

Making a Change through Responsibility

Examining Stakeholders' Reactions to Responsible Change Management
and Corporate Social Responsibility

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Key Words

Change Management; Corporate Social Responsibility; Multilevel Research; Configurational Analyses

Abstract

Today's business world is highly dynamic, increasingly international, and marked by powerful corporations. Nonetheless, individual human beings shape the environment in which business takes place. In light of such surroundings, one increasingly important challenge for organizations is successful change management, which can only succeed with employees' support. When facing a well-informed, interconnected array of stakeholders, companies must also tackle demands to take social responsibility. By combining various theoretical and methodological approaches, the present dissertation addressed these trends in four empirical papers. Study 1 and Study 2 considered the reactions of employees during organizational change. The first study investigated the connection between dispositional resistance to change and emotional exhaustion. In a multilevel model, work-unit level informational team climate and perceived organizational support were relevant moderators. Using fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), the second paper turned to factors associated with employees' intended support for change. Drawing from the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), it revealed relevant configurations of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Study 3 focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and investigated which combinations of responsible and irresponsible activities, both recent and more historical, shape corporate reputation among the general public. Lastly, Study 4 expressly brought change management and CSR research together by showing that employees reacted more favorably to organizational change when their supervisors effectively communicated responsibility. Taken together, the present dissertation demonstrated that corporations can make a change through responsibility in order to favorably influence both stakeholder and business outcomes, thereby providing relevant implications for both research and practice.

1. Introduction

Highly dynamic developments mark today's business world. To survive in such surroundings, companies must frequently modify their strategies, structures, and operations (Rafferty & Griffin, 2007). Organizations' viability thus crucially depends on the successful management of such change processes. At the same time, in globalized and volatile business contexts, new stakeholders and legislations place demands on organizations (Dahlsrud, 2008) and key stakeholders are increasingly likely to notice or actively seek out information about a company's responsibility (Alniacik, Alniacik, & Genc, 2011). Thus, organizations also depend on an effective management of issues related to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Acknowledging the surging relevance of these topics, this dissertation investigates change management and CSR concerning their effects on outcomes relevant to both companies and stakeholders, most prominently employees. Thereby, this dissertation aims to expand the existing knowledge on four interrelated topics: 1) relevant factors that affect employees' support and well-being during change; 2) underlying mechanisms through which CSR affects reactions of the public and employees; 3) the relevance of CSR during change; as well as 4) recent methodological calls relevant to these research endeavors.

In the subsequent sections, a brief introduction to relevant research on change, CSR, and the intersection of both fields will be given, followed by an overview of related methodological calls. The next chapter then summarizes the four empirical papers underlying the present dissertation. After presenting the full version of these four articles, a joint discussion of their implications, limitations, and possible conclusions follows. Taken together, the overarching purpose of this dissertation is to contribute both to the research basis and to managerial decision-making at the intersection of change and CSR management in a modern business world.

1.1. Change Management and its Impact on Employees

To survive in an increasingly complex business world, organizations must be vigilant about new developments in their task and general environments (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Evolving external opportunities and threats can create a misfit between the organization and its environment, necessitating the identification and adjustment of current internal weaknesses (Jacobs, van Witteloostuijn, & Christe-Zeyse, 2013). Companies' reactions may consist of major changes such as mergers or acquisitions as well as smaller adaptations, which usually involve a redistribution of resources (Bernerth, Armenakis, Feild, & Walker, 2007).

However, Bernerth (2004) pointed out that organizational leaders often lack clarity regarding the steps necessary for successful organizational change. Accordingly, a review by By (2005) concluded that practitioners often fail in the successful management of change, while researchers have not yet provided a sufficient knowledge basis. Nevertheless, what seems undisputable is that change efforts comprise not only the actual modifications made to jobs or operations, but also numerous implications for organizational members (Bernerth, 2004). In line with this notion, existing research leaves little doubt that employees are one major factor that crucially affects change management and vice versa.

Change matters to employees. To date, a broad array of employee reactions to change has been identified, which crucially converge in highlighting that organizational change strongly affects employees' attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Jacobs et al., 2013, Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). As emphasized in a review by Oreg et al. (2011), organizational change does not only provoke reactions to the change itself – including affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses – but may also have more far-reaching consequences for employees' work and well-being. On the one hand, change can hence pose one of the major stressors in organizational life due to potential negative effects such as job loss, reduced well-being, and the like (Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999). On the other hand, depending on various variables, it is quite as possible that employees may view change positively, which is then reflected both in their attitude toward the change process and the organization as a whole (Elias, 2009). Accordingly, not only does organizational change matter to employees, but also employees matter to change implementation and its results.

Employees' reactions to change matter to organizations. In order to manage change successfully, companies crucially depend on their employees. In a review, Rafferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis (2013) accordingly concluded that fostering employees' readiness for change may be decisive in increasing the success rates of organizational change. In reverse, negative attitudes of employees may make the failure of attempted change initiatives more likely, and this negative experience may then further increase destructive feelings toward future change processes (Bernerth, 2004). Besides affecting the success of change implementations, employees' reactions to change may also impact more general outcomes. For example, negative work-related consequences of change may include higher turnover intentions (Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999), absenteeism (Martin, Jones, & Callan, 2005), as well as reduced task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Carter, Armenakis, Feild, & Mossholder, 2013). Consequently, management must be able to design change processes in a way that

encourages employees to embrace change, thereby ensuring the company's viability (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

Aim 1) of this dissertation. Taken together, recent research thus suggests that change and its specific features matter to employees, whose reactions in turn provide the basis for the success of change and hence for the survival of organizations. Importantly, employees' perceptions of a change initiative do not necessarily concord with what the organization had intended (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006). In consequence, both researchers and practitioners may benefit from a deeper understanding of factors that may foster employees' well-being during as well as support for organizational change. In this light, this dissertation strived to address *Aim 1) Investigating relevant factors that affect employees' support and well-being during change.* The specific research gaps addressed by the present research are outlined in each empirical paper.

