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Readiness for change : can readiness be primed?

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READINESS FOR CHANGE:
CAN READINESS BE PRIMED?

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Lisbeth S. Andersen

August 2008

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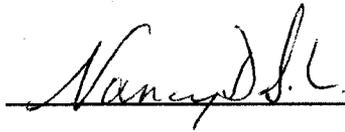
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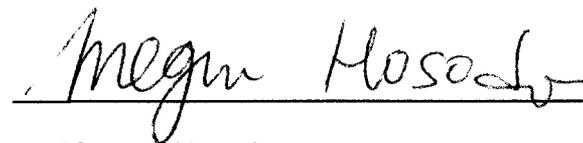
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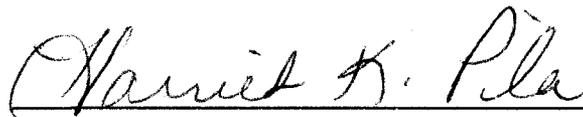
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ABSTRACT

READINESS FOR CHANGE: CAN READINESS FOR CHANGE BE PRIMED?

by Lisbeth S. Andersen

This thesis addresses the topic of priming and readiness for change. It is suggested that readiness for change can be primed by exposing individuals to a positive prime that relates to a coming change. Although the focus is on change at an individual level, comparisons are made to how people relate to change in an organization. Global competition necessitates organizations to constantly adapt to new challenges, which requires that employees are ready to change along with it. This study examines the dimensions of the readiness for change construct and explores which of the multiple dimensions organizations may be able to affect simply by priming the employees with situations relevant to the coming change. Priming research is common in cognitive psychology, however rare in organizational psychology. Instead of a field research, the author of this study attempted to deploy an experimental approach to detect if readiness for change can be primed.

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INTRODUCTION

Change is an inevitable part of life and every individual faces change at some point in life. Life changes follow essentially a cyclical pattern from birth to death (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). In the first one-third of life individuals handle changes that make them more independent (from child to teenager to young adult); then in the next one-third of life changes occur that relate to the individuals' ability to compromise (adulthood: getting married and having kids); and in the last part of life, individuals deal with changes that make them more dependent, as old age tends to impose certain boundaries. Although change is a natural part of life, humans do not necessarily desire change. In general, humans like status-quo unless the condition they are in is threatening or uncomfortable (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The way an individual relates to change in his or her private life could be an indicator of how people relate to change in general and in his or her professional life. Examining individuals' attitudes toward change that occurs in their private life may suggest how they relate to change in organizational settings (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Prochaska, Velicer, Rossi, Goldstein, Marcus, Rakowski, Fiore, Harlow, Redding, Rosenbloom & Rossi, 1994).

Just like life change, organizational change is an inevitable part of organizational life. In the past decade, global competition has increased the occurrences of change significantly (Garrison, Noreen, & Brewer, 2006; Swanson & Power, 2001), and when organizations change, people in the organization face

the choice of changing accordingly or opposing the change. A fundamental part of almost any organization's survival is the ability to adapt quickly to a new competitive landscape (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; By, 2007; Garrison et al., 2006; Eby, Adams, Russell, & Gaby, 2000; Bandura, 2002), and an organization's ability to adapt to a changing environment depends on the people who populate it; leaders as well as followers, but also on external factors such as governmental laws. For change implementation to be successful the majority and the most influential employees must be willing to accept and embrace the change, otherwise internal conflicts occur that can damage the organization extensively (Garrison et al., 2006; Armenakis et al., 1993).

Change can be characterized on a continuum ranging from minor changes to major changes (Dunphy & Stace, 1993; Rafferty & Simons, 2006), and an individual's reaction is expected to differ depending on the type of change facing him or her (Rafferty & Simons, 2006; Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007). Major changes are likely to have a vast impact on daily life (e.g., finishing school and start working), whereas minor changes are not (e.g., start drinking more water) (Rafferty & Simons, 2006; Holt et al., 2007). In the organizational change literature, there is a focus on managing the change effort in a way that avoids employees perceiving that there is nothing in the change for them (e.g., more workload, but not an increasing salary), as a negative view of the change is likely to lead to resistance (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Just like in the organizational settings, individuals'

acceptance of change and willingness to embrace it – or readiness for change – depend on the particular change the individuals are facing, and how they will be impacted by it (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007; Eby et al., 2000).

The focus of this study is on major changes, as they have the biggest impact on an individual's daily life and are most likely to provoke resistance to change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis, & Harris, 2002). Major change in this study refers to the transfer from school to a career-related job undergraduate students will experience once they have graduated.

The purpose of this study is to examine if and how an individual's readiness for (major) change can be affected by having people actively engaged in an activity that is somewhat similar to some parts of a coming change and exposed to a positive "prime" within that particular activity. Priming individuals is certainly not a new concept in social psychology and cognitive psychology (Bargh, 2003; 2006; Bargh & Morsella, 2008), and it is an interesting phenomenon, in that a prime can change an individual's behavior, without the participant's conscious awareness. In organizational psychology, field research is typically the predominant research method, which makes it incredibly difficult to determine cause and effect. Therefore I attempted to create an experimental research design where one group was primed to think positively about the coming change (it is one's ideal job). This group was also actively relating to the

coming change in that the participants prepared and gave a short pitch on why they were the best candidate (similar to what they would be asked to do in a job interview). Then, their attitudes and intended behavior toward the coming change (transferring from school to a career-related job) were compared to a control group, which was not primed or actively engaged in any change-related activity.

The experimental approach deployed in this study to explore the concept of readiness for change and what affects it (positive primes and engagement in a change-related activity) adds the element of being able to determine cause and effect, and contributes to the existing research in this field. In an experiment, the researcher has control over participants' environment for a brief period and consequently is able to determine whether a primed environment has any causal effect on participants' attitudes or behavior. Readiness for change has also shown positive and significant correlations with some personality factors such as negative affect, locus of control, and general attitudes toward change (Holt et al., 2007). However, as far as I am aware, readiness for change has never been considered in relation to openness to experience. Therefore, the current study also contributes to the extension of research concerning the relationship between readiness for change and personality factors.

Readiness for Change

Based on research by Armenakis et al., (1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2002) and a comprehensive review of 32 existing assessment tools on readiness for

change, Holt, et al. (2007) proposed a theoretical framework of readiness for change. The theory seeks to explain the factors influencing individuals' affect about consequences of a potential change and subsequently their willingness to support the change. Holt et al. found that readiness for change is a multidimensional construct consisting of four dimensions: "...[R]eadiness for change was defined as a comprehensive attitude that is influenced simultaneously by the content (i.e., what is being changed), the process (i.e., how the change is being implemented), the context (i.e., circumstances under which the change is occurring), and the individuals (i.e., characteristics of those being asked to change) involved" (Holt et al., 2007, p. 235). Figure 1 depicts how Holt et al. theorized the four dimensions to interact as "a general set of beliefs [that] shape readiness and provide the foundation for resistance or adoptive behavior" (p. 235).

