The Effect of Commitment, Communication and Participation

on Resistance to Change: The Role of Change Readiness

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Abstract

There is growing concern surrounding the effect of resistance to change on organisational change success. The main purpose of the present research was to clarify the relationships between important contextual variables highlighted in the literature, and resistance to change and readiness for change. Participants completed an online survey while their organisation was about to or already going through a change. As predicted, the results show the importance that participant perception of the adequacy of communication had on resistance to change and that this relationship was mediated by the readiness dimension of viewing the change as appropriate. The relationship between other contextual variables of perceived opportunities for participation and affective organisational commitment, and resistance to change were not found to be mediated by readiness for change dimensions. Affective commitment however, showed a direct negative relationship with resistance to change. These findings highlight the importance of a planned approached to change-related communications, and its potential to reduce resistance to change by effectively creating readiness for change in an organisation. Implications of these results and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Introduction

Overview

Change within organisations is commonplace in today's workplaces. Increasing globalisation, technological innovation, competition, a knowledgeable workforce, changing government laws and regulations, political events, and shifting social trends mean that organisations are faced with having to be more flexible and adaptable to environmental demands (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Pfeffer, 1994). Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) assert that larger organisations have to go through moderate organisational changes at least once a year, with major organisational change undertaken every five years. With change failure rates reported from 40% to as high as 70% (By, 2005; Cartwright & Cooper, 1992; Isern & Pung, 2007; Maurer, 1996), there is cause for concern on the lack of understanding of the reasons underpinning the high failure rates.

There are many reasons given for why change plans fail, but there is one issue that appears time after time: employee change resistance (Maurer, 1996; Reger et al., 1994; Spiker & Lesser, 1995). Waldersee and Griffiths (1996) completed a longitudinal study of large organisations and found that the most frequently reported problem by management when implementing a change was employee resistance. Researchers have argued that many organisational changes have failed because those managing a change often underestimate the critical role that employees play in a change process (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; George & Jones, 2001; Lau & Woodman, 1995). When planning and implementing an organisational change, employee reactions can be positive: e.g., they show commitment and receptivity to the change; or can be negative e.g., they show resistance, stress, or cynicism (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). The many reactions that employees have in regards to an organisational change vary over time. Moreover, it is also not entirely uncommon for

employees to feel ambivalent, where they hold conflicting emotions and cognitions about the change (Piderit, 2000).

In regards to negative reactions, change resistance has been one of the most commonly researched attitudes. Resistance to change, as a precursor to negative behavioural responses toward implementation strategies, has been referred to as one of the main reasons that organisational change plans fail and thus it is important to understand resistance in order to prevent future failures (Erwin & Garman, 2010).

While some name resistance to change as a major problem in organisations, others have focused on readiness for change and the role that it plays in facilitating organisational change (Armenakis et al., 1993). Readiness for change is defined as "the cognitive precursor to the behaviours of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort" (Armenakis et al., 1993, pp. 681-682). This is the process where employees' beliefs and attitudes about an organisational change are altered to perceiving the change as necessary and achievable (Armenakis et al., 1993). Others have suggested the similar term 'openness to change', defined as positive affect towards change and willingness to support change (Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Resistance and readiness have been used interchangeably, often causing confusion and thus not providing a clear classification for determining what the antecedents and consequences of these constructs are (Armenakis et al., 1993). Strategies for combating resistance to change (such as communication and participation) are described as actually creating readiness (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Past research has suggested that change readiness attitudes pre-empt change resistance (Armenakis et al., 1993). Highlighting factors that foster change readiness amongst employees may help drivers of change to gain valuable insight into employee change attitude development and subsequent change resistance. Although it has been suggested that both

organisational context factors and individual dispositional factors impact change readiness and resistance (Oreg, 2006; Wanberg & Banas, 2000), this study focuses on the relationships between organisational contextual variables. That is, the communication about a change, participation in a change, and affective commitment level to the organisation; and the relationship these hold with readiness and resistance to change. Where it is expected these contextual variables will be positively related to readiness for change, and negatively related to resistance to change, and that readiness for change mediates the relationship between the contextual variables and resistance to change. This is important to investigate as change leaders have a level of control over how much and what type of change-related communication an employee receives, whether an employee is able to participate in change planning and implementation, and how to appropriately capitalise on affective commitment to the organisation in order to ensure successful implementation and staff retention.

Resistance to change

People react to change in a variety of ways (Oreg, 2006). While some employees are more accepting of change, others are seen to be resistant. Chawla and Kelloway (2004) define resistance as "an adherence to any attitudes or behaviours that thwart organisational change goals" (p. 485). Additionally, Zaltman and Duncan (1977) define resistance as "any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo" (p. 63). Furthermore, Giangreco (2002) include in their definition that resistance to change "might take the form of non-violent, indifferent, passive or active behaviour" (p. 14). Resistance behaviours are described as being both overt e.g., sabotage and vocal opposition; and covert e.g., reducing output and withholding information (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005; Recardo, 1995). While overt resistance behaviours may be recognised by change managers, covert resistance may be harder to pinpoint and observe (Recardo, 1995). With over 70% of resistance being covert compared to overt then this provides the greatest challenge to those

managing a change (Recardo, 1995). Other negative behaviours about change can often include things such as ridicule of the change, boycotting change discussions, and blocking and sabotage behaviours (Lines, 2005).

Resistance to change is often touted as something to be eliminated or overcome (Waddell & Sohal, 1998). Conversely, Dent and Goldberg (1999) have put forward that the belief that there will be resistance to change is a primary flaw in change interventions. However, it would be unrealistic to expect that there will be no resistance when implementing a change in an organisation. Organisations and change managers often do not realise the ways in which employees feel a sense of security in their usual work groups and set routines. Levinson (1972) conceptualises organisational change as an experience of personal loss, especially when employees have valued and familiar routines. It is therefore understandable that reactions can actually be described as employees feeling emotional or mourning a loss from change (Burke, Lake, & Paine, 2008; Diamond, 2003). Allocating inadequate time and attention to the emotions of employees involved in a change can result in a poorer outcome in a change initiative (Diamond, 2003). By acknowledging that resistance to change could be present in employees, change managers may be able to better understand how to ensure that employees are ready for change.

There has been a multitude of research on antecedents and consequences of resistance to change. Sources of resistance include things such as cynicism, leadership inaction, lack of capabilities to implement change, and embedded routines (del Val & Fuentes, 2003). Most research on resistance to change however, has been conducted by assessing contextual variables such as communication and participation (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Coch & French, 1948; Elving, 2005; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Lines, 2004) and more recently affective commitment (Peccei, Giangreco, & Sebastiano, 2011), while others have only looked at individual dispositional factors (Cunningham et al., 2002; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik,

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& Welbourne, 1999). The role of change readiness and resistance has been considered from both a dispositional perspective and a situational perspective (Oreg, 2006; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). As such, Oreg (2006) found employee personality attributes and organisational context were significantly associated with employee attitudes towards organisational change, while Wanberg and Banas (2000) found that employee resilience and contextual factors such as communication and self-efficacy for coping with the change were related to higher levels of change acceptance. Although personality can be used to explain various reasons for why people resist change, it is also important to investigate contextual factors as they have a characteristic advantage in an organisational change. Change managers have an element of control over contextual factors which can ensure that a change initiative is implemented as effectively as possible.

