Overcoming Organizational Change Fatigue
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Cody Cox and Greg Pool
Industrial/Organizational Psychology
St. Mary’s University
Developing the transformational leaders of tomorrow by creating and propagating “tools of thought” through a global network of research, development, and education in leading edge cultural stewardship and leadership.

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Organizational Change

Who wants to lead the change?
Organizational Change Failure

Recent research suggests that failure rates for enterprise-level change initiatives may be as high as 75%.

Implementation failures are often cited as a major reason for change failure.

- Failure to communicate why the change is necessary or how the change will proceed.
- Poor planning.
- Lack of leadership support.
- Lack of resources.
- Inadequate change leadership skills and experience.
- Focus on systems rather than people.
The idea of Change Fatigue (CF) was recognized as an important construct almost 20 years ago.

Unfortunately, there has been very little consensus about what change fatigue is or how it should be measured.

Most scholarly articles about CF are non-empirical thought pieces or qualitative case studies.
The 3 studies that measure CF quantitatively have focused on the number of changes experienced rather than the psychological and behavioral strain the changes can cause in employees and leaders.

• Rafferty and Griffin’s (2006) focuses on the uncertainty of change not fatigue.
• Elving, Hansma, & de Boer (2011) measures a resigned attitude toward change, not fatigue.
• Berneth, Walker and Harris (2011) measures fatigue within oneself, not organizational-level fatigue.
Enterprise-Level Change Fatigue

CF is a psychological state of exhaustion in which excessive amounts of change have led to the perception that future change will be difficult for the individual or the organization.

This exhaustion limits one’s ability to adapt to future changes.

The personal experience of CF is important, but it is essential that organizations also measure perceptions of CF in others.

• Reduces the likelihood that self-reports will be distorted or biased.
• Captures the impact of change on the organization, rather than a single individual.
• Less dependent on the rater’s personal ability to manage change.
Goals for the Current Research

Develop a new measure of change fatigue that fully captures the dimensions of fatigue, exhaustion, and overwhelming change.

Create scales measuring employees’ self-reported change fatigue (Self Change Fatigue) and their perception of change fatigue in others (Other Change Fatigue).

Create two versions of each measure.
- Long version for initial baseline analyses - more detailed information.
- Shorter scales for subsequent quick-takes.
Surveyed change fatigue across a variety of companies.

Measured burnout, engagement, and intention to turnover.

Participants were from a variety of industries, and were located at many levels within their organizations including managers and supervisors.
## Our Results

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Change Fatigue (Others)</td>
<td>0.97</td>
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<td>2. 12-Item Change Fatigue (Others)</td>
<td>0.89*</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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<td>3. Change Fatigue (Self)</td>
<td>0.95*</td>
<td>0.79*</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. 12-Item Change Fatigue (Self)</td>
<td>0.76*</td>
<td>0.76*</td>
<td>0.92*</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<td>5. Recent Changes</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Burnout</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>0.67*</td>
<td>0.63*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Engagement</td>
<td>-0.42*</td>
<td>-0.42*</td>
<td>-0.64*</td>
<td>-0.53*</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.75*</td>
<td>0.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Turnover</td>
<td>-0.46*</td>
<td>-0.43*</td>
<td>-0.47*</td>
<td>-0.34*</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>0.55*</td>
<td>-0.54*</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **How CONSISTENT our items were**
- **How well our scales related to each other**
- **Change predicts Change Fatigue**
- **Fatigue predicts Burnout**
- **Fatigue predicts Engagement**
- **Fatigue predicts Turnover**
Change Fatigue and Burnout

- Recovery
- Burned Out
- Reserve
- Propensity

Change Fatigue

- Self
- Other
Change Fatigue and Engagement

- Change Fatigue
  - One Year
  - Two Years
  - Three to Eight Years
  - More Than Seven Years

- Males
- Females

- No Subordinates
- One Subordinate
- Two Subordinates
- Three or More Subordinates
Change Fatigue and Turnover

The diagram illustrates the relationship between Change Fatigue and Turnover, with two main quadrants: Propensity and Departing. The X-axis represents Change Fatigue, while the Y-axis represents Turnover. The two quadrants are further divided into Reserve and Recovery sections.

The data points are color-coded, with blue indicating 'Self' and orange indicating 'Other'. The distribution of points suggests a correlation between the two variables, with some clustering and dispersion across the quadrants.

This visualization helps in understanding how changes in fatigue levels affect turnover, and how different types of employees (Self vs. Other) might react differently to these changes.
Change Fatigue and Turnover

**Change Fatigue**
- Less Than One Year
- One Year
- Two to Three Years
- Three to Eight Years

**Subordinates**
- One Subordinate
- Two to Three Subordinates
- Three to Eight Subordinates

**Gender**
- Males
- Females
What’s Next?

I’ve got change fatigue.

But we haven’t really started—
Next Steps For Research

Measuring fatigue over time.

Relationships between fatigue and other outcomes.

Identifying additional symptoms of fatigue.

Exploring fatigue in other contexts and settings.

Designing science-based interventions to remedy fatigue.
So, Your Company Has Change Fatigue... What Can You Do About It?
Business Risk Management Perspective

**Avoid** – don’t engage in activities known to carry certain risk.

**Abate** – reduce or eliminate the probability of the risk occurring or the severity of the consequences.

**Mitigate** – dealing with the damage after it has occurred.
Avoid – Not feasible to totally avoid but you can catch it very early.

• Establish a baseline within your organization.
• Measure frequently to catch an increase in CF before it is serious (i.e., early warning or an “annual physical”).
• Implement a Run-the-business / Change-the-business governance process.
• Consolidate and coordinate communications across all change initiatives.
• Have a strong program and project management process (treat org initiative as program).
Change Fatigue in the Business Risk Management Context

**Abate** – Change Fatigue is reaching concerning levels.

- We want to reduce the damaging impact of CF.
- Use information to reduce the severity of the consequences.
- Add resources (Tactically).
- Decrease operational ("day job") work loads.
- Deliver measureable/observable results in 90 day periods of time.

**Mitigate** – Negative consequences of Change Fatigue have already occurred.

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Provide rest and recovery periods.
- Celebrate progress and successes.
Thank you.

Questions?

gpool@stmarytx.edu
ccox9@stmarytx.edu