THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR AND DIFFERENT FORMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE BEHAVIOR

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Complementing prior research on the macro- and system-focused views of organizational change, we examined microprocesses of change by attending to 3 different forms of change behavior as predicted by the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Data were collected from 193 employee–coworker dyads working in various organizations in South Korea. Results showed that the TPB-based predictors were related to distinct forms of change behavior. Specifically, the change efficacy of employees predicted their compliance with change, management support for change predicted employees' cooperation with change, and change favorableness was related to proactive championing for change. Magnitude of change was a positive predictor of the 3 forms of change behavior (compliance, cooperation, and championing) and moderated the relationship between change efficacy and compliance with change. We have contributed to the literature by elaborating on the microlevel dynamics of organizational change by introducing the TPB to explain behavioral reactions to change.

Keywords: organizational change, change behavior, theory of planned behavior, change magnitude, reactions to change.

Organizations encounter and adapt to rapid technological and environmental changes (Strauss, Niven, McClelland, & Cheung, 2015). Departing from a long history of taking a macro-, system-focused view of organizational change (Sung, Cho, & Choi, 2011), researchers have increasingly begun to recognize the importance of individual-level factors in understanding organizational change by focusing on the microlevel dynamics of various psychological and behavioral

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reactions to change (Oreg, Bartunek, Lee, & Do, 2018). Most previous researchers focused on responsive behaviors to change as a unidimensional construct, overlooking the multidimensionality of change behaviors in dynamic organizational environments. It also remains unclear what preceding mechanisms may lead to each behavioral reaction. Therefore, in this study we attended to three forms of change behavior reflecting different levels of discretionary involvement of employees in the change process: mere compliance, active cooperation, and proactive championing (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Given the different functions and values of these change behaviors for organizational outcomes, our aim was to understand how different mechanisms shape these change behaviors in the workplace by drawing on the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991).

Literature Review

Employee Reactions to Organizational Change

The contemporary business environment is characterized by dynamic organizational changes and diverse change initiatives (Sung et al., 2011). In this context, behavioral support for change from employees is required for successful change implementation. However, previous researchers have mostly considered change behavior as a unidimensional construct and overlooked the possibility that different forms of change behavior require distinct predictive mechanisms. In this study, we focused on three forms of change support behaviors based on the level of employees' voluntary engagement in change: compliance, cooperation, and championing (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). *Compliance with change* involves giving minimum support by performing only required behaviors to go along with the change. *Cooperation with change* refers to providing behavioral support by exerting voluntary effort to improve one's capabilities and making modest sacrifices to ensure the success of the change. *Championing for change* refers to offering extreme support by going beyond what is formally required and also encouraging others to support the change.

The Theory of Planned Behavior as a Framework for Explaining Change Behavior

Different forms of change behavior have distinct preceding mechanisms. For example, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) reported that cooperation and championing are explained by affective and normative commitment, whereas compliance is predicted by affective, normative, and continuance commitment. To further elaborate how different forms of change behavior can be shaped by distinct individual and social processes, we adopted the TPB, which is used to isolate the determinants of general human behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Empirical researchers have confirmed the validity of the TPB in predicting various human

behaviors (Chu, Chen, & Sung, 2016). Per this theory, there are three formative predictors of human behavior: (a) *attitude toward behavior* is the extent to which a person has a positive or negative appraisal of the given behavior, (b) *subjective norms* are a person's social expectations or perceived pressure to perform the behavior in question, and (c) *perceived behavioral control* is a person's perceived competence in performing the behavior based on past experience or anticipated impediments (Ajzen, 1991).

We sought to explain change behaviors by applying TPB-based predictors. In the context of organizational change, attitude toward behavior affects change behavior in the form of change favorableness (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006). Subjective norms perceived by employees through management support and encouragement for change behavior signal that the organization expects its members' change-supportive behavior. Perceived behavioral control is reflected in *change-targeted self-efficacy*, which refers to a person's belief in his/her ability to implement change and perform change-related tasks well (Choi & Chang, 2009). We believed that these three TPB-based predictors would have distinct implications for the three forms of change behavior.

