition as problematic and in need of improvement and also casts blame for the situation—“it involves casting others into the role identities of villain, culprit, or antagonist” (Hunt, Benford, & Snow, 1994: 191). Prognostic framing lays out what needs to be done to resolve the problem and “involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 616). In other words, prognostic framing identifies the course of action required to resolve the problem or condition. While diagnostic framing identifies the target or goal of action, prognostic framing identifies the strategy and tactics and targets by which the change may be accomplished. Motivational framing then provides compelling reasons to undertake this resolution—it “entails the social construction and avowal of motives and identities of protagonists” (Hunt et al., 1994: 191). Motivational framing urges people into action by convincing them “to engage in collective action and sustain their participation” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 617). Motivational framing combines the sense of agency with the emotional salience of the issue, and provides “the ‘heat’ that distinguishes social movements” from other institutions or ideas (Taylor, 1995: 227). While diagnostic and prognostic framing provide the analysis and direction, it is motivational framing that inspires the translation of ideas into action and stimulates and sustains participation in the movement.

Cultural Differences between India and the United States

Cross-cultural research has established that national culture accounts for 25 to 50 percent of variation in attitudes (Gannon et al., 1994). People of a given nation share common beliefs

and values, and individuals bring these shared values to work (Brannen, 1994). Cross-cultural theorists have argued that simply observing the differences in behaviors across national cultures is no longer enough (Earley & Singh, 1995; Gibson & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001), and that understanding how and why they differ is important.

Managerial knowledge and practices are embedded in the context in which they are applied (Weick, 1995). They reflect attitudes, values, and norms of the society where they have been developed, and might, therefore, be limited in their applicability elsewhere (Michailova, 2000). Differences in perceptions, values, attitudes, and relational systems make the application of standardized managerial systems and practices questionable. It seems possible that values associated with national cultures may create climates that are different within the organizations where change is being implemented. Since organizational change is related to a variety of different needs including social and socio-psychological needs, change management approaches and techniques need to be localized (Michailova, 2000). In this dissertation, I examine the universality and generalizability of the Armenakis et al's change readiness sentiments, and while doing so I compare responses and emerging themes across the two cultures.

Hofstede (2003) presented five dimensions to identify and categorize a country's culture. Hofstede (2003) and Kwantes (2003) report great differences between the Indian and American cultures on three of these dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, and long-term orientation. Significant contrasts between cultures do indeed make an often substantial difference (Hofstede, 2002) in the way managers and workers behave in organizations (Michailova, 2000; Steer, Bischoff, & Higgins, 1992). Additionally Hall (1977), described differences in cultures as being high context versus low context.

Power distance. Power distance focuses on the degree of equality, or inequality, between people in the country's society. A high power distance ranking indicates inequalities of power and wealth. Cultures with a high power distance tend to have more structure and hierarchy in their systems compared to those with low power distance. In low power distance societies equality and opportunity for everyone is stressed (Hofstede, 2003). In organizations, high power distance cultures signify “close supervision, fear of disagreement with supervisor, lack of trust among coworkers, and directed supervision” (Gudykunst, 2001: 42). According to Hofstede (2003), India has a power distance score of 77, compared to a world average of 56.5, thus indicating a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. The United States has a power distance score of 40. This indicates greater equality between societal levels, including government, organizations, and even within families. This orientation reinforces a cooperative interaction across power levels and creates a more stable cultural environment (Hofstede, 2003).

Individualism-collectivism. Individualism focuses on the degree a society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. A high rank signifies that individuality and individual rights are emphasized within the society. Individuals in these societies tend to form a larger number of looser relationships, be more self-reliant and look out for themselves. People in individualistic cultures value independence and are “supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only,” while in collectivistic cultures, “people belong to in groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange of loyalty” (Hofstede & Bond, 1984: 419) These cultures reinforce extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group (Hofstede, 2003). While India scores 48 on individualism which is slightly lower than the world average of

50, reflecting an orientation towards a collectivistic culture, the United States scores 91, thus indicating a society with more individualistic attitudes (Hofstede, 2003).

Long-term vs. short-term orientation. Long-term orientation is concerned with the future- versus present-orientation of a culture. Cultures with long-term orientations are typically characterized by preservation of tradition and respect for authority, while cultures scoring low in this dimension stress flexibility and openness to change (Ilangoan, Scroggins, & Rozell, 2007). India scored significantly higher (61) than the United States (29) with the world average being 48 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). India is considered a long-term orientation culture whereas the United States is considered a short-term orientation culture (Hofstede, 1994). In the United States, however, not much emphasis is placed on preserving traditions and customs (Gopalan & Stahl, 2001). Here the change is accepted, and maintaining status-quo is not common (Tocqueville, 1945). Unlike the United States, Indian society does not view time as a commodity with perishable value (Sinha, 1990). Indians attach pride to and maintain their heritage, and continue to follow old traditional practices (Gopalan & Stahl, 2001). Such an orientation may focus upon maintaining the status-quo and not change.

High vs. low context. Hall (1977) categorized cultures based on the dominant form of communication prevalent in a culture. In a high-context culture, most of the information is set in the physical context or tacit within an individual (Crowne, Phatak, & Salunkhe, 2009; Hall, 1977), and information is shared via simple messages that may actually have deeper meaning (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). High-context cultures are commonly found in eastern nations (Adair, 2003) including India (Crowne, et al., 2009). In low-context cultures, messages are conveyed explicitly (Hall, 1977). According to Kitayama & Ishii (2002), communication in such cultures assume that unless stated in words, individual thoughts are difficult to interpret, therefore the

need to make everything explicit. Low context cultures are typically found in Western nations (Adair, 2003), including the United States (Hall, 1977). Working with tacit versus explicit information has the potential to affect the sensemaking of middle managers. More so, since change scenarios are full of ambiguity and uncertainty.

India is a typical representative of the classical eastern culture. The United States is often considered a prototype of the classic western culture. Prior research has argued that cultural differences should influence managers' intentions and actions. I examine the argument in the context of middle managers' change readiness sensemaking and sensegiving.

DISSERTATION MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Each of the three papers in this dissertation has its own theoretical motivation. Here, I highlight a few broad motivations for the dissertation project in its entirety. Corporate change initiatives may be more complex and comprehensive than they appear at an aggregate organizational level. Understanding change outcomes therefore requires separate attention to different elements within a changing initiative.

The theoretical starting point for my dissertation is Armenakis et al's (1993, 1999) conceptualization of change readiness sentiments. This theoretically grounded framework is rooted in several research areas such as change (Lewin, 1947), social learning (Bandura, 1986), social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and organization development (Coch & French, 1948). However, scant research (e.g., Holt, 2004) has empirically examined the change readiness model (Armenakis et al., 1993) that proposed the five change sentiments. While Armenakis et al. (2007) examined the validity and usefulness of the framework by content analyzing the interview responses of the members of the top management team of an organization, how middle managers make sense of these change

attributes is not known. Furthermore, while Armenakis et al. (2007) found differences in the frequency in which each individual sentiment is mentioned in the reviewed literature, the importance of the five change sentiments in the minds of the manager deserves further inquiry.

I chose a qualitative research design since it is more personal and digs deeply into the issues, permitting researchers to converse with participants, establish a relationship with them, listen to their personal experiences, and generally gain a greater understanding of their perspective. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is an “investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing, and classifying the objects of study” (p. 161). Scholars in the field of organizational change often attempt to determine why change initiatives succeed or fail, but the results of a single change effort in a specific context cannot be easily extended to work universally. Therefore, studies need to be conducted in various settings to provide a better overall picture. By involving a sample of middle managers across multiple organizations in two different nations, the research I describe here attempts to respond to Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron (2001)’s call for organizational change studies examining (a) multiple contexts of analysis, and (b) international and cross-cultural comparisons.

The specific research questions that drive my enquiry are:

1. How do middle managers appraise a change in order to be comfortable with (ready for) the change? In other words, what primary change readiness sentiments do they consider when evaluating a change?
2. Are any other change readiness sentiments, apart from the five proposed by Armenakis et al. (1993), considered critical at the middle manager level?

3. Are there cultural differences in the responses to questions 1 and 2; specifically, do middle managers in India and the United States evaluate their change readiness differently?
4. What information do middle managers use to determine their five change readiness sentiments? What data sources and processes do they use during the sensemaking process? Are there any cultural differences in the sensemaking processes between Indian and U.S. middle managers?
5. How do middle managers accomplish the sensegiving process, specifically focusing on the change readiness sentiments? What sources and processes do they employ during the sensegiving process? Are there any cultural differences in the sensegiving processes between Indian and U.S. middle managers?

To address these questions, this dissertation consists of three related qualitative studies using data collected through in-depth interviews with 80 middle managers from 40 organizations representing multiple industries in India and the United States. The first paper addresses the first three research questions and is an empirical examination of what constitutes middle managers' change readiness sentiments. Much has been written about managing change in the workplace, including how to develop change readiness in an organization. However, little is known about how middle managers evaluate change readiness and how change readiness is appraised in different cultures. To fill that gap, a qualitative examination of the change readiness sentiments of Indian and American middle managers was conducted. Content analysis of interview responses from the middle managers revealed the soundness of the five change readiness sentiments as proposed by Armenakis and colleagues (1993, 1999). The differences in the importance of the change sentiments between Indian and American managers are noted and

explained in the light of differences in cultural dimensions. Additionally, a new change readiness sentiment, urgency, is proposed.

In the second paper I address research question four by examining how middle managers construe, interpret, and communicate change readiness sentiments. Drawing on an inductive analysis of interview responses of responding middle managers, I investigated the dynamics of sensemaking of their change readiness sentiments, and the influence of their cultural values on the process. I found that middle managers' sensemaking occurs in two stages – prospective or anticipatory, and retrospective or confirmatory, and that the managers depend on change readiness schemata based on both tacit as well as explicit knowledge. I identify the various cues and catalysts of the sensemaking process and the various schemata associated with their change readiness sentiments, and model the associated sensemaking process.

In the third paper, I address research question five by comparing and contrasting the multiple strategies that define middle manager's sensegiving of change readiness sentiments. Although there is a growing body of research that investigates the role middle managers during organizational change, not much attention has been paid to how they frame issues related to the change. In this qualitative study, I examined how middle managers consciously framed change readiness sentiments associated with a change they were responsible for implementing. Themes identified inductively from the in-depth interviews revealed that middle managers use three sensegiving strategies: explaining, energizing, and enacting. I further explain these strategies using the concepts of framing, and symbolic action. The paper highlights the significance of framing as an important managerial activity at all levels of the organization that needs due consideration when a change is introduced in an organization.

In conclusion, I believe my three studies have the promise to be interesting to researchers and practitioners alike. According to Kanter, Stein, and Jack (1992), implementing change has become the ultimate managerial responsibility. For practitioners, eliciting the sensemaking and sensegiving processes that middle managers use in creating organizational change readiness might offer them critical insights about the roles middle managers enact and the skills (creative, emotional, and behavioral) required to successfully accomplishing them.

PAPER I

MIDDLE MANAGERS' INITIAL CHANGE CONCERNS: EXAMINING CHANGE READINESS SENTIMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA

“When people are ready to, they change. They never do it before then, and sometimes they die before they get around to it. You can't make them change if they don't want to, just like when they do want to, you can't stop them.” — Andy Warhol, *Andy Warhol in His Own Words*, 1993

Organizations today are required to undergo changes of varying nature (Vermeulen, Puranam, & Gulati, 2010) and at an incredible pace (Piderit, 2000). However, both academics (Fay & Luhrmann, 2004) and practitioners (Aiken & Keller, 2009) estimate that a majority of planned change initiatives fail to deliver the promised outcomes. For over two decades, researchers have been debating the most effective ways to manage organizational change (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Dawson, 2003; Nilakant & Ramnarayan, 2006; Pettigrew, 1990).

One stream of research on organizational change focuses on change recipients' attitudes toward, and perceptions, about changes being implemented (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Piderit, 2000; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). According to this research, one of the major reasons for the poor success rate of change implementation is change recipients' resistance to change; it could disrupt the successful implementation of organizational strategies and damage firm performance (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Therefore, a key issue in successfully managing organizational change is creating an environment that supports change (Boukenooghe, Devos, & Van den Broeck, 2009). Change needs to be managed in ways that lead to employees' willingness and ability to perform well in the changed settings. Organizations must be able to “unfreeze”

employee beliefs and motivate employees to make the desired changes (Lewin, 1951). Researchers have referred to this as creating change readiness (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Failed change initiatives are often traceable to an organization's failure to effectively cultivate change readiness before implementing a change (Schein, 2004).

Since change typically requires people to unlearn their current ways of doing things and adopt new attitudes and behaviors (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 2004), creating change readiness is not easy. Armenakis et al. (1993) suggest that change readiness leads to an intention to exhibit behaviors that will support the change. To generate readiness, Armenakis and his colleagues (Armenakis et al., 1993, 1999, 2001) identified five underlying and interrelated key beliefs or sentiments reflecting appraisals about the change: discrepancy ("change is needed"), appropriateness ("the change proposed is suitable"), valence ("I will benefit from the change"), efficacy ("I can make the change happen"), and principal support ("the key leaders are committed to the success of the change"). The sentiments were theorized while looking for an answer to the question: What do change recipients consider and what appraisals do they make when making their decision to embrace and support a change effort or reject and resist it?

The purpose of the research presented here is to examine the degree to which the five sentiments proposed by Armenakis et al. (1993, 1999, 2001) capture the initial thoughts and concerns middle managers experience when a new change is announced. I focus on the concerns of middle managers because they play a particularly crucial role during change efforts (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Huy, 2001; Rouleau, 2005). The responsibility to dispel resistance (or create change readiness) at the operating level lies with middle managers (Huy, 2002). Middle managers exhibit upward influence by synthesizing information and championing change initiatives (many of which are dictated to them) and they display downward influence by implementing deliberate strategies (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1997). However, not much is

known regarding how middle managers appraise change proposals. This is unfortunate because they are seldom involved in the planning process (Osterman, 2008), and their own readiness may influence their ability to create readiness in others. Given their significant role during change implementation, better understanding of what change-related concerns and information is pertinent to middle managers themselves to be change ready is a worthy pursuit (Spreitzer & Quinn, 1996).

Finally, most of the research on change readiness sentiments has been conducted in Western societies, predominantly, the United States. Additionally, the validity and consequent generalizability of the change sentiments proposed by Armenakis and colleagues may be culture-bound. Despite the growing popularity of the change readiness construct in academic (Boukenooghe, et al, 2009; Madsen, John, & Miller, 2006; Rafferty & Simmons, 2006) and practitioner literatures, little research exists that examines the cross-cultural relevancy of the construct and the management implications for culturally related change readiness differences. According to Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron (2001: 702), “in a culturally diverse and globally competitive world, scholars can only sit in discomfort in their own corners of the world pretending their patterns of change are the world’s patterns of change”. During these times of increased globalization of business, it is important to consider the generality of this research to people of different cultures.

Organizational processes are inextricably linked to the cultural context (Johns, 2001, 2006; Schein, 2004). According to Schein (2004), the culture of the organization can be a source of resistance to change, and organizational culture is embedded within the broader societal culture (Danisman, 2010; Hofstede, 1985; Nelson & Gopalan, 2003). The success and failure of change efforts are influenced by existing cultural values. Societal values may influence the change process through its influence on the organizational culture (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). National cultural value systems influence patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that may differ

from one nation to another (Hofstede, 2003). National culture influences a variety of managerial practices (Puffer, 1993) and effectiveness of change initiatives (Golembiewski, 1993, 2000). In order to address the gap, I compared the initial change concerns of middle managers, from India and the U.S.

In summary, two research questions drive this study. First, do the initial thoughts and concerns middle managers report upon hearing about an impending change match the five change appraisal sentiments described by Armenakis et al.? Second, do differences in the concerns expressed by Indian and U.S. managers correspond to underlying cultural differences between the two countries? In addition to addressing these two questions, our research also provides an opportunity to respond to the call by Armenakis and Harris (2009) for research examining the relative importance or centrality of the five sentiments.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Change Readiness sentiments

Change readiness is a “cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort” (Armenakis et al, 1993: 681), and plays a crucial role in mitigating resistance to change and thus in reducing the failure rate (Eby, et al., 2000; Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002). According to Huy (2002: 328), change readiness “denotes a person’s willingness to consider change”. Creating change readiness is key to well-planned change implementation (Armenakis, et al., 1993). Doubts or negative assessments of the personal and organizational benefits of organizational changes can lead to negative consequences, such as reduced commitment and increased turnover (Vandenberghe, 1999). Holt, Armenakis, Harris, and Feild (2007a) argued that *readiness* occurs “when the environment, structure, and organizational members’ attitudes are such that employees are receptive to a forthcoming change” (p. 290).

Armenakis and colleagues (e.g., Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis, Harris, & Feild, 1999) identified five key change readiness sentiments that influence individuals' support for change and ultimately encourage all stages of the change process from readiness, through implementation, to institutionalization. These sentiments are discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, valence, and principal support; all are influenced by change agent communication and change institutionalizing activities (Armenakis et al., 1999). The sentiments were drawn theoretically from social psychology (Katz & Kahn, 1978), social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), motivation (Vroom, 1974), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) literatures. The five sentiments and their importance were also demonstrated in practical projects such as consulting efforts as well as other field experiences. Armenakis, et al. (1999) content analyzed a variety of publications in both academic as well as practitioner journals, and identified the five sentiments as being salient to change recipients' evaluation of a change proposal. Armenakis et al. (2007a) assessed the relative validity of these five change sentiments by content analyzing articles published in 12 scholarly journals known to publish organizational change research during the period 1997–2006. Their review identified 42 articles in which at least one of the five change sentiments was investigated. The study results provided evidence that researchers and practitioners found one or more of the five sentiments to be of significance in organizational change management efforts.

Discrepancy expresses the perceived justification of the need for the change. In order to be ready for change, employees must believe that the proposed change is really needed (Bartunek et al, 2006; Kotter, 1995; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). The need can be explained either in the form of an opportunity or just a lack of performance. A difference between the current state versus a preferred state legitimizes the need.

Appropriateness refers to the degree to which the proposed change offers a plausible panacea for the shortcomings in the organization. That the change is necessary is not simply

enough. It is also important that the proposed change is the most suitable change. Suitability of a change may be defined by its content, process, and context. While top managers are predisposed to choose change plans based on success stories as well as external consultant's recommendation (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1996), they are popular recipes for implementation failure. On contrary, change proposals that are arrived upon after careful planning and design based on the organizational context, results in less uncertainty among change recipients (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006).

Efficacy involves appraising one's own ability to implement the change in their daily work. Individuals tend to avoid activities that they feel less capable of performing successfully (Bandura, 1986). Thus, employees should believe that the new demands posed by the change proposal are within their ability to fulfill. Jimmieson, Terry, and Callan (2004) found that self-efficacy positively related to employees' adjustments made due to an organizational change. While Armenakis and colleagues (1993, 1999) did not delineate the different levels of efficacy, i.e. personal *vs.* collective, Armenakis et al. (2007a) did identify the levels and incorporated items reflecting both efficacies in their scale.

Valence implies possible enhancement of individual goals (i.e., personal or professional). Valence can be extrinsic (e.g., incentives) or intrinsic (such as autonomy). It is important for individuals to see how the change affects them personally: what do they stand to gain (or lose) consequent to the change? Bartunek et al (2006) found that for change recipients, personal gains and losses were important. Van Dam (2005) found that sentiments regarding intrinsic and extrinsic benefits were related to attitudes towards the change.

Principal support refers to the support from change agents, both global as well as local. Change implementation requires resources, training, and other support systems. For employees, it is important that to see that the management genuinely "walks the talk." Alignment of rhetoric and action on part of the change agents (i.e. behavioral integrity, see Simons, 2002) is important. If the

change recipients believe that principal support is insufficient, they would themselves be not enthusiastic about the change (Armenakis et al., 2007b).

While the five sentiments have guided several case analyses (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al, 2007b), with the exception of Holt (2002), little empirical research examines the adequacy of the five sentiments, or their relative importance. Holt (2002) studied the sentiments in multiple change recipient samples consisting of organizational members from different levels and concluded that the five sentiments effectively represented most of their change concerns. However, all samples in the study were from the United States, and the author did not delineate middle managers' sentiments from others.

Additionally, several studies have examined the role of the five sentiments in predicting critical change outcomes, both at the organizational as well as individual levels. While some studies examined the importance of discrepancy and appropriateness in change scenarios (Cole, Harris, & Bernerth, 2006; Oswald, Mossholder, & Harris, 1994), others studied the collective role of the five change readiness sentiments (Brown, 2009). While Cole et al (2006) found that appropriateness was positively related to change commitment, and negatively related to role ambiguity, Oswald and colleagues found that managers who believed the organization's vision was salient (thereby, need for change and appropriateness of change) were more committed to and satisfied with the organization. Credo et al. (2008) found that employee engagement during change was associated with the five change readiness sentiments, and Varma and Harris (2008) found that the readiness sentiments were positively correlated to post-merger organizational identification. Collectively, the readiness sentiments were positively related to affective commitment to change (Brown, 2009), as well as to the emotional pleasantness associated with change (Harris & Gresch, 2010).

As explained in the previous paragraphs, research regarding the change readiness sentiments has been varied and very supportive of the importance of such sentiments during change

implementation. However, almost all of these studies were conducted in the United States, which raises questions such as, are similar sentiments borne in the minds of change recipients in other cultures? Again, do these sentiments hold importance across organizational levels, specifically, middle managers?

Middle Managers' Initial Change Appraisals

Middle managers are individuals positioned typically two or three levels below the CEO (Woolbrodage & Floyd, 1990), and one or two levels above the operating level employees (Huy, 2002). Numerous writers have documented the role of middle managers in the implementation of organizational change initiatives (e.g., Kanter, 1982; Kotter, 1996). Middle managers are often tasked with implementing change initiatives in order to align employee attitudes and behavior with executive intent (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). With regard to helping implement changes they did not initiate or champion, middle managers play a dual role: they are change recipients who must in turn be change agents (Balogun & Johnson, 2004 & 2005, Floyd & Lane, 2000). As a recipient, middle managers have to accept and implement the changes in their own roles and responsibilities. At the same time, they are also expected to be an agent of the change that management has instructed them to implement. They are particularly called upon for the latter role, since they are “a nexus for information flows within the organization” (Floyd & Lane, 2000: 157). Having to cater to these multiple expectations and balance their responsibilities makes middle managers' role during change very challenging. According to Huy (2002), the responsibility to dispel resistance at the operating level lies with middle managers. Therefore, it is beneficial that the middle managers themselves have a positive appraisal of the change.

Middle managers' personal thoughts and concerns about a change are particularly important since they shape their subsequent behaviors and commitment towards implementing the change (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007). Middle managers can either choose to support and hasten change

implementation, or resist and delay, and even sabotage the initiative (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Guth & MacMillan, 1986). Managers' change readiness sentiments influence their subordinates' sentiments (Gresch, 2011). When managers have a positive evaluation regarding the change, its appropriateness and benefits, one can expect them to do a more genuine job of influencing others to support the change. Similarly, if middle managers perceive the change to be flawed or if they believe it works against their self interests, they may be resistant to the initiative (Guth & MacMillan, 1986). If the managers are themselves not convinced about the change and if they do not feel the organization is capable of implementing the change, they would find it more difficult to convince others. Middle managers' lack of support for a change may show up in their behaviors (i.e. reasoned action, Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) which when noted by their subordinates would send a wrong/mixed message. Again, such a lack of support could be interpreted by the subordinates as lack of behavioral integrity (Simons, 2002) on part of the middle managers.

According to Lazarus (1991), cognitive appraisal of events happens in two stages: Primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Middle managers' initial thoughts regarding a change could be argued as their primary appraisal. The thoughts are not generated by rational processes; they are automatic and affect driven. It could be posited that such automatic thoughts are formed by deeper concerns, i.e. what really matters to the individual. In the same line of thought, initial thoughts and concerns reflecting their primary appraisal of a change proposal, represent sentiments that are important to the manager. Armenakis et al.'s goal was to determine what sentiments and beliefs shaped individual decisions to support or resist a change. Therefore, I expect that these sentiments should be reflected in change recipient's initial thoughts and concerns reflecting their early appraisal of an announced change.

Hypothesis 1: Middle managers' initial appraisal of a top down organizational change will be primarily composed of the five change sentiments of discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, and valence.

United States and India - Cultural Differences in Initial Change Appraisal

Cultural value systems differ from one nation to another and influence the way people think and behave (Hofstede, 2003). The shared values and norms of the society are manifested in the patterns of how the members of the society feel and act (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Because the five sentiments model promoted by Armenakis et al. have largely been examined in U.S. organizations, there is a need to examine its cultural universality. This need is consistent with the call of Lyons and Chrysoschoou (2003: 146) for cross-cultural comparisons that “could make useful contributions to some of the fundamental debates within psychology such as the universality versus specificity of psychological structures, processes and social behavior.”

There are two reasons why India and the United States were selected for this study. First, previous research suggests that there are clear cultural distinctions between India and the United States (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that managerial perceptions regarding change in the two countries will reflect different cultural values. Second, the need to understand change readiness has never been more timely and salient than in organizations operating in countries like India that are undergoing historic political and economic transformations. After economic reforms were initiated in 1991, the Indian economy has registered strong performance indicators (International Monetary Fund, 2010). According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2010), India was among the top 10 countries concerning foreign direct investment in 2009, and is expected to be the third largest recipient of foreign investment in 2010-2012. Indian firms have seen quite an increase in foreign competition, resulting in major change initiatives. However, organizations that adopted change management models

developed in the West had limited success (Gupta, 1991; Kalra, 2004). Ahuja and Khamba (2008) argued that in the context of India, it is the existence of organizational, cultural, and behavioral barriers rather than change interventions themselves that makes successful implementation of organizational change difficult. Therefore, a need for change management frameworks that are relevant to Indian organizations has been warranted (Amba-Rao et al, 2000; Budhwar, 2001).

One of the oldest and most popular frameworks used to compare cultural differences between nations is Hofstede's classification (1980). Hofstede's cultural dimensions were developed to gauge the cultural influence on values in an organizational setting and were later adopted in broader cross-cultural analyses. Hofstede (1980, 1994) assessed cultural similarity and dissimilarity on five dimensions: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation. Within Hofstede's framework, numerical scores ranging from 0 to 100 representing each of the five cultural dimensions were assigned to a number of nations, including India and the United States. According to Hofstede (1994), India and the United States differed significantly in terms of long-term orientation, power distance, and individualism.

Long-term orientation. Long-term orientation is concerned with the future- versus present-orientation of a culture. Cultures with long-term orientations are typically characterized by preservation of tradition and respect for authority, while cultures scoring low in this dimension stress flexibility and openness to change (Ilangovan, Scroggins, & Rozell, 2007). India scored significantly higher (61) than the United States (29) with the world average being 48 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). India is considered a long-term orientation culture whereas the United States is considered a short-term orientation culture (Hofstede, 1994). In the United States, however, not much emphasis is placed on preserving traditions and customs (Gopalan & Stahl, 2001). Here the change is accepted, and maintaining status-quo is not common (Tocqueville, 1945). Unlike the United States, Indian society does not view time as a commodity with perishable value (Sinha,

1990). Indians attach pride to and maintain their heritage, and continue to follow old traditional practices (Gopalan & Stahl, 2001). Such an orientation may focus upon maintaining the status-quo and not change. Therefore, Indian managers can be expected to be more focused on preserving the “current” system and less keen to change. In order for them to change, a strong reason for the change proposition might be necessary.

Hypothesis 2: Initial concerns and questions consistent with discrepancy sentiments will be more frequently cited by Indian than U.S. middle managers.

Power distance. Hofstede’s (1980) power distance dimension addresses the extent to which people accept unequal distributions of power in society and organizations. This is the dimension that explains how basic human inequalities in social status, prestige, wealth, and power are perceived by the members of a society (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996). India scored significantly higher (77) than the United States (40) with the world average being 56 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In high power distance countries such as India, acquiring power is considered appropriate, and the exercise of power generally leads to satisfaction (Hofstede, 1980). In addition, people in high power distance societies try to maintain and increase power differences as much as possible (Hofstede, 1980). High power distance countries are, therefore, more tolerant of hierarchies and autocratic leadership, and more likely to expect clear directions. High power distance cultures would see subordinates taking their superiors’ intent for granted, and disposed to follow orders rather than question them (Sinha & Sinha, 1990).

The pattern of superior/subordinate relationships dictated by the historical caste system also affects power relations in Indian organizations (Selvadurai, 1997). Compared to U.S. managers, Indians are more likely to avoid organizational conflict, and to show greater concern for maintaining harmony. Once established, members of a hierarchical structuring of relationships yield to their superiors both on- or off-the-job issues (Sinha & Sinha, 1990). Superiors expect loyalty,

compliance, and submission from their subordinates (Phegade, 1997). Subordinates who yield to power are bestowed with favors, while those who do not are distanced and discriminated against (Sinha & Sinha, 1990). Such a system has resulted in subordinates' unquestioning loyalty to superiors (Kangayappan, 1992). Given the acceptance of hierarchical order in families and organizations, it is expected that top management actions would require less justification in high power distance cultures. Evidence also shows organizations in large power distance societies provide fewer chances through conventional channels for subordinates to question superiors' actions (Schultz et al. 1993). At the same time, low power distance countries are more likely to seek factual evidence and reasoning in relation to a particular course of action (Hofstede, 1991).

Therefore, I hypothesize that

Hypothesis 3: Initial change concerns and questions consistent with appropriateness sentiments will be more frequently cited by U.S. than Indian middle managers.

Individualism. Individualism refers to the degree to which individual decisions and behaviors are encouraged by the society, thus reflecting the way people live together (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; Hofstede, 1980). The United States scored significantly higher (91) than India (48), with the world average being 50 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Individualistic behaviors are more likely to be considered selfish and socially unacceptable in a collectivist society such as India, as contrasted with the society with a high individualism culture like the United States (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). According to Hofstede (1980), in a highly collectivist society, or a society with low individualism, people exhibit strong emotional attachment and loyalty to their families and social organizations. Additionally, a highly collectivist society generally requires social harmony to be achieved on the basis of personal conformity to the environment, and personal interests (what is in it for me) are often times sacrificed for the sake of group benefits. People in individualistic cultures give priority to their personal goals over the goals of their in-groups (Triandis, 2001).

Hypothesis 4: Initial change concerns and questions consistent with valence sentiments will be more frequently cited by U.S. than Indian middle managers.

Bandura (1997) asserted that the personal efficacy sentiments people hold play an important role in their functioning. He posited that individuals do not work as social isolates, and therefore people form sentiments about the collective capabilities of the group(s) to which they belong.