1.2. CSR and its Impact on Stakeholders

In recent years, the demand that companies should not only focus on profits but should also take into account larger society has spread in both theory and practice. The notion of CSR reflects this idea (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). According to van Marrewijk (2003), CSR describes "company activities – voluntary by definition – demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders" (p. 102). Since NGOs, suppliers, consumers, and employees exert more and more pressure on companies, practitioners today increasingly seek to understand relevant antecedents and consequences of CSR (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). However, the implementation of new CSR initiatives may disturb or be in conflict with existing practices, and managers must hence be certain that the benefits of any planned activity will outweigh these downsides (Yuan, Bao, & Verbeke, 2011). For both practitioners and researchers, it is hence crucial to comprehend why and how CSR matters to stakeholders, and how this is relevant to companies.

CSR matters to stakeholders. Various current definitions of CSR converge in emphasizing that companies have a significant economic, social, as well as environmental impact (Dahlsrud, 2008). Importantly, observers do not only perceive CSR as relevant when directly targeted or affected by (ir)responsible activities. Rather, Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, and Williams (2006) suggested that CSR relates to perceptions of justice that go beyond mere self-interest and are thus positively affected by witnessing any concern for others. Accordingly, NGOs, social movement campaigns, and the press take an active interest in matters related to

CSR, making information accessible to the wider public (Campbell, 2007). In turn, the general public is increasingly aware of its own ability to shape corporations' activities to the better (Dawkins, 2005). Thus, one external stakeholder group to whom CSR increasingly matters is the general public.

Additionally, CSR is also highly relevant to stakeholders within the company; that is, the company's employees. Through social identification mechanisms, CSR activities in general may cause employees to experience self-enhancement through the membership in an organization that is perceived as prestigious (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010). Hence, even CSR activities directed at other stakeholders may have a positive impact on employee outcomes (De Roeck & Maon, 2016; Kim et al., 2010). Additionally, a conceptualization by Brammer, Millington, and Rayton (2007) specifically identifies internal CSR, i.e., activities focused on the internal operation of an organization, as one major domain of responsibility. Research has since studied employee-focused practices such as training, work safety, ethical labor policies, and diversity as reflections of internal CSR (ICSR) and has reported numerous positive effects (for an overview, see Rupp & Mallory, 2015 or Gond, El Akremi, Swaen, & Babu, 2017). In consequence, because powerful stakeholder groups such as the public and an organization's own staff perceive CSR as highly relevant, they may reciprocally react to CSR activities in ways that may then affect organizations.

Stakeholders' reactions to CSR matter to organizations. Existing research suggests that perceptions of CSR impact stakeholders' relationship with an organization and thus shape their behaviors toward this organization (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009). For example, external observers such as NGOs and the press monitor companies' activities and mobilize campaigns whenever these seem necessary (Campbell, 2007). Analogously, also consumers and other external stakeholders tend to penalize any seemingly irresponsible acts while rewarding positive engagements (Alniacik et al., 2011). Hence, the ways in which the general public, which comprises a broad array of external stakeholders, reacts to a (lack of) CSR may have a considerable impact on organizations. Moreover, also employees may react to CSR in ways that significantly affect companies. For example, van Buren (2005) underlined that according to a growing body of literature, employees may respond positively to CSR by working more efficiently. Analogously, CSR may be a rare chance for organizations to foster positive reactions among current and prospective employees (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). Considering today's unprecedented challenges in attracting and retaining a qualified work force (Beechler & Woodward, 2009), such effects are particularly relevant.

In light of the reactions of powerful stakeholder groups such as the public and employees, it is perhaps not surprising that some researchers suggested that CSR may ultimately affect companies' bottom line. Drawing on existing findings regarding various stakeholder groups, Bhattacharya et al. (2009) determined that through stakeholders' reactions, CSR may provide a return on investment for companies. Accordingly, a review by Orlitzky, Schmidt, and Rynes (2003) concluded that overall, CSR is positively connected to company revenues in a virtuous cycle in which one enhances the other.

Aim 2) of this dissertation. To sum up, the existing research base suggests that companies affect various stakeholder groups, including the general public and their own employees through CSR. In turn, stakeholders' reactions to CSR may fundamentally influence companies. However, stakeholders' perceptions of a company's performance regarding CSR often wildly diverge from any objective basis (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Rather, they are subject to psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions, which have received little attention in existing research (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). Hence, a more fine-grained understanding of relevant factors and boundary conditions that form reactions to CSR may prove valuable for both theory and practice. Providing more insights on these issues was another goal of this dissertation, thereby leading to the formulation of *Aim 2) Investigating underlying mechanisms through which CSR affects reactions of the public and employees.* The specific research gaps that the empirical studies address in this regard are described in each paper.

1.3. Connecting CSR and Change Management

Through current developments in the business world, both organizational change and CSR are becoming increasingly important issues for practitioners and researchers. Moreover, both fields converge in the fact that they matter to stakeholders such as employees, whose consequent reactions in turn affect organizational success (see sections 1.1. and 1.2.). In addition to these parallels, existing studies and frameworks specifically imply that organizational change may be one context in which CSR is particularly salient and impactful.

Such a connection is highly plausible when considering that change by its very nature has a strong effect on employees' lives. For example, Bernerth et al. (2007) emphasized that change is inherently connected to a redistribution of resources as well as high ambiguity. Thereby, change innately carries ethical implications. Indeed, in a complex and dynamic economic environment, leading an organization in a responsible manner involves reducing uncertainty, managing complexity, and providing positive visions of the future (Maak & Pless,

2006), which are also prominent factors in change management. Hence, it is plausible that employees' reactions to change may be more positive when they perceive the organization and its agents as acting responsibly.