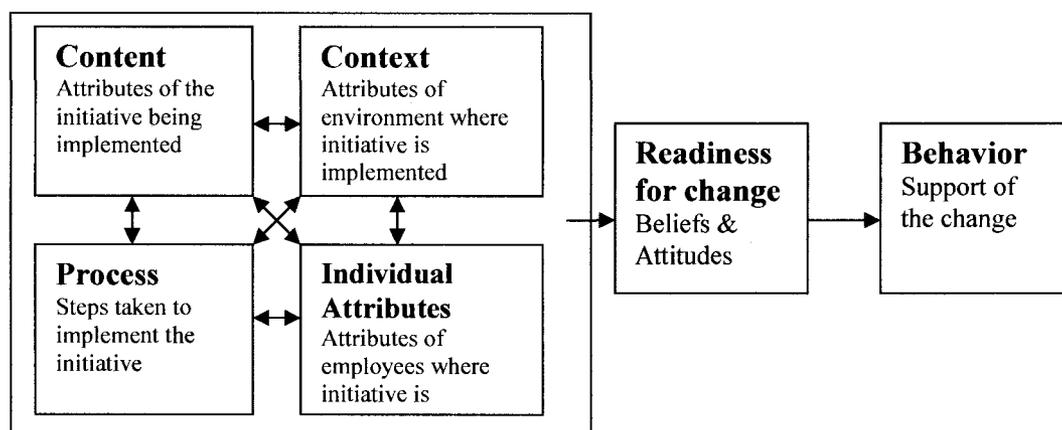


Figure 1: Model of the Relationship Between Content, Process, Context, and Individual Attributes With Readiness. *Note.* From “Readiness for Organizational Change” by D. T. Holt, A. A. Armenakis, H. S. Field, and S. G. Harris, 2007, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 43(2), p. 235. Copyright 2007 by NTL Institute. Reprinted with permission.

Their empirical research on this theoretical framework revealed four dimensions that did not fully align with the suggested conceptual framework, as employees seemed to have difficulties distinguishing content from context. Holt et al., (2007) explained this by stressing that change does not happen in a vacuum but always in a context, and then decided to combine content and context and re-label it “appropriateness”. Furthermore, they found that the dimension “process” primarily consisted of items regarding leaders’ commitment to the change, and this dimension was therefore relabeled to “management support”. Finally, individual attributes parted into two separate dimensions: self-efficacy for change (employees’ belief that they are capable of implementing a

proposed change) and personal valence (employees' belief that the proposed change is beneficial to organizational members). As Holt et al. embraced the new structure their research revealed I decided to base my study on their modified theoretical framework (see Figure 2).

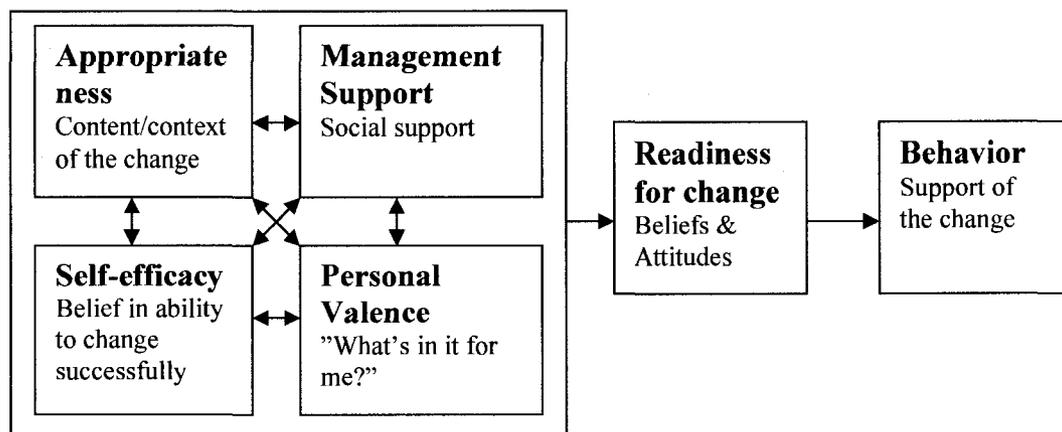


Figure 2: Revised model of Holt et al.'s (2007) Readiness for Change model.

Appropriateness of the change refers to the content or the characteristics of a particular change (e.g., outsource to address a discrepancy between the organization's present state and the desired end state), and the context wherein the change is about to be implemented (e.g., the organization is facing tough competition). Thus, it is a combination of content and context that constitutes appropriateness in that employees may agree that the organization needs to change to accomplish the desired end state, but disagree with how the desired end state is accomplished (e.g., outsourcing).

Management support is an important part of the process when change is implemented. In their article "Crafting a change message to create transformational readiness," Armenakis et al. (1993) emphasized the importance of management support as managers to a large extent are responsible for creating the circumstances that allow change to take place (e.g., policies, procedures). Employees have no incentive to engage in a change effort if their managers are reluctant to support the change, so successful change needs support from management to minimize the risk of stalling the change effort (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Holt et al., 2007). In this study the term management support will be replaced by social support as the context for change is outside the organizational environment.

Finally, self-efficacy and personal valence are attributes that differ among individuals (not only in an organization, but in general) and these individual attributes may influence how individuals perceive a coming change. According to prior research, self-efficacy is important in creating readiness for change, as motivation for change is influenced by the individual (and also the collective) confidence in the ability to change successfully (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Holt et al., 2007). Personal valence refers to whether or not the individual perceives the change to be personally beneficial, which depends on the priorities the individual has and what is considered important to him or her (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Holt et al., 2007).

In conclusion, Holt et al.'s (2007) research confirmed that appropriateness, management support, self-efficacy, and personal valence are the four dimensions that constitute readiness for change. The basis for that conclusion is that when individuals think the change is appropriate, believe the change is supported by management (or another authority), are confident that they are able to change successfully, and believe there is something in it for them, their beliefs and attitudes will influence their behavior toward the organizational change. As depicted in Figure 2, readiness for change is created when all four dimensions are affected simultaneously to support the coming change. Ultimately, when beliefs and attitudes are *for* change the behavior typically reflects it as well.

Priming and Readiness for Change

Twenty-five years of priming research has revealed that nearly all kinds of social representation can be primed (i.e., incidentally activated) in one context only to influence behavior in another context without the primed individual's conscious awareness (Bargh, 2006). When a researcher uses priming manipulations he or she typically seeks to activate a specific construct passively and unobtrusively by having the participant think about or use this construct in an early phase of the experiment and then examining its effect on behavior later in the experiment (Bargh & Williams, 2006). So far, research has shown that priming can influence a person's social norms, emotions, social behavior,

stereotypes, and more complex concepts such as deep cultural values and interpersonal relations (Bargh, 2006).

For example, in a study on priming goal-directed attention, it was shown that goal-directed (selective) attention drives what one attends to (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). Participants were given a task that they were told they had to finish, then some of the participants were interrupted in the middle of the task and required to move on to the next exercise. Ferguson and Bargh found that the participants who still needed to finish the task attended more to items in the following exercise that related to the task they never completed. They concluded that an active goal causes mental representations pertinent to goal attainment to become more active than usual, and thus more readily activated by related stimuli in the surroundings. Although the current study is not concerned with the priming of goal-directed behavior, it is suggested that the mechanism behind priming goal-directed behavior can be used effectively to affect participants' attitudes toward a coming change.

The change in question in the current study lies in the future for all participants – for some it is further away than for others. Cognitive psychology posits that people's predictions of future events depend on their mental representation of this event, and that people often fail to predict their reactions correctly because the focus is on those consequences of the event that readily come to mind, whereas contextual factors typically are underestimated (e.g., you

look forward to going on vacation, but are forgetting that traffic typically is heavy) (Bargh & Williams, 2006; Trope & Liberman, 2000).

Temporal Construct Theory (TCT) hypothesizes that events taking place in the distant future are perceived in high level construals (i.e., general, super-ordinate, and essential features) and events taking place in the near future are perceived in low level construals (i.e., specific, sub-ordinate, and incidental features) (Trope & Liberman, 2000; 2003). Most events are perceived to contain positive or negative outcomes or both. Over time, both positive and negative values associated with an outcome of an event generally diminishes, but negative outcomes diminishes more than positive outcomes, i.e., the further out in the future the event will take place the more the individual underestimates the negative value, whereas positive values tend to be stable (Trope & Liberman, 2000; 2003; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). As such, temporal distance should increase the attractiveness of any activity. In their study, Trope and Liberman (2000) found empirical support that when values associated with more generic constructs of an event were more positive than the values associated with more specific constructs of an event, the attractiveness of an option increased with temporal distance. This means that the further away an event is the more positive an individual will view it, because he or she connects the event with more positive values at a generic level (e.g., going on vacation).

