

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE:
AN ANALYSIS BETWEEN OBSERVED BEHAVIORS
AND ESPOUSED PERCEPTION.
A PROPOSED STUDY
AT
[COMPANY NAME HERE]

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Executive Summary

Massive or rapid business upturns and downturns, technology shifts, mergers, and acquisitions all can result in major organizational change. These changes can involve deep structural change that may require cultural change within the organization for lasting success. However, many studies have commented that the success rate of lasting change efforts has been poor. One such study attempting to better understand the issues found that both not adequately planning for change and not addressing organizational resistance to change fell in the top five factors for determining success or failure.

The purpose of this paper is to outline an initial study to examine relationships between individual self reported measures of resistance to change and objectively measured behaviors and to observe and report if reaction to change, caused by a transformative change effort, alter individuals' espoused perceptions of change and/or actual performance. The value of this study will be to aid in increasing the knowledge of those aspects contributing to evidenced resistance to change. This first study has two main goals. The first goal is to provide the data for this writer's doctoral dissertation on resistance to change. The second goal of this study is to validate a baseline measurement protocol for follow-on studies investigating moderating factors of resistance to change. There is considerable literature suggesting the importance of leadership during change for successful outcomes. The objective of the follow-on studies is to research and develop meaningful investigative and diagnostic tools for the organization seeking to affect such deep and structural changes within their business.

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What This Paper Is About

This paper describes a possible pathway to improving the quality of transformative changes that occur in organizations. Many of these changes are due to environmental upheavals that the organization has to deal with. Such upheavals might come from a new disruptive technology to the organization's offering, legislative change that drastically alters the ability of the organization to compete, and massive upheavals that stem from mergers and acquisitions or major upturns and downturns. All these types of change result in deep structural changes to the organization that affects the very culture of the organization.

A first study is detailed that will attempt to establish a repeatable measure between espoused perceptions regarding change and empirical outcomes. Having established a protocol for measuring the real effects of resistance to change, a case for leadership as a moderator of change is made, and a series of follow-on studies are discussed. The initial goal of the follow-on studies is to measure the moderating effect of leadership styles on resistance to change (RTC). These studies are established to develop a methodology for the practitioner to improve the chances of obtaining lasting change in situations dealing with needed structural and cultural change.

This first study is also to provide the data for the author's doctoral dissertation. To meet the two goals of this first study, careful attention needs to be made that this first study provides the quality research to meet both goals. The intent of this paper is to fully explain the initial study and enter into an analytic discussion with [Company Name] such that this author's dissertation committee, [Company Name], and the author are satisfied that the organization under study will be sufficiently representative of organizations

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undergoing transformative change and that the data and analysis gained from the study will have adequate trustworthiness to inform the follow-on studies.

The Problem Defined

Stemming from Lewin's theories of change, the subject of organizational change has grown to a very rich field of theory and practice with no shortage of new ideas. However, in spite of all the academic and practical activity, the success of achieving major change in organizations has been chronicled as being poor with some researchers noting failure rates reaching as high as 70% (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burnes, 2005; By, 2007; Carleton & Lineberry, 2004; Epstein, 2004; Wildenberg, 2006). In a survey study of 105 business processes that were reengineered, Grover, Jeong, Kettinger and Teng (1995) developed a hierarchical list of 64 derived problems that affected the change effort. The top five problems discovered in order of importance were (1) the need to manage change was not recognized, (2) top management had a short term view and was looking for a quick fix, (3) there were rigid hierarchical structures in the organization posing barriers, (4) line managers were unreceptive to innovation, and (5) there was a failure to anticipate and plan for organizational resistance to change. It would seem reasonable to suggest that researchers in the field of organizational change continue to search for better understanding of the phenomenon.

Organizational change and resistance to change received academic interest when Kurt Lewin (1947) developed his theories of change and field theory in social science in the late 1940's. As the topic has developed, three different basic theories of change have evolved, Incremental, Continuous, and Transformative change. The traditional view of change was that of a linear process of gradual and incremental change with the

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organization progressing through a logical sequence of stages over time. This view of change was expanded by a new view of a non-linear process (Chang, Bordia and Duck, 2003). One such theory of the new view was the concept of punctuated equilibrium brought into social research by Gersick (1991). Opposed to linear change, punctuated equilibrium was considered nonlinear change. Creating a possible third type of change, Weick and Quinn (1999) suggested it was possible to “bypass the apparatus of planned change” (p. 376) as well as overcome the arguments of incremental change’s inability to be transformative by utilizing continuous change in a conceptual mode of *translation*. These three types of change appear able to contain the current conceptualizations of change: Incremental change addressed by fine tuning practices and processes for increased efficiency; Continuous change driven by rapidly and continuously changing technologies and other environmental forces; and Radical change forced upon organizations by major environmental shifts, societal shifts, and disruptive technologies.