Generally, research has emphasized that employees' reactions to change are highly dependent on contextual factors (e.g., Choi, 2011) as well as attributes ascribed to the change agent; i.e., the organization (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). The relevance of an organization's responsibility in particular is implied by findings on related constructs. For example, high trust in management was connected to more favorable employee outcomes during far-reaching change to the organizational structure (Oreg, 2006), just as higher perceptions of organizational support had positive effects during large-scale organizational change (Rafferty & Simons, 2005). Accordingly, a less threatening nature of organizational change as well as higher trust in upper and lower management were reported to increase employees' openness to change (Devos, Buelens, & Bouckenoghe, 2007). Indeed, change seems to directly increase the perceived importance of ethics and responsibility: As Sharif and Scandura (2014) reported, the positive employee outcomes that are generally related to ethical leadership were even more prominent in times of change. In accordance with such findings, researchers have advised that in order to secure employees' commitment to change, management needs to consider fairness-related implications of the change's impact, the implementation process, and interactions with change recipients (Bernerth et al., 2007). Armenakis and Harris (2009) hence proposed that organizations must generally strive to plan and implement change in an ethical manner.

Aim 3) of this dissertation. Despite these first findings regarding single and mostly directly change-related aspects of responsibility, research has neglected many other potentially relevant aspects as well as the role of the company's broader approach to responsibility. Drawing on current theories and research, the present dissertation hence examined parallels and interconnections of change and CSR management. By studying how employee reactions to change can be fostered as well as how CSR affects stakeholders both generally and during organizational change, this dissertation investigated the node of these topics. Thereby, the present dissertation strived to address *Aim 3) Investigating the relevance of CSR during change.*

1.4. Methodological Calls in CSR and Change Research

In order to increase the contribution to existing research, the four papers presented in this dissertation responded to recent calls concerning study design and data analysis. One main call in this regard advocated the application of multilevel designs. Researchers such as Wright

and Nishii (2007) emphasized that variance regarding organizational practices may occur at several levels of analysis, which must be considered simultaneously in order to increase our understanding how such practices may affect employee outcomes. According to their model, objective practices move from the group level to the individual level when they are perceived by individuals. Although some first empirical evidence supports the relevance of team level perceptions during change in particular, many potentially relevant factors in this context have not yet been studied in multilevel models (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2010). Hence, it is not surprising that change researchers have called for the wider application of multilevel modeling in order to reveal insights that have escaped previous studies (Rafferty et al., 2013).

Tying in with this notion are similar calls in CSR research. For example, Aguinis and Glavas (2012) emphatically highlighted that future CSR research must be multilevel in nature as the factors that influence CSR – and vice versa – are effective at different, though nested, levels of analysis. In response to these calls, Study 1 and Study 4 of this dissertation hence took a multilevel approach that investigated both team level and individual level effects.

Beyond multilevel modeling, recent methodological calls have also suggested taking a step away from traditional linear analysis methods altogether and applying analyses that work on an entirely different conceptual and computational basis instead. In particular, researchers such as Fiss (2007) have advocated the application of set-theoretic analyses in organizational and management research. Among these approaches, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) has recently received much attention due to its ability to reveal relevant combinations of factors, thereby addressing complex causal relationships and multiple interactions (Fiss, 2011). Accordingly, Gond et al. (2017) as well as Skarmeas and Leonidou (2013) highlighted that QCA may be a valuable tool to address the research gaps that still exist regarding complex interactions in the field of CSR. Hence, Study 2 and Study 3 of this dissertation employed fuzzy set QCA (fsQCA) in order to provide comprehensive insights in change management and CSR research.

Overall, the four studies included in this dissertation thus took a broad methodological approach in order to address *Aim 4) Acknowledging recent methodological calls relevant to the present research endeavors.*

1.5. Making a Change through Responsibility – the Present Studies

Building on research regarding organizational change and CSR, four studies empirically addressed the aims of this dissertation (for an overview, see Table 1). By investigating which

variables may increase employee well-being and supportive intentions during change, the first two studies primarily focused on change management. However, the leverage points implied by the results may be used to design responsible change implementations. In contrast, Study 3 investigated CSR-related activities and their impact on corporate reputation among the general public. Finally, Study 4 expressly combined the two research streams by examining the impact of CSR in the context of organizational change. Conjointly, these studies illustrated how responsibility can make a change both literally and metaphorically. The following section summarizes the focus and main findings of the four studies.

The first paper focused on employee well-being during organizational change as well as moderating effects of team level perceptions. More specifically, drawing on person-environment fit theory (Edwards, Caplan, & van Harrison, 1998), Study 1 examined the relationship between individual employees' dispositional resistance to change and emotional exhaustion. Using a longitudinal design as well as multilevel analyses, this study revealed a positive relationship between these variables and found that team level perceptions of informational team climate and organizational support were relevant moderators. Study 1 thereby contributed to existing research by providing deeper insights into the dynamic relationship between change, employee well-being, as well as potential buffers of this relationship.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Study 2 examined factors that may enhance employees' intended support for organizational change, thereby focusing on a change-related outcome that is highly relevant to the organization itself. Using fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) as well as latent profile analysis (LPA), this study examined the relevance of specific configurations of a positive change-related attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. By providing insights into patterns of these variables related to supportive intentions as well as into patterns associated with a lack of such intentions, this paper contributed to existing research through a particularly fine-grained perspective.

