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The mitigating effects of core self-evaluations in uncertain environments

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of core self-evaluations (CSE) and change uncertainty on job satisfaction and turnover intentions within the context of an organizational change. Because individuals high in CSE are expected to be able to cope better with uncertainty, the authors also tested the mitigating effect of CSE on the change uncertainty-attitude relationships.

Design/methodology/approach – Surveys were completed and returned by 398 employees in the midst of a merger containing measures of CSE, change uncertainty, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. The survey was voluntary and administered cross-sectionally.

Findings – Change uncertainty was found to negatively influence job satisfaction and positively influence turnover intentions. Additionally, CSE positively impacted job satisfaction and negatively impacted turnover intentions. High CSE was also found to minimize the negative impact of examined change uncertainty-job attitude relationships.

Research limitations/implications – The research has implications for the role of CSE in attitude formation within a change context and adds to existing literature supporting the detrimental effects of change uncertainty on job attitudes. Also, the study provided evidence of how CSE interacts with change uncertainty reducing the detrimental impact on job attitudes. Future research should continue to examine the role of CSE in the way employees react to other change-related stressors.

Originality/value – The relationships among change uncertainty, CSE, and job attitudes were explored through a theoretical lens and tested empirically using employees in the midst of an organizational change.

Keywords Job attitudes, Change uncertainty, Core self-evaluations

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In today's economic and political climate, organizational change is an inevitable fact of work life driven by the need to remain competitive. When the need is strongest, organizations tend to adopt a variety of more extreme tactics, such as strategic redirections, reorganizations, mergers, and other structural changes. Scholars have shown that individuals react to these changes with higher stress, lower commitment, higher turnover intentions, and higher uncertainty (Amiot *et al.*, 2007; Oreg *et al.*, 2011;

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Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991; Vaananen *et al.*, 2004). Uncertainty, in particular, has been established as an important process variable because of its negative influence on job attitudes and work behavior (e.g. Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Hui and Lee, 2000; Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991).

The lack of clarity stemming from an organizational change can manifest itself at the organization, group, and individual levels (Bordia *et al.*, 2004). We focus here on the individual perception of change uncertainty because it is expected to be the most salient form for employees and serves as a major source of stress during an organizational change. When viewed at the individual level, change uncertainty can be defined as an employee's subjective evaluation of how certain they are that they possess the necessary skills to cope and be effective with any job modifications arising from the organizational change (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Once manifested, change uncertainty can then have detrimental effects on job attitudes.

Of course, not all individuals react in the same way to stressors such as change uncertainty. Personality plays an integral part in how individuals appraise and cope with stressors (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Essentially, some individuals may be better equipped to deal with stressors and not perceive them as a hazard. According to behavioral plasticity theory (BPT) (Brockner, 1988), individuals' general self-esteem (i.e. appraisal of one's self-worth) serves as an internal coping mechanism influencing the extent that a stressor is viewed as a threat to the focal individual. High self-esteem individuals are expected to be less susceptible to environmental stressors than low self-esteem individuals, so their reactions to stressors should be less intense given their low-behavioral plasticity (Brockner, 1988). BPT has been primarily tested with role stressors finding only partial support for the theory. This prompted researchers to examine other traits, including generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, but with similar partial support found (e.g. Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1995; Jex and Elacqua, 1999; Saks and Ashforth, 2000; Spector *et al.*, 2000).

Direct effects of single-order personality traits on employee reactions to stressors may yield inconsistent results for two reasons. First, isolated traits such as self-esteem thought to influence employee behavior have not always produced sufficient evidence for these effects (e.g. Baumeister *et al.*, 2003). Second, many traits significantly overlap with each other so the commonalities among these traits has the potential of influencing attitudes and behaviors. For these reasons, the use of higher order constructs may better capture the personality-related conceptual space that influences individual reactions to their environment (Johnson *et al.*, 2008).