Incremental, developmental, or transitional change

Incremental change, also termed evolutionary or convergent change, is seen as small-scale and restricted to individual, localized change projects (Breu & Benwell, 1999). Falling within the scope of incremental change, Anderson and Anderson (2008) suggested that developmental and transitional change could be addressed by transactional change management techniques.

Continuous change

Weick and Quinn (1999), in contrasting episodic change with continuous change, made a distinction that episodic change followed Lewin’s (1947) unfreeze-transition-refreeze while continuous change would follow a path of freeze-rebalance-unfreeze. The

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authors characterized episodic change as tending to be infrequent, discontinuous and intentional while continuous change was suggested to be ongoing, evolving and cumulative changes. In their view, an “organization associated with continuous change is built around recurrent interactions... authority tied to tasks rather than positions, shifts in authority as tasks shift... systems that are self organizing rather than fixed...”(p. 375). The authors suggested leaders would be required to make deep changes in themselves for an organization of this type to succeed.

Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) found two salient features of the continuous change organization in their study of the computer industry. They noted successful managers first perfected their moves and then developed a game plan in stark contrast to the sequence of transformative change. Perhaps allowing this strategy, they noted firms created organizational structures that in some terms were structured but in other ways were not. Parallel to the types of change discussed in this section, the authors suggested that these types of structures lie between the extremes of very rigid and highly chaotic organization. They speculated that the semi-rigidity allowed change to occur yet be managed, but not so rigid as to prevent change altogether. The authors noted a managerial challenge because such structures exhibited a dissipative equilibrium and required constant managerial action to avoid slipping into pure chaos or pure structure.

Chaotic, radical, frame breaking, or transitional change

The organizational model of punctuated equilibrium as developed by a number of scholars posited that major change occurs infrequently, abruptly and metamorphic (Gersick, 1991; Miller & Friesen, 1980); Tushman, Newman, & Romanelli, 1986). Gersick suggested organizational momentum maintained the system’s equilibrium but

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when that equilibrium was broken, the resulting change would dismantle the organization's deep structure. Romanelli and Tushman (1994) suggested that the large majority of organizational transformations were accomplished via rapid and discontinuous change while a series of small changes did not accumulate to provide any major transformations.

Breu and Benwell (1999) noted numerous terms of radical change, revolutionary, or discontinuous, to imply large-scale, organization-wide transformation, exhibiting a decisive break with the past. They noted radical change had been depicted as "frame-bending", a concept that highlights the organization's complete breakaway from an established orientation and, thus, its transformation. Anderson and Anderson (2008) noted transformative change to be chaotic in nature and required a radical shift in the mindset of the agent and followers requiring an engaged leadership role to help drive the process towards a desired state. Anderson and Anderson argued that the transformative process was by nature chaotic, and that it could not be managed, suggesting there was an element of risk in how an organization emerges from a chaotic state. Transformative change is characterized by changes to the deep structure and culture of the organization and, due to the magnitude of disruptive effects, is the intervention of interest of this study.

Resistance to Change

Researchers have looked to understand change (and resistance to change) from the lenses of systems theory, organizational group dynamics and the individual. While all three lenses have valid arguments, many researchers argue that in the end, it is the individual that affects change to the organization. The literature is rich with propositions

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on resistance to change, but as Van De Ven and Poole (1995) have noted, these theories and studies remain compartmentalized and fragmented. Dent and Goldberg (1999) challenged the direction of researching the individual, suggesting a more profitable avenue would be to return to a systems approach. Piderit (2000), noting Goldberg and Dent's arguing for a retiring of the phrase "resistance to change," called for a unified multi-dimensional approach to researching this topic. In answering that call, Oreg (2003) developed what he claimed to be the first instrument to specifically address individual resistance to change simultaneously looking at three dimensions of resistance, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. The questions for his survey instrument along with his factor analysis are shown in appendix A. Oreg continues to argue that individual resistance to change is a significant factor and exists even when the change is consonant with an individual's interests.