Drawing on the category diagnosticity approach (Skowronski & Carlston, 1987, 1989), the third paper then specifically turned to the field of CSR by investigating how CSR-related activities affect corporate reputation among the general public. More precisely, Study 3 explored which combinations of responsible and irresponsible activities, both recent and more historical, shape corporate reputation. By finding evidence for a strong negativity bias as well

as relevant time effects, Study 3 highlighted the applicability of a psychological model of perceived morality to the context of CSR.

Lastly, the fourth paper explicitly brought together notions from change research and CSR research by examining how three facets of communicating responsibility affected employee outcomes during organizational change. In line with expectations derived from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) as well as LMX theory (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), multilevel analyses indicated that employees perceived higher levels of change appropriateness when supervisors communicated with individuals as well as work teams in ways that reflected responsibility. Hence, Study 4 contributed to existing literature by combining change and CSR research and by pointing to the crucial role of supervisors in this intersection.

In sum, the empirical studies thus addressed the four aims stated initially: Examining 1) relevant factors that affect employees' support and well-being during change; 2) underlying mechanisms through which CSR affects reactions of the public and employees; 3) the relevance of CSR during change; as well as 4) responding to recent methodological calls. In sum, this dissertation demonstrated that corporations nowadays can make a change through responsibility in order to favorably influence outcomes relevant to both the organization itself as well as its stakeholders, with a special emphasis on employees.

The following chapter presents summaries of the four empirical papers, which have been submitted to peer-reviewed academic journals and have either already been accepted for publication or are currently under review. In accordance with the present regulations of the University of Osnabrueck, the full version of these articles are not included in this electronic dissertation as they can be accessed via the respective journals.

Table 1

Overview of the empirical studies

Title	Authors	Design	Level	Analysis
1 Dispositional resistance to change and emotional exhaustion: Moderating effects at the work-unit level	Turgut, S., Michel, A., Rothenhöfer, L. M., & Sonntag, K.	Employee survey with longitudinal design	Individual; team	Multilevel modeling
2 A configurational perspective on the theory of planned behavior to understand employees' change-supportive intentions	Straatmann, T., Rothenhöfer, L. M., Meier, A., & Müller, K.	Employee survey with two (unmatched) time points	Individual	Regression analyses, LPA, fsQCA
3 The impact of CSR on public reputation – a configurational multi-time, multi-source perspective	Rothenhöfer, L. M.	Matched secondary data from two sources	Organizational	fsQCA
4 Communicating responsibility makes a change! The impact of CSR and supervisor communication on employee reactions during change	Rothenhöfer, L. M., Koch, I., Schons, L. M., & Scheidler, S.	Employee survey with cross-sectional design	Individual; team level (including matched supervisor responses)	Multilevel modeling

2. Empirical research

2.1. Study 1:

Dispositional resistance to change and emotional exhaustion: Moderating effects at the work-unit level

Authors: Turgut, S., Michel, A., Rothenhöfer, L. M., & Sonntag, K.

Article type: Research paper

Purpose: Organizational change, although essential for business success, may negatively impact employees' well-being. Based on person–environment fit theory and a trait-activation perspective, the authors investigate employees' dispositional resistance to change as it impacts emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, the authors examine two potential boundary conditions: perceived organizational support and informational team climate. Thereby, the authors aim to expand the knowledge base on relevant personality traits that affect employee outcomes during change as well as potential leverage points for practitioners.

Design: In a large automotive company undergoing organizational change, longitudinal data from 709 participants in 30 work units was collected at two points in time. Multilevel analyses were applied to evaluate the hypotheses.

Findings: The results confirm that dispositional resistance to change (time 1) is positively related to emotional exhaustion (time 2). Moreover, a lack of perceived organizational support and a high informational team climate, both measured at the work-unit level, strengthen these effects.

Implications: In terms of theory and research, the results highlight the relevance of personality traits and activating cues in the context of organizational change, providing a starting point for further investigations of similar relationships. Regarding practice, the authors conclude that organizations should offer coaching and training programs for employees who are highly change resistant. Furthermore, personal and organizational development strategies should consider the insights gained from the study regarding internal contextual factors that moderate change management processes.

Originality: While research largely concurs in showing that change significantly impacts on employee well-being, it has neglected the role of relevant personality traits and activating cues. The present paper aims to provide insights into these specific factors to enhance our understanding of organizational change and its effects.

Keywords: Emotional Exhaustion, Multilevel Design, Organizational Change, Perceived Organizational Support, Resistance to Change, Team Climate

2.2. Study 2:

A configurational perspective on the theory of planned behavior to understand employee's change-supportive intentions

Straatmann, T., Rothenhöfer, L. M., Meier, A., & Müller, K

Article type: Research paper

Purpose: Organizations depend on employees' support when implementing necessary change processes. This study aims to shed light on the formation of employees' intentions to support organizational change. Specifically, it strives to provide nuanced insights in the relevance of psychological determinants suggested by the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) by complementing linear analyses with a configurational perspective. Thereby, the study aims to provide intricate avenues for further research as well as leverage points for practitioners.

Design: The study uses data from two measurement times drawing on employees of a city council (t1: N = 1,589; t2: N= 1,524) undergoing complex and continuous organizational changes. To investigate potential configurations, classical linear analytic methods are supplemented by the application of two case-centered methods: latent profile analysis (LPA) and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA).

Findings: Generally, the results support that the three proposed psychological determinants – attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms – impact employees' intentions to support change. Moreover, the case-centered results from LPA and fsQCA consistently highlight the relevance of configurational patterns. Specifically, LPA and fsQCA reveal that different combinations of the three determinants are associated with the presence or absence of high supportive intentions. Differences between the two measurement times (i.e., earlier and later phases of the change process) became evident.