As has been outlined, resistance to change poses as a major concern for organisations. There are many ways that change managers can influence employees' resistance to change. Examples include: providing support, negotiating incentives and agreements, manipulation and co-optation, and explicit and implicit coercion. While the appropriateness of these strategies is contingent on the time frame, the type of change, the stakes involved and the resources available (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979), the communication strategy and employee opportunity to participate in the change have been highlighted as the most effective methods of mitigating resistance and increasing readiness (Coch & French, 1948; Daft & Lengel, 1988; del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Elving, 2005; Ford, Ford & D'Amelio, 2008; Frahm & Brown, 2007; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Jimmieson, Peach, & White, 2008; Klein, 1996; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Lines, 2004; Marchington, Wilkinson, Ackers, & Goodman, 1994; Miller & Monge, 1985; Miller et al., 1994; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg, & Schyns, 2008).

Early understandings of change resistance conceptualised it as a force that was detrimental to organisational functioning and something that clashed with normal organisational operation, with the main impression being that it should be eliminated (Waddell & Sohal, 1998). However, the focus on combating or reducing resistance to change may overshadow potential opportunities that resistance to change presents. Many researchers have argued for the utility of resistance (e.g. Ford & Ford, 2010; Lines, 2004; Mabin, Forgeson, & Green, 2001; Piderit, 2000; Waddell & Sohal, 1998). Resistance to change has been framed as an important insight into the issues surrounding a change (Ford & Ford, 2010); a way to improve decision making (Lines, 2004); and something useful that can be channelled to shape strategic plans (Mabin et al., 2001). Additionally, employees may resist change on the basis of an ethical and strategic position, where they may not perceive the change as beneficial to the organisation and its stakeholders (Agocs, 1997; Oreg 2006; Piderit, 2000). Consequently, labelling concerns that employees raise as 'resistance' may prove to be detrimental. Change managers may miss out on what information employees can provide about obstacles and issues that they predict will arise after learning of change plans if they simply attempt to counter resistance (Maurer, 1996). By considering resistance, a change manager may be able to better understand the issues and make more informed decisions, but information of this type is only passed on if resistance is first acknowledged (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). For this to happen, open communication networks and participation in a change are necessary, not only so employees understand what is going to happen, but so they have the opportunity to raise issues that they find concerning.

Readiness for change

Readiness for change was initially conceptualised in health psychology and medical studies (e.g. Block & Keller, 1998; Prochaska, Redding, & Evers, 1997); where certain health behaviours are stopped (e.g. smoking) while others are started (e.g. exercise); but researchers

have adapted readiness to organisational settings. Many factors influence how effective organisational changes are implemented, and as described before, readiness for change is considered the cognitive precursor to the successful adoption of a change (Armenakis et al., 1993). Armenakis et al. (1993) describe two necessary courses of action for creating readiness for change in an organisation. The first is to communicate a message of discrepancy, where employees understand the desired end change state and the current state, thus highlighting the need for change. The second is to build confidence in employees that they have the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to deal with the discrepancy (Armenakis et al., 1993). If employees lack self-efficacy for the ability to change, then this can result in negative reactions such as defensiveness and denial (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). Chreim (2006) found that employees embrace change if they consider that their personal skills and abilities match those needed to succeed in new roles. By taking these two courses of action for creating readiness, an organisation is seen as effectively unfreezing employees beliefs and attitudes in preparing them for change (Armenakis et al., 1993). Research on readiness for change has found support for the two courses of action for creating readiness. For example, it has been found that individuals more confident in their ability to cope with job change, or those who have high self-efficacy reported higher readiness for organisational change and participated more in the redesign activities (Cunningham et al., 2002).

Other researchers have emphasized the importance of an employees' belief in the benefits of the change for the organisation and work processes (Jones, Jimmieson, & Griffiths, 2005), and an individual belief that the changes are "both necessary and likely to be successful" (Eby, Adams, Russell, & Gaby, 2000, p.422). Readiness for change is defined as an attitude that is collectively influenced by the content of the change, the process of the change, the context of the change and the individual employees (Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007). Readiness for change is reflected in the extent to which employees are

emotionally and cognitively likely to accept a change plan (Holt et al., 2007). Holt et al. (2007) describe readiness for change as a multidimensional construct based on four components. These are whether employees feel that the change is appropriate (appropriateness); whether they believe management support the change (management support); whether they feel capable of making the change successful (self-efficacy); and whether they believe the change is personally beneficial, which can alert them to needed attention about the change (personal valence) (Holt et al., 2007). By measuring all of these factors collectively, the combination results in a more comprehensive measurement tool of readiness for change (Holt et al., 2007).

Madsen, Miller, and John (2005) recommend that in order for employees to feel ready for change, first, it is essential that change managers and leaders understand how to create and foster change readiness. In order for this to happen, the mechanisms that create and drive readiness for change need to be investigated. Employees who are change ready hold an understanding and belief about the change and have an intent to change because of a communicated need made salient (Madsen et al., 2005). Employees report higher readiness for change levels when they feel committed to their organisations (Madsen et al., 2005). Furthermore, Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) discuss such strategies as participation and communication, and facilitation and support as ways to deal with resistance to change, where these strategies can be seen to be effective in reducing resistance to change through creating readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Communication

When implementing an organisational change it is important that there is a communication strategy in place as uncertainty can be more stressful than the practical aspects of the organisational change (Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). Feeling uncertain about an

impending change and what position it may leave employees in is characteristic of those going through change (Schweiger & Walsh, 1990). As such, providing employees with information about a change can help to reduce anxiety and uncertainty about expected outcomes (Miller & Monge, 1985). The link between communication and resistance to change is established in the literature. Wanberg and Banas (2000) found that when employees reported receiving useful information about an organisational change in a timely manner, they were more positive when evaluating the change and were more open to cooperate. Similarly, Miller et al. (1994) found that when change announcements were communicated, those communications that were timely, useful, and addressed employees' concerns, were more likely to help employees feel ready for change. These findings stress the importance of communication in a change. Good communication is said to allay employees' fears, transmit a message that fosters employee self-efficacy for being able to perform after the change is implemented, and educate employees about the change (Daly, 1995; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Furthermore, communication not only facilitates understanding but also enhances the buy in of employees to the strategic need for change (Van Dam et al., 2008). Finally, communicating with individuals about their appraisal of the change and helping them find a point of personal power within the change movement fosters this confidence in the change (Walinga, 2008).

Although communication in a change is vital, the significance of communication depends on the nature of how it is received, where any information is better received when it is delivered in an appropriate way (Miller et al., 1994). Daft and Lengel (1988) developed a richness level dimension of communication media and describe in-person information as the richest medium for delivering information, while written media are regarded as the leanest. The type of media that should be utilised is dependent on the type of message that is to be communicated. For example, Goodman and Truss (2004) found that the majority of

employees preferred face-to-face contact when senior managers were communicating the change strategy and benefits. This was compared to other media types such as email, memo's and staff bulletins.