However, the task of understanding resistance to change is not complete. Studies of respondent's reported perceptions to change are incomplete lacking analysis along the longitudinal component (Oreg, 2003). In addition, the literature is extremely weak in linking reported perceptions (i.e., via survey methodology) to empirical measures of performance or outcomes. Most all studies found used closed ended Likert scale self-administered survey methodologies. Using only surveys of this nature without triangulating the data causes concern regarding the validity of the results. Fowler (2009) noted that respondents report with less than perfect accuracy. They may not understand the question, they do not know the answer, they cannot recall the answer, or they do not want to answer in the context of the question. Fowler suggested open-ended questions have advantages of obtaining answers that are unanticipated, the answers may more

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closely reflect the respondent's opinion, and studies have demonstrated respondents like to answer in their own words. Schober and Conrad (1997), using Suchman and Jordan's argument that standardized wording may decrease response accuracy due to the lack of conversational flexibility in aiding respondents need to understand the questions, concluded that flexible interviewing may lead to significant improvement in accuracy when mapping between the question and the respondent's situation is complicated. It would appear then, including open ended questions to the quantitatively analyzed responses, offering the participants the opportunity to address the survey questions in their own words, would enhance reliability issues that may arise from any self-administered closed ended survey. Those issues being dangers to accurate reporting stemming from an individual's motivation at a given moment, their level of openness, their individual level of self-awareness (Bond, 1995) and whether or not the individual is responding to pressures to supply socially desirable responses (Matlin, 1995).

The First Study

The linkage between measures of resistance to change and empirical outcomes is not fully understood. Noting the admitted importance of this factor made by many researchers, it would then seem most beneficial to further understand this linkage. The purpose of this study is to examine relationships between individual self reported measures of resistance to change and objectively measured behaviors and to observe and report if a transformative change effort alters individuals' responses to Oreg's resistance to change scale and/or actual performance. The value of this study may aid in increasing the knowledge of the importance of these aspects contributing to evidenced resistance to change.

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The approach is a mixed methods study utilizing Oreg's Resistance To Change scale (RTC) along with quantitative scalar measures of performance already in use by the company under study to examine correlative aspects of espoused resistance to change and measured performance in a longitudinal study. Commensurate with this, a qualitative study involving open-ended questions added to the surveys along with interviews of the participants will be made in an attempt to ask why or why not individuals were influenced by the disruptive effects of the change effort and how these effects influenced their behaviors. A conceptual explanatory model is shown in appendix C.

The research questions this study attempts to address are, from a positivist lens, is there a relationship between levels of espoused resistance as measured by Oreg's scale and observed behaviors in the work setting? Does resistance to change vary over time and with the effects of change? Then, from a qualitative view, what do the participants report back on their perceptions of the change and why do they think they reacted in the ways they did? Can we explain the quantitative results with their versions of their lived experiences in this phenomenon? To assure that the survey questions are being interpreted accurately, each of the sections of the RTC survey will have an additional open-ended question wherein the participant can answer the question in his or her own words.

The study will be a quasi-experimental setting with a group experiencing "treatment" in the form of a transformational change. The selection will be based upon a census approach attempting to capture both the main effects and extreme cases. The survey data will be acquired twice in a pre-test, and after the initiation of the change process, in a post-test survey activity. The results of the two surveys will inform

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direction of the follow-up interviews. Due to the size of the [Company] organization, [number dependent upon organization size] members will be asked to participate in the interview process. All members, of course, will be informed that they may decline to participate without any adverse effect. The quantitative data will undergo statistical analyses while the qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis. The two streams of analyses will be merged in attempt to gain an increased understanding of the phenomenon and to either confirm or argue against the proposition that an individual's espoused factors of resistance to change result in measurable outcomes. Secondly, as Oreg had noted in his paper, longitudinal examination of the RTC was suggested. This study addresses that need as well.

Possible Moderators of Change

Anticipating the results of the initial study, there is considerable theory to suggest the proposed first study will find that moderating factors may be at play. One such moderator heavily discussed in the literature is that of change leadership. In Oreg's studies, the affective, cognitive, and behavioral intent model is shown in appendix B. An alternative model showing a different linkage between affective, cognitive and behavioral intent along with general moderators of intent is shown in appendix D. The model showing leadership effects is shown in Appendix E. This change leadership can be conceptualized as consisting of elements of strategy and style.