In contrast, when the values associated with more specific constructs of an event are more positive than those associated with more generic constructs of

an event, the attractiveness of an option decreases with temporal distance. In other words, if an individual perceives specific details of an event to be more positive than the generic perception of it, then the closer the event is the more attractive it will be perceived. For example, going back to school may at a generic level be viewed as a negative thing, but if the specifics such as seeing friends again, or excitement about a particular class are viewed as positive, then the closer to the event the individual is, the more attractive the event will seem to the him/her (Trope & Liberman, 2000).

Affect-based values associated with an event also tend to diminish with temporal distance, i.e., temporal distance increases the weight of cognitive value relative to that of affective value (Trope & Liberman, 2000, 2003). The further away an event is, the more rational the assessment of the event, the closer the event is, the more affective the assessment. However, high-level versus low-level construals have been found to be more influential than affect-based versus cognitive-based values on how an event is perceived (Trope & Liberman, 2000, 2003). Therefore, temporal distance increases the weight of the value of high-level construals relative to the weight of low-level construals regardless of whether affective or cognitive values are associated with the event. This means that if affective values are associated with high-level construals and cognitive values with low-level construals, the weight of affective values increase with temporal distance relative to the weight of cognitive values, although affect-

based values in theory should diminish more than cognitive-based values (Trope & Liberman, 2000, 2003).

TCT posits that events in the distant future associated with positive and negative values will mainly be perceived in terms of their positive values. For example, if a CEO encourages employees to drive the organization toward success although this means changes in terms of sacrifices for the employees – if the changes are in the distant future, they are yet abstract (i.e., perceived in high-level construals), and may not provoke resistance. Instead, the employees may feel inspired by the CEO and want to do whatever it takes to make the organization succeed. However, once the change is about to be implemented it becomes a reality and specific, and employees will start to question the necessity of the change.

As people – according to TCT – emphasize positive aspects more than the negative aspects of an event taking place in the distant future, and weigh cognitive values more than the affective values (Trope & Liberman, 2000, 2003), it is expected that both groups in this study will score high on the readiness for change scale. This expectation is based on the fact that the change is in the future for all participants (although some are closer to the change event than others), and because the change is expected to emerge.

The undergraduates know that eventually they will finish school and have to find a job, and therefore, it is likely that they rationalize the coming change (i.e., they think logically about the change, but do not “feel” it yet). The

participants in the priming condition are asked to prepare for and be part of a job interview, and are primed with the words “ideal job” and “why you are the best candidate” during the instruction for this particular exercise. Engaging participants in a job-interview (and in this way simulating an aspect of the coming change) for their *ideal* job is expected to incite various feelings from nervousness to excitement as the interview is about their most desired job, and in this way add more affect-based values (the “feelings”) about the change. The positive primes during the instruction are expected to add another layer to the positive attitude toward the coming change, as they not only hear the words, but also act upon them when preparing and conducting the “job-interview.”

Fitzsimons and Bargh (2003) demonstrated in their study that participants who were primed to think of a friend were significantly friendlier toward strangers than those participants who were primed to think about a coworker. These kinds of studies, where a prime activates a mental representation that in return influences attitude or behavior in another context, have been conducted extensively with significant results (Bargh, 2003; Bargh & Mosella, 2008; Bargh & Williams, 2006; Engeser, Wendland, & Rheinberg, 2006; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003). Therefore, it is suggested that this additional positive attitude will influence attitudes toward getting a career-related job, when answering the readiness for change questionnaire in a later exercise.

Conclusively, although all participants are suggested to be positive about the coming change, it is expected that participants who were primed with positive

words about the change and acted out an aspect of the change, will be significantly more ready for change than the participants in the control group.

Hypothesis 1: Participants in the priming condition will be more ready for change than participants in the control group.

The first hypothesis suggests that a change-related activity and positive primes increase readiness for change. As readiness for change is a multi-dimensional construct, the next questions to explore are if all four dimensions are influenced by the prime. In the following sections, each dimension will be examined separately.

Appropriateness

In terms of creating readiness for change among individuals, Armenakis et al. (1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2002) suggested and found evidence that appropriateness is crucial as individuals “may feel some form of change is needed but may disagree with the specific change being proposed” (Armenakis & Harris, 2002, p. 170). In the readiness for change concept, appropriateness refers to the characteristics of a change and the context in which the change is happening – or more precise appropriateness refers to the nature and necessity of the change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Holt et al., 2007).

In an organizational setting, employees facing change need to understand why the change is necessary and why the particular change effort is the right solution (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis &

Harris, 2002; Holt et al., 2007). This is also crucial for people making major changes in their personal life. Prochaska et al. (1994) studied “Stages of Change” and found that people who wanted to change an unhealthy behavior needed to understand why the behavioral change was necessary. Their results showed that what typically activated people contemplating to change some part of their behavior to actually take action was an understanding of why continuing an unhealthy behavior could become fatal (Prochaska et al., 1994). If an individual understands that the change is necessary and agrees that the measures taken are appropriate, then he or she will engage in behavior that will support the implementation of change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Spector, 1989).

In order for participants in the priming condition to view the change as significantly more appropriate than those in the control group, the activity and positive prime words have to affect their perception of the characteristics of the change and/or the context in which the change is happening. The primed participants must to a larger extent understand why they need to find a job after finishing undergraduate school and why finding a job is the right solution (i.e., characteristics of the change, and the context in which the change is happening). As the transfer from school to career-related work is part of most western adolescents’ life, it is more than likely that the awareness of this change has existed in the periphery of many of the undergraduates’ minds over the years (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Therefore, it is expected that all of them will

understand the need to find a job as a natural development of getting older (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). As such, it is anticipated that both participants in the priming condition and participants in the control group will score high on appropriateness due to the awareness and natural development of the change, and that there will exist no significant difference between the two groups.

The students who are closer to graduation, however, may not necessarily feel comfortable about this transition, because – as TCT posits – the closer to the event the more they start to think about the event in specific details (low-level construals). Based on TCT, distant future events have proven to be viewed more positively than near future events due to more general and super-ordinate contemplations of the event (e.g., “I am going to make a lot of money once I am done with school and start working” or “I want to be a consultant”), whereas near future events are contemplated in much more specific terms (e.g., “How do I write a good application?”, “How can I conduct a successful job interview?”, “What if I am getting rejected?”, or “How will I become a consultant?”) and therefore also capture more negative aspects of the event (Trope & Liberman, 2000). The more specific contemplations of the near future event participants have, the greater the possibility of including negative aspects of the coming change, which can affect how appropriate participants find the change. This means that Junior, Sophomore, and Freshman students, who are further away from the change event, are more likely to view the change from school to career

as more appropriate than Senior and Graduate students, who are closer to the changing event.

Hypothesis 2: Participants further away from the changing event will tend to perceive the change as more appropriate than participants closer to the changing event.