Implications: This study's results provide valuable insights for future research regarding psychological variables that affect employees' change-supportive intentions. Moreover, it demonstrates that case-centered analytical methods can enrich research and theory-building in change management as well as in the field of behavioral intention formation in general. Regarding practice, the results imply factors that companies may target in workshops and

other interventions to build support and ways to tailor these interventions to the specific situation.

Originality: So far, studies in the realm of organizational change as well as in the realm of TPB research in general have focused on additive and linear effects. The present study expands this perspective by additionally investigating configurational effects.

Keywords: Change-supportive Intentions, Change reactions, Configurational Perspective, Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis, Latent Profile Analysis, Intention Formation, Theory of Planned Behavior, Organizational Behavior, Change Management

2.3. Study 3: The impact of CSR on public reputation – a configurational multi-time, multi-source perspective

Rothenhöfer, L. M.

Article type: Research paper

Purpose: This study aims to investigate relevant configurational patterns in the relationship between activities representing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate reputation among the public. To shed light on complex reactions of this influential stakeholder group, hypotheses are drawn from the category diagnosticity approach. Thereby, a psychological model of perceived (im)morality is transferred to the CSR context.

Design: Analyses are based on secondary data. For a sample of 130 large US-based companies, CSR-related activities are reflected by the independent ratings comprised in the KLD database while reputation among the general public is assessed using the RepTrak score of the subsequent year. The hypotheses are evaluated using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to reflect configurational patterns.

Findings: In line with hypotheses, positive/negative CSR activities influence reputation in the expected directions, while the effects of specific configurations of CSR activities reveal an asymmetry caused by a negativity bias. Further analyses moreover confirm that positive effects require a consistent positive performance regarding prior reputations and the aggregated CSR activities of several previous years. These findings thereby support the notions outlined in the category diagnosticity approach.

Implications: The present study implies that reactions to CSR are analogous to perceptions of individuals' (im)moral behavior, thereby providing new angles for future research. Most prominently, negative information determines reputation when performance is inconsistent. Moreover, the results suggest new angles for the conceptualization and study of CSR by pointing to the applicability of fsQCA. For practitioners, the present results may provide a starting point for designing effective CSR management strategies that maximize the positive effects on stakeholders such as the general public while avoiding detrimental effects that may arise from some configurations of CSR activities.

Originality: The present study contributes to CSR research by investigating a powerful but hitherto understudied stakeholder group through a category diagnosticity lens combined with a configurational approach to analysis. By using secondary data from two separate sources as well as two points in time, the present study moreover avoids potential biases that may have skewed previous research designs.

Keywords: Configurations; Corporate Social Irresponsibility; Corporate Social Responsibility; fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis; Reputation; Stakeholder Evaluations

2.4. Study 4:

Communicating Responsibility Makes a Change! The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility and Supervisor Communication on Employee Reactions during Change

Rothenhöfer, L. M., Koch, I., Schons, L. M., & Scheidler, S.

Article type: Research paper

Purpose: In an increasingly complex business world, organizations must successfully implement change, which crucially depends on employees' support. The authors hypothesize that reactions to change are improved when the direct supervisor is a communicator of responsibility through 1) communicating about responsibility (i.e., about company-internal corporate social responsibility (ICSR) activities); 2) communicating responsibly (i.e., distributing communication equally across team members); and 3) attributing the company's ICSR activities to intrinsic (versus extrinsic) motives.

Design: A multilevel dataset with 251 employees nested in 58 teams was collected during a comprehensive change process at two medical clinics in Germany and was matched with the respective supervisor's responses. Multilevel analyses were performed to test the hypotheses.

Findings: Results confirm the impact of the three proposed facets of communication: 1) Supervisors' communication about ICSR at the individual level positively affected employees' perceived change appropriateness, which in turn increased their extra-role behaviors. Across levels, 2) supervisors' equal distribution of communication among team members as well as 3) supervisors' intrinsic attributions of the company's ICSR engagement increased employees' perceived change appropriateness. Moreover, supervisors' communication about ICSR aggregated at the team level also had positive effects, but only when communication was equally distributed.

Implications: Findings imply that communicating responsibility as well as responsibly may foster employees' positive reactions during change. Future research may explore the relationship of leadership, change management, and CSR management in more depth to provide further insights on this understudied intersection of topics. Practitioners may benefit by selecting and training supervisors during change in a manner that ensures a beneficial communication style.

Originality: Only recently have researchers shown that ICSR shapes employees' work attitudes and behaviors, and previous studies have not yet considered these effects in a change setting. By bringing together these research fields as well as several relevant theoretical approaches (e.g., social exchange, organizational justice, leader member exchange), the present study expands on existing research.

Keywords: Change, Corporate Social Responsibility, Supervisor, Communication, Extra-role Behavior

3. General Discussion

The four empirical studies that make up this dissertation focused on different aspects of organizational change and CSR, drawing upon several theories and utilizing different data sets and designs. Thereby, the four studies complemented each other, offering joint insights into the overarching topic of this thesis: The question of how organizations can make a change through responsibility. In terms of theory and research, the purpose was to broaden our understanding of the effects of change and CSR on outcomes relevant to stakeholders and organizations while responding to current methodological calls. In regard to practice, the studies thereby may reveal leverage points that change managers as well as CSR managers can utilize to succeed in the dynamic, complex, and increasingly interconnected environment of today's business world. Accordingly, when viewed together, the studies provide several implications for research and practice, while they naturally are also subject to some limitations. These aspects are discussed following a brief summary of the empirical results.