Contrary to most studies, Goodman and Truss (2004) found that there was not much difference between those who had received a lot of information and those who had not, showing that even the best-planned communication strategy can still result in employees who feel like they have not received enough information in a timely and appropriate manner. Therefore, ensuring the appropriate change communication strategy is matched to the type of change is very important.

It is prudent to keep in mind that even the best planned organisational communication strategy may be affected by the social nature of employees in an organisation. Research has highlighted the importance of informal communication networks during change, which can develop through conversations among team and unit members, or online communications (Lok & Crawford, 1999). Organisations are embedded in social networks, where other employees can have a great effect on how people understand and conceptualise change plans. There are social systems through which information about a change (e.g., rationale for change, impact on work processes) is exchanged and discussed (Armenakis et al., 1993). Employees gauge reactions from each other to determine the meaning behind any change messages that are given (Armenakis et al., 1993). Research found support for this, where employees who were part of networks within an organisation that exchanged task and social information understood the expectations of their role better than those who were not (Miller & Monge, 1985). On a related note, Miller et al., (1994) found that those employees who were part of networks such as these received more information than others. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact that networks can have and the best ways to distribute information about a change. Madsen et al., (2005) found a link between social relationships in

the workplace and readiness for change, where positive attitudes towards colleagues may facilitate an environment that promotes information exchange which can lead to openness to change.

In essence, although research has highlighted the value of communication to change planning and implementation, communication is only helpful when change information is conveyed in an appropriate way, and information sharing through social processes within an organisation is accounted for.

Participation

While change communication is seen as a good way to overcome resistance, providing opportunity for participation in a change has also been commended as a way to help reduce these negative attitudes toward transformations to the work setting. Sashkin (1984) posits that the need for participation in organisational change is based on the principle that it fulfils three basic human work needs: autonomy, meaningfulness, and decreased isolation. As well as this, employee participation in an organisational change is thought to make the realities of the organisational change clearer, while also benefiting the change managers by gaining more information regarding the perspectives and skills of the employees (Lines, 2004). Not only do employees feel involved and feel like their opinion matters, but change managers receive valuable information that can help them to make better decisions when it comes to implementing a change (Kotter, 1996; Waddell & Sohal, 1998).

In addition, much research has highlighted the benefits of including employees in change planning and implementation. For example, there is ample evidence supporting the claim that employees who feel like they have an opportunity to participate in change planning also exhibit higher intentions to engage in behaviours that are change-supportive (Coch & French, 1948; Jimmieson et al., 2008; Lines, 2004; Marchington et al., 1994; Van Dam et al.,

2008). Furthermore, Coch and French (1948) illustrate that the level of employee participation (i.e. no participation, participation by representation, and total participation) has a direct effect on resistance to change. In practice, those who were involved in group meetings where management communicated the need for change and as a group planned the changes, showed less resistance to change.

In terms of how readiness and resistance to change can be impacted by employee participation, it is reasonable to assert that those employees who are part of the planning or implementation of a change are privy to information that is not accessed by those who do not participate; thus, they are more likely to understand the reasons and objectives for the change (Holt et al., 2007). Armenakis et al. (1993) conceptualise participation as a way in which employees can realise messages about organisational discrepancy and change related efficacy, where greater confidence is given to information realised on their own. Active participation is described in three ways – including those employees in tasks where they can gain a lot of information about discrepancy and efficacy; providing employees with a vicarious learning experience so that they can develop their own confidence for completing new tasks; and through enactive mastery, where employees take small steps towards a change, effectively building up confidence (Armenakis et al., 1993). Participation helps to facilitate a sense of ownership of the change process, where employees feel like they have come up with solutions themselves which can foster readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bouckenooghe, Devos, & Van den Broeck, 2009), leading to less resistance (Coch & French, 1948). Moreover, active participation can help facilitate change self-efficacy (Armenakis & Harris, 2002).

While there are reasons for involving employees in change planning and implementation, there are many reasons for why it is not always possible. To carefully involve everyone in a way that is precisely managed may take too long, especially when

change is the upshot of need for immediate response to environmental demands (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). It may not be possible to involve employees in certain changes as it may be too costly to do so, or specific groups of employees may not hold the necessary knowledge and expertise to make informed strategic decisions. In these instances, appropriate and timely communication could plausibly compensate for low levels of involvement in strategic decision-making.

Affective Commitment

One of the most commonly researched work-related consequences of change is organisational commitment (e.g. Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Holt et al., 2007; Judge et al., 1999; Oreg, 2006; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991).

Despite suggestion that commitment plays an important role in organisational change acceptance (Begley & Czajka, 1993; Cordery, Sevastos, Mueller, & Parker, 1993; Iverson, 1996; Yousef, 2000) and positive attitudes and reactions toward organisational change (Guest, 1987; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002) research on organisational commitment as an antecedent to employee reactions to change is scarce.

Although organisational commitment has been defined and measured in different ways, all definitions share a common premise that organisational commitment is a kind of bond or link that an employee has to an organisation (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Allen and Meyer (1990) propose that there are three types of organisational commitment: affective, continuous and normative. As defined by Allen and Meyer (1990) affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation. Normative commitment reflects pressures on an employee to remain with an organisation resulting from organisation socialisation. Continuance commitment refers to commitment associated with the cost that employees perceive are related to leaving the organisation (Allen

& Meyer, 1990). Organisational commitment is said to develop over time and can be influenced by a number of factors such as role related features, personal characteristics and work experience (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). The affective component of commitment has been shown to be strongly connected to important organisational related variables such as turnover, absenteeism, performance, organisational citizenship behaviours and resistance to change (Iverson, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002; Somers, 1995). Affective commitment is also strongly correlated with forms of organisational justice (Meyer et al., 2002). When an employee perceives that they are being treated fairly, they are more likely to become committed to an organisation. Solinger, Van Olffen, and Roe (2008) argue that normative and continuance dimensions of organisational commitment are different concepts to affective commitment, where the affective dimension corresponds to an attitude held about the organisation, while the other two dimensions reflect an attitude about outcomes such as turnover. They contend that the other dimensions be dismissed in favour for treating organisational commitment as an attitude (Solinger et al., 2008). Affective and normative commitment have been found to be highly correlated, while continuance commitment may be considered to be unidimensional, but more research is needed (Meyer et al., 2002). A key subject of research conducted on affective organisational commitment proposes that an employee, who is affectively committed, and has a psychological attachment to an organisation, identifies with the organisational values and goals, are more likely to engage in in-role and discretionary behaviours that are advantageous to an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). As mentioned before, a multitude of research has been conducted on organisational commitment and affective commitment has been shown to be most strongly related to a variety of important organisational outcomes, therefore, affective commitment is the most appropriate construct to investigate in this study.

