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Lorianne D. Mitchell

East Tennessee State University, mitcheld@etsu.edu

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Emotional Reactions to Organizational Change

Lorianne D. Mitchell
East Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

The field of emotions in organizations has experienced significant growth in the last few decades (c.f. Mitchell, 2010), due in large part to the seminal research by Weiss and colleagues (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and their resultant Affective Events Theory (AET). In summary, AET posits that we react emotionally to organizational events that are important to us. However, the emotion we experience is determined by our appraisals of the event outcome on a number of dimensions, including its benefit/threat to us and who is responsible for the outcome (self/other/uncontrollable event) (Ashkanasay et al., 2002; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

However, only recently is there a convergence of the emotion and organizational change literatures. In fact there is a growing recognition of emotion in change management processes. Negative emotions are negatively related to support of a change (Keifer, 2005) and failure to manage recipients' emotions may lead to program failure (Liu & Perrewe, 2005).

The current research adopts a contemporary recipient-focus trending in the organizational change literature (e.g., Armenakis & Harris). This empirical study, in its formative stages, proposes to assess an organization currently experiencing, or recently having experienced, a change initiative. Recipients' discrete emotional reactions to the change will be assessed and recommendations made for effectively managing resultant emotions throughout the change process. Numerous managerial implications will be made based on the extant organizational change and emotions in organizations literatures.