A higher order personality trait thought to overcome some of the limitations with single-order self-appraisals is core self-evaluations (CSE) (Judge *et al.*, 1997). CSE is a multi-faceted trait consisting of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control, reflecting one's self-worth and ability to succeed (Judge, 2009). Studies have confirmed the stability of these traits as underlying facets of CSE (Dormann *et al.*, 2006; Judge and Bono, 2001) along with demonstrating that CSE is consistently better at predicting job attitudes and work behavior than the four isolated traits alone (Erez and Judge, 2001). From a BPT perspective, individuals with high CSE (i.e. high self-esteem, high generalized self-efficacy, low neuroticism, and an internal locus of control) should exhibit the confidence necessary to deal with organizational stressors so they react less intensely to them than those low in CSE. Obviously, CSE should exert a modest direct effect on job attitudes based on previous findings (Bono and Judge, 2003), but CSE may also be a meaningful moderator of stressor-job attitude relationships. Harris *et al.* (2009) found that high CSE reduced the detrimental effects of social

stressors on job attitudes so similar moderating effects should be found in the context of an organizational change as studied here.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the direct and interactive influence of change uncertainty and CSE on two critical job attitudes: job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Job satisfaction has been shown to motivate employee task-related efforts (Judge *et al.*, 2001) and turnover intentions have been documented as a consistent predictor of actual turnover (Griffeth *et al.*, 2000). Given organizational leaders' desire to motivate and retain employees throughout an organizational change, a deeper understanding of processes impacting job satisfaction and turnover intentions is essential. Kacmar *et al.* (2009) called for research examining CSE within a BPT framework so our study meets that call by testing the role of CSE in mitigating the detrimental influence of uncertainty within a change context.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Change uncertainty and job attitudes

Research and case studies support uncertainty as the most frequent and critical psychological state resulting from an organizational change (Davy *et al.*, 1988; Marshall and Olphert, 2009; Terry and Jimmieson, 2003). Uncertainty amidst change negatively influences commitment and motivation (Hui and Lee, 2000) while concurrently increasing absenteeism and turnover (Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991). Uncertainty thus acts as both a reaction to change and an antecedent of attitudes and behavior, which underpins the psychological process relating change characteristics with work outcomes (Marmenout, 2010).

Change uncertainty should be viewed as a stressor for most employees, so how employees react to this stressor becomes an important issue for organizational leaders. Stress appraisal theory has been used extensively to explain employee reactions to stressors in a work context (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Under this framework, stressors are demands or conditions thought to invoke stress for the focal individual. Stress presents itself as a psychological response by individuals to something at stake, which poses a strain on existing individual resources and in turn impacts work outcomes.

Whether the outcome is desirable or undesirable depends on how the employee views the stressor. Cavanaugh *et al.* (2000) indicated the importance of broadly distinguishing work stressors as either challenge or hindrance. Challenge stressors promote mastery and personal growth for employees because they place time constraints and job complexity requirements on employees that generate future gains. Hindrance stressors on the other hand serve as barriers that unnecessarily interfere with work progress. Meta-analytic results support the negative relationship between hindrance stressors and job satisfaction and the positive relationship between this stressor type and turnover intentions (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2007). It is believed that change uncertainty will be viewed as a hindrance stressor that unfavorably impacts job attitudes (Cartwright and Cooper, 1993). High change uncertainty should create added obstacles for completing work so employees are more prone to be unsatisfied with their jobs and desire escaping the stressful environment. The lack of certainty individuals have about the change, how their jobs will be impacted by the change, and their ability to meet any new demands brought on by the change are likely viewed as impediments to daily work requirements. Therefore, change uncertainty should negatively relate with job satisfaction and positively relate with turnover intentions. Or stated formally:

H1. Change uncertainty will negatively relate with job satisfaction.

H2. Change uncertainty will positively relate with turnover intentions.

2.2 Core self-evaluations and job attitudes

When introducing CSE, Judge *et al.* (1997) suggested individuals subconsciously evaluate their self-esteem, self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control and the collective self-appraisal of these traits comprises what influences their perceptions and behavior. The combined effects of those CSE judgments likely stem from conceptual similarities among the four traits. Self-esteem represents a perception about one's self-worth (Harter, 1990) and generalized self-efficacy captures a confidence to complete tasks in general (Locke *et al.*, 1996). Obviously, individuals who view themselves favorably are more likely to be confident in their ability to complete most tasks. Part of this positive self-view and confidence is further supported by a lack of anxiety and depression. Low neuroticism is a tendency to focus on positive aspects of the self and be less prone to stress and depression (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Individuals who are confident and emotionally stable should also contain a sense of environmental control. Locus of control is a belief that events are influenced by one's own behavior and do not stem from uncontrollable external factors (Rotter, 1966). Taken together, it is the cumulative effect of these judgments that impacts our tested job attitudes.