Bandura (2000: 77) added that “culture shapes how efficacy sentiments are developed, the purposes to which they are put, and the sociostructural arrangement under which they are best expressed.” In a society with high individualism, people are “autonomous and independent from their in-groups” (Triandis, 2001, p. 909), and each person is entitled to his or her own opinion, rather than conforming to a collective consensus, and everyone is expected to be self-sufficient and self-reliant in a highly individualistic society (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; Hofstede, 1980). On the other hand, people in collectivistic societies are “interdependent within their in-groups” (Triandis, 2001, p. 909). While the individualistic culture promotes independence, the collectivistic culture promotes interdependence (Sinha *et al.*, 2002).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) observed that Westerners generally have an independent view of the self that emphasizes the separateness, uniqueness, and internal attributes of individuals, whereas Asians hold an interdependent view of the self that stresses connectedness, social context, and relationships. When collectivistic norms prevail, collective efficacy will be more important than self-efficacy (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Xie, 2000).

Hypothesis 5a: Initial change concerns and questions consistent with collective efficacy sentiments will be more frequently cited by Indian than U.S. middle managers.

Hypothesis 5b: Initial change concerns and questions consistent with personal efficacy sentiments will be more frequently cited by U.S. than Indian middle managers.

The social structure of India is designed to encourage interdependence (Savani, et al., 2011), and managers are likely to motivate their subordinates through social and interpersonal interventions (Budhwar & Khatri. 2001). In this connection, Kanungo and Mendonca (1994) suggest that employees in India are often more concerned about their personal relationships with the supervisor, instead of the actual job performance. The United States, on the other hand, is deemed to be 'individualistic,' and managers are less likely to rely on social and interpersonal interactions in their dealings with subordinates. According to Hofstede (1980), in a highly collectivist society, people exhibit strong emotional attachment and loyalty to their families and social organizations. Additionally, a highly collectivist society generally requires social harmony to be achieved based on personal conformity to the environment.

Again, in a society characterized by high power distance, managers would be expected to avoid conflict with their superiors. This would result in them looking for agreement on part of their respected peers, top management and immediate supervisor. Such an agreement is vital since that will naturally lead to availability of resources for the manager in question to perform their functions without problems. Hierarchy and inequality are deeply rooted in India's traditions (Jain & Venkata Ratnam, 1994). As Sinha (1990) points out, this often leads to subordinates being dependent on their supervisors (principal support) to help resolve challenges faced at work.

Hypothesis 6: Initial change concerns and questions consistent with principal support sentiments will be more frequently cited by Indian than U.S. middle managers.

METHODS

In order to test the hypotheses, I conducted a qualitative study based on interviews with Indian and U.S. middle managers. Participant responses were content analyzed to identify issues that they considered important when evaluating a change within their organization.

Sample and Procedure

Sample. I used a dual strategy to recruit participants. For the U.S. sample, I used a snowball sampling method. I sent emails to 24 students and 36 recent alumni of the Executive MBA program of a large public university located in the southeastern United States. These individuals were either top or middle managers. The email clearly defined the type of participant I wanted to include in the study. I specified that I was looking for mid-level managers who had recently (less than 18 months) implemented a top-down organizationally mandated change in which the manager had no role in planning or designing. Recipients of the invitation were asked to participate, if they satisfied the conditions, or nominate others who were suitable. Of the 60 individuals contacted, 24 (40%) responded. Of these, 14 individuals agreed to the interview while the rest nominated a total of 32 middle managers from their organization and organizations within their network (for example, one alumnus invited managers from his client organization to participate). Overall, 40 U.S. middle managers across 21 companies in 11 industries were interviewed individually (the average number of respondents per company was 1.90).

For the Indian sample, I contacted senior managers of 23 organizations via telephone and email. Of the 23 organizations contacted, senior managers of 21 (91%) organizations responded. They then referred us to 46 middle managers satisfying our criteria. Finally, 40 Indian managers from 17 companies and 9 industries were interviewed (the average number of respondents per company was 2.35). Managers from the other four organizations could not be included due to scheduling problems.

The 80 managers comprising the final sample represented various functions including engineering (U.S.: 20%; India: 20%), sales/marketing (U.S.: 7.5%; India: 10%), human resource management (U.S.: 5%; India: 10%), general management (U.S.: 15%; India: 7.5%), finance (U.S.: 5%; India: 20%), technology (U.S.: 17.5%; India: 12.5%), and operations (U.S.: 30%; India: 20%) .

The U.S. sample was 78% male and the Indian sample was 85% male. All the participants had undergraduate degrees, over half (U.S.: 62%; India: 58%) had a master's degree (an MBA or other), and one Indian manager had a PhD. The work experience of the U.S. sample ranged from 11 to 38 years (mean = 21.8, *SD* = 6.8). For the Indian managers, work experience ranged from 7 to 34 years (mean = 19.7, *SD* = 6.4). A more detailed list of the samples is given in Tables 1 & 2.

Interview procedure. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 75 participants. For the other five participants (all in the United States), telephone interviews were required due to scheduling conflicts and travel demands. The typical interview lasted an hour, although the actual duration varied from 50 to over 85 minutes. The appointments were secured several days before the actual interviews.

At the beginning of the interview, all participants (except those interviewed over the telephone) signed an informed consent document and gave permission to have the interviews audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The interviewees were guaranteed that the information obtained would be secured in a non-identifiable manner and that the recordings would be deleted once transcribed. All participants were asked to talk about a recent organizational change that they were involved in but were not responsible for initiation, i.e. all of the changes were organizationally mandated and were top-down initiatives. Therefore, each interview started with the respondent offering a description of the change. The range of changes described included restructuring (U.S.: 15%; India: 40%), change in leadership (U.S.: 10%; 5%), process improvement (U.S.: 15%; India: 37.5%), downsizing (U.S.: 17.5%), technology change (U.S.: 22.5%; India: 12.5%), and merger (U.S.: 20%; India: 5%).

Although the specific types of change were not a focus of the study, it was vital that respondents had recently experienced a change in order to provide a meaningful response. Another

reason of starting the interview with a description of the change was to put the interviewee at ease. I made sure that the interviewee was not primed in any way regarding our theoretical interest.

This was done to make sure that responses were personal and free-flowing. After they described the change, they were asked the questions that form the focus of this research: “When you heard first about the change, what initial thoughts ran through your mind? What did you feel good about and what concerned you?”

Data extraction. The interview responses were transcribed verbatim and content analyzed. Content analysis is a widely used technique to draw inferences from textual data (Morris, 1994). In organizational change research, content analysis has been widely used to analyze interview responses (Isabella, 1990; Sonenshein, 2010). It involves selecting segments from the data (either exploratory or a priori) and systematically analyzing those segments. For content analysis, I used *Atlas.ti* (Muhr, 2004), a computer aided qualitative data analysis software. It has been previously used in management research (Tilcsik, 2010) since it facilitates working with large data sets and contains a variety of tools for systematically analyzing the data. In using *Atlas.ti*, the first step is to create a hermeneutic unit within the program, and then associate each interview transcript with the unit. Each transcript is a primary document. When a primary document is selected, text from the document (words, phrases, or full sentences, or paragraphs) can be highlighted and coded. Primary documents (i.e., transcribed interviews) were coded with a phrase or sentence as the unit of analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). Each phrase or sentence that referred to a specific change related issue was separated as a unit. While identifying and separating the units, I made sure all possible issues were identified and captured in separate comments.

TABLE 1
U.S. Sample Description

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
US1	Head - IT	Education 1	Technology Change	Masters - Engg	23
US2	W/H Manager	Logistics 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	18
US3	W/H Manager	Logistics 1	Downsizing	MBA	15
US4	Program Head	Education 1	IT Change	MBA	22
US5	National Sales Manager	Industrial Products 1	Restructuring	MBA	32
US6	Manager - Clinical Practices	Health care 1	Info Sys Change	MBA	17
US7	Project Manager	Manufacturing 1	Project Shutdown	Masters - Engg	28
US8	Director, Rehab Specialty	Health care 2	Efficiency Improvement	MBA	33
US9	Sales Manager	Manufacturing 2	CRM Implementation	MBA	16
US10	VP - Branch Technology	Banking 1	Restructuring	MBA	13
US11	Area Manager, Service	Telecommunications 1	Merger	MBA	22
US12	Asst. Manager - Operations	Telecommunications 1	Merger	Undergraduate	23
US13	Manager - Call Center	Telecommunications 1	Leadership Change	Undergraduate	28
US14	Plant Manager	Contract Services 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	25
US15	Service Manager	Contract Services 2	Restructuring	Undergraduate	18
US16	Manager - Finance	Contract Services 2	Process Improvement	MBA	11
US17	Senior Project Manager	Contract Services 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	23
US18	Manager, Network Operations	Hospices 1	Leadership Change	MBA	20
US19	Sr. Manager - Operations	Hospices 1	Info Sys Change	Undergraduate	22
US20	VP, Clinical Services	Hospices 1	ERS Implementation	Masters - Pharmacy	26

TABLE 1 (continued)

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
US21	Dy. Chief - Information Security	Banking 2	Merger	Masters - Engg	18
US22	Director - Financial Aid	Education 2	Regulatory Change	Undergraduate	36
US23	National Account Director	Health care 3	Restructuring	MBA	23
US24	Principal - Consulting Division	Technology 1	IT Change	MBA	18
US25	Plant Manager	Manufacturing 2	Efficiency Improvement	Undergraduate	15
US26	General Manager	Manufacturing 3	Merger	Undergraduate	30
US27	Contract Manager	Technology 2	Customer Requirement	Masters - Engg	30
US28	Program Manager	Technology 2	Quality Program	Masters -Engg	38
US29	Director, Contracts and Pricing	Technology 2	Acquisition	Undergraduate	14
US30	Project Manager	Technology 3	Leadership Change	Masters - Engg	15
US31	Manager - Business	Technology 3	Acquisition	Undergraduate	16
US32	Manager, Software Solutions	Technology 3	Restructuring	Masters - MIS	11
US33	Manager - Data Management	Technology 4	Process Improvement	Masters - MIS	33
US34	Program Manager	Technology 4	Leadership Change	Undergraduate	17
US35	HR Manager	Manufacturing 4	Downsizing	Undergraduate	20
US36	Manager - Business	Technology 3	Quality Program	Undergraduate	30
US37	Principal	Technology 3	Sourcing Strategy Change	MBA	18
US38	Program Director	Pharmaceutical 1	Merger	MBA	20
US39	Manager - Operations	Retail 1	Closure of Facility	MBA	19
US40	Head - Technology	Technology 5	Joint Venture	MBA	24

TABLE 2
Indian Sample Description

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Type</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
I1	Senior Sales Manager	Construction Equipment 1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	25
I2	Head - SCM	Construction Equipment 2	Process Improvement	MBA	17
I3	Head - Improvement Group	Construction Equipment 2	Process Improvement	MBA	15
I4	Head - CAD/PLM	Construction Equipment 2	Efficiency Gain	Undergraduate	25
I5	Sr. Manager - Safety	Construction Equipment 1	New Process Development	Undergraduate	10
I6	Head - Civil Projects	Heavy Engineering 1	Change in Culture	Undergraduate	34
I7	Head - New Product	Heavy Engineering 1	Relocation	Undergraduate	16
I8	Manager - Customer Accounts	Heavy Engineering 1	Efficiency Improvement	Undergraduate	25
I9	Manager - Materials	Manufacturing 1	Information System	MBA	17
I10	AGM - Testing	Automotive 1	New Process Development	Masters -Engg	20
I11	Manager - Design	Automotive 1	New Process Development	Undergraduate	25
I12	AGM - Product Dev	Automotive 1	New Process Development	PhD - Engineering	22
I13	Divisional Mgr - Product Dev	Automotive 1	New Process Development	Undergraduate	15
I14	AGM - Product Dev	Automotive 2	New Process Development	Undergraduate	22
I15	DGM - Product Development	Automotive 2	New Process Development	Masters -Engg	31
I16	Senior Manager - Product Dev	Automotive 2	New Role	Undergraduate	14
I17	Sr. Manager - HR	Manufacturing 2	Relocation	MBA	25
I18	Manager - Finance	Manufacturing 2	New Process Development	Masters - Finance	12
I19	Dy. CFO	Chemicals 1	IT Implementation	MBA	18
I20	Head Strategy	Consumer Durables 1	Restructuring	MBA	13

TABLE 2 (continued)

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
I21	Manager - Rural Finance	Financial Services1	Restructuring	MBA	13
I22	Manager - Sales	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	MBA	17
I23	DGM - Sourcing	Manufacturing 4	New CEO	MBA	26
I24	Head - Operations	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	MBA	18
I25	Head - Quality	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	Undergraduate	33
I26	Head - Human Resources	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	MBA	16
I27	Dy. Manager - Costing	Manufacturing 4	New CEO	Masters - Finance	12
I28	Manager - HR	Info Tech 1	Restructuring	MBA	9
I29	Project Manager	Info Tech 1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	16
I30	Assistant Manager - HR	Info Tech 1	Restructuring	MBA	8
I31	Manager, Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	15
I32	Manager, Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	15
I33	AGM - Marketing	Automotive 3	New Product Development	MBA	17
I34	Sr. Branch Mgr - Power Systems	Construction Equipment1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	24
I35	Sr. Manager - ERP	Power 1	ERP Implementation	Undergraduate	18
I36	DGM - ERP	Power 1	ERP Implementation	Undergraduate	26
I37	DGM - Finance	Power 1	ERP Implementation	MBA	21
I38	Manager - Retail Products	Financial Services 1	Restructuring	MBA	18
I39	Project Manager	Info Tech 2	Process Improvement	Undergraduate	23
I40	Manager - Operations	Call Center 1	Process Improvement	MBA	7

Overall, I created 112 unitized comments for the U.S. sample and 107 for the Indian sample. Once the comments were created, they were put into a spreadsheet in a separate column. I created two separate sheets for the different samples. Once that was done, a colleague who was familiar with Armenakis et al.'s change readiness sentiments, and had recently finished his doctoral dissertation on the topic, joined me in independently coding the comments. If a unitized statement implied two different sentiments, they were counted as two separate comments. However, if the same respondent echoed the same sentiment in multiple unitized statements, we counted it once. In other words, for every respondent, we counted a unique coded theme only once, even if the respondent mentioned it multiple times.

Our coding involved a combination of both a priori and exploratory research. On one hand, we were looking for Armenakis et al.'s five change readiness sentiments, while on the other we were also open to new thoughts and ideas that the managers might espouse. For example, a sentiment of urgency was mentioned by a few managers. In the process, we marked all the sentiments that the managers mentioned in response to the question about what their thoughts were when the change was first communicated to them.

When faced with a statement that was not directly codable into one of the five sentiments, we studied it in the specific context, and examined if they were one of the five sentiments in disguise. For example, in five instances, managers mentioned "uncertainty" as one of their initial concerns. However, we interpreted that uncertainty was either borne out of valence ("what will happen to me"), appropriateness ("not sure if this is the right solution"), or principal support ("not certain how serious the top management is this time"). Similarly, three managers felt the change was "unfair." However, we interpreted that fairness was primarily for an aspect of valence ("it was unfair...I lost my best people"). Other examples of similar sentiments included "disappointment," "helplessness," and "fear."

To assure confidence in the assignments of unitized comments to the different sentiments, we assessed the degree of agreement between both of us. Overall agreement was strong (77%). In those instances where our coding differed, we reviewed the coding to see why some comments were coded differently. Usually we found that the differences were due to improper punctuations in the transcripts that distorted the meaning, or a comment that did not make complete sense in isolation from the whole response. In each case, we discussed and modified the coding until 100% agreement was achieved. In addition to the five sentiments, five other themes also emerged. These were urgency, novelty of change, excess change, surprise, and not again. Table 3 provides examples of the final thematic coding.

In order to test the hypotheses, I conducted two independent proportions z-tests to test for significant differences in the percentage of mentions for each change readiness sentiment between the Indian and U.S. samples.

RESULTS

Table 4 indicates the frequencies of the sentiments for both the samples, and it also shows the results for two proportions z test between the total mention (i.e., the total number of times a particular readiness sentiment was referred to) for each sample. It was found that all five change readiness sentiments as conceptualized by Armenakis et al. featured in the immediate thoughts of both U.S. as well as Indian middle managers when called to implement a change. In fact, the five sentiments captured a majority of the number of quotes; in the Indian sample, the five sentiments accounted for 87.8% (94 out of 107) of the unitized comments and in the U.S. sample, they accounted for 92% (104 out of 113) of the comments. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 which suggested that middle managers initial thoughts regarding an organizational change would correspond to the five change sentiments was supported.

TABLE 3
Sample Codes with Selected Texts from Interview Responses

Change Sentiment	Response Example
Discrepancy	<p><i>...I really understood the way it should happen and it was not happening that way...</i></p> <p><i>... It's finally happened, we don't have any other choice, we've done everything else we could do and now we are at that point. There's nothing else to cut...</i></p>
Appropriateness	<p><i>...this is something that we need to go into, right?... for being such an experienced engineering organization...</i></p> <p><i>...I agreed with what they did because one, it saved the company money...</i></p>
Individual Efficacy	<p><i>...I wasn't very technologically savvy or comfortable apart from the usual work, being comfortable with Excel and stuff so, does it mean that one needs to be extremely technology savvy...</i></p> <p><i>... I am going back and forth in my head between do I agree with it or do I have a choice that was going to affect, how am I going to sell it, how am I actually going to implement it,...</i></p>
Collective Efficacy	<p><i>... Are we certainly capable to take that challenge...</i></p> <p><i>...I was very disturbed. Primarily from the fact that a decision was made that impacted a contract that had been previously bid and no one took the time to discuss this with the contract and say what are your impacts? Can we do this, can we not?...</i></p>
Support	<p><i>...the other apprehension I had was that whether I would have the web as well, as a collective organization, and whether the senior management will have the resolve to push through such a massive changes that were being thought of, that was a massive change...</i></p> <p><i>...it was going to require a lot of investments and a lot of investment buying from upper management to provide resources...</i></p>
Valence	<p><i>If I'm successful it is okay well and good, if I'm not successful what will happen?...</i></p> <p><i>...it made me nervous because you don't know are they going to let you go, are they going to need you now...</i></p>
Urgency	<p><i>...Well, there was a concern about the schedule and that was kind of everybody was concerned about the schedule because I knew that six months was actually quite challenging...</i></p> <p><i>...This was a very short time to handle everything because changing assessment was only one month away...</i></p>

TABLE 4
Frequency of Change Readiness Sentiments mentioned by Indian and U.S. Middle Managers
and Results for Two Independent Proportions z-test

Change Sentiment	India		U.S.		<i>z-score</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Discrepancy	10	25.0	16	40.0	-1.43
Appropriateness	19	47.5	23	57.5	-0.89
Efficacy: Individual	11	27.5	14	35.0	-0.72
Efficacy: Group	19	47.5	11	27.5	1.85 ⁺
Support	20	50.0	11	27.5	2.06*
Valence	15	37.5	29	72.5	-3.15*
Urgency	7	17.5	4	10.0	0.97
Novelty	2	5.0	0	0.0	
Excess change	1	2.5	2	5.0	
Surprise	2	5.0	1	2.5	
Not again	1	2.5	1	2.5	
<i>Total</i>	107		112		

* $p < .05$

⁺ $p < .07$

Hypothesis 2 predicted that discrepancy sentiments would be more frequently cited by Indian than U.S. middle managers, and Hypothesis predicted that appropriateness sentiments would be cited more by U.S. than Indian middle managers. However, no significant differences between Indian and U.S. managers were found in the number mentioning discrepancy and appropriateness sentiments. Therefore, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported. Consistent with hypothesis 4, significantly higher number of cites consistent with valence sentiments were made by U.S. middle managers than their Indian counterparts. While the difference between U.S. and Indian managers was not significant for the mention of individual efficacy (i.e. Hypothesis 5a was not supported), for collective efficacy, the difference was marginally significant (i.e. Hypothesis 5b was supported). Principal support was mentioned more by Indian managers than their U.S. counterparts, i.e. Hypothesis 6 was supported. Though very small in number, urgency was identified as a separate change readiness sentiment by a few middle managers (over 10 %).

DISCUSSION

This research makes three major contributions. First, it provides support for the adequacy of the change readiness sentiments as postulated by the readiness framework of Armenakis et al. (1993, 1999, 2002) in capturing the concerns of middle managers from different cultures. Second, it demonstrates that the centrality of the five sentiments may differ according to the cultural context. Finally, a distinct sentiment, urgency, emerged that compliments and extends the five sentiments.

Middle Managers' Change Readiness Sentiments

Middle managers play an important role in organizations. In addition to accomplishing the core tasks of their organizations (Ostermann, 2008), middle managers also have a critical role in helping organizations implement new initiatives (Balogun, 2003). Researchers have called for studies to further investigate the change role of middle managers. This paper attempted to explain the change related concerns pertinent to their roles and hierarchical level. Organizations need to recognize the importance of change readiness, specifically among middle managers. I found that middle managers' initial thoughts and concerns regarding a change they were implementing were adequately captured by the five change readiness sentiments offered by Armenakis et al's readiness framework.

Our findings imply that top management would benefit from explicitly addressing change perceptions when implementing a change in their organizations. More specifically, the results of this study indicate that the five change sentiments – discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, valence and support (or six, including urgency, explained later) – encompass middle managers' primary concerns. In other words, our results support the idea that change implementation projects have greater chances of success when these concerns are adequately addressed at the middle manager level. The findings while interesting, are quite preliminary. Future studies can examine middle managers' change readiness sentiments and their relation to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes at

the individual level, such as, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, performance (successful implementation), commitment to the change, citizenship, and others.

Readiness Sentiments and Culture Differences

According to Kazmi (2008), the existing strategic change literature is insufficient in respect to change implementation in the Indian context. On a similar note, Bezboruah (2008) has called for the development of action strategies within the context of India to manage the resistance to change. This study adds value to this gap by suggesting the change readiness framework as one that could be perused in an Indian scenario. The readiness framework, while developed and tested in the United States, is found to summarize the concerns of Indian middle managers also. It is believed that future studies will use the readiness framework in further qualitative as well as quantitative studies based on Indian organizations and sample.

If change readiness sentiments are developed through experience, it seems likely that culture differences will influence change readiness of individuals within a particular culture. This paper has attempted to understand the differences in the change readiness sentiments of U.S. and Indian middle managers in the light of culture differences. While the five sentiments were found to be integral to the concerns of middle managers from both the cultures, cultural differences do seem to affect which sentiments are more salient among the managers. For example, valence was cited more by U.S. middle managers. This is in complete alignment with the individualistic values that the U.S. managers are posited to nurture and represent. Selfish behaviors are completely acceptable in an individualistic culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), whereas in a collectivistic culture, personal interests are sacrificed for the sake of group benefits (Hofstede, 1980). Similarly, principal support sentiment was mentioned more by Indian managers than U.S. managers. This may be due to the fact that hierarchy and inequality is deeply rooted in Indian traditions. As Sinha (1990) points out, this often leads to subordinates being dependent on their supervisors to help resolve their problems.

Additionally, lack of empowerment leaves the middle managers looking up to their superiors' assurance of availability of resources.

Furthermore, for U.S. managers, individual efficacy seemed to be more important. One possible reason for this may be the fact that the U.S. organizations are more comfortable with the practice of "hire and fire." Consequently, managers have to take extra care to make sure that they are able to match the organization's expectations. While the collectivistic disposition may be one reason why Indian managers are concerned with collective efficacy, another reason for this concern could be the fact that Indian organizations face bigger scarcity of resources than U.S. organizations.

However, no significant differences were found in the mention of discrepancy and appropriateness sentiments between Indian and U.S. managers. This could be because discrepancy and appropriateness are macro (organizational) level sentiments, and primed towards content of the change. At the middle manager level, given that they are seldom involved in the planning and design of strategic decisions, the primary worries seem to be regarding the capability, resources, and immediate implications of the change implementation. Particularly in Indian societies that are characterized with high power distance, macro-level decisions are completely left to the senior positions, and the mid and lower level managers do not think it is necessary for them to be worrying about these issues; instead, they simply follow the instructions they receive from their superiors (Sinha & Sinha, 1990).

It is estimated that there are over 1.5 million people of Indian origin in the United States. Of these, 70% or more are involved in the work force. The culturally diverse workforce makes this study relevant to the organizations that employ a lot of these employees. U.S. organizations employing Indian managers may benefit from this study. It is likely that Indian and U.S. managers may exhibit differential levels of change readiness (and therefore, commitment to the change). For example, Indian managers may prefer more information about organizational capability for the

change and top management support for the change than most U.S. managers. Similarly, U.S. managers may prefer specific information about the short-term implications of the change at the individual level, and may favor rewards closely associated with successful implementation. Given their long-term orientation, it may not be as important for the Indian managers to receive immediately rewards for meeting a change implementation deadline or objective. This information is also beneficial for multinational corporations (Kostova & Roth, 2002) of U.S. origin that have invested in setting up plants and offices in India.

Given the benefits associated with a ‘change ready’ workforce, organizations should capitalize on the findings of this study. Organizations should recognize cross-cultural differences in change readiness sentiments of individuals from various cultures and design their change communication correspondingly. This might result in employees who are better prepared to perform in a given change context. Our findings also suggest that conducting a pre-implementation readiness assessment will help senior managers and decision makers choose which sentiments to rigorously address in their change communication that will prepare the organization for the anticipated change. Addressing the middle managers’ readiness sentiments will better prepare these managers to sell the change downstream and ensure that the change is implemented at the operating levels.

Urgency

The *urgency* sentiment answers the questions “how much time do I have for implementing the change?” or “how soon is this change implementation needed?” Though very small in number, urgency was identified as a separate change readiness sentiment by over 10% of the respondents. While it was a stand-alone sentiment in most cases, in a couple of instances it was built into the sentiment of efficacy. In other words, the managers’ assessment of capability was related to the time available for the work. This is not surprising given that middle managers are faced with micro-level implementation of the change, and therefore, shorter deadlines. This is also in alignment with the

extant change literature (Kotter, 1996, 2008). According to Kotter (1996: 36), “creating a sense of urgency is a must for creating the necessary momentum for the change. It enables the removal of sources of complacency or minimizes their impact, for example, by setting higher standards, both formally and informally, in day to day interaction.”

Based on the comments, it appears that it is important for middle managers to get a clear idea of the time requirements for the change implementation that they were involved in. While some felt the change was “too quick,” others thought it was inappropriately timed. However, a majority of the managers in both U.S. and Indian samples did not mention this sentiment. One possible explanation could be the timing of the study. The U.S. economy was experiencing a bad recession for over a year when the data were collected. Indian organizations, too, were facing challenges. For several organizations, a change of some sort was more of an act of survival. Managers of such firms might not have worried about the timing of the change or whether enough time was available for the implementation.

Conceptually, the five readiness sentiments seem to answer the basic questions of inquiry: *why* (discrepancy), *what* and *where* (Appropriateness of content and context), and *who* and *how* (Support and efficacy). The only missing question is *when*. Although the appropriateness sentiment might explain the time requirements to an extent, some specificity in explaining the time demands of the change seems to be missing, which I believe could be captured through the additional sentiment of urgency. Future researchers could develop and include items to capture this sentiment, along with the other available readiness beliefs instruments (Armenakis et al, 2007a; Holt et al., 2007b), and conduct a confirmatory factor analysis to verify the distinctiveness of the beliefs.

Limitations

The current study bears several limitations, which lead to future research directions. First, although cross-cultural differences have been predominantly examined by the cultural dimensions

proposed by Hofstede (1980), there are other factors that might have contributed to the observed differences in the change sentiments. For example, the differences in the socio-economic characteristics of the United States and India could have contributed to the findings. Future research can go beyond the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede and incorporate various socio-economic factors into cross-cultural studies of organizational change.

Before I jump into declaring that the readiness model can be applied in other cultures, a word of caution is appropriate. This study compared Indian managers with U.S. managers. According to Virmani (2005: 4), “the Indian manager today, educated either in the West or tutored on Western management literature, attempts to manage and administer the Indian industrial structure on Western principles.” Some of the similarity in the results could very well be due to this fact. Future studies might want to measure individual level-constructs of cultural values to examine if training and education has alienated individuals from their national cultures, at least in terms of their behaviors at work.

Second, the current study is limited by the fact that only two countries were compared. Accordingly, future researchers are encouraged to expand the number of countries to include more countries within the same cultural cluster identified by Hofstede (1980, 1994) and perform more cross-cultural studies. The paper suggests future research to study middle managers in nations like China, Japan, or Korea, which represent the Asian or Eastern culture in a more distinct way. However, in that case, the convenience of using English language might be lost.

The study also bears a few limitations due to the nature of the sample studied. First, the sample was one of convenience, and therefore, not random. While there was some amount of control, a manager’s decision to participate was purely left to chance. In other words, I did not pick and choose the individual respondents in the final sample. One negative outcome of this was evident in the dearth of female managers in the sample. Second, while eighty interviews are big

enough for a qualitative study, a bigger sample might have helped with more meaningful content analysis results. While I believe that this issue might be addressed to a certain extent given the variety of change as well as the variety of organization types, generalization of the findings should be done with caution.

CONCLUSION

Implementing change is one of the major responsibilities of middle managers. Given their dual roles, both of a recipient as well as an agent, the dynamics of change at the middle manager level is an interesting area of research. This paper offers insights regarding what is important in the middle managers' minds, when they appraise a change they have been asked to implement. The paper compared and contrasted how middle managers of the United States and India, evaluate a change while developing their change readiness sentiments. I found that the sentiments of change readiness as proposed in the framework apply to change recipients in different cultures too (in this study, India), given that the framework was developed and predominantly tested in the United States. The paper stretches the framework by proposing the sentiment of urgency. Future studies based on the change readiness construct could use this.

PAPER II

MIDDLE MANAGERS' CHANGE READINESS SENSEMAKING: CUES AND CATALYSTS

"[Organizations are] collections of people trying to make sense of what is happening around them..." (Weick, 2001: 5).

Middle managers play an active role during organizational change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). They are simultaneously change recipients and agents of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). While top management is responsible for designing and planning the change, much of the authority and responsibility for implementation is delegated to middle managers (Huy, 2001). Middle managers are expected to create readiness for change, minimize resistance, and transform employees into change enthusiasts (Thomas & Dunkerley, 1999) whose energies are directed towards organizational goals (Cyert & March, 1963). To perform these roles effectively, mid-level managers need to understand and accept the change themselves (Balogun, 2003; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994; Huy, 2001). Despite extensive research on middle managers' roles in organizational change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Huy, 2001), not much is known about how middle managers become 'change ready' themselves.

Change readiness (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993) indicates one's level of willingness to change (Huy, 2002), and plays a significant role in mitigating resistance to change (Eby, Adams, Russell, & Gaby, 2000). Rowden (2001) suggests that an organization must be in a continued state of change readiness. Armenakis and his colleagues (Armenakis et al., 1993, 1999, 2001) have proposed five underlying and interrelated key beliefs or sentiments reflecting

appraisals about the change that combine to generate change readiness. The five sentiments are discrepancy (“a change is necessary”), appropriateness (“the proposed change is correct for the situation”), efficacy (“the change can be accomplished”), valence (“there are benefits to be gained from the change”), and principal support (“leadership is committed to change success”).