Social Support

Social support refers to the availability and quality of support from probable social resources like family, friends, coworkers or managers (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988; Viswesvaran, Sanchez & Fisher, 1999). As mentioned in the brief introduction of the theoretical framework for readiness for change, management support – or social support as it is termed in this study – represents one of the four dimensions, as it influences individuals' belief in whether the change will become reality (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007; Rafferty & Simons, 2006). In organizations, change affects all organizational members equally. Managers, however, often have more influence on decisions regarding the change. Within groups (e.g., in an organizational or school setting), employees or students are interacting and being influenced by each others' beliefs and attitudes (Armenakis et al., 1993). In vulnerable situations, in particular, people look for support from others to understand and cope with the events facing them (Armenakis et al., 1993). In the change readiness literature, support often equals trust in the authorities and peers, as management is perceived as decision makers and to a

certain extent also as role models, whereas peers are generally perceived as sources of comfort and understanding (Cunningham, Woodward, Shannon, MacIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom & Brown, 2002; Eby et al., 2000; Rafferty & Simons, 2006). In this study, social support equals parents, professors, and friends. Parents and professors represent authority and possibly source of comfort and understanding, whereas friends typically represents source of comfort and understanding.

If there is a significant difference between the priming condition and the control group, the activity and the positive primes have affected how much participants perceive their social network to support them in this coming change. As discussed above, the particular change in this study is not happening unexpectedly to neither students nor their social network (parents, professors, or friends), and it is most likely considered as part of a natural development. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the priming condition will enhance the importance of this variable compared to the control group.

Self-efficacy for change

Self-efficacy is defined as having confidence in one's ability to do well in general or to do certain things well, *not* just performing the mechanics of a specific behavior or task (Bandura, 2007). In relation to change, self-efficacy is considered as being confident in one's ability to change successfully. Bandura (1982) states that "[p]erceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective

situations” (Bandura, 1982, p. 122), and as such self-efficacy for change is a precursor for an individual, who wants to bridge an existing gap between a current state and a desired future state (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bandura, 2007; Brockner & Guare, 1983; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Although Beehr and Bowling (2005) suggest that self-efficacy can be perceived as stable and acts as a personality characteristic, it lacks trait-like qualities in that self-efficacy can be more easily altered by experience than other personality traits. Self-efficacy is context-specific, because it relates to a situation that a person experiences. Although an individual believes that he or she does certain things well or does well in general, the same person can in parallel be aware of his or her limits (i.e., there is something that the individual knows that he or she cannot do well). However, self-efficacy can more easily be altered upward than downward, meaning that if an individual believes that he or she does well in general, his or her self-efficacy belief will not be dramatically altered downwards by failing to do one specific task successfully (Beehr & Bowling, 2005).

Self-efficacy is related to self-regulatory behavior and contains elements of self-protection (Bandura, 2007). The self-regulatory and self-protective behavior comes into play when faced with a potentially threatening situation (e.g., being able to withstand peer pressure in relation to drug use or unsafe sex), or when seeking to satisfy personal goals and aspirations (Bandura, 2002; 2007).

The importance of self-efficacy for change in relation to readiness for change has also empirical support, as results have shown that an individual's

self-efficacy for change acts as a motivator for accepting and embracing the change and influences the individual's perception of the change as less threatening (Cunningham et al., 2002; Rafferty & Simons, 2006; Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

In the priming condition, participants were asked to prepare and conduct a five-minute "job-interview" on why they were the *best* candidate for their *ideal* job. As Bandura (2002; 2007) states that self-efficacy relates to personal goals and aspirations, it is suggested that involving participants in an activity similar to a job interview (which will be part of the coming change), where participants are asked to emphasize their positive qualities for their ideal job, will make those participants' belief in being capable of managing the transfer from school to a desired career-related job more readily accessible than for the participants in the control group.

Hypothesis 3: Participants in the priming condition will exhibit significantly more self-efficacy for change than those in the control group.

Personal Valence

Personal valence refers to self-interest (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). If an individual does not see that his or her self-interest is satisfied in some way by a change, then he or she is likely to resist the change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Therefore, when change is deemed necessary by management in an organization and is communicated to employees, then employees begin to assess the positive outcomes relative to the negative outcomes of this change,

and if the negative outcomes outweigh the positive ones, they have no incentive to support the change (Cobb, Wooten, & Foilger, 1995; Armenakis & Harris, 2002).

This psychological mechanism was also found in the research conducted by Prochaska et al. (1994) regarding the change of unhealthy behavior. Across the various research situations, the same pattern emerged when people contemplated changing an unhealthy behavior (Prochaska et al., 1994). Individuals assessed the pros and cons of a given change effort (e.g., stop smoking), and results showed that an overweight of pros for changing an unhealthy behavior would make an individual change this behavior. In an organizational setting, an overweight of pros compared to cons for engaging in a proposed organizational change can increase the individual's self-interest if the change seems beneficial for the individual (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Cobb et al., 1995). Common to both an organizational change setting and an individual change setting is that people will attempt to change if they perceive that they will gain something by changing (e.g., "I will be able to breathe better" or "The organizational change leads to new tasks that I think will be interesting and challenging").

Ferguson and Bargh (2004) proposed in their study that "automatic evaluation of objects is sensitive to the shifting goal relevance of the corresponding objects" (p. 557). Although they referred to an object that could be useful in attaining the current goal, it is suggested in the current study that

activating a potential goal (getting their ideal job) will affect the evaluation of corresponding stimuli later in the experiment (which is how ready participants are for the coming change). Ferguson and Bargh (2004) found empirical support that an active goal impacted how individuals perceived objects in the environment, and that the assessment of an object was driven rather by current and prospective expectations than by past experience (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). Fitzsimons and Bargh (2003) demonstrated in their study that an individual's motivation could be influenced by thinking of relationship partners, who had goals for them – even when the individual was alone and merely being primed to think of the relationship partner. This suggests that thinking about an ideal job may influence how ready (or motivated) participants will be for changing from school to a career-related job.

In the current study, the priming was thought to instill a positive attitude toward the change as participants' self-interest was considered. The primes regarded the ideal job and the participant was told that he or she was the best candidate for this job, therefore it was anticipated that the individual's motivation for the coming change would be influenced positively.

Hypothesis 4: Participants in the priming condition will exhibit higher personal valence than participants in the control group.

Openness to Experience

“...[R]ecent literature exploring organizational change has suggested a number of personality factors and facets of an organization's culture that could

be expected to correlate with readiness-for-change factors” (Holt et al., 2007, p. 244). As part of their development of the readiness for change scale Holt et al. tested convergent validity against personality factors such as locus of control, negative affect, rebelliousness, and general attitudes toward change, but not openness to experience, which seems peculiar considering the characteristics that constitutes openness to experience.

Openness to experience characterizes an individual's willingness to take in different facets of an experience and defines a person, who is broad-minded, curious, imaginative, and original (Baer & Oldham, 2006; Lee-Bagley, Preece, & DeLongis, 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1980). Individuals who are high in openness to experience are more likely to experience a diversity of emotions, have broad interests, preference for variety, and hold unconventional values (Lee-Baggley, Preece, & DeLongis, 2005), and those individuals are therefore highly motivated to actively seek out new and varied experiences and are in constant pursuit of unfamiliar and novel situations (McCrae & Costa, 1980; Baer & Oldham, 2006; Lee-Bagley, Preece, & DeLongis, 2005).

In McCrae and Costa's study (1980) of openness to experience, the authors found that openness to experience also encompasses areas such as fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values. The more open to experiences an individual is the broader the interests, the greater the need for variety, the greater the tolerance for ambiguity, and the more active the pursuit of the unfamiliar (McCrae & Costa, 1980). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5: Openness to experience predicts readiness for change, after controlling for conditions.