Prior research on organisational commitment has produced a variety of findings on its relationship to resistance to change. Iverson (1996) found that organisational commitment was the second most important determinant of organisational change attitudes after union management, where those employees were more emotionally invested in the organisation and their goals were more congruent with the organisations goals. Begley and Czajka (1993) found that higher commitment levels before a major change in an organisation resulted in employees better handling their stress levels after. Indicating that organisational commitment can protect employees from the stress of organisational change (Begley & Czajka, 1993). Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) and Yousef (2000) also found a relationship between organisational commitment and positive change attitudes. This is on the basis that the change is seen as beneficial to the organisation and doesn't alter its core values too much (Bennett & Durkin, 2000; Yousef, 2000). Madsen et al. (2005) found that employees reported higher readiness for change levels when they felt committed to their organisations. That is, they felt higher readiness levels when they felt loyal, involved and identified with their organisations. Peccei et al. (2011) warn that while managing levels of organisational commitment may prove an effective tool in reducing resistance to change, it is best utilised alongside other measures such as effective communication strategies and employee participation.

Rationale for present research

It is important for researchers to understand what drives resistance to change in organisations, especially contextual elements, as this gives change managers the opportunity to direct change in a way that is successful. There are many reasons for why organisations encounter resistance from their employees; insufficient information, lack of participation, feelings of unfairness, the fear of losing something valued, and change to the established ways of doing something can all impact on reactions to change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). A large number of studies have outlined the effectiveness of reducing resistance to change

through providing employees with appropriate communication about the change and through involving employees in the change process. As well as this, an employee's level of affective commitment has been shown to have a positive effect on resistance to change. Similar results have also been found for readiness for change where communication about a change and participation are seen as effectively creating readiness for change in organisations. Affective commitment is not as well researched, but the literature suggests that it may provide a buffer for the negative effects of resistance (Peccei et al., 2011). Because readiness for change has been described in the literature as pre-empting resistance to change (Armenakis et al., 1993), it is important to understand its role in the relationship between the contextual variables of communication, participation and affective commitment, and resistance to change. To the author's knowledge, no research has investigated whether readiness for change mediates the relationship between contextual variables such as communication, participation and affective commitment, and resistance to change.

As well as this, there is a possibility that different groups may vary in the study variables. For example, Martin, Jones, and Callan (2006) found that upper level staff reported more positive attitudes towards change than lower level staff. Other differences have been found such as age and change acceptance, where older employees are less agreeable (Cordery et al., 1993). Therefore as well as the proposed relationships, differences in employee position, change type, full-time/part-time positions, age, tenure and sex will also be explored.

Hypotheses

Based on the review of the literature above, the research hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Perceived adequacy of the communication received about the change will be negatively related to resistance to change.

H2: Perceived opportunities for participation in the change will be negatively related to resistance to change.

H3: Affective organisational commitment will be negatively related to resistance to change.

H4: Change communication will be positively related to readiness for change dimensions (appropriateness, management support, self-efficacy and personal valence).

H5: Change participation will be positively related to readiness for change dimensions (appropriateness, management support, self-efficacy and personal valence).

H6: Affective organisational commitment will be positively related to readiness for change dimensions (appropriateness, management support, self-efficacy and personal valence).

H7: The relationship between change communication, change participation and organisational commitment and resistance to change will be mediated by readiness for change dimensions.

Method

Participants

Organisations were recruited via email and were a majority of government departments with one private business included also. Out of 21 various organisations approached, 6 organisations agreed to participate. The final sample was comprised of 102 employees from 6 organisations that were about to undergo change, or were currently going through change. Participants included 29.4% males and 70.6% females. The mean age was 39.62 years (SD = 9.90). The mean tenure was 5.75 years (SD = 6.00). Four main change types were reported: organisational restructure (N = 40), departmental restructure (N = 32), change in leadership (N = 25), and cost/budget cuts (N = 4).

Affective Commitment. In order to measure the employees level of organisational commitment the Affective Commitment subscale developed by Meyer & Allen (1997) was used. Previous coefficient alpha values for this subscale of the organisational commitment measure ranged from .77 to .88 (Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Meyer & Allen, 1997). A sample question to measure affective commitment is, "*This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me*". Responses were obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Communication Adequacy. The quality of communication about the change process was measured using a four item scale adapted by Wanberg and Banas (2000) based on a six item scale originally developed by Miller et al. (1994). The coefficient alpha for the six item scale was α = .86 (Miller et al., 1994). A sample question that measures information is, "*I have received adequate information about the forthcoming changes*". Responses are obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Participation. Participation was assessed with four items developed by Wanberg and Banas (2000) that look at the extent to which employees perceived that they had input into a change process. A sample question that measures participation is, "*I have some control over the changes that have been proposed*". Responses are obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. No coefficient alpha information was provided on the scale development study by Wanberg and Banas (2000).

Readiness for change. Readiness for change was measured along four dimensions using Holt, Armenakis, Field, and Harris' (2007), scale. The scale was developed to gauge readiness for organisational change at an individual level. The coefficient alphas for the dimensions were .94 for appropriateness, .87 for management support, .82 for change efficacy, and .66 for

personal valence (Holt et al., 2007). A sample question for the appropriateness subscale is: "*I think that the organisation will benefit from this change*"; for the management support subscale: "*Our senior leaders have encouraged all of us to embrace this change*"; for change efficacy: "*When we implement this change, I feel I can handle it with ease*"; and for personal valence: "*My future in this job will be limited because of this change*". Responses were obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Resistance to Change. The level of resistance attitudes that employees held about the change in their organisation was measured using a four item scale. Originally developed by Piderit (1999), the coefficient alpha for the negative intentional reaction to change subscale was .86. A sample question for negative intentional response subscale is: "*I intend to encourage others to resist implementing this change*". Responses were obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Procedure

Organisations were deemed eligible to participate through word of mouth and media reporting. Those organisations going through change were initially sent an email inviting them to participate. If possible this was sent to Human Resource departments, otherwise it was sent through online query forms on the organisations website. A copy of the initial contact email can be found in Appendix A. Those organisations that replied were asked to distribute the link to the survey to employees in the organisation. Most participants received an email inviting them to participate in the study, while some were advised of the study via a notice posted on their work intranet. The participation notice was sent by either their HR department or from those who were in charge of the change implementation. Both the email and notice contained the same information and can be found in Appendix B. Only employees of organisations who were about to undergo change, or were currently going through change

were eligible to participate Those who were interested in participating were able to click on a link attached to the notice that took them to the online survey hosted by Qualtrics' Survey Software. The first page provided information about the study, where participants were advised that any information they provided would be treated as confidential. Participants indicated their consent to participate by ticking the yes box on the information page before proceeding to complete the questionnaire. This page can be found in Appendix C. The survey took approximately ten minutes and participants were able to leave any comment that they wished to at the end of the survey.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for all variables are presented with the correlations in Table 1. Participants reported moderate levels of change communication adequacy, participation, and perceptions of the change as personally beneficial ($3.66 < M < 4.06$). There were somewhat higher mean levels on the affective commitment and perceiving the change as appropriate to the organisation ($4.45 < M < 4.49$). Perception of management support and change self-efficacy were higher again ($4.98 < M < 5.01$), whereas, intentional resistance to change was quite a lot lower than the mid-point ($M = 2.29$).

