Influential Factors in Individual Readiness for Change

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Effectively managing change is one of the most critical challenges organizations face today. Increasing the readiness for change of employees may be one of the most important interventions an organization can initiate. This study investigated the relationship between an employee's readiness for change and his or her margin in life (MIL). MIL is based on McClusky's (1963) theory of margin and is a theory of adult potential that is based upon the balance adults seek between the amount of energy needed to live and learn and the amount actually available. The survey questionnaire also studied the relationship of various demographics to an employee's MIL. Results suggest there are significant correlations between MIL and readiness for change, age, educational level, and length of time with company.

Effectively managing change is one of the most critical challenges organizations face today. History shows that organizations that continually and consistently rise to meet that challenge are those that are most successful. According to McNabb and Sepic (1995, p. 370), change is the process of "altering people's actions, reactions, and interactions to move the organization's existing state to some future desired state." Because of the constant changes confronting employees, some degree of adjustment and improvement can and should occur continuously. Often, however, changes result in dissatisfied or distressed employees. When anxiety is high, performance is lowered and job satisfaction is reduced. Staff resistance to the desired change is often excessive and immediate (McNabb & Sepic, 1995). In fact, it is often suggested that it may be

easier, at times, and less costly to start a completely new organization than it is to change the culture of an existing one. McNabb and Sepic (1995, p. 372) purported that a key goal of a company is to "introduce desired changes, while keeping anxiety, resistance, and subsequent stress to an absolute minimum." Many of these change challenges reflect complicated human dynamics between individuals, departments, and even with outside organizations and the environment (Backer, 1995).

In the management arena, change is discussed at various levels (i.e., individual, group, and organization wide). Organizational change interventions cannot be successful unless individual change takes place. Individual change cannot effectively occur unless employees are prepared and ready for it. Increasing the overall readiness for change (RFC) of all employees may prove to be one of the most effective interventions an organization can initiate (Cunningham, Woodward, Shannon, MacIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom, & Brown, 2002). Employee RFC is a challenge for any organization and is often neglected in planning and implementing (Backer, 1995). It is essential that individuals work through their fears, resistances, and anxieties about changes. This process is one that increases an individual's RFC. Identifying individual change readiness characteristics can help business professionals in prescribing and implementing more effective change interventions. One of the reasons this topic is of such importance to research is not only because of its complexity but also because of its applicability to the work of practitioners in various fields. Backer (1995) explained that:

> Individual RFC is involved with people's beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and their perception of individual and organizational capacity to successfully make those changes. Readiness is a state of mind about the need for change. It is the cognitive precursor to behaviors of either resistance or support…readiness for change is not a fixed element of individuals or system. It may vary due to changing external or internal circumstance, the type of change being introduced, or the characteristics of potential adopters and change agents. Thus, interventions to enhance readiness are possible…change can occur under conditions of low readiness, of course, but behavioral science research indicates that the probability of success is reduced when low readiness leads to low motivation to change or to active resistance (p. 22-24).

By designing and implementing research in this area, we can assist organizations with tools to increase their employees' RFC which, in turn, will benefit both the organization and the individual.

The purpose of this paper is to report the results of a research study that explored the possible influence of a number of factors (i.e., potential individual change readiness characteristics) on RFC. We were particularly interested in learning more about whether employees' levels of RFC were influenced by their margin in life (MIL) and various demographics (gender, age, marital status, educational level, number and age of children, and length of time with company).

Theoretical Frameworks

MIL was developed from McClusky's (1963) theory of margin, which he first presented in a 1963 publication (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Merriam and Caffarella (1999) explained that it is a theory of adult potential. McClusky's theory is grounded in the "notion that adulthood is a time of growth, change and integration in which one constantly seeks balance between the amount of energy needed and the amount available" (p. 279-80). Hanpachern, Morgan, and Griego (1998, p. 340) defined this theory, its components, and MIL in the following passage:

> The basic concepts in this theory are load, power, and margin. Load is any intangible thought feeling, physiological function, or concrete task that dissipates energy when mentally entertained or physically implemented. High load puts responsibilities or burdens on an individual. Power is any source of energy or any resource that can be used to balance the load; it is positive and creates joy, pleasure, strength, or richness for a person. MIL is determined by load and power according to the formula: [Margin = 1-Load/(Load + Power). If load is higher than power, margin is less than .5. In that case, a person's energy is channeled into self-maintenance. By decreasing load, increasing power, or doing both, a person acquires margin, or the ability to act. If people have a high level of MIL (greater than .5) they will have a higher level of satisfaction and feel that more options are open to them, resulting in freedom of choice. A larger MIL equips people to handle emergencies and changes in life (p. 340).