Balogun and Johnson (2004) point out that one way to understand how middle managers react to and act upon change is to study their sensemaking activities, which in turn, requires an understanding of their interpretations and interpretive schemes (Isabella, 1990). This is in alignment with the growing body of research that focuses on micro-processes of change (Bartunek, Rosseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006; Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Whittington, 2003), including how organizational members appraise and make sense of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993). While Gioia and Thomas (1996) pioneered the sensemaking research by discussing how top managers’ sensemaking was critical for organizational functioning, sensemaking is no longer seen as restricted to top managers but also involves middle managers (Maitlis, 2005; Patriotta, 2003; Rouleau, 2005; Stensaker, Falkenberg, & Gronhaug, 2008). Middle managers use sensemaking processes to resolve the uncertainty and ambiguity that is typically associated with change events and their resulting behaviors can influence change outcomes (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Maitlis, 2005).

The primary research question driving this research is: What information do middle managers look for to make sense of a proposed organizational change and shape their five change readiness sentiments. Secondly, I am interested in identifying the cues that trigger this sensemaking. In other words, I focus on identifying the micro processes of middle manager change readiness sensemaking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Middle Managers & Change Sensemaking

In large organizations, the middle level of management performs a number of tasks to ensure a smooth flow of information, decision, and resources, above and below it (Mintzberg, 1993). According to Huy (2001), in order to successfully accomplish their roles, middle managers are simultaneously entrepreneurs, communicators, therapists and tightrope artists. The role of middle managers during organizational change efforts becomes more complex. Some have argued that middle managers are a source of problems and are resistors (Biggart, 1977; Miles, 1997). Others have positioned middle managers as catalysts for change (Balogun and colleagues, 2003, 2004, 2005; Floyd & Woolridge, 1992, 1997; Huy, 2001). Nonaka (1988) observed that middle managers played “a key role in the process of abandoning the old and generating the new” (p.12). Huy (2001) felt that middle managers understand their organization and know what needs to happen in a deep way. He observed that middle managers make significant contributions during change implementation, and even suggested that the “senior executive who learns to recognize, respect, and deal fairly with the most influential middle managers in an organization will gain trusted allies” (p.79). Rouleau (2005) argued that middle managers interpret and sell change initiatives through their day-to-day actions.

Sensemaking has been defined as the process of “meaning construction and reconstruction by the involved parties as they attempt to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of intended strategic change” (Gioia & Chittipedi, 1991, p. 442). According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), sensemaking is a process of social construction where organizational members interpret environmental cues. Sensemaking allows individuals to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity through interaction with others, and it plays a central role in

critical and dynamic contexts (Maitlis, 2005), including organizational change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Isabella, 1990).

In the context of change, sensemaking influences readiness and motivation to change. Change involves a dynamic context characterized by lack of information, uncertainty and ambiguity. When managers face organizational change, they move into a conscious sensemaking mode (Brown, 2000) in order to cope with the intense cognitive disorder caused by the change (McKinley & Scherer, 2000). Change recipients receive and process a constant stream of change-related information from multiple sources. Their active and conscious sensemaking efforts enable them to decide what their next course of action should be. Managerial sensemaking is a critical activity during change because it transforms chaotic, ambiguous situations into meaningful symbols and language that create the catalyst for action (Mills, 2003). Isabella (1990) noted that a considerable amount of cognition and interpretation accompanies the change process. The process of interpreting the change empowers managers to influence the change (Knights & McCabe, 1998); however, the interpretation of change initiatives is precarious (Whittington, 2003). While studies have examined middle manager sensemaking processes during organizational restructuring (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Luscher & Lewis, 2008), it has not been explicitly examined in the context of determining their own readiness and willingness to support the change.

Change Readiness

Change readiness has been defined as “the cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort” (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993, p. 681). Readiness for change plays a crucial role in mitigating resistance to change and thus in reducing the failure rate associated with organizational change efforts (Eby, Adams, Russell, & Gaby,

2000). Researchers and practitioners alike have made suggestions for preparing (creating readiness) organizations and their members to successfully implementing change (Kotter, 1996; Luecke, 2003; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Given the constant and continuous change pressures facing organizations, Rowden (2001) suggests that an organization benefits from being in a continual state of change readiness. And Eby et al. (2000) argued that for organizational readiness, individual employees must be open and ready for change. Armenakis, and colleagues (1993, 1999, 2001) identified five sentiments or beliefs about a change which combine to determine the readiness among the change recipients. These sentiments are discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, valence and principal support. Each of these sentiments emerges from change recipients' sensemaking efforts to answer key questions about the change.

Discrepancy. The first sentiment, *discrepancy*, emerges from sensemaking efforts to answer the question, "Is the change necessary?" Discrepancy refers to the perceived difference between the current state of the organization and some ideal state. An incongruity between current and desired states helps legitimize the need for change. Individuals must perceive that there is a pressing need for the change. Unless organizational members are aware that there is a problem or deficiency with the current state, there will be no motivation to change (Bies, 1987). Several other researchers have argued on the same lines (Kotter, 1995; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). According to Nadler and Tushman (1995), organizational awareness of the need to make a change is of utmost importance. Organizational leaders must demonstrate that there is a "clear and present danger: a tangible and immediate problem that must be confronted if the organization is to remain economically viable" (Beer et al., 1990, p.55). When change recipients believe that their (or organization's) needs are not being met by the status-quo, they will be more willing to support the change (Hultman, 1998).

Appropriateness. The sentiment of *appropriateness* reflects the answer to the question: “Is this change the right solution to address the existing discrepancy?” In addition to believing that a change is needed, if employees are to support change, they must also believe that the specific change being proposed will effectively address any discrepancy. Given the increasing frequency of changes that organizations face (Piderit, 2000), change recipients would expect to be convinced that that the proposed change is truly warranted and is not yet another “program of the month.” If the proposed change is viewed by employees as an incorrect or unrealistic approach, they may not be willing to ‘buy-in’ to the change or attempt to make it work (Cole, Harris, & Bernerth, 2006), or they may even actively oppose it (Kissler, 1991). This sentiment becomes more salient in situations where the organization concerned might have experienced changes in the past that have failed or poorly designed (Beer et al., 1990).

Efficacy. The change readiness sentiment of *efficacy* emerges from answering the question: “Can I/we implement the change successfully?” Efficacy focuses on the confidence that members have regarding their personal ability as well as the organization’s ability to successfully implement the proposed change. Drawing from the expectancy theory of motivation, to be motivated to support a change, individuals must not only feel that the change is appropriate but also that success is possible (e.g., Vroom, 1964). Support for the role of efficacy in organizational change situations has been found in previous research (Amiot et al., 2006; Armenakis et al., 2007; Eby et al., 2000; Jansen, 2004; Jimmieson et al., 2004; McGuire & Hutchins, 2006). Organizational change situations are often accompanied by uncertainty, stressful job conditions, fear of failure, and loss of control. Beliefs about one’s abilities function as effective buffers during such conditions (Cooper, Dewe, & O’Driscoll, 2001). Personal adaptation demands created by the change that create uncertainty, fear of failure, or difficulty in

sense making that drive negative attitudes toward change (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006).

High self-efficacy enable change recipients in coping with the strains associated with change, making the change seem less stressful (Avey et al., 2008). High efficacy decreases the perception of difficulty in making the change a success, thereby improving the change for success (Armenakis et al., 1999).

Valence. *Valence* is a sentiment shaped by efforts to answer the question “What’s in it for me and us?” Armenakis and his colleagues (1993, 1999) observed that organizational members assessed how they proposed change would affect them. Valence is one of the primary determinants of whether a change recipient will accept or resist change. This sentiment is theoretical based on motivation theory (Vroom, 1964). Outcome of organizational events are important in and of itself (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Judgments based on outcomes have been found to be related to many different organizational variables including employee commitment (Ambrose, 2002). Change recipients are more likely to be committed to a change initiative when the proposed change is easily perceived as personally favorable (Fedor et al., 2006; Novelli, Kirkman, & Shapiro, 1995) and, unless benefits are communicated early, change recipients are likely to anticipate that personal losses will result from the change (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). If the change clearly puts the members at a disadvantage, they would tend to resist the change. Alternately, if it is perceived that the employees would be better off consequent to the change, they would be more likely to embrace the change. Without inducements, it seems to be difficult to get employees to support change (Fedor et al., 2006).

Principal support. Finally, the *principal support* sentiment is shaped by resolving concerns about the sincerity and level of support backing the change. The sensemaking question driving principal support is: “Are the key parties committed to the success of the change?”

Armenakis and colleagues (1999) described *principal support* as a means by which to “provide information and convince organizational members that the formal and informal leaders are committed to successful implementation . . . of the change” (p. 103). When a change initiative is introduced, organizational members are concerned about whether management is serious about the proposed change or is it just a short-term whim. Even if employees have positive evaluations of the other change sentiments, why should they embrace a change that they feel is unlikely to persevere? This concern will be greater if there is a history of failed attempts to change due to lack of continued support. In this case, the credibility of management (Simons, 2002) undermines the sentiment of principal support. When there is a disparity between the change agents’ ‘talk’ (rhetoric) and “walk” (actions), change recipients perceive that principal support is not sufficiently demonstrated. The importance of buy-in, support, and commitment by top management has been noted in several studies (Kotter, 1996; Vollman, 1996).

India and United States

Managerial knowledge and practices are embedded in the context in which they are applied (Weick, 1995). They reflect attitudes, values, and norms of the society where they have been developed, and might, therefore, be limited in their applicability elsewhere (Michailova, 2000). Differences in perceptions, values, attitudes, and relational systems make the application of standardized managerial systems and practices inappropriate. It seems possible that values associated with national cultures may create climates that are different within the organizations where change is being implemented. Since organizational change is related to a variety of different needs including social and socio-psychological needs, change management approaches and techniques need to be localized (Michailova, 2000). In this study, I examine the universality and generalizability of middle managers’ change readiness sentiments sensemaking behaviors,

and while doing so I compare responses and emerging themes across the two cultures, namely, India and the United States.

Previous research suggests that there are clear cultural distinctions between India and the United States (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). According to Hofstede (1994), India and the United States differed significantly in terms of long-term orientation, power distance, and individualism. India is considered a long-term orientation culture whereas the United States is considered a short-term orientation culture (Hofstede, 1994). India scored significantly higher than the United States in terms of power distance. While India is considered a collectivistic culture, United States is classified as highly individualistic. Therefore, a model generated using data from the two cultures would tend to be more universal and generalizable.

Research Questions

While Armenakis et al. (2007) examined the validity and usefulness of the five sentiments framework by content analyzing the interview responses of the members of the top management team of the organization, how middle managers make sense of these change attributes has not been studied. I focus on the concerns of middle managers because they play a particularly crucial role during change efforts (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Huy, 2001; Rouleau, 2005). Middle managers co-operation and contributions may be essential to change success (Kanter, 1982). The responsibility to dispel resistance (or create change readiness) at the operating level lies with middle managers (Huy, 2002). Middle managers exhibit upward influence by synthesizing information and championing change initiatives (many of which are dictated to them) and they display downward influence by implementing deliberate strategies (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1997). However, not much is known regarding how middle managers appraise change proposals. This is unfortunate because

they are seldom involved in the planning process (Osterman, 2008), and their own readiness may influence their ability to create readiness in others. Additionally, little is known about the sensemaking information search that generates the sentiments. For example, when trying to answer the question, “do we need to change?” underlying discrepancy, what are the specific issues that middle managers consider? In addition, what sources do they seek out for this information? Exploring these questions is the main focus of this research. Specifically, I focused on the following research questions:

1. What information do middle managers look for when developing their five change readiness sentiments?
2. What information sources and processes do they use during the sensemaking process?
3. What specific managerial skills and abilities seem relevant in the change readiness sensemaking process?
4. Are there any commonalities in the sensemaking processes between Indian and U.S. middle managers?

METHODS

A multi-case qualitative approach was chosen for this study to focus on the perspectives and the interpretations of the individuals being studied (Bryman, 1988). The attempt was to answer the research questions based on respondents’ experiences, assuming that examining specific, situational aspects of managerial behavior will lead us to a better and broad level of understanding of the phenomenon in general. I chose a qualitative research design since it is more personal and digs deep into the issues, permitting me to converse with participants, establish a relationship with them, listen to their personal experiences, and generally gain a greater understanding of their perspective. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is

an “investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing, and classifying the objects of study” (p. 161).

Sample

I used a purposeful sample for this study, as is a general norm for qualitative research (Creswell, 2002). The interview participants were middle managers in business organizations in either the United States or India. The participants of the study had to meet two criteria. First, they had to be middle-managers who held exempt-status and were at least two levels below the CEO and at least two levels above operating level employees. Second, they had to be currently (or within the last 12 months) involved in implementing a change that was organizationally mandated but was not their personal idea or instigated by them.

I chose to draw my sample from both the United States and India to examine if there were any differences in middle managers’ sensegiving due to the difference in cultures or whether a broader unified understanding work. Emails (Refer to Appendix A) were sent to 60 current and past participants in the Executive Masters of Business Administration program of a large public university located in the southeastern United States inviting them to participate in the study if they satisfied the conditions or nominate others who met the outlined criteria. Most of these students and alumni were middle managers themselves. Of the 24 who responded, 14 (23%) indicated they met the criteria and agreed to be interviewed themselves; the remaining 10 held senior positions so they nominated a total of 32 middle managers as potential participants from within their organizations. Phone numbers of such potential participants were communicated either through email or telephone. Each manager was contacted through telephone. Of the 32 managers, 26 agreed to participate. Overall, a total of 40 U.S. participants

across 21 companies and 11 industries were identified and interviewed (the average number of respondents per company was 1.90).

For the Indian sample, senior managers of 23 organizations that I personally knew were contacted via phone and email (Refer to Appendix B). I told them about the study and asked them to allow members of their middle-management to be contacted and offered an opportunity to participate. Of the 23 such senior managers I contacted (Refer to Appendix B), 19 agreed to participate. Among the 19, 17 organizations ultimately were included in the sample. The other two could not be included due to scheduling problems. Of the 17, 10 of the senior managers provided email addresses of 28 prospective middle managers, four gave telephone contacts of 16 middle managers, and the rest three had talked to the middle managers (8 in number) themselves, set up appointments, and arranged for the interviews. From the group of 28 managers contacted through email (Refer to Appendix C), 21 agreed and set up times for the interviews. Among the 16 managers contacted over telephone, 11 agreed to participate and finalized meeting times. Finally, a total of 40 managers from 17 companies and 9 industries were interviewed (the average number of respondents per company was 2.35).

The final sample of 80 managers represented various functions including engineering (U.S.: 20%; India: 20%), sales/marketing (U.S.: 7.5%; India: 10%), human resource management (U.S.: 5%; India: 10%), general management (U.S.: 15%; India: 7.5%), finance (U.S.: 5%; India: 20%), technology (U.S.: 17.5%; India: 12.5%), and operations (U.S.: 30%; India: 20%). The U.S. sample was 78% male and the Indian sample was 85% male. All the participants had undergraduate degrees, over half (U.S.: 62%; India: 58%) had a master's degree (an MBA or other), and one Indian manager had a Ph.D. The work experience of the U.S. sample ranged from 11 to 38 years (mean = 21.8, $SD=6.8$), while for the Indian managers, work experience ranged

from 7 to 34 years (mean = 19.7, $SD=6.4$). A more detailed list of the samples is given in Tables 1 & 2.

The middle managers that finally comprised the sample belonged to range of functions, levels, and geographic locations. Particularly in case of the Indian sample, care was taken to include respondents from different regions (in and around major metros such as Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and New Delhi). In case of the U.S. sample, all but nine of them were located in the Southeastern states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Four managers belonged to eastern part of the U.S, but were travelling in the South during the time of data collection. Five managers located elsewhere (west coast, Midwest, and East) were interviewed over the telephone. More significant to the study is the fact that these managers, both Indian and American, talked about changes that they had either recently implemented or were presently implementing. I believe this fact mitigates the influence of retrospective biases to my analyses (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). It is also important for this study because I was able to capture what the managers thought at various stages of the change, and it played a vital role when developing the temporal model described later in the paper.

I conducted all but 5 interviews at the managers' work places during work time on a one-to-one basis. For the other five participants (all in the United States), telephone interviews were required due to scheduling conflicts and travel demands. Prior to the interview, all the respondents were asked to give their permission for the interview to be digitally audio-recorded and all did. To establish as accurate record of the interviews, verbatim transcripts were produced. The final document containing verbatim responses exceeded 1200 single-spaced pages, of which about 540 pages of transcribed data was analyzed for this study.

TABLE 1
U.S. Sample Description

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
US1	Head - IT	Education 1	Technology Change	Masters - Engg	23
US2	W/H Manager	Logistics 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	18
US3	W/H Manager	Logistics 1	Downsizing	MBA	15
US4	Program Head	Education 1	IT Change	MBA	22
US5	National Sales Manager	Industrial Products 1	Restructuring	MBA	32
US6	Manager - Clinical Practices	Health care 1	Info Sys Change	MBA	17
US7	Project Manager	Manufacturing 1	Project Shutdown	Masters - Engg	28
US8	Director, Rehab Specialty	Health care 2	Efficiency Improvement	MBA	33
US9	Sales Manager	Manufacturing 2	CRM Implementation	MBA	16
US10	VP - Branch Technology	Banking 1	Restructuring	MBA	13
US11	Area Manager, Service	Telecommunications 1	Merger	MBA	22
US12	Asst. Manager - Operations	Telecommunications 1	Merger	Undergraduate	23
US13	Manager - Call Center	Telecommunications 1	Leadership Change	Undergraduate	28
US14	Plant Manager	Contract Services 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	25
US15	Service Manager	Contract Services 2	Restructuring	Undergraduate	18
US16	Manager - Finance	Contract Services 2	Process Improvement	MBA	11
US17	Senior Project Manager	Contract Services 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	23
US18	Manager, Network Operations	Hospice 1	Leadership Change	MBA	20
US19	Sr. Manager - Operations	Hospice 1	Info Sys Change	Undergraduate	22
US20	VP, Clinical Services	Hospice 1	Info Sys Change	Masters - Pharmacy	26

TABLE 1 (continued)

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
US21	Dy. Chief - Information	Banking 2	Merger	Masters - Engg	18
US22	Director - Financial Aid	Education 2	Regulatory Change	Undergraduate	36
US23	National Account Director	Health care 3	Restructuring	MBA	23
US24	Principal - Consulting Division	Technology 1	IT Change	MBA	18
US25	Plant Manager	Manufacturing 2	Efficiency Improvement	Undergraduate	15
US26	General Manager	Manufacturing 3	Merger	Undergraduate	30
US27	Contract Manager	Technology 2	Customer Requirement	Masters - Engg	30
US28	Program Manager	Technology 2	Quality Program	Masters -Engg	38
US29	Director, Contracts and Pricing	Technology 2	Acquisition	Undergraduate	14
US30	Project Manager	Technology 3	Leadership Change	Masters - Engg	15
US31	Manager - Business	Technology 3	Acquisition	Undergraduate	16
US32	Manager, Software Solutions	Technology 3	Restructuring	Masters - MIS	11
US33	Manager - Data Management	Technology 4	Process Improvement	Masters - MIS	33
US34	Program Manager	Technology 4	Leadership Change	Undergraduate	17
US35	HR Manager	Manufacturing 4	Downsizing	Undergraduate	20
US36	Manager - Business	Technology 3	Quality Program	Undergraduate	30
US37	Principal	Technology 3	Sourcing Strategy Change	MBA	18
US38	Program Director	Pharmaceutical 1	Merger	MBA	20
US39	Manager - Operations	Retail 1	Closure of Facility	MBA	19
US40	Head - Technology	Technology 5	Joint Venture	MBA	24

TABLE 2
Indian Sample Description

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Type</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
I1	Senior Sales Manager	Construction Equipment 1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	25
I2	Head - SCM	Construction Equipment 2	Process Improvement	MBA	17
I3	Head - Improvement Group	Construction Equipment 2	Process Improvement	MBA	15
I4	Head - CAD/PLM	Construction Equipment 2	Efficiency Gain	Undergraduate	25
I5	Sr. Manager - Safety	Construction Equipment 1	New Process Development	Undergraduate	10
I6	Head - Civil Projects	Heavy Engineering 1	Change in Culture	Undergraduate	34
I7	Head - New Product	Heavy Engineering 1	Relocation	Undergraduate	16
I8	Manager - Customer Accounts	Heavy Engineering 1	Efficiency Improvement	Undergraduate	25
I9	Manager - Materials	Manufacturing 1	Information System	MBA	17
I10	AGM - Testing	Automotive 1	New Process Development	Masters -Engg	20
I11	Manager - Design	Automotive 1	New Process Development	Undergraduate	25
I12	AGM - Product Dev	Automotive 1	New Process Development	PhD - Engineering	22
I13	Divisional Mgr - Product Dev	Automotive 1	New Process Development	Undergraduate	15
I14	AGM - Product Dev	Automotive 2	New Process Development	Undergraduate	22
I15	DGM - Product Development	Automotive 2	New Process Development	Masters -Engg	31
I16	Senior Manager - Product Dev	Automotive 2	New Role	Undergraduate	14
I17	Sr. Manager - HR	Manufacturing 2	Relocation	MBA	25
I18	Manager - Finance	Manufacturing 2	New Process Development	Masters - Finance	12
I19	Dy. CFO	Chemicals 1	IT Implementation	MBA	18
I20	Head Strategy	Consumer Durables 1	Restructuring	MBA	13

TABLE 2 (continued)

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
I21	Manager - Rural Finance	Financial Services1	Restructuring	MBA	13
I22	Manager - Sales	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	MBA	17
I23	DGM - Sourcing	Manufacturing 4	New CEO	MBA	26
I24	Head - Operations	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	MBA	18
I25	Head - Quality	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	Undergraduate	33
I26	Head - Human Resources	Manufacturing 3	Restructuring	MBA	16
I27	Dy. Manager - Finance	Manufacturing 4	New CEO	Masters - Finance	12
I28	Manager - HR	IT 1	Restructuring	MBA	9
I29	Project Manager	IT 1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	16
I30	Assistant Manager - HR	IT 1	Restructuring	MBA	8
I31	Manager, Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	15
I32	Manager, Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	15
I33	AGM - Marketing	Automotive 3	New Product Development	MBA	17
I34	Sr. Branch Mgr - Power Systems	Construction Equipment1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	24
I35	Sr. Manager - ERP	Power 1	ERP Implementation	Undergraduate	18
I36	DGM - ERP	Power 1	ERP Implementation	Undergraduate	26
I37	DGM - Finance	Power 1	ERP Implementation	MBA	21
I38	Manager - Retail Products	Financial Services 1	Restructuring	MBA	18
I39	Project Manager	IT 2	Process Improvement	Undergraduate	23
I40	Manager - Operations	Call Center 1	Process Improvement	MBA	7

Interview protocol. I followed the advice of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and developed a semi-structured interview protocol (Refer to Appendix D) where the middle manager respondents were asked general questions that encouraged them to reflect on their experiences and change readiness sentiments as an organizational change unfolded. At the beginning of the interview, all participants (except those interviewed over the telephone) signed an informed consent document and gave permission to have the interviews audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The interviewees were guaranteed that the information obtained would be secured in a non-identifiable manner and that the recordings would be deleted once transcribed. All participants were asked to talk about a recent organizational change that they were involved in but were not responsible for initiation, i.e. all of the changes were organizationally mandated and were top-down initiatives. Therefore, each interview started with the respondent offering a description of the change. Although the specific types of change were not a focus of the study, it was vital that respondents had recently experienced a change in order to provide a meaningful response. Another reason of starting the interview with a description of the change was to put the interviewee at ease. I wanted to ensure that the interviewee was not primed in any way regarding my theoretical interest, and that their responses were personal and free-flowing.

The interviews began with asking the respondent to tell me about their job. I then asked them to “Tell me about some of the recent changes that have occurred in your organization? Which ones affected you and your subordinates the most?” This question was used to identify a specific change that would be the focus of the remainder of the interview. The respondents were asked to choose a change that they felt comfortable to talk about. Typically the selection was based on the significance of the change as well recency. Across the 80 respondents, the range of changes described included restructuring (U.S.: 15%; India: 40%), change in leadership (U.S.:

10%; 5%), process improvement (U.S.: 15%; India: 37.5%), downsizing (U.S.: 17.5%), technology change (U.S.: 22.5%; India: 12.5%), and merger (U.S.: 20%; India: 5%).

After establishing the focal change with each respondent, a set of open-ended questions were used to examine the initial change concerns they experienced. Specifically, respondents were asked how they learned about the change, what initial thoughts ran through their minds upon hearing, and what they felt good about and what concerned them. Their responses were used to test the adequacy of the five change sentiments articulated by Armenakis et al. (1993, 1999). This inquiry provided support for the five sentiment model and is the focus of the first paper in this dissertation.

The next set of questions forms the basis for the research described here. For each of the five change sentiments: discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, and valence, respondents were asked a series of questions as follows:

Discrepancy - “Was this change necessary? Why do you think so? Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?”

Appropriateness—“Was the proposed change the best response to the discrepancy identified above? Did the organization benefit from the change? Why do you think so? Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?”

Efficacy—“Did you think the organization had the capability to make this change? Why do you think so? Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?”

Principal support—“Did the management support this change? Why do you think so? Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?”

Personal valence—“Did individuals benefit from this change? Why do you think so?”

Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?”

Probing questions were asked during the interview as appropriate to elicit greater clarity regarding respondents’ comments and conclusions.

Finally, a set of questions regarding how the managers attempted to shape the change sentiments of their subordinates was asked. The result of this line of reasoning is the subject of the third paper in this dissertation.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory involves systematic generation of theory from data. This approach does not mean that no prior theory was used and that the researcher was a “blank slate,” which is a common misconception of grounded theory (Locke, 1996; Suddaby, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1998) allow for prior theory and personal experience to frame researchers’ efforts to gain useful insights into the data. I followed their approach to elaborate upon the existing conceptual vocabulary (sensemaking). Essentially, I followed Suddaby (2006) in an attempt to “achieve a practical middle ground between a theory-laden view of the world and an unfettered empiricism” (p. 635).

I used Atlas.ti, a computer aided qualitative analysis software, for coding purposes. Atlas.ti facilitates coding, analyzing and interpreting large volumes of textual data (Muhr, 1997). The data analysis was carried out in four steps. First, the responses were divided according to the readiness sentiment being addressed. This was not complicated since the interview protocol had separated sections of questions for each readiness sentiment. In Atlas.ti, this was done by coding the section according to the issue in hand, for example, Sensemaking_Discrepancy, and then

creating an output file that contains only the selected codes. The output of the first stage of the data analysis was a set of narratives composed of ordered raw data (interview responses), each chronicling the sensemaking associated with each of the five change readiness sentiments.

Open coding, in which first-order concepts are identified (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), was the second step in the analytic process. These concepts become the basic units of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) for the sensemaking for each of the five readiness sentiments. Open coding involved line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts to break apart the interviews into small units (Charmaz, 2006). While analyzing the responses, I used several lenses to understand respondents' comments. Specifically, I was interested in identifying the different sources of information they referred to, the nature and form of the information, the approach to gaining that information taken (e.g., inquiring, responding, reinforcing, and concluding), individual characteristics that seemed to facilitate such behaviors, and organizational and social aspects that underlie those behaviors. As a result, multiple codes could be linked to a given response. In a constant comparison method, I switched between using existing codes and creating new ones. For example, while referring to whether he thought a proposed change (a new IT system) was appropriate and why, a clinical practices manager who heads the function says:

In a lot of ways, NO; I did not (*think the change was appropriate*) because I felt that the reason the system was planned was so that physicians could put orders in, and I did not feel like the physician staff were at a point of being able to input medication orders in the computer themselves. So I felt like it was possibly too forward thinking.

While coding this response, I looked at it from different angles. First, I coded it as “no appropriateness” for middle manager’s sentiment. Then I marked it as “Felt Experience” as the sensemaking cue. Then, I coded it as “Tacit Sensemaking” for the sensemaking nature, since the manager’s knowledge about the physician staff’s abilities was based on his personal understanding. I also marked it “Anticipatory Sensemaking”

since I already knew during the course of the interview that the implementation of the new system had not started. Finally, I marked it as “Task Knowledge” and “People Skills” for middle manager attributes. The manager had a good understanding of what the new IT system would demand from its users (task knowledge), as well as, the capabilities of the prospective users.

The third analytic step was to categorize the concepts of open coding into *axial* categories. Axial categorization begins “the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:124). Here, I looked for commonality in the codes in order to generate second-order themes. In Atlas.ti, axial coding is done by developing categories using the Family Manager function, where codes can be grouped together into a family. I reviewed the entire list of codes examining for similarities, removing duplicates, and checking for redundancy. The review was conducted for codes both within a specific readiness sentiment as well as across all sentiments. For example, I created a family labeled *External Environment Cues* to capture all the discrepancy sensemaking cues (i.e., events/issues/people) that originate from the general external environment of the organization. This family included the following first-order concepts: economic conditions, regulatory changes, and technology changes. Again, the process of combining first-order concepts into families was iterative.

Selective coding was the fourth and final analytic step used to identify the thematic storyline that emerges from the integration of concepts discovered through open and axial coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is a unifying process where the data are integrated into a meaningful whole of interrelated concepts forming a theoretical framework or model. Here, I focused on answering the research questions, and identifying the micro processes of middle manager sensemaking of change readiness.

RESULTS

“How do middle managers make sense of their personal change readiness when faced with the task of implementing a change proposed and mandated by senior management?” was the central question guiding this study. My analysis of the eighty interview responses helped me identify a distinct set of conditions related to middle manager sensemaking. While not every condition was present in each manager’s sensemaking efforts, the presence of each condition seemed to individually influence the sensemaking process. In the discussion that follows, I report the conditions I found to be associated with middle manager sensemaking. In doing this, I explore why these conditions might be associated with change readiness sensemaking, and describe a theoretical model suggested by the data. The process of axial coding established three major axes in the data: sensemaking cues, sensemaking catalysts, and sensemaking processes. When creating families for sensemaking cues, I reviewed all first order codes within a specific sentiment. While creating families for sensemaking processes and middle manager attributes, I reviewed first order codes across all the sentiments. As I reviewed these major categories, and their sub categories (families and codes), I identified their relationships with each other. A model of middle manager sensemaking of change readiness began to emerge from the data. In this context, it is important to point out that no significant differences were identified between the Indian and the U.S. sample as far as the findings are concerned.

Sensemaking Cues Underlying Change Sentiments

Examination of the responses to questions about how the middle managers in the study assessed each of the five sentiments led to the identification of 34 cues (first-order concepts) that were merged into 14 second-order themes to explain the sensemaking cues identified for each of

the five sentiments. Figure 1 diagrammatically represents the data structure for sensemaking cues.