Before testing the hypotheses, factor analyses were conducted to examine the dimensionality of the scales. Principle factor analysis with varimax rotation in SPSS was used to assess the factor structure of the scales. Those factors that had an eigenvalue higher than one were assessed and items were considered to 'load' on a factor if they were at least .40, as recommended by Hinkin (1995).

Communication and participation were found to load on two different factors, indicating that they are measuring separate constructs. They both showed good reliability with high alpha values (α = .93, and .80 respectively). The affective commitment items loaded on two factors, which was not expected. However, item 4, "*I think that I could easily become attached to another organisation as I am to this one*" was the only item loading on factor 2, and was excluded from further analyses. The alpha value obtained for this version of the scale was .88.

Table 1.

Correlations for all Variables

	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Communication	100	4.06	1.53	(.93)										
2. Participation	100	3.66	1.33	.62**	(.80)									
3. Affective Commitment	98	4.49	1.24	.30**	.26**	(.88)								
4. Appropriateness	102	4.45	1.40	.48**	.36**	.24*	(.94)							
5. Management Support	100	5.01	1.37	.28**	.23*	.01	.02	(.85)						
6. Change Self-efficacy	100	4.98	1.09	.42**	.20	.23*	.58**	.06	(.86)					
7. Personal Valence	101	4.06	1.50	.52**	.26**	.32**	.55**	.02	.56**	(.72)				
8. Resistance to Change	98	2.29	1.13	-.30**	-.24*	-.33**	-.56**	-.12	-.42**	-.37**	(.90)			
9. Tenure (years)	101	5.77	6.02	-.26**	-.11	.09	-.20*	-.14	-.03	-.10	.16			
10. Sex	102	-	-	.10	-.02	.00	.14	-.08	.06	.07	-.11	-.15		
11. Age (years)	85	39.62	9.90	-.20	-.10	-.04	-.13	.04	-.02	-.02	-.05	.49**	-.06	

Note: *p < .05 **p < .01 (two-tailed)

The readiness for change scale when first examined showed six factors rather than four factors as expected. As well as this, several cross-loadings were noted. Items 7 and 8 from the appropriateness subscale loaded on the same factor as the items for personal valence subscale. When looking at these two items it is clear that they refer to personal outcomes of change (e.g., item 7 is: "*This change makes my job easier*"). Upon exclusion of the items, the alpha value for the appropriateness of change subscale was .94. In addition, items 4 and 6 from the management support subscale showed low communalities (.26 and .31 respectively). Communalities represent the proportion of variance in that item which can be attributed to the factors in that solution, indicating that these items do not belong to a factor. Upon exclusion of these items, the alpha value for the manager support subscale was .85. Change self-efficacy and perceptions of change as personally beneficial showed good alpha values ($\alpha = .86$ and .72 respectively).

For resistance to change, the items for negative intentional resistance loaded on a single factor. However there was one item with a very low communality and by excluding this, it increased the alpha value of the scale ($\alpha = .90$).

Correlations

The correlation matrix for the scales and demographic variables is presented in Table 1. As Table 1 shows, significant correlations were found between each of the independent, dependant and hypothesised mediator variables. Perceived adequacy of the communication received about the change was significantly negatively correlated with resistance to change, supporting hypothesis 1 ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$). Perceived opportunities for participation in the change were significantly negatively correlated with resistance to change also, supporting hypothesis 2 ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$). As well as this, affective organisational commitment was

significantly negatively correlated with resistance to change, consistent with hypothesis 3 ($r =$ -.33, $p < .01$).

Perceived adequacy of the communication received about a change was significantly positively related with appropriateness ($r = .48$, $p < .01$), management support ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), self-efficacy ($r = .42$, $p < .01$), and personal valence ($r = .52$, $p < .01$), readiness dimensions, supporting hypothesis 4. Perceived opportunities for participation in the change were significantly positively related with appropriateness ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), management support ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), and personal valence ($r = .26$, $p < .01$) readiness dimensions, supporting hypothesis 5. However, no significant relationship with the readiness dimension of self-efficacy was found. Affective organisational commitment was significantly positively related with appropriateness ($r = .24$, $p < .05$), self-efficacy ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), and personal valence ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) readiness dimensions, supporting hypothesis 6. However, no significant relationship with the readiness dimension of manager support was found.

Tenure was found to negatively correlate with communication about the change and appropriateness for the change.
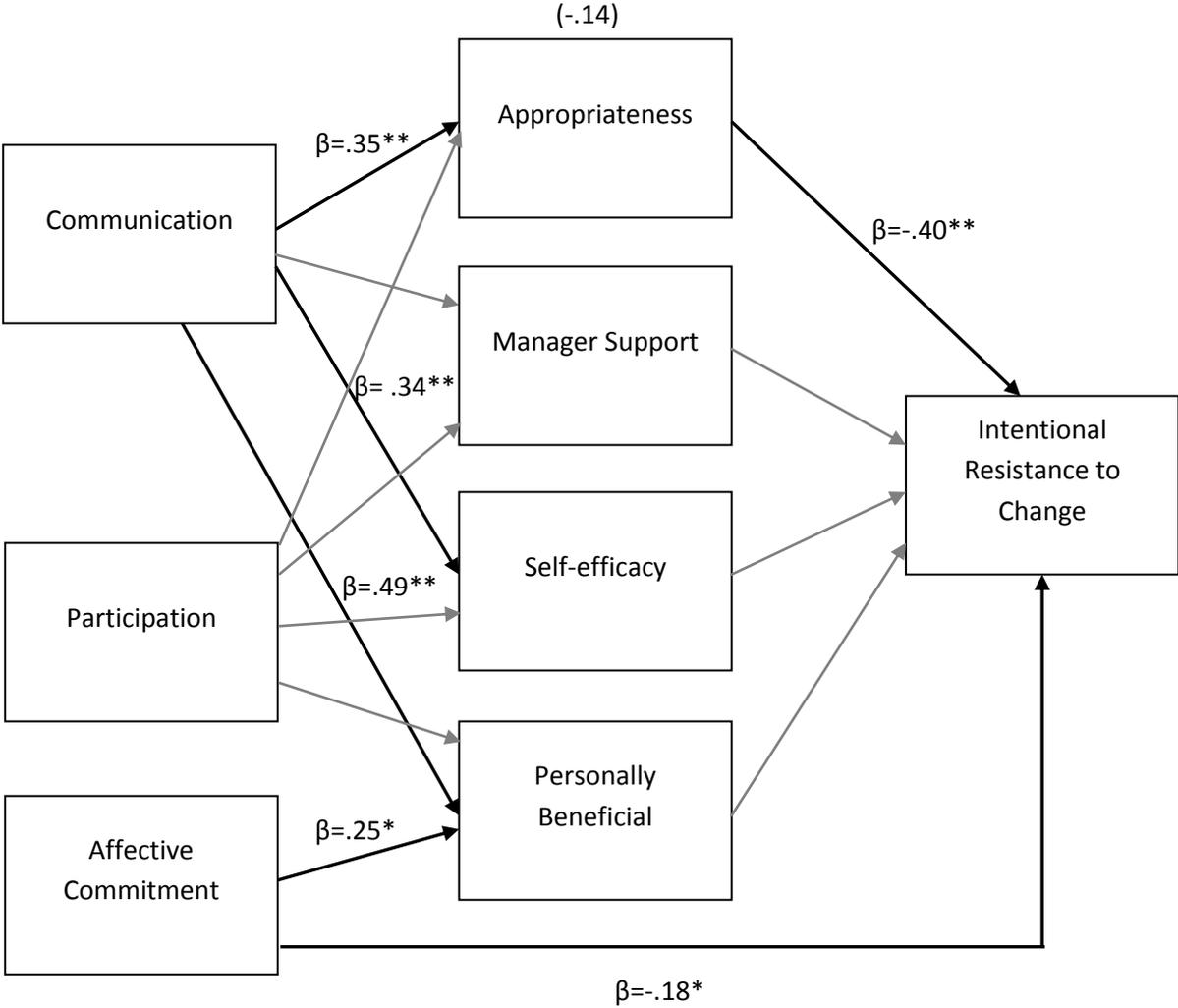
Mediation