Strategy

Kotter (1995) posited eight steps to transform an organization: (1) develop a sense of urgency, (2) form a guiding coalition creating sufficient power to lead the effort, (3) create a vision, (4) communicate the vision whenever and wherever possible, (5)

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empower others to act on the vision, (6) plan and create short term wins, (7) consolidate improvements and move for more change, and (8) institutionalize the new approaches. Schein (2002) suggested a procedure to envision a possible change that broadens Kotter's model. First, Schein suggested questions of "Why change?" should be asked challenging if there really was a need, was it possible, what would be the motivation for change, were there both need and readiness for change, and could the information that would support a rationale for change be developed that would not trigger resistance. Secondly, he proposed that there should be an identification of the desired future state of the organization. Finally, he felt that an analysis of the present state be made and a gap analysis be made to further identify the tasks ahead.

Styles of leadership

Kotter (2001) noted major differences between managers and leaders. Managers coped with complexity by looking for patterns, relationships and linkages to help explain and control while leaders coped with change by creating visions and strategies. Sorenson (2000) found participative leadership style demonstrated tendencies to build cohesive teamwork, increase satisfaction, resolve conflicts, increase decision acceptance, further develop leader and decision making skills, and strove to enrich the workplace. Sorenson assumed participative leadership to be superior in that it gave voice to multiple individuals and involvement in ways that would vitalize commitment and satisfaction.

Eisenbach, Watson, and Pillai (1999) suggested that outstanding leadership models were moving toward the transformational, visionary and charismatic which focused on organizational transformation. They noted the distinction between transactional leadership developing from the exchange process between leaders and

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subordinates wherein the leader provided rewards in exchange for subordinates' performance and transformational leadership where behaviors moved beyond transactional leadership motivating followers to identify with the leader's vision and sacrifice their self interest for that of the group or the organization.

Sorenson (2000) also noted a second powerful style of leadership called referent leadership where individuals exhibited positive feelings for the leader along with a desire to please the leader. He noted that charisma could be a variant of referent leadership. Sorenson went on to suggest that referent and participative leadership had similar practices except for referent leadership having the characteristic of empowerment because, using that style, the leader would rely upon the use of values, interpersonal influence and relationships to manage behavior. Conger (1999) suggested the principal leadership processes of charismatic leaders were to search out existing or potential gaps and emphasize the importance of the new goals and means to close the gap, induce followers to transcend their self interests for the good of the organization, and stimulate followers' higher order needs and aspirations. Sorenson considered charismatic leaders to be organizational reformers or entrepreneurs acting on innovative or radical change. Yukl (1999) similarly found a transformational leader to be more likely to take actions that would empower followers and make them partners in a quest to achieve important objectives. In noting a difference between a transformative and a charismatic leader, Yukl suggested the charismatic leader seemed more likely to emphasize the need for radical change that could only be accomplished if followers put their trust in the leader's unique expertise. Yukl also posited that incompatible aspects of the core behaviors for transformational and charismatic leadership might make it rare for both types of

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leadership to occur at the same time. Noting similarity, Conger (1999) found both transformational and charismatic leaders perform in conditions of crisis, distress and entrepreneurial conditions. Conger noted dealing with high outcome uncertainty was a common factor in these leadership styles.

Leader Follower or Leader Member Exchange (LMX) Concepts

Gerstner and Day (1997), in a meta-analytic review of leader-member exchange theory, offered their description of LMX as being a focus on the dyadic relationship between a leader and a member which quality helps predict outcomes at the individual, group and organizational level. Their findings indicated a significant positive correlation between LMX and satisfaction with supervision, organizational commitment, and role clarity. They also noted significant negative correlation between LMX and intentions to quit. Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997) tested a model of antecedents and consequences of LMX and perceived organizational support (POS). They defined LMX more specifically as the social exchanges entailing unspecified obligations between an employee and his or her leader. In their paper, the authors defined organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as behavior performing duties going beyond the employment contract. Their findings were that LMX was positively related to performance, OCB, and favor-doing that directly benefited leaders. Additionally, they noted the antecedents of LMX of leader's perceptions of liking and expectations to be positively related. Tierney (1999), in a survey study of 240 employees, found (a) employees experiencing a higher quality LMX relationship with their supervisor would perceive the climate as change-conducive, (b) employees experiencing a higher quality relationship with their team would perceive the climate as change conducive, and (c) employees working with a team which perceives the

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climate as change-conducive would also individually perceive the climate as change-conducive. The quality of LMX appears to have dimensionality in terms of liking (Boyd & Taylor, 1998; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999), procedural justice (Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999), and the matching of self-identities in terms of attitudes and values (Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999). Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999), in suggesting careful consideration be taken by leaders, noted leaders can have powerful, dynamic influence on subordinate self-concepts, the subordinate's perception of leadership and group. Conger (1999) found charismatic leadership was bestowed upon the leader by their followers based upon the perceptions of the leader's behavior. This formed a reciprocal process as it was found that the leader could directly affect the perceptions of the followers.