FIGURE 1
Data Structure for Change Readiness Sentiments Sensemaking Cues

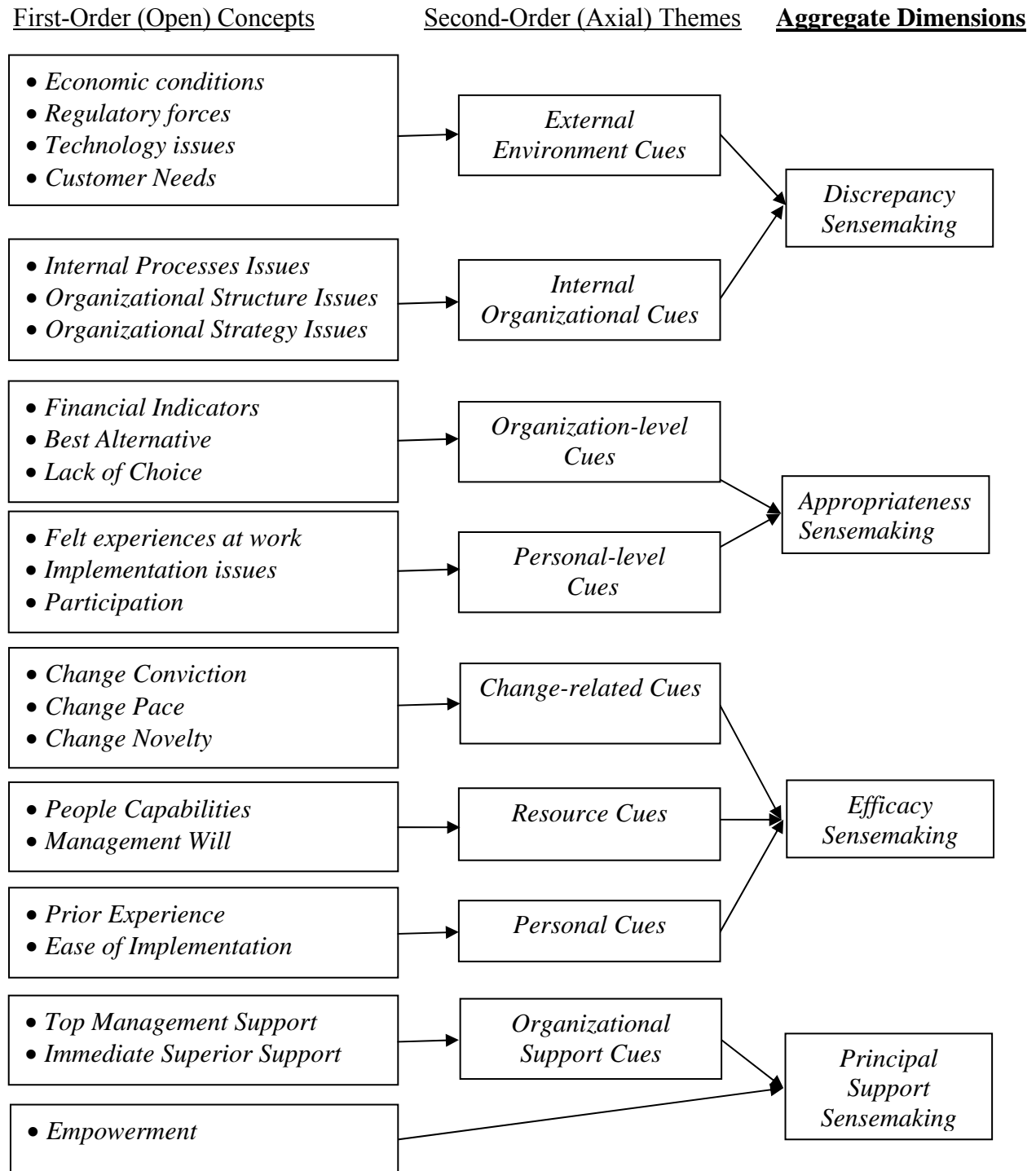
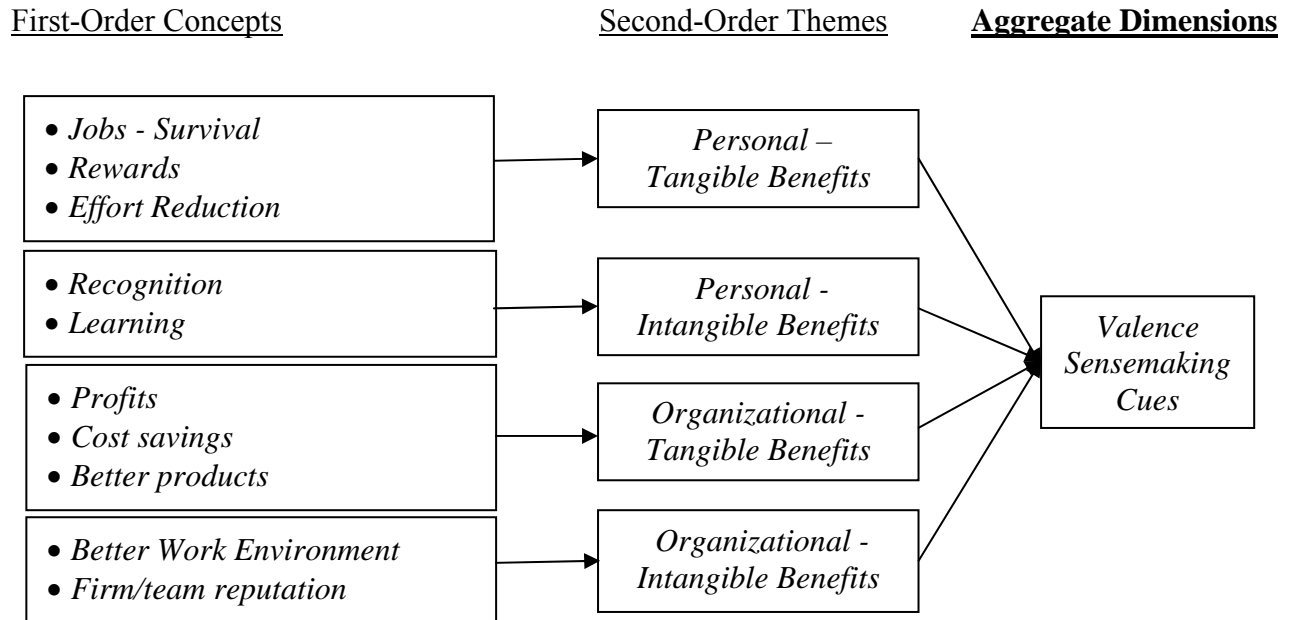


FIGURE 1 (contd.)



Discrepancy sensemaking cues. The sentiment of discrepancy is primarily shaped by information associated with the issues that are external and internal to the organization. Middle managers, by virtue of the multiple roles they enact (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1994) evaluate all aspects of the environment. The need for change can be triggered by external environment cues or internal organizational reasons such as inefficient processes or ineffective structures. The external environment consists of economic, political, legal/regulatory, social, technological, and legal factors that influence how an organization runs its business (Bourgeois, 1980). The influence is typically over time and not necessarily evident in day to day transactions. According to Wooldridge and Floyd (1990), middle managers’ contributions to the strategy process are quite significant (Pascale, 1984) because they are often quickest to recognize strategic problems and opportunities.

As shown in Figure 1, seven first-order cues combined to form two second-order themes captured managers’ sensemaking about discrepancy. **External Environment Cues** is a second-

order theme that comprises four first-order concepts: Changes triggered by *Economic Conditions*, *Regulatory Forces*, *Technology Changes*, and *Customer Needs*. According to Wooldridge and Floyd (1990), middle managers are often earliest to recognize strategic problems and opportunities. When discussing why or why not they thought the focal change was necessary (discrepancy sensemaking), 48% of respondents (U.S. = 56%; Indian = 40%) mentioned external environment cues. Of these cues, Economic Conditions was mentioned by 22% of respondents (U.S. = 27%; Indian = 17%), Regulatory Forces by 8% (U.S. = 10%; Indian = 6%), Technology Changes by 10% (U.S. = 15%; Indian = 6%), and Customer Needs by 8% (U.S. = 5%; Indian = 10%).

An Indian middle manager, who heads the product lifecycle management function of a manufacturing firm, describes how he did not have to worry about cost containment when the economy did well, and how the current downturn has resulted in low sales volumes, leading to him having to review his cost of production:

For the last 4-5 years we were not really bothered about the fixed expenses such electricity, gas conditions etc, because there was tremendous growth...we were experiencing growth to the tune of 10% and we used to say 'wow, what a growth it is.' Last 3-4 years, we were growing at 30-40%, and in some years it was more than 40%, so we were really not bothered about the day to day expense rather we were worrying about how to meet the customer demands or how to make more production, how to make better designs, that was it. But now, when downturn is there, you don't have that volume, so now the important question is: what is your cost of production, or what your cost of manufacturing, cost of sales, etc?

A Director of a Rehabilitation Facility in the United States illustrates how corrective changes were urgently necessitated since failure to do so would have led to closure of their facility by the regulatory body:

With the citations that the state made, they will come back in 30-60 days and reassess that you have corrected those problems and they will come back at anytime and they can shut you down if you have not corrected some of these problems...The citations that my department had were not such that they would

shut us down immediately, but if you continue to show that you were not fixing those problems, that was a possibility.

An American manager, who is a program head in a large public university in the Southeast United States, conveyed how technology changes, were necessary for generating the right reports, led him to believe that the mandated change was necessary:

I don't think the different systems we had in place were fine, particularly in the financial component we used to have a system called the financial reporting system (FRS); it was probably even hand written system by somebody here, I don't know where it came from, but I've been talking to people at the Bursar's office and other units and I realized it was very limiting, and that they had a lot of trouble generating the reports and the data within the time limits they were needed, so from a micro perspective, FRS needed to be updated.

An Indian manager of a construction equipment manufacturing firm feels that the restructuring of his organization was mandated due to variation in the customers' preferences:

We were an emerging construction equipment player and we want to be more focused and prominent player, leader in this segment. So what really happened was... everybody was targeting the bigger customer to have a big deal...nobody was targeting small customer, so a need was felt, 'okay, we have to create two business verticals, one will focus only big customers and one will focus on small customer, in one segment we will get quantum of business with a lesser rate. And in the other, will get more customers with the higher rates.' So that was the whole idea and that clicked too.

The second category of cues associated with discrepancy sensemaking was ***Internal Organizational Cues***. This second-order theme comprises three first-order concepts: *Internal Processes Issues*, *Organizational Structure Issues*, and *Organizational Strategy Issues*. Middle managers' understanding of internal sensitivities and capabilities allows them to evaluate the relevance and feasibility of proposed corporate changes (Huy, 2001). According to Pappas et al. (2004), middle managers' strategic knowledge is associated with their championing of alternative ideas and synthesizing new information. Middle managers' When asked to explain their sentiments of discrepancy, Internal Organizational Cues were mentioned by 52% of respondents (U.S. = 44%; Indian = 60%). In terms of the first-order concepts underlying these

cues, Internal Processes Issues were mentioned by 21% of respondents (U.S. = 10%; Indian = 31%), Organizational Structure Issues by 14% (U.S. = 15%; Indian = 13%), and Organizational Strategy Issues by 18% (U.S. = 20%; Indian = 17%).

A testing manager of an Indian automobile manufacturing organization, while explaining the need for a new product development system, refers to how in the current process his team was overloaded with projects resulting in lack of focus among the team members:

Look, one of the main points I thought was that it would reduce the number of projects that we were handling at any point of time; if you see my company, we were handling 15 to 20 projects at the same time...And that actually takes away the focus of the entire team.

A program manager in a U.S. contract services firm clearly mentions that the current structure was ineffective and hence, restructuring was necessary to be able to manage the problems that would emerge otherwise:

The current structure was ineffective, people worked in silos, there's not a lot of cross communication, there's a lot of politicking and you know, people picking on each other...So, the current system was not working, and as we all know that the industry is posed into major changes and we probably haven't seen anything yet... So, in order to make sure we are positioned for the future... yes, changes have to be made period.

A regional sales manager in an American chemicals firm stresses upon how the need for a CFO was mandated by the vision of the organization to grow beyond a certain size:

We had a guiding vision of where we want to go as a company and as we go on that journey, we see these things that develop that drive a change... We are trying to get to \$54 million, and we are trying to present my financials into a consolidated multi-national financial, what are we missing? And things pop up such as 'guys, you'll need a CFO.'

Appropriateness sensemaking cues. The data suggested that the sentiment that a change is appropriate was influenced by two major sets of cues: *Organization-level Cues* and *Personal-level Cues*. Organization-level Cues included indicators regarding promised outcomes and actual outcomes of the change efforts, and specific information regarding available alternatives to the

change effort. This is a second-order theme that comprises three first-order cues: *Financial Indicators*, *Better Solution*, and *No Alternatives*. Organization-level Cues were mentioned by 39% of respondents (U.S. = 38%; Indian = 39%), of which Financial Indicators were mentioned by 10% of respondents (U.S. = 8%; Indian = 12%), Better Solution by 18% (U.S. = 12%; Indian = 24%), and No Alternatives by 11% (U.S. = 18%; Indian = 3%). If the change was seen as being unfavorable, changes in organizational and change commitment were largely neutral to negative (Fedor et al., 2006)

A project manager in an Indian call center feels that the suggested change was appropriate because it was less costly:

I feel that at the cost and the timeline in which we could get it done, it was much better success than what people thought, I mean, the alternative for this would have been getting something from the market, but then integrating that system into the existing system would have been much more difficult. And again, very expensive as well.

An information technology security manager in the United States who had just experienced a merger comments that a merger was an obvious decision, but he felt good about the acquiring company being similar to his organization, as opposed to other possible acquirers:

I think they were more similar than they could have been with the Citigroup so, a New York firm and a southern based firm would have been a lot different dynamic. While the two merging organizations were not the same culture by any stretch of imagination, they were more similar.

A warehouse manager in the United States, who had to lay off a few people as a result of the poor economy, says:

I really do not think that there was another way to do it. I do not see if this was not just a layoff during a decent economic standing. We had something major happen with the economy, so, it is not like they would have said, okay, Sales guys, we need to find another area. We need to go to different stores. Everybody was having trouble selling, so it is not like we could search other options, as far as I know...So, I do not see anything else they could have done to save money, which is what we needed to do. So, I do not see anything they could have done. So, I believe it was the right choice.

The second condition associated with appropriateness sensemaking was *Personal-level Cues*. These are indicators occurring closer to the middle managers in the organizational hierarchy. This is a second-order theme that comprises three first-order concepts: *Felt experiences at work*, *Implementation issues*, and *Participation*. Personal-level cues were mentioned by 61% of respondents (U.S. = 62%; Indian = 61%), of which felt experiences were mentioned by 24% of respondents (U.S. = 18%; Indian = 30%), implementation issues by 21% (U.S. = 29%; Indian = 12%), and Participation by 16% (U.S. = 15%; Indian = 18%).

A positive experience at work leads an American middle manager to validate the appropriateness of the downsizing he was implementing.

We have shown in every one of the departments of my organization that we can do more with less. That that's possible so it validated the point that we weren't working at my capacity, cause things are still getting done, we are still operating. We may be working a few more hours but it is still getting done. That was a validation point.

The dissatisfaction of an Indian manager who feels the change resulted in more effort expended to arrive at similar results as before is evident in the following comment:

Yeah, we just felt that to get the same result you would have worked harder. Same effort if you had put with a different agency probably you would have spent that energy in delivering better results. Okay, so there was a feeling that work could be compromised.

An American middle manager who disagrees with the outside consultants because he feels they were "not thorough with the operations," says:

Of course, a major consulting firm was hired, but they didn't have the necessary knowledge...decisions about personnel all those were made at VP and above level...And they don't get down in the weeds often and then people from outside with no expertise were making the decision. So that's where my no comes from, the whole process, the input that was sought was not from people who really understood the business.

An Indian manager in an automobile testing function, implementing a new process, says

The difference between the outlook that my subordinates had and what I had was that I had a chance to participate in some of those initial meetings, we had a few one to one discussions with their team also. So that's actually how I came to know that we would like to have a customized process, which will be better for us.

Participation in planning and meetings enable a manager to be more informed regarding the decision to change, thereby empowering them to understand the appropriateness of the planned change. Participation in change has been identified by many authors as critical for reducing resistance to change (Glew, Griffin, & Van Fleet, 1995; Pasmore & Fagans, 1992). Wagner (1994) stated that participation refers to a process where influence is shared among individuals who are hierarchically unequal. Wanberg and Banas (2000) reported that high levels of participation were associated with beliefs that change would be beneficial for an organization.

Efficacy sensemaking cues. Respondents indicated that their Change Efficacy was shaped by three major families of cues: ***Change-related cues***, ***Resource cues***, and ***Personal cues***. Change-related cues are factors that enable middle managers' sensemaking of efficacy. This is a second-order theme that comprises three first-order concepts: *Change Conviction*, *Change Pace*, and *Change Novelty*. Change-Related cues were mentioned by 35% of respondents (U.S. = 33%; Indian = 38%), of which Change Conviction was mentioned by 22% of respondents (U.S. = 22%; Indian = 22%), Change Pace by 7% (U.S. = 8%; Indian = 6%), and Change Novelty by 6% (U.S. = 3%; Indian = 6%).

A manager of an Indian manufacturing company reflects how being convinced about the appropriateness of the proposed change led him to not worry about efficacy:

Look, I never had any apprehension whether we can do it or not, you know, it is something which is not there at the back of my mind at any given point while I was doing it because I was very much convinced that this change was needed; it is only a mindset which is holding them; it is not that people can't do it and there are no limitations see what, once they realize that there is a need for a change then we have to empower them to take their own decisions.

Similarly, a product development manager refers to how if one believes what they are doing is right, they would not doubt their ability:

The thing is if you believe that what you are doing is right you will not have this question of doubting your ability.

Globalization and technological advances have accelerated the pace of change in organizations, resulting in increasing anxiety in organization members. While some researchers have suggested that successful transformations are implemented quickly since it overcomes the disruptive period of risk and uncertainty associated with any major change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988), others have argued for more gradual change that is seen more manageable, and have cautioned against organizations choosing overwhelming and rapid transition (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; Hedberg, Nystrom, & Starbuck, 1976.; Pettigrew et al., 1992; Quinn, 1980). Amis et al (2004) suggest that rapid change throughout organizations is not only insufficient to bring about change, but may even be detrimental to its outcome. During change situations top management tend to be externally focused; middle managers are called upon to restore employee engagement by providing support and assurance to employees (Huy, 2002). I found that questions regarding efficacy were raised in middle managers' minds when they found the pace of the change to be too fast.

A marketing manager of a consumer durables manufacturer in the United States refers to how capability of implementing a change is influenced by the pace of implementation.

No, not as quickly; yes, they are capable of making the change, which I agree. That they could have initiated as quickly as they did, no, I do not think so. I mean it was almost back breaking, the pace that they set, the deadlines that they set for setting up the database and cleaning the database...I mean just a ridiculous amount of focus that was going into it, so I didn't think that it was going to be a success. I thought that it was going to be one of those where they were going to set this pace and we were going to run as fast as we could and eventually, we would run out of steam.

A product development manager refers to how not being exposed to the change proposition raises efficacy issues within the minds of the manager:

It was such a paradigm shift from the way the company always operated, it did bring about a lot of doubts...it was going to require the company to either acquire, a company that had a more hardware centered focus or the company was going to have to invest R&D money in order to develop capabilities.

The second condition associated with efficacy sensemaking was *Resource Cues*. This second-order theme comprises two first-order concepts: *People Capabilities*, and *Management Will*. Middle managers, by virtue of their closeness to the operating level, are in a position to gain a better understanding of the capabilities (knowledge, skills, and abilities) available for change implementation. Top management's actions and resources provided by management also strengthen middle managers' sentiments about efficacy. Resource cues were mentioned by 45% of respondents (U.S. = 53%; Indian = 38%), of which People Capabilities were mentioned by 15% of respondents (U.S. = 11%; Indian = 19%), and Management Will by 30% (U.S. = 42%; Indian = 19%).

A manager of the testing function of an automotive manufacturer refers to how a manager's understanding of their subordinates skills and capabilities helps them to better deploy resources:

As a function head I generally know the skills and capabilities of my subordinates before a nomination is made for a particular program. So a capability perspective is definitely looked into before a person is nominated for a particular role in the program.

An Indian manager working with an auto major, recalls how he was initially doubtful, yet subsequent management actions led him to be confident about the organization's change capabilities:

I had very, very severe doubts that my organization would be capable of making this change and make this change successfully. I had very little hope that this will happen, but after seeing the last one, one and a half years of changes that have

taken place in the organization, it is very clear that senior management has the will now to make it happen and back up the changes that are happening to go towards to this happening. So my apprehension levels have come down...

On the other hand, a program head of a large university in the southeastern United States, refers to how she felt confident regarding change efficacy right from the beginning by looking at the intention of the management evidenced through resources deployed. In this case, designated consultants were made available for trouble shooting problems during a campus wide IT systems implementation:

I was not worried whether the change can be implemented...I guess by looking at the resources that they put towards this transition, I mean they had designated consultants living here, probably for two years, working with each unit as they had problems and other issues.

The third condition associated with efficacy sensemaking was *Personal Cues*. This again is a second-order theme that comprises two first-order concepts: *Prior Experience*, and *Ease of Implementation*. Managers use their personal experiences to gain a sense of efficacy. Efficacy sentiments are also influenced by implementation issues. Personal Cues were mentioned by 20% of respondents (U.S. = 15%; Indian = 25%), of which Prior Experience was mentioned by 14% (U.S. = 18%; Indian = 30%), and Ease of Implementation by 6% (U.S. = 8%; Indian = 3%) of respondents.

Some people may be inclined to resist organizational changes because they are not confident about their capabilities to perform in a changed situation (Parker, 1998). This is more so if the change implementation involves an unfamiliar experience, which increases uncertainty. A human resources manager of an aircraft manufacturing company in the United States reveals how multiple experiences have led to the manager feeling confident about their ability to implement a change:

In my 10 years of working here, this is probably the seventh time I've had to lay people off... Yeah, so I've had a lot of experience with laying off people... So I actually I felt incredibly confident about what I had to do.

Employees who feel capable of performing particular tasks have been found to cope more effectively with change (Cunningham, et al., 2002; Hill, Smith, & Mann, 1987). An Indian manager responsible for implementing a quality standard in their IT systems refers to how efficacy sentiments were subject to skepticism when faced with the reality of implementation problems:

Yes, when we got to the implementation stage, I was skeptical (*about our capabilities*). While it seemed to be a simple upgrade or update, it involved major changes in the way we were planning out some of the projects... And some of the projects were already underway, so we couldn't have changed them. There is always a challenge between managing cost and having the latest system... In our industry, we are in a highly competitive market, so when we seek projects, we have to try and optimize the cost and other resources...

Principal support sensemaking cues. Respondents' comments suggested that the sentiment of principal support for a change is shaped by two major sources: ***Organizational Support Cues***, and ***Empowerment Cues***. Organizational Support Cues refer to organizational factors from which middle managers take a cue while making sense of support availability. It is a second order theme consisting of two first-order concepts: *Top Management Support*, and *Immediate Superior Support*. Organizational Support Cues were mentioned by 90% of respondents (U.S. = 83%; Indian = 97%), of which Top Management Support was mentioned by 72% (U.S. = 73%; Indian = 71%), and Immediate Superior Support by 18% (U.S. = 10%; Indian = 26%) of respondents. The first organizational aspect that triggers a sentiment of support among middle managers is the level of commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and behavioral integrity (Simons, 2002) of the top management. Trust in those leading change is also considered

to be an important aspect, and a prerequisite for employees' cooperation with the change (e.g. Kotter, 1995).

A marketing manager with a large heavy engineering firm in India refers to how willingness and support on part of a Vice-President reinforced the belief that the management was serious about and did support the change:

Our Vice President was the sponsor of this scheme. And he used to hold monthly and quarterly reviews and all that. Whenever there was a need of his support, like there was this issue that came out around sometime after this project took off for one year or something. We found that there were some terminals that did not support the software, and I'm just being honest... So some 30, 40 odd terminals did not support. So there was a need of replacing them. At that time it cost around 1000 dollars a piece, so it was a need of 2 to 3 million which was immediately sponsored. So these were, there was willingness on the part of management that was demonstrated throughout ...

The attitude and behavior of the immediate superior (Eisenberger, et al., 2002; Levinson, 1965) also feeds into middle managers' sensemaking of change support. A Project Manager working for a Indian software development major, reflects this idea where the manager feels least affected by changes because of the understanding and relationship he shares with his supervisor.

Actually on a day to day basis, I am interacting with my boss and sharing all the activities, how we are doing and what we are doing. So since he is already having same experience because of heading this strategic team, so he has idea okay how the things will move, so obviously give me input and I always share with them this input.

The second condition associated with sensemaking of change principal support was **Empowerment**. This first-order concept primarily refers to the nature and extent of the role played by the middle manager in the change process. Empowerment in their work is an indicator of principal support for middle managers. Fenton-O'Creevy (2001) argued that empowering middle managers is vital. Oswald et al., (1997) also stressed upon the benefits of involvement in

the change process. Empowerment was mentioned by 10% of the respondents (U.S. = 17%; India = 3%).

A U.S. warehouse manager makes sense of support by the independence that was offered to him by the management is implementing the change:

They were very involved with what we were doing and at the same time as being involved, they left me alone. They let me come up with the criteria. I put it together. Their role was to make sure that I got to the number that I needed to, to come up with a plan and this whole process has been, it'll be about a year to be honest, so by the end of this year I have to be x number and I'm executing my plan towards their goal.

An American database manager recollects how he was given a free hand in making decisions related to the change:

My bosses have said, "go, get this done we'll support your decisions" and so that's what I'm trying to do. I have to trust him on that because so far the decisions that we've made they have supported.

Valence sensemaking cues. Valence as perceived by middle managers appears to be signaled by two major criteria: "Tangible vs. Intangible benefits," and "Personal vs. Organizational benefits." Tangible benefits include raises, promotions, rewards, etc, while intangible benefits include recognition, better working environment, and engaged subordinates. Personal benefits are those that they directly receive or experience such as a raise or a recognition. Organizational benefits include those that occur at a different level such as the organization (growth, profitability) or subordinates (engagement, efficiency), but do benefit the managers indirectly by virtue of membership or association. Using these two criteria, I compiled four forms of benefits that middle managers considered when determining their change valence: **Personal - Tangible, Personal - Intangible, Organizational - Tangible, and Organizational - Intangible.** Figure 2 depicts the matrix of valence cues that middle managers consider while appraising the benefits of change.

FIGURE 2
Change Valence Matrix

		<i>Valence: Focus</i>	
		<i>Personal</i>	<i>Organizational</i>
<i>Valence: Form</i>	<i>Tangible</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise/Rewards • Jobs-Survival • Effort Reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profits/Loss • Better products
	<i>Intangible</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition • Supervisor relations • Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation of the firm • Engaged subordinates • Better work environment

Personal-Tangible benefits refer to those outcomes of the change process that have an external manifestation and affect the managers directly, such as keeping a job and getting a promotion. Personal-Tangible benefits were mentioned by 38% of the respondents (U.S. = 40%; India = 35%).

A Program Manager working with the federal contractor refers to a change where successful implementation of a customer-mandated change will enable the firm to retain the contract and thereby allow the employees to keep their jobs.

If we do not make this change, and the firm loses this contract, and every one of us is going to lose their job.

A service quality assurance manager refers to how the manager received a pay raise after post-merger integration: “*I’ve benefited in that I got the largest pay raise...*”

Personal-Intangible benefits refer to various subtle benefits that the managers themselves experience during or after the change, such as learning and recognition. Personal-Intangible benefits were mentioned by 17% of the respondents (U.S. = 22%; India = 13%).

A middle manager felt that no recognition reached her level in the organization, leading her to undervalue the utility of the change: “*The recognition for my effort wasn’t always sent down the chain...*” Similarly, a U.S. manager of clinical services refers to learning a new

technology as a direct benefit of the change experience: *“I have learned a lot about technology that I didn’t know before...”*

Organizational-Tangible Benefits refer to various benefits that manifest at a different level of the organization (organization, group, customers) such as profits, cost savings, and better products. Organizational-Tangible benefits were mentioned by 18% of the respondents (U.S. = 13%; India = 23%).

A product development manager working with an Indian auto manufacturer feels:

This new process should improve the quality of the vehicles we make, which in turn will help the organization sell more and gain more profits...

A finance manager working for an Indian bank looks at the benefit of change in terms of cost savings:

Under the new structure, we have been able to reduce a lot of overhead, which is good for my company.

Organizational-Intangible Benefits refer to the subtle benefits that are experienced at a different level of the organization (organization, work group) such as firm reputation, and better work environments. Organizational-Intangible Benefits were mentioned by 27% of the respondents (U.S. = 24%; India = 30%).

A manager argues that the new skills learnt by his subordinates made it easy for him to deploy them in other roles, resulting in a less worrisome environment:

People took on new responsibilities, they learnt new roles, new tasks, it stepped up in some places and that was I would say fun... When you’ve got that many people that can do anything in the operation, it makes labor a very nice thing because you can just transplant people. You don’t have to worry about man I don’t have anybody that knows this, everybody knows it.

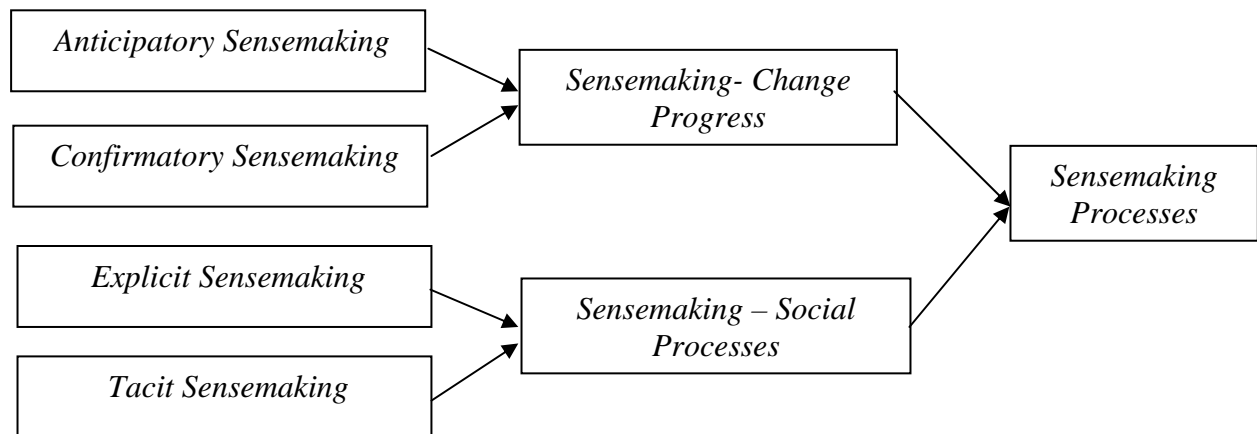
A project manager working for an Indian software development firm believes that successful implementation of a new quality standard will enhance the reputation of the firm:

Look, if we pull this off, we will be the first company to do this. That itself is a strong motivator...