Change Efficacy and Compliance with Change

As organizational changes are initiated or adopted by management and considered important for their managerial agenda, explicit requirements and guidelines for change-related behavior are imposed on employees (Sung et al., 2011). Performing minimally expected behaviors represents employees complying with these requirements. To the extent that one can cope with potentially overwhelming events, such as organizational change, there is little reason for employees to fear (Moss, Sanchez, Brumbaugh, & Borkowski, 2009). Belief in one's coping abilities for forthcoming events reduces the level of stress before, during, and after the experience (Bandura, 1982). Employees with a strong belief in their coping efficacy to change will not avoid the experience and will willingly carry out what is required of them.

Employees with sufficient self-efficacy or personal mastery fulfill the formal requirements of organizational change instead of avoiding or resisting the change (Moss et al., 2009). However, employees who believe that they cannot deliver what is required of them can feel intimidated by the change and, therefore, avoid rather than comply with it (Bandura, 1982). Indeed, people fear to expose their incompetence and avoid engaging in behaviors beyond their capability to prevent personal embarrassment (Moss et al., 2009). As such, employees may avoid or even resist compliance when they believe they are incapable of carrying out required change-related tasks. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 1: Employees' change efficacy will be positively related to their compliance with change.

Management Support and Cooperation with Change

Per the TPB, social influence is created among employees when they perceive that others want them to behave in certain ways (Ajzen, 1991). The Galatea effect suggests that supervisors' expectations for employees' desirable behavior tend to encourage subordinates to behave as expected (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007). Thus, under the turbulent conditions of organizational change, management support for change creates social norms for employees that clarify managerial expectations and operate as a form of social pressure for employees to behave in change-supportive ways (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007). Organizational support conveys that management and organizations care about change. Accordingly, employees believe that their supportive behavior will be reciprocated and appreciated by their organization and perceive that upcoming changes are less threatening (Kirrane, Lennon, O'Connor, & Fu, 2017). Therefore, we hypothesized the following relationship.

Hypothesis 2: Management support for change will be positively related to employees' cooperation with change.

Change Favorableness and Championing for Change

Proactive support for change can be explained by an employee's attitude rather than pressure from external sources (Chun, Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2013). The importance of intrinsic inclination in predicting proactive behavior has been previously recognized (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008), in that proactive behaviors, such as championing for change, are more strongly related to personal inclinations than to passive and normative behaviors (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Therefore, employees proactively support change when they are convinced by and possess positive attitudes toward change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Actively participating in a change initiative and promoting it to others also implies that the focal employees make sacrifices for successful change implementation, which can result from favorable evaluation and positive outcome expectations (Fedor et al., 2006). Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Employees' change favorableness will be positively related to their championing for change.

Contextual Contingency: Magnitude of Change

In studies of individual behaviors researchers have tended to emphasize person–situation interaction. Lewin (1951) stated that a field or life space around individuals interacts with personal factors, such as attitudes and psychological states, to determine overt social behaviors. This situational influence differs according to the strength of a given environment (Mischel, 1977). Situational strength theory posits that the strength or intensity of external cues regarding the desirability of a given behavior inflict psychological pressure on people to

engage in a particular behavior (Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010). When a strong situation exists, people behave according to available external cues regardless of personality variables. In contrast, people behave according to their own personal inclinations when a weak situation exists, for example, when a traffic light turns yellow as the person approaches (Mischel, 1977).

In the context of organizational change, we identified magnitude of change as a key aspect of situational strength because extensive changes, such as mergers and acquisitions or organizational restructuring, signify considerable mandates and an extensive scope of involvement of employees regardless of their willingness (Chung, Du, & Choi, 2014). Therefore, we believed that change initiatives with considerable magnitudes and scope imposed by organizations would be perceived as inevitable and unavoidable by employees, who would then exhibit different forms of change-supportive behavior in accordance with their personal and social situations, and we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Change magnitude will be positively related to compliance, cooperation, and championing forms of change behavior.