METHOD

Participants

This study was part of a larger study conducted by Dong Ngyuen that examined the effects on psychosocial stress and social support on memory (will be submitted for future publication). Participants in the study were undergraduate students from San Jose State University. In all, 98 students volunteered to participate in a “cognition experiment” in exchange for 1.5 credits. Seventy percent of the students were female and the average age was 19 years (SD=2.01). The ethnic heritage were dispersed such that 41.8% were Asian, 20.4% were Caucasian, 18.4% Hispanic, 3.1% were African American, 1% Asian Indian, and 14.3% Other. Among the participants 59.2% were Freshmen (N=58), 20.4% Sophomores (N=20), 10.2% Juniors (N=10), 8.2% Seniors (N=8), and 1% Graduate (N=1) students. Fourteen percent majored in Psychology, 85% majored in another field, and 1% did not indicate their major. Sixty percent were currently employed, and of those employed 2.1% worked full-time (more than 40 hours a week) and 56.8% worked part-time (less than 40 hours a week).

Procedure

This study deployed an experimental approach to explore the causal effect of priming on readiness for change in a controlled environment. Participants were offered 1.5 credits in exchange for participating in the study. Half of the participants were assigned to the priming condition group and the other half was assigned to the control group. Participants reported two at a time to two

laboratories located in separate places, where an experimenter greeted the participant, informed him or her of the conditions, and then asked the participant to sign a consent form. One laboratory focused on the priming condition and the other on the control condition.

The protocols for the two conditions followed the same pattern, except for one difference. In the priming condition participants were asked to prepare for and participate in a job-interview, and were instructed that it was for their “ideal job” and that they were to convince “the two experts” that they were the best candidate for this ideal job. Participants in the control group, however, watched a 15 minute travel video on Yosemite National Park. The experimenters explained to the participants that they were studying reactions during cognitive exercises and requested that participants complete a questionnaire with items designed to fit the change scenario that participants were expected to encounter upon finishing college and starting a working career. Finally, the experimenters debriefed the participants about the study, asked them not to speak with current class mates about the study, and then signed them for the 1.5 credit points.

Measures

Readiness for Change. Readiness for change was measured using Holt et al.’s (2007) readiness for change scale. The scale is based on their theoretical framework and reflects that readiness for change is a multi-dimensional construct. The measure includes items on appropriateness, social support, self-efficacy for change, and personal valence. The original readiness for change

scale consists of 25 items designed to assess organizational members' readiness for change. For this study however, 16 items were chosen and modified to fit the target group of undergraduate students. The modification of items attempted to align with the dimensions in the original scale, and participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements, which was similar to the original response format. Below is a more thorough description of each of the four dimensions.

Appropriateness. Originally content and context of change were theorized to be two separate constructs, but results from Holt et al.'s (2007) factor analysis showed considerable overlap between content and context of change, suggesting that participants had difficulties distinguishing the two. Therefore, Holt et al. decided to consolidate the two hypothesized constructs into one and name it "Appropriateness" to refer to whether or not employees see a need for the change, and find the particular change benefiting for the organization. In the current study, four items were modified from the original scale to measure appropriateness among undergraduates. An example of these items was "There are a number of rational reasons why I want to start a career-related job." All four modified items loaded on the same construct, but the internal consistency among the four items was not satisfactory ($\alpha = .63$) (Nunnally, 1978). One item that did not correlate with the other items was therefore removed, which increased alpha to a satisfactory level of .70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Self-efficacy for Change. Four of the original items created to gauge participants' self-efficacy were modified to fit undergraduate's self-efficacy. An example of an item measuring self-efficacy for change was "My past experiences make me confident that I will be able to perform successfully in a career-related job." Results of a factor analysis revealed that all four items loaded on the same construct. Two of those items, however, turned out to be complex as they also loaded on the social support and the appropriateness constructs, but the difference in the values favored the self-efficacy dimension, and it was decided to keep them as part of the self-efficacy construct. This subscale showed a reliability of $\alpha = .70$.

Personal Valence. This dimension also consisted of four items, and the initial item analysis indicated that one item "I am looking forward to making more money in a career-related job" could become a problem. The item was negatively skewed and did not correlate significantly with any of the other three items in this subscale. The factor analysis furthermore revealed that this item did not have sufficient value to load on the hypothesized dimension, or any of the other dimensions. The result from the reliability analysis of all four items was therefore not surprisingly low ($\alpha = .5$). After removing this item only three items were left, and the average inter-item correlation was used as the reliability measure. The average inter-item correlation was .34, which was above the recommended level of .30 (Nunally, 1978).

After deleting the items causing internal consistency problems for the readiness for change scale, another forced four-factor Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin rotation was conducted to extract the four hypothesized dimensions. The cut-off point was 0.35 and the forced 4-factor model explained a total of 62.94% variance. On the first factor; the four appropriateness items loaded together with one of the self-efficacy for change items explaining 24.96% variance. On the second component the three items hypothesized to measure personal valence loaded, explaining 14.93% of the variance. On the third dimension, the two items intended to measure social support from professors and parents loaded explaining 12.02% of the variance. Finally, the fourth factor contained all four change-efficacy items accounting for 11.04% of the variance.

Openness to Experience. Openness to experience was measured with ten items from the openness to experience scale provided by the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP, 2007). The scale consisted of five positively keyed and five negatively keyed items and participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Inaccurate to 5 = Very Accurate) how accurately they felt each statement described them. An example of a positively keyed item is "I believe in the importance of art", and for the negatively keyed item "I avoid philosophical discussions" (IPIP, 2007). The initial item correlation analysis revealed that two of the items "I tend to vote for liberal political candidates" and "I tend to vote for conservative political candidates" did not significantly correlate with any of the other items in the scale except with each other. Half of the items

were significantly and negatively skewed. A forced one-factor Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin rotation was also conducted to extract the dimension for the openness to experience measure. With a cut-off score of 0.35, the variance accounted for was 26.88%. Two items did not have sufficient value to load. These two items had in the initial item analysis indicated problematic tendencies, as they did not correlate with the other items in the scale, and it was anticipated that this potentially could harm the reliability of the scale, and the following reliability analysis computed an alpha of only .69. Therefore, it was decided to remove the two items that did not load according to cut-off value, and the index of reliability increased to .75.

RESULTS

In examining all participants in the primed condition and the control group, the means and standard deviations for the scales and subscales (see Table 1) showed satisfactory standard deviations. The high group means, however, indicated that participants had a tendency to be very ready for change in terms of all four dimensions and open to experience.

Table 1 shows that among the subscales of the readiness for change construct, significant and positive correlations were found between self-efficacy for change and appropriateness ($r = .33, p < .01$). This finding indicates that when individuals perceive themselves as being able to succeed in dealing with a specific change, they tend to find this change more appropriate, or when individuals perceive a change as appropriate, they tend to think they are more capable of succeeding in dealing with this change. Openness to experience correlated positively and significantly with readiness for change ($r = .21, p < .01$), which is a necessary precondition for hypothesis 5. Furthermore, a positive and significant correlation existed between openness to experience and self-efficacy for change ($r = .31, p < .01$), which indicated that individuals who were more open to experience perceived themselves as being more capable of managing change, or those who perceived themselves as able to succeed in managing a change were more open to experience.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Across All Participants (N=94).