Substantial research has supported the positive relationships of CSE with job satisfaction, motivation, and task performance (Chang *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, the positive relationship between CSE and job satisfaction has been argued to stem from a willingness to create job complexity which makes work more interesting and satisfying (Bono and Judge, 2003). The approach-avoidance framework posits individuals have natural tendencies to either view most situations positively or negatively evident by an approach or avoidance mentality (Elliot and Thrash, 2002). High-CSE individuals appear to be more likely to exhibit an approach mentality so they tend to view their work more favorably. These highly confident individuals do display more problem-solving coping strategies and less avoidance coping strategies (Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2009) and contain a greater approach mentality to work by setting fewer avoidance work goals (Ferris *et al.*, 2011). We therefore argue in a change context, high-CSE individuals should approach their work from a positive perspective translating into higher job satisfaction, than found for those low in CSE.

Given the strong relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Tett and Meyer, 1993), we would expect a similar, albeit negative, relationship between CSE and turnover intentions. High CSE should lead to lower turnover intentions because these individuals are likely to feel more confident in their ability to "weather the storm" and stay more focussed on their job requirements. In essence, individuals with high CSE even within a change context have less thoughts of escaping the organization because they are able to cope with the change-related demands. Conversely, low-CSE individuals are not as confident in their ability to work through the change environment, so they are more apt to develop desires of leaving the organization for more stable environments. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H3. Core self-evaluations will positively relate with job satisfaction.

H4. Core self-evaluations will negatively relate with turnover intentions.

2.3 The moderating influence of core self-evaluations

In addition to the direct influence of CSE on job satisfaction and turnover intent, CSE is expected to alter the detrimental effects of change uncertainty on these job attitudes.

According to stress appraisal theory, a stressor is only problematic when individuals appraise it as negatively impacting them (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). BPT indicates that individuals' favorable self-views provide them with the necessary resources to cope with stressors including change uncertainty (Brockner, 1988). Because CSE comprises four core evaluations thought to influence the way individuals perceive their environment, it should provide a strong overall confidence necessary for dealing with change-related uncertainty. Part of the reason high-CSE individuals are less impacted by stressors may also come from their approach work goal mentality, making them less likely to avoid work obstacles (e.g. increased work load) as they emerge. The overall influence of self-esteem, self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control found within CSE may be why some research has not fully supported BPT using single-faceted self-evaluative constructs. Previous BPT research has focussed primarily on the mitigating influence of general self-esteem and generalized self-efficacy on relationships of role stressors (e.g. role ambiguity and role conflict) with work outcomes and attitudes (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999; Jex and Elacqua, 1999; Mossholder *et al.*, 1981; Saks and Ashforth, 2000) and found only mixed support for the theory. Thus, CSE provides a multi-faceted confidence that should better mitigate undesired reactions to stressors.

CSE more fully captures perceptions of self-worth, capabilities, and competence in general (Judge *et al.*, 2005). Managers high in CSE have been shown to be able to better cope with organizational change than their low-CSE colleagues (Judge *et al.*, 1999). According to BPT, high-CSE individuals are expected to be less behaviorally plastic so they should not react as strongly to change uncertainty with lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions as expected for those low in CSE. The avoidance mentality and high-behavioral plasticity found in low-CSE individuals makes them more susceptible to these negative contexts creating these decrements. Based on the above discussion, we propose two additional hypotheses:

- H5. Core self-evaluations will moderate the negative relationship of change uncertainty with job satisfaction, such that when core self-evaluations is high, the strength of the relationship will be weakened.
- H6. Core self-evaluations will moderate the positive relationship of change uncertainty with turnover intentions, such that when core self-evaluations is high, the strength of the relationship will be weakened.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants and procedure

Mergers with other firms offer organizations a potential means of improving their effectiveness and competitiveness (Andrade *et al.*, 2001; Daly *et al.*, 2004). The myriad of uncertainties generated by this form of change (Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Cartwright and Cooper, 1993; Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991) makes it the ideal context for studying our proposed model and the basis for the participant pool examined. Participants were solicited from 98 regional division bank branches located in the Southeastern USA a few months following the announcement of a merger. We suspected that the merger would generate uncertainty for employees, particularly because the merger process integrated two conflicting cultures. The acquired bank had a more aggressive and outcome-focussed culture, whereas the acquiring bank had a more customer-focussed culture (i.e. spending more time developing existing business than acquiring new accounts). Information packets about the study containing the employee survey were

mailed to all post-merger employees with a pre-stamped envelope for returning the survey upon completion.