3.1. Summary of Empirical Results

Each of the four studies provided empirical findings that contribute to the overarching topic of this dissertation. First, in a longitudinal study design, Study 1 found support for the hypothesized relationship between dispositional resistance to change and emotional exhaustion. Multilevel modeling revealed two relevant boundary conditions at the level of the work-unit. In particular, low perceptions of organizational support increased the problematic effects of dispositional resistance to change, presumably because employees thereby experienced a lack of relevant resources. In addition, a high informational team climate strengthened this relationship, indicating that open and frequent interactions between work unit members may create damaging crossover effects.

Based on the data of two time points during an ongoing change, Study 2 then examined three change-related psychological factors regarding their incremental effects as well as their interdependencies. Using regression analyses as well as LPA and fsQCA, this study revealed specific configurations of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control that were connected to employees' high supportive intentions, or absence thereof. In particular, this study pointed to a crucial but also intricate role of positive change-related attitude. Most prominently, a lack of such attitudes may be particularly detrimental in later stages of the change.

Drawing on secondary data on the level of organizations, Study 3 examined the relationship between CSR and corporate reputation among the general public, confirming that

CSR-related activities generally affect public reputation. Both for current CSR-related activities and for aggregated historical activities, the analyses revealed a negativity bias suggesting that the public values only continuous and unequivocal corporate deeds. Moreover, the study suggested that existing negative (but not positive) reputations tended to “stick” over time.

Regarding the communication of responsibility during a comprehensive change process, Study 4 found a positive effect of ICSR information provided by the supervisor. Such information was associated with perceived change appropriateness, which in turn increased employees’ extra-role behaviors. In a multilevel model, a larger inequality in the communication with different team members decreased individual perceptions of change appropriateness and also moderated the effect of team level ICSR information, which was only effective when the dispersion of supervisor communication was low.

3.2. Joint Implications for Research

Beyond the individual implications of each study that were discussed in each of the four papers (and that will therefore not be repeated here), the joint empirical evidence has several interesting implications for research concerning change, CSR, and the intersection of both fields as well as concerning methodology.

3.2.1. Implications regarding change research. Study 1, 2, and 4 addressed Aim 1) of this dissertation: Investigating relevant factors that affect employees’ support and well-being during change. Thereby, they provide some interesting implications for change research. First, they highlight several theoretical approaches that can be meaningfully applied to the context of organizational change. While person-environment fit theory (Study 1), the theory of planned behavior (Study 2), and social exchange / LMX theory (Study 4) do not originate from the field of change research, they provide valuable starting points to understand employees’ reactions to organizational change. This broad applicability of theories from psychology and organizational behavior research additionally underlines that ordinary human beings and their psychological make-up shape organizational change.

Second, the findings of the three studies point to the relevance of both variables from the organizational context and factors internal to the individual in shaping employee reactions to change. For example, dispositional resistance to change (Study 1), a relatively stable trait, is a variable that lies within the individual. In contrast, beyond a certain subjectivity that applies to all perceptions, organizational support (Study 1) and the communication provided by the supervisor (Study 4) are part of the organizational context. Thereby, the present results tie in

with existing research that has identified these two categories as important types of antecedents to change reactions (e.g. Oreg et al., 2011; van Dam, Oreg, & Schyns, 2008).

Third, the studies highlight that not only individual-level factors, but also work-unit and team level perceptions play a crucial role in determining employees' reactions to change. These findings are in line with a review by Rafferty et al. (2013), who emphasized the relevance of cross-level effects in the context of change as well as a worrisome lack of empirical investigations thereof. One of the few studies examining such effects pointed to the relevance of change fairness and change favorableness at the level of the work-group (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006). The results of Study 1 and 4 support the notion of relevant cross-level effects, but go beyond these authors' findings by highlighting that not only shared change-related perceptions but also shared perceptions of the broader organizational context affect individual outcomes during change.

3.2.2. Implications regarding CSR research. Concerning CSR research, Study 3 and 4 provided insights regarding Aim 2) of this dissertation: Investigating underlying mechanisms through which CSR affects reactions of the public and employees. In particular, these studies provide support for the business case of CSR by pointing to new settings in which CSR may influence significant variables. Specifically, Study 3 highlights the relevance of CSR among the general public, which has not received much attention by previous research despite its obvious power. Moreover, Study 4 underlines the importance of ICSR in the context of organizational change, which has not been studied as a relevant context for (I)CSR to date. Thereby, the studies provide further support for research and theories that suggest that CSR is relevant across various stakeholder groups and settings.

Moreover, Study 3 and 4 converge in suggesting that the consistency of responsible actions crucially affects stakeholders' reactions. In both studies, lagging behind in one area reflecting responsibility was detrimental to the positive effects of doing well in other respects. Interestingly, these effects did not only hold for closely linked aspects reflecting responsibility (i.e., different facets of supervisor communication in Study 4), but also for companies' broad-scale CSR-related activities that were aggregated across various dimensions and years (i.e., the activities coded in the KLD data set and analyzed in Study 3). Hence, the present results tie in with models suggesting a negativity bias regarding moral behavior such as the category diagnosticity approach (Skowronski & Carlston, 1987, 1989). They also correspond to some first empirical evidence supporting the relevance of consistency in the context of CSR such as a recent study by De Roeck, El Akremi, and Swaen (2016).

3.2.3. Implications at the intersection of change and CSR research. Specifically, at the intersection of change and CSR research, the present dissertation contributes to the understanding of the relationship between these two traditionally distinct areas. Thereby, the dissertation has implications related to Aim 3): Investigating the relevance of CSR during change. In particular, the present studies parallel recent developments concerning the relationship between human resources (HR) and CSR. In regard to HR, Greenwood (2013) emphasized that taking an ethical lens is inherently required when dealing with the treatment of human beings. Accordingly, Gond, Igalens, Swaen, and El Akremi (2011) suggested that some traditional HR practices may be considered as CSR due to their focus on fairness and socially sensitive topics while other practices may be located at the overlap of HR and CSR by supporting specific groups among employees. In parallel, the present dissertation highlights the ethical implications of change and suggests that employee-focused practices during change may be considered CSR or may directly fall in the intersection of both fields. By highlighting equivalents and overlaps between these areas, the four studies may foster future theory-building and empirical research at the intersection of these topics.