Change Readiness Sensemaking Process

In addition to identifying the sensemaking cues underlying each of the five change sentiments, I also examined the processes that middle managers used while making sense of their change readiness sentiments. As explained in the example in the Methods section, I analyzed the same responses, albeit with a focus of understanding beyond the obvious (sensemaking information and cues). I looked to classify the sensemaking process based on the nature of the information that was being attended to, as well as its temporal nature vis-à-vis the change progression. Figure 3 diagrammatically represents the data structure for sensemaking processes.

FIGURE 3
Data Structure for Change Readiness Sentiments Sensemaking Processes



I found that these processes could be broadly classified as being based on change progress: *anticipatory* (pre-change) and *confirmatory* (post-change), and the nature of the process: *tacit* (or implicit) and *explicit*. Refer to Figure 4 for the sensemaking processes matrix.

Anticipatory sensemaking occurs before a change (or a change event, assuming a change to be composed of several micro events), and involves being attentive to gossip, rumor, and other

micro pieces of information (Isabella, 1990). Anticipatory sensemaking was referred to by 21% of the respondents (U.S. = 19%; India = 23%).

FIGURE 4
Sensemaking Processes Matrix

Sensemaking: Change Progress

		Anticipatory Sensemaking	Confirmatory Sensemaking
		<u>Sensemaking: Nature</u>	
Explicit Sensemaking		Explicit – Anticipatory	Explicit – Confirmatory
Tacit Sensemaking		Tacit – Anticipatory	Tacit – Confirmatory

An Indian manager believes the change will prove to be a necessity, anticipating that the number of competitors may increase in future.

What you have today as a competition maybe one, two players, but you are going to have ten or eight to ten players coming in the coming years. And what will be key critical is which company is going to come back to the customer, how quickly.

Another Indian manager explains how he expects that his organization will have the necessary capability to implement a proposed change, based on past experiences.

I do not think we will have any problem... We have done it the past... We have the backing of a large Indian multi-national organization and the management wants it.

Confirmatory sensemaking occurs after a change (or a change event). The trigger for confirmatory sensemaking could be aligned with or in conflict with the outcome of the anticipatory sensemaking. Confirmatory sensemaking was referred to by 79% of the respondents (U.S. = 81%; India = 77%).

An American manager concludes the need for the change after having seen how the change resulted in positive organizational outcomes, in this case, the necessary reports, happy employees, and satisfied customers:

It was generating the reports I needed, everybody was happy and my customer never complained. My teams did not have a problem. So the change was needed after all...

A manager concludes about the benefit from the change by reflecting upon the learning experience that has resulted from the change, which they believe will help them when the next change is proposed:

I think just from the learning experience, there's a benefit. Because if this is an indication of things that might come then we'll be more prepared, better prepared next time.

Tacit sensemaking refers to those processes that occur at the individual level based on the implicit knowledge situated within the individual. The information triggering this process is generally private in nature. Past experiences, personal reflections, individual predisposition, deductions from conversations and actions, etc., enable this form of sensemaking. Tacit sensemaking was referred to by 28% of the respondents (U.S. = 24%; India = 33%).

An Indian sales manager working with a heavy engineering firm recalls how he felt the implemented change was not appropriate based on what was presented to him:

After implementation, I felt this is not what we thought; this is quite different from what was presented to us.

A program manager working with a defense contractor gains a sense of efficacy based on his tacit understanding of the people he is working with:

I know the people, I know what they are doing and we know what we are doing so, I think we can make it happen, even in the midst of conflict of not agreeing with the customer, but because of the people, yeah, it is possible.

Explicit sensemaking refers to those processes that occur at the individual level based on external and objective information and events. The information triggering this process is commonly public in nature. Organizational communication, announcements, media releases, reports, public behaviors, etc. enable this form of sensemaking. Explicit sensemaking was referred to by 72% (U.S. = 76%; India = 67%) of the respondents.

A sourcing manager working for a manufacturing firm in India, refers to objective results that were achieved due to the proposed change, and therefore concludes its appropriateness:

Whatever we achieved it was otherwise not possible...Now, I can say it was the right thing to do... Yeah, it had shown positive results...

A manager concludes about the change support when he experiences it first hand:

Yes, when I approached my superiors or the superiors of the superiors to say this topic is going to be discussed in one of the committee meetings and I require a lot of support and immediately three of the directors joined the meeting and supported me.

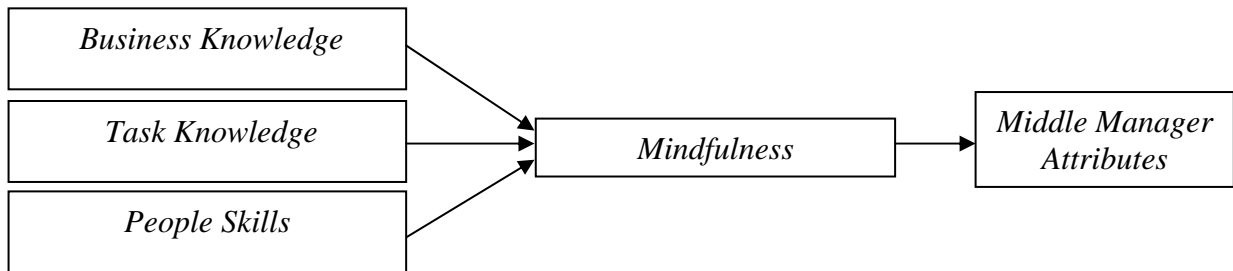
Again, an American manager concludes change valence based on a recent raise that was given:

I've benefited in that I got the largest pay raise than I have ever gotten with the company my first year...

Sensemaking Catalysts

The next set of findings in relation to middle managers' sensemaking concern the conditions that influence it. As explained in the example in the Methods section, I analyzed the same responses; however, here I was looking at middle manager skills that were implied in the sensemaking behavior. For example, when a manager refers to details of the business/industry their organization belonged to, I would code the instance as "General Business Awareness." Similarly, if a manager referred to their relationships with their superiors, and/or subordinates as a sensemaking cue, I would code the response as "people skills." Figure 5 diagrammatically represents the data structure for sensemaking processes.

FIGURE 5
Data Structure for Middle Manager Attributes



Mindfulness. In this study **Mindfulness** is a second-order theme consisting of three first-order concepts: *General Business Awareness*, *Task Knowledge* and *People Skills*. I use the Western view of mindfulness (Langer, 1989; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000), according to which it emphasizes active awareness regarding events external to the individual. According to Langer (2000), mindfulness is "a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context" (p. 220). Mindful middle managers are aware of the broader implications of the change and yet do not lose their focus on day-to-day practices and needs. They tend to proactively and consciously look for the sensemaking cues identified in the

preceding discussion. Managers who are not mindful tend to be overwhelmingly focused on what needs to be done in the short term. While they can be depended upon to meet deadlines and achieve day-to-day goals, their contribution to the organization beyond that is limited.

In a qualitative study that examined the psychological and behavioral characteristics of successful middle managers in making sense of the uncertain situations, Han (2010) found that middle managers displayed a high level of managerial mindfulness. Mindfulness helped managers to maintain order amid chaos, and make thoughtful adaptation in response to uncertainty (Han, 2010). Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) argued that mindfulness “can aid in the detection of early anomalies that can spiral into seemingly impossible outcomes” (p. 92).

The first first-order concept was middle managers’ General Business Awareness: When managers had a better understanding of the overall nature of the organization’s business, they were better placed to interpret the sensemaking cues related to the readiness sentiments. This first-order concept was mentioned by 32% of the respondents (U.S. = 38%; India = 26%). Pappas, Flaherty, & Wooldridge (2004) found that middle managers’ strategic knowledge was positively related to their championing of alternative ideas and synthesizing of new information.

An Indian manager comments how his awareness of business level issues leads him to believe that the proposed change was necessary:

Due to the world recession the markets were going down for our products...we’re not meeting our budgets by selling the existing products So that way if you look, yes we needed to change, we needed to change the products that we dealt in and we definitely needed to change how we worked.

Next, I found that middle managers’ sensemaking of change readiness is influenced by their Task Knowledge: their grasp of the technical and functional details of their work enabled them to evaluate the change proposition and subsequent management actions more rigorously. Task knowledge was mentioned by 34% of the respondents (U.S = 24%; India = 44%).

A project manager in the U.S. refers to his knowledge of his function in identifying the need for the change:

We have shown in every one of the departments of my organization that we can do more with less. That that's possible so it validated the point that we weren't working at our full capacity, because things are still getting done, we are still operating. We may be working a few more hours but it is still getting done.

Finally, I found that the managers' appraisal of change readiness sentiments to be influenced by their People Skills: this primarily refers to their understanding of their subordinates' needs, and capabilities. However, this may also include their relationship with their supervisor, as well as, external stakeholders, such as suppliers and customers, depending on the nature of their jobs. This may involve explicit understanding of skills and abilities, as well as, tacit understanding of attitudes and motivation People skills were evident in 28% (U.S. = 26%; India = 30%) of the respondents.

An Indian project manager refers to his subordinates' knowledge and skills while assessing change efficacy:

...Because here most of the people we have are engineers and the degree wise they are Bachelors or Masters. You know, this is a special skill; so my people, they know about what exactly is needed as a process...

The findings I reported in the preceding section describe the conditions associated with middle manager sensemaking. In the next section, I extend the understanding by proposing a theoretical framework of the sensemaking processes associated with change readiness sentiments as suggested by the data.

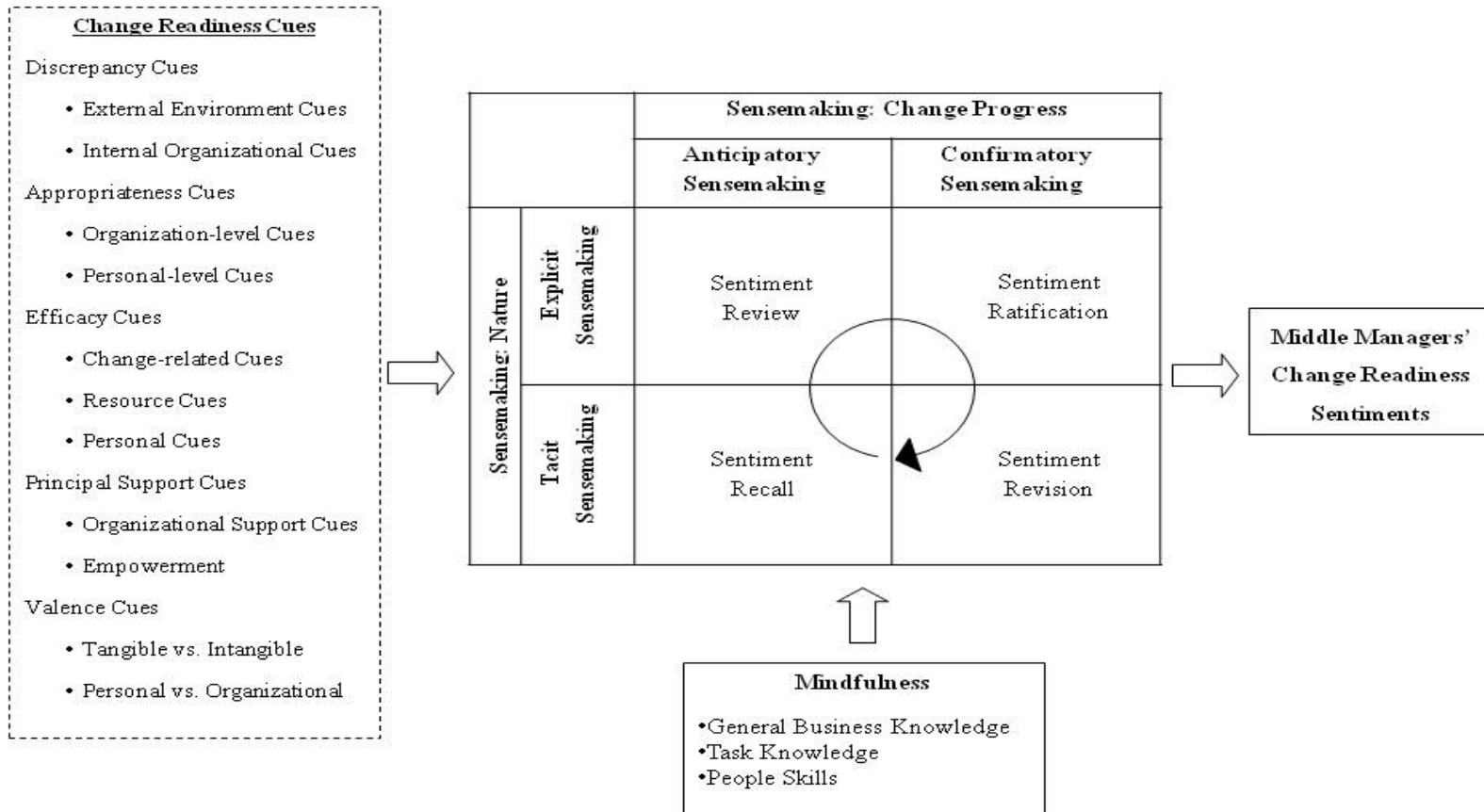
A TEMPORAL MODEL OF CHANGE READINESS SENSEMAKING

According to Gioia and Mehra (1996), schemata are modified in intricate ways out of awareness via assimilation of subtle cues over time. Critical to understanding middle manager sensemaking of change readiness is what I refer to as "a temporal model" (refer to Figure 6):

change readiness sensemaking is a multiphase process that involves tacit and explicit information collection and evaluation across two time phases: anticipatory and confirmatory. According to the model, change readiness sensemaking is essentially a process of schema change, since it involves revising existing schemas. I liken this conceptualization with the “bookkeeping model” of schema change (Rothbart, 1981) which suggests that people are always monitoring confirming and disconfirming events, while constantly comparing between them, and choosing to retain or reject the schema in question. my data suggests that the same situation occurs when middle managers are faced with a change. In order to be ‘change ready’ themselves, they are continuously looking for cues (identified earlier) that feed their sensemaking and resulting schemas about the change. The cues could be explicit (financial indicators, implementation issues) or tacit (felt experience, management will) in nature.

When individuals consider a future course of action, they run it through their minds as if it has already occurred; only then are they able to make sense of possible outcomes (Gioia, 1986). Therefore, according to the model, middle managers *make sense of the change in anticipation* (Isabella, 1990) to give coherence to their internal and external environment, i.e., appraisal of a change within the minds of a middle manager happens even before the actual change starts. Sensemaking regarding any particular change readiness sentiment is initiated through anticipatory sensemaking where an existing schema regarding the sentiment is *recalled*. According to Isabella (1990), the primary activity of managers during anticipatory sensemaking is assembly of all the tidbits of information available (both tacit as well as explicit) into “an interpretive portrait based on speculation and anticipation” (p. 17).

FIGURE 6
A Temporal Model of Middle Manager Sensemaking of Change Readiness Sentiments



When enough information is not available or when the available information is novel (such as change information), managers rely on schemata based on their own practical experiences (Gioia & Mehra, 1996). Given the ambiguity and uncertainty due to lack of enough information, dependence on an existing schema is natural. Such schemata tend to be private, and unknown to others, and are fed primarily by the tacit knowledge contained within the individual typically created through prior (or the latest) change experiences. For example, a restructuring decision may be considered unnecessary (low discrepancy) since the current structure has been working fine. Here, the existing schema about the structure implies ‘if it isn’t broke, do not fix it’.

As time passes or change progresses, more explicit information about the change becomes available. The information may be available through management communication, public media or through personal conversations. Managers rely on schemata that are rational, conscious and objective (Huisman, 2001; Jameson, 2001). As mentioned earlier, this information could be either aligned or in conflict with the recalled schema. In either case, the initial schema is compared with the new information (cues), in a process I refer to as *sentiment review*. Here the manager is still combating uncertainty, and is continually monitoring the status of the belief. They enter a conscious and less automatic sensemaking mode (Brown, 2000). Continuing on the example, here the manager receives explicit information as to how the decision to restructure is justified given the economy is suffering, and revenues are in decline.

Once the review process begins, managers move to the *confirmatory sensemaking* mode. Here, decisions and conclusions are made after an event occurs. In this stage, managers are very consciously looking for explicit information that is evidentiary in nature. They are primarily attentive to actions rather than words. According to Rothbart (1981), “slow accrual of (roughly)

equally weighted disconfirming instances eventually can overwhelm the confirming instances and lead to repudiation of the original belief” (p. 176). Schemas are modified when discrepancies above a certain threshold trigger active reconsideration of prior sense making (Gioia & Mehra, 1996). In my model, the disconfirming instances are caused by explicit information that is more credible in nature (typically actions rather than words). I call this stage *sentiment ratification*. Here the manager has bought into the new belief. In the continuing example, let us say, the manager is informed that a competitor organization has also restructured in order to combat the poor economy. This information regarding need to restructure becomes more persuasive.

In the final stage, the manager internalizes the new change sentiment, and replaces the old schema with a new one. I call this stage as *sentiment revision*. This process is tacit and retrospective in nature. I say retrospective since I believe this stage happens after the outcome of the change event is evident, and is based on the manager revising their schema (the new schema says ‘it may not be broken, but it can still be improved’). What I also propose is that this revised schema now is ready for use for the next change event.

Mindfulness of the middle manager plays an enabling role in the whole process. Highly mindful individuals look for multiple cues, both tacit and explicit, during both anticipatory and confirmatory stages. They actively compare and contrast their existing sentiment and information obtained from the new cues, and then they establish a new level of the readiness sentiment. Their resulting sentiments can be change positive or change negative. When positive, the managers become strong advocates of the proposed change. When negative, they might complain about the change or actively or passively resist it.

I have created two narratives from multiple interviews that will exemplify the preceding discussion. The comments included in the narrative are such that they came from managers who

were at different phases of change implementation, which enables me to add a time dimension to the sensemaking process. In the first narrative, I show how readiness sentiment of appropriateness is appraised (see Table 14), and in the second narrative, I look at how principal support sentiment is appraised (see Table 15).

Implications for Research.

The findings reported in this article make several important contributions to the sensemaking perspective and the change implementation literature. My research extends Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) focus on sensemaking during the change by emphasizing the importance of sensemaking at the middle manager level (Balogun & Johnson, 2004) throughout the implementation process. By identifying a set of sensemaking cues that middle managers refer to when appraising a change, this study extends our current understanding of middle manager sensemaking (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Bartunek, et al., 2006). I argue that change readiness sensemaking is an ongoing process that is highly subjective to the individual.

Several studies have framed change readiness (or resistance) as a dispositional trait of the change recipient (Oreg & Sverdlik, 2011; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999). I posit change readiness sensemaking as a continuing activity (Weick, 1993) for middle managers. The model that emerges from my data analyses posits that middle managers' change readiness is a state, which depends on the amount of information available, stage of the change, and other factors pertinent to them. The meaning of the change alters as managers' readiness sentiments get modified (Bartunek et al., 2006). Readiness sentiments get updated continuously as more cues are available. These cues can be understood both tacitly and explicitly. The temporal model demonstrates the way middle managers' sentiments regarding change readiness change with time and with the nature of cues.

TABLE 3
Sample Narrative 1: Development of Change Readiness Sentiment of Appropriateness

Readiness Sensemaking	Representative Quotations	Remarks
<i>Sentiment Recall</i>	<i>“I think the way it is being run and handled is better, it is running smoothly. I think that clean cut division lines is possibly not the best approach. I think the system we have in place of, you know, ‘this is your account, you manage this, this, this,’ I think that is a much smoother process.”</i>	Change is felt to be not appropriate since current positive experience is anticipated to be threatened
<i>Sentiment Review</i>	<i>“For better customer service....this is what we were told.”</i>	Explicit information (may be communication from management/supervisor) challenges the existing schema, since better customer service is desirable
<i>Sentiment Ratification</i>	<i>“Because we now have a better control of the process. Although I won’t say it is a 100% better from whatever it was, it is definitely a progression.”</i>	Explicit improvement in control is confirmed. This could be either through persuasive communication from management or even the middle managers’ own experience
<i>Sentiment Revision</i>	<i>“And this I believe is one of the core strategy that is going to be there for short while, which I firmly believe that having done this I think we would have done great amount of jobs in terms of making sure that we are able to meet not only the customer needs but we are able to meet the customers customer need.”</i>	Appropriateness is internalized; the revision involves tacit understanding that while current experience is positive, it can still be enhanced

TABLE 4
Sample Narrative 1: Development of Change Readiness Sentiment of Principal Support

Readiness Sensemaking	Representative Quotations	Remarks
<i>Sentiment Recall</i>	<i>“Neither one of those changes were fully embraced because of the cost, because of the expenditures to get there. None of that was fully embraced at the executive level; it really kind of handcuffed us at the middle management level.”</i>	Weak sentiments of support because of lack of executive intent, and expenses involved in previous negative change experiences
<i>Sentiment Review</i>	<i>“The management wants it. It is important that the management wants it and if the management wants it there will be every support.”</i>	Explicit information (may be communication from management) regarding management commitment challenges the existing schema
<i>Sentiment Ratification</i>	<i>“Our Vice President was the sponsor of this scheme. And he used to hold monthly and quarterly reviews and all that. Whenever there was a need of his support, like there was this issue that came out around sometime after this project took off. We found that there were some terminals that did not support the application... some 30, 40 odd terminals So there was a need of replacing them. At that time around Rs. 50,000 a piece he used, so it was a need several hundreds of thousands which was immediately sponsored. So the willingness on the part of management was demonstrated ...”</i>	Explicit willingness to make the change happen is confirmed through top management involvement and decision to fund the necessary costs.
<i>Sentiment Revision</i>	<i>“The culture of this organization is all about change...when the company makes a decision to move in a certain direction I think they do a very good job of supporting it, right? Laying the foundation but more importantly they follow through with it,... right?”</i>	Support sentiment is revised and internalized; the revision involves tacit understanding that when the organization plans a change, it will back it up with necessary resources

The model adds to the existing literature by examining how the change readiness sentiments change as change progresses. Future research can pursue to elaborate on my conceptualization by dedicating themselves to longitudinal case studies, where they can collect periodic information from the middle managers regarding all new developments and information available to them, while simultaneously recording their levels of change readiness sentiments.

Implications for Practice.

The most important take away from this study is acknowledging the significance of middle managers during change implementation. Downsizing middle management appears to be a pet practice among executives (Wysocki, 1995); however, such a policy threatens the organization's ability to be flexible and innovative (Floyd & Woolridge, 1996; Huy, 2001). This study reinforces the importance of middle managers by shedding light on the role on tacit and explicit processes of sensemaking that these managers indulge in during change implementation. Tacit knowledge is not easy to articulate and is stored primarily within the minds of these managers. By losing these managers, and thereby the valuable knowledge resource, organizations face a serious problem (Boiral, 2002). I also emphasize the significance of explicit information made available through communication and actions of top management in directing the readiness sentiment review.

The identification of tacit and explicit sensemaking brings forth multiple areas of practical and academic interest. Tacit sensemaking points out to the knowledge middle managers have by virtue of their closeness to the operating level, the richness of their experience, and value of such knowledge when a change is considered. Explicit sensemaking points out to the fact that well designed change communication and actions can influence middle managers' impression regarding a change and the organization's readiness. Well-framed change communication that is

delivered persuasively can alter existing beliefs. Similarly, management actions such as one of support, or celebrating small wins could result in lasting changes in how middle managers think about change.

The findings of this study will prove valuable to organizations planning a change. The list of cues informs the change planners as to what areas to focus on in order to enhance the change readiness of their middle managers. Top management can highlight such information within the organizational communication channels while explaining the change. The list also highlights various behaviors or actions on behalf of the top management that is read into by the middle managers while making sense of change readiness.

We also bring in individual differences during change by pointing out to middle managers' mindfulness, i.e., their general awareness about what is going on both within the organization and without. Senior managers could use this information in identifying their local change agents/champions by looking for individuals who are more mindful, i.e. have a better understanding of not just their specific tasks, but also about the strategic aspects of the organization.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, the goal of this study was not to provide statistically generalizable conclusions, but to expand our theoretical understanding to benefit change research and practice. Given the lack of solid theoretical understanding and the limited empirical research on change readiness sensemaking, this study was exploratory in nature. However, this study involved identifying patterns and commonalities from a variety of different change implementation experiences (i.e. cases), thereby enhancing its credibility (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, the data for the study were collected in one form, i.e., semi-structured interviews. Other studies (e.g.

Maitlis, 2005; Sonenshein, 2010) have included multiple data sources including relevant documents, observations, other individuals such as superiors and subordinates, citing triangulation objectives. This study was primarily focused on the experiences of the middle manager, not necessarily worrying about checking the veracity of their responses. I tried to make the respondent very comfortable during the actual interview and from the conversational experience that I had, I believe the managers were not being dishonest or reticent about their thoughts and feelings. Moreover, since I was not interested in testing the effectiveness of the managers' thought processes or their subsequent conclusions and decisions, triangulation was not considered relevant.

Finally, the study did not include measurements of outcomes of the sensemaking processes. Future research needs to probe further on the mechanisms by which the above mentioned factors i.e., the various sensemaking cues, and individual influence the sensemaking process interact, and also attempt to ascertain their effects on the process outcome, such as readiness levels, change involvement, both task performance and citizenship behaviors.

CONCLUSION

Implementing change is one of the major responsibilities of middle managers. Given their dual roles, both of a recipient as well as an agent, the dynamics of change at the middle manager level is an interesting area of research. This paper offers insights regarding what is important in the middle managers' minds, when they appraise a change they have been asked to implement. It identified several cues that middle managers look for while appraising a top-down change. It also found that middle managers' sensemaking occurs in two stages – prospective or anticipatory, and retrospective or confirmatory, and that the managers depend on change readiness schemata based on both tacit as well as explicit cues. Finally, the study proposed a four-stage sensemaking

model that I believe extends our current understanding of how managers become change ready.

Future research on change readiness, change management and middle managers could benefit from the same.

PAPER III

FRAMES AND ACTIONS: MIDDLE MANAGERS' SENSEGIVING OF CHANGE

READINESS SENTIMENTS

"If I could get everybody at the plant to look at everything through my eyeballs, I would have a lot of problems licked." A plant manager quoted in *Working* by Studs Terkel (1974: 181).

"Whenever there is a change, I am not always very clear about what it is or how it will be done. So I collect whatever information I can by speaking to my colleagues (peers) and my bosses, and then I explain a customized version to my team, in a very positive way, of course." - An Indian plant manager

"You know the sadness of the event, the people that would be affected, how they would feel, how it would affect their home life, their personal lives; what it meant for our company, our organization and even our own department, what was I going to communicate to these employees to help them better accept the reality of the situation? And although there wasn't anything positive about the decision, I had to communicate it with a positive spin." - An American middle manager

A key responsibility of managers is to persuade their subordinates to direct their efforts toward organizational goals (Cyert & March, 1963). This role of managers becomes particularly significant in times when organizations undergo change. Managers define and maintain change. A key challenge of change lies in gaining employees' willingness to commit to the change effort (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993). Since employees usually suffer most when change is handled badly (Buono & Bowditch, 1989), they often resist organizational change initiatives (Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, & Mullane, 1994). Research on change management has explored various strategies that managers use to reduce employee resistance to organizational change (e.g., Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). One of the oldest and oft referred suggestions is that managers must help 'unfreeze' employee beliefs and motivate them to make the desired changes

(Lewin, 1951). To accomplish this unfreezing, managers engage in sensegiving activities while making the change meaningful for their subordinates (Morgan, Frost, & Pondy, 1983). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) defined *sensegiving* as the process of influencing the sensemaking of others by directed it towards “a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (p. 442). Sensegiving is about influencing (Chia & Holt, 2009) and persuading (Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, & Humphries, 1999). Managers may explain why the change is needed (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999), invite participation in planning a change (Coyle-Shapiro, 1999), or reward change supportive behaviors (Poole, Gioia, & Gray, 1989).

In this study, I attempt to further understand this sensegiving role managers have to perform during change. This study makes a unique contribution by narrowing its focus in three ways. First, I concentrate on middle managers since they play a crucial role during change implementation (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). Their location in the organizational hierarchy puts them in a role of being a “nexus of information” (Floyd & Lane, 2000). They receive instructions from top management, which they have to explain to the operating level. In generic terms, they are required to convert the strategic plans into operational reality. Their proximity to the operating level supervisors and employees enables them to experience the reality of change implementation in a manner that the senior management cannot. Sensegiving research has traditionally focused on top management, although recent studies have also attended to middle managers (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Rouleau, 2005).

Second, I focus on sensegiving associated with communication and development of change readiness sentiments. Change recipients’ readiness sentiments have been posited to be significant during organizational change since the sentiments lead to choosing to either resist or support the change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Change-related attitudes and behaviors of

change recipients are related to both their job performance (Neubert & Cady, 2001), as well as, organizational performance (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003; Robertson, Roberts, & Porras, 1993). According to Eby, Adams, Russell, and Gaby (2000), *change readiness* is the extent to which organizational members perceive that the organization is ready to implement the change. While there have been studies on sensegiving during change (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007), we do not know what managers specifically do when trying to shape change readiness sentiments.

Finally, because sensemaking and sensegiving are intrinsically connected to socio-cultural context (Rouleau, 2005), I examine if middle managers' sensegiving behaviors are influenced by their societal culture and values. Specifically, I examine the similarities and differences in change readiness sensegiving behaviors between Indian and U.S. middle managers.

The primary research question driving this research is: What sensegiving strategies do middle managers employ while they attempt to shape their subordinates change readiness sentiments. Secondly, I am interested in identifying the skills that are pertinent to accomplishing the sensegiving role during organizational change. I believe this study offers meaningful implications for both researchers, as well as, practitioners. According to Kanter, Stein, and Jack (1992), implementing change has become the ultimate managerial responsibility. Identifying the micro details of managerial behavior will help researchers to understand the change process dynamics better leading them to further the research in deeper and wider directions. For practitioners, eliciting the sensegiving and framing strategies and tactics that middle managers employ in creating organizational change readiness might offer them critical insights about the roles the middle managers enact and the skills (creative, emotional, and behavioral) required to successfully accomplish them. Managers will benefit from this paper by

perusing the information in change planning and implementation, and for selection and training of managers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sensegiving

According to Pfeffer, one of the primary tasks of managers is to “provide explanations, rationalizations, and legitimization for the activities undertaken by the organization” (1981: 4). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) refer to this task as *sensegiving*. The term, commonly used in the strategic management literature, refers to persuading others of the appropriateness of strategic objectives (Bartunek, et al., 1999; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dunford & Jones, 2000; Rouleau, 2005). *Sensegiving* refers to the process one uses to influence how others construct meaning (Smith & Plowman, 2010), and is a variant of sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) suggest that sensemaking and sensegiving are sequential processes.