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Readiness for change	5.13	.62				
2. Appropriateness	5.90	.89	.59**	(.70)		
3. Self-efficacy for change	4.97	.92	.75**	.33**	(.70)	
4. Personal Valence	4.54	1.20	.57**	.05	.16	(.34)
5. Openness to experience	4.05	.93	.21**	.01	.31**	.07 (.75)

Reliability in parentheses, found in diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2 shows that in the control group none of the subscales correlated with each other, whereas in the priming condition a significant and positive correlation was found between self-efficacy for change and appropriateness ($r = .35$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, in the priming condition, openness to experience correlated positively with readiness for change ($r = .38$, $p < .01$), and at the subscale level openness to experience correlated with appropriateness ($r = .34$, $p < .05$) and self-efficacy for change ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). These results indicated that participants who were primed to think about the coming change in their lives perceived themselves as more able to succeed in changing when finding the change appropriate, or if they found the change appropriate, they perceived

themselves as more capable of succeeding in changing. The significant and positive correlation between openness to experience with appropriateness and self-efficacy indicated that people more open to experience have a greater tendency to think of the change as appropriate and perceive themselves as capable of changing successfully.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Across Control group and Priming Condition.

Control group (N=45)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Readiness for change	5.06	.62				
2. Appropriateness	5.77	.85	.56**			
3. Self-efficacy for change	4.89	.92	.75**	.28		
4. Personal Valence	4.61	1.14	.63**	.17	.23	
5. Openness to experience	4.07	1.15	.10	-.25	.22	.13
Priming Condition (N=49)						
1. Readiness for change	5.19	.62				
2. Appropriateness	6.03	.92	.59**			
3. Self-efficacy for change	5.04	.92	.74**	.35*		
4. Personal Valence	4.48	1.25	.54**	-.02	.10	
5. Openness to experience	4.03	.64	.38**	.34*	.38**	.04

*p<.05, **p<.01

In testing Hypothesis 1, which stated that participants in the priming condition would be more ready for change than participants in the control group, it can be seen from the group means in Table 2 that the two groups were consistent with the hypothesis as the mean for readiness for change was higher in the priming condition ($M=5.19$) than in the control group ($M=5.06$). This indicated that people who had been primed to think about the coming change were more ready for change than people who were not primed to think about it. To fully test the hypothesis, an independent sample t-test was conducted to examine whether the two group means (control and priming condition) differed significantly from each other in terms of readiness for change. The independent variable was condition (priming condition versus control group), and the dependent variable was readiness for change as the overarching construct. The two groups were tested for equality of variance through Levene's test of variances, under the assumption that homogeneity existed between the priming condition and the control group, which it did as no significant difference in variance was found $F(93) = .41, p = .52$. The result showed no significant difference in the group means [$t(93) = -1.015, p > .05$] and therefore this hypothesis was not supported.

To test Hypothesis 2, which stated that participants further away from the changing event would tend to perceive the change as more appropriate than participants closer to the changing event, another independent sample t-test was conducted. The independent variable was "year in college" and was grouped

into two levels. Freshman, Sophomores, and Juniors (N=88) were considered to be a group further away from the changing event than Seniors and Graduates (N=9), and Seniors and Graduates were considered to be closer to the changing event. The dependent variable was appropriateness. The homogeneity of variance assumption was not met, as variances differed significantly $F(92) = 14.2$, $p < .001$, which could have influenced the power of the results. The relatively high group means indicated that participants in general found the change appropriate. However, contrary to the expectation, participants further away from the changing event found the change less appropriate ($M=5.92$) than those closer to the changing event ($M=6.00$), and the independent t-test furthermore revealed that the difference in the group means was not significant [$t(92) = -.260$, $p > .05$]. Therefore, temporal distance to the changing event did not seem to influence participants' attitude toward the coming change. An exploratory analysis was conducted to test if the grouping of students may have had an influence on the results. With respect to the two kinds of grouping (further away and closer to the changing event), I found it reasonable to group Freshman and Sophomores in the group "further away from the changing event" (N=78) and Juniors, Seniors, and Graduates as a group closer to the changing event (N=19). Then another t-test was conducted, but the outcome did not change. Temporal distance to the changing event did not seem to influence attitudes toward the change.

Hypotheses 3 and 4, which stated that participants in the priming condition would exhibit significantly more self-efficacy for change than those in the control

group and that participants in the priming condition would exhibit higher personal valence than participants in the control group, were tested with two independent sample t-tests. The independent variable was condition (priming versus control group), and dependent variables were self-efficacy (for H₃) and personal valence (H₄). The homogeneity of variance was met for both variables, as the results of Levene's test was non-significant for both self-efficacy for change [$F(92) = .01$, $p > .05$] and personal valence [$F(92) = .04$, $p > .05$].

For self-efficacy (H₃) the group means were initially in favor of priming, as the group mean in the priming condition ($M=5.04$) was higher than in the control group ($M=4.89$). This indicated that priming participants with positive messages about the change (ideal job, best candidate) could activate participants' self-efficacy. The difference found, however, was non-significant [$t(92) = -.799$, $p > .05$], providing no support for this hypothesis.

Examining priming's effect on personal valence (H₄), the group means for the two groups indicated that priming had no effect on personal valence as the group mean was higher in the control group ($M=4.61$) than in the priming condition ($M=4.48$). The result of the independent t-test confirmed furthermore that the difference was not significant [$t(92) = 0.519$, $p > .05$], providing no support for hypothesis 4. Priming participants to think about the change in terms of their ideal job and themselves as the best candidate had no effect on how beneficial the participants found the change to be.

The group means for both groups are summarized in two figures (see Figure 3 and 4) to provide a better overview of the tendencies within each variable.

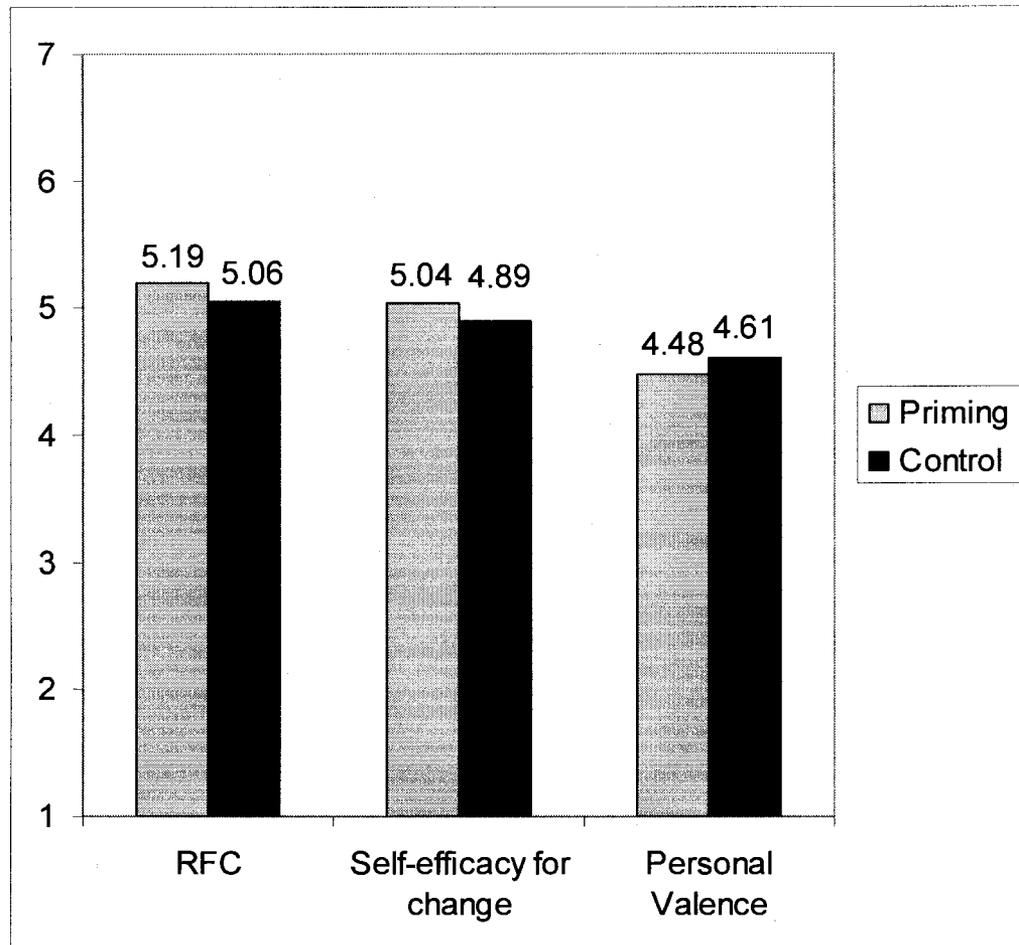


Figure 3. Group means for priming condition and control group testing priming's effect on readiness for change, self-efficacy for change, and personal valence (hypotheses 1, 3 and 4).