At the same time, the four studies indicate some conceptual fuzziness regarding CSR, especially when directed at employees. As Rupp and Mallory (2015) critically pointed out, activities that some researchers term (I)CSR often overlap with what other researchers conceptualize as HR practices, many of which are already standard and normative (and hence do not correspond to the notion of CSR being a voluntary “add-on”). Analogous ambiguities arise in the context of organizational change: Is the responsible design of change implementations part of the concept of CSR? Are even the various offers for employees that we labeled ICSR and that positively affected change reactions in Study 4 indeed part of that construct? And what are the advantages and consequences of each conceptualization? Clarifying where and how to draw the line between a standard but somewhat responsible behavior toward employees and true CSR will likely still be subject of many an interesting debate in CSR research and related fields, and the present dissertation may add to this discussion by approaching the topic from two different research streams.

3.2.4. Implications related to methodology. In terms of methodology, the four studies provide new insights by taking a diverse approach to research design and analysis, thereby acknowledging recent methodological calls (Aim 4). First, the present dissertation takes various levels of analysis into account. In line with the focus of Aim 1) and Aim 2), the greatest emphasis lies on the individual level of analysis; that is, the individual employees within an

organization. This focus is reflected in Study 1, 2, and 4, which thereby shed light on the micro-level that has often been neglected especially in CSR research (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). An inclusion of team level analyses (Study 1 and 4) as well as of supervisor data (Study 4) complement this perspective, thus permitting to examine effects that these higher levels of analysis may have on employees. Lastly, Study 3 supplements these approaches by focusing on the organizational level. The meaningful findings drawn from the investigation of various analysis levels provide empirical support for the notion that CSR as well as change are best understood as multilevel phenomena (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Gond et al., 2017; Morgeson, Aguinis, Waldman, & Siegel, 2013; Rafferty et al., 2013). By this means, the present studies avoided the loss of valuable information that may occur from the inclusion of one level of analysis or from an unwarranted generalization of conclusions from one level of analysis to others.

Second, taking a different methodological perspective, Studies 2 and 3 were based on fsQCA, which Fiss (2007) identified as an important – though under-utilized – avenue for management research. To date, large gaps remain in the application of this type of analysis to business and management research even though many relationships in this field are inherently configurational (Berger, 2016). By applying fsQCA, Study 2 and Study 3 offered unique insights in the complex configurations that are associated with change-supportive intentions and public reputation, respectively. The intricate findings of both studies therefore provide support for the argumentation of Fiss (2007), who highlighted that fsQCA may prove valuable in management research due to its ability to reveal complex relationships and relevant combinations of effective factors. Hence, the present dissertation also underlines the potential that fsQCA and similar analysis techniques hold within the complex fields of change and CSR research.

Finally, the data utilized in the four papers stems from a multitude of sources. In particular, Study 1, 2, and 4 utilized primary data collected in three different organizations. One of these organizations represented the public sector while the two private sector organizations reflected different industries (i.e., the automotive and the health care industry). Moreover, Study 3 drew upon secondary data from two recognized sources. By finding complementary but compatible relationships across the different data sets, this dissertation highlights the value of utilizing a broad array of data sources in order to increase the generalizability and validity of research endeavors in this realm.

3.3. Joint Implications for Practice

Taken together, the papers have several implications for the effective management of organizational change and CSR in practice. Concerning change management, the findings provide indications of how organizations may tailor interventions during change in order to increase their effectiveness. One potentially relevant variable is dispositional resistance to change, as employees that have higher levels of this trait seem more vulnerable to negative reactions (Study 1). Direct supervisors could hence particularly encourage those employees to participate in interventions who have already shown resistance to previous changes. Moreover, companies may consider providing self-assessment scales of dispositional resistance to change to employees combined with information about where to get support. Another factor that organizations may consider when tailoring interventions is the shifting relevance of psychological factors in earlier versus later phases of change (Study 2). By specifically targeting attitude, subjective norms, and/or perceived behavioral control in those phases during which they are relevant to supportive interventions, companies may increase the effects of interventions. Lastly, companies may also tailor interventions to the level of support that they aim to achieve. As Study 2 highlights, the factors leading to very high supportive intentions are no direct reversal of those connected to low intentions. Consequently, interventions aimed at generating some mediocre support among currently unwilling employees may differ from those that aim to further encourage supportive employees.

Another important implication ties in with the argument of Choi (2011), who emphasized that practitioners can impact on employees' reactions by acknowledging that change occurs in a broader organizational context that they can leverage strategically. In line with this notion, Study 1, 2, and 4 point to relevant factors that organizations may address. Perceived organizational support, informational team climate (Study 1), as well as the content and style of supervisors' communication related to responsibility (Study 4) are crucial aspects that organizations can shape deliberately. In particular, by suggesting that ICSR may be especially important during organizational change, the present dissertation highlights that change and CSR management may overlap also in practice.

Together, change and CSR managers may thus identify ways to create a general atmosphere of responsibility taken seriously as well as a responsible design of change processes. As specific steps related to these factors, organizations should strive to make support and information more accessible during organizational change. To this end, trainings may help middle managers identify adequate ways to support members of their teams. Moreover, change

and CSR managers may also consider offering information sessions for all employees that explain how the organization will ensure a smooth change implementation as well as the employees' well-being. Another step may be to utilize the company website and other readily available sources to spread information about the company's approach to responsibility, the change, and any existing support measures. Importantly, the communication of responsibility needs to be consistent to achieve maximal positive effects. Hence, all activities should strive to create a consistent impression and direct supervisors should be sensitized to this topic.

