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# Predicting Attitude Toward Organizational Change

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# Predicting Attitude Toward Organizational Change

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## Introduction

Whether the result of a merger, or just the demands of a tough transitional period, significant organizational change is one of the most difficult strategies to implement. The components influencing responses to change remain indistinct. Prior research suggests that stronger organizational identification, high readiness to change, and tenure are the main components that predict a positive attitude toward change (Caldwell, Herold, & Fedor, 2004; Claiborne, Auerbach, Lawrence, & Schudrich, 2013; Johnson, & Heimberg, 1999; Kwahk & Ahn, 2010). However, perception of change has yet to be examined as a mediating variable. This mediation will further our understanding of the various components that are influenced by organizational change. We defined perception of change as comprising two elements: appropriateness (i.e., how necessary the change appeared to be) as well as perceptions of self-efficacy (i.e., how well they thought they would perform their work following the transition). It was predicted that there would be a positive correlation between perception and attitude.

Previous studies have measured attitude as a function of affective, cognitive and behavioral elements, but measured attitude as reactions to and consequences of change. This dichotomous approach allowed us to obtain a greater scope of information on attitude.

Furthermore, we predicted that perception of change would perform as a mediating variable between readiness to change, organizational identification, tenure with the organization and attitude toward change (see Figure 1). By focusing on the influence of perception of change, we better understand the factors that influence attitude toward change as well as the processes of attitude formation.

## Methods

### Participants

1031 employees at the University of Puget Sound (401 faculty and 630 staff) were emailed a request to participate in our study. 122 faculty members (30%) and 199 (32%) staff members completed the survey, resulting in a 31 percent response rate overall. All responses remained anonymous and there was no compensation for participation.

### Materials

We compiled a survey consisting of items from six different scales. These scales measured organizational identity, cultural readiness to change, perception of change, reaction to change and attitude toward change. Hard copies were available upon request.

### Procedure

The institutional research department sent an email that explained the purpose of the study and provided a link to follow if the individual decided to participate. Consent was given if the participant continued on to the survey. On average, it took about ten to fifteen minutes to complete the survey.

## Results

### Correlations

The intercorrelation matrix suggests that all correlations are statistically significant except the correlations between organizational identity and consequence of change and years employed (see Table 1). While most correlations are statistically significant, it should be noted that significance has been influenced by the large sample size.

- General Readiness and Perception of Appropriateness
- Perception of Appropriateness and Consequence of Change