Surveys contained items assessing tenure, position (teller, customer service representative, manager), previous bank affiliation (absorbed vs acquiring bank), change uncertainty, extraversion, CSE, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Complete data were determined to be total responses on all variables of interest. Of the 1,052 mailed surveys, 398 usable responses (37.8 percent response rate) were returned with 29 cases having only one missing item across all variables. We used maximum likelihood imputation to retain these cases (Enders, 2001). Our final participant sample demographics consisted of average tenure of 80.98 months (SD = 106.59) and 60.6 percent being affiliates of the absorbed bank with job positions including 53.3 percent tellers, 22.6 percent customer service representatives, and 24.1 percent managers.

3.2 Measures

All survey items were reported on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert scale. We measured change uncertainty using Ashford's (1988) four-item scale. We altered the target from "restructuring" to "merger." A sample item is "I still can't predict how the merger will affect me" ($\alpha = 0.83$). Job satisfaction was assessed with Cammann *et al.*'s (1983) three-item measure. A sample item is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" ($\alpha = 0.86$). Turnover intentions was measured using Kelloway *et al.*'s (1999) four-item scale. A sample item is "I am thinking about leaving this organization" ($\alpha = 0.91$). We measured core self-evaluations using Judge *et al.*'s (2003) 12-item scale. A sample item is "I am confident I get the success I deserve in life" ($\alpha = 0.78$). Controls were tenure (in months), position, and previous bank affiliation (1 = absorbed company; 0 = acquiring) due to their potential main effects on our outcome variables. We also collected a marker variable which represents a theoretically unrelated variable thought to capture common method variance (CMV) (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). Extraversion, defined as an individual disposition to be talkative, energetic, and assertive (Digman, 1989), served as the marker variable in our analysis. It was assessed using Donnellan *et al.*'s (2006) four-item extraversion measure. A sample item is "Am the life of the party" ($\alpha = 0.75$).

4. Analysis of results and hypothesis testing

4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and descriptive statistics

To reduce the number of parameter estimates, we created item parcels and modeled these composites as factor indicators (Little *et al.*, 2002). Parcels were generated by averaging items based on factor loadings (Landis *et al.*, 2000). We tested the proposed four-factor structure – change uncertainty, CSE, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions – with MPlus software (Muthen and Muthen, 2007). The CFA for our hypothesized model fit the data well: $\chi^2(48) = 191.86$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.94; standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = 0.06; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08, based on criteria established by Hu and Bentler (1999). Due to shared commonalities between job satisfaction and turnover intentions, we investigated a nested model structure combining these two attitudes. This nested structure produced worse fit: $\chi^2(51) = 291.96$; CFI = 0.90; SRMR = 0.06; RMSEA = 0.11, which was significantly different than the hypothesized model: $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 100.10$, $p = 0.00$. Based on this comparison, we proceeded with using the proposed structure. Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for study variables.

Table I.
Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities for study variables

Variable name	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Company affiliation	0.61	0.49	–									
2. Tenure (in months)	80.98	106.59	–0.07	–								
3. Teller	0.53	0.50	–0.06	–0.27**	–							
4. CSR	0.23	0.42	0.04	–0.02	–0.58**	–						
5. Manager	0.24	0.43	0.02	0.33**	–0.60**	–0.31**	–					
6. Change uncertainty	2.79	0.88	–0.25**	0.18**	–0.08	0.13*	–0.04	<i>0.83</i>				
7. CSE	3.80	0.49	0.16**	–0.17**	–0.00	–0.04	0.04	–0.34**	<i>0.78</i>			
8. Job satisfaction	3.83	0.88	0.21**	–0.10*	–0.00	–0.10*	0.10*	–0.58**	0.31**	<i>0.85</i>		
9. Turnover intentions	2.44	1.11	–0.21**	0.03	0.06	0.04	–0.10*	0.60**	–0.28**	–0.78**	<i>0.91</i>	
10. Extraversion	3.37	0.78	0.07	–0.11*	–0.09	0.05	0.05	–0.06	0.22**	0.01	0.04	<i>0.75</i>

Notes: *n* = 398. Cronbach's *α*s appear on the diagonal in italics. **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01