Research on sensegiving is built on the research on sensemaking. While sensemaking deals with how people think, sensegiving involves purposefully trying to change how others think. Bartunek et al. (1999) equated sensegiving with persuasion. *Sensegiving* is an intentional effort to persuade others, where the sender has an intended meaning for a target audience. The intent of sensegiving is seen as providing a viable interpretation of a new reality and to influence targets to adopt it as their own (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Several studies have argued that sensegiving is a critical organizational activity (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dunford & Jones, 2000), particularly among middle managers (Balogun, 2003). Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) found that leaders’ sensegiving was triggered by “complex sensemaking environments—those that were ambiguous and unpredictable and that involved numerous stakeholders with divergent interests” (p. 80). This description aptly depicts an

organizational change scenario. When an organization faces a major change, shared and individual meanings and interpretations are questioned and exposed to reconstruction. While organizational members share actions, activities, moments of conversations, and joint tasks, the meanings people attach to such actions and activities differ widely (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999). Organizational members become unsure of how to interpret the events happening around them, and this uncertainty is magnified if the change includes organizational characteristics they are affectively attached to (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Individuals' perceptions of the characteristics of a change influence the degree to which the change is adopted (Rogers, 2003). People in different organizational levels are likely to interpret change differently (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). Depending on how they interpret and evaluate the proposed change, employees experience emotions and form attitudes and intentions that influence their decision to support (or resist) the change (Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, & Walker, 2007). Under such a situation, managerial sensegiving plays a major role in making the collective transition (Bartunek, et al., 1999; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Managers' sensegiving is expected to influence subordinates' interpretations of the change (Maitlis, 2005). Since all major organizational change tends to be difficult and complex, involving recalibration of priorities and relationships, several researchers have suggested that more attention be paid to the sensegiving processes that aim to justify the change initiative (Fiss & Zajac, 2006).

While much of the literature on sensegiving has focused on top management, only a few studies have attempted to examine how middle managers construct meaning or shape the meaning construction of others (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Rouleau, 2005). However, little attention has been given to the dynamics and nature of sensegiving during organizational change. To address these

shortcomings, in this paper I focus on middle managers as sensegivers, rather than top managers; and I focus on sensegiving during organizational change rather than the generic/everyday sensegiving (Smith, et al., 2010) role of middle managers.

Middle managers. Middle managers occupy an interesting location within the organizational hierarchy. They are typically two or three levels below the CEO (Woolbridge & Floyd, 1990), and one or two levels above operating-level employees (Huy, 2002). They are seen as breaking down top management goals into action plans and individual objectives. They first interpret corporate goals and then translate these strategic plans into everyday work practices. Several researchers have argued that middle managers play important roles during strategic change initiatives (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Currie & Procter, 2005; Huy, 2002). In these studies, middle managers were not the initiators, but rather the recipients of change initiatives articulated typically from the top of the organization.

While their hierarchical position tends to make them less conscious about the organizational strategy (Floyd & Lane, 2000), during change, middle managers play a vital informational role (Floyd & Lane, 2000). They receive instructions from top management, which they have to explain to the operating level. In generic terms, they are required to convert the strategic plans into operational reality. Their proximity to operating level supervisors and employees enables them to experience the realities of change implementation in a manner different from senior management. Ironically, middle managers are seldom involved in planning the change. Consequently, middle managers have to take ownership of a change they did not plan, as well as, sell the change to employees below them. The latter role is decisive since buy in by organizational members is crucial for a change to succeed (Kotter, 1996).

Change sensegiving commonly involves a dynamic environment characterized by lack of information, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Change recipients deal with a constant flow of information about the change from multiple sources and various forms. This deluge of information leads them to an active and conscious sensemaking mode (Brown, 2000) that enables them to decide what their next course of action should be. It is during such situations that middle managers' sensegiving becomes vital. Their proximity to operating employees gives them a better understanding of 'what is important' for their subordinates, and empowers them to suitably present the change information such that their readiness sentiments are favorably developed.

The significance of middle managers' sensegiving notwithstanding, only a few studies have documented the intricacies of middle manager sensegiving behavior by looking at emotions (Huy, 2002), sensemaking (Rouleau, 2005), and everyday sensegiving (Smith, et al., 2010). Save a few studies on employee resistance (Roscigno & Hodson 2004; Knights & McCabe 2000; Tucker 1993), not much is known about the detailed nuances of the interpretive meaning-making processes used by change recipients, as well as, change agents (Kaplan 2008; Lynch 1998), particularly the interpretive and communicative processes used by middle managers. This study examines the sensegiving activities of middle managers as they attempt to frame change related issues for their subordinates. Specifically, this study examines how middle managers influence their subordinates' change readiness sentiments. I believe it will further our understanding of managerial sensegiving, and also strengthen practice through specification of the sensegiving processes.

Change Readiness

Organizational change initiatives may fail due to external and internal reasons. While external reasons involve lack of support from stakeholders, such as, customers or clients, internal reasons include lack of leadership (Tichy & Ulrich, 1984), a mismatch with the existing culture, and lack of support from employees involved in the change (Dent & Galloway-Goldberg, 1999). According to Maitlis and Lawrence (2007), sensegiving plays a crucial role in achieving support and enthusiasm for change because readiness for change is influenced by how change recipients process information (Armenakis & Feild, 1993). Response to a change depends on receptivity of the change in the organization (Kostova & Roth, 2002), and Armenakis and colleagues (1993, 1999) have theorized five sentiments toward a change that combine to create readiness and motivate change support among employees. These sentiments are discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, valence and principal support.

Discrepancy refers to the sentiment regarding whether the change is needed and is represented by feeling there is a difference (discrepancy) between the organization's current state and some desired state (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Discrepancy can be influenced by increased competition, changes in governmental regulations, depressed economic conditions, changes in strategy, and other change triggers (Armenakis et al., 1993).

The sentiment of *appropriateness* focuses on whether the specific change is considered 'right' for the organization. It reflects the answer to the question: "Is this change the right solution to address the existing discrepancy?" It emphasizes the likelihood of addressing the need for change reflected in discrepancy. Change proposals that are arrived upon after careful planning and design based on the organizational context, result in less uncertainty among change recipients (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). When employees see that the proposed change is capable

of addressing the “need for change,” they tend to be more committed towards the change (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006).

Efficacy refers to the sentiments of organizational members regarding their confidence in their ability to cope with change effectively (Bandura, 1977). This mastery is progressive and individuals gradually accumulate more complex skills, increasing their feelings of self-efficacy, while minimizing stress from abandoning the old behaviors. So, while creating readiness for change, one should reinforce employees’ feelings of self-efficacy (Armenakis et al., 1993). Bernerth (2004) proposed that during stressful events, such as organizational change, low self-efficacy presents a negative cyclical relationship in that individuals who judge themselves as incapable of coping with environmental demands will tend to dwell on personal deficiencies and magnify the severity and difficulty of the task/change at hand, thus making it more difficult to change their own behaviors.

Personal valence emphasizes the positive and negative outcomes of change, its intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, and its fairness (that is, it is in our best interest to change). Change recipients are more likely to be committed to a change initiative when the proposed change is easily perceived as personally favorable (Fedor et al., 2006; Novelli, Kirkman, & Shapiro, 1995). When employees believe in the inherent benefits of the proposed change, they reflect a desire to provide support for the change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Finally, *principal support* is the sentiment that management and the organization’s leadership, and peers support the long-term success of the change and are willing to devote resources and attention to that success. In part, it is a major component of an organization-level sense of efficacy and addresses common concerns about the credibility of change efforts. “Is

management serious about this change?” is the key question. Employees may not be willing to change unless they have seen a clear demonstration of support from key organizational leaders.

Change readiness sentiments have guided several case analyses (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al, 2007b). Holt (2002) studied the sentiments in several change recipient samples consisting of organizational members from different levels, and concluded that the five sentiments effectively represented most of their change concerns. Additionally, few other studies have examined the role of the five sentiments in predicting critical change outcomes, both at the organizational, as well as, individual levels. Some studies examined the importance of discrepancy and appropriateness in change scenarios (Armenakis, Bediean, & Niebur, 1979; Cole, Harris, & Bernerth, 2006; Oswald, Mossholder, & Harris, 1994), while others studied the collective role of the five change readiness sentiments (Brown, 2009). The readiness sentiments when examined collectively were found to be positively related to pleasantness associated with change (Harris & Gresch, 2010), as well as, to the affective commitment to change (Brown, 2009). The five change readiness sentiments were associated with employee engagement (Credo et al., 2008) and post-merger organizational identification (Varma & Harris, 2008) during a merger.

Framing. In order to better understand how middle managers attempt to develop change readiness in their teams through sensegiving behaviors, I borrow from the framing perspective in the social movement literature. While framing concepts are mentioned here, they actually emerged during the interpretive research that follows. However, like Nag and Gioia (2012), I chose to peruse the traditional style of presenting a theoretical overview first. However, it should be kept in mind that in this study, the whole idea of frames actually emerged from the study itself while iteratively going back and forth between the data and relevant literature.

Framing emphasizes persuasive communication as the key to successful change (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). It refers to how information and situations are defined, constructed, and presented in order to have a certain impact. Goffman (1974: 21) defined a frame as a “schema of interpretation” that provides a context for understanding information that enables individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label.” Framing involves selecting and highlighting certain aspects of the change.

Sensegiving is about framing (Fiss & Zajac, 2006). Framing is a critical activity in the construction of social reality because it helps shape the perspectives through which people see the world (Hallahan, 1999). Framing essentially involves selection and salience (Entman, 1993). Managers use framing while explaining organizational decisions to other organizational members. Managers are required to communicate their understandings, particularly in the midst of organizational change, in a way that provides their subordinates with adequate workable certainty. Managers are frequently expected to create and develop narrative stories about organizational situations for their subordinates to believe in (Sims, 2003). Using persuasive language and symbols and constructing narratives are some of the sensegiving strategies that managers use (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Information adequacy is not always positively related to employee job satisfaction during change; information should be communicated to employees only when it is carefully designed and delivered purposefully (Zhu, May, & Rosenfeld, 2004).

Framing involves being articulate and persuasive more or less on demand (Fairhurst, 2010). Social movement framing addresses three basic questions: What is the problem and who is responsible (diagnostic framing)?; what are the solutions (prognostic framing)?; and how can action be encouraged (motivational framing)? (Benford & Snow 2000; Snow, et al., 1986).

By employing the concept of framing, I examine how middle managers present an organizationally mandated change to the organizational levels below them. Furthermore, I also examine the relationship between framing and change implementation in the context of cultural differences between middle managers in India and the United States.

India and United States

Differences in perceptions, values, attitudes, and relational systems make the application of standardized managerial systems and practices inappropriate. Managerial knowledge and practices are rooted in the context in which they are applied (Weick, 1995). They reflect attitudes, values, and norms of the society where they have been developed, and might, therefore, be limited in their applicability elsewhere (Michailova, 2000). It seems possible that values associated with national cultures may create climates that are different within the organizations where change is being implemented. Since organizational change is related to a variety of different needs including social and socio-psychological needs, change management approaches could be localized (Michailova, 2000).

Previous research suggests that there are clear cultural distinctions between India and the United States (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). India and the United States differed significantly in terms of long-term orientation, power distance, and individualism (Hofstede, 1994). United States is considered a short-term orientation culture whereas India is considered a long-term orientation culture (Hofstede, 1994). India scored significantly higher than the United States in terms of power distance. While United States is classified as a highly individualistic culture, India is considered a collectivistic culture. While it is usual to look for differences, I was more interested in looking if there were any commonalities between the two groups, and I hope that

developing a framework using data from the two distinct cultures would be more universally applicable.

In summary, the research questions driving this study are

1. How do middle managers accomplish the sensegiving process, specifically focusing on the five change readiness sentiments?
2. Specifically, what sources and processes do middle managers resort to during sensegiving?
3. What is common among the sensegiving processes middle managers of Indian and U.S. organizations, the cultural influences notwithstanding?

METHODS

This study began with a review of relevant literature to determine if there were studies regarding sensegiving by middle managers. While a few studies about middle managers as sensegivers were found, none specifically focused on creating change readiness. I chose a qualitative design since such an approach to studying change provides rich and compelling insights into how and why change unfolds in organizations and its impacts at various levels (Gray, Stensaker, & Jansen, 2010). Using an inductive approach, I interviewed middle managers who were involved in implementation of a strategic change. These interviewed managers were at least two levels above the operating staff and at least two levels below the CEO. Inductive research strategies provided the best lens for this research to unearth the nuances of middle managers' sensegiving behaviors. However, my inquiry used the change readiness sentiments as an organizing framework, that is, I focus on how middle managers gave sense of the readiness sentiments to organizational levels below them.

Sample

I used a purposeful sampling strategy to identify prospective participants. Such a method helps in creating a sample that is information-rich and “manifest the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 243). The participants of the study were selected using the following criteria:

1. Middle managers who held exempt-status and were at least two levels below the CEO, and at least two levels above the operating level employees;
2. The managers were involved in (or had been involved in the last 8-12 months) in implementing a change that was
 - a. Organizationally mandated, and
 - b. Was not initiated by them

I included middle managers from the United States and India to examine if there were any commonalities in middle managers’ sensegiving, the difference in cultures notwithstanding and whether a broader unified understanding work. I relied on two different processes for identifying participants in the United States and India. For the U.S. sample, I contacted 60 current students of an Executive MBA program of a public university in the southeastern part of the United States. I requested them to participate in my study or recommend potential candidates who satisfied the necessary conditions (Refer to Appendix A for the invitation to participate). Of the 60 individuals sent the email soliciting participation in the research, 24 (40%) responded. Among the 24, 14 individuals agreed to be interviewed themselves; the other 10 held very senior positions within their organizations, and nominated a total of 32 middle managers from their organization, as well as, organizations within their network. For example, one individual invited managers from his client organization to participate. Phone contacts of these managers were communicated through email and phone. I contacted these managers over the telephone. Of the

32 middle managers nominated, 26 agreed to participate, and set up suitable meeting times.

Overall, a total of 40 U.S. participants were identified and interviewed from 21 organizations belonging to 11 industries. Overall, a total of 40 U.S. participants across 21 companies and 11 industries were identified and interviewed (the average number of respondents per company was 1.90).

Table 1 describes the final sample of U.S. managers were interviewed.

For the Indian sample, I used my personal network, developed during the several years of working in the industry, to identify prospective individuals, typically senior managers, who could facilitate the data collection. Of the 23 such senior managers I contacted (Refer to Appendix B), 19 agreed to participate. Among the 19, 17 organizations ultimately were included in the sample. The other two could not be included due to scheduling problems. Of the 17, 10 of the senior managers provided email addresses of 28 prospective middle managers (of which 21 agreed; refer to Appendix C for the invite), four gave telephone contacts of 16 middle managers (of which 11 agreed), and the remaining three had talked to the middle managers (8 in number) themselves, set up appointments, and arranged for the interviews. Finally, a total of 40 managers from 17 companies and 9 industries were interviewed (the average number of respondents per company was 2.35).

The 80 managers comprising the final sample represented various functions including engineering (U.S.: 20%; India: 20%), sales/marketing (U.S.: 7.5%; India: 10%), human resource management (U.S.: 5%; India: 10%), general management (U.S.: 15%; India: 7.5%), finance (U.S.: 5%; India: 20%), technology (U.S.: 17.5%; India: 12.5%), and operations (U.S.: 30%; India: 20%) . The U.S. sample was 78% male, and the Indian sample was 85% male. All the participants had undergraduate degrees, over half (U.S.: 62%; India: 58%) had a master's degree

(an MBA or other), and one Indian manager had a Ph.D. The work experience of the U.S. sample ranged from 11 to 38 years ($M = 21.8$, $SD = 6.8$). For the Indian managers, work experience ranged from 7 to 34 years ($M = 19.7$, $SD = 6.4$). A more detailed list of the samples is given in Tables 1 and 2.

Data Collection

I decided to use semi-structured interviews for my data collection. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a semi-structured format is suited when the interviewer's pursuit is exploratory in nature. Moreover, semi-structured interviews enable researchers to retain some control over the process while allowing respondents to openly discuss their experiences. In this study, the interviewees were probed to describe their experiences regarding either an ongoing or a recently implemented change. The choice of the change discussed was left entirely to the middle manager respondents. Allowing contact persons to select the cases helped to ensure that participants would be cooperative (Nutt, 1986). When the managers offered several options, change instances that added diversity to the database, in terms of case types, were selected.

At the beginning of the interview, all participants (except those interviewed over the telephone) signed an informed consent document and gave permission to have the interviews audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The interviewees were guaranteed that the information obtained would be secured in a non-identifiable manner and that the recordings would be deleted once transcribed. All participants were asked to talk about a recent organizational change that they were involved in but were not responsible for initiation, that is, all of the changes were organizationally mandated and were top-down initiatives. Therefore, each interview started with the respondents offering a description of the change. The range of changes described included restructuring (U.S.: 15%; India: 40%), change in leadership (U.S.:

10%; 5%), process improvement (U.S.: 15%; India: 37.5%), downsizing (U.S.: 17.5%), technology change (U.S.: 22.5%; India: 12.5%), and merger (U.S.: 20%; India: 5%).

TABLE 1
U.S. Sample Description

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
US1	Head - IT	Education 1	Technology Change	Masters - Engg	23
US2	W/H Manager	Logistics 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	18
US3	W/H Manager	Logistics 1	Downsizing	MBA	15
US4	Program Head	Education 1	IT Change	MBA	22
US5	National Sales Manager	Industrial Products 1	Restructuring	MBA	32
US6	Manager - Clinical Practices	Health care 1	Info Sys Change	MBA	17
US7	Project Manager	Manufacturing 1	Project Shutdown	Masters - Engg	28
US8	Director, Rehab Specialty	Health care 2	Efficiency Improvement	MBA	33
US9	Sales Manager	Manufacturing 2	CRM Implementation	MBA	16
US10	VP - Branch Technology	Banking 1	Restructuring	MBA	13
US11	Area Manager, Service	Telecommunications 1	Merger	MBA	22
US12	Asst. Manager - Operations	Telecommunications 1	Merger	Undergraduate	23
US13	Manager - Call Center	Telecommunications 1	Leadership Change	Undergraduate	28
US14	Plant Manager	Contract Services 1	Downsizing	Undergraduate	25
US15	Service Manager	Contract Services 1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	18
US16	Manager - Finance	Contract Services 1	Process Improvement	MBA	11
US17	Senior Project Manager	Contract Services 2	Downsizing	Undergraduate	23
US18	Manager, Network	Hospices 1	Leadership Change	MBA	20
US19	Sr. Manager - Operations	Hospices 1	Info Sys Change	Undergraduate	22
US20	VP, Clinical Services	Hospices 1	ERS Implementation	Masters - Pharmacy	26

TABLE 1 (continued)

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
US21	Dy. Chief - Information	Banking 2	Merger	Masters - Engg	18
US22	Director - Financial Aid	Education 2	Regulatory Change	Undergraduate	36
US23	National Account Director	Health care 3	Restructuring	MBA	23
US24	Principal - Consulting	Technology 1	IT Change	MBA	18
US25	Plant Manager	Manufacturing 2	Efficiency Improvement	Undergraduate	15
US26	General Manager	Manufacturing 3	Merger	Undergraduate	30
US27	Contract Manager	Technology 2	Customer Requirement	Masters - Engg	30
US28	Program Manager	Technology 2	Quality Program	Masters - Engg	38
US29	Director, Contracts and	Technology 2	Acquisition	Undergraduate	14
US30	Project Manager	Technology 3	Leadership Change	Masters - Engg	15
US31	Manager - Business	Technology 3	Acquisition	Undergraduate	16
US32	Manager, Software Solutions	Technology 3	Restructuring	Masters - MIS	11
US33	Manager - Data Management	Technology 4	Process Improvement	Masters - MIS	33
US34	Program Manager	Technology 4	Leadership Change	Undergraduate	17
US35	HR Manager	Manufacturing 4	Downsizing	Undergraduate	20
US36	Manager - Business	Technology 3	Quality Program	Undergraduate	30
US37	Principal	Technology 3	Sourcing Strategy Change	MBA	18
US38	Program Director	Pharmaceutical 1	Merger	MBA	20
US39	Manager - Operations	Retail 1	Closure of Facility	MBA	19
US40	Head - Technology	Technology 5	Joint Venture	MBA	24

TABLE 2
Description of the Indian Sample

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Type</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
I1	Senior Sales Manager	Construction Equipment 1	Restructuring	Undergraduate	25
I2	Head - SCM	Construction Equipment 2	Process Improvement	MBA	17
I3	Head - Improvement Group	Construction Equipment 2	Process Improvement	MBA	15
I4	Head - CAD/PLM	Construction Equipment 2	Efficiency Gain	Undergraduate	25
I5	Sr. Manager - Safety	Construction Equipment 1	New Process	Undergraduate	10
I6	Head - Civil Projects	Heavy Engineering 1	Change in Culture	Undergraduate	34
I7	Head - New Product	Heavy Engineering 1	Relocation	Undergraduate	16
I8	Manager - Customer	Heavy Engineering 1	Efficiency Gain	Undergraduate	25
I9	Manager - Materials	Manufacturing 1	Information System	MBA	17
I10	AGM - Testing	Automotive 1	New Process	Masters -Engg	20
I11	Manager - Design	Automotive 1	New Process	Undergraduate	25
I12	AGM - Product Dev	Automotive 1	New Process	PhD - Engineering	22
I13	Divisional Mgr - Product Dev	Automotive 1	New Process	Undergraduate	15
I14	AGM - Product Dev	Automotive 2	New Process	Undergraduate	22
I15	DGM - Product Development	Automotive 2	New Process	Masters -Engg	31
I16	Senior Manager - Product	Automotive 2	New Role	Undergraduate	14
I17	Sr. Manager - HR	Manufacturing 2	Relocation	MBA	25
I18	Manager - Finance	Manufacturing 2	New Process	Masters - Finance	12
I19	Dy. CFO	Chemicals 1	IT Implementation	MBA	18
I20	Head Strategy	Consumer Durables 1	Restructuring	MBA	13

TABLE 2 (continued)

<i>Interviewee No.</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Change Details</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Experience</i>
I21	Manager - Rural Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	13
I22	Manager - Sales	Manufacturing	Restructuring	MBA	17
I23	DGM - Sourcing	Manufacturing	New CEO	MBA	26
I24	Head - Operations	Manufacturing	Restructuring	MBA	18
I25	Head - Quality	Manufacturing	Restructuring	Undergraduate	33
I26	Head - Human Resources	Manufacturing	Restructuring	MBA	16
I27	Dy. Manager - Costing	Manufacturing	New CEO	Masters - Finance	12
I28	Manager - HR	IT	Restructuring	MBA	09
I29	Project Manager	IT	Restructuring	Undergraduate	16
I30	Assistant Manager - HR	IT	Restructuring	MBA	08
I31	Manager, Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	15
I32	Manager, Finance	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	15
I33	AGM - Marketing	Automotive	New Product	MBA	17
I34	Sr. Branch Mgr - Power	Construction	Restructuring	Undergraduate	24
I35	Sr. Manager - ERP	Power	ERP Implementation	Undergraduate	18
I36	DGM - ERP	Power	ERP Implementation	Undergraduate	26
I37	DGM - Finance	Power	ERP Implementation	MBA	21
I38	Manager - Retail Products	Financial Services	Restructuring	MBA	18
I39	Project Manager	IT	Process Improvement	Undergraduate	23
I40	Manager - Operations	Call Center	Process Improvement	MBA	07

I created a semi-structured interview protocol (Refer to Appendix D) to elicit experiences and descriptions about how middle managers communicated to their subordinates while attempting to create change readiness. The interviews began with asking the respondents to tell me about their job. I then asked them to “Tell me about some of the recent changes that have occurred in your organization? Which ones affected you and your subordinates the most?” This question was used to identify a specific change that would be the focus of the remainder of the interview. The respondents were asked to choose a change that they felt comfortable to talk about. Typically, the selection was based on the significance of the change, as well as, its recency.

Across the 80 respondents, the range of changes described included restructuring (U.S.: 15%; India: 40%), change in leadership (U.S.: 10%; 5%), process improvement (U.S.: 15%; India: 37.5%), downsizing (U.S.: 17.5%), technology change (U.S.: 22.5%; India: 12.5%), and merger (U.S.: 20%; India: 5%).

After establishing the focal change with each respondent, a set of open-ended questions was used to examine the initial change concerns they experienced. Specifically, respondents explained how they learned about the change, what initial thoughts ran through their minds upon hearing, and what they felt good about and what concerned them. Their responses were content analyzed used to test the adequacy of the five change sentiments articulated by Armenakis et al. (1993, 1999). This inquiry provided support for the five sentiment model and is the focus of paper 1 in this dissertation.

Next, a set of questions regarding how the managers made sense of their change readiness sentiments was asked. Specifically, I asked them about the different information

sources they looked at and processes they used while appraising the change. This line of questioning is the subject of paper 2 in this dissertation.

Finally, I asked a set of questions regarding how the managers attempted to shape their subordinates' change sentiments. The results of this line of questioning provided data for this study. My questions were broad and included inquiries such as:

- a. Did you communicate the need for the change (*discrepancy*) to your subordinates? How did you do that? How did they react? What did you do then?
- b. Did you talk about the appropriateness of the change (*appropriateness*) to your subordinates? How did you do that? How did they react? What did you do then?
- c. Did you talk about capability issues (*efficacy*) to your subordinates? How did you do that? How did they react? What did you do then?
- d. Did you talk about availability of support (*principal support*) to your subordinates? How did you do that? How did they react? What did you do then?
- e. Did you explain the benefits of the change (*valence*) to your subordinates? How did you do that? How did they react? What did you do then?

The interviews were conducted both onsite, as well as, over the telephone. Each interview began with a small warm up conversation about the purpose of the interview and the research questions. However, care was taken to ensure that the participants were in no way primed about any conceptual reference. They were invited to speak freely and in details about their thoughts and behaviors. All the managers received a promised confidentiality and anonymity. All the interviews except five were conducted in person. Five interviews (all of them in the U.S.) were conducted over the telephone since the managers were traveling. Interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 50 to 85 minutes. A verbatim transcription of the interviews was created in

the form of a document that exceeded 1200 pages, of which about 420 pages of transcribed data were analyzed for this study.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, I followed the guidelines for naturalistic enquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and constant comparison techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These methods have been posited to enable rigorous collection and analysis of qualitative data they enable identification of themes and dimensions from the participants' responses (Corley & Gioia, 2004). They also offer opportunities for identifying themes and aggregate dimensions (Smith et al, 2010).

In the first phase of the analysis, I read the transcripts from each interview, looking for initial organizing ideas, and in the process tried to 'hear' what the managers said. I pondered on the broader thoughts presented in the data and identified initial themes. To systematize the data coding, I used ATLAS.ti software that enabled me to not only record each sentence by theme but also cross-reference each sentence later. I then constructed a file for each of the five major change readiness sentiments as well as for each of my sample type, that is, Indian and U.S. managers, consisting of the quotes assigned to that theme. These files were named accordingly, e.g. Sensegiving_Discrepancy_Indian, Sensegiving_Efficacy_US, etc. These became my primary data files for my subsequent analyses.

The next step in this process was coding the output files from the previous operation. The grounded theory approach has a hierarchy of coding types: open, axial, and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) posited that open and axial coding procedures are to enable the analyst to compare incident to incident, incident to personal experience, and incident to the literature. Open coding is the analytic process through which concepts are identified (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These concepts become the basic units of analysis (Corbin & Strauss,

1990). Open coding involves line-by-line examination of text to identify ideas, thoughts, and meanings. Individual responses were broken down into units containing one action (e.g. “called a team-meeting”). While open coding, I kept an open mind and tried to figure out “how much is packed into small bits of data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 65). I considered the range of plausible meanings and avoided making quick interpretations about the data. This process involved line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts to break apart the interviews into small units (Charmaz, 2006). Atlas.ti enables the coder to code either in-vivo (verbatim from text) or open (independent terms based on coders’ discretion). Once a code is generated (open or in-vivo), it is stored in the program, and it automatically becomes available as a list for subsequent use when the coder wants to reuse the label.

My focus while identifying and developing first order concepts was to identify key issues including the content of sensegiving of change readiness sentiments, specific strategy (frame or action) used, and manager skills that might be relevant to the process. Open coding was conducted at two levels. On one hand, when my focus was to identify the readiness sentiment specific frames, I created codes that were specific to the given sentiment. In this case my data set was all the responses to the specific sentiment related questions. When my focus was to identify middle manager characteristics that seemed pertinent to the sensegiving role, I created codes across the five sentiments. Here, my data set included all the responses to all the questions. For example, while referring to how he gave sense of the principal support sentiment, an Indian middle manager involved in implementation of a new policy comments:

Basically, I call in team meetings with special directors (senior management) being present and then explain the things to my team. The presence of senior management members gives the team members the idea that management is committed and it generates some sort of support from them. I go on telling them that this is your job, that’s it.

Multiple codes were applied to this response, including *call meetings, involve senior management, explain, exhibit support, and refer to job*. As I read the text, I had to switch between using existing codes versus creating new codes. In this process, I saw the meanings of codes either expand or shrink depending on the selected text. This is consistent with the constant comparison method, where according to Glaser and Strauss (1999), “while coding an incident for a category, [researchers] compare it with previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (p.106).

The third step in my analysis was to categorize the concepts of open coding into *axial* categories. Axial categorization begins “the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.124). Here, I looked for commonality in the codes to generate second-order themes. In Atlas.ti, axial coding is done by developing categories using the Family Manager function, where codes can be grouped together into a family. Axial coding was done in two phases. In Phase 1, I focused on sensegiving frames and strategies. For each readiness sentiment, I reviewed the entire list of codes examining for similarities, removing duplicates, and checking for redundancy. Then, I created second-order themes that captured several first-order codes. In Phase 2, I focused across readiness sentiments looking for (a) similarities in strategies, as well as (b) middle manager characteristics and abilities that influenced a chosen sensegiving behavior. For example, I created a family named Everyday Action to capture all the actions that middle managers performed that involved minimal investment yet sent out a message that included the following first order codes: “attend meetings,” “use of language,” and “walk the talk.” These codes have been applied to sensegiving instances for sentiments of efficacy, support, and valence. Creating families enables one to collate data better, and saves a great deal of time. Again, the process of putting codes into code

families was iterative. The process of axial coding established three key factors in the data: sensegiving frames, sensegiving tactics and strategies, and middle manager skills.

Finally, during selective coding I focused on answering my research questions, identifying the micro processes of middle manager sensemaking of change readiness. Selective coding is the process used to identify the thematic storyline that emerges from integration of concepts discovered through open and axial coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is a unifying process where the data are integrated into a meaningful whole that is intended to be a set of interrelated concepts forming a theoretical framework or model. As I reviewed these major categories, and their subcategories (codes), I attempted to look at how they were related to each other. A model of middle manager sensegiving of change readiness began to emerge from the data.

RESULTS

The research questions that drove the study ask how middle managers give sense of change readiness when faced with the task of implementing a change proposed and mandated by management. My analysis of sensegiving in the 80 cases led me to a distinct set of strategies and factors of middle manager sensemaking. Every strategy was not pursued at every instance for sensegiving to occur; however, each strategy and factor seemed to individually influence the sensegiving process. In the sections that follow, I first report the various sensegiving tactics, the frames, and actions that encompass the sensegiving process. The structure of the results are shown in Figures 1 and 2 described below.