We further proposed that change magnitude would operate as a boundary condition in shaping compliance to change; this compliance would then reflect an involuntary and obligatory aspect of change behavior that may be subject to situational constraints. A large change magnitude presents a strong situation, such that we believe employees will feel obliged to accept and comply with change mandates regardless of their individual differences, such as change efficacy. However, we posited that the hypothesized relationship between change efficacy and compliance would remain positive or become stronger under weak change situations with a relatively low change magnitude. Therefore, change magnitude may interact with change efficacy to shape the change compliance of employees and function as a moderating contingency. However, the more active change behaviors, such as cooperation and championing, are less prone to being further moderated by change magnitude beyond its main effect (Kim, Hornung, & Rousseau, 2011). Thus, we hypothesized the following relationship.

Hypothesis 5: Change magnitude will moderate the relationship between employees' change efficacy and compliance with change, such that the relationship is more strongly positive when change magnitude is small than when it is large.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We collected data from four companies in the financial industry in South Korea. These companies had experienced recent organizational changes, such as the introduction of a new team learning system and a series of currently ongoing

postmerger integration interventions. With the support of human resource executives at these companies, we recruited employees who had been directly exposed to and expected to participate in the change initiatives. Coworkers of the participating employees rated the change behavior of the focal employees in order to reduce common method bias and improve the validity of the study (Conway, 2002). Although direct supervisors are a plausible source of performance ratings, the current outcomes of change behaviors may be more likely to be observed by coworkers, who spend more time with the focal employees through daily task-related interactions. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality before commencing the survey.

The initial sample comprised 291 employees and their coworkers. We obtained data from 193 employee–coworker dyads after eliminating insincere responses and cases with no matching coworker ratings (response rate = 66.3%). The final sample of employees included 73% men and 27% women with an average age of 37.3 years ($SD = 7.09$) and a mean organizational tenure of 6.8 years ($SD = 5.04$). More than 70% of the participants had a college-level education.

Measures

We used published multi-item scales with acceptable reliability to measure the current study variables. Participants rated all items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), except for change magnitude and the demographic variables. The name/title of the change in question was written on the cover page of questionnaire to provide participants with a clear reference for the target organizational change.

Change favorableness. We adopted four items ($\alpha = .91$) from a change favorableness scale developed by Fedor et al. (2006) to measure the positive attitudes of employees toward a given organizational change. Sample items include "As a result of this change, I will find my work more interesting" and "As a result of this change, my quality of life at work will be improved."

Management support for change. We adopted the seven-item scale ($\alpha = .88$) used by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) to assess the level of managerial support for organizational change. Sample items are "Managers often mention directly or indirectly the importance of this organizational change" and "My boss is willing to help me so that I can take part in this change."

Change efficacy. Employees' change-related self-efficacy was measured using five items ($\alpha = .92$) adopted from Wanberg and Banas (2000). Sample items are "Wherever this change takes me, I'm sure I can handle it" and "I can perform my role during this organizational change without much difficulty."

Change magnitude. We used a four-item index ($\alpha = .87$) to assess the magnitude or scope of a given organizational change. Three items were adopted from Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) to measure the perceived magnitude of

changes relative to the organization, organizational climate, and nonwork life of employees. As organizational changes may affect each employee's daily work routines, and because such personal implications are important in forming individual reactions toward change, we added an item regarding the impact of change on one's job on a day-to-day basis. Thus, our change magnitude scale included the following four items: "How much did this organizational change affect your (a) organization, (b) organizational climate, (c) nonwork life, and (d) daily job?" (1 = *not much*, 7 = *a great deal*).

Change behavior. Measurement items for the three change behaviors were adopted from Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). First, compliance with change was assessed by the following three items (α = .88): (a) "This person has accepted role changes following an organizational change," (b) "This person has complied with the organization's directives regarding the change," and (c) "This person has adjusted the way he/she does his/her job as required by this change." Second, the scale for cooperation with change included the following items (α = .86): (a) "This person has tried to remain optimistic about the change, even in the face of adversity," (b) "This person has sought help concerning the change when needed," and (c) "This person has tried to understand the organizational change as well as he/she can." Finally, championing for change was assessed with the following three items (α = .80): (a) "This person has encouraged the participation of others in the change," (b) "This person has tried to help others to overcome change-related difficulties," and (c) "This person has often spoken positively about the change to people outside the company."