Hypothesis 7 proposed that the relationship between change communication, change participation, organisational commitment and resistance to change would be mediated by readiness for change dimensions (i.e., appropriateness, management support, self-efficacy and personal valence). To test this prediction, the Mediation Macro developed by Hayes and Preacher (2011) was used, where all the predictors, mediators and the outcome variables were entered in the model simultaneously.

Because all of the regressions are calculated at the same time, all other variables are controlled for when testing individual relationships. Figure 1 shows the results of a

meditational analysis on the variables. As hypothesised: the results revealed a significant relationship between perceived appropriateness of the change and resistance to change, whilst controlling for effects of communication (β = -.40, p < .01), but no other significant relationships were found between change readiness dimensions and resistance to change. Furthermore, the results displayed a significant indirect effect between communication and resistance to change (β = -.14, p < .01), indicating a mediation, where the relationship between communication and intentional resistance to change dropped in direct path size when the readiness dimension of appropriateness (the mediating variable) was controlled.

Figure 1. *Results of mediation analysis (grey arrows indicate non-significant paths).*

* p < .05 **p < .01 (two-tailed)

It was also found that affective organisational commitment was significantly related to perceiving the change as personally beneficial and to resistance to change, but perceptions of change as personally beneficial did not mediate the relationship between affective commitment and change resistance (β = -.02, *ns*). It should be noted that participation in a change had no significant effect on readiness for change dimensions or on resistance to change. This latter finding is likely due to the impact of communication, which may have subsumed that of participation.

T-tests

Independent t-tests were conducted to explore differences in perceptions of communication, participation and readiness and resistance in relation to sex, employment status groups, managerial position and change time. When looking at sex, it was found that there were no significant differences between males and females on any of the scales. When testing to see if there was a difference between those participants who worked part-time and those who worked full-time, it was found that those who worked full-time reported that the change was more appropriate (t(99) = -3.17, p < .01), (3.26 < M < 4.61). Full-time participants also reported significantly more change self-efficacy (t(97) = -2.07, p < .05), (4.38 < M < 5.07), and higher perceived adequacy of communication about the change (t(97) = -1.99, p < .05), (3.25 < M < 4.20), than those who work part-time. Those participants who worked in a managerial position reported significantly higher change efficacy than those who did not hold a managerial position *(t(98) = 2.46, p < .05)*, (4.81 < M < 5.38). There was not a significant difference in responses between those who reported that they were about to undergo change and those who were currently going through change.

When examining the types of change that participants reported, significant differences were found in levels of change readiness and resistance across change types of organisational restructure, departmental restructure, change in leadership, and cost/budget cuts. For appropriateness, participants who indicated that the change they were going through was a departmental restructure reported that the change was significantly less appropriate than those participants of other change types ($F (3, 97) = 3.60$, $p < .05$). For management support, those who reported having a change in leadership also perceived less managerial support for the change, compared to other change types ($F (3, 95) = 16.23$, $p < .01$). Those going through a departmental restructure reported the highest mean level of management support (M = 5.55, SD = 0.85). Interestingly, those participants who reported a change in leadership found the change more personally beneficial than those who were going through other change types ($F (3, 96) = 2.76$, $p < .05$). Participants who reported the change as budget and cost cuts reported more intention to resist change compared to those going through other change types ($F (3, 93) = 3.14$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

Summary of results

This research was interested in assessing the relationship between a number of contextual variables (i.e., communication, participation, and affective commitment), readiness for change and resistance to change. In addition, the mediating role of readiness for change in the relationship between the contextual variables and resistance to change was investigated.

Based on previous research it was expected that the perceived adequacy of the communication that was given to participants about a change would elicit less resistance to change. Consistent with hypothesis 1, the findings revealed a negative relationship between communication and resistance to change indicating that the greater reported adequacy of the communication that participants received, the less likely they were to react negatively to the change. Consistent also with hypotheses 2 and 3, reported opportunities for participation in a change and affective organisational commitment were negatively related to intentional resistance to change. This indicates that the more reported opportunity for participation and the greater level of affective commitment then the less likely participants intended to react negatively to the change. These findings are consistent with previous research that has highlighted the strong links that communication and participation have with resistance (e.g. Coch & French, 1948; del Val and Fuentes, 2003; Ford et al., 2008; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Jimmieson et al., 2008; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Lines, 2004; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam et al., 2008), and more recently affective commitment (Peccei et al., 2011).

Based on previous research it was expected that the more reported adequate communication that was given to employees about a change then the more participants would report being ready for change (hypothesis 4): find the change appropriate, perceive management as supporting the change, have self-efficacy for making the change successful,

and view the change as personally beneficial. The findings supported the hypothesis, revealing a positive relationship between communication and all four readiness dimensions indicating that the more reported communication that participants received then the more ready for change they felt. Based on previous research, a similar result was also expected for reported participation in a change. Similar results were found to support hypothesis 5 except for the relationship between participation and the readiness dimension of management support, where no significant relationship was found. These results are consistent with Walinga (2008), where a participative role structure and increased clarity in communication amongst teammates were identified as being instrumental in transforming (changing) a team.

It was also expected that affective commitment would be positively related to readiness for change dimensions. In line with hypothesis 6, it was found that affective commitment was positively related to all of the readiness dimensions except for management support. This finding supports the idea that affective commitment plays an important role in being an antecedent to change attitudes, where it may provide a buffer for the stress of change (Peccei et al., 2011). Although communication and participation can be seen as methods to reduce resistance and increase readiness, by understanding the relationship that affective commitment holds with change attitudes, then this can help change managers understand how not only current techniques matter, but employees feelings about the organisation that have developed over time.