Load and *power* are comprised of both external and internal factors (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). For example, external load may include normal life responsibilities (e.g., family, work, and community) while internal load consists of "life expectancies developed by people" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 280) (aspirations, desires, and future expectations). The external resources needed for power may include family support, social and physical abilities or skills, economic abilities, and work and community (Stevenson, 1982). Internal power resources may come from skills and experiences (acquired or accumulated) such as "physiological functioning, intellectual development, education, self-concept, spiritual/religious strengths, goals, and expectations which have been achieved" (Stevenson, 1982, p. 222).

McClusky (1963) offered this model for studying the course of adult development. He believed that "a person with adequate margin has a choice over a range of relevant alternatives. With adequate margin the individual has a broader field of life space and is able to move more autonomously within it" (Stevenson, 1982, p. 225). The actual model does not address change itself, but as Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 282) argued regarding learning, it addresses "when it is most likely to occur." The overall argument then is that to learn and change most effectively adults need to have some margin of power, meaning that individuals should have more power (resources) available than perceived load.

Much of research in the area of RFC is housed in the behavioral sciences field which studies both organizational and individual levels of change. This literature does

support the concept that RFC is significant in the business arena as well as many others. Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) emphasized the importance of creating readiness as a precursor to organizational change. They examined the influence strategies available to help general readiness. They argued that an organization should be actively creating readiness. Backer (1995, p. 21) reported that failure to analyze and deal with readiness issues can actually lead to "abortive organization development efforts". He explained that resistance to change is directly related to not providing an effective *unfreezing* process before attempting a change. He theorized that Lewin's (1951) *unfreeze* element of his change theory is a major element of RFC. If proper and complete *unfreezing* or *readiness* does not occur, long-term successful change cannot occur.

Although previous literature has not specifically addressed a connection between the theory of margin and Lewin's field and change frameworks, there are some interesting parallels. According to Kurt Lewin (1951, p. 240), human behavior is determined by the entirety of an individual's situation or the "totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent." In his field theory the whole psychological field within which people interact must be considered to understand behavior. Individuals behave differently based on the tensions between perceptions of self and environment, and these tensions can stem from work and non-work domains. Lewin believed that one must consider the power of the underlying forces to determine behavior. McClusky's theory of margin is also based on these assumptions. He argued that the constructs of *power* and *load* should consider all of life's decisions and dimensions. Both Lewin and McClusky would argue then that the entire situation (life in all its complexity) should be considered in the design of effective human change.

When writing about Lewin's work, Edgar Schein (2006, p. 1) argued that "all forms of learning and change start with some form of dissatisfaction or frustration generated by data that disconfirm our expectations or hopes." His research found that human change (at the individual, group, or organizational levels) is often a profound psychological dynamic process that involves "painful unlearning without loss of ego identity and difficult relearning" as one cognitively attempts to "restructure one's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes" (Schein, 2006, p. 1). McClusky's framework would consider all of the variables in the "whole" picture as either neutral or contributing to *power* and *load*. Since change most likely requires energy, it would be considered a *load* in the MIL framework. Hence, as previously mentioned, MIL would look at all of these variables when considering an appropriate time to prepare for change (i.e., RFC). McClusky would argue that assisting employees in ensuring their MIL includes more *power* than *load* would give them more energy (e.g., mentally, physically, emotionally) to be open, willing, and supportive in participating and/or leading change efforts. Of course, Lewin argued that effective change requires a preparatory phase *(unfreezing)*, implementation *(change)*, and *refreezing* (e.g., it becomes a habit, is a set process or system, the change becomes institutionalized). Enhanced MIL would assist employees in all phases of Lewin's change model. For the purpose of this research, however, MIL is a power concept to consider particularly in Lewin's unfreeze phase.