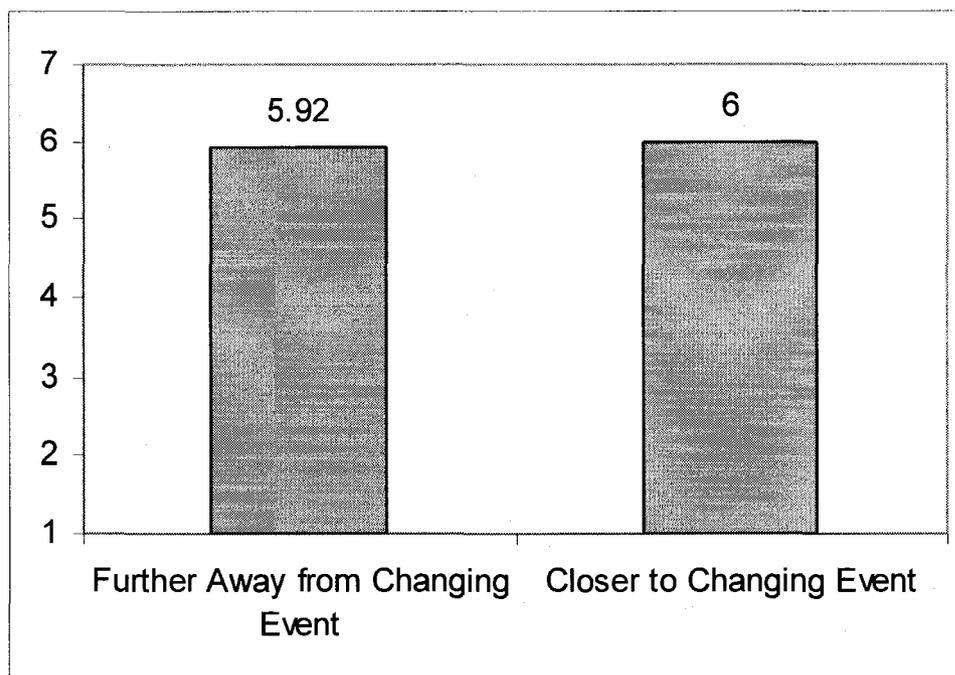


Figure 4. Group means for the two groups “Further Away from Changing Event” and “Closer to Changing Event” in terms of appropriateness (hypothesis 2).

To test hypothesis 5, which stated that openness to experience predicts readiness for change after controlling for conditions, it can be seen from Table 1 that there is a positive and significant correlation between openness to experience and readiness for change ($r = .21, p < .01$), which signifies that individuals, who are more open to experience tend to be more ready for change. As the participants were divided into two different conditions it was necessary to test for condition by conducting a multiple regression analysis. The hierarchical regression analysis was conducted by entering readiness for change as the

dependent variable, and as independent variables the condition variable was entered in the first step to control for priming effect followed by openness to experience in the second step. Results from hypothesis 1 showed that there was no significant main effect of priming on readiness for change [$F(1,92) = 1.06, p > .05$]. Together with openness to experience, priming accounted for 8% of the variance ($R^2 = .08$). In support for the final hypothesis, a significant effect of openness to experience on readiness for change was found [$F(1,91) = 6.91, p < .05$]. After controlling for the priming condition, individuals more open to experience (regardless of priming condition or control group) were also significantly more ready for change than those less open to experience (see Table 3).

Table 3. Hierarchical MRC of Condition and Openness to Experience in relation to Readiness for Change. (N=94)

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F	β
Step 1					
Condition	.11	.01	.01	1.06	.11
Step 2					
Openness to Experience	.29	.08	.06**	.07**	.27**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether readiness for change could be primed in an experimental setting. Based on prior priming research findings it was expected that attitudes toward change could be influenced by the use of priming. The current study was experimental in nature and designed to examine the effect of one change (the primes) in conditions between two groups to determine a causal effect of priming. In addition, this study also sought to extend the research on readiness for change by deploying an experimental setting as most research on this topic is based on field studies.

The effect of priming on readiness for change was examined for the overarching construct and each of the dimensions. Results showed that priming did not have a significant impact on readiness for change or the two sub-dimensions of self-efficacy for change and personal valence. As prior priming research has shown that priming is very effective (Bargh, 2006; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003), the potential reason for the lack of significant results may be due to the design of the experiment, which will be explained in further detail in the limitations section. Likewise, temporal distance from the changing event did not influence how appropriate participants found the coming change, which is not consistent with prior research (Trope & Liberman, 2000; 2003). A contributing factor to the lack of a significant result could be due to the small number of participants constituting the group “closer to the changing event”. Only eight participants constituted this group, thus making it difficult to

infer whether or not there is in fact no significant difference between how people perceive a change in near or distant future.

Other reasons for the lack of significant findings could be that there were problems with reliability for the instrument used to measure readiness for change, as well as the fact that the change was not unexpected for the participants (both groups have high group means for readiness for change). Originally, the instrument used to measure readiness for change consisted of 25 items and was intended for organizations, not for students. Due to time limitations in the experiment, the questionnaire had to be reduced to only 16 items, and all items had to be modified to fit the target group. The shortening and modification of the questionnaire might have affected the reliabilities of the four constructs constituting the readiness for change construct, and to obtain satisfactory reliability measures more items had to be deleted. Results also showed a tendency for rather high means on the various dimensions. The reason for this could be undergraduate students' knowledge and anticipation of the change. They were hardly surprised by the coming change, as they had known about it for a long time and maybe even looked forward to it. Finally, only 98 participants were included in the study limiting the power of the results.

On an entirely different note regarding possible influences on the non-significant results, priming research has shown that mentioning family, friends or professors, who have significant importance in an individual's life, goals related to either of these relationship partners can be activated unconsciously

(Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003). The survey in this study included items mentioning parents, friends, and professors, and this may have activated goals related to these relationship partners and the change, such as students knowing that their parents want them to succeed in a career-related job after graduation or students remembering professors emphasizing what is expected of them when they start working, which could have resulted in students feeling urged to respond more positively to the coming change.

Openness to experience was, as expected, significantly and positively correlated with readiness for change. From a theoretical point of view this makes sense, as this personality characteristic encompasses traits such as curiosity, imaginativeness, preference for variety, and an active pursuit of new experiences as well as unfamiliar and novel situations. Typically, change will lead to new experiences, or unfamiliar or novel situations, and for an individual to change the current situation, curiosity and imaginativeness are if not required, then at least very helpful. This finding, however, raises other interesting issues of how openness to experience can influence a person's attitude and behavior toward change in different contexts.

Limitations of the Study

The experimental approach was associated with certain delimitations. First, this study was part of a larger project, which made it impossible to introduce an unexpected change in the experimental setting, as this would have ruined other parts of the research. The change introduced then had to be one

that was inevitable for all the participants, and as the transfer from school to career-related work happens sooner or later in life, it was decided to examine attitudes toward this particular change. However, it was likely that the majority of students had been anticipating this kind of change for a long time, which could have affected the results, and the actual rate of students who were going to have a career-related job soon was much lower than those who were going to have a career related job in distant future, which also could have influenced the results.