Figure 1 shows the data structure for the sensegiving frames and strategies. The first-order concepts are the various sensegiving frames that middle managers used. Frames are the logic or schemas that define the core of sentiment sensegiving. The second-order themes are the

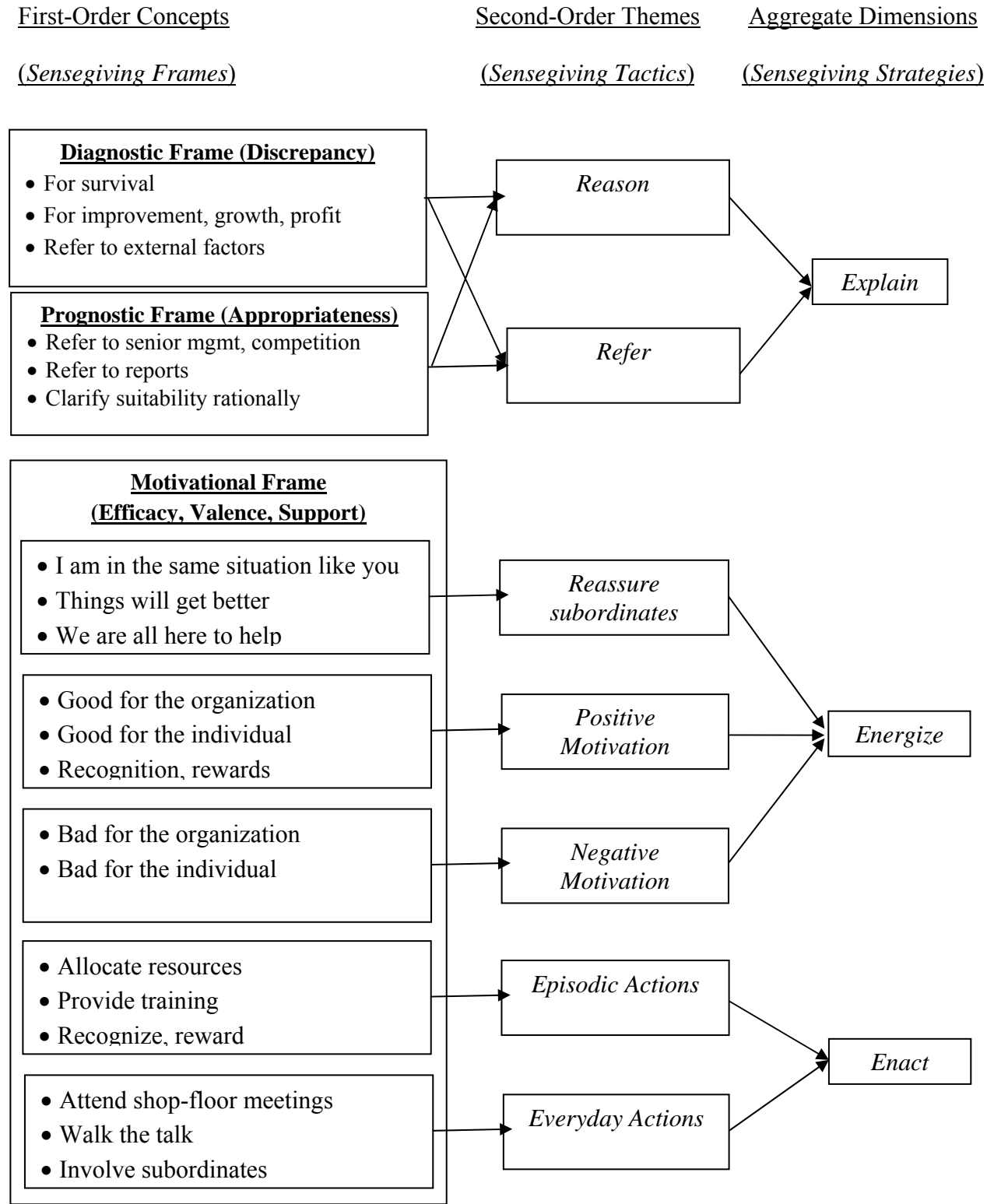
sensegiving tactics that middle managers used while communicating the frames. Aggregate dimensions are sensegiving strategies formed by combining the sensegiving tactics. For example, when sensegiving discrepancy, middle managers *reason* using diagnostic frames (what is the problem) that typically explained change as a need for the organization to survive the business environment (do or die). Also, they may *reason* using prognostic frames that identify the change as a solution for an internal problem, that when implemented will improve processes, and or market performance. Reasoning is a part of the sensegiving strategy called *Explain* that also includes another second order theme, *refer*.

Sensegiving Frames and Strategies Actions

I found middle managers became involved in framing change readiness sentiments by using three broad sensegiving strategies, which I refer to as Explain, Energize, and Enact.

Explain. Employees are often unaware about the business reasons behind a proposed change. Middle managers were responsible for clarifying to employees what the change meant. To build commitment for implementing these changes, middle managers communicated the whys and wherefores regarding the change and how change outcomes will improve life at the organizational and individual levels. Explaining involves convincing subordinates through rational cognitive reasoning. Middle managers' role as communicators increases significantly during organizational change (Huy, 2001). First, they must gain clarity regarding the nature and dimension of change. Then they must translate their understanding in a manner that makes sense to their subordinates. Explaining was used in communicating readiness sentiments of discrepancy and appropriateness.

FIGURE 1
Final Data Structure Concerning Sensegiving Frames and Strategies



Middle managers used *diagnostic frames* when communicating change discrepancy. Diagnostic framing identifies some condition as problematic and in need of improvement and also casts blame for the situation—“it involves casting others into the role identities of villain, culprit, or antagonist” (Hunt, Benford, & Snow, 1994: 191). The core of the diagnostic frame is identification of the problem, but perhaps more importantly, identification of the cause of the condition (i.e., who or what is to blame). This attribution of causality or blame provides a rationale for change as well as a target for change efforts.

Once the need was communicated, middle managers use *prognostic frames* while explaining the appropriateness of the change. Prognostic framing lays out what needs to be done to resolve the problem communicated in the diagnostic frame. It “involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 616). In other words, after agreement is reached in terms of what is wrong and who or what is at fault, it is necessary to agree on what needs to be done. Prognostic framing identifies the course of action required to resolve the problem or condition. While diagnostic framing identifies the target or goal of action, prognostic framing identifies the strategy and tactics and targets by which the change may be accomplished.

Explaining of discrepancy and appropriateness consists of two sub-strategies or tactics: (a) reason and (b) refer.

Middle managers communicate information regarding the need for and suitability of the change in a manner that was rational, as well as, reasonable. Communicating a rationale for the change is important (Brockner, 2002). This is evident in the following comment:

Instead of just bombarding them, saying we ARE going to do this because we HAVE TO, I try to explain. Instead of being a dictator and saying you are going to do it this way because I know the best, I solicit their feedback. I ask them, ‘why have you done it this way (the old way) for so long? Why does it work? Why

not?'; And, then I show them how the new process is really making a difference, why it is more efficient... Again it's trying to get them to understand and get their input, so they feel like it's their decision and their change and not just mine. (A U.S. plant manager on explaining the need for a new manufacturing process)

Middle managers reason using frames, such as, survival, efficiency, growth and profitability when explaining the need for the change. For example, an Indian testing manager working for an automotive company, enumerated the benefits to be had by perusing a new product development process:

I point out all the benefits to be had and where we are better in the current system, where we'll be better, where the process is better, where we'll be more robust, where the quality will be better.

Similarly, a finance manager working for an Indian bank, listed the positive effects of a new proposed organizational structure, when responding to his subordinates' queries.

Recently four or five guys called me up, I think their subordinates must have called them up... So I told them this is better for the organization because of these reasons... I just mentioned issues like synergy among the departments, collection will be better, moreover, it will be more of an open kind of environment to work.

On some occasions middle managers presented the need for change as the only option available, without which survival of the organization or workgroup could be brought to question. For example, a program manager working for a defense contractor, called upon his subordinates to identify areas where his team must cut costs, without which the team faces losing the contract, and therefore, their jobs.

They participated and I encouraged their participation in deciding across the organization where we could afford to take this cuts... It was not just one team that was singled out, it was several teams and everybody had to pay a price, so you had to remind that for the sake of the organization and for the sake of keeping the contract that we had, we had to find a way to do this.

The second tactic middle managers employed when explaining the need and suitability of the change involved referring to external entities. Typically, this tactic is used as a follow-up to the reasoning tactic. They choose to refer to senior management, vision of the organization,

competitors' actions, and technical reports in the hope of reinforcing the credibility of the message. For example, a project manager of an Indian software development company framed the suitability of the proposed restructuring by explaining that most of their competitors had already undergone a similar change. He noted

Most of the companies are following this policy or process. For example, all your software development companies, they are doing it, they are appointing people whenever there is a requirement of projects, when the project is completed they are redeployed.

Likewise, a product development manager emphasize that someone belonging to senior management was championing the proposed change, and, therefore, it would be the right thing to do.

We got this news from our Executive Director (ED) at that time. So we in our team meeting we emphasized on, you know, everybody has to support the ED.

An Indian human resource manager, who works for a manufacturer of industrial products, referred to marketing reports in presenting the discrepancy between what their plants produced and what competitors did.

I could not force this to anybody okay, but look up in such a way that what the other companies are doing and where are we against those companies... so I had taken some reports from many sources like marketing team on what the competitors are doing and their products....I also gathered information various stores regarding our sales, so this input I had from the market...I took information from this people also and said that our plants are in these level, others are in these level, so we need to definitely come to that level in meeting the customers' demands.

Similarly, a U.S. sales manager, working for a manufacturer of consumer durables, referred to a reputed publication, while justifying a proposed change in their information technology systems.

I actually had done some research and had a Harvard Business Review article on organizations that had implemented the same type of program. I brought the copy to work, and actually provided the guys with the article...I provided them with the

article and showed them how some of our competitors had gone through in a similar exercise.

Energize. Change management is seldom a purely rational activity (Clarke, Hope-Heilley, & Kelleher, 2007). Dealing with change is an emotional process, with its own tasks and stages (James & Arroba, 1999: 71). Emotions influence what environmental signals and cues people focus on, how they interpret those signals, and how well they will act on those interpretations (Bechara & Damasio, 2005; Hodgkinson & Healey 2008). Again, when faced with uncertainty (as is typical during organization change), individuals refer to their affective states as additional information when making decisions whether to support the change or not (Elfenbein, 2007; Schwarz & Clore, 2003, 2007). In addition to simply explain the merits of the change, middle managers also try to emotionally connect with their subordinates. Middle managers are likely to be more attuned to their subordinates' emotional needs since they are closer to their employees (Huy, 2002). They are found to use *motivational frames* when sensegiving readiness sentiments of efficacy, personal valence, and principal support.

Motivational framing provides forceful reasons to undertake this resolution—it “entails the social construction and avowal of motives and identities of protagonists” (Hunt et al., 1994: 191). Motivational framing combines the sense of agency with the emotional salience of the issue. Motivational framing provides “the ‘heat’ that distinguishes social movements” from other institutions or ideas (Taylor, 1995: 227). While diagnostic and prognostic framing provide the analysis and direction, it is motivational framing that inspires the translation of ideas into action and stimulates and sustains participation in the movement. Motivational framing urges people into action by convincing them “to engage in collective action and sustain their participation” (Benford & Snow, 2000:617). The motivational frames that middle managers used for change

readiness sensegiving were found to be of three types – *reassurance frames*, *positive motivation frames*, and *negative motivation frames*.

Managers interviewed in the study were sensitive to the excess stress placed on individuals by the change initiatives. In order to mitigate uncertainty due to change, they used *reassurances* as a motivating tactic. Some people are more affected by change projects than others; that leads to lots of fear-generating speculation. One common way of allaying the fear and uncertainty, was to communicate ‘your situation is not unique, I am in the same situation’ or ‘relax, things will get better.’ Middle managers sought to lower unpleasant/low-activation feelings of disappointment and fatigue of their subordinates by sharing their state of affairs.

Under the severe constraints of time and resources that often prompt the need for major change, effective emotion managers try first to calm their highly agitated employees before trying to elicit enthusiastic support for change. For example, a senior operations manager, who works for a hospice in the United States, assured the employees of all the help that might be needed in getting the employees to speed with the new medical records system:

We kept reassuring them that we were available and that the software support folks were available to help them when they faced issues... When we actually did roll the program out, and there was a lot of back office information that had to be put in, we had our own little training sessions, one on one.

Similarly, an Indian sales manager working for a construction equipment manufacturer offer to help his subordinates, whenever they faced a problem:

I told them if you face any problem, you call me. I can discuss the matter with you, no issues.

Another common way of reassuring among middle managers was communicating the “I am no different” message. Whether it was fear of uncertainty, lack of support, or doubts of capability, managers put their subordinates at ease by spelling out that “all of them were in the

same boat.” An Indian operations manager working for a manufacturer of power equipment echoed a similar sentiment

You need to tell the people that, yes, you were concerned about it; you were not taking that lightly and you were trying to communicate something that probably he’s not able to understand as of now, okay?...Then you need to emphasize that, ‘yes, you are not the only victim...you are not the only one. All of us here have similar concerns...This is happening all across the organization and we at the head office also have the same kind of things happening here also.’

Similarly, a U.S. clinical practices manager confessed that he was not aware of the details of the proposed change, and that they should wait before making judgments.

I told them it will be worth our effort and time to remain positive and to move forward with the system...we need to wait and see before we make any true judgment...I think they respected that advice. They seemed pretty satisfied with the fact that I was honest to say that this is unknown for you, and it’s unknown for me too.

The second energizing tactics middle managers resorted to was offering *positive motivation* through rhetoric as well as inducements. Positive motivational frames typically refer to why the change was the right one (appropriateness), how the specific individual (or group) would benefit (personal valence), or give out a sense of support to build subordinates’ efficacy sentiments. People need an incentive for the added work and disruptions that change requires. Employees with abundant positive inducements experience positive emotions during change (Frederickson, 2001) and display high levels of commitment to change (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012).

A common motivational frame used for positive motivation was that the change was good for the organization. In other words, there were indirect benefits to be gained, if the change were implemented successfully. An Indian manager who heads the design function of an automotive manufacturer stressed the ways in which a proposed change (a new product development system) could be beneficial to the organization:

I pointed out all the benefits to be had and where we are better in the current system, where we'll be better, where the process is better, where we'll be more robust, where the quality will be better.

Similarly, a U.S. business development manager working for a technology firm motivated his subordinate by listing the benefits for the organization and relating it to how that, in turn, would benefit the individual

I also told him it's a great opportunity for all of us because when our business is increasing, your position, your level also will be moved; it is not saturated, your opportunity will be better, within a short time you will be product manager, within a short period of time you will be sales manager.

Middle managers also positively motivated their subordinates using rewards and recognition when possible. A U.S. plant manager recollected how he was forthright about the difficulties associated with the change, but decided to incorporate celebrating small achievements, and offering rewards:

I explained that one is not going to be comfortable, I was going to be doing things different than they have been used to, but I let them know it's going to be exciting, it's going to be fun, it's going to be an adventure. And try to make it exciting and fun and then what I tried to do was put in rewards practices too...that is if you met a certain goal you got a certain reward, we had departmental quarters, we had special lunches, we had celebrations for things that we accomplished and just to keep it exciting every time we did something to make it worthwhile.

Managers employ both positive and negative motivation to bring about change (Fiol, 1999). They made appeals to focus on the benefits (positive motivation), as well as, pointed to failures and feared events to avoid (negative motivation). *Negative motivational frames* commonly focused on how the organization or individuals might be hurt, if the change were not successfully implemented.

An Indian product development manager warned his subordinate that any slip on his part might affect his subsequent appraisals.

Listen boss, next year you get appraised not only by your line manager or your functional head which is me. Obviously I'll have some 70% but the remaining 30% is going to come from the program that you are going to deliver. If you are going to slip up on that, I won't be able to help you very much.

A similar theme is evident in the comment of a U.S. technology firm project manager. He reminded his subordinates of the investment the company had already made towards the change, and there was no way anybody who did not embrace the change could be unaffected.

The company has invested too much in it and this is why they have invested too much in it and so this is the direction the company is going so either learn how to embrace it or eventually it's going to end up to you in a negative way and nobody want to see that.

Enact. While I primarily focused on the framing strategies of middle managers during change readiness sensegiving, I also found that at the middle managers' level, sensegiving was simultaneously attempted through actions, that is, it was not only what the managers said, but also what they did, and how they did things to ensure buy-in among their subordinates.

Managers' actions consisted of two types: *episodic* and *everyday actions*.

Episodic actions involved considerable investment of resources, such as, buying equipment, or providing external training. I borrow the term *episodic* from the literature on power, and define it as "relatively discrete strategic acts of mobilization initiated by self-interested actors" (Lawrence et al., 2001: 629). Certain middle managers, based upon their task knowledge, requested and got funding approval for a number of episodic actions. For example, an Indian customer accounts manager, who works for a large heavy engineering company, remembered how he was able to convince top management to replace desktop computers with laptop computers, which in addition to exciting employees, also enabled them to learn and work on the new software even while they were away from work.

I got this idea...I convinced my superiors to spend some money and replace all the PC's with laptops. It had two effects: one, peoples' interests on the program

was refreshed, and two, since they were allowed to take the laptops home, they could work while at home.

In a quite similar example, a U.S. manager, in charge of network operations and working for a hospice, convinced her top management to replace traditional desktop monitors with flat screen monitors

A big thing that we did was this (pointing to a widescreen monitor); it made a huge difference and we didn't budget for it. I had to manipulate the budget in order to get them in and I told them I couldn't get them all one, all on time but what happened was when we brought the system up, well the old monitors, the monsters not the flat screen but those big things we still had some of those... You couldn't see the whole patient information, you couldn't get over to click on places that you needed to be able to click, so that presented - and we didn't realize that when we were training we trained on laptops and the laptops did not have that issue and when they installed it and we sat down to our desk we were like oh my god we can't, this whole part of the screen has been chopped off. And you had to scroll over to get over there, it was time consuming.

On a different scale, the technology head of a U.S. software arranged for several subordinates to visit locations of an organization with which his firm had planned a joint venture.

One of the things I tried to do is bring our senior guys to Asia to tour the facilities of our partner, to also tour the development facilities and get a flavor and respect what these guys had done. That allowed them to brag about the company that had taken control of us so that way they knew the capabilities of this company and they could go to our companies and say we are doing this but now we have this company we can do this and if you want to go and do this we can do this... Those guys sold it to the other guys.

On a smaller scale, an Indian manager implementing a new product development process mentioned how he participated in a training program and passed ("cleared") a test that was considered difficult. Once the test was cleared, he felt more confident in communicating his change efficacy sentiments. He said

I took an online kind of training and cleared the test...then I was able to say 'if I can do it, so can you.'

Everyday actions required minimal resources, such as usage of flattering language, attending and listening to subordinates' concerns, etc. These sensegiving efforts were ongoing,

nonstop attempts to shape how employees made sense of the change, and were not limited to singular events; rather, managers looked for such opportunities on a daily basis.

People knew that it is not in their control. They also very well understand that it is not in the hands of their boss, that is, me. They also realized that it is something that is happening across the organization, so even if they tried, they cannot do anything about it. Yet, at the same time, they want to protest and get their frustrations out, and tell it to me. I always acted as, you know, a confession room kind of thing you know, where people can come in say anything they want and with confidence. And I always told them, 'whenever you have some frustration, please come to me and tell it to me.'

An Indian finance manager working for a manufacturing firm and responsible for implementing a cost management program explained how he spent time on the shop floor and tried to set an example by incorporating cost saving changes in his work.

I used to spend a lot of time with them on the shop floor, explaining the proposed changes in the process or the work related stuff. I also demonstrated by example giving some initiatives. If I expect a subordinate to make some changes, and I myself don't do the same, that gives the wrong message to the people...So, I also had to be a role model to the people...for example, a supplier was located around 100 kilometers away from here and typically we are allowed to rent a car and go. On several occasions, I went by public transport and visited the supplier in the morning then came back in the evening.

Employees are often unwilling to commit to a change when they perceive the change will lead to workload increases in addition to their regular work (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). So, is it just increases in workload or the equitable distribution of work distributed among subordinates? Middle managers were aware of the fact and took upon themselves to ensure that distribution of work was more or less equitable. An American manager working for a technology firm echoed the same idea:

I would just help them put things in priority and try to juggle things and make sure that we all had the same level of work load...So I did try to make sure that it was all equally distributed in terms of work load and I would get there and do things too: I'll make copies, I'll send scanned documents and send back whatever needs to be done... I would never ask them to do something that I wouldn't do, so that was another way I tried to help the situation. I wanted them to see that I was willing to get in there and roll up my sleeves and help them get their job done.

According to Smith, Plowman, and Duchon (2010), when workers feel respected, and believe that management is amenable, unfreezing might be less threatening to subordinates because they are led by managers who engage in everyday sensegiving. An Indian manager heading the strategy function of a consumer durables manufacturing firm, mentioned how she made it a practice to proactively meet with her subordinates and offered to help with information regarding the change as well as day-to-day work.

I routinely went back to them and asked them how they were doing and if they needed anything and if there was anything they needed to talk about, anything that wasn't clear they wanted more clarification on. I made myself available, and very approachable.

Similarly, an American manager, a Rehabilitation Specialty Director, shared how she assumed extra work on a daily basis, when asked to implement change mandated by regulatory bodies.

By taking on some patients, you know, seeing patients myself, I was working much longer hours. I took no time off. I worked the weekend. I really tried to, you know, if they needed to be off, with a child or, you know, I tried to take over and let them be off when they needed to be off. You know I did ask that nobody just take off to be taking off, but that if they needed to be off for certain family obligations or things like that then I would cover for them. I did take patients on my own, like I said, I did work much longer hours during the day, I did work the weekends and some holidays in there to make sure the patients were seen, but also I had to show the staff, that you know, I'm not above that and that it was affecting my life just like it was affecting their life.

Everyday actions are not limited to occasions or even location. It can happen anytime, even when nobody is really aware of it. For example, a consulting principal who works for a major networking company, commented that he would casually talk about the change in day-to-day situations such as around the lunch table.

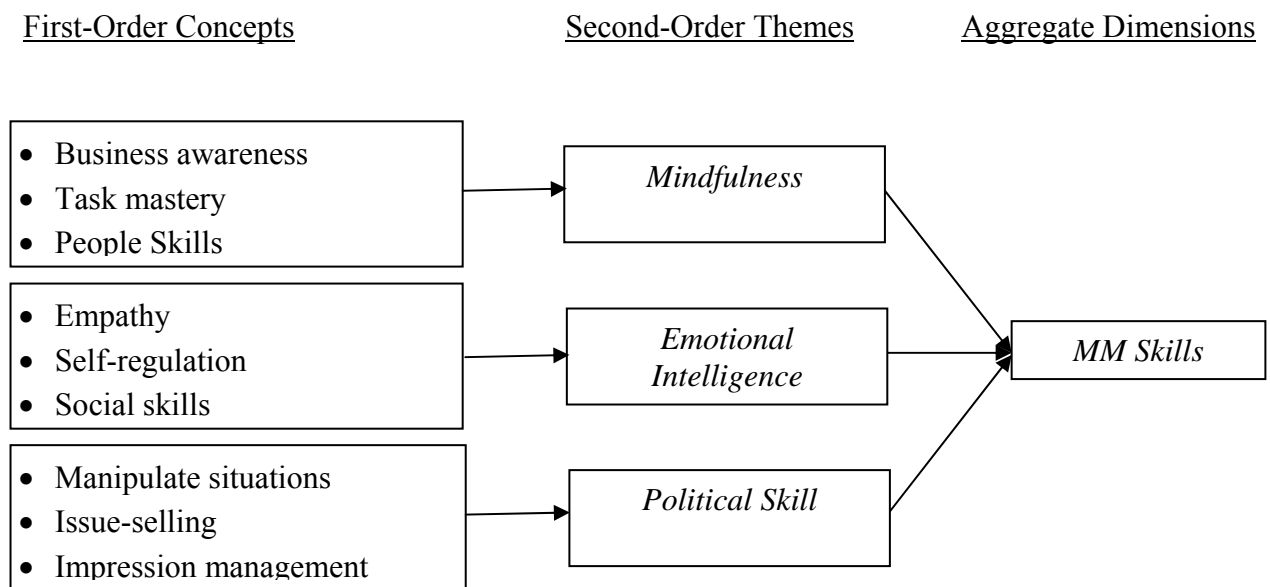
At the office table or around lunch table you are talking to your subordinates and you are talking like 'well, you know we needed to do this or it was good for us' and then you layout the positive side of it. And there again just to try and help mitigate their fear and their angst about everything that was going on.

Sensegiving Skills

My next set of findings in relation to middle managers’ change readiness sensegiving concern the conditions that influence it. Mintzberg (1980) has argued that not only the frame and the agenda of a managerial job are important – the person holding the job is also critical to the managerial role. In addition to identifying the sensegiving processes, I also examined the individual skills that seem to be exploited during the change readiness sensegiving processes identified earlier.

Figure 2 depicts the data structure for middle manager skills that are important for change readiness sensegiving. Here, the first-order concepts are the various behaviors that middle managers exhibit during sensegiving. For example, when sensegiving the discrepancy sentiment, middle managers are required to keep themselves updated with both external and internal information (information monitoring) so that they can better explain the need for change.

FIGURE 2
Data Structure for Sensegiving Skills



When sensegiving the efficacy sentiment, middle managers need to have a clear idea of the tasks (task mastery) involved, as well as, of the people who are expected to perform those tasks. Information monitoring and task mastery are combined under a second order theme of mindfulness, which in turn, is a subset of the aggregate dimension called middle manager skills.

Mindfulness. Middle managers' knowledge of the current business environment, strategic issues, technical expertise, and knowledge of the people under them, their skills and capabilities were important during sensegiving. According to Langer (2000), mindfulness is "a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context" (p. 220). Being mindful placed the managers in a better position to understand the concerns and worries of the change recipients under them, and better frame their change communication such that it was persuasive, as well as, meaningful. Mindfulness helped managers to maintain order amid chaos, and make thoughtful adaptation in response to uncertainty (Han, 2010). An Indian finance manager was responsible for implementing cost reduction strategies in the manufacturing firm he worked in. He explained how one's own sincerity strengthens one's position when they are required to ask others to make changes in the work practices.

It is a matter of how sincere you are yourself; what you do and if you are sincere about what you do, nobody can doubt your integrity basically. You are yourself confident about what you talk about, what you communicate with people above and below you. Things are much clearer, no ambiguity anywhere, across the board.

Similarly, a business development manager working for a technology firm in the United States stated why and how a better understanding of his subordinates gave him an upper hand when implementing a quality control process at work:

I spent more time with them, seeing where they are at, what they are accomplishing, I can understand their frustrations earlier on when they were discussing it with me, 'hey, I don't know what to do here,' I was able to answer it.

I was able to say 'forget it, don't write anything there, go on to the next section, do this here, document that'... So working at a micromanagement level during that chaos and being able to be right there when the personnel are having problems and give them a direction, the frustration to them is, ...you don't want them to feel they are responsible for this. You want them to feel that you are taking the responsibility and you are giving them direction and they are following your direction down the path and that you are recognizing this hardship that's being created on them.

Mindful middle managers' knowledge is not limited to organization's strategies but also includes the social structure of the organization, which helps facilitate change (Pappas, Flaherty, & Wooldridge, 2004). A better grasp of subordinates' thoughts and feelings puts middle managers in a better position when communicating readiness sentiments. An Indian manager working for a financial services firm stated how knowing the subordinates helped him deal with them.

Now, my style of working is I try to develop a relationship with my subordinates: just trying to understand 'what they are thinking, what is in their mind?' This gives me an advantage when I deal with them.

Emotional intelligence. Change arouses strong emotions (Bartunek, 1984); particularly, if the change involves a major sense of loss on the part of the change recipient. The loss could be one of identity, security, or efficacy. Organization members are emotionally invested in the assumptions that shape their cognitive structures for sensemaking and meaning giving (Reger et al., 1994). Hence, catering to the emotions triggered by the change can aid successful change implementation (Liu & Perrewé, 2005). Clark, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher (2007) argued that the interplay between the personal and organizational aspects of change requires not only intellectual effort but demands challenging emotional involvement. Middle managers are suggested as the "key loci for emotion management during change (Huy, 2002, p. 33). Middle managers experience emotions both as change recipients (Huy, 2002), as well as, change agents (i.e. group-focus emotions, Huy, 2011). In this study, middle managers encouraged employees to express a

wider range of emotions, both personal and work related. Support mechanisms that enhance and develop middle managers' abilities to engage with the emotional challenges of their work, were clearly an important element of such efforts (Mayer & Smith, 2007). An Indian head of operations of a manufacturing major, describes the need for empathizing with the subordinates and communicating the concern

You need to emphasize that 'yes, the situation is challenging, and you are not the only victim; you are not the only one. This is happening all across the organization, and we at head office also have the same kind of things happening here also.' Then I change my tone and explain why the change is good for the organization, and maybe next time when we meet we will discuss about it in details.'

However, managing emotions is not an easy task to accomplish. On one hand, middle managers are expected to hide their own emotions, while on the other, subordinates expect the middle managers to empathize with them. An American manager explained the inherent dilemma that middle managers like him face, while sensegiving change readiness sentiments, when they themselves may not have totally bought into it.

Honestly, it is very difficult because if you are not a consummate actor, if you are really being sincere it's very difficult to bring in that art of conviction when you really do not have it and you are telling somebody to do something and you can see that he doesn't believe that you yourself believe in what you are saying. It's quite difficult to get them to get convinced.

Political skill. Sensegiving is primarily targeted toward influencing others' attitudes and behaviors. Influencing others' sensemaking is essentially a political behavior (Buchanan & Badham, 2008), which is not necessarily a bad thing. Instead, it might well be driven by unselfish intents (Buchanan & Badham, 2008). Ferris, Perrewé, Anthony and Gilmore (2000) define political skill as "an interpersonal style construct that combines social astuteness with the ability to relate well, and otherwise demonstrate situationally appropriate behavior in a

disarmingly charming and engaging manner that inspires confidence, trust, sincerity, and genuineness” (p.30).

Organizational change is a power struggle (Mintzberg, 1984). Change implementation scenarios are defined through scarcity of resources, decision-making under uncertainty, and meaning-making under ambiguity, all of which refer to power dynamics in the environment. Individuals have to resort to tactics and other persuasive techniques to advance their intent over others (Hardy, 1996). Politics involves creation and imposition of a perception of legitimacy and reality (Brown, 1995). Middle managers have to manage what their subordinates feel about the change. In this study, I found instances of middle managers exhibiting political behavior. In some cases, it involved getting top management to invest in their plans; while in others, it involved use of flattery, ingratiation, or legitimate power to get their subordinates’ involvement during change.

So if it is not important for me why should I bother my guys? That day we had a meeting on this and this is not important so I don’t go.