Another final perspective on RFC can be found in the transtheoretical change model that has been extensively researched during the past 25 years. It was originally

developed to study the process of smoking cessation but has expanded to include many other change efforts. The model integrates two interrelated dimensions of change, stages of change, and processes of change, along with the constructs of self-efficacy and decisional balance. The stages of change dimension is represented when an individual is ready to change (Barrett, 1997). The five stages of change are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (Barrett, 1997; Block & Keller, 1998; Morera, Johnson, Freels, Parsons, Crittenden, Flay, & Warnecke, 1998). Characteristics of RFC are present in both the contemplation and preparation stages. Block and Keller (1998) proposed a segmentation approach (Prochaska & DiClemente's (1984) transtheoretical model and Roger's (1975) protection motivation theory) to suggest that people at different stages of RFC are differentially affected by levels of these predictor variables (i.e., vulnerability, severity, response efficacy, and self-efficacy). They do admit, however, that they cannot determine, with correlational statistics, the direction of the correlation. Morena et al. (1998) discussed the debate surrounding the measure of stage of readiness to change and the transtheoretical model. Their research results indicated that the measure of RFC showed high levels of stability and reliability in their specific setting.

Literature Review

In addition to a review of relevant theoretical frameworks, a review of the literature can assist in understanding the research constructs for this study and their relationships. First, the importance of creating readiness and reducing resistance to change efforts will be discussed after which literature on the following topics will be reviewed: the results of Hanpachern's (1997) study; the participative method of change interventions; RFC characteristics and factors; the manager's role and employee empowerment; and the influence of nonwork aspects on employee performance.

There has been discussion of the relationship between RFC and resistance to change. Armenakis et al. (1993, p. 681) argued that RFC is distinguished from resistance to change, stating, "Readiness is the cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort." Tranhant and Burke (1996, p. 37) argued that employees' resistance to change is an important component in successful organizational change interventions, explaining that "managing change effectively requires a sophisticated appreciation and understanding of the multiple variables at play. People and processes must be in tight alignment in order to support goals."

Hanpachern (1997) conducted an interesting study comparing an individual's overall margin in life (MIL), and many of its work and nonwork aspects, with an individual's RFC level. Hanpachern et al. (1998) made fairly bold conclusions reporting the results of this research study. They reported significance in all of the work aspects of margin with readiness correlations ranging from .20 to -.34 ($p<.05$; $p<.01$). They did not find significance in any of the nonwork aspects of margin, but the overall MIL produced a .28 correlation ($p<.01$). From their statistics they concluded that the theory of margin can be extended for use in the organization development field and that MIL can help identify workers' RFC. In their study, work factors (especially management-leadership relations and job skills and knowledge)

predicted RFC. Hanpachern et al. (1998, p. 349) explained that "although the nonwork factors themselves were not predictors of readiness in this study, the factors of self, family, and health were generally rated as more important than the work factors. The nonwork factors also had more power than load, indicating positive MIL". Even though significance was noted in many correlations, their conclusions were not fully supported in whole by the statistical findings. The study had a number of agreement limitations in its research methodology (e.g., sample size, use of only one organization) that prevented it from significant generalizability. The results, however, were interesting and can be utilized for the purpose of discovery as Arkmenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) suggested.

Some of the survey questions used in Hanpachern's (1997) study related to the literature suggesting that the participative method of change interventions is important in order to overcome resistance to change. This means that employees participate more successfully in change if they are included in the decision-making process for the change intervention. Even though this theory appears to be widely accepted (Hanpachern et al., 1998), it is important to consider the contradictory literature. Locke, Schweiger, & Latham (1986) noted that, even though evidence does support participation, there is some support that in decision-making it is not always a precursor for successful change interventions. A review of 50 employee-participation studies show that "26% of the studies found that participation resulted in lower productivity" and concluded that "both scientific literature and management experience have demonstrated that participation is useful only under certain circumstances, a key requirement being that the subordinate has expertise to bring to the decision-making process" (Locke et al., 1986, p. 65).