The Role of Effective Leader Follower Relationships in Change Strategies

Change can be viewed as having multidimensional continuums. One dimension supported by the literature is that of complexity. On the one end are mechanistic, simple changes of improvement while at the other end are changes described by terms of complex, chaotic, and radical - all with levels of unknown paths and goals. A second dimension would be that of reactivity. On the one end would be those changes that are either planned or proactive with the other end being defined as unplanned or reactive. A third dimension of change would be the change timeframe. At the one end would be gradual or continuous processes and at the other end, rapid, episodic and explosive change.

The LMX model would appear to have significant contribution to enhance leadership efforts across almost all the spectrums of these dimensions. Properly managed, LMX provides for a more humanistic and individualized approach that is

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suggested necessary in situations of complex and or uncontrolled change. It can increase perceived participation on the cognitive level. It can increase the sense of commitment to the leader, the group and the vision. It can increase the quality of communication stemming from the enhanced development of justice, fairness and trust. LMX can be the glue to hold the organization in semi structure needed for continuous change. LMX can enhance trust and safety allowing for accelerated learning and exploration during a chaotic upheaval. LMX can build upon the increased conversation between the leader and follower in the mutual participative development and acceptance of vision and paths to achieve change. LMX may provide a new path to address resistance to change. LMX and the dyadic conversations where each informs the other would appear to contribute to all these goals. However, the application of LMX theory alone may be insufficient. The potential higher quality relationship offered by LMX is dependent upon both the leader's and member's desire to enter such a relationship (Tierney, 1999). This may result in groups of employees or individuals engaged in low-quality relationships with their supervisor with less understanding of the organization's support for change. These employees may be less inclined toward change. With the lack of a supervisor-employee relationship that can serve as a conduit for change climate perceptions, the organization and the change leader will need to add additional means for communicating its support for change to these individuals.

The Follow-On Studies

As developed above, the effects of leadership may very well impact lasting change. The LMX model may have linkages into the Oreg model of affective, cognitive and behavioral intent by examining trust and liking with affective components, the

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increased and deeper conversation with cognitive components and the development of personal safety as it might apply to behavioral intent. An expanded conceptual model of behavior is shown in Appendix D. Appendix E illustrates the forces of leadership vs. the transactional supervision role of management shown in Appendix D as it pertains to addressing change and possible resistance to change. Possible linkages between moderators of need for approval and fear of rejection could possibly be explained by factors developed in the LMX model where trust moderates fear of negative input and liking moderates the need of positive input. The increased dyadic communication stemming from actual behavioral output communicated back to the leader is also shown. Thus, leadership style is a good candidate for further study. Avolio and Bass (1999) have reconfirmed Bass's original 1985 Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire's (MLQ) ability to discriminate between six constructs of leadership. The MLQ is a diagnostic tool often used for leadership training. The direction of follow-on studies will be that of examining results of the MLQ in conjunction with the protocol established in the first study to try to determine if a causative relationship exists between leadership styles and empirical outcomes of resistance to change in the case of transformative change activities.

Ultimate Goals Of This Effort

The ultimate goal of this effort is to see if an academic approach to understanding the dynamics of leadership and resistance to change can produce an applied methodology that might aid in achieving lasting change stemming from major organizational upheavals such as experienced in mergers, acquisitions, and other significant environmental impacts on the organization that may call upon structural and cultural changes in the organization if a lasting change is to be successful. More specifically, it is a goal of this author to

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develop an intervention protocol supported by the findings of this research such that pre-change consultation, coaching, and training, if required, can be used to help organizations facing major change to improve their chances of achieving lasting change.

The Next Step

This paper has been written to provide a guide to the next step by introducing a set of definitions of types of change, resistance to change and a proposed methodology to understanding the linkages between resistance to change and empirical outcomes. The first task, if this proposal is accepted, is to assure that there is an identifiable transformative event, objective measures of performance are used by the organization and produce meaningful data, and that the members of the organization are interested and willing to participate.