As expected, readiness for change mediated the relationship between communication and resistance to change. However, this was only significant for the readiness dimension of appropriateness. Although a relationship between communication and resistance to change is expected, it is also expected that if that communication does not properly convey the appropriateness of the change, then it may not have an influence in reducing resistance. Therefore, communication about a change has a negative relationship with resistance to

change to the extent that change-related communication conveys the appropriateness of the change.

All other predicted mediation relationships were not found to be significant. Despite the significant correlations between participation and change readiness and resistance, it appears the inclusion of communication in the model eliminated the effect of participation. Quantitative and qualitative information drawn from the survey indicates that the changes in the organisations included in this study were mostly implemented top-down, allowing little opportunity for participation. Downsizing and restructuring is an example, where it would be rather unorthodox for employees to participate in deciding what employees have to be made redundant. In addition, few respondents held a salient leadership position in the organisation, and were mostly middle-managers or not currently in a managerial position.

Affective commitment showed a significant direct path to resistance to change. The direct negative relationship between affective commitment and resistance to change is important as it shows the way in which an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation influences resistance to change. Affective commitment was also found to have a significant positive relationship with the readiness dimension of personal valence. A possible explanation for why this dimension was significant while the others were not is that participants who identify strongly with their organisation may view change plans as being beneficial for them. However, the finding that communication accounted for most of the variance in the change readiness component "personal valence" highlights the idea that although affectively committed individuals may exhibit less intention to resist the change, communication is essential to ensuring that employees know how the change will positively impact the organisation (i.e., appropriateness).

Further analyses provided insight into the participant groups. Compared to those who were working part-time, individuals working full-time were more likely to deem the change as appropriate to the organisation, to experience higher change efficacy for the change, and consider the appropriateness of the change-related communication provided. This finding makes sense as those who work fulltime are more 'core' employees and are at the workplace for longer, thus providing more opportunity to receive communication about the change and feel ready for the change. Whereas, part-time or more 'periphery' employees are not present as often to receive such information (Barling, Inness, & Gallagher, 2002).

Those participants who stated that they were in a managerial position reported significantly higher change-efficacy. This finding is interesting as it shows how those who have a role in the implementation of change have the confidence that they are able to perform satisfactorily after the change. This may be because they have more access to information about the change, where they are more aware of the consequences of the change and a belief that they have the experience and hold a position that allows them to grow and adapt (Martin et al., 2006).

Previous research has found inconsistent results between tenure, age and sex and readiness for change (Madsen et al., 2005), however, in this study it was found that tenure negatively correlated with communication and appropriateness for the change, this is somewhat surprising as it is expected that those who have been in an organisation longer may have had more time to develop strong social networks where information is shown to be exchanged (Miller et al., 1994). Conversely however, Iverson (1996) found that tenure had a negative effect on organisational change, consistent with Broadwell's (1985) assertion that those who have not been with an organisation for long will be less set in their ways and have fewer set notions about organisational procedures. Van Dam et al., (2008) also found a negative relationship between tenure and resistance to change, and they postulate that it could

be because longer tenured employees may have more investments in the current work situation such as retirement programs and specific skills and they may be more likely to oppose threats to the status quo. Although the current study did not find a direct relationship between tenure and resistance to change, the negative relationships between tenure and communication and viewing the change as appropriate raises cause for concern. This is because those with longer tenure may not accept managerial efforts for clear communication and portrayal of the appropriateness of the change which could have additional effects on change implementation. Previous research has found age to have a negative relationship with change, where younger employees are more likely to accept change than their older colleagues (e.g., Cordery et al., 1993). However, this study found no such relationship between age and the measured variables. Sex had no significant relationship with any of the measured variables consistent with Cunningham et al., (2002) who found no relationship between readiness for change and gender.

The significant differences found between types of change provide insight into the complexity of employee reactions and attitudes to organisational change. A reason for why those going through a departmental restructure reported a significantly lower level of appropriateness then other kinds of changes is not clear. It may be the case that when people are directly affected in a departmental restructure they are less likely to see the change as appropriate as they may overemphasize the importance of their job in a department. Employees who are invested in their jobs are unlikely to take news that their position in the organisation is surplus to requirements very well, especially if they identify strongly with the organisation and with their position in the organisation (Luthans & Sommer, 1999).

The significant difference found between a leadership change and management support may be able to be explained through the lack of a manager to show their support. The organisation in the current study that was going through a leadership change spent some time

without a leader until a new one was appointed. For this reason, they were unable to gauge their manager's level of support for the change as they did not have one to observe at the time of data collection.

Overall, the results suggest that communication plays an important role in resistance to organisational change and that there is some evidence to support the notion that this relationship is mediated by readiness for change. Other predicted antecedent variables were found to significantly correlate with resistance and readiness for change, but none were as influential as communication.

Research limitations

A limitation of the study is that survey data was collected at only one point in time. Because of this, claims regarding the directionality of the relationships between the variables in this study should be made with caution. The use of multiple regression means that relationships can be substantiated, but no assertions can be made about any underlying causal mechanisms (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Nevertheless, previous research and theory exist to support the causal directions of the relationships proposed in this study.

Another limitation was that the participants were at two different stages of change. It may be the case that employee's change attitudes alter over a change period (Piderit, 2000). However, there was no significant difference found between those participants who reported they were about to undergo change and those who were currently going through change, highlighting that similar results were found for all organisations who participated, regardless of being in different stages of a change process.

A further limitation of the research design could be common method variance, due to the fact that all of the measures used were self-report and completed in a single survey. Correlations may be higher between the measures as participants may act on the same biases

for each. However, findings from factor analyses show each scale was found to be loading on separate factors, indicating that they are different constructs. This suggests that common method variance may not have greatly influenced the results. Furthermore, if there are some effects there is no reason to suppose that differences in relationships between the variables are because common method variance has exerted a degree of difference bias on the relationships (Spector, 2006).

Finally, more significant results might have been seen with a larger sample size. The sample of 102 may not have had enough power to produce significant results for some of the hypothesised relationships. A downside of researching organisational change is that organisations can be reluctant to allow their employees to participate as they cite that their staff are already under enough stress and an increased workload. By gaining more access to participants the knowledge on attitudes around resistance and readiness for change could be expanded.

Directions for future research

Future studies would benefit from delving deeper into what makes communication so instrumental in organisational change. While some studies have explained the importance of communication as a way to reduce uncertainty (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007), investigation of the differing sources and media used to convey change messages may provide further understanding of how employees conceptualise change through received messages. As well as this, research could also investigate how employees search for and understand information from within the work environment, where employees may take a more active role in seeking information rather than assuming they are passive and simply wait for information to be received. Furthermore, future research could investigate the role that social relationships play in both communication and participation (Armenakis et al., 1993; Madsen et al., 2005).

Participation was only investigated from the extent to which employees perceived that they had input into a change process. Some change processes do not allow for participation because of time constraints and the reactive nature of some changes (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Therefore, it may be interesting to look at participation from various levels similar to Coch and French (1948). For example, full participation (have influence over the change) may produce different results to those who are simply able to air their views for management to consider. Other levels of participation that could be investigated include things such as the effect of having only one person from a team participating in a change and whether this helps the rest of the team feel like they have an input (although indirectly) in a change.