McNabb and Sepic (1995) introduced a model that identified the relevant factors determining RFC for an individual and an organization. These included organizational culture, organizational climate, organizational policies, and organizational performance outcomes. According to their model, these are directly linked to RFC. It was suggested that the "effective integration of culture, climate, and policies determines the ability of an organization to carry out its mission and to accept and integrate change" (McNabb & Sepic, 1995, p. 372). Additionally, "inertia, manifested as a resistance to change in the operating philosophy of an organization, has been shown to be a powerful force" limiting the adoption of change (McNabb and Sepic, 1995, p. 381). Backer (1995) presented elements defining efforts to enhance change readiness which include contextual factors, message characteristics, and communication approaches that can be used to deliver them; attributes of change agents; interpersonal and social dynamics of the organization in which change is to take place; and specific enhancement interventions. He presented a model for this enhancement that included three stages: assessing readiness, contextualizing readiness, and enhancing readiness. This literature does support Hanpachern's (1997) and Stevenson's (1982) decision to include a number of work aspect MIL domains, subscales, and individual survey items in their questionnaires.

Cabana, Rand, Powe, Wu, Wilson, Abboud, and Raubin (1999) identified 5,658 articles and selected 76 published studies to review regarding additional RFC characteristics. Each of these studies included at least one barrier to adherence of

physicians to clinical practice guidelines, practice parameters, clinical policies, or national consensus statements in an attempt to develop an approach toward improving adherence. Reducing these barriers appeared to decrease physicians' RFC and to increase their reluctance to change at least in this specific context. These barriers included lack of awareness, lack of familiarity, lack of agreement, lack of self-efficacy, lack of outcome expectancy, inertia of previous practice, and external barriers (e.g., cumbersome, confusing). Although their results were not generalized to other employment occupations, further research may show that reducing these barriers may be helpful for other occupations in various types of organizations. These barriers relate directly or indirectly to a number of questionnaire items as well as to the majority of the work aspects of margin Hanpachern (1997) presented.

Hanpachern (1997) showed correlation between an employee's relationship with management/leadership, job knowledge and skill, job demands, social relations, and in his/her MIL. Burke (1997) found that an employee's RFC is reduced when role and task responsibility ambiguity regarding the employer's expectations is present. The employee is more likely to experience feelings of job insecurity as well as possible reduced motivation. In fact, Armenakis and Harris (2002, p. 169) explained that "negative responses to organizational changes are caused by leaders' oversight of the importance of communicating a consistent change message." Another reason the readiness may not be present is that the employee is not receiving feedback. This naturally contributes to insecurity and reduced motivation. Pronk, Tang, and O'Connor (1999) studied the hypothesis that willingness to communicate is directly associated with an individual's readiness to change behavior. The results of the study demonstrated this to be the case. Schleusener (1999, p. iii) studied the RFC of individuals in organizations and found that "a hierarchical regression analysis of the elements of the supported employment model on empowerment of individuals in six different departments showed that readiness for change and self-efficacy for teamwork were significant contributors to empowerment."

There is also literature available supporting the findings that nonwork aspects of MIL (i.e., self, family, and health) have an effect on an employee's productivity and stress. A study by Kirchmeyer (1992) provided support that participation in nonwork domains can enrich human resources available for work. The aim of another study by Kirchmeyer (1995) was to test a conceptual framework for managing the work-nonwork boundary. She surveyed men and women who faced considerable demands in both work and nonwork domains because many often report high levels of inter-domain conflict. It was found that there is spillover to work from nonwork aspects. Even though the connection was implied, more research is needed to solidify a specific link of these boundaries to RFC. Cohen (1995) conducted research to examine the relationship between work commitment form (i.e., organization commitment, occupational commitment, job involvement, Protestant work ethic, work involvement) and nonwork domains. Although the return rate was only 47 percent, it was found that, with the use of correlational analysis (i.e., regression analysis), nonwork domains affected all work commitment forms examined in this study, especially organizational commitment. Work commitment forms have been shown to predict important work outcomes such as "turnover, turnover intentions,

performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, absenteeism, and tardiness" (Cohen, 1995, p. 240). It was also noted that the way in which organizations react toward nonwork domains of their employees can increase or decrease work commitment. Research in each one of the nonwork aspects of the MIL survey also provides evidence of a positive relationship on an individual's power and load as defined previously.