Figure 1. Diagram of Mediation

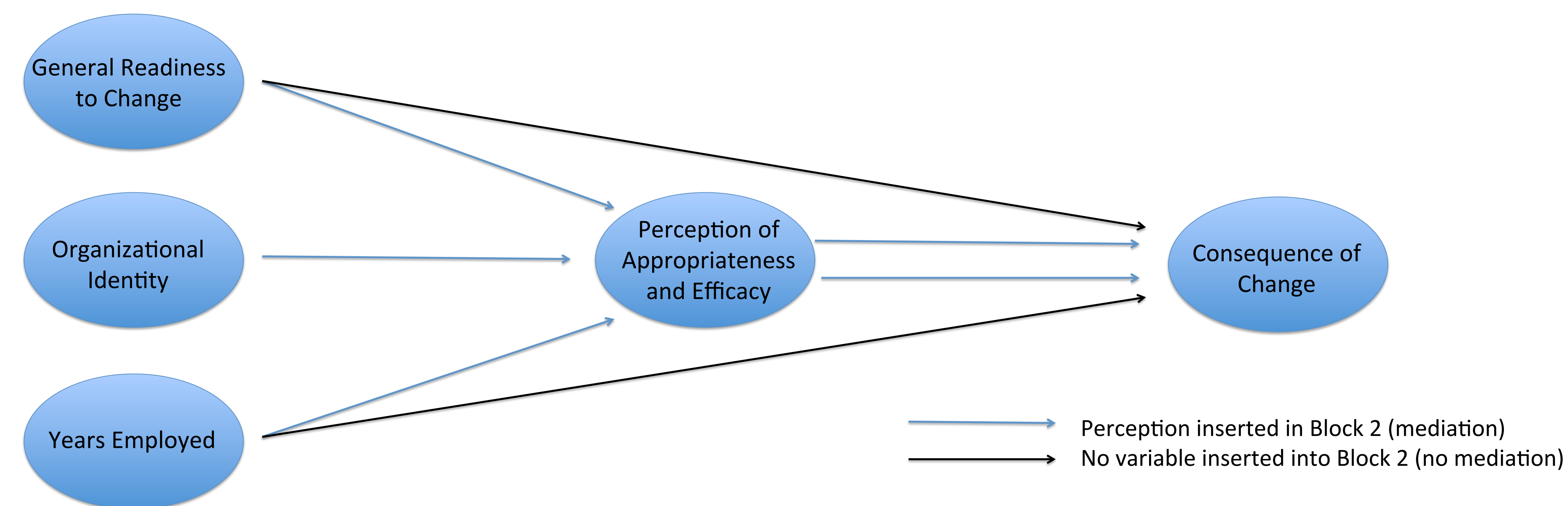


Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between the Measures

Scale	Mean	SD	OI	GR	PA	PE	CC	YE
Organizational Identity (OI)	25.9	3.9	(.81)					
General Readiness to Change (GR)	16.1	2.3	.19**	(.56)				
Perception of Appropriateness (PA)	22.5	5.6	.17**	.35**	(.90)			
Perception of Self Efficacy (PE)	16.1	3.1	.14*	.26**	.27**	(.69)		
Consequence of Change (CC)	9.5	3.2	.05	.23**	.47**	.26**	(.87)	
YE	12.3	9.5	.06	-.14*	-.25**	-.19**	-.28**	(NA)

Note. Internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) appear in the main diagonal. Years Employed is denoted as YE. \* indicates that the correlation is significant at  $p < .05$ . \*\* indicates that the correlation is significant at  $p < .01$ .

### Regressions

Results suggest that perception of appropriateness fully mediates the relationship between general readiness to change and consequence of change. Additionally, perception of appropriateness partially mediates the relationship between years employed and consequence of change. As indicated in Table 2, the Beta scores for general readiness to change and years employed are significant in Block 1 but when perception of change is added into the regression equation the score is no longer significant. It should also be noted that organizational identity was not influencing the regression equation in either blocks of the analysis.

Additionally, when tenure was substituted for years employed in Block 1 of the regression equation (faculty only), it was significant, Beta = .380,  $p < .001$ .  $R^2 = .234$ , almost double the  $R^2$  for Block 1 when using years employed.

Table 2.

Multiple Regression Analysis for Consequence of Change

	Variable	Beta	Standard Error	Total R <sup>2</sup>
Block 1	OI	.048	.050	
	GRC	.146*	.085	
	YE	-.252**	.022	.100
Block 2	OI	-.006	.046	
	GRC	.037	.080	
	YE	-.167*	.020	
	PA	.423**	.180	.262
	PE	.042	.184	

Note. OI denotes Organizational Identity. GRC denotes General readiness to Change. YE denotes Years Employed. PA denotes Perception of Appropriateness. PE denotes Perception of Self-Efficacy.

## Discussion

### Critiquing the model

The full mediation of Readiness in predicting Consequence of Change (i.e., attitude) suggests that it effects work entirely though Appropriateness and Efficacy. That is, higher general levels of perceived readiness (i.e., views that their colleagues were amenable to change in general), in turn, led to respondents finding the change to People Soft to be more appropriate and efficacious. These, in turn, led employees to report more positive consequences associated with the change.

The mediation that occurs when perception of appropriateness and efficacy of change is included in the regression equation provides insight to the process of attitude formation.

For faculty, whether or not they had received tenure had a strong and significant impact on attitude, even after accounting for years employed (i.e., nontenured faculty more positive attitude).

### Practical implications

Suggestions to the organizations.

### Future research

Broader outcome measures that all employees can answer would help researchers understand the full effects of organizational change.

Researchers should examine the various types of identity to see if they differentially impact organizational change attitudes.

Other than faculty tenure, Perception of Appropriateness was the most influential component in determining an individual's attitude toward change. Future research could more fully examine the components of when and why change does or does not seem pertinent and necessary to employees.

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