Control variables. Previous researchers have reported that demographic characteristics, such as gender, level of education, and tenure, are related to change-related attitudes and behavior (Kim et al., 2011); thus, we controlled for these in our analysis. Gender was coded as a dummy variable (male = 0 and female = 1). Level of education was reported using the following four categories: 1 = high school or lower, 2 = 2-year college, 3 = bachelor's degree, and 4 = graduate degree. Tenure was reported in years. Participants came from four different organizations implementing different organizational change initiatives; thus, we included three company dummy variables to control for any differences between companies.

Results

We checked the empirical distinctiveness of the scales by conducting a series of confirmatory factor analyses. We created a measurement model using 20 items reported by the focal employees as indicators of the four latent factors. The four-factor structure exhibited an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2(*df* = 164) = 403.94, comparative fit index (CFI) = .90, root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA) = .09, and performed better than any of the alternative two- or three-factor models (χ^2 difference tests, all $p < .001$). We also tested the three-factor structure of change behaviors reported by coworkers, creating a measurement model using nine items as indicators of the three latent factors and allowing all covariances among them. Results indicated that the hypothesized three-factor model of change behavior had a decent fit to the data: χ^2 ($df = 24$) = 49.89, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .08. This three-factor model fitted significantly better than any of the one- or two-factor models of change behavior (χ^2 difference tests, all $p < .001$). Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables.

Effects of TPB-Based Predictors on Different Change Behaviors

Our hypotheses were tested by conducting a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses using three different forms of change behavior as the dependent variables. We also provided 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the hypothesized effects. As shown in Table 2, employee demographics and the company dummy variables were entered as controls in the first step of each set of regression equations, which were used to predict the three change behaviors. The three TPB-based predictors were entered simultaneously in the second step to examine each predictor's distinct effect on specific change behaviors after controlling for the effects of demographics, company membership, and other TPB-based predictors.

Model 2 of Table 2 confirmed our theoretical expectation and shows that change efficacy was significantly and positively related to compliance with change (β = .26, $p < .01$, CI [0.10, 0.41]), whereas change favorableness and management support were not significant predictors of compliance. These patterns support Hypothesis 1. As we expected, employees complied with organizational change when they believed that they could manage the change.

Our results also support Hypothesis 2, in that cooperation with change was significantly predicted by management support (β = .22, $p < .05$, CI [0.05, 0.38]) but not by the other two TPB-based predictors (see Model 5 of Table 2). Social pressure from the organization and supervisors encouraged employees to exert more effort to support the successful change than was formally required.

Finally, in accordance with Hypothesis 3, championing for change was predicted by change favorableness (β = .17, $p < .05$, CI [0.01, 0.34]) but not by the other predictors (see Model 8 of Table 2). Our participants showed strong support for the change and promoted it only when they personally favored the change. This finding provides strong evidence for the hypothesized distinct connection types.

Table 1. *Correlations, Descriptive Statistics, and Reliability Analyses for Study Variables*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Level of education	2.18	0.91										
2 Tenure	6.81	5.04	.06									
3 Gender	0.27	0.45	-.27**	-.05								
4 Change favorableness	5.16	1.13	-.07	-.12	-.22**	(.91)						
5 Management support for change	5.51	0.88	-.03	-.02	-.03	.46**	(.88)					
6 Change efficacy	5.28	0.92	-.01	.02	-.15*	.43**	.31**	(.92)				
7 Change magnitude	4.80	0.99	.14	.01	-.21**	.55**	.44**	.38**	(.87)			
8 Compliance with change	5.58	0.94	.01	-.04	-.16*	.29**	.21**	.34**	.40**	(.88)		
9 Cooperation with change	5.49	0.91	-.08	.01	-.16*	.29**	.26**	.19**	.32**	.68**	(.86)	
10 Championing for change	5.23	1.04	-.14	.02	-.17*	.33**	.23**	.24**	.32**	.59**	.67**	(.80)