Regarding demographic variables and their relationship to MIL, Hanpachern et al. (1998) found that age, gender, education, martial status, and length of employment did not have a relationship with the MIL construct. However, differences in RFC were found among employees who worked in certain departments and positions, were in managerial positions, and were relatively new to the organization. Related to marital status or number of children, other research has suggested the changing roles of men and women, both at home and in the workplace, may influence overall life satisfaction. Researchers in Europe found that it is the tendency for women to be taking on new roles as they enter the workforce, and yet family responsibility continues to be viewed as a female domain (Shoon, Hansoon, & Salmela-Aro, 2005). These researchers further reported that overall life satisfaction is enhanced for males and females in paid employment who are married and have children. These authors did find some difficulty for men as they attempted to adapt to domestic duties. This provides some indirect evidence that marital status and children may increase an employee's MIL because of the life satisfaction construct. However, Mcelwain, Korabik, and Rosin (2005) suggested that as individuals attempt to redefine themselves, taking on roles that were previously not there, the result can be a kind of interrole stress which is work-family conflict. It would seem apparent that work interfering with family and family interfering with work can result in different forms of stress and may be viewed differently by men and women. These researchers found that work interfering with family was an issue for both men and women, and that family interfering with work was more of an issue for men compared to women. The researchers did find that overall job satisfaction and general life satisfaction were as similar for men and women. Perrewe, Hochwarter, and Kiewitz (1999) suggested that value attainment may be a mediator variable between work interference with family, family interference with work, and overall job and life satisfaction. These researchers proposed that individuals tend to compare life activities to pre-determined standards or values. Thus if work begins to interfere with family, the value a person has for family may mediate the end effect of life and job satisfaction. The same can be said to be true for family interfering with work and the value one places on work. The perceptions of life and job satisfaction may well be moderators for MIL. It is clear that the past literature is mixed in providing support for possible relationships between MIL and various demographic variables.

The reviewed literature assisted in the development of a framework for the current study. The literature does support the importance of RFC as well as a high MIL in overall human productivity. It has also supported the design choices in Hanpachern's (1997) study of the eight work and nonwork aspects of margin and also supports the items in our revised and simplified MIL scale that has yet to be presented.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this survey questionnaire study was to investigate the concepts of McClusky's (1963) theory of margin, including both the work and nonwork aspects of MIL, and their relationship to RFC. We chose to utilize the general framework of Hanpachern's (1997) work while making extensive changes to the MIL scale, sample and population, and other methodological components. Because the relationship between work and nonwork domains continues to be of great interest to researchers and employees (Kirchmeyer, 1995), we felt continued attention to these domains was important. We wanted to determine if employees who have higher MIL levels are more open and prepared for change. If supportive findings were discovered, implications for types of change interventions may surface. In addition, the cost-benefit of designing and implementing person-focused, small group, or large group interventions that can assist employees in increasing their margin in life (work and non-work aspects) may be strengthened. Since there is little available research in this area, another purpose of this study is for overall discovery. Armenakis et al. (1993, p. 688) stated that "readiness assessments may be for the purpose of discovery as much as for the purpose of confirmation."

Therefore, the ultimate goal of this study was to learn more about whether employees' levels of RFC are influenced by their MIL and various demographics. Based on the theoretical frameworks and research findings presented in the previous section, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 1: Employees who have higher MIL levels will have significantly higher perceptions of overall RFC.

Hypothesis 2a-b: Employees who have higher a) non-work-related MIL and b) work-specific MIL levels will have significantly higher perceptions of overall RFC.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no relationship between MIL levels among gender, age, number of children, marital status, educational level, and length of time with company.

Research Methods

This research study involved a survey questionnaire being given to employees in corporate settings. It can be classified as a correlation relational study because two or more different kinds of data were gathered from the same groups of subjects to test for relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Participants and Sample Selection

The population of this study was the group of individuals who conformed to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of this research study. This target population included the populations of four organizations (three for-profit and one non-profit) within the state of Utah with numbers of local employees ranging from approximately 200 to over 2,000. These organizations varied greatly in industries, products, and services. One organization distributed surveys to all employees while another distributed surveys to all employees within six predetermined departments. A

third conducted a random sample of all supervisors, management, and leadership within the organization. Finally, we ran a random sample of about two-thirds of all employees for the fourth company. A total of 758 surveys were given to employees, and 464 surveys were returned for a return rate of over 61 percent.

Measures/Instrumentation

We had originally explored doing a complete replication of Hanpachern's (1997) study; but after some troubling pilot test results we substantially changed the MIL scale. For our revised study, RFC served as the dependent variable; overall, work, and nonwork MIL served as independent variables; and the intervening demographic variables included gender, age, marital status, educational level, number of children, age of children, and length of time with company.