Naturally, leveraging ICSR information in times of change is more feasible when an organization is actually performing well in this regard. Hence, upholding existing ICSR activities as well as launching (and communicating) new ICSR activities when change is impending may be an effective tool. In contrast, reducing ICSR activities to a minimum in order to focus time and resources on "getting over with" a change process may likely be detrimental to the success of that very change. As also the general public reacts to the consistency with which CSR activities are conducted over time (Study 3), CSR managers are well-advised to implement coherent and ongoing activities. In order to keep track of both internal and external stakeholders' impressions (which, of course, may diverge from the organization's objective efforts), practitioners may hence also benefit from employing surveys regarding perceptions of CSR among all relevant stakeholders.

Despite the potential benefits, implementing such comprehensive CSR activities may pose difficulties. Indeed, the adoption of CSR initiatives has been identified to be both a crucial and a challenging task for management (Yuan et al., 2011). Quite plausibly, new CSR initiatives may be hindered simply by a general reluctance toward the associated organizational change. In this regard, the aforementioned collaboration between change management and CSR management may offer additional benefits by permitting to transfer effective tools from change implementation to the context of launching CSR activities.

Taken together, the implications of this dissertation may help practitioners to design CSR and organizational change in ways that positively affect stakeholders, and that hence reciprocally positively influence the organization. Thereby, the implications of the four studies offer some insights into how to navigate successfully in an increasingly dynamic and interconnected business world.

3.4. Limitations of the Present Studies and Future Research

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions described above, the four studies presented in this dissertation naturally also are subject to some limitations. First, only one of the studies (Study 1) had a truly longitudinal design. While Study 2 included two time points and Study 3 reflected a one-year time lag, it was not possible to measure, match, and/or control for the variance of all study variables at both time points. Lastly, Study 4 only utilized data from a single time point, and thus was purely cross-sectional. Hence, these three studies cannot clearly differentiate between effects that evolved over time and cross-sectional correlations. Accordingly, no clear conclusions regarding the causality of the investigated effects are possible. Although the designs of the studies had other strengths, future research may benefit from employing a longitudinal perspective especially to the relationships examined in Study 2, 3, and 4.

A second and related limitation lies in the restricted time span reflected by the three survey-based studies (i.e., Study 1, 2, and 4). While the secondary data utilized in Study 3 permitted the examination of data aggregated across several years and pointed to the relevance of time effects, the other three studies do not reflect such long-term developments. However, such an angle seems promising as reactions to change may plausibly shift over longer periods of time, which existing research has not addressed adequately (Rafferty et al., 2013). Analogously, the effects of CSR are likely to unfold over time. However, especially at the individual level of analysis, research tapping into such long-term effects is rare (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). In consequence, future research taking a longitudinal design that covers several years may provide a fascinating extension of the present findings.

Third, all of the studies utilized self-report measures as outcome variables. In consequence, the studies do not reflect the impact on actual behavior, which would be most meaningful for practitioners seeing that behaviors – rather than mere thoughts – affect organizational success. While there is little doubt that attitudes and especially intentions are closely related to behavior, research would benefit from including measures such as turnover rates (regarding internal stakeholders) or buying behavior (regarding external stakeholders). Moreover, such objective behavioral data cannot be subject to certain biases – such as social desirability or non-response biases – that may occur with the self-reported measures utilized in the present dissertation.

Fourth, all surveys (i.e., data collections for Study 1, 2, and 4) were conducted in German organizations and in German language. While there is no immediate evidence to

suggest that this focus affected the results, researchers have pointed out that cultural variables may affect organizational behavior in general (e.g., Erez, 1994) as well as expectations and reactions regarding CSR in particular (e.g. Gond et al., 2017). Hence, generalizing the present findings to different cultural contexts may not be possible, and further research is necessary in order to determine whether the same effects hold in other countries or regions.

Fifth, regarding the relationship of organizational change and CSR, this dissertation examined how responsible practices may foster the implementation of organizational change (or which antecedents such practices may address). Thereby, the dissertation focused on only one side of the potential transfer between change and CSR management. However, this transfer may also occur in the other direction with change management fostering the implementation of CSR measures (e.g., Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2009, Yuan et al., 2011). Hence, a fascinating avenue for future studies may be to deepen our understanding of the reciprocal support – versus one-sided transfers in either direction – that may occur between both areas.

3.5. Conclusion

Based on four empirical studies, this dissertation examined employees' reactions during organizational change as well as stakeholders' reactions to CSR. In explaining employee reactions during change, the findings highlighted the relevance of a change-related personality trait (i.e., dispositional resistance to change) and certain configurations of psychological factors (i.e., change related attitude, subjective norms, as well as perceived behavioral control). The findings also pointed to the influence of contextual variables at the individual level (i.e., ICSR information communicated by the supervisor) and the work-unit/team level (i.e., team level informational team climate, perceived organizational support, and dispersion of supervisor's communication). Moreover, the results revealed associations between CSR-related activities and public reputation at the level of organizations. Overall, the present dissertation thereby points to ways in which organizations can make a change through responsibility. In the light of today's highly dynamic environment and the increasing pressure exerted from stakeholders, the implications hence are relevant for practitioners and managers in the areas of CSR as well as organizational change. By shedding light on the intersection of both fields, this dissertation points to new avenues for future interventions and research endeavors.

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¹ Note: The references displayed in this list correspond to Chapters 1 and 3. The references included in the four studies that comprise Chapter 2 (Empirical Research) are listed at the end of each study.

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