Note. Cronbach's α shown in parentheses.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. *Hierarchical Regression Results for Change Behaviors*

	Compliance with change			Cooperation with change			Championing for change		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Level of education	-.06	-.04	-.05	-.15	-.15	-.12	-.15	-.13	-.14
Tenure	-.01	.00	-.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.01
Gender	-.37*	-.23	-.13	-.41*	-.32	-.26	-.47*	-.31	-.21
Company 1	.06	.07	-.18	-.11	-.05	-.24	-.34	-.26	-.50*
Company 2	-.51	-.34	-.55	-.15	.08	-.07	-.25	.01	-.12
Company 3	.41	.41	.17	.38	.50*	.32	-.40	-.33	-.51
Change favorableness		.09	-.02		.10	.04		.17*	.08
Management support for change		.09	.04		.22*	.15		.10	.09
Change efficacy		.26**	.10		.04	.00		.14	.02
Change magnitude			.35***			.21*			.32***
Change favorableness × Change magnitude			.03			.14			.02
Management support for change × Change magnitude		.09			-.07			.16	
Change efficacy × Change magnitude			-.23**			-.10			-.15
ΔR^2	.11***	.11***	.12***	.08***	.08***	.04		.09***	.07**

Note. N = 193. Standardized beta coefficients are shown.
* *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

Main and Moderating Effects of Change Magnitude

The three equations shown in Models 3, 6, and 9 of Table 2 confirmed Hypothesis 4, showing that change magnitude exerted significant and positive effects on compliance with change (β = .35, p < .001, CI [0.18, 0.52]), cooperation with change (β = .21, p < .05, CI [.03, .40]), and championing for change (β = .32, p < .001, CI [0.12, 0.52]).

We performed a moderated regression analysis to test Hypothesis 5. Change efficacy and change magnitude were mean-centered to reduce the possibility of multicollinearity among the predictors before creating the interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991). We also included in Model 3 of Table 2 interactions of change magnitude with the other two TPB-based predictors to control for the effects of these alternative interaction effects involving change magnitude.

Model 3 of Table 2 shows that the interaction between change efficacy and change magnitude was a significant negative predictor of compliance with change (β = -.23, p < .01, CI [-0.38, -0.07]), supporting Hypothesis 5. Notably, change magnitude significantly shaped change compliance such that the effect of change efficacy was no longer significant once the main and interaction effects involving change magnitude were entered.
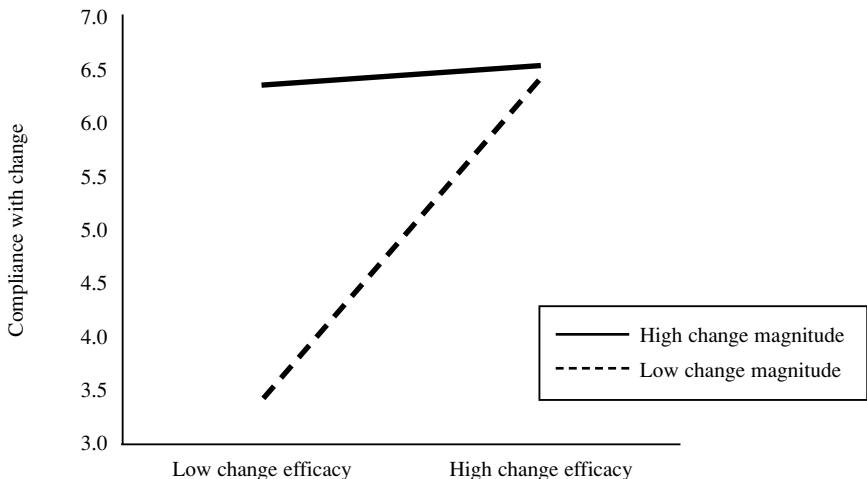

Figure 1. Interaction plot of the effect of change efficacy and change magnitude on compliance with change.