We used two instruments for this research project. First, we used Hanpachern's (1997) original 14-item RFC scale (with slight alterations) which was based, in part, on McNabb and Sepic's (1995) research and several unpublished studies. The stem question asked "My willingness or openness to…" and some sample items include the following: 1) work more because of the change is; 4) create new ideas is; 7) change the way I work because of the change is; and 12) support change is. Participants were asked to circle one of seven numbers on a Likert scale (1=very unlikely; 7=very likely). Schleusener (1999) explained that Hanpachern identified three dimensions of RFC: promoting change, participating in change, and resisting change. These dimensions serve as subscales. Promoting includes four items, participating includes six, and resisting change includes the remaining four items used in this scale. Hanpachern pilot tested three versions of this scale and Cronbach's alpha was measured to be .82, which indicates good internal consistency (Hanpachern, 1997; Hanpachern et al., 1998; Schleusener, 1999). Our slightly adjusted instrument had a Cronbach's alpha of .81 which is consistent with previous research.

Second, we formed the MIL scale by studying Hanpachern's MIL Revised scale which had already been modified from the original published survey by Stevenson in 1982. The MIL Revised scale consisted of 50 questions designed to measure many aspects of life in relation to work and nonwork. The work aspects of margin are divided into five categories including: job knowledge and skill, job demands, social relations in the workplace, management-leadership relations, and organizational culture. The nonwork aspects of margin are divided into three categories which include: self, family, and health. Our simplified instrument included nine questions in total, with only one question focused on each of the work and nonwork areas discussed. Participants were asked to read each statement carefully and then circle the number (on the list provided below) that best represented their feelings and views.

1 = Takes *a lot* of my energy - it physically or mentally drains - a load on my shoulders
2 = Takes *some* of my energy - it *somewhat* drains me - somewhat of a load on my shoulders
3 = Neither takes energy nor provides joy, pleasure, strength, or richness for me.

4 = Provides or creates *some* joy, pleasure, strength, or richness for me – gives me *some* energy/power in my life.
5 = Provides or creates *a lot* of joy, pleasure, strength, or richness for me – gives me energy/power in my life.

The participants were asked to answer the following nine questions by circling one of the numbers (1-5) provided above.

1. My job…
2. Balancing my work and family…
3. My physical and mental health…
4. My relationship with my boss…
5. My social relationship in the workplace…
6. My current job knowledge and skills…
7. The demands of my job…
8. My commitment to this organization…
9. My family…

The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .73 which is lower than Hanpachen's version (alpha = .85) but still within an acceptable range. The new version of the MIL instrument was pilot tested (n=44) to ensure internal consistency, which was found. Even though Stevenson (1982) and Hanpachern (1997) established validity, stability, and internal consistency on their instrument, because of the substantial changes in the current form, establishment will need to be re-explored.

Data Collection Procedures

A key contact at each organization was used to distribute surveys. This individual had a list of the employees to be given surveys and the survey number each should be given. We kept a list of survey numbers given to each organization, and we recorded which surveys were returned. Researchers did not have a list of employee names, so confidentiality was maintained. Numbers were used to identify organizations. After about 10 days we asked the organizational contacts to provide a general reminder to all participants to return surveys. Additional copies of surveys were provided if needed. In three of the organizations, an envelope with a pre-addressed and stamped envelope was provided so they could mail them directly to us. One organization asked participants to seal them in an envelope and drop them off in a large drop envelope located in each of their departments. The following week a researcher picked up the sealed envelopes. This resulted in a return rate of over 61 percent.

Data Analysis Procedure

We used Pearson correlations and multiple regressions to explore the relationships between MIL and RFC. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test magnitude and direction of the relationship. Multiple regressions were used to determine the correlation between the criterion variable and a combination of demographics (Gall, Borg, & Hall, 1996).

Limitations

There are five primary limitations for this study:

- First, our study was limited to only specific aspects of MIL. It did not and could not address all variables that can increase an individual's power or all of the variables that can decrease an individual's load;
- Second, an individual's RFC can be influenced by variables not measured in this study. A questionnaire survey cannot accurately control many variables within an organization's culture or for an individual's situation;
- Third, participants may not have a clear understanding of power and load even though it will be briefly addressed on the questionnaire. Neither was there time nor finances for interviews, so the participants were limited to a brief written description;
- Fourth, a questionnaire cannot probe deeply into respondents' opinions and feelings which would be helpful in taking a more comprehensive look at RFC and its relationship to MIL;
- Fifth, the study was limited to 758 employees in four organizations. A larger and fully randomized sample would have improved generalizability.

Results and Discussion

Table I contains the demographics of the participants who returned their surveys. As is shown, male and female respondents were nearly equal; and most employees were between the ages of 21 and 54 (see additional demographics).

The first hypothesis predicted that employees who had higher MIL levels would also have higher overall RFC perceptions. The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r=.298) did show that there was a significant correlation at the .01 level between individual MIL and RFC responses. This supports Hanpachern's (1997) findings already discussed. This means that individuals who perceive they have more *power* than *load* (MIL) also believe they are more open and ready for change.

The second hypothesis predicted that employees who had higher non-work-related MIL and work-specific MIL levels would also have significantly higher perceptions of overall RFC. This hypothesis asks us to look deeper within the MIL score to see if there are correlations between the six work MIL work items and RFC as well as the three nonwork MIL items and RFC. As for the work MIL items, there is a significant correlation (p=.01) of .288 between MIL and RFC. This means that employee perceptions of work-related *load* and *power* are related to their RFC. In other words, the more *power* or the higher work-related MIL (relationship with boss, commitment to company, relationship with coworkers, and such), the more the employee is open and ready for the changes that he or she may be asked or expected to make at work. There is also a correlation (although very low) of RFC and nonwork MIL (family, work-family balance, physical and mental health) (r=.181). This means that there is a relationship between the power employees may feel from their families/health that may be related to their RFC as well.

These findings support our overall argument that to learn and change most effectively adults need to have some margin of power, meaning that individuals should

Table 1: *Demographic Frequencies of the Sample*

Demographic	*Categories*	*Frequencies*
Sample	Total number	464
Gender	Male	222
	Female	229
Age range	Less than 21	10
	21-30	230
	31-40	97
	41-54	92
	55+	22
Marital status	Single	96
	Separated/Divorced	33
	Widowed	3
	Married	316
Highest educational level	High School	135
	Associate Degree	141
	Bachelor Degree	152
	Masters Degree	21
	Doctorate Degree	2
Age of children	None	180
	0-5	144
	6-11	98
	12-18	87
	Over 19	51
Length of time with company	0-6 months	53
	7-11 months	63
	1-2 years	95
	3-5 years	145
	6 or more years	95
Company	A	128
	B	145
	C	127
	D	54

have more power (resources) available than perceived load. This argument emerged from the writings of theorists and researchers working in this area (e.g., McClusky, 1963; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Stevenson, 1982). As McClusky (1963) argued, "a person with adequate margin has a choice over a range of relevant alternatives" (Stevenson, 1982, p. 225). One such alternative is clearly being open, prepared, and willing to be involved in personal and professional change efforts. This research also supports Lewin's (1951) writings that human behavior is determined by the entirety of an individual's situation, as the MIL construct attempts to represent. Although it is important to note that because of the complexity of human behavior, a MIL measurement does not and cannot address all elements of an individual's life that could possibility relate. These results also support the notion that MIL is perhaps an important element or component in the *unfreezing* stage of Lewin's change model. Since effective change requires this stage to occur and there is a clear relationship between MIL and change readiness (i.e., *unfreezing*), interventions that heighten MIL may prove advantageous for organizations and families.

Finally, because of the mixed literature, the final hypothesis predicted no

relationship between MIL and the demographic variables of gender, age, marital status, educational level, number of children, and length of time with company. However, unlike Hanpachern's study which found no relationship between demographics and MIL, our study found a significant relationship between MIL and age of employee (p=.045), education level (p=.002), and the length of time an employee has been working with the company (p=.041) (see Table 2). In general terms, the older the employee is the higher MIL level he or she perceives (more power than load). Another interesting finding was that there was actually a significant negative relationship between the level of education and MIL. This means that employees with less education perceived themselves as having higher levels of MIL. This may be because people with more education typically have more responsibility, tend to be salaried instead of hourly (hence often work more hours), and may have more complex jobs. These individuals may feel more of a load than those who are not as highly educated. Finally, it appears that those who have been with the company the shortest periods of time have higher level MIL levels. The past literature provides no findings to explain why this would be the case. Literature does find that new employees often adapt better to change than employees who have worked longer (Hogarty, 1996). Perhaps new employees also feel lighter *loads* because they are not fully entrenched into an organizational culture that may become more of a burden or load the longer an employee works for the same company. Regarding the demographic variables, it is important to note that the change in the R-square value in the multiple regression was only .06. The R-square value is an indication of the variance accounted for in the dependent variable by the independent variables. In this case the variance accounted for in MIL is .251. The change in R-square implies the change in variance accounted for by adding additional predictors. Although age of employee, educational level, and length of time with company did account for some variance, it is important to note that the practical significance of these results may be questionable.