4.2 Marker variable analysis

Because we collected our study variables from the same source, there were raised concerns about the potential effects of CMV (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) recommended partial correlation methods designed to control for CMV as one means of alleviating CMV concerns. Lindell and Whitney's (2001) marker variable analysis examines the extent CMV is problematic by partialing out the smallest correlation between the marker variable and another same source variable (i.e. common method bias effect) from other same source correlations. This common method bias effect when referring to Table I was found between extraversion (marker variable) and job satisfaction ($r = 0.01$). Using this small correlation, all same source correlations were partialled for this effect and none of the significant correlations became null after correcting for this error. Thus, CMV does not appear to be a concern with these data.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing was performed using multiple linear regression with PASW 18.0 formerly called SPSS (Norusis, 2010). Two models were examined for our tested outcomes: job satisfaction and turnover intentions. All controls, change uncertainty, CSE, and the interaction were entered as independent variables. These independent variables were also grand mean centered to reduce potential multicollinearity issues (Aiken and West, 1991). The results of these models are reported in Table II.

H1 and *H2* stated change uncertainty will negatively relate with job satisfaction and positively relate with turnover intentions. Further, *H3* and *H4* offered opposite effects with these outcomes for CSE. As shown in Table II, change uncertainty was negatively related with job satisfaction ($\beta_{5a} = -0.53$, $t = -11.93$, $p = 0.00$) and positively related with turnover intentions ($\beta_{5b} = 0.73$, $t = 13.07$, $p = 0.00$). Further, CSE positively influenced job satisfaction ($\beta_{6a} = 0.21$, $t = 2.69$, $p = 0.00$) and negatively influenced turnover intentions ($\beta_{6b} = -0.20$, $t = -2.06$, $p = 0.04$). Based on these results, *H1* through *H4* were supported.

For *H5* and *H6*, CSE was expected to moderate the relationships of change uncertainty with job satisfaction and turnover intentions such that the intensity of these reactions is weakened when CSE is high. CSE significantly moderated the relationships of change uncertainty with job satisfaction ($\beta_{7a} = 0.18$, $t = 2.30$, $p = 0.02$)

Table II.
Multiple linear
regression results for
study hypotheses

	Dependent variables			
	Job satisfaction Coeff.	SE	Turnover intentions Coeff.	SE
Intercept, β_0	3.93**	0.10	2.41**	0.13
Tenure, β_1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Teller, β_2	-0.17	0.09	0.20	0.12
CSR, β_3	-0.18	0.11	0.04	0.14
Bank affiliation, β_4	0.08	0.08	-0.10	0.09
CU, β_5	-0.53**	0.05	0.73**	0.06
CSE, β_6	0.21**	0.08	-0.20*	0.10
CSE/CU interaction, β_7	0.18*	0.08	-0.22*	0.10

Notes: Level-1 $n = 398$. CSR, customer service representative; CU, change uncertainty; CSE, core self-evaluations. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

and turnover intentions ($\beta_{7b} = -0.22$, $t = -2.29$, $p = 0.02$). To further examine these significant interactions, we performed simple slopes tests to determine the slopes at high- (+1 SD) and low- (-1 SD) moderator values (Preacher *et al.*, 2006). The strength of the negative association between change uncertainty and job satisfaction when CSE was high ($\beta = -0.45$, $t = -8.01$, $p < 0.01$) was less than the strength when CSE was low ($\beta = -0.62$, $t = -10.16$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, the positive relationship between change uncertainty and turnover intentions was also found to be weaker when CSE was high ($\beta = 0.62$, $t = 8.93$, $p < 0.01$) than when CSE was low ($\beta = 0.83$, $t = 10.99$, $p < 0.01$). Based on these simple slopes comparisons, we found support for *H5* and *H6*. Figures 1 and 2 display the significant interaction plots for the job satisfaction and turnover intentions outcomes.

Despite the significance of these interactions and support for our theory, we decided to test the extent of the slope differences at high- and low-CSE values due to the relatively small moderating effects found. Because interaction terms are non-linear, we bootstrapped 1,000 samples using the initial 398 responses to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals of the difference between the slopes at high- and low-CSE values using recommendations by Edwards and Lambert (2007). The difference between change uncertainty-job satisfaction slopes at high- and low-CSE values was found to be only marginally significant at the 0.10-level: $CI_{90\% \text{ Bias Corrected}} (0.03, 0.32)$. Whereas, the difference between change uncertainty-turnover intentions slopes at high- and low-CSE values was significant at the 0.05-level: $CI_{95\% \text{ Bias Corrected}} (-0.38, -0.01)$. These results along with the previously supported theory are now discussed.