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APPENDIX A. OREG'S (2003) RESISTANCE TO CHANGE SCALE

Oreg Resistance to Change Scale Questions
And Factor Analysis

Table 3
Estimated Standardized Regression Weights for the Four-Factor Model Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Study 2

Factor/item	Estimate
Routine Seeking	.809 ^a
I generally consider changes to be a negative thing.	.747
I'll take a routine day over a day full of unexpected events any time.	.679
I like to do the same old things rather than try new and different ones.	.626
Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it.	.539
I'd rather be bored than surprised.	.475
Emotional Reaction	.910 ^a
If I were to be informed that there's going to be a significant change regarding the way things are done at work, I would probably feel stressed.	.715
When I am informed of a change of plans, I tense up a bit.	.692
When things don't go according to plans, it stresses me out.	.663
If my boss changed the criteria for evaluating employees, it would probably make me feel uncomfortable even if I thought I'd do just as well without having to do any extra work.	.414
Short-Term Thinking	1.210 ^a
Changing plans seems like a real hassle to me.	.665
Often, I feel a bit uncomfortable even about changes that may potentially improve my life.	.494
When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if I think the change may ultimately benefit me.	.460
I sometimes find myself avoiding changes that I know will be good for me.	.381
Once I've made plans, I'm not likely to change them.	.141 ^b
Cognitive Rigidity	.540 ^a
I often change my mind.	.831
Once I've come to a conclusion, I'm not likely to change my mind.	.569
I don't change my mind easily.	.556
My views are very consistent over time.	.291

^a Estimates for first-order factor loadings on the second-order Resistance to Change factor. ^b This was the only nonsignificant loading. The item was not used in subsequent studies. All other loadings were significant at $p < .001$.