Second, as mentioned earlier the scale used to measure readiness for change was modified to fit the target group, as the original scale was designed for employees in an organizational setting. The modification might have harmed the internal consistency, especially for social support, and two items from this dimension had to be deleted to make the subscale reliable. In addition, the experimental approach might have hindered access to social support, which was a shortcoming of the study as it did not reflect a real-world setting.

Third, one of the major problems of the study is that there was no manipulation check incorporated in the design of the study, which could have served as an indicator for whether or not the priming manipulation worked or not.

Fourth, conducting only one experimental study made it difficult to infer whether priming would also have affected factors outside the experimental setting. However, based on the extensive research body of priming studies, priming is likely to be found in non-experimental research or in everyday life. The reason for this is that people are constantly bombarded with information in real

life, e.g., commercials (which are somewhat similar to primes). The psychology behind commercials is to prime consumers' behavior so that they will buy the product.

Finally, given the majority of participants were undergraduates, another potential problem of the present study is external validity (i.e., generalizability). In the real world or in an organization, people or employees are diverse in age, ethnicity, experience, background, and culture, which this sample did not represent to the same extent.

Practical Implications.

The findings in this study indicated that priming, contrary to expectations, did not influence readiness for change. However, when practitioners are dealing with readiness for change it is important that they operate from the notion that readiness for change consists of four dimensions, and that the creation and maintenance of readiness for change involve influence on or manipulation of one or more of the four dimensions.

The assumption underlying this study was that personal and professional change can be compared. The emphasis was on how people experience and perceive a personal change and then relate the attitudes toward personal changes to changes happening in an organizational setting. Personal and professional changes may differ, however, in that individuals can escape their current job by finding another job, but they cannot escape their current life and find another life. In addition, the individual has to a certain extent control over

personal changes, which is not always the case when it comes to organizational changes. However, common to both personal and professional changes is that novel situations and new experiences are unavoidable, which the individual has to relate to, and although the circumstances for change may be different, the individual will have to face whatever challenge the change poses, and decide whether to accept and embrace it or not (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Theoretical Implications

Although the hypotheses concerning priming and readiness for change were not supported, there are important theoretical implications concerning priming and how attitudes toward change can be affected by priming. Twenty-five years of priming research have consistently showed that attitudes and behavior can be primed. In theory, priming should have influenced attitudes toward change, and subsequently the behavior toward change, but the effect was not detected in this research design, probably due to certain limitations of the study described above.

This study extended the research on personality traits relating to readiness for change as results showed that individuals who are open to experience were more ready for change. However, this result was not consistent when examined across the two groups. Only within the priming condition did a significant and positive relationship between openness to experience and readiness for change exist, whereas openness to experience among participants in the control group was not significantly related to readiness for change. The

reasons for these opposing findings were not clear, but sample size could be a potential reason for this.

Examining each of the dimensions in the readiness for change-construct for both groups combined revealed that only self-efficacy for change correlated significantly and positively with openness to experience. Between groups, however, openness to experience in the priming condition was positively and significantly related to both appropriateness and self-efficacy for change, whereas in the control group none of the dimensions correlated significantly. The reason for the relationship between openness to experience and self-efficacy for change could be that a personality trait like openness to experience and the context-specific self-efficacy for change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007) compliment each other perfectly with regard to change. In terms of change, believing that one can overcome a discrepancy between where he or she currently is, and where he or she would like to be, a certain amount of curiosity or the courage to pursuit novel and unfamiliar situations is required (McCrae & Costa, 1980).

Future Research

Gaining further knowledge of the factors influencing an individual's attitudes toward change will be beneficial to better understand how an individual relate to change in general. The experimental approach should be explored further, as being able to infer causal effect is an advantage to researchers. However, a replication of the current study will require a better and more refined

design reflecting a situation where the change is unexpected and where the initial reactions may indicate a more general attitude toward change. An alteration of the experimental design is therefore recommended to accommodate the four dimensions in a way more similar to a realistic situation (i.e., the change is unexpected and participants can draw on a social network).

The role of openness to experience for an individual's readiness for change should also be further examined, as this personality trait in candidates and employees could be crucial for organizations that are more prone to changing circumstances.

The proposed hypotheses refer to the individual level, but can be useful on an organizational level as well. Organizations face changes constantly when competing globally, and organizations need employees who are flexible and willing to change with the organization. In conclusion, organizations will move a step ahead if they realize how crucial gaining knowledge about factors that influence an individual's readiness for change is to their survival.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the present study did not find significant results of a priming effect on readiness for change, indicating that positive messages regarding a change do not influence how people perceive a change, which is contrary to most priming studies (Bargh & Williams, 2006; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003) and research on factors contributing to the creation and maintenance of readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; By, 2007; Holt et al., 2007). Currently, there are no studies, as far as I am aware, that examine the effect of priming on readiness for change, so the novel approach to examine the factors affecting readiness for change should be explored further. However, the finding that openness to experience is important for an individual's readiness for change raises many interesting questions of how this affects a person's attitude and behavior toward change in different contexts.

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APPENDIX
Survey Questionnaire

A. YOUR PERCEPTIONS

For most of you, once you complete your undergraduate studies you will be looking for a job that fits your career interests. This transition from college to a career is a change. The following statements reflect this change. If you plan on going to graduate school please read and answer the questions as if you were to start a career related job.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1.	In the long run, I feel it will be worthwhile for me if I start preparing now for a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Starting a career will make my life easier.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	There are a number of rational reasons why I want to start a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	The time I am spending thinking about my future career should be spent on something else.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	My professors or parents encourage me to embrace this change in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	My professors or parents stress the importance of this change in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	My friends will support any career path that I choose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Some of my friends have already started their careers and the things I hear from them makes me comfortable starting my own career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	I do not anticipate any problems adjusting to a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	I don't think I will do well in some of the tasks that will be required in a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	When I set my mind to it, I can learn everything that will be required in a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	My past experiences make me confident that I will be able to perform successfully in a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	I am worried I will lose some of my status when I transition from college to my career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	This change will disrupt many of the personal relationships I have developed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15	Once I have chosen a career path, my options in other fields become limited.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	I am looking forward to making more money in a career-related job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B. ABOUT YOU

The following phrases describe people's behaviors. Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes *YOU*. Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, your responses will be confidential. Please read each statement carefully and circle the number that corresponds to the number on the scale.

Very Inaccurate	Moderately Inaccurate	Neither Inaccurate or Accurate	Moderately Accurate	Very Accurate
1	2	3	4	5

I...

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | believe in the importance of art. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | have a vivid imagination. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | tend to vote for liberal political candidates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | carry the conversation to a higher level. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | enjoy hearing new ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | am not interested in abstract ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | do not like art. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | avoid philosophical discussions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | do not enjoy going to art museums. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | tend to vote for conservative political candidates | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

C. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- Age: _____
- Gender: Male Female

3. Year in college: _____

4. Major: _____

5. Ethnicity (Check all that apply):

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Palauan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cambodian | <input type="checkbox"/> Indonesian | <input type="checkbox"/> Polynesian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> Tahitian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Latina/o | <input type="checkbox"/> Taiwanese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> East Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> Malaysian | <input type="checkbox"/> Thai |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fijian | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify): _____ |

D. JOB INFORMATION

3. Are you currently employed?

- No
 Yes

4. Please indicate your employment status

- Not currently employed
 Working full-time (40 hours or more a week)
 Working part-time (less than 40 hours a week)
 Other: _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