5. Discussion

Building on research establishing the criticality of perceptions of uncertainty in the psychological process of change (e.g. Marmenout, 2010; Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991), we examined the effects of change uncertainty on job satisfaction and turnover intentions within an ongoing merger. Our results found change uncertainty reduced job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions. Using stress appraisal theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), we were able to hypothesize these detrimental reactions to change uncertainty which are consistent with the existing organizational change literature (e.g. Armenakis *et al.*, 1999; Oreg *et al.*, 2011). Of course, with change becoming a constant

Figure 1.
The moderating effect of CSE on the negative relationship between change uncertainty and job satisfaction

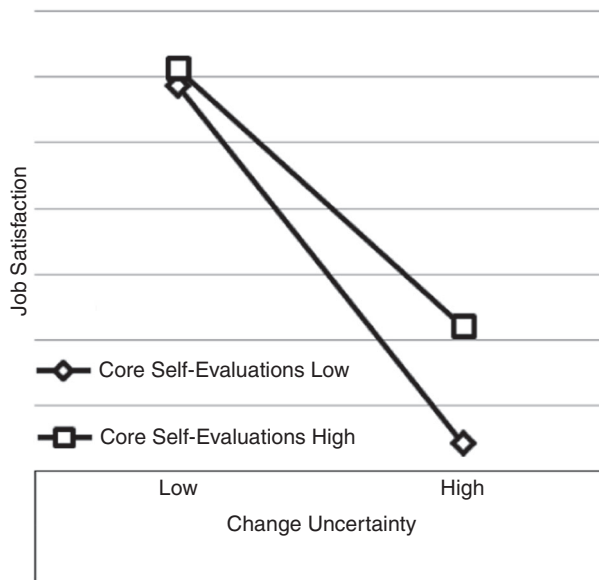
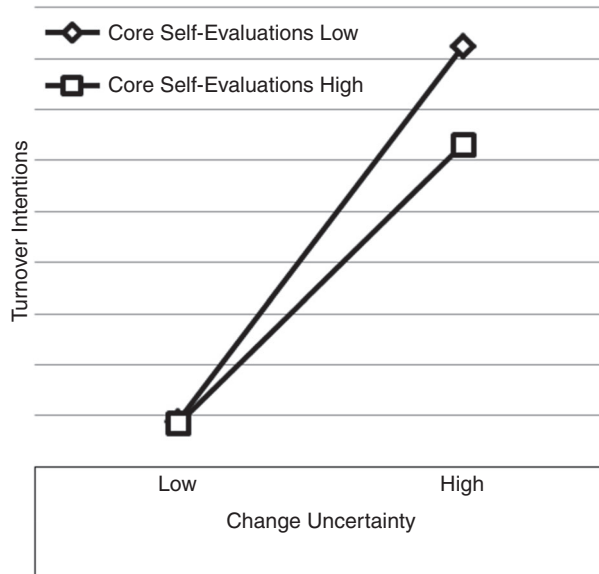


Figure 2.
The moderating effect of CSE on the positive relationship between change uncertainty and turnover intentions



for many organizations, continued research is needed for understanding stressor effects and our study provides additional evidence of these undesired reactions to change uncertainty.

In addition to uncertainty, we examined the direct influence of CSE on these same job attitudes. High-CSE individuals were expected to possess an approach mentality to work and exhibit less avoidance goal behaviors (Elliot and Thrash, 2002; Ferris *et al.*, 2011). By being less likely to avoid work obstacles brought on by the change, high-CSE

individuals should have higher satisfaction and lower quit intentions. Our study found support for this theory. Clearly, CSE can serve as an internal resource for dealing with organizational change and these results further substantiate current research in CSE. Managers high in CSE have been found to better cope with change (Judge *et al.*, 1999) and CSE has obvious benefits on job attitudes and work behaviors across job types and industries (Chang *et al.*, 2012). This study therefore adds to our understanding of attitudinal reactions to both CSE and change uncertainty for change recipients in the midst of an organizational change.