We conducted a simple slope analysis to further probe the pattern of this significant interaction (Aiken & West, 1991). Figure 1 shows an interaction plot depicting the significant and positive effect of change efficacy on compliance with change at a small change magnitude (b = .52, p < .05), but the slope

became nonsignificant when the change magnitude was large ($b = .03$, *ns*). The regression line for the large change magnitude indicates that employees complied with change regardless of their change efficacy when organizational change was regarded as a strong situation with considerable change demands. Nonsignificant results were noted for the interaction terms of change magnitude that involved the other TPB-based predictors and in the equations we used to examine the other change behaviors of cooperation and championing.

Discussion

To address the emerging interest in employees' behavioral reactions to change, we explored incumbent microprocesses by attending to three different forms of change behavior and specifying their distinct predictors based on the TPB. We proposed that change magnitude would play a critical role as a general driver of change behaviors and act as a boundary condition of the relationship between change efficacy and compliance. Our empirical analysis results largely support the theoretical propositions.

We have contributed to the organizational change literature by empirically demonstrating that different forms of change behavior are stimulated by distinct individual and social factors, as specified in the TPB. Self-efficacy belief is a starting point for employee engagement with the basic requirements of organizational changes. Social support and normative expectations can promote active collaboration (Wu & Parker, 2017); however, employees may need to develop personal and intrinsic attachment to a given change to be willing to engage in proactive and spontaneous support and promotion of change initiatives (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). This revelation regarding the distinct underlying drivers of different forms of change behavior improves understanding of the microprocesses of organizational changes, which have often been investigated in the past from a solely macroperspective (Sung et al., 2011).

Our results also show that all three forms of change behavior were positively related to change magnitude, suggesting that employees may participate both passively and actively to a great extent when they perceive changes to be considerable and likely to extensively affect themselves and their organization. In this respect, change magnitude attenuates the role of individual differences, such as change efficacy, in predicting compliance with change. Further, change efficacy was found to be positively related to compliance with change under the condition of a small change magnitude. Employees who perceive changes as being insignificant in magnitude may comply with change only when they believe that they can easily carry out the required behavior without exerting much extra effort (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1977). Thus, complying with change serves as a low-cost demonstration of these employees' competence and support

for their organization. People who are unsure of their capabilities and view changes as unimportant are tempted to hide their inabilities by caring less about and not complying with change (Moss et al., 2009). However, employees may comply with company policies regardless of their perceived competence when the organization is presumably under enormous change. Our results highlight the importance of magnitude of change initiatives and the need for considering such situational factors to fully understand organizational change processes.

Our findings also have practical implications for managers to achieve successful organizational change. Radical (or explorative) changes in an organization require proactive, championing supporters who are self-empowered to actively customize a given task and resolve unknown barriers against successful changes (Huy, 2002). This situation requires organizations to provide employees with a clear vision and positive expectations, and to frame upcoming changes in a way that promotes favorable attitudes among employees. By contrast, the process for incremental (or exploitative) changes with a relatively clear and well-established structure is predictable and can be effectively managed by managers or change agents (Ettlie, Bridges, & O'Keefe, 1984). Passive compliance and cooperative participation of staff suffice for smooth implementation of these changes. In this change situation organizations can offer employees ample training or technical assistance, along with organizational resources or support to reinforce employees' change efficacy and perception of management support. In addition, managers may emphasize the importance, magnitude, and scope of the change initiative to encourage all employees' change engagement.

The current findings should be interpreted with consideration for the following limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional research design precluded drawing clear causal inferences. Our theoretical propositions are firmly grounded in well-established theories, such as the TPB; however, further empirical validations of the current model using longitudinal or experimental study designs would be desirable. Second, we employed coworker ratings of change behaviors to overcome the potential shortcomings of same-source bias. However, the validity of the current findings can be strengthened by a more robust measurement approach based on objective indicators of change behaviors or adoption of employer or supervisor ratings. Further, in future studies researchers may consider different sources of data to address the uneven gender distribution of the sample obtained from financial companies in this study. Finally, our analysis was based on a relatively small sample of employees and their coworkers from four financial institutions. Thus, future researchers may extend the current findings by collecting data from a large sample of employees in various organizations from diverse industries; such organizations would experience different types of organizational changes related to products, processes, and other aspects of their work.

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