A senior Indian manager responsible for enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementation in a power generation and distribution company referred to how he shares positive news with subordinates, and keeps bad news (criticisms) to himself:

... good is when one of the directors, who was earlier very much opposed, made an announcement in one of the seminars we had organized in Calcutta... He said ‘I have good news to share that the firm has become a leader now,’ I didn’t know this. So immediately I telephoned everybody in my group that we are now the leader. Bad is the criticism we receive every day, this is not working or that is not working. This is a problem; that is a problem, etc. I never bother sharing that, I keep it to just myself or a couple others.

A clinical practices manager working for a hospice in the United States referred to how while implementing a new information system she customized information based on whom she was addressing.

Depending on who I'm talking to I am going to tailor the message to emphasize you know what's more important. So when I talked to the nurses I was stressing the importance of providing them with information they were going to need when they were at the bedside. When I was talking to the social workers and saying you'll be able to get in and find out what the status is on this bill that was generated in the hospital because you'll be able to get into patient accounts. So I can't tell you exactly what I said to each subordinate or each group of subordinates because their needs were different.

A national sales manager working for an industrial products distribution firm and implementing an organizational restructuring echoed a similar idea.

There are leaders in the group, there are followers in the group and there are instigators in the group and so you got to neutralize this guy about this issue or he is going to try to blow it up into a brush fire and you got to encourage this guy or he is just going to sit there and things are going to miss him...he is like what's the point, how come you guys are all upset and I am not upset, am I missing something? So you got to give them some more information, you got to help them get prepared for the different roles they're going to play, but that is just part of adjusting your management staff to address to a group of people that you're responsible for.

An American head of services working for a defense contractor, reminisced how he chose to filter information while implementing an organizational restructuring:

I recognized that I need to treat them all kind of the same and give them all the exact same information I think a few of them felt like because of our personal relationship, the information I would typically share with them suffered, and they maybe held that against me a little bit...I'm not communicating enough with them but I made the determination that I'm going to communicate what they need to know not they necessarily want to know.

According to Kotter (1996), change agents should recognize that informal followers and advocates of change are quite powerful, and change occurs easily only when the organization has a strong network of change enablers. In other words, it is advised that a guided coalition is formed by recruiting allies to protect change initiatives against powerful opponents (Kanter 1982, 1983; Kanter et al. 1992). According to Kanter et al. (1992, p. 381) these coalitions should be conceived as "power tools", which require political skills to form and develop. This concept is evident in what an American finance manager said how he went about getting his department to

buy-in to a technological, change that apparently required employees to spend more time over and above the regular work.

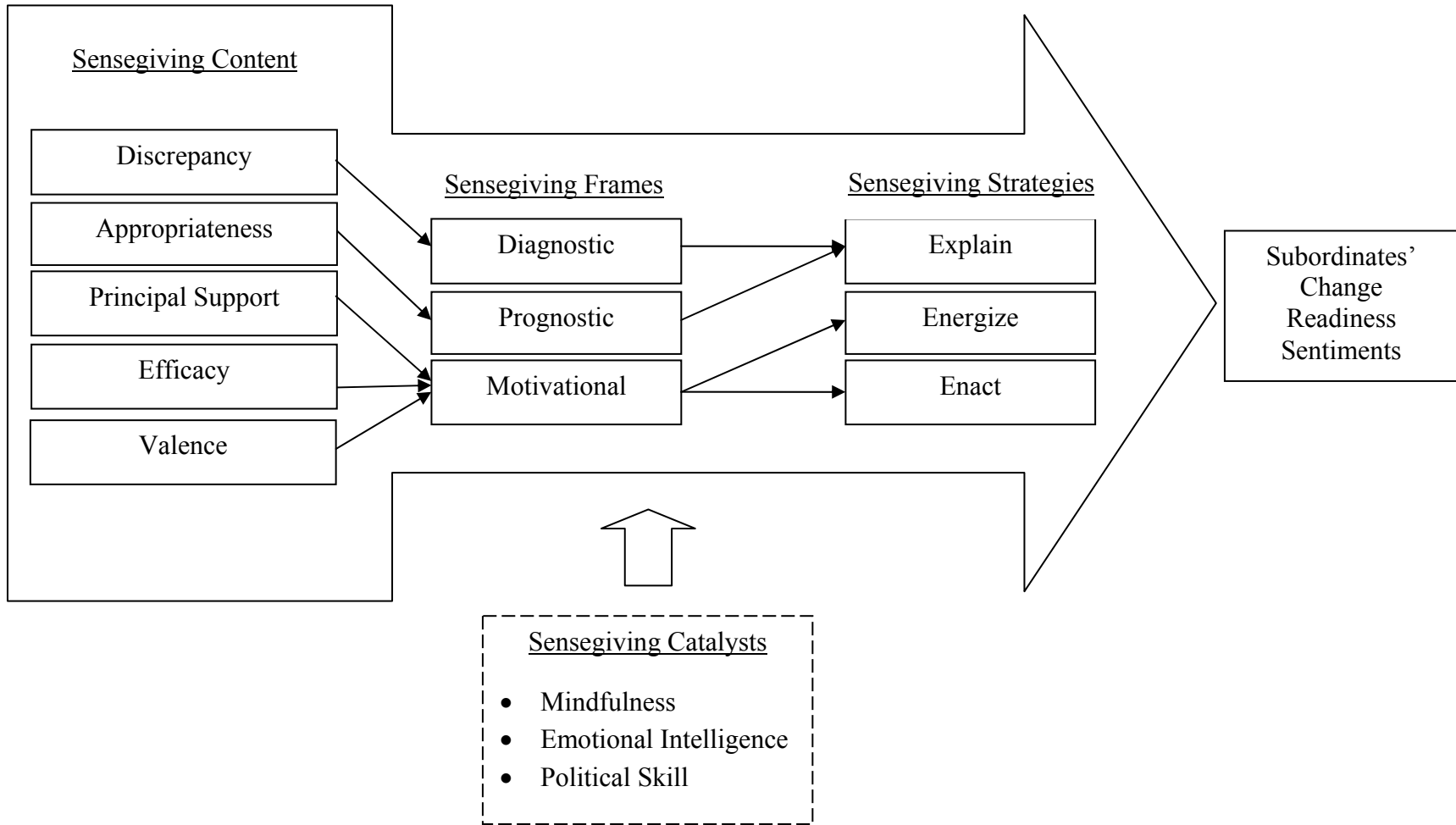
I think you'd be surprised politically what getting Ken's support will do. (Ken is a popular supervisor). Because he's pretty influential...if he comes out and says this is a good idea then others think it's probably a good idea to step on board...I don't think the change was bad for anybody. However, it did cost them a little more time and was eating their time away from other things. So you know I think the most important thing for me was getting Ken's support...Well, I had started trying to do my pitch to Ken on why I thought it was a good change. You know, first thing was, to get Ken on board and I kind of asked his help and support in any way as it came down the road that however I may need it...You know once he was on board we'd made the decision to go ahead...

DISCUSSION

According to Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) middle managers “mediate, negotiate, and interpret connections between the organization's strategic and operational levels” (p. 466). However, knowledge regarding middle managers' sensegiving behaviors is scarce. Using an exploratory qualitative study, which relied on in-depth interviews with middle managers called upon to implement a top-down change, the current study helps fill the gap concerning such sensegiving behaviors of middle managers. The findings I report in the preceding section describe the sensegiving tactics used by middle managers while creating change readiness sentiments among their subordinates. In this section, I discuss these findings, and extend the understanding by proposing a change readiness sentiments sensegiving model as suggested by my findings (refer to Figure 3).

The first important finding of my study involves the role of middle managers during organizational change. Kanter (2004) argues that successful implementation of changes in an organization is made more possible through the use of efficient middle managers.

FIGURE 3
A process model of middle manager sensegiving of change readiness sentiments



Since all the participants (though limited in number) identified change initiatives where they were not involved in planning, it is understood that inclusion of middle management for strategy implementation is not very common (Balogun, 2003). Yet, in the case of every middle manager I interviewed, it was evident that they played a significant role during change implementation. The data analyses revealed the various activities middle managers performed when called upon to implement a top-down change. Their roles were not limited to communicating change related information, but also in mobilizing resources through activities, both episodic as well as everyday ones.

While every manager I interviewed did not use each of the sensegiving strategies identified in the study, I believe the strategies are generally applicable. The intentional efforts by middle managers to reinforce the change readiness sentiments through sensegiving seemed to contribute greatly to the change implementation process. Middle managers are generally responsible to dispel resistance to change at the operating levels. In other words, they are accountable to create change readiness. According to Hardy (1985), managerial actions have two types of outcomes, substantive and sentiment. Achieving sentiment outcomes matters because positive sentiments improve the chances of achieving desired substantive outcomes. That is, positive sentiment makes it more likely that substantive outcomes will occur. When workers have positive feelings about a proposed change, that is, when sentiment is positive, workers are more likely to see the change as legitimate, to understand what is expected of them, and be motivated and committed to do what is expected of them.

As per the model (Figure 3), sensegiving of change readiness sentiments of discrepancy and appropriateness is accomplished by middle managers through diagnostic and prognostic frames (Benford & Snow, 2000), respectively. However, it seems diagnostic and prognostic

frames are nothing but two sides of the same coin. In other words, one frame is seldom complete without the other. Middle managers accomplish the sensegiving through explaining the need and suitability of the change, by rational reasoning and by reference. In order to carry out such sensegiving, they should be involved in the initial stages of strategic development of change. Two-way communication and clear channels should be used between middle managers, with senior management and with employees, to ensure that all levels of the organization have a clear understanding of the need for change. Timely and richer information will enable middle managers to frame discrepancy and appropriateness sentiments effectively.

The sensegiving of change readiness sentiments of efficacy, principal support, and valence, and is achieved through motivational frames (Benford & Snow, 2000). Middle managers carry out sensegiving through the energizing tactics of reassurance, positive motivation, and negative motivation. They make appeals by identifying short-term and long term benefits (positive motivation), as well as point to failures and feared events to avoid (negative motivation). To aid their success in this role, they need to be given support in the form of informational support, endorsement, and autonomy to act from senior managers (Smith et al., 2010).

During implementation, senior managers should continue to provide managers with support in the form of instrumental and informational support, as well as, autonomy. Increased informational support should be given to managers not involved in strategy design. Two-way communication with a focus on the practical implications of change should be encouraged between senior managers and middle managers. Messages from middle managers should reinforce the need for change and provide individualized practical implications, thus helping employees in the change transition. Change agents must determine how to increase efficacy and

must provide greater support in order for the change to be successful (Gully et al., 2002; Herold et al., 2007; Vollman, 1996). Instrumental support from the senior management will enable efficacy and support sensegiving. It will facilitate both episodic as well as everyday actions.

Additionally, sensegiving of efficacy, principal support and valence sentiments is achieved through episodic and everyday actions. Everyday actions required minimal resources and are not limited to occasions or locations. When change recipients have low change efficacy, they should be provided with education and training that will provide them with the confidence they need in order to successfully make the change (Galpin, 1996). This could be achieved through a onetime training (episodic action) and through daily conversations, and team building (everyday actions). The sentiment of valence can be communicated through conscientious efforts on the part of management in terms of how they treat their employees, that is, everyday actions (Armenakis et al., 1993, 1999; Kernan & Hanges, 2002; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), and also through formal reward and recognition mechanisms (episodic).

Middle managers are located at a junction for information exchange between upper management and employees (Pappas, Flaherty, & Wooldridge, 2004), and are expected to convert the strategic goals into operational objectives. To accomplish this role, middle managers indulge in sensegiving. Sensegiving is achieved through both rhetorical as well as instrumental means. According to Maitlis and Lawrence (2007), sensegiving was enabled by “a discursive ability that allowed actors to construct and articulate persuasive accounts of the world” (p.80). According to my data, that discursive ability could be composed of at least three skills, namely, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and political skill.

Limitations

While a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews is important for extending and developing theory on middle management sensegiving, I believe this study is not without limitations. My data are heavily dependent on what the managers chose to say about what they said and did during change implementation. I did not verify the statements by getting feedback from the subordinates who were subjected to the sensegiving. Further research should examine both the sensegivers' intentions and the sensemakers' understandings. Having said that, this study involves identifying patterns and commonalities from a variety of different change implementation experiences (i.e. cases), thereby enhancing its credibility (Stake, 1995). Again, the data for the study were collected using one means of data collection, that is, semi-structured interviews. Other studies have included multiple data sources, such as, relevant documents, observations, other individuals such as superiors and subordinates, citing triangulation objectives (Huy, 2002; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Sonenshein, 2010). This study was primarily focused on the experiences of the middle manager, not necessarily worrying about checking the veracity of their responses. I tried to make the respondent very comfortable during the actual interview, and from the conversational experience that I had, I believe the managers were not making their responses up. Moreover, since I was not interested in testing the effectiveness of the managers' thought processes or their subsequent conclusions and decisions, triangulation was not considered relevant.

CONCLUSION

The role of middle managers in successful implementation of organizational change is getting increasingly recognized, yet relatively not much is known regarding their roles as sensegivers of change readiness sentiments. This study analyzed experiences of a sample of

middle managers from two nations, India and the United States, and examined the common micro processes of such sensegiving roles. Consistent with framing theory in social movement literature, the study found that middle managers used a diagnostic frame when communicating the sentiment of change discrepancy, a prognostic frame when communicating the appropriateness sentiment, and motivational frames when communicating the readiness sentiments of efficacy, principal support and personal valence. Additionally, middle managers performed episodic and everyday actions to supplement the frames. I encourage future researchers to extend these findings by studying the effects of such frames and actions in developing the change readiness sentiments of the subordinates.

CONCLUSION

“Things change. They always do, it's one of the things of nature. Most people are afraid of change, but if you look at it as something you can always count on, then it can be a comfort.”

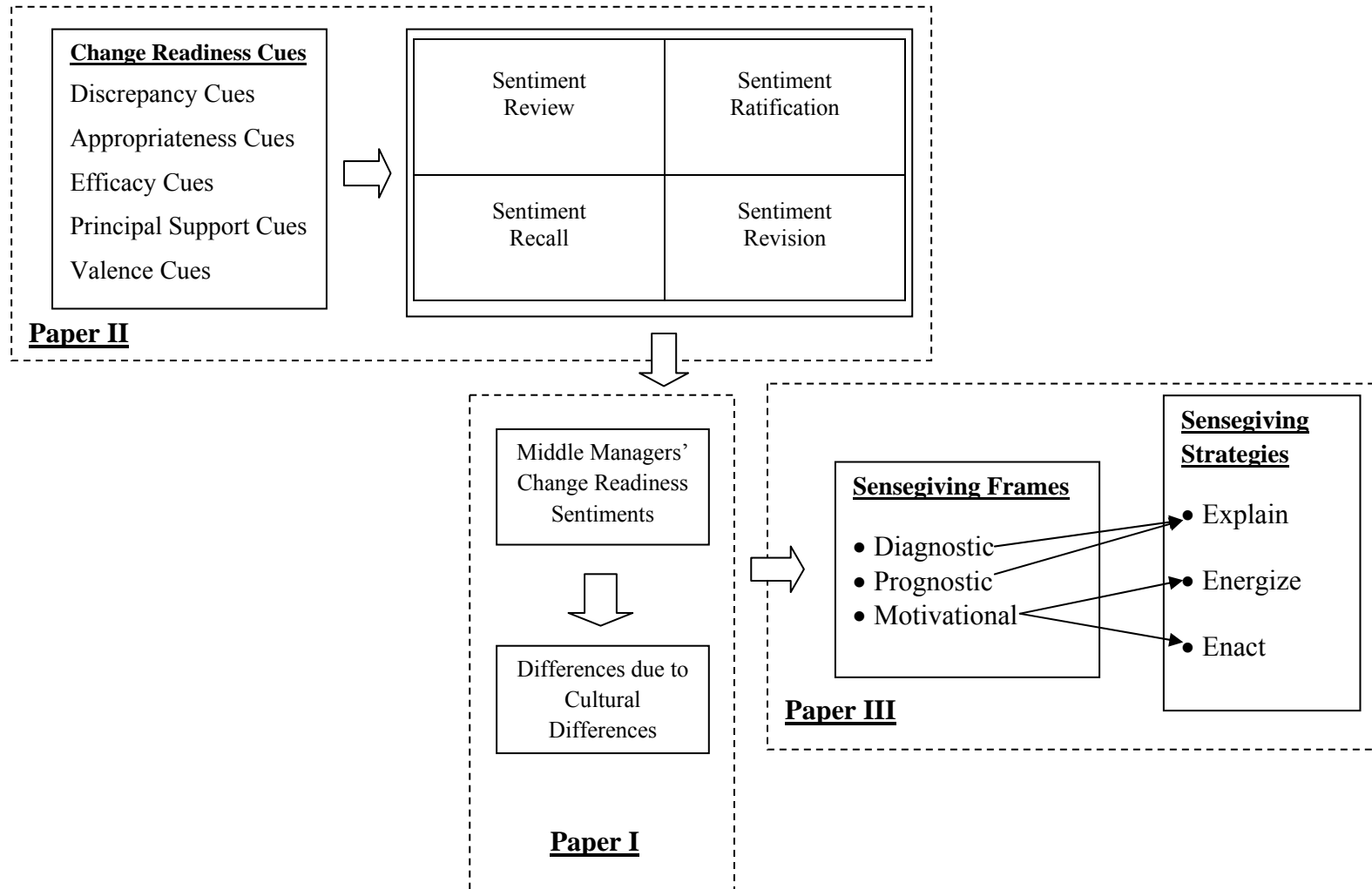
(The Bridges of Madison County, 1995)

The three papers that complete my dissertation have their own unique set of contributions. However, to conclude my dissertation, I give these findings a second look in order to identify how they collectively develop a complementary view of middle manager sensemaking and sensegiving during change implementation. Here, I summarize the areas in which I believe these papers make meaningful contributions to change research and practice.

The main question guiding the dissertation has been: When called upon to implement a top-down change, what sensemaking and sensegiving actions do middle managers engage in, in order to influence the change readiness sentiments of their subordinates? However, the question was broken into sub-questions that were attended to in the three papers. The research findings of three papers are diagrammatically summarized in Figure 1.

In the first paper, I addressed the following questions: What primary change readiness sentiments do middle managers consider when evaluating a change? Are any other change readiness sentiments, apart from the five proposed by Armenakis et al. (1993), considered critical at the middle manager level? Are there cultural differences in the responses to these questions; specifically, do middle managers in India and the United States evaluate their change readiness differently? The five sentiments as proposed by Armenakis et al. were found to be a valid framework by which change readiness was appraised at the middle manager level. While Indian managers tend to be concerned more about principal support than their American counterparts,

FIGURE 1
Summary of the Dissertation



the U.S. middle managers had more valence related concerns than the Indian managers. There were no significant differences in how these two groups viewed discrepancy and appropriateness. Indian managers tend to have more concerns related to collective efficacy. Though very small in number, urgency was identified as a separate change readiness sentiment by a few middle managers (over 10 %).

In the second paper, I addressed the following questions: How do middle managers appraise change in order to be comfortable with (ready for) the change? What information do middle managers use to determine their five change readiness sentiments? What data sources and processes do they use during the sensemaking process? Are there any cultural differences in the sensemaking processes between Indian and U.S. middle managers? I identified several sentiment-specific cues that middle managers look for while making sense of change readiness. Then I found four sensemaking processes that middle managers used: anticipatory vs. confirmatory sensemaking, and tacit vs. explicit sensemaking. Mindfulness was identified as an individual level factor that might influence the sensemaking processes.

In the third paper, I addressed the following questions: How do middle managers accomplish the sensegiving process, specifically focusing on the change readiness sentiments? What sources and processes do they employ during the sensegiving process? Are there any commonalities in the sensegiving processes between Indian and U.S. middle managers, cultural differences notwithstanding? Using framing theory, I found that middle managers employed three readiness framing strategies: diagnostic frames centered on change discrepancy; prognostic frames focused on change appropriateness; and motivating frames concentrated on efficacy, support, and personal valence. Framing was accomplished through two sensegiving strategies, explain and energize. Additionally, middle managers were found to perform episodic and

everyday actions to reinforce their change readiness frames. Finally, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and political skills were identified as middle manager characteristics that might have an influence on the sensegiving process.

The Change Readiness Sentiments Framework

In the introduction to a special research forum in the *Academy of Management Journal* intended to outline some of the key issues that researchers studying organizational change should consider, Pettigrew and colleagues (2001) suggested that an important gap in the literature concerned the lack of organizational change research that (a) investigates international and cross-cultural issues, and (b) examines multiple change contexts. The work presented here is an attempt to contribute to understanding of these underdeveloped areas. My essays involved middle managers who belonged to various levels within their organizations. While some were located at the top, two levels below the CEO, there were some who were program managers who interacted with the operating level on a daily basis. The papers covered a variety of change types including but not limited to, organizational restructuring, mergers, technology changes, downsizing, and leadership changes. I involved middle managers from India and the United States. One of the significant findings of the studies is the applicability of the change readiness framework (Armenakis & colleagues, 1992, 1999, 2002) in the variety of change contexts, as well as cultures outside the United States. The five change readiness sentiments, as suggested by Armenakis and colleagues (1993, 1999), significantly captured the thoughts and concerns that occupy the minds of middle managers when they are called upon to implement an organizational change. Every interviewee referred to one or more of these sentiments when describing their change implementation experiences. I found that both Indian and American middle managers considered the sentiments of discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, valence and principal

support when appraising a top-down change. Additionally, the sentiments were actively incorporated in the middle managers' efforts in selling the change to their subordinates.

Again, when analyzing for sensemaking and sensegiving behaviors, I found a lot of similarity among Indian and American middle managers. According to Virmani (2005: 4), "the Indian manager today, educated either in the West or tutored on Western management literature, attempts to manage and administer the Indian industrial structure on Western principles." Some of the similarity in the results could very well be due to this fact.

Role of Middle Managers during Change Implementation

Research on the role of middle managers during organizational change has been divided in their arguments. While one set of studies posits that middle managers are change resisters, and have a negative impact on organizational change (Dopson & Neumann, 1998; Fenton-O'Creevy, 1998, 2001), others have claimed that middle managers play a vital and positive role during change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994, 1997; Huy, 2002; Rouleau, 2005). My studies support the latter claim. All the managers that I interviewed during the course of this study played an active role during the change events that they referred to, and were responsible for smooth implementation of the same. As organizations become more complex, middle managers are likely to have a more detailed understanding of current and future customers' needs, and potential external opportunities and threats, and therefore be better positioned to make change related decisions. The ultimate success of an organizational change initiative depends to a large extent on the level of effort exerted by the frontline employees and middle managers charged with implementing the decision.

As evident from the second paper, middle managers take cues from both external and internal sources. On one hand, middle managers strategic knowledge enables them to observe

and understand what is going on outside, and their task knowledge helps them look for issues that arise within the organization. In addition to their knowledge, they also use their networks in understanding change readiness. Such networks have political as well as informational significance for the change effort. Not only do the middle managers rely on a network for information about opportunities, they also rely on this network to build an internal coalition to drive the change efforts considered appropriate.

Senior executives need to appreciate the central importance of middle managers in developing and maintaining the firm's capabilities (King, Fowler, & Ziethaml, 2001). While top managers allocate resources to explore and exploit competencies, they are seldom involved in the day to day operations that take advantage of these capabilities. The onus of managing the same lie with middle managers, who integrate top-level ideas with lower-level implementation issues, and help determine the use of capabilities. This becomes more crucial during organizational change. Middle managers cannot assume that the good intentions underlying a change decision will be enough to ensure widespread acceptance, commitment, or compliance. Typically, uncertainty, suspicion, and hostility may be common whatever the context of the change. An enormous attention to framing processes is still required to minimize the negative sentiments towards the change.

According to the third paper, middle managers use Explain, Energize and Enact strategies when sensegiving change readiness sentiments. Organizations can proactively involve and train middle managers regarding the technical aspects of the change, as well as, in communication skills. This will help middle managers do a more convincing job of communicating the sentiments to their subordinates. Organizations that empower their middle managers will enable

them to take the necessary episodic and everyday actions that seem to go a long way in sensegiving readiness sentiments.

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APPENDIX A

Letter inviting participation from American managers

To: EMBA Students and Alumni
From: Stan Harris, Torchmark Professor of Management
Re: Request for participation in a research project

War Eagle! I hope things are going well for all of you.

I am writing to request your help in conducting a research project. I am directing the dissertation research of Viraj Varma, a Ph.D. student in our Organization Studies, Strategy, and Change track of the Management Ph.D. Viraj's dissertation research focuses on how middle managers interpret and appraise organizational changes and how they, in turn, try to influence their subordinates' attitudes and motivation toward those changes. To conduct the research, he is interviewing middle managers followed by short surveys completed by the managers and approximately three of their subordinates. All comments will remain completely anonymous.

You can help us with this research endeavor in two ways. If you are a middle manager yourself, you can volunteer to participate in an interview and ask a few of your colleagues to participate as well. Or, if you are in a senior management or executive position, you can facilitate having some of the middle managers in your organization having the option of participating. Viraj's research will shed some much needed light on the process of change management from the perspective of middle management who are often not involved in the design of change but must play integral roles in implementation.

I hope you will consider helping us with this research project. If you are interested, please contact me and I will forward your information to Viraj for follow-up. If you are going to be on campus soon, I can arrange for you to meet with Viraj for more information.

Thanks again for your help and I hope to hear from you soon.

My contact information:
Phone: (334) 844-6519
Email: harris4@auburn.edu
Embanet: stanharris

APPENDIX B

Letter inviting participation from Indian Companies

Respected Sir/Madam,

I believe this email will find you in the best of health and in good cheer.

I am a doctoral student pursuing a PhD in Management, at Auburn University, under the supervision of Dr. Stanley Harris. My purpose for writing you this letter today is in hopes of seeking your kindly permission and support in conducting a research study in your esteemed organization.

I am collecting data for my dissertation which intends to examine the micro-processes that explain how middle managers interpret and appraise an organizational change, and subsequently attempt to gain support for the change from their subordinates. I am specifically interested in the common situations where the middle managers have had no role in planning the change, but have to implement it.

I would like to ask that you give permission to invite 4-5 middle managers in your organization to participate in a personal interview with me. The study is qualitative by design, and involves face-to-face interviews with middle managers that are currently, or have recently been, involved in implementing an organizational change. The interviews will be audio recorded; however, once the audio files are professionally transcribed to text form and reviewed for accuracy, the audio files will be permanently deleted. The responses will be kept confidential and maintained in a coded form, with no individual responses of any sort being revealed to anyone: this being a requirement from both the University and the U. S. Federal Government.

Traditionally, such projects have been extremely fruitful in identifying concerns and issues that are of interest to the management of the organizations studied. Studying practical organizational contexts with academic rigor is always a wonderful combination that provides greater understanding and statistical support. I believe both academics as well as practitioners would benefit from understanding organizational change issues from the perspective of real managers in different organizations.

Implementing change has become the ultimate managerial responsibility. For practitioners, eliciting the sensemaking and sensegiving processes that middle managers indulge in creating organizational change readiness might offer them critical insights about the roles the managers enact and the skills (creative, emotional, and behavioral) required to successfully accomplishing them. Such insights can help corporate recruiters do a better job in hiring individuals who are

better disposed to manage change. At the same time, organizational trainers can design programs that will help develop these skills among their current managers.

The results of my research will be published and presented in academic journals and conferences. I will also provide interested participants and organizations with a summary of my findings. As an outcome of my study, I would learn from the research experience, and, last but not least, fulfill the course requirements for my Ph.D.

I shall be deeply gratified if you would kindly extend your gracious support. I shall be more than happy to call you at your convenience to explain further details.

I look forward to your warm and positive response,

Sincerely,

Viraj Varma

Doctoral Student, Management
Auburn University, AL 36832

APPENDIX C

Contact/email script for the middle manager participants in India

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a doctoral student pursuing a PhD in Management, at Auburn University, Alabama, USA.

My purpose for writing you this letter today is in hopes of seeking your participation and support in an academic research study. Your organization has kindly given me the permission to contact you and other middle managers in the organization.

I am collecting data for my dissertation which examines the processes middle managers use to interpret and appraise an organizational change, and subsequently attempt to gain support for the change from their subordinates. The study involves face-to-face interviews with middle managers that are currently, or have recently been, involved in implementing an organizational change.

Participation in my study is VOLUNTARY. If you choose not to participate, it will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University and will have no bearing on your employment or evaluations with your organization. Your organization will not know of your decision to participate or not. If you decide to participate, I will interview you in person regarding your experiences with managing organizational change. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. If you give your permission, I would like to audio record the interview; however, once the audio files are professionally transcribed to text form and reviewed for accuracy, the audio files will be permanently deleted. Personal identifiers will be removed from your transcribed responses rendering them anonymous. You may withdraw from participation at any time (without penalty). You may also withdraw any data collected from you immediately after the interview, before it is coded and made anonymous.

All of your responses in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. No one in your organization will know your individual responses.

I shall be deeply gratified if you would kindly extend your gracious support and I will be contacting you soon to answer any questions and to request your voluntary participation.

I look forward to talking with you soon,

Sincerely,

Viraj Varma

Doctoral Student, Management, Auburn University

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol



Change Readiness Sentiments: Understanding Middle Managers' Sensemaking and Sensegiving"

Primary Investigator: Viraj Varma

Chair: Dr. Stanley G. Harris

Interview Protocol

Demographic Information

1. Organization (Industry/Sector):
2. Title/Position:
3. Level in organizational structure (from the lowest):
4. Tenure:
5. Tenure in the current organization:
6. Education:
7. No. of changes implemented in last one year:
8. Tell me a little about your job.

9. Tell me about some of the recent changes that have occurred in your organization? Which ones affected you and your subordinates the most?

10. Which of these changes would you be comfortable discussing in more detail? How did you learn about this change?

11. When you heard about this change, what initial thoughts that ran through your mind? What did you feel good about and what concerned you?

12. What was your role in this change? What did you have to do?

13. What was your own level of support for this change? When you were deciding how you felt about the change, what were the key factors that influenced your decision?
14. What role did you play in shaping your subordinates' involvement and support for this change? What did you do to accomplish this? What did you find work best? Did anything not work as well as you hoped?

Now I would like to ask you to think about some specific feelings that seem to be important to how people react to change.

15. Discrepancy:

- a. Was this change necessary? Why do you think so?
- b. Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?
- c. How did you explain the same to your subordinates? How did they react? What did you do then?

16. Appropriateness:

- a. Was the proposed change the best response to the discrepancy identified above? Did the organization benefit from the change? Why do you think so?
- b. Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?
- c. How did you explain the same to your subordinates? How did they react? What did you do then?

17. Efficacy:

- a. Did you think the organization had the capability to make this change? Why do you think so?
- b. Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?
- c. How did you explain the same to your subordinates? How did they react? What did you do then?

18. Principal support:

- a. Did the management support this change? Why do you think so?
- b. Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?
- c. How did you explain the same to your subordinates? How did they react? What did you do then?

19. Personal valence:

- a. Did individuals benefit from this change? Why do you think so?
- b. Was there any specific event or person that helped you draw your conclusion? How so?
- c. How did you explain the same to your subordinates? How did they react? What did you do then?