In addition to these main effects, we proposed and tested the combined influence of change uncertainty and CSE on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Using a BPT framework (Brockner, 1988), we tested the mitigating influence of CSE on relationships of change uncertainty with these job attitudes. The detrimental effects of change uncertainty on these outcomes were found to be weaker for high-CSE individuals than for low-CSE individuals, supporting BPT. High-CSE individuals appear to be less behaviorally plastic than low-CSE individuals so they have weaker detrimental relationships of change uncertainty with job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Thus, BPT arguments appear to apply to CSE and show promise within organizational change contexts.

The moderating effects found in this study, however, were still relatively small. Based on these small effects, we decided to further examine the change uncertainty-job attitude relationships for high- and low-CSE individuals. For the change uncertainty-job satisfaction relationship, the slope for high-CSE individuals was only marginally different than the slope for those low in CSE. High-CSE individuals on the other hand did show a significantly different slope than low-CSE individuals for the change uncertainty-turnover intentions relationship, offering additional support for our presented theory. The marginal difference found for the relationship with job satisfaction may stem from the strong direct influence of CSE on job satisfaction. High-CSE individuals may also not always see the value in exerting their internal coping resources to address the high change uncertainty. Individuals with high CSE pursue careers that more favorably impact their job satisfaction (Judge and Hurst, 2008) and show more tenacity for finding another job when they are unemployed (Wanberg *et al.*, 2005), so these individuals may be less fearful about leaving the organization than low-CSE individuals. Still, the small moderating effect of CSE on stressor-job attitude relationships provides further understanding of the intricacies for those high and low in CSE within an organizational change. Future research should thus examine potential reasons for the differing moderating strengths of CSE found here.

5.1 Implications for practice

Organizational changes represent disruptions to the status quo that can increase turnover and negatively impact firm performance (Baron *et al.*, 2001). Managers within these contexts must deal with motivating and retaining key employees during these difficult times. Therefore, our results provide further indication of the degree uncertainty generated by the change influences employee work motivation (i.e. job satisfaction) and their willingness to remain (i.e. turnover intentions). Additionally, our study offers further tests of the direct role of core self-evaluations on these same attitudes while undergoing a change. Because job satisfaction and turnover intent are proximal indicators of performance and actual turnover (Griffeth *et al.*, 2000; Judge *et al.*, 2001), organizational leaders should take steps to reduce perceptions of uncertainty through training efforts and integrate personality screening for high CSE in their recruitment efforts. High-CSE individuals are better able to cope with changes so they are more likely to persist through future restructurings than low-CSE individuals are.

Of course, selecting only high-CSE individuals may not always be feasible. Therefore, these results also provide practical guidance to managers within a change context. Given a limited amount of available time, managers may need to first direct their attention and resources to those low-CSE employees they wish to retain because they are less able to deal with change uncertainty and more likely to develop higher turnover intentions that potentially lead to actual exits. Certainly, these managers should not ignore valuable high-CSE employees because high-CSE individuals still react negatively to change uncertainty. Taken together, these results simply indicate that under increased time constraints, managers can direct their initial assistance to those less able to properly cope with organizational change. HR professionals should collect CSE personality profiles from employees and share these assessments with managers so they are able to make these time management decisions.

5.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

As with most research, our study is not without limitations. First, all study variables were collected from self-report data so this study is susceptible to CMV (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). We felt this limitation was unavoidable due to variables of interest being individual job attitudes. To assess this potential bias, we performed Lindell and Whitney's (2001) marker variable analysis test which did not indicate that CMV was problematic in our data. Second, the data were collected cross-sectionally, so causal arguments cannot be made. We drew from stress appraisal, approach-avoidance and BPT frameworks for justifying the direction of our hypotheses, but reverse causality may still be plausible. Future research would thus benefit by examining our model in a longitudinal design as a means of further supporting causality while limiting CMV concerns.

In conclusion, our study adds to existing literature by examining the direct influence of both change uncertainty and CSE on job satisfaction and turnover intentions in the context of an organizational change. We also examined BPT in a change context using CSE as a more comprehensive assessment of behavioral plasticity. CSE was expected to reduce the relationship strength of change uncertainty with our examined job attitudes and the study results lent support for BPT. Our study therefore points to the usefulness of BPT within high-stress environments such as an organizational change. Future research is needed to build upon the findings here as a way of further understanding the value of BPT within change-related efforts along with the role of CSE in reactions to other change-related stressors.

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