Table 2: *The Relationship between MIL and Selected Demographics*

Variables	B	Sig.	R^2	ΔR^2	F
(Constant)	29.465	.000	.251	.063	2.599**
Gender	.841	.104			
Age of employee	.791	.045*			
Marital status	.218	.316			
Educational level	-.863	.002**			
# of children	7.616E02	.839			
Length of time with company	-.422	.041*			

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

These results found no relationship between the MIL construct and gender, marital status, or number of children. This supports Hanpachern (1997) who found similar results in looking for relationships between MIL and gender and marital status. As previously mentioned, research (Shoon et al., 2005) has suggested that changing roles at home and in the workplace may influence overall life satisfaction which may be linked to MIL. Although women tend to have stronger home roles in addition to new workplace roles, researchers found overall life satisfaction of both males and females to increase if they were married and had children—possible *power*. On the other hand, the literature on work-family conflict provides reasons that MIL may decrease with the additional responsibilities of children and family duties—possible *load*. It is probable that this power-load combination of the marital status and number of children demographics may have resulted in no impact on individual MIL levels, as found in our research. As mentioned previously, both males and females experience similar levels of life satisfaction from children and marriage and additional research has shown both genders (although differently) perceive work-family conflict (Perrewe et al., 1999). This may be one reason there is no difference between the genders in perceptions of MIL in this study.

Implications for Future Theory and Practice

What are the implications for future theory and research? Continued research in the area of RFC is essential. Although the concepts have been around for many years (e.g., Kurt Lewin) and much has been done in the general area of change, little research has been done in the management arena related to RFC for change at the individual level. Research focused on the identification of RFC moderators/factors and resistance to change constructs is needed along with research on specific interventions that can result in increased RFC. Further, research needs to be continued in the area of the transition from workplace readiness to the actual change movement. This research has been based on established theory from a number of domains. However, theory specific to the complex relationship between MIL and RFC has not been developed. This research provides the evidence and groundwork to encourage and support further theoretical work in this area.

What are the implications of this research for practice? Strategic management is all about change. Change is foundational to performance improvement at all levels. Many researchers and practitioners already focus on organizational change, but continued work in the area of individual change can be just as important to understand and facilitate. Practitioners who do not understand individual readiness will develop and implement change interventions that will not be as successful (short-term and long-term) as those who design interventions, when needed, to prepare employees to be open and ready for the change that needs to occur. Overall, managers and leaders can be more effective and efficient if they understand RFC and its antecedents, determinants, moderators, outcomes, connections, and complexity. Change can be exhilarating for some—or at least not as painful as it could have been for others—if employees are ready and willing to adjust, improve, learn, and develop.

The identification of factors that influence readiness for individual change is an

important endeavor. Changing individual employees is a complex task, especially when they are not open to or supportive of change efforts. This study found that employees who have higher MIL levels (meaning they feel more energy, strength, joy, and power from their work and nonwork lives and environments) may be more open and ready for changes the organization may require of them. Furthermore, employees who feel good and are not burdened down by various work (job in general, job demands, relationship with boss, workplace social support, job knowledge and skills, and commitment to the organization) and possibly nonwork (family, balancing work and family, physical and mental health) concerns appear to be ready to make necessary individual and organizational changes. This provides support for organizations to offer assistance to employees so that they can have more energy to commit to change efforts. Interventions may include assisting employees with balancing work and family responsibilities (flexible schedules, childcare assistance, job-sharing, training, and more), offering wellness programs, organizing communication improvement activities with management and employees, providing continual help related to improving job knowledge and skills, adjusting job demands when appropriate, providing programs to improve organizational commitment, and increasing employee autonomy.

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