Oreg, 2003

APPENDIX B. – Oreg Conceptual Model

Oreg model RTC to Outcomes

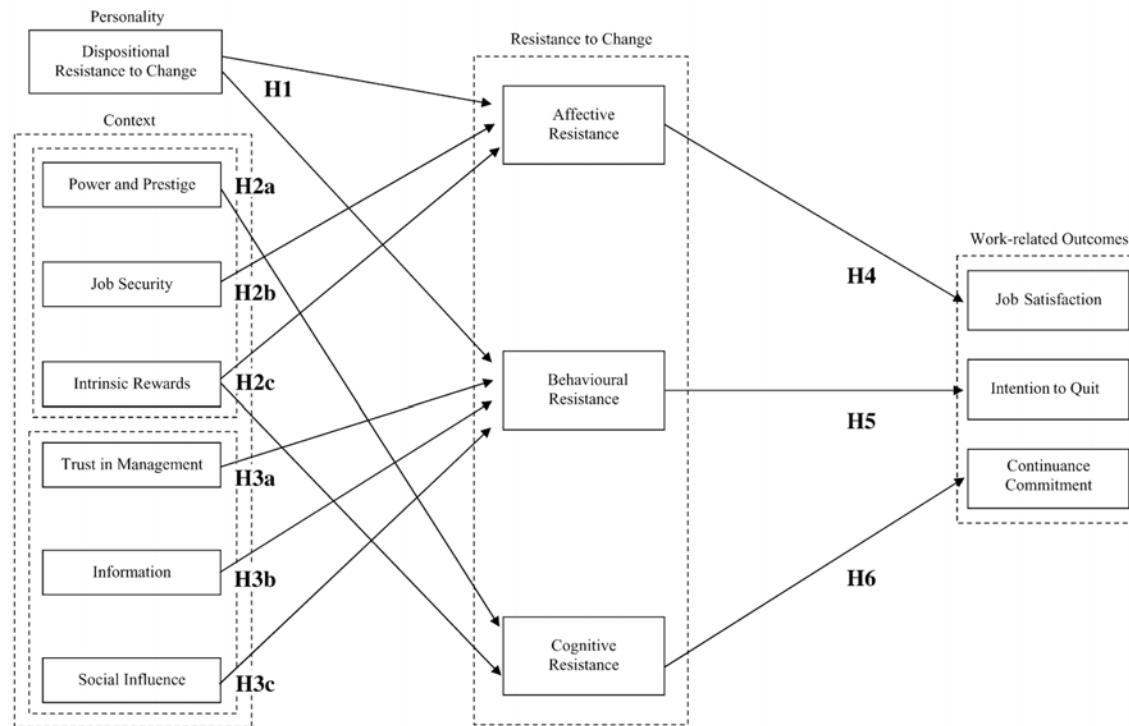
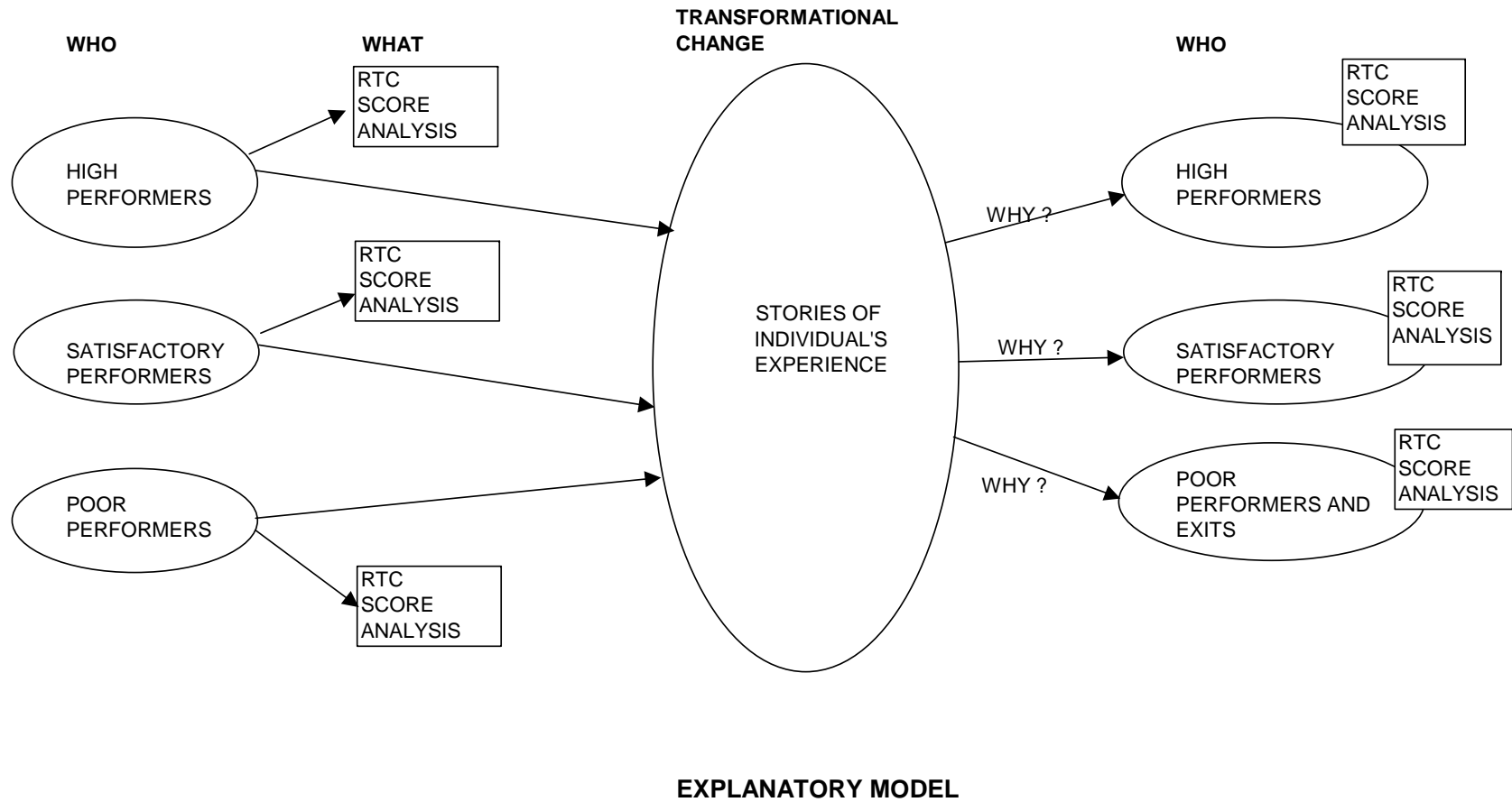


Figure 1. The theoretical model with study hypotheses.

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Oreg, 2006

APPENDIX C. EXPLANATORY MODEL



APPENDIX D. – SECOND STUDY