As well as this, future research could set out to better understand the various definitions that have been given for resistance to change, readiness for change, openness to change and commitment to change. Often these labels have been used interchangeably and with all of these being similar constructs, a clearer conceptualisation of these would make future research easier to undertake. It would also allow for better and easier integration of past research as there have been several variations of studies undertaken with each looking at similar constructs that are defined slightly differently.

Future research could also investigate individual-level outcomes to see what effect the relationships that the variables assessed in this study hold with long term organisational factors such as job satisfaction, turnover and future change success. Although understanding what factors influence resistance to change is useful, it is also important to understand how individual-level variables are affected once a change is implemented.

Organisational change as it was once conceptualised was thought of as something that was an exception to routine day-to-day functioning. Only recently have calls been made to allow organisational change to be embraced and accepted as an ongoing process (Ford &

Ford, 1994; Orlikowski, 1996; Pettigrew, 1992; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Weick & Quinn, 1999). The current research however investigated resistance to change in terms of a change that is more characteristic of an episodic change. Episodic change is said to follow Lewin's model of organisational development where change is conceptualised as progressing through successive phases of unfreezing, transitioning and refreezing (Lewin, 1947). Episodic change is described as the change being driven rather than emerging (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Continuous change however is more reflective of organisational change that is ongoing and evolving, where small adjustments across organisations can result in substantial change over time (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Future research could investigate differences in organisational change that is considered to be continuous, where organisations have adopted a culture of constant change and adaptability. Further to this, future research could also be conducted on those employees who have gone through numerous changes within an organisation where as well as contextual factors, past change may have a predictive impact on how new change plans are received (Stensaker & Meyer, 2011).

Conclusions

The research sought to clarify the relationships between contextual variables and resistance to change, and to highlight important variables that mediated this relationship. Communication, participation, affective commitment, appropriateness, management support, change self-efficacy, personal valence and resistance to change relationships were explored in order to better understand the mechanisms guiding successful and unsuccessful change plans.

The finding that hypothesis 7 was partially supported, where the relationship between the contextual variable of communication and resistance to change was mediated by appropriateness has important implications for the future direction of not only research, but also on organisational change strategies. By understanding that communication about the

change is mediated by employee perception of the appropriateness of the change, then change managers can better understand how communication has such a big influence over resistance to change. Where care can be taken on the kind of message that is given so that employees not only gain understanding of important information about the change, but they understand why the change is appropriate.

Although no other predicted mediating relationships were found, the correlations between the variable still provide important insight into how contextual factors are related to subsequent change attitudes. Further exploration is needed in determining causality of the contextual and mediating factors, as well as this, research also needs to address the various labels given to the resistance, readiness, and openness to change literature to ensure clearer integration of literature and various antecedent and consequent factors that have been found.

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Appendix A: Email Recruitment

To whom it may concern

You and your organisation are invited to participate in the research project: The Effect of Commitment, Communication and Involvement on Resistance to Change: The Role of Change Readiness. The project is being carried out as a Masters Dissertation requirement by Kali McKay under the supervision of Joana Kuntz, in the Psychology Department of the University of Canterbury. The study seeks to investigate change in organisations and the factors that are involved in employee resistance to change. In recent media it has been highlighted that there may be an introduction of automated postal services and also the possibility of store closures. These organisational changes are what I am interested in and I would greatly appreciate your help with my research

The study involves employees of your organisation completing a 15-20 minute anonymous survey.

Those who participate in the study will eligible to win one of three $200 supermarket vouchers.

The survey will be distributed through a link sent via e-mail and requires that employees have access to a work email. If this is not possible, then paper versions can be arranged to be sent.

A summary of the overall findings of the study can be sent to you if requested once the study is completed. This study will provide you with information on staff readiness or resistance to change, and on the extent to which the communicating strategy of the organisation is contributing to these attitudes. This information can then be used by the organisation to inform the change process (e.g., communication and involvement approaches). This may also be very beneficial for future change plans and processes.

While many people often find change to be a distressing topic, it is expected that minimal emotional distress will occur as a result of completing this questionnaire. The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed my request to conduct this project. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me (kali.mckay@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or Joana Kuntz (joana.kuntz@canterbury.ac.nz).

Please let me know by return email whether or not your organisation would be interested in participating in the study.

Regards,

Kali McKay

Appendix B: Invitation to Participation Email/Notice

You are invited to participate in a survey regarding readiness and resistance to organisational change. The project is being carried out as a Masters Dissertation requirement by Kali McKay under the supervision of Joana Kuntz, in the Psychology Department of the University of Canterbury.

The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. In return for taking the time to take part in this study, you may go in the draw to win one of three $200 grocery or fuel vouchers.

Any information that you provide will be treated as confidential.

To take the survey, please click on the link/or copy and paste it into your web browser.

http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_40cH30PqHkYYyhu

The Effect of Commitment, Communication and Involvement on Resistance to Change: The role of Change Readiness.

Please read the following note before completing the questionnaire.

NOTE: You are invited to participate in the research project: The Effect of Commitment, Communication and Involvement on Resistance to Change: The Role of Change Readiness by completing the following questionnaire.

Purpose of Study
The aim of the project is to understand the antecedents of resistance to change in order to help understand the mechanisms underlying successful and unsuccessful change plans.
The project is being carried out as a Masters Dissertation requirement by Kali McKay under the supervision of Joana Kuntz, Psychology Department, University of Canterbury.

The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. In return for taking the time to take part in this study, you may go in the draw to win one of three $200 grocery or fuel vouchers. Please indicate whether you would like to go in this draw by entering your email address in the space provided at the end of the survey.

Confidentiality
• Any information that you provide will be treated as confidential. Only the principal researcher and supervisors will have access to raw data. Under no circumstances will any data you supply be disclosed to a third party in a way that could reveal its source.

• The questionnaire data will be stored on password-protected computers in secured locations in the Psychology department of the University of Canterbury.

• You can be assured that your name will not be revealed in any reports or publications generated by this study.

You may withdraw your participation, including withdrawal of any information you have provided, until your questionnaire has been added to the others collected.

It is expected that minimal emotional distress may occur as a result of completing this questionnaire. However, if you do feel distressed then you are able to stop until you feel able to resume the questionnaire or terminate your involvement in the project altogether. Use the 'comments' section at the end to state your intention to withdraw from the project.

Rights of Research Subjects
The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed my request to conduct this project. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Joana Kuntz (joana.kuntz@canterbury.ac.nz). She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

Participant Consent
• I have read and understood the description of the above-mentioned project.

• I understand that my participation will involve completing a questionnaire

• I fully accept that I am giving my consent to participate in this research study. Ticking the 'accept' box indicates that I understand and agree to the research conditions.

• I also understand and am satisfied with all the measures that will be taken to protect my identity and ensure my interests are protected.

• I understand that because my identity is unknown I cannot withdraw the data I provide once I have turned in the questionnaire.

• I understand that I will only be eligible to win a $200 voucher if I answer all the survey questions.

• I agree to publication of results, with the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved.