EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:

A HIERARCHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines attitudes and perceptions of employees during organizational change, based on their hierarchical position. Based on prior research on organizational change, we predicted that higher-level employees would respond more favorably to change, and that their attitudes and perceptions would be different from those lower in the hierarchy. This led to the following research question:

*Do employees' attitudes and perceptions during organizational change differ across hierarchical levels?*

Two measurement methods were conducted on the same organizational sample. 49 employees at various companies answered a structured questionnaire, and four of those were subsequently interviewed in a semi-structured interview.

Results showed a partial confirmation to the hypothesis. Higher-level employees displayed more positive attitudes on several indicators. They tended to be more convinced that the change would positively influence relations between co-workers; that the change was necessary; that they were included in the change process and had less fear of the change affecting their own position in a negative way.

Lower level employees were less optimistic on a variety of indicators, such as how the change would affect them personally, inclusion in the change process and how much conflict the change would cause within the organization.

Some parts of the hypothesis were not supported or only partly supported, as there was a similarity in attitudes on many indicators, regardless of hierarchical level. These included satisfaction with leadership, perceived necessity of the change, as well as general satisfaction with the outcome.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will serve as an introduction for this master’s thesis, where the overview and objective of the thesis is presented, along with its scope. The main objective and topic of this master’s thesis is to analyze the different perceptions of employees during organizational change, based on hierarchical position.

By using the acquired theories and academic tools from our respective programs at Copenhagen Business School, which include both studies on change management and human resource management, we felt that an interesting and relevant study on organizational change could be assembled. Both authors have experienced organizational change in different forms in the past, which further added to our interest on the subject and convinced us that the topic selected was ideal. Both primary and secondary sources were used in order to increase validity and quality of the research.

In order to gather data from primary sources, we used both a survey and semi-structured interviews. Using these methods enabled us to gather quantitative as well as qualitative data, which we felt would add considerably to the quality of our analysis. Data from secondary sources was gathered from the extensive access of the Copenhagen Business School library, in the form of journals and academic books on the subjects covered.

Finally, we are both convinced that having the opportunity to work on this thesis will greatly add to our academic skills, as the subject is of great interest to us and will without doubt be useful in our future activities.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose and objective of this master’s thesis is to find out whether there is a difference in perceptions of employees when it comes to organizational change, based on where in the hierarchy the individual employees are positioned. By using the acquired academic tools from our graduate programs at CBS; Human Resource Management (HRM) and Business Administration and Psychology (Cand.merc. (psyk)), respectively, we aim to find out if this difference in perceptions exists, and to what extent. By applying the relevant theory and presenting our finding from the research conducted, we will try to answer the research question presented:
Do employees' attitudes and perceptions during organizational change differ across hierarchical levels?

Based on prior research, we expected to see a difference in attitudes towards organizational change, based on participants’ position in an organizations hierarchy. We expected those higher up in the hierarchy to be more positive and open towards change than those at lower levels.

1.2 Delimitation

The process of writing a master's thesis gives authors a platform to pursue countless avenues of academic inquiry. Therefore delimiting the scope of the thesis is an essential part, as boundaries will have to be set regarding the extent of focus, information obtained and methods used. The delimitation will justify method selections, assumptions, use of data, as well as identifying potential weaknesses of the study.

We decided to cover the subject of organizational change, particularly focusing on the effects of hierarchical level, irrespective of other factors such as specific organizational or geographical culture. However, our findings generalizability will be limited to an extent, as the perspectives obtained from our research mostly originate from two geographical locations: Iceland and Denmark.

A vast number of models on organizational change exist. The models we have chosen to highlight and employ are generally accepted and widely used, and we consider their selection as tools for analysis to be justified.

The research conducted was bound by certain time limits, and therefore we decided to use what could be argued to be a small sample, although adequate, for both the questionnaire and the interviews. The length of the interviews was furthermore limited to 30 minutes, in order to make them more appealing for participants, and for the data processing to be manageable. The research focuses on the attitudes and perceptions of individuals within organizations, regardless of a specific organizational culture. This is in part due to the structure of the research, and in part due to the fact that participants were members of several different organizations. The findings can therefore be considered to be on an individual level rather than on a company level.
Considering the boundaries outlined above, we do realize that generalization of our findings might be limited to an extent. We do however find the combination of theories, methods and research in this thesis to be an interesting extension and contribution to previous work in the field of organizational change.

1.3 **THESIS STRUCTURE**

For the reader’s convenience, this part of the thesis will outline the structure of the thesis, and present and emphasize the main issues of each chapter. The thesis is in a sense split in two interconnected sections, with the first part covering theory and the second part covering the research.

[FIGURE 1: THESIS STRUCTURE]

After covering the problem statement, delimitation and thesis structure in the introduction chapter, the focus will turn towards the history of *change management* in **Chapter 2**. The chapter will cover the history of the subject within the academic literature, and highlight relevant theories used in the field today. Furthermore, the most important change management models are discussed: Lewin’s model of force field analysis, Kotter’s 8-step model, and Bridge’s transition model. The chapter concludes with a review and criticism of the models presented.

*Organizational change* will be covered extensively in **Chapter 3**, with a special focus on the topics of the effectiveness of change and types of change, which we will then use for categorization in our research. This includes the categorization of downsizing of restructuring into a single category, as well as mergers and acquisitions. The methods available for organizations preparing for change will furthermore be covered, as well as the importance of communication. Finally, the main conflicts brought on by organizational change, such as resistance to change, are discussed.
Chapter 4 will cover emotional intelligence and its role in organizational change. The difference between emotions and moods will furthermore be discussed.

Employee perceptions and attitudes during organizational change will be covered in Chapter 5. The different perceptions and attitudes that may result from organizational change will be discussed, both from an organizational- and individual level. We will then move on to a discussion on the hierarchy of organizations, and justifications will be made for our categorizations of hierarchical levels. Finally, the difference in perceptions and attitudes based on hierarchical level is discussed, which leads up to the research conducted.

Chapter 6 outlines the current research. The research design and method is presented, and data collection and processing justified. The generalization and reliability of the research is then discussed, before the results are presented. The results are presented graphically, with the most notable results presented and explained.

Subsequently, the results obtained are decoded into findings in Chapter 7 by comparing and cross-analyzing questions and applying the theory presented before, along with a thorough discussion of the findings.

To conclude the thesis, the results and findings will be summarized and reflected upon in Chapter 8. We will discuss our methods and how the research could have been improved, and make suggestions for further research.
2. CHANGE MANAGEMENT

"Change is the only constant"
- Heraclitus, Greek philosopher

In this chapter we will put organizational development and change management into context by examining their origins. Furthermore we will look at the most prominent theoretical change models, which are utilized both by managers leading their organizations through change, as well as researchers attempting to conceptualize organizational change.

2.1 INDUSTRIALIZATION

The origins of modern organizational development and change management theories can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. In the 1900s, as industrialization became more prominent in the big cities of the western world, there was a sharp increase in manufacturing, which resulted in a growth of factories and factory workers. This created a demand for a better understanding of the organization. The goal then became to gather data that could be used to aid in selecting, developing and training workers. This also caused an increasing demand for new ways to increase efficiency and productivity, and for ways to aid managers in planning and monitoring the work (Burke, 2007).

2.2 SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT

Many consider scientific management (also known as Taylorism or the classical perspective) to be the first theory, to attempt solving management challenges in a scientific manner. First published in 1911 by Frederick Taylor, the theory focused on improving economic efficiency and labor productivity by using the scientific method (Locke, 1982).

Taylor viewed the organization as a machine that should be studied using scientific methods; with a cause and effect approach. With a foundation in engineering, Taylor's methods included empiricism, data collection, standardization of best practices and knowledge transfer; methods which were to become stables of management theories in the future (Grönroos, 1993).
The theory of Scientific Management is based on four principles:

- **Data gathering.** By gathering data, Taylor hoped to be able to formulate rules and laws that might be applied by managers in the workplace, with the intent of increasing efficiency.
- **Worker selection and development.** Taylor believed in the importance of specialization, and selecting workers that were well suited for the position. This also included focus on training and development for workers.
- **Bringing together scientific management and the worker.** By applying the methods of scientific management in the work environment, Taylor intended to give managers tools to measure and improve performance of workers.
- **Dividing the work.** The worker's role was to do the job itself (i.e. shoveling) and the role of management was to plan and monitor the work. Taylor stated that it was much more difficult to change the work routines of managers, than it was to change the routines of workers (Locke, 1982).

Although it has been influential on subsequent approaches, the scientific management approach is limited by its focus on the organization as a machine, and on manufacturing industries. By the 1930s, the theory was widely considered to be obsolete, as organizations became increasingly more complex (Burke, 2007). Despite this, Taylor's theory has influenced contemporary theories in many ways. For one, Taylor was a proponent of incentive pay, which is a big part of industrial organizational psychology today. Other fields, such as industrial engineering and total quality management have also been significantly influenced by the work of Taylor (Locke, 1982).

In contrast to the strictly scientific cause-and-effect approach of scientific management, later approaches of organization studies came to focus more on the importance of factors such as employee attitude, morale and social relations. The shift of focus from scientific management towards a bigger emphasis on the importance of psychological and sociological factors (e.g. employee attitudes and perceptions) can clearly be seen in the Hawthorne studies (Burke, 2007).
This series of experiments were conducted in the years 1924-1932, on the workers of the Hawthorne Works factory, in order to examine the effect of working conditions on productivity. In one module of the experiments, the researchers varied the lighting conditions of workers and noticed that an increase in lighting seemingly increased productivity. When the researchers decreased the lighting, work productivity continued to increase, and even when the researchers pretended to change the lighting, productivity continued to rise (Gillespie, 1991). This effect became to be known as the *Hawthorne-effect*. The Hawthorne-effect displays itself in subjects improving or changing their behavior when they know that they are being studied and observed (McCarney et al., 2007). The researchers were not aware of the Hawthorne-effect yet, but recognized that some other factor, besides the physical lighting, was affecting employee output. They concluded that there did not seem to be a cause-and-effect relationship between working conditions and productivity, as their hypothesis had originally stated (Burke, 2007).

These findings concerning employee output also led researchers to start examining non-physical variables, such as the effects of psychological factors. This included examining how variables such as types of supervision, perceived status, and social relations affected worker attitudes and productivity. The relevance of the Hawthorne studies on contemporary change management and organizational development is therefore substantial, as they were one of the first organizational studies that focused on psychological factors, and helped usher in a new era of a more humanistic approach (Burke, 2007).

The researchers set out with a hypothesis about the effects of physical stimuli on workers, in classic cause-and-effect style, similar to the ideas of Taylor's scientific management approach; an approach where the organization is a machine, and the workers must be fine tuned. Instead the studies demonstrated the need for a more humanistic approach, both in the research, but also in treatment of workers (Gillespie, 1991).
The legacy of the Hawthorne studies on organizational development and change management can therefore be summed up as follows:

"They demonstrated the important influence of psychological or human factors on worker productivity and morale. [...] the relative lack of a need for close supervision of people who know their jobs, the importance of receiving feedback on the direct relationship between performance and reward, and having choices and some influence over change."

(Burke, 2007)

2.4 LEWIN AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The trend of humanism and social psychology in organizational research, continued from the 1940s and onwards, as researchers increasingly began to focus on change management issues in organizations. The early work on change management, was dominated by the theories of German psychologist Kurt Lewin; a pioneer in applied and social psychology (Burnes, 2004). A unifying theme through most of Lewin's work was the notion that the group to which an individual belongs is the ground for his perceptions, feelings and actions (Allport, 1948). This group focus was to become one of the main pillars of the social psychological approach to organizational development, as will be discussed later on.

2.5 INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

During the Second World War, industrial psychology became a popular method for industrial and military organizations to conduct tests of morale and efficiency. The main method was standardized testing, with the use of questionnaires and screening, which were then tested for validity and reliability. This field continued the tradition of psychological testing and psychometrics of Sir Francis Galton and L.L. Thurstone (Jensen, 2002; Burke, 2007).

Industrial psychology relied heavily on measurements, surveys and questionnaires. This tradition became the main focus of psychologists at the University of Michigan in the 1950s and 1960s, headed by Rensis Likert; whose focus was to systematically assess morale and attitudes amongst employees in organizations (Burnes, 2004).
In the following decades, the scope of organizational development broadened, from focus on the group by the social psychologists in the 50s and 60s, towards wider issues such as organizational culture, transformational change and sociotechnical systems (Burke, 2007).

The sociotechnical systems change effort is focused on changing work structures and a shift towards a more bottom-up management approach. It later incorporated methods by the action research approach of University of Michigan, an approach first introduced by Kurt Lewin. These approaches included survey feedback and behavioral science. In this sense, the work of Kurt Lewin continues to be influential in the contemporary change management literature (Beckhard, 1997).

In the mid 1990s, Kotter (1996) introduced the 8-step model for implementing change; a model that became immensely popular in management literature. We will now look at different change models in more detail, including the models of Lewin, Kotter and Bridges.

2.6 Change Models

There have been many attempts to conceptualize the change process through models. Many of these models have become popular amongst non-academics, such as managers going through organizational change. We will now discuss some of the most widely known and employed models, and how using these models may prove to be both beneficial and problematic for managers going through change.

2.6.1 Lewin’s Model

Kurt Lewin's Force field analysis, published in the Mid-20th century, became one of the pioneering works on change management. The model focuses on two forces: driving forces and resisting forces. According to Lewin, these two forces work against each other in a dynamic way inside organizations, and ultimately reach equilibrium. An imbalance in this equilibrium may cause a tension that subsequently leads to change (Burnes, 2004).
Lewin's approach to change was based on four inter-linked, and reinforcing factors: *Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research* and the 3-Step model (Burnes, 2004).

Field theory was Lewin's attempt at understanding the complexity of group behavior. He believed that behavior was a set of interactions and forces that affected both group behavior and individual behavior. He claimed that any change in behavior stemmed from changes in these forces (Lewin, 1946).

Group Dynamics was Lewin's idea that group behavior should be the prime focus in change research, as he believed that understanding the internal dynamics of the group was the key to committing individuals to change, and changing individual behavior (Burnes, 2004).

Lewin introduced action research in the paper *Action Research and Minority Problems* (Lewin, 1946). He argued, that in order to implement a successful change, there is a need for a correct analysis of the situation, and subsequently a need for appropriate action.

The 3-step model, which by many is considered Lewin's key contribution to organizational change, he proposes that the process of change goes through 3 stages: *Unfreeze, Change* and *Refreeze*. The unfreeze stage is about creating the right conditions, in order to facilitate the change. This includes coping with resistance to change and to convince people to move
from a “frozen” state to a “ready for change” state. The next stage is the change state, often characterized by confusion and a change in roles and identity. The final stage, the refreeze stage, is about cementing the change and attempting to make it permanent (Burnes, 2004). The model is presented in Figure 3 below.

![Lewin's Change Model Diagram](image)

**FIGURE 3: LEWIN'S 3-STEP MODEL. SOURCE: BURNES (2004).**

### 2.6.2 Kotter’s 8-Step Model

Kotter (1996) proposes an 8-step change model. Consistent with Lewin's work, Kotter states that companies must go through a series of steps in order to maximize the likelihood of successful change:

1. **Establishing a sense of urgency.** It is important, especially in the beginning, that employees feel that change is necessary. According to Kotter (1996) a lack of this need will lead to resistance, which in turn will make the implementation process more difficult. In order to increase employee support towards the change initiative, it is important to successfully communicate the need for change, and what the potential benefits may be.

2. **Create the guiding coalition.** Kotter stresses the need for change strategists to create a group of key people, whose function it is to further communicate the purpose, plan and potential benefits of the change. These must be people who are committed to the change, and who are able to transfer this commitment to others. It is crucial to get the right mix of skill and status, as factors such as position within the hierarchy,
area of expertise, leadership and perceived integrity are all important when it comes to communicating to the rest of the organization.

3. *Develop a vision and strategy.* It is crucial for companies to have well defined goals and objectives when it comes to the change process. In fact, Kotter believes that most change initiatives fail because of vague objectives, failure to plan ahead and a failure to implement contingency plans.

4. *Communicate the change vision.* It is important that there exists a common understanding as to why the proposed change is necessary. Employees need to buy-in, and this can only be achieved by successful and clear communication, and by involving people.

5. *Empower action.* In order to initiate a change, obstacles must be removed, and a channel of dialogue must be created between members of the organization. This demands support from the top management, and an incentive for employees to contribute with constructive criticisms.

6. *Generate short-term wins.* A change process can be a long and draining ordeal for employees, which is why it is important to create short terms goals. Short-term wins can also serve to build momentum in the opening stages, by showing people that progress is already being made. It can also increase morale amongst members of the organization, as by finishing smaller goals, people get a sense of accomplishment, which can motivate them to finish the task.

7. *Consolidating gains and producing more change.* It is important to measure progress, but equally important to re-evaluate the goals and objectives, once the current ones have been met. If objectives have not been met, the reasons for this must be examined, and a new plan of action introduced.

8. *Anchoring new approaches in the culture.* Similarly to the “freeze” notion of Kurt Lewin, Kotter emphasizes the need to cement a successful change. This can be achieved in several ways, but most importantly, according to Kotter, is to try and implement the changes into the culture of the organization (Kotter, 1996).
2.6.3 Bridges' Transition Model

Bridges (2009) proposes a model that focuses on people's difficulties with transitions. According to him, employees primarily struggle with transitions, and not the changes themselves. He distinguishes between the change and the transition. The change is the situation itself (e.g. downsizing, merger), whereas the transition is more psychological (e.g. employee reactions to the situation). Consistent with the work of Lewin and Kotter, Bridges claims that change recipients go through stages. In Bridges' framework, these are three emotional stages that work interdependently of each other and may intersect; i.e. people can find themselves in more than one of these stages simultaneously.

The three stages are: letting go, the neutral zone and the new beginning, as can be seen in figure 3.

![Figure 4: Bridges' Model. Source: Bridges (2009)](image)

The first stage is characterized by letting go and accepting an “ending”. In order to start a new stage, employees must accept letting go of certain things, for instance elements of the company culture, work relationships etc. It is important for leaders of organizations to properly prepare the employees for the sense of loss that may accompany organizational change (Bridges, 2009).
The second stage is a stage of neutrality, where employees have left the old ways behind, but the new has not yet been implemented. At this stage it is important that employees receive the appropriate support and guidance, in order to carry them over to the next stage (Bridges, 2009).

The third and final stage, the new beginning, starts once the past has been left behind. This is the point in time where employees are required to develop new skills, adjust to the new ways and accept the change. The role of the supervisor is to cement the change and offer support in implementing new procedures (Bridges, 2009).

2.6.4 CRITICISM

The theories of Lewin have attracted major criticism from multiple sources (Kanter et al., 1992; Pettigrew et al., 1992; Wilson, 1992). The main critique of Lewin’s model is that it assumes that organizations operate in a stable state. Critics point out that while the model might be relevant for small-scale change and extremely stable conditions, it is not relevant to the modern organization. For instance, in an increasingly dynamic business environment, it would prove difficult to “freeze” changed behavior and processes. A modern organization is constantly evolving and changing, and a frozen state is likely an unobtainable ideal.

"Lewin's model was a simple one, with organizational change involving three stages; unfreezing, changing, and refreezing [...] This quaintly linear and static conception - the organization as ice cube - is so wildly inappropriate that it is difficult to see why it has not only survived but prospered, except for one thing. It offers managers a very straightforward way of planning their actions, by simplifying an extraordinary complex process into a child’s formula."

(Kanter et al., 1992)

Another criticism of Lewin's theory, is a lack of focus on organizational power, and an over emphasis on top-down style management, where managers make the decisions and deal with resistance from employees (Burnes, 2004). Kotter's change model has similarly been criticized for not referencing any outside sources, and only being based on personal business experience (Applebaum, 2012).
More generally, the change models have been criticized for being too simplistic (Kanter et al., 1992), and for not being "situational" enough. Critics argue that the models shouldn't be a "one-size fits all" solution, but should instead be flexible enough to fit different forms of organizations and change processes (Dunphy & Stace, 1993). This can prove problematic for change managers seeking an easy solution to organizational change issues.

Others have criticized theories and approaches in change management for lacking in empirical evidence, and being based too much on anecdotal evidence (Todnem, 2005).

We have now looked at how change models can prove to be useful (and sometimes problematic) tools when it comes to conceptualizing change processes. Next we will turn our attention towards a more general overview of Organizational change, including effectiveness of change, types of change and resistance to change.
Organizational change has been defined as the process of migration from a current situation to a desired future state (Mack et al., 1998). The term has also been described to be usefully conceptualized, in terms of both its process, i.e. how change occurs, and its content, which describes what actually changes in the organization (Barnett & Carroll, 1995). Moreover, it describes the process of continually renewing an organization’s direction, structure and management of people in a changing environment, in order for the business and organizational changes to be successful and for the desired results to be realized (Berns, 2007; Todnem, 2005).

Change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both on an operational and strategic level. Therefore, there should be no doubt regarding the importance of an organization to be able to identify where it needs to be in the future, and how to manage the change required to get there (Todnem, 2005).

Much of the literature within organizational theory covering organizational change has focused on the content of change instead of the change process itself, which suggest that organizations strongly resist change (Amburgey et al., 1993). It is understandable that change is a feared subject. However, because of the increasingly fast-changing environment, organizations cannot afford not to change, and are literally forced to change in order to survive (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979, Rafferty et al., 2013).

The theories dealing with how organization change over time are often based on a lifecycle or development metaphor, assuming that as organizations grow, a particular transformation will occur, such as a shift in control from the direct to the informal by the management, as a firm grows in size (Barnett & Carroll, 1995). This can however also manifest in the formation of patterns and routines within organizations. Amburgey et al. (1993) highlighted organizational routines as an internal factor of various models and theories of organizational learning. This refers to repetitive patterns of activity by organizational members, both individuals and groups, with the routines defining what the organization knows. They further argue that models based on routines have tended to focus on the results of changes in routines, i.e. disruption and loss of competency. As a result, if the foundation for reliable performance is based on stable and reproducible routines, then organizational change can increase the risk of failure (Amburgey et al., 1993). For example when an old
and established family business goes through merger or acquisition, it might experience problems as old routines are being interrupted.

Types of change can vary considerably between organizations, ranging from downsizing and restructuring to culture change. The different types of change will therefore be covered in the following section, with the processes, strategies and effects of different types of change discussed.

### 3.1 Types of change

Smith (2002) defined major organizational change as any intentional change in the way the organization does business that affects the strategic position of the organization, compared to its competition. These include: acquisitions and mergers, restructuring and downsizing, expansions, culture change or technology change. Both acquisitions and mergers, and restructuring and downsizing share some common features, and have received increased attention in recent years. They are considered interrelated, for example both represent the effects of the economic recession, namely organizations’ attempts by to survive and to increase productivity (Burke & Nelson, 1997).

#### 3.1.1 Downsizing and Restructuring

The process of downsizing and restructuring has been widely studied, with quantitative measures of operational and financial performance typically used as research methods (Smith, 2002). The benefits of downsizing are meant to be both economical and organizational, with the major economic benefit being increased revenues through cost cutting, and thus increased value to shareholders (Burke & Nelson, 1997). Downsizing focuses mainly on reducing the number of employees, as well as divestiture of company assets in the form of selling off a part of a business (Smith, 2002). Therefore, as people can represent a high percentage of costs, the action of downsizing through reducing the number of employees seems to be a natural step in cost cutting (Burke & Nelson, 1997).

Restructuring on the other hand involves mergers of work units, disbanding of unprofitable departments, and team-based restructuring (Bordia et al., 2004). Organizations use restructuring for various reasons, e.g. to increase productivity, enhance competitive
advantage, lower overheads, accelerate decision making, and smoothing communications (Burke & Nelson, 1997).

Restructuring and downsizing can furthermore result in opportunities such as re-energizing tired workers and lifting their spirits, shifting the organization’s focus to future possibilities, increasing incentives, increasing investment in training and development, encouraging innovation, and creating a clearer mission (Burke & Nelson, 1997).

Although the success-rate of this approach is among the highest for any change strategy at 40%-50% (Smith, 2002), restructuring and downsizing can be difficult and depressing events. Personal relationships are disrupted, jobs disappear, and managing the moods of the organization becomes an essential leadership skill. Leaders must therefore pay close attention to employees’ emotions, changes in their feelings and moods, and furthermore work hard to maintain a receptive climate for change (Garvin & Roberto, 2005).

3.1.2 MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Mergers and acquisitions refer to the ownership and operations of two companies being integrated to form one organization (Smith, 2002). Although the terms are similar in the context of combining organizations, what separates the two is that mergers are the combination of organizations of similar size where neither one can be seen as the acquirer (Vaara, 2000; Bordia, et al. 2004).

The process of mergers and acquisitions involves organizational change where some or all parts of the original organizations’ functions and activities are integrated, although to a varying degree, due to the fact that the motives and types of mergers and acquisitions differ widely (Seo & Hill, 2005). Some mergers have been called synergistic in that the acquiring company enhances its capabilities with the assets of the acquired company, for example by adding complementary products or gaining access to new customers, while other mergers allow the acquiring company to diversify into other industries and thus improve its financial strength (Smith, 2002).

Numerous companies have adopted the strategy of mergers and acquisitions in order to expand their organizational capabilities and improve their competitive market positions (Seo & Hill, 2005). The success of these strategies is usually evaluated in terms of financial
indicators, with the range of success having been found to be quite wide, for instance between 16-80% in a meta-analysis conducted by Smith (2002).

3.1.3 Culture change

A major ingredient of the firm’s internal environment is the organizational culture. It has been found to not only affect financial performance, but to encourage the creation and sharing of knowledge within organizations (Khoja & Maranville, 2010). The vast literature on culture management has classified the research on the subject into three sub-categories; studies supporting that culture can be manipulated, studies arguing that culture may be changed under certain conditions, and studies showing that culture cannot be consciously changed (Harris & Ogbonna, 1998).

Culture change deals with long term change of how work is done within a business, with the outcome of the change being fundamentally new ways of how work is done and what work is done (Porter & Parker, 1992). Various efforts are used in order to change the behavior patterns of employees, such as motivating employees through reward and recognition programs to achieve desired performance, empowerment of employee decision making that affects customers as well as other employees, and employee training to be more sensitive to diversity issues (Smith, 2002; Porter & Parker, 1992).

Any given organizational change probably involves several types of change. Research found that at least 40% of organizational change involved more than one category of organizational change, and this percentage may underestimate the overlap of change categories (Smith, 2002). Having covered the different types of change and how they sometimes overlap, the effectiveness of change processes will now be discussed, as the process of implementing change does not guarantee a successful outcome, unless it is adequately managed.

3.2 Effectiveness of Change

Many factors contribute to effectiveness when organizational change is implemented. One such factor is readiness for change. Readiness for change contributes to effectiveness when organizational change is implemented. It is similar to Lewin’s unfreezing concept, as it is reflected in beliefs and attitudes of organizational members’, and to what extent they
believe the changes to be necessary. Furthermore, it is reflected in the organization’s ability to successfully implement changes (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Change processes go through a series of phases that usually require a considerable length of time. By skipping steps along the way, an illusion of a fast process is created and a satisfying result is never produced. A critical mistake in any one of the steps, such as implementing readiness for change among employees, can have a negative or even devastating impact that slows momentum and prevents good work (Kotter, 1995). The next section will therefore discuss the importance for organizations to appropriately prepare for change by building momentum and support. It will also focus on the importance of communication in the change process, and the possible conflicts that can arise during the change process.

3.3 Preparing for change: Building momentum and support

The success of change efforts is not only contingent upon the content or substantive nature of the efforts. It is also a result of the processes followed and actions undertaken during the implementation. Therefore the content and processes must be viewed as complementary elements in the planning and monitoring of organizational change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Despite there being numerous individual success stories, change can be difficult to accomplish. The fact is, that companies’ initiatives such as downsizing or changing company culture generally tend to have low success rates, with around 70% of all change attempts failing (Beer & Nohria, 2000).

Under circumstances where change brings transformation of environmental conditions that expose previous strategies and orientations to be obsolete, change may be worth the risk for organizations. These organizations will then strive to survive by attempting to adapt to new environmental demands (Haveman, 1992). In order for the change to become successful and resistance minimized when adapting to these new demands, it is important that both leaders and employees are on board. In an organizational environment where employees have been included in change beforehand, both in implementation and planning, resistance to change is likely to be less and commitment higher (Weber & Weber, 2001). If employees have not been involved prior to the implementation of the process, the role of the leader becomes even more important. Jones et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of having
Strong leadership present during organizational change, as leaders can manifest appropriate behavior, provide a vision of change and give direct support to employees. Moreover, effective leaders can help build stability and commitment during change, as well as ease uncertainties arising amongst employees (Jones et al., 2008). Guiding employees in the process of change may be the ultimate test of a leader, being both an essential and difficult task, as employees will usually and naturally resist change (Kotter, 1995). Leaders will have to perform significant work in the beginning stages and during the first few months, when uncertainty is high. Leaders must take a series of deliberate but subtle steps to alter employees’ prevailing views and create a new context for action (Garvin & Roberto, 2005).

Clarity of mission and goals may be a key ingredient when developing and maintaining positive employee attitudes during a change effort. Organizations that fail to do so are less likely to manage change successfully (Weber & Weber, 2001; Lehman et al., 2002). However, successful transformation has been shown to include managers that seek to establish goals early on in the planning process, achieve objectives and reward the people involved when due (Kotter, 1995). Many CEOs have recognized the importance of getting employees motivated in order to make changes, but make the mistake of trying to reform incentives throughout the whole organization, which can be a time consuming and expensive process, given the wide variety of motivational needs in any large company (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003).

Transformation often involves employees making short-term sacrifices. The reality is that employees will not make sacrifices even if they are unhappy with the status quo, unless they believe that useful change is possible (Kotter, 1995). Short-term successes confirm the work and vision of the leaders, boost hard working employees, undermine skeptics and encourage everyone’s belief in the change effort (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Kotter (1995) explains that although managers may be against the idea of being forced to produce short-term wins, pressure can be a useful element in a change effort. When people realize that major change will take time, urgency levels can drop, and commitments to produce short-term wins help keep the urgency levels up and force detailed analytical thinking that can clarify or revise vision (Kotter, 1995).

In order to prepare members of an organization for change, the primary mechanism is the message for change that should incorporate two main issues: the need for change, and the
implementation of the perceived ability to change among those who will be affected by it (Armenakis et al., 1993). Delivering these messages to lower-level employees is highly important, and thus using the right tools for communication is crucial, as will be covered in the following section.

3.4 Communication

People tend to dislike and avoid change. The creation of an atmosphere, where trustful communication and collaboration can take place, may therefore be an important foundation for achieving organizational objectives regarding change (Weber & Weber, 2001).

Managers often try to introduce change with tools such as reason, reports, and spreadsheets, although solely using such tools may come through both unconvincingly and ineffectively (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kim & Mauborgne, 2003). Such sources can nevertheless be used to amplify messages sent by those wanting to implement the change. For example, a diagnostic report from an outside source may be used to add credibility to a message sent by a leader in charge of the change. In general, messages prepared by more than one source, particularly an external source, give greater air of believability and confirmation (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Communication may reduce potential negative outcomes of a change process by allowing employees to obtain change-related information from the communication of management. By including employees in change decisions, and therefore increasing their awareness and understanding of the change events, negative outcomes may further be reduced and help with the process (Bordia et al., 2004). This may involve communicating on where the organization currently stands, where it wants to be, and why that end-state is appropriate (Armenakis et al., 1993). What a company says must match what it actually does (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

Kotter and Cohen (2002) explain that employees often fear change initially and communication that ignores that fear becomes propaganda by arguing about emotions and sounding defensive. Instead, the vision should be presented clearly and honestly, as well as confidently addressing responses such as anger (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Leaders in change should also gain trust by demonstrating through their actions that they are the right leaders
for the change process, and they must convince their employees that their plan is the appropriate and right one for moving forward (Garvin & Roberto, 2005).

Executives who lead to successful changes learn how to back up their talk with action, and consciously attempt to become a living symbol of the new corporate culture. This may not be easy, as communication comes in both words and deeds. Communication through deeds is often the most powerful, as nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with their words (Kotter, 1995).

To the typical employee that fears change, all restructuring plans look alike and therefore the trick for turnaround leaders is to show employees how their plans differ from their predecessors’ by convincing people that the organization is truly on its deathbed, or at least, that radical changes are required if it is to survive and thrive (Garvin & Roberto, 2005). The credibility of turnaround leaders accumulates from what employees know about the leader and his reputation. Clear messages will therefore have more influence if the turnaround leader generating those messages has a good reputation and is deemed trustworthy among employees (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Kotter (1995) explains that in successful transformation efforts, executives use all existing communication channels previously wasted on nonessential information to broadcast the vision. This includes transforming uninteresting notifications into lively messages about the vision and turning ordinary management meetings into lively discussions of the transformation (Kotter, 1995). Communication media, in terms of richness, personal focus, and timeliness, is richest when personally direct as it establishes a personal focus and permits multiple information cues and immediate feedback. Contrary to this, written communication is considered lean, impersonal, and providing for few information cues, with no direct feedback opportunities. Between these two extremes is other media such as audio and videotapes and electronic mail. For non-routine communications however, more richness is required and messages that are simple, straightforward, rational, and logical can be communicated via lean media (Armenakis et al., 1993).

Using the right tools for communications is essential for increasing the likelihood of successful change, especially given the high rate of unsuccessful change in the past. However, even if the communication part of the change process is well worked out, there
may be certain conflicts that can be brought on by change, as will be discussed in the following section.

3.5 Conflict

Employees may have trouble disengaging from the old organization during change as they feel a sense of loss with having to let go of the old organizational setup with regards to values, norms, and organizational history. There are some positive aspects of the organizational culture that are inevitably lost with change (Jones et al., 2008). Even though change is implemented for positive reasons, employees often resist and respond negatively to change because of the highly stressful experience, increased pressure, and uncertainty brought with change, (Jones et al., 2008; Mack et al., 1998).

Organizational change, according to Mack et al. (1998) is unique in a way because of the relationship between the change itself and the individual employee, which impacts the employees by forcing them to function in a different manner. However, the employee also affects the change because the employee’s active or passive acceptance, or alternatively resistance, will directly influence the outcome of the change (Mack et al., 1998). It can be anticipated that organizational members will generally attempt to cope with the uncertainty of change by going through denial and resistance as identified by Armenakis and Bedeian (1999).

As a result, resistance, commitment, stress and other related personal reactions are highly relevant criterion variables to be considered in the framework of planning and implementing an organizational change, as it can be brought on by change and thereby inhibit success (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

3.6 Resistance to change

Change can be difficult because many people are reluctant to change their habits. What worked in the past is good enough, and without being forced to change, employees will keep doing what they have always done (Garvin & Roberto, 2005). The topic of resistance to change, which is directly related to positive or negative attitudes of change, is well acknowledged in the literature as a critical success or failure factor (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Employee resistance to change, a subject introduced by Kurt Lewin among others, is
considered to be one of the main reasons for failed change efforts. The significance of the subject has furthermore been highlighted in the high rate of failed change efforts (Jones et al., 2008; Dent & Goldberg, 1999).

Readiness, as mentioned before, is also a factor that contributes to the effectiveness during organizational change. It has been argued that the reason so many change efforts run into resistance is usually directly traceable to a lack of an unfreezing process, before attempting a change process (Armenakis, 1993). Employee resistance to change can negatively affect change efforts, morale, productivity, and employee turnover. The need for effective management teams is therefore emphasized, as the recognition of positive employee attitudes is often vital in order to achieve organizational goals (Weber & Weber, 2001).

The most common reasons employees resist change include: the fear of losing something of value, a misunderstanding of the change and its implications, a lack of belief in the change, and a low tolerance towards the change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). People may furthermore resist the loss of status, pay, or comfort, although these issues are not the same as resisting the change itself, but rather the perceived undesirable outcomes of the change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Jones et al., 2008). This is to a large extent consistent with the findings of Vakola and Nikolaou (2005), who found highly committed employees to be more willing to accept organizational change of it is perceived to be beneficial, but resist it if he or she perceives it as going against his or her own benefit. Each individual therefore determines through his or her perceptual filter whether change is a threat or a benefit (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Kegan and Lahey (2001) furthermore argued that resistance to change does not necessarily reflect opposition, nor result from the state of not being able to react. Alternatively, as employees hold a sincere commitment to change, many people are unwittingly using productive energy toward a hidden competing commitment. The resulting outcome therefore looks like resistance, but is in fact a kind of personal immunity to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

There are many directly related emotional states that a person can experience during change processes, and in some cases these constitute resistance to change, as is to be expected, since the change process involves going from known to the unknown (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Uncertainty is defined by Bordia et al. (2004) as an individual’s inability to predict something accurately, possibly due to lack of information or contradicting information.
Furthermore, a characteristic feature of uncertainty is the sense of doubt about future events or about cause and effect relationships in the environment. Therefore, when employees feel fearful or defensive, they tend to focus on self-preservation instead of creative solutions or progress (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

There are always some employees that simply will not change and sometimes it is easy to see why, as an employee can fear a shift in power, the need to learn new skills and/or the stress of having to join a new team. Therefore it is worth discussing the multiple dimensions of attitudes, as will be our focus in the following section.

3.6.1 Multiple dimensions of attitudes towards change

Piderit (2000) presented the concept of multiple dimensions of attitudes, also known as the tripartite view of attitudes. The concept can be used to explain why employees may show resistance towards change, even though they may believe the change to be necessary for the organization. These dimensions are: cognitive, emotional, and intentional. The cognitive dimension refers to the employee’s beliefs about the change, the emotional dimension refers to the employee’s feelings in response to the change, and the intentional dimension refers to the employee’s evaluation of change based on past behaviors and future intentions towards it. The intentional dimension is thought more likely to reflect intentions when the employee is faced with newly proposed organizational change (Piderit, 2000).

This view of different dimensions when it comes to change may explain the complexity of resistance, and may also support the often inconsistent definitions of resistance in organizational studies. Some sources of resistance may have more impact on employees’ emotions while others may directly influence their behaviors, or influence what employees rationally think about the change (Oreg, 2006).

3.7 Developed resistance by managers

Although experienced managers are generally well aware of the fact that organizational change efforts sometimes face employee resistance, surprisingly few take time before an organizational change to systematically assess which employees might resist the change initiative, and for what reasons (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Thus, managers should be careful not to cause resistance themselves, by simply assuming that there will be opposition
or resistance to the change among employees. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) described that managers often use simple set of beliefs based on past experiences instead of using careful thought, which can possibly lead to a creation of serious problems because of many different ways in which individuals and groups react to change.

### 3.8 Conclusion

Amburgey et al. (1993) showed that the net effects of organizational change depend largely on time. They furthermore showed that change may be adaptive, but only after enough time passes for the organization to repair the problems associated with disruption. If change does take place too often, this recovery may never occur, and therefore seemingly adaptive organizations that frequently change will continually reset their liability of newness (Amburgey et al., 1993).

It has been shown that good and effective work relationships, the handling of conflicts and effective communications are very important in organizational change. This all contributes to the creation of positive attitudes to change and subsequently to the success of a change process. Furthermore, it is important for organizations to plan the change carefully in order to create a well-structured work environment, a well-balanced work schedule, and to reduce stress and uncertainty (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005).

It is clear that organizational change not only affects strategies and other strictly organizational matters, but also individual employees. Therefore, the focus during the organizational change should not only be on the implementation issues of change, but also on management of employee emotions.

The employees are the core of every organization, and it is therefore very important for leaders to appropriately and effectively manage the emotions of their employees and to get them on board. Such measures are important in order to get the best out of every employee, especially during a potentially emotionally loaded phase, such as organizational change. With this in mind, the attention is turned towards the concept of emotional intelligence in the following chapter, and how this can influence employees during a change process.
4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The concept of emotional intelligence was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as a type of social intelligence. According to them, this type of intelligence is separable from general intelligence, and involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use that information to guide one’s thinking and actions (Vakola et al., 2004). The concept is based on Gardner’s (as cited by Salovey & Mayer, 1990) theories, but even though Gardner did not use the term emotional intelligence, his concept of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence provided a foundation for later models on the subject. The core of intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to know one’s own emotions, while the core of interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other individuals’ emotions and intentions. One aspect of the personal intelligence (which is divided into inter- and intrapersonal intelligence) is furthermore described by Gardner to be related to feelings, and is thus close to what we call emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte et al., 1998).

Salovey and Mayer’s (as cited by Côté et al., 2010) ability model of emotional intelligence is greatly accepted among researchers in the field. The model proposes that emotional intelligence is a set of four emotion-related abilities: The ability to perceive emotions, the ability to use emotions, the ability to understand emotions, and the ability to manage emotions. In a later attempt, Salovey and Mayer expanded their model and formulated a revised model of emotional intelligence. This revised model emphasizes the cognitive components of emotional intelligence to a greater extent, and furthermore conceptualizes emotional intelligence in terms of potential for intellectual and emotional growth. The scope of emotional intelligence includes the verbal and nonverbal appraisal and expression of emotion, the regulation of emotion in the self and others, and the utilization of emotional content in problem solving (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

The emotional intelligence concept was later popularized by Daniel Goleman, who defined it as the capacity to recognize our own feelings and those of others, motivate ourselves, and manage emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Vakola et al., 2004). Goleman’s popularity has brought increased attention to the role of emotional intelligence within workplaces. The long history of research and theory concerning emotional intelligence has suggested that people with high levels of emotional intelligence experience
and achieve more success in their careers. Moreover it is suggested they feel less job insecurity, are more effective leaders, more effective in team performance and leadership, adapt better to stressful events, and have better coping strategies compared to those with low emotional intelligence (Vakola et al., 2004, Cooper, 1997). Furthermore, it has been suggested that emotional intelligence is a set of individual differences that are likely to underpin sets of behaviors among transformational leaders (Clarke, 2010). Emotional intelligence is therefore a highly relevant concept and one that is important to consider when implementing and monitoring organizational change.

4.1 Emotions and moods

Psychologists in the field of work and organizational psychology, have paid great attention to the role of feelings at work, but have tended to do so by focusing almost exclusively on two constructs: stress and satisfaction. Although these constructs have served, and continue to serve, some useful, although limited purposes, it has become increasingly clear that if a thorough understanding of mental states of employees is to be developed, specific emotional states such as moods and emotions have to be examined as well (Briner, 1999). Briner argued that emotions may often be seen as an irrelevant subject, that stands in the way of effectiveness, as organizations and the work-environment can in some cases be viewed as rational, logical and non-emotional, with the main focus being on the completion of tasks. In processes of change, this means that desired outcomes and how to get there quickly, tends to be the focus, rather than other matters such as emotions.

Scholars have used many different definitions for emotions such as feeling a particular way, being in a certain mood, and reaction to an event. Emotional states have also been characterized as having different patterns of valence (i.e. the attractiveness or aversiveness of an event, object, or situation), uncertainty, arousal, individual control, threat, and goal-obstruction (Gooty et al., 2010). Moods, according to Mayer and Salovey (1993), are similar to emotions and can facilitate prioritizing life tasks and direct attention to the self, possibly clarifying certain experiences and facilitate adaptive responses to them. Moods are moreover considered more slow-changing than emotions, weaker in intensity, and irresponsive to specific events, contrary to emotions which have been considered rapidly changing, stronger in intensity, and ever-responsive to events (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Emotions direct attention to stimuli in need of processing, and similarly to moods, arise
when there is a mismatch between personal expectations and the environmental realities (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Furthermore, emotions have been defined to contain components such as cognition, internal reaction, overt behavior, facial expressions, and goal structure (Briner, 1999).

Emotions typically result from either an internal or external event that has a positive or negative valence meaning for an individual, and can be distinguished from the related concept of mood in that emotions are shorter and generally more intense (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). As well as being a source of intuitive insight, emotions may also provide potentially valuable information. Despite this, Cooper (1997) argues that solely having emotions is not enough, as knowing how to acknowledge and value feelings in yourself as well as others and how to respond to them appropriately is also important.

In summary, emotions can both shape and be shaped by numerous work actions, drive trust, loyalty and commitment, and contribute to the accomplishments of individuals, teams and organizations in processes such as organizational change (Fineman, 1997; Cooper, 1997).

4.2 Change

Organizational change can trigger both positive and negative emotions for employees, as organizations are constantly re-organizing, re-engineering, downsizing and implementing new technology as they try to survive and remain competitive. However these ongoing and seemingly endless efforts can put a lot of strain on both the organizations themselves and the individuals within those organizations (Vakola et al., 2004).

Past research on organizational change has mainly focused on organizational factors while neglecting the person-oriented issues (Vakola et al., 2004). According to Vakola et al. (2004), people-oriented research on the subject of organizational change has leaned increasingly towards exploring the issues of charismatic or transformational leadership, the roles of top management in organizational change, and the phenomenon of resistance to change. The impact of leadership on organizational change and performance has been researched extensively, with a number of studies focusing on the connections between transformational leadership and organizational success (Duckett & Macfarlane, 2003). Most research in the field has however failed to consider psychological traits and
experiences of individuals going through change, which may be equally crucial for its success (Vakola et al., 2004).

Burns (as cited by Duckett & Macfarlane, 2003) developed the theory of *transforming leadership* in 1978. The theory was intended to differentiate between those leaders that establish meaningful and motivating relationships, and those of lower hierarchical levels that rely greatly on exchange or transaction to generate results. Transformational leaders have been shown to use charisma to inspire others, generating cooperation, enthusiasm and trust, and report stronger goal focus and job satisfaction (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004). These leaders thus ignite aspirations of employees by instilling pride, bringing out enthusiasm, and increasing optimism regarding a desirable future, further emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence in the process of change (Gooty et al., 2010).

### 4.3 Coping

A central reaction to organizational change involves the extent to which individual managers cope with uncertainties brought on by change in their work lives, as discussed by Judge et al. (1999). They defined copings as individual’s efforts to manage the internal and external demands of the person-environment transaction that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the person’s resources. They further explain that in order to cope successfully, the process of change is likely to manifest itself in different ways and that individuals who are able to successfully cope in an organization undergoing a high degree of change should be more satisfied and committed to the organization.

Coping with change involves the ability to perceive and understand the emotional impact of change on oneself and others. The first step towards being effective in helping ones organization manage change, is to be aware of and manage ones own feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. There is also a need to recognize the emotional reactions of other organizational members, and to act to help people cope with the reactions brought on. Meanwhile, in this process of coping effectively with massive change, other members of the organization need to be actively involved in monitoring and managing their emotional reactions and the emotional reactions of others (Cherniss, 2001).

Research on emotional intelligence has shown job satisfaction to be positively related to general attitudes, acceptance and a positive view of organizational change. Negative
attitudes toward change have been associated with lower job satisfaction and commitment, while a relationship between stress-job dissatisfaction following change has been found to be higher for employees with lower organizational commitment (Judge et al., 1999).

As we have discussed, the literature on Change Management has shown that beliefs, perceptions and attitudes are critical for successful organizational change. Additionally there seems to be a variance of individual difference, such as personality traits and emotional intelligence that seems to differentiate individual responses to change. It has been hypothesized that employees with low control of emotions will react negatively to changes, as they are not well enough equipped to deal with the demands and consequences of such a stressful and emotionally expensive procedure. In contrast, employees with an ability to use their emotions appropriately are considered more optimistic, and tend to desire outcomes that benefit others as well as themselves (Vakola et al., 2004; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004). These employees often take initiative in viewing change as an exciting challenge and usually decide to reframe their perceptions of a newly introduced change program (Vakola et al., 2004).

As mentioned before, traditional approaches to management have tended to ignore, or play down the role of emotions, viewing them as impediments to rational work processes. A model presented by George and Jones (2001) proposes that emotional reactions may be one of the forces that keep managers in tune with the changing circumstances they face. In the model, emotional reactions to discrepancies are an important signal received by managers and other members of an organization, indicating the need to direct one’s attention to a pressing concern, problem, or opportunity and change one’s perspective or schemas (i.e. the organized pattern of thought or behavior) (George & Jones 2001). Some studies have furthermore suggested that instead of IQ or raw brainpower alone, it is emotional intelligence and the related aspects of practical-creative intelligence that form the foundation for many of the best decisions, most dynamic organizations and most satisfying and successful lives (Cooper, 1997). Therefore, during a change process, managers have to acquire a certain degree of emotional literacy and know the places to raise social defenses, the kinds of emotions that can or cannot be expressed in particular settings, and how emotions may be used strategically to gain desired ends, in order to survive or thrive in the job (Fineman, 1997).
4.4 Denial & Receptivity

At the individual level, receptivity denotes a person’s willingness to consider change, and similarly on the organizational level, it refers to organizational member’s willingness to consider proposed changes and to recognize the legitimacy of such proposals (Huy, 1999). It is further argued by Huy (1999) that receptivity is both a state and a process, which at any given moment denotes both an interpretive and attitudinal state (both cognitive and emotional) to accept the need for the proposed change. The continuous sense making and sense giving activities conducted among various members of the organization, both shape and are shaped by the process of receptivity. Individuals pursue a development of a meaningful framework in order to understand the essence of the proposed change and to influence each other toward a preferred redefinition of the organizational reality. A radical change proposal can therefore trigger strong emotional responses that affect how the change is cognitively construed and the nature of the following actions (Huy, 1999).

The process of denial may halt the process of change as negative discrepancies and emotional reactions occur. Individuals may seek to control the initial emotional reaction, and the process of denial may set in, as the existence of the initial discrepancy and existing emotion is kept down or defensively denied. A person may furthermore become psychologically distant from the phenomenon, become caught up with other tasks, and even deny that there is anything to be concerned with at all. In case of denial, consideration of the discrepancy is avoided and the process of change halted (Georg & Jones, 2001).

Vakola et al. (2004) argue that the individual-difference construct of emotional intelligence has a potential to contribute to a better understanding of the affective implications of change policy taking place within organizations. Employees with higher emotional intelligence thus have better understanding of their own feelings. For this reason, it has been proposed on the subject of the theoretical model of individual change process, that these employees more likely to be adaptable in emotional reactions to discrepancies signaling the need for change (Vakola et al., 2004).

Chances are that different individuals experience different emotions with different intensity resulting from the same event. Therefore, different groups of individuals may have different emotional responses, needs, or coping mechanisms that need to be diagnosed and attended to according to the demands of each specific situation. The same emotional state does not
necessarily exist at the same intensity among all individuals in the organization, nor is it necessary to expend organizational resources evenly on everyone to achieve a particular change objective. An emotionally capable organization understands the relationship between emotion and change (Huy, 1999).

4.5 Learned Helplessness

Control has been defined as an individual’s beliefs, at a given point in time, in his or her ability to affect a change in a desired direction on the environment. The ability to influence or control these events can be undermined by uncertainty or lack of knowledge about current or future events. A lack of control can lead to negative consequences, such as anxiety, learned helplessness and lower performance, often due to the feelings of powerlessness caused by the uncertainty (Bordia, et al., 2004). Experience with uncontrollable events may have a second cognitive consequence where experience with uncontrollability may produce a learning difficulty, and the perception of control may thus be hindered by uncontrollability. For example, if an individual has previously experienced change where a lack of influence or control was perceived, he or she may automatically feel uncontrollability the next time a change is experienced. Individuals can even learn to be helpless when reacting to certain conditions. When these attempts fail, learned helplessness may set in, resulting in a decreased effort in the future (Maier & Seligman, 1976; George & Jones, 2001).

The Learned helplessness hypothesis states that when events are uncontrollable, the individual may learn that the relationship between his behavior and outcomes are independent of each other. This discovery may in turn lead to motivational, cognitive, and emotional effects of uncontrollability (Maier & Seligman, 1976). From a behavioral point of view, this learning could produce lack of initiative responses to control the outcome. That is, an employee who has not experienced feedback in similar situations previously, will stop trying to affect the outcome. From a cognitive point of view this could lead to a belief that the responses are ineffective, and further lead to a difficulty for the employee in learning that any given responses actually work. From an emotional point of view, it might then produce emotional changes when the outcome is traumatic (Maier & Seligman, 1976).
The existence of learned helplessness may further increase the importance of the presence of emotional intelligence among supervisors. If non-supervisors have acquired helplessness through past experience with organizational change, they may find the situation uncontrollable from the beginning and not even try to be included or influence the change process. In turn, the helplessness might affect their work performance and give the appearance of resistance to change.

4.6 Conclusion

Organizations are often faced with limited flexibility when it comes to selecting or placing managers on assignments dealing with change. Therefore, as organizations are faced with changes they must deal with managers who are already in place, emotionally intelligent or not, and even prepare managers for coping with change through development (Judge et al., 1999). Even if the managers in place are not emotionally intelligent, it has been indicated that emotional intelligence can be learned at almost any age, and that emotional abilities may develop from trial-and-error learning. It is therefore possible that emotionally intelligent individuals may have applied different emotion management strategies in the past, then observed the different impact this had on emotions, and as a result learn which strategies are the most effective (Côté et al., 2010). Therefore, as one is forming the various characteristics of one’s own emotional intelligence, it is likely that this ability will increase; intuition, capacity of mutual trust, sense of integrity and authenticity, appreciation of constructive discontent, ability to find solutions in difficult circumstances, and leadership effectiveness. In summary, an individual will be better able to use the effects of emotions in situations and processes such as organizational change instead of hiding from them by using unhealthy coping strategies (Cooper, 1997).

Based on the theories of emotional intelligence it is clear that emotions, and the concept of emotional intelligence can influence the process of change. Just as the management of emotions can prove to be an important factor, as well as handling employee perceptions and attitudes towards change. The next chapter will focus on employee perceptions and attitudes, as well as how group identities may influence change recipients reactions to change.
5. EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

In this chapter we will examine the literature on perceptions and attitudes, as these have been found to influence change recipients reactions in several ways. We will then move on to a discussion of the intergroup nature of organizations, and how people's group identities may influence their perceptions and attitudes. Finally, we will look at which specific group identities have been found to be the most significant in this regard.

Scholars in the field of organizational change generally agree that change initiatives tend to fail more often than they succeed. Applebaum (2012) found failure of change initiatives to range from 30% to 80%, while Kotter (1995) estimated that approximately 70% of all organizational change initiatives fail. Herold and Fedor (2008) estimated that only around 20% of change initiatives were successful, and that the failure rate was somewhere between 67-80%.

Jones et al. (2008) claim that one of the key reasons for this high failure rate is resistance to change from employees. They suggest that creating and sustaining favorable beliefs, perceptions and attitudes amongst employees is critical for successful implementation of change initiatives. Kotter (1995) claims that the biggest factor in failed organizational development is the human factor, i.e. attitudes, behaviors and responses by the change recipients.

5.1 PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

The study of attitudes and perceptions dates back to the 1930s, and has long been a staple of the social psychological tradition (Allport, 1954). The term attitude has been defined as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). For example, an employee may have certain pre-determined attitudes towards organizational change, which might influence the way he/she perceives change initiatives. It is then up to leaders to manage those attitudes, and form new favorable attitudes towards the process.

Perception is a related concept to attitudes, and generally attitudes are believed to influence perceptions. Perception has been defined as "the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world" (Lindsay & Norman,
For example, an employee who has a generally negative attitude towards change initiatives will be influenced by the way he/she perceives the change. Again, it is up to the change initiators and leadership to develop and encourage more favorable attitudes and perceptions amongst employees. This requires a focus on the individual within the organization, instead of just a focus on the processes within the organization itself.

Traditionally, organizational efforts have tended to focus on processes within the organizations, more than how individuals react to change. That perspective has however been criticized, as some claim that a more individual-centric approach is needed in order to successfully understand changes within organizations (Oreg et al., 2011).

### 5.2 Organizational Level vs. Individual Level

Oreg et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis, reviewing 60 years of organizational change research. They discovered that the majority of organizational research has focused on how organizations prepare for, implement and react to change, while only a small portion has examined how change recipients react to organizational change. As a result, organizational research has mainly focused on the organizational level, but not the individual level, i.e. change recipient's reactions, attitudes and perceptions and how these affect the organization.

Other researchers have also brought attention to this gap in the literature, and pointed out the need for a more individual centric approach. Martin et al. (2005) noted that perceptions and attitudes of change recipients might prove to be a key factor in regards to successful implementation of change. Furthermore, Beer & Nohria (2000) found attitudes and perceptions to influence factors such as job satisfaction, morale, productivity and absenteeism. Subsequently, organizations and researchers are increasingly becoming aware of the need for more research on the individual level, and to what degree perceptions and attitudes affect organizations (Oreg et al., 2011).

### 5.3 Theory-based Models of Psychological Experiences

Research on theory-based models of the *psychological experiences* of change recipients has been lacking, despite the importance of this concept on the success of organizational change (Martin, 2005). As we examined in the last chapters, psychological experiences,
such as employee emotions, may play a vital role when it comes to managing successful change initiatives.

Martin et al. (2005) found that employees who rated the organization and work environment favorably were more likely to have more positive attitudes towards a change process, better adjustment to the change and higher levels of general job satisfaction. These employees also showed lower levels of absenteeism and turnover intentions, and reported more psychological well being. It is therefore clear that organizations cannot afford to neglect this aspect during the change process.

As organizational change can be an especially stressful event for employees, it becomes essential for organizations to adequately manage emotional reactions of employees. There is evidence suggesting that emotional reactions and coping styles determine how well employees adjust to change, and to what extent the stress impacts their psychological and physical health (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

This raises the question of which factors influence employee attitudes and perceptions, which will be the focus of the next section.

5.4 Group Identities

Most researchers group all change recipients together, treating them as a single entity. As a result, they potentially ignore the important effects of group membership on perceptions and attitudes amongst employees (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). This means, that instead of examining how different group identities may potentially influence employee reactions, most studies simply categorize change participants as one homogenous group. This categorization has however been criticized by some, who point out that the diversity of change recipients is an important variable during organizational change (Martin et al., 2005).

5.4.1 Social Identity Theory

Social psychology has a long tradition of research on how group factors influence behaviors and cognition of individuals. One theory that tries to identify and explain how group factors may influence explicit behaviors amongst individuals is social identity
The theory suggests that individuals identify with groups or categories and use those to derive a sense of self-identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

People may alter the way they see themselves when they become members of a new group, through a process of self-redefinition. This means that people adopt the behavior, values and norm of the group and that their self-esteem is tied up in the social standing of the group. They also compare other groups (out-groups) with their own (in-group) (Festinger, 1954). As a result, members of a group might see themselves in a more positive light if they perceive the group they belong to, to be superior to other groups. An in-group identification of this kind has also been shown to increase intergroup conflict in organizations. In-group identification may therefore lead to undesirable outcomes, for example employees using time and effort to attempt "winning" an intergroup conflict, rather than focusing on achieving organizational goals (Hennessy & West, 1999). These findings have led researchers to point out the inherent limitation of examining individual responses to organizational change, without taking into account the intergroup nature of change processes (Jones et al., 2008; Terry & Callan, 1997).

Organizational change is an event where group identity may be even more important to members of the organization, as it can represent a shift in culture, norms and groups within the organization, which in turn may threaten group status. Such a group effect increases when the change is perceived as being threatening to group identities (Terry & Callan, 1997).

"Employees may identify as members of groups based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, role or occupation, position in the hierarchy, work unit or department/division, and union membership".

Martin et al. (2006)

We are then left with a question of which group identities to examine, and which group identities are most likely to influence perceptions. In the next section we will examine which of these identities have been found to influence reactions of change recipients and to what extent.
As noted by Martin et al. (2006), employees may identify with in-group membership based on a variety of characteristics. One variable that might intuitively seem likely to affect employee reactions is gender, which will be covered in the following section.

### 5.5.1 Gender

Early theories on gender differences proposed that women and men react differently during stressful events, due to a difference in expectation, work environment and difference in socialization (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). Despite this, most modern studies have failed to find support for the theory that men and women react differently to organizational change, and have in fact pointed out that the early findings were due to the different nature of jobs examined. For instance, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found a difference in the coping methods of men and women, with women being more likely to make use of avoidance coping than men, but suggested that this difference was likely due to the fact that women, on average, hold lower-level jobs than men. This means, that a difference in coping styles is likely to be connected to an individuals position in the organizational hierarchy, rather than gender.

Armstrong-Stassen (1998) furthermore found limited support for theories of gender difference, pointing out that the assumption that women and men have different work roles shows the theories to be a bit outdated. She found no significant differences in how men and women cope with downsizing in regards to job insecurity, avoidance coping or negative emotional reactions. Similarly, Kanter (1976) found that organizational structures (such as power) and hierarchical arrangements seemed to be the primary deciding factor in influencing employee reactions, and not gender differences.

In summary, there is limited support for the idea that gender is an important factor when it comes to group identities and reactions to change. Furthermore, it seems that the gender differences discussed arise due to a difference in status within the organization. These findings are furthermore consistent with those of Katz and Kahn (1978), who concluded that an employee’s position in the organizational hierarchy is an important variable that determines a range of attitudes and behaviors in an organizational context.
With this in mind, the attention will now be turned to how a person's position within the organizational hierarchy may affect their reaction to change.

5.6 Hierarchical Level

According to Beck et al. (2000), employees increasingly use professional identity as a primary mean of organizational and social identification. This means that members of the organization to a greater extent identify as members of a group based on job-role, status or level within the organization.

A number of studies have found differences in reactions, perceptions and attitudes, based on hierarchical status of the change recipient. In the following sections, we will highlight the most significant findings of these studies.

5.6.1 Classification

According to Kanter et al. (1992), there are three main groups of stakeholders during organizational change: change strategists (at the top), change managers (typically middle-management) and change recipients (non-managers). De Luca (1984) similarly groups change participants into: controllers, interventionists and targets.

In accordance with this definition, some studies categorize members of the organization into three parts: non-supervisors, supervisors and executives. (Covin & Kilmann, 1990; Jones et al., 2008). Others divide members into two parts: managers and non-managers; superiors and subordinates; or white-collar and blue-collar workers (King et al., 1991; Nelson et al., 1995; Kozlowski et al., 1993).

The different hierarchical categories of organizational members have accordingly been described in the following way:

Non-supervisors are the employees who do not have management responsibilities. These employees are likely to be those most affected by a change initiative, in terms of an altering of day-to-day processes. This group is also likely to be the least influential, and have the least amount of power and decision-making influence.
Supervisors/managers/middle managers have management responsibilities, and are typically one level up from the non-managers. This group is often responsible for implementation of change initiatives, and although the change is not as likely to affect their day-to-day work as much as non-supervisors, they may find themselves in a difficult position between the non-managers and executives.

Executives/senior managers/change strategists are at the top of the hierarchy. They are often the ones who plan and device the changes, but the changes will most likely not affect them on a day-to-day basis. Despite this, executives may have higher stakes in seeing the change successfully implemented (Jones et al., 2008; Kanter, et al., 1992; Covin & Kilmann, 1990)

5.6.2 DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTIONS AND FOCUS

Previous research has suggested that higher-level and lower-level employees may differ in how they perceive change. Hatfield and Huseman (1982) found that subordinates and superiors have different perceptions about several organizational factors, such as the challenges subordinates face on the job, attitudes towards each other and duties and responsibilities of subordinates. These findings indicate a fundamental difference in perception depending on hierarchical status, which in turn may influence how these groups approach the change process.

King et al. (1991) discovered that managers and non-managers differ in the extent to which they focus on different phases of the change process. Managers were more likely to be focused on implementation issues, compared to non-managers. The managers were also more likely to highlight the positive aspects of the process, in comparison to non-managerial staff. The researchers hypothesized that these findings may be explained by four factors: a group's stake (e.g. the extent to which the change affects work roles), role in the process, identity within the organization and effectiveness of inter-group communications.

The difference in focus based on hierarchical level was also researched by Covin and Kilman (1990). They found that consultants (external to the organization) were more concerned than managers about preparation and planning during change. Managers on the
other hand, were more concerned about implementation issues, and less concerned about establishing a clear purpose for the change.

The difference in focus may cause a difference in the way the groups view the process, which in turn might influence their attitudes, perceptions and reactions to the change initiative. In addition to a difference in perception and focus, studies have shown that lower-level employees may fare worse during organizational change, compared to those higher up in the hierarchical ladder, on several indicators.

5.6.3 NEGATIVE REACTIONS OF LOWER-LEVEL EMPLOYEES

Martin et al. (2006) found that lower-level staff reported more negative attitudes during change, and reported higher turnover intentions and higher level of stress. In addition, they found evidence to suggest that groups at the lowest level may fare worse during change, and that this may be due to the fact that this group is the one with the least amount of resources and political influence in the organization. Non-supervisors tend to report more role ambiguity (uncertainty about job roles), less support from supervisors, less job security, lower job satisfaction and lower acceptance of the organizational change (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005).

This difference does not only manifest itself in perceptions, but may affect the mental health of employees as well. Nelson et al. (1995) conducted a study on an organization transitioning from a public to private company. They found job satisfaction and physical and mental health to decline faster among manual workers, than amongst managerial staff and white-collar workers. Similarly, Kozlowski et al. (1993), found a difference in the effect of downsizing on blue-collar and white-collar workers. As some have argued, this difference may be due to the difference in work roles and tasks of these groups. For instance, blue-collar workers tend to do jobs that are more physically taxing. Support for this theory may be seen in findings by Armstrong-Stassen (1998), who claimed that these differences in work roles and tasks may contribute to lower levels of health and higher levels of stress amongst lower level employees (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). Winefield (2000) also found task orientation (i.e. the nature of the work performed) to be associated with different levels of perceived work stress.
5.6.4 Perceived Threat and Leadership Support

Lower-level employees have been found to experience more threat of negative consequences than other groups, during a change process (Kanter et al., 1992). This may be due the fact that that this group has the least resources, power and political influence to affect how the changes might affect their position, as mentioned earlier (Martin et al., 2006).

Managers and supervisors also tend to report higher levels of leadership support, and having more access to information (Haugh & Laschinger, 1996). It is possible that this difference arises because, compared to non-supervisory staff, higher-level employees are more often involved in the change process, and therefore perceive a higher level of information access. It is quite possible that these factors are interlinked in some way. For example, as lower-level employees have less influence and less access to information, they might feel more threatened by a change process. This might in turn cause negative attitudes towards changes in general, which might affect stress levels, job security and cause lower acceptance of change initiatives. It must however be kept in mind that it is difficult to establish a causal relationship in this manner, but it does seem plausible that these factors are interlinked in some way.

5.6.5 Positive Attitudes of Higher-Level Employees

Perhaps not surprisingly, higher-level employees report more positive attitudes during change across various indicators. These include positive appraisal of the change, adjustment, leadership support and organizational commitment (Martin et al., 2006).

Managers also have higher perceived control over decisions concerning the future of their jobs, compared with non-supervisors. Managers and supervisors are also more likely to employ healthier coping methods, such as control-oriented coping by seeking help and thinking positively. Non-supervisors more often engage in avoidance coping, and are less likely to make use of available organizational support (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998).
As we touched on earlier, these differences may be caused by the different roles played during the change process. Upper-level employees tend to have more of an input, compared with employees lower in the hierarchy. As noted by Haugh and Laschinger (1996):

"...managers are more involved in the change process, and in a sense “drive” the changes, they have more expedient access to information and greater understanding of the rationale for change. In contrast, lower level employees may feel disempowered and less confident during organizational change"

Haugh & Laschinger (1996)

Although these findings paint a bleak picture for lower-level employees, a few studies have found higher-level employees to report more negatively on some indicators. For instance, a study by Martin et al. (2006) found that managers reported the change process as being more stressful than did non-managers. Despite this, the managers also reported that they had more control of the process, compared to non-managers. This finding may be due to the fact that managers tend to focus more on implementation issues, as highlighted by Jones et al., (2008) and Covin and Kilmann (1990), and that this difference in focus causes them to perceive the change process as being more stressful.
In summary, the majority of the research suggests that position in the organizational hierarchy tends to influence differences in attitudes and perceptions towards the change process, with higher-level employees reporting more positive appraisals. This difference may possibly be explained by the difference in roles, power, experience and implication of the change for these groups (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998).

In general, changes tend to affect the day-to-day work routines of lower level employees to a greater extent, while this group also has the least amount of decision-making influence during the change process. In contrast, change initiatives tend to have less of an impact on the day-to-day activities of higher-level members, who in turn tend to have a higher degree of influence on the change (Jones et al., 2008).

"Overall, research suggests that supervisors and non-supervisory staff have different attitudes toward and perceptions about organizational change, arising from their disparate experiences of the change process, which reflect differences in power, autonomy and influence."

(Jones et al., 2008)

It seems then, that position in the hierarchy is an important factor in determining employee perceptions and attitudes. With this in mind, we will now turn to our research and examine if we will be able to find differences in perceptions and attitudes across hierarchical levels.
6. RESEARCH

This chapter will cover the research that was carried out on the subject of organizational change. The research methodology, research design, research method and data collection will be discussed thoroughly in relevant sections. Finally the main results will be presented both in writing and graphically, which will then form the basis for the findings as presented in the next chapter.

6.1 Methodology

This section aims to explicate, justify and reflect on the methods selected and used, upon which the analytical design of this thesis is based. The methods selected were done with the objective of the study in mind, which was attempting to answer the following research question:

Do employees' attitudes and perceptions during organizational change differ across hierarchical levels?

The remainder of this section will cover the following topics in separate sections: research design, research method, data collection, data processing, reliability and generalizability.

6.1.1 Research Design

The research design was inspired and partly based on similar studies conducted by Jones et al. (2008) and Martin et al. (2006). In these studies organizations were considered intergroup entities, i.e. as groups of people who identify themselves with specific departments, units, or hierarchical levels. We decided to examine whether there was a difference in perceptions among three categorized groups of entities: executives, who tend to plan and delegate the change strategy; managers, who tend to manage and implement the change; and non-supervisors, who tend to have the least amount of influence. The term employee will then be used as an umbrella term to encompass all members of the organization. This classification of employees was based on research by Kanter et al. (1992) who identified these three groups as the major stakeholders within organizations during change. The classification was then later used by Jones et al. (2008). Our research
will examine if and where there is a difference in perceptions between these three groups during change.

The study by Jones et al. (2008) solely relied on open-ended interviews with people from different organizational levels for data collection. For our study, we decided to add a questionnaire, in order to collect more descriptive data, while also employing open-ended interviews. In addition, we collected data from a variety of companies, unlike Jones et al. (2008) who examined one specific workplace. For our research, the questionnaire was conducted first, before a follow-up interview with participants. For data collection, the questionnaire was sent to the employees of two Icelandic companies, as well as to individuals within the professional networks of the researchers and the supervisor of this thesis. The participating individuals were limited to those who were either currently or had recently undergone organizational change, which was furthermore the reason why these particular companies were approached. Finally, when the time frame for the questionnaire had expired and the number of participants was considered adequate, follow-up interviews were conducted among volunteering participants in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the subject.

6.1.2 Research Method

A research design represents the structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of the subsequent data gathered. The research design is furthermore internally valid when there is confidence that the findings of a study are characteristics of the variables being studied and not of the investigative procedure itself (Bryman & Bell, 1999; Sandelowski, 1986). A good research design moreover reduces the risk of bias, making assumptions, and jumping to conclusions, and is careful in its decision on what counts as significant to the outcome (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001).

In order to acquire the research’s aim and objectives, suitable methods and strategies have to be chosen, and limitations regarding the thesis’ scope considered. Furthermore, the process of creating the research question involves constant revision of the methods and strategies as the project progresses.
6.1.2.1 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

There are two types of methodologies used in research; quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research differs from qualitative in the sense that it aims at gathering and analyzing numerical data, as opposed to the qualitative method of gathering data based on descriptions (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Most quantitative research approaches, regardless of their theoretical differences, have a tendency to emphasize that there is a common reality on which people can agree (Newman & Benz, 1998).

The quantitative approach is founded in the so-called "hard" sciences, like mathematics and physics, where the research subjects tend to be more quantifiable. Quantitative data is any data in numerical form, such as percentages. In contrast, the social sciences, typically called "soft", tend to have subjects that are more elusive to quantify (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There tend to be no standardized questions used in qualitative interviews, instead the researcher tends to use questions as a guideline during the interview process. The researcher furthermore seeks to keep the participant within the limits set forward by the questions, although not trying to control the interview directly (Esterberg, 2002).

Social scientists have increasingly moved towards a bigger incorporation of qualitative methods into their research. This approach can add a new dimension of understanding, where the subjects seize to be only objective data, but instead become meaningful relations that are to be interpreted by the researcher (Tuli, 2011).

In order to answer the research question presented, a decision was initially made to use survey research. This is a method of collecting data with standardized questions for a large group of individuals, in an attempt to capture how they think in terms of motivation and beliefs, and what they do in terms of behavior (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Using the survey method therefore allowed us to obtain the individual experience of a change process that the respondents had experienced in their current or previous organizational carrier. Compared to solely conducting interviews, the use of a survey furthermore enables us to reach a larger amount of respondents than otherwise, although an interview process would indeed generate more in-depth data for each participant. Therefore, it was decided to use a mixture of a questionnaire and follow up interviews, which would result in both a satisfactory amount of participants, and in-depth data.
6.1.3 Data Collection

6.1.3.1 The Questionnaire

We decided to use a survey-based questionnaire for data collection (see Appendix A). First, participants defined the change process they were currently or had previously experienced. Subsequently the participants answered 29 question related to the change process, followed by six background questions. At the end of the questionnaire participants were given the option of participating in a follow-up interview by leaving an email address. The questions used were modified to fit the aim of the research, and we found the questions to properly reflect our research question (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001).

The intention was to measure subjective variables such as attitudes and perceptions, using self-assessments. Therefore many survey questions involved what is essentially a rating task, where respondents are given a stimulus in the form of a question or a statement, and are subsequently asked to describe their attitudes, opinions, and/or feelings towards the subject on a response scale. These questions took the form of a summative scale that allows for agreement and disagreement on individual items, where the participants responded to statements along a 7-point Likert-scale, which is the most common form of summative scale. The respondents were asked whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither disagreed nor agreed, somewhat agreed, agreed or strongly agreed with the position or statement contained in the question (Alwin, 1997).

According to Information theory, a greater number of response levels convey more information about the underlying variable of interest, and in our case the different perspectives and attitudes of employees, depending on where they are placed in the organizational hierarchy. If we assume that attitudes can exists on a scale that has direction, intensity, and a region of neutrality, then a minimum of 5 levels is necessary to communicate attitudes. This is also more likely to distinguish weak positive and negative attitudes from neutrality. As stated in Information theory, a 7-point response scale is more accurate than a 5-level scale, which prompted us to select and use a 7-point response scale. This also allows for a better measurement of direction and neutrality, and distinguishes three levels of attitude intensity. By using more response levels, we are able to provide more accurate communicative internal states such as attitudes, feelings and beliefs, and the
information obtained using more response levels also ensures greater reliability of measurement (Alwin, 1997).

The 29 questions of the questionnaire were assembled with the research question in mind, and were intended to reflect what employees at different hierarchy levels experience during organizational change. Questionnaires used by Martin et al. (2005), Chawla & Kelloway (2004), as well as items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (1979) were used to develop our own questionnaire further. By coding open-ended interviews, Jones et al. (2008) identified three main categories of issues during change, each containing several sub-themes, with a total of 12 themes. These themes were used as a reference in our study, and later applied for the interviews conducted. This led to inevitable adaptations of external questionnaire items to suit our research question and objective. Some items were modified to fit the purposes of the study better, and others were modified in order to clarify wording, after feedback from the pilot study of our questionnaire. A pilot study is a test-run of the questionnaire conducted among a few volunteering participants, in order to improve the research design, find out if the participants understand the process and questions, and to estimate how long it takes a participant to answer the questionnaire (Elmes et al., 2006).

The pilot study was conducted on friends and classmates, a total of 20 individuals, before the questionnaire was sent out to the selected participants, in order to gain feedback on the clarity of questions and if any questions were difficult to understand. The resulting feedback was very helpful and beneficial and prompted us to reconsider, rephrase, and in some cases remove questions in order to improve the questionnaire and make it more user-friendly.

The platform used for distributing the questionnaire was the survey option supplied by Google Drive. It was sent out to potential participants on May 7th 2013 at two large companies that had recently underwent a change process, to the extended LinkedIn network of our supervisor, as well as our own relevant network on LinkedIn and Facebook. Those who decided to participate were then given an option to sign up for receiving a copy of this thesis when completed. No special permissions were needed for our survey, besides confirmation from those who decided to participate.
Participants were sent the basic information on the survey, instruction on how to participate, and a promise of confidentiality, where all participants would remain anonymous and responses would not be traceable to the participants in any way. It took a participant approximately 3-5 minutes to complete the survey, which is a desirable length to ensure high participation, as it is a short time commitment (Neal, 1987).

The questionnaire included an option to submit an e-mail address, if one was interested in participating in a short follow-up interview. All interview participants had previously answered the questionnaire, and therefore had a vague idea of what the study was about.

6.1.3.2 The Interviews

For the interview process, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a widely used format for qualitative research, conducted either with an individual or in groups, and generally range from under half an hour up to several hours in length (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews were administered online via Skype.

The interviews were conducted in accordance with a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix B) based on the recommendation by Kvale (1996), previous research by Jones et al. (2008) and Isabella (1990), using qualitative methods. By applying this method, we hoped to gain a deeper form of understanding of participant perceptions, as the interviews allow for an interactive process and purposeful sampling that seeks to maximize the depth and richness of the data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). As Jones et al. (2008) explain, there is a need for research using a more qualitative approach, where respondents are not limited to answering the questions that the researchers selected, but instead get to report on the issues that are important to them. The interviews do need to be sufficiently focused with regards to the research question so that the participants and interviewer have shared experiences about the topic, which is ensured by stating the purpose of the research at the beginning of the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Schein (1985) points out that respondents report on the issues they sense as being important. Schein believes that it is the job of the interviewer to document and try to best of his ability not to influence which subjects are discussed. According to this view, a lesser-structured interview is less likely to give the interviewer an opportunity to influence the
opinions and views of the respondent, and therefore minimizes bias (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

With this in mind, we tried as best we could to let the respondents pick the subjects discussed, and only interrupted to make sure we had understood the answer correctly. We asked respondents to pick a change process to talk about, and tried to keep the questions broad and open-ended (e.g. "what did you think was the most positive aspect during the change process?"). By doing this we hoped to pinpoint which topics the participants felt were most important, and worthy of discussing.

6.1.3.2.1 Grounded approach

For the interview process we decided to use grounded approach. This is a method intended to explore views and data by way of induction. Instead of setting out with a predetermined hypothesis, the researcher gathers information and induces a conclusion after the fact; a sort of reverse engineered hypothesis (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Even though our study has a predetermined hypothesis, we felt like open interviews inspired by this approach might provide another element of understanding of the specific issues these participants are facing.

One of the benefits of this approach is the amount of information that can be gathered, despite having few participants to work with. In a short interview it is possible to get in-depth answers on a limited amount of issues. This way we may gain an understanding of the day-to-day challenges, in a manner that is not possible by using pre-determined questionnaires. It is also possible that the researchers are mistaken in which issues participants are concerned about, which would reflect in irrelevant items on a pre-determined survey.

6.1.4 Data processing

Over a period of 3 weeks, 49 individuals participated in the survey, which was considered a sufficient number in order for the survey to deliver acceptable results. As is necessary in all scientific studies, we considered how large the sample should be, and whether our sample would reflect the population. As is always a risk, the sample size may only document the existence of the sample being studied, but may not be representative of the population.
However, we found our sample to be of a satisfactory size, as it was consistent with the findings of Anderson and Vingrys (2001). They describe how small samples can be used to show reliable results, if the sample chosen is from a selectively normal population, and if a certain set of paradigms are present for every individual in the sample. Our sample was selectively chosen, as the company’s used had recently gone through a change process, and all of the participants had the paradigm present of having experienced change recently or currently. Therefore we consider our sample size acceptable (Anderson & Vingrys, 2001). After the survey-period ended, the data was processed in Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics.

The participants that volunteered for a follow-up interview were then contacted, and a time arranged for a meeting that suited both parties. All interviews were conducted within the same week, via Skype. The interviews were subsequently transcribed and coded immediately following the interviews. To minimize bias in interpreting the interviews, the interviews were coded on a so-called line-by-line basis, which is a method commonly used in grounded theory (Isabella, 1990).

6.1.5 RELIABILITY AND GENERALIZATION

The reliability and validity of instruments used in the research is central to evaluating the accuracy and objectivity of the measurements, while the generalizability of findings depends on the representativeness of the sample and the ability to replicate the data collection procedures (also known as replicability) (Fossey et al., 2002). Validity is also an important key to effective research; if a piece of research is invalid it becomes worthless. Validity is therefore a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011).

Research instruments are considered valid when confidence is present that they measure what they are intended to measure. More specifically, the truth value of an instrument is enhanced when the researcher can show that it measures what is being studied in the way it is defined in the study, that it compares well with other tests measuring the same phenomenon, and that the test results are congruent with theoretical explanations of the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 1986). We consider our research to have considerable validity due to the fact that we find our sampling, as described earlier, to be both adequate and
acceptable, as it is a result of careful sampling and application of appropriate instrumentations and statistical treatments (Cohen et al., 2011).

It is however impossible for research to be 100 per cent valid; that is the optimism of perfection. Quantitative research possesses a measure of standard error which is inbuilt and which has to be acknowledged (Cohen et al., 2011).

Dependent on the internal validity of a study is external validity, which refers to the generalizability of findings and the representativeness of subjects, tests, and testing situations (Sandelowski, 1986). Certain conventions of sampling are observed in quantitative research to ensure representativeness and generalizability, including the random selection of subjects, predetermined sample sizes to ensure the proper use of statistical test of inference. Sampling is typically statistical in that it is intended to reflect the distribution from which a sample is drawn (Sandelowski, 1986). Although we consider the research to have internal validity, it is important to acknowledge the limits of generalizability. For instance, it may be possible to generalize the findings to other similar companies, and companies with similar organizational cultures, such as other companies within the geographical area of the Nordics. To which extent they may be generalized to all companies is more uncertain, as factors such as company culture, individual culture differences and differences in business environment etc. would have to be taken into consideration.

Reliability in quantitative research refers to the consistency, stability, and dependability of a test or testing procedure over time. Reliable research should yield the same, or comparable result, every time it or an alternate, or parallel form of it is administered to the same or comparable subjects, and when it has homogeneous items (Sandelowski, 1986; Cohen et al., 2011). Reliability is viewed as a necessary precondition for validity, and inherent in the goal of reliability is the value of repeatability. The repeatability of testing procedures and results lends credibility to the findings and confidence in the generalizability of the study. Reliability in quantitative research assumes that replication of testing procedures is possible; that replication of testing procedures does not alter the thing being studied; that there is an observable regularity about human experiences that is a function of those experiences and not the testing procedures; and that if more than one person observes the same thing, it really exists in that way (Sandelowski, 1986). Many of
the questionnaires items were based on existing questionnaires, which have shown to have high validity. Although several items were modified to better fit our research, we believe this existing framework will carry over to our research in terms of validity. Additionally, we find our research to generate similar results as previous research in the field, and our methods to be highly replicable, and so we consider our research to have high reliability.

6.2 Results

In this section, we will cover 10 selected questions from the questionnaire, and present the results, in a detailed and accessible manner. The reason for only covering 10 questions out of the 29, is that these questions were considered to be the most indicative and to be more decisive than the others. This section will only present the data obtained, but not feature interpretation of the data, as this will be covered in chapter 7: Findings & discussion.

As stated earlier, the questionnaire responses from participants were formatted on a 7-point Likert scale, where the options were: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree. In this section, however, we will summarize the answers of strongly disagree, disagree, and somewhat disagree, forming the category generally disagree. The same then applies for strongly agree, agree, and somewhat agree, which forms the category generally agree. The answers neither agree nor disagree will stand unaltered as a category. This will allow the reader to have a clearer view of the participants’ attitudes towards change, although every question will be supported with a figure containing the full detail of the results, i.e. excluding categorization.

First we will present background information on participants, including the subsection general attitudes towards change, where participants’ answers will be covered without taking hierarchical position into account. In the following subsection we will then present and analyze the results more thoroughly by comparing findings with the participants’ hierarchical position. This will allow us to find potential differences in the attitudes towards change based on the hierarchical position of participants.
Before presenting results on change-related issues, the background of participants will be introduced.

**FIGURE 5: GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS**

Figure 5 presents the gender ratio among participants. A total of 49 individuals answered the questionnaire, of which there were 15 women and 34 men.

**FIGURE 6: AGE OF PARTICIPANTS**

As seen in Figure 6, most participants were in the age group of 30-44 years old, or 59%, with the second largest age group being 45-59 year olds, or 25%. Participants of 29 years or younger accounted for 14%, while only 2% of participants were 60 years or older.

**FIGURE 7: HIERARCHICAL POSITION OF PARTICIPANTS**

As can be seen in Figure 7, 20 participants, or 41%, were managers, 15 participants, or 31% were non-supervisors, and 13, or 27% were executives or working within senior management. One participant held the professional title of an owner, and it was our conclusion that this participant might skew the results as an outlier, and subsequently the participant was left out of the presentation of results. The distribution of participants in the
other three hierarchical positions was however considered particularly positive, with the number of participants representing each group being similar.

When questioned about how long the participants had held their current position, most participants had work experience at their current company of 6 years or longer, or 38%, while 31% had held their current position for 4-6 years, and 27% had held the position for one to three years. The results can be viewed in Figure 8.

6.2.2 GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE

In this section we will briefly cover the results of participants’ attitudes towards the change their company is experiencing or the change the company has recently experienced. The results in this section are independent of the hierarchical position of participants.

Although participants were either currently or had previously undergone change, we will refer to the change in the past tense throughout, for the sake of consistency and simplicity.

6.2.2.1 RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

6.2.2.1.1 I FEEL THAT THE CHANGE WAS NECESSARY
Figure 9 shows that participants were overall in agreement that the change the company was going through was necessary, with 76% of participants generally agreeing with the statement. Only 10% of participants generally disagreed, and 14% neither agreed nor disagreed.

6.2.2.1.2 I THINK THAT CHANGES IN THIS ORGANIZATION, IN GENERAL, TEND TO WORK WELL

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked if they thought that changes in their organization, in general, tended to work well, 63% of participants generally agreed with the statement, while 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 18% generally disagreed, as seen in Figure 10.

6.2.2.1.3 IT IS REALLY NOT POSSIBLE TO CHANGE THINGS AROUND HERE

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Figure 11, similar results to the previous question were derived from the statement it is really not possible to change things around here, where 88% generally disagreed with the statement, while 2% neither agreed nor disagreed and 10% generally agreed.
6.2.2.1.4 CHANGES SEEM TO CREATE MORE PROBLEMS THAN THEY SOLVE

The statement *changes seem to create more problems than they solve* was generally rejected by participants, with 72% generally disagreeing. Meanwhile, 14% *neither agreed nor disagreed*, and 14% *agreed* that changes seemed to create more problems than they solved. The results can be viewed in Figure 12.

6.2.2.1.5 I FEAR THAT CHANGE MIGHT AFFECT MY POSITION IN A NEGATIVE WAY

As seen in Figure 13, participants predominantly disagreed with the statement *I fear that change might affect my position in a negative way*, with 68% generally disagreeing, while 16% *generally agreed* with the statement, and 14% *neither agreed nor disagreed*. 
When questioned on the subject of company culture with the statement *I think that the change fits well with the overall company culture*, 67% of participants generally agreed with the statement, as seen in Figure 14. Furthermore 26% of participants generally disagreed, while 6% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Figure 15 shows that when faced with the statement *I think the change might cause uncertainty about work roles in the company*, 59% generally agreed with it, while 32% generally disagreed, and 8% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

In this section, the results will be analyzed by comparing the hierarchical positions of employees. The section will furthermore be divided into five sub-sections: *Relationships*
between people; Perceptions of change – attitudes and feelings; Uncertainty; and Conflict, power and politics.

6.2.3.1 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE

6.2.3.1.1 I BELIEVE THE CHANGE PROCESS WILL POSITIVELY INFLUENCE RELATIONS BETWEEN ME AND MY CO-WORKERS

Figure 16 shows that 77% of executives generally agree with the statement I believe the change process will positively influence relations between me and my co-workers. Managers seem to have generally split views on the subject, unlike participants from other hierarchical position groups, with 55% generally agreeing with the statement, 15% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 30% generally disagreeing. Among non-supervisors, 40% generally agree with the statement, 33% neither agree nor disagree, and 27% generally disagree.
6.2.3.2 Perceptions of change – attitudes & feelings

6.2.3.2.1 I feel that the change was necessary

![Figure 17: I feel that the change was necessary](image)

When asked if they felt the change was necessary, the participants were generally harmonious with the statement, with all hierarchical position groups mostly agreeing. Figure 17 shows that 85% of executives generally agree with the subject, while no executive disagreed with the statement. Both managers and non-supervisors participating answered similarly, although a few percent of them strongly disagreed or disagreed. Overall though, participants were generally in agreement on the subject that change was necessary at their respective company.

6.2.3.3 Uncertainty

6.2.3.3.1 I fear that the change might affect my position in a negative way

![Figure 18: I fear that the change might affect my position in a negative way](image)
Figure 18 shows that executives generally disagree with the statement *I fear that the change might affect my position in a negative way*, where 46% strongly disagree, and a total of 85% *generally disagree* with the statement. The managers participating had a fairly even distribution of answers, although a larger share of managers than non-supervisors and executives agreed with the statement. Overall, more managers *generally disagreed* with the statement, 60%, than generally agreed with it. Non-supervisors, similar to the managers, mostly disagreed with the statement, although their answers were spread fairly evenly on the scale. A total of 63% of non-supervisors *generally disagreed* with the statement.

6.2.3.3.2 I BELIEVE THE CHANGE WILL BE BENEFICIAL FOR ME PERSONALLY

![Bar chart showing the percentage of agreement and disagreement among executives, managers, and non-supervisors for the statement regarding personal benefit of change.](image)

FIGURE 19: I BELIEVE THE CHANGE WILL BE BENEFICIAL FOR ME PERSONALLY

When participants were asked if they thought the change would be beneficial for them personally, it became evident that executives mostly agreed with the statement, with 85% of executives *generally agreeing* with the statement, while only 8% *generally disagreed*. In comparison 50% of managers *generally agreed* with the statement, while only 10% *generally disagreed*. The answers of non-supervisors were fairly evenly distributed, with 33% *generally agreeing* with the statement, 40% *generally disagreeing*, and 27% *neither agreeing nor disagreeing*. The results can be viewed in Figure 19.
6.2.3.4 CONFLICT, POWER AND POLITICS

6.2.3.4.1 I THINK THE CHANGE WILL INCREASE CONFLICT IN THE COMPANY

As seen in figure 20, executives to a large extent agreed with this statement *I think the change will increase conflict in the company*, with 62% generally agreeing, although no one strongly agreed. Managers responded to the statement quite differently, with 35% generally disagreeing with it. Another 35% of managers *neither agreed nor disagreed* with the statement. Furthermore around 30% of managers *generally agreed* with the statement. Similarly to managers, non-supervisors mostly disagreed with the statement, with 47% generally disagreeing. Meanwhile, 40% of participating non-supervisors *generally agreed*, and 13% *neither agreed nor disagreed* with the statement.

6.2.3.4.2 I FEEL LIKE I HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THE CHANGE PROCESS

As seen in figure 21, executives to a large extent *agreed* with this statement *I feel like I have been included in the change process*, with 47% generally agreeing. Managers responded to the statement quite differently, with 25% strongly disagreeing with it. Another 8% of managers *neither agreed nor disagreed* with the statement. Furthermore around 20% of managers *generally agreed* with the statement. Similarly to managers, non-supervisors mostly disagreed with the statement, with 8% strongly disagreeing. Meanwhile, 20% of participating non-supervisors *generally agreed*, and 0% *neither agreed nor disagreed* with the statement.
There seemed to be a difference in how participants answered the statement *I feel like I have been included in the change process*, depending on their hierarchical position, as seen in Figure 21. It is clear that executives agreed with the statement, with 54% *strongly agreeing*, and a total of 85% *generally agreeing* they had been included in the change process in some way.

The responses of managers were fairly distributed along the scale, with 50% of managers *generally agreeing*, while 40% *generally disagreed*. The remaining 10% *neither agreed nor disagreed*. When compared to the answers of executives, the results of non-supervisors are quite different. Non-supervisors, for the most part disagreed, with 20% *strongly disagreeing*, 47% *disagreeing*, and 13% *somewhat disagreeing*. Thus, 80% of non-supervisors *generally disagreed* with the statement, while only 14% *generally agree* with the statement.

6.2.4 PROCESS

This section will continue covering the results by comparing the hierarchical positions of employees. The section will be divided into two sub-sections: *Participation and involvement*; and *Desired process*.

6.2.4.1 PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

6.2.4.1.1 I FEEL LIKE I HAVE A VOICE WHEN IT COMES TO THE CHANGE PROCESS

![Figure 22: I feel like I have a voice when it comes to the change process](image-url)
When asked if participants felt like they had a voice when it came to the change process, the distribution of answers was in many ways similar to the previous question on whether participants felt like they were included in the change process, as seen in Figure 22.

Executives mostly agreed, with 38% strongly agreeing with the statement *I feel like I have a voice when it comes to the change process*, with 31% agreeing, and 8% somewhat agreeing to the statement. Therefore, 77% of executives generally agreed with the statement.

The responses of managers were fairly evenly distributed, although generally they were more likely to be in agreement with that they had a voice when it came to the change process. Half of the managers participating generally agreed with the statement, while 40% generally disagreed. The remaining 10% therefore neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Non-supervisors were in more disagreement than executives and managers with the statement, with only 21% generally agreeing. On the contrary, 53% generally disagreed when asked whether they felt they would have a voice when it came to the change process. The remaining 27% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

6.2.4.1.2 I ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION-MAKING, IN MATTERS THAT AFFECT ME AT WORK

Figure 23 shows the distribution of answers when participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they *actively participated in the decision-making, in matters that affected them at work*. 
Executives almost entirely agreed with this statement, with 62% strongly agreeing, and a total of 92% generally agreeing. No executives strongly disagreed, disagreed, or somewhat disagreed with the statement.

Similar results can be observed amongst managers, with 70% generally agreeing. Managers neither agreeing nor disagreeing accounted for 20%, while only 10% of generally disagreed with the statement.

The answers of non-supervisors were quite different from those of the executives, with only 46% of non-supervisors generally agreeing with the statement, compared to 92% of non-supervisors. The number of non-supervisors generally disagreeing with the statement accounted for 47%, which is in contrast to the results of executives, where no one generally disagreed.

6.2.4.2 Desired process

6.2.4.2.1 I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED SOME THINGS DONE DIFFERENTLY

When asked if participant would have preferred some things done differently, all three groups of executives, managers and non-supervisors provide similar answers. More than two-thirds of executives, or 69%, generally agreed with the statement, while 15% neither agreed nor disagreed. Managers were also quite positive towards the statement, with 50% generally agreeing, while 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 20% generally disagreed.
Out of the three groups, non-supervisors agreed the most with the statement, with 73% generally agreeing. Meanwhile 27% of non-supervisors generally disagreed with the statement. The results can be seen in Figure 24.

6.2.5 Outcomes

In this fourth and final section, the results will continue to be analyzed using the hierarchical positions of employees, as in the previous two sections.

6.2.5.1 The change process has made it easier for me to solve certain tasks

As seen in Figure 25, the views of the participants were divided on this question. Executives mostly agreed with the statement, with a total of 69% generally agreeing. Meanwhile, 23% generally disagreed with the statement, and 8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Managers answered quite differently, as a higher proportion of participants neither agreed nor disagreed, or 35%. For the most part though, managers disagreed with the statement, with 50% generally disagreeing, while 25% of managers participating generally agreed with the statement.

The attitude of non-supervisors regarding the subject were somewhat split, with 40% generally agreeing, while 33% generally disagreed. More than a quarter of non-supervisors, or 27%, neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.
Semi-structured interviews are intended to focus on the issues raised by the interviewee, in contrast to questionnaires, where the issues respondents report on are predetermined by the researcher. We therefore believe that these two methods compliment each other nicely; with one offering numerical and descriptive data, and the other a more in-depth focus on what issues seem salient to the employees.

We interviewed a total of four people; one executive, two managers and one employee. Three of four participants worked at the same company, and two of those discussed the same change process, but from different angles, as one was an executive and the other a manager. We will present the findings of each interview and then present coding for each one.

The participants of the questionnaire and interviews were promised confidentiality in their responses, and so for the sake of anonymity, information such as company names and area of business were excluded from the results, where deemed necessary.

6.2.6.1 First Interview

The participant of the first interview was an executive involved in a merger of work processes in two factories. The company of the executive (Company A) had recently merged with another company (Company B). Company A had a factory with similar functions as a factory recently acquired by Company B. It was therefore decided that Company A should take over operations in the other factory, and take over customer relations as well. The other factory was to implement Best Practices standardization and adapt processes from Company A, focusing solely on production (with Company A taking over customer relations and related functions). One of the biggest challenges was creating processes for Company A to be able to access the relevant information, in order to be able to communicate with the customer. All three companies were located in different countries, which made the process more complex.

The executive expressed the belief that employees had generally been positive towards the change in the beginning, and that everyone had seen that the change was necessary. The most negative aspect was the difficulty in forcing a corporate culture on the newly acquired...
factory, as it had been a family business and was not used to rigid processes. This had led to some difficulties in communication, and the cultural barrier was tangible. One of the ways this manifested itself was in the difficulty in obtaining the necessary information needed to service the customers. The factory would promise information, but fail to meet the deadline set. The executive explained that this was in part due to a cultural difference, and in part caused by a company culture difference, where the factory was not accustomed to the same rigidness in meeting deadlines as Company A was. The executive also expressed the view that part of this might stem from the way the company culture of Company A was being forced on them. They (the factory) were used to doing things in a certain way, but were suddenly ordered by a third party to change the way they do most things; resulting in some tension.

The executive did not believe that the change process had affected the workers of Company A in a major way, but had instead just added a level of complexity that was not present earlier. Additionally there was the concern about an increase in workload as the revenue had been increased by 25%, while operating a similar number of employees (one employee was added to the division overseeing this new branch). However, the executive believed that this increase in workload might affect relations between the workers of Company A and the factory.

The executive believed that communication with employees had been successful, and that everyone had been eager to get the change process underway. However, there might have been a failure to manage expectations, as the top branch had made the new factory out to be more advanced and well run than later turned out to be the case.

The biggest challenge, according to the executive, was believed to be coordination between Company A and the new factory. The new factory was receiving 500 orders a day, which they were used to process their own way, but were now forced to change their work processes. Company A needs information, and the factory is not used to providing this info.

"It has been difficult to force them into this corporate way of doing things, where you have to provide the right information at the right time."

If one thing could have been done differently, the executive mentioned management of expectations. The communication in the early stages might have caused unrealistic
expectations, and made the employees believe that the change would be less troublesome than turned out to be the case.

### Coding - 12 Themes

**Table 1: First Interview: Emotional and Attitudinal Issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships between people</th>
<th>Increase in workload may cause strained interactions between staff of Company A and the factory.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of change (attitudes &amp; feelings)</td>
<td>Positive attitudes in the beginning stages (hinted at less enthusiasm as the process had went on).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Mentioned uncertainty about adapting to new work-processes amongst employees in the acquired factory. Did not think it would affect staff of Company A (no structural change).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict, power &amp; politics</td>
<td>Mentioned friction in communication with staff of the newly acquired factory. They were not used to taking orders from an external source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening company values</td>
<td>A threat to company values of the external factory, which used to be a family company. None expected for Company A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: First Interview: Process Issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Talked about communication in the early stages being too optimistic and building unrealistic expectations. Also mentioned difficulty in communicating with the factory; getting information etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Claimed a general positive attitude amongst staff towards participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning challenges</td>
<td>Increase in workload for staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>None mentioned (participant is part of the leadership).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired process</td>
<td>Would have tempered expectations in the beginning stages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.6.2 Second interview

Participant two was a manager involved in the same process as detailed earlier, although at another stage, due to the different position in the hierarchy. This was especially interesting to us, as this provided an opportunity to see how (and if) this participant viewed the process differently.

The manager went a bit more into detail about the background of the merger, highlighting the similarities between the newly acquired factory and the functions of the factory of Company A. After acquiring the new factory, Company A did an analysis on the operations and found out that the factory was doing similar things as their own factory was doing in 2004. This made the factory well suited for an overhaul adapting Best Practices, based on the same model their own factory had adapted some years earlier. According to him the expectation had initially been that the acquired factory would be more advanced, as far as processes and day-to-day operations were concerned.

The manager believed that the biggest challenge had been getting the right information from the factory in a timely fashion. In a similar vein the one thing he would have liked done differently was to have sent an ambassador to the country of the factory, in order to oversee the transition. It had proved difficult to get relevant information from the factory, and the manager expressed the belief that it would probably have been easier with a person located in the same country.

The manager also mentioned issues related to the local tax authorities, but believed that this could not have been avoided, even if they went back in time with the same knowledge they have now. According to him, Company A was rather conservative when it came to change processes, in the sense that they tended to follow the proper channels and hierarchical pathways. He considered this to be a positive trait generally, but that perhaps it had affected this specific process, as the acquired factory was used to more flexibility and used more informal channels for information and communication.
The process had brought an increased level of complexity to the daily operations, but the manager stressed that this was a general trend, with revenue within his division in Company A growing from 40 million euros to 250 million euros in a few years. This had naturally added a level of complexity, and made it increasingly difficult to keep a good overview. The manager also mentioned an increase in external threats, but did not specify this further.

Generally, the responses of the manager were more focused towards hands-on issues, and focused more on specific issues during the process, compared to the first interview with the executive. A part of this could be explained by the different roles these individuals had in the process. The executive was more involved in planning and delegation, whereas the manager was more involved in day-to-day issues.

Despite this, the executive and manager covered many similar issues such as challenges in communication, unrealistic expectations and the belief that the factory would be more advanced. Both mentioned cultural differences and difficulty in getting the right information.

### Coding - 12 Themes

**Table 4: Second interview: Emotional and attitudinal issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between people</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of change (attitudes &amp; feelings)</td>
<td>Did not specify positive or negative attitudes, but mentioned an increase in complexity as a challenge for staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Stressed that the change entailed no structural change for Company A, only the factory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict, power &amp; politics</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening company values</td>
<td>Talked about how staff of the factory might feel threatened by being forced to do things differently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 5: SECOND INTERVIEW: PROCESS ISSUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communication</strong></th>
<th>Difficulty in communicating with the factory. Difficulty getting information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning challenges</strong></td>
<td>Legal challenges with local tax authorities. Loss in oversight as a result of the increase in complexity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** Desired process**</td>
<td>Would have liked to station a person in the country of the factory. An ambassador whose responsibility would have been to make sure the right information got delivered in a timely fashion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 6: SECOND INTERVIEW: OUTCOMES

| **External issues** | Mentioned an external threat, but did not specify further. |

6.2.6.3  THIRD INTERVIEW

Participant three was a *manager*, working in a department at the same company as the first two participants. This manager chose to discuss a change process that he had initiated in his own department.

The manager had initiated a change process that entailed pairing subordinates into new work groups. Previously, employees had to attend monthly meetings discussing progress on various projects. The division’s 11 employees worked on several different projects, which meant that many of the discussions were only relevant to a select few. To those employees not involved, listening to those discussions was perceived as a waste of time.

The manager therefore devised a change, whereby the employees would be split up into three workgroups. These workgroups would then meet separately and discuss issues related
to current projects. In the new arrangement she arranges weekly meetings with each group (as opposed to one big monthly meeting).

The manager believed that employees had generally been positive, and that the satisfaction had increased with time, as employees saw the effects of the change.

The biggest challenge initially, was seen as dividing people into groups that made sense, as the division of projects was not always clear. This required the manager to "sell" the change idea to the group.

The manager believed the most positive aspect had been the appreciation displayed by the employees with the new procedures. The most negative aspect was the challenge of making sure all of the original 11 employees still formed a unit that did not split up into three totally separate groups.

The manager thought that the change had been necessary. Additionally he believed that the division was in a better shape post-implementation than it had been beforehand. The positive feedback from the employees seemed to reinforce this belief and he also thought that the change had created more positive communication between co-workers.

In the original stages of communicating the change, the manager announced the proposed changes and at the same time called a meeting to discuss this. In this meeting the employees were allowed to offer feedback, most of which turned out to be positive.

The biggest challenge generally, had been to stick with, and stand by the change as a manager. According to the managers, employees will always have opinions, some positive, and others negative. It is important not to hesitate or start doubting at the first sign of negative reactions. He mentioned how the meetings have developed to currently having another kind of dynamic, as there are fewer people present. While there may be heated discussion, and dispute on issues, it has been for the better and the meetings are more time efficient and effective.

The manager believed the one thing that could have been differently, had been consulting more with the employees in the planning stages. However, he did express an uncertainty
with whether or not this would have changed anything, as the change had been fairly successful.

6.2.6.3.1 Coding - 12 Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7: THIRD INTERVIEW: EMOTIONAL AND ATTITUINAL ISSUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships between people</strong> : Had become more positive as a result of the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of change (attitudes &amp; feelings)</strong> : Positive. Increase in satisfaction as time went on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty</strong> : A bit of uncertainty on new work roles in the new teams initially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict, power &amp; politics</strong> : None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threatening company values</strong> : None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8: THIRD INTERVIEW: PROCESS ISSUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong> : Successful communication in planning stages. Employees were encouraged to provide feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong> : Generally positive. People seemed on board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning challenges</strong> : Initially a challenge to divide people into relevant work groups. Later a challenge to keep all groups connected as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong> : None mentioned (participant is the leader in this case).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desired process</strong> : More communication with employees in planning stages. Not sure however if that would have changed anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 9: THIRD INTERVIEW: OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External issues</strong> : None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fourth participant was a non-supervisor in an IT department at a bank with a total of 1300 employees. The change he described was a restructuring of his work unit in order for the unit to better fit the overall structure of the bank. In the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, there had been structural changes made to the operations and divisions, due to a change in focus. The IT department had not seen a restructuring, and had residues of the old organizational structure. The intention of the change process was to streamline the operations of the department and make sure that the structure of the rest of the organization was reflected in the structure of the IT department.

The change was also a practical one, as the support function of the IT department must match the operations of the rest of the banks operations; for instance the pension fund operations have separate challenges from the credit department. People inside the company, who are seeking information, would therefore have a easier time with it after the change was completed. This aspect of the change, was the part that the employee found most positive, i.e. that the change inherently "made sense".

The most negative part was viewed as remnants of the old organizational structure prevailing, despite the structural change. As an example, one staff member was made head of a workgroup, despite an obvious lack in competence. The participant believed that this was due to the fact that the director of the department had hired this person, and with the new structural changes there did not seem to be a suitable place for this individual within the company. The director, unwilling to face the fact that the employment may have been ill advised from the beginning, then chose to place this person as the head of a work group to avoid having to admit his mistake. These types of politics were seen as the most negative aspects.

The participant viewed the change as necessary, as the departmental structure had always been a little off, in regards to the rest of the organizations since 2008. After the economic crisis there was a restructuring, which always felt odd and resulted in the department not being in sync with the rest of the organization.
The participant described how his department had previously always had to work against another unit within the organization. After the change there was a bigger scope of the support functions within the division, but not necessarily an increase in workload.

Another perceived positive was the separation of two workgroups within the division that had little in common. These two groups were working in separate areas but were still part of the same department. The separation had given the department more clarity and a feeling of "less noise" was described, not in a literal sense, but as more focused and relevant information.

The communication aspect of the change process was deemed sufficient by the participant, with managers informing the staff of the proposed change and doing a good job informing people on what to expect. Some of the information was communicated via long e-mails, which the participant felt had suited the department well, as most staff in the IT department was accustomed to communicating via the computer.

6.2.6.4.1 Coding - 12 Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships between people</th>
<th>The change had meant a change in job title for some people. Mostly positive.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of change (attitudes &amp; feelings)</td>
<td>Positive overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict, power &amp; politics</td>
<td>Some politics, incompetent staff promoted due to politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening company values</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 11: FOURTH INTERVIEW: PROCESS ISSUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Pleased with communication. Felt format (via email) suited department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning challenges</td>
<td>None mentioned (participant is a non-supervisor and was not involved in the planning process).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Generally positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired process</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 12: FOURTH INTERVIEW: OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External issues</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Interesting findings from the results will be discussed and potentially explained in this chapter. First, the distribution of background variables such as age, gender and hierarchical position will be examined. Then the results obtained from the questionnaire and interviews will be looked into and interpreted and possibly explained by comparing them to the existing literature and theory.

7.1 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The framework was partially based on a classification of issues during organizational change, identified by Jones et al. (2008). These three categories were: Emotional and attitudinal issues, Process issues and Outcome issues. Each category then had several sub-categories, a total of 12 factors. Jones et al. (2008) observed, that while these groups shared many of the same attitudes and perceptions, executives tended to express more positive attitudes toward change, compared to managers and non-supervisors. They also found that during organizational change, executives were more likely to focus on process issues and outcomes of the change, and less on emotional and attitudinal issues. Managers were found to focus on planning challenges and participation issues, and were more likely to mention potential negative outcomes for the staff, compared to executives. Non-supervisors were most likely to focus on emotional and attitudinal issues, and were more likely to view the change in a negative light. This hierarchical difference is consistent with findings by Martin et al. (2006), where upper level staff reported more positive attitudes on a range of indicators. Based on these findings, we expected executives' attitudes towards change to be generally more positive than managers and non-supervisors.

Jones et al. (2008) also found that executives and managers tended to focus more on planning challenges and outcomes of the change, compared to non-managers. We included questions for this purpose on the questionnaire, but also expected that this difference in focus might shine through in the open-ended interviews. With the interview approach, we hoped to be able to give a more holistic picture of peoples' understandings than would be possible with solely employing questionnaires (Brannen, 2005).
7.1.1  **Distribution of Age, Gender and Hierarchical Positions**

Overall, we were pleased with the distribution of the questionnaire participants in regards to age, gender and hierarchical positions. The variables age and hierarchical position were both fairly evenly distributed, although a majority of participants were in the 30-44 year category, or 59%. This distribution is to be expected in a professional setting, especially since a majority of the participants have some seniority within their respective organizations. In a study on organizational change, Martin et al. (2005) found 62% of participants to be in the 20-40 year category, and 38% to be 40 years or older.

Hierarchical position was distributed fairly evenly amongst questionnaire participants, at 31%, 41% and 27% for non-supervisors, managers and executives respectively. The interview participants were one employee, two managers and one executive. One questionnaire participant was categorized as an owner, and a decision was subsequently made to remove this participant from the final results, as we felt it might skew both the outcome and the presentation of the results. The study was designed with three general hierarchical positions in mind, and this participant did not fit the criteria of the design.

Although the gender variable was a little less evenly distributed, with 31% of participants being female, and 69% male, we were not specifically looking at gender differences, and so we were not particularly concerned with this distribution. According to the literature, gender variables have been found to be less important for perception during organizational change, compared to for example status inside the organization and organizational level (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). The distribution of gender amongst interview participants was even, with two men and two females.

7.2  **Main Findings**

In the following section we will direct the focus towards findings obtained from the research. We will highlight interesting results from the questionnaire and interviews, and try to put these into context with previous research and relevant theory.
There were three questions in the questionnaire that showed similar results, although we had originally categorized one of them into a separate category. The items were: *I feel like I have been included in the change process*, *I feel like I have a voice when it comes to the change process* and *I actively participate in the decision-making, in matters that affect me at work*. Originally, we had intended the question on inclusion in the change process to measure a construct of *Conflict, power and politics*, although it is clear in retrospect that it has more in common with the questionnaire items measuring *Participation and involvement* (which is where the other two items are located on the scale).

The distribution of responses to these three questions were similar, which gives support to the idea that they measure a similar construct related to participation and inclusion. As expected, executives reported considerably more positive responses than both managers and non-supervisors on all three indicators. In response to *I feel like I have been included in the change process*, 85% of executives generally agreed that they had been included, compared with only 14% of non-supervisors. Furthermore, 0% of non-supervisors strongly agreed that they had been included in the change process.

Similar results, although not as decisive, were observable in responses to whether participants felt that they had a voice when it comes to the change process. 77% of executives generally agreed with this, 50% of managers but only 21% of non-supervisors. Moreover, only 15% of executives generally disagreed, compared to 53% of non-supervisors.

Finally, this pattern is repeated on the item *I actively participate in decision-making, in matters that affect me at work*, with 92% of executives agreeing, but only 46% of non-supervisors. Additionally, 0% of executives generally disagree with this proposition, but 47% of non-supervisors.

Although these three items are related, the *inclusion in the change process* item is slightly more passive; in the sense that it assumes that it is the responsibility of others to include them in the process. In comparison *having a voice* and *actively participating in decision-making* indicates a greater level of initiative by the participant.
Although this difference in responses between executives and non-supervisors was expected, we will now focus on potential explanations of causes. The substantial difference in responses between the groups may possibly be explained by the fundamentally different characteristics and roles of these positions. As Armstrong-Stassen (1998) pointed out, higher-level employees tend to have more access to information and tend to have more power to influence matters they feel are important. Additionally, they generally have higher perceived control over decisions concerning their jobs, compared to non-supervisors. In support of the responses above, Haugh and Laschinger (1996) found that higher-level employees tend to be more involved in the change process, and lower level employees tend to be less confident during organizational change. It has furthermore been argued that employees who are able to influence decisions affecting them are more likely to value outcomes, regardless of whether their participation was formal or not (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004).

Studies have identified use of emotional intelligence abilities and empathy effectively as underpinning more effective communication within organizations (Clarke, 2010). It is possible that lack of emotional intelligence by leadership may result in non-supervisors feeling less included in the change process. Emotionally intelligent individuals have been shown to prefer involvement, and working within an organizational philosophy that promotes and recognizes individual- and team contributions (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004). It can therefore be argued that leaders should effectively address the needs and concerns of the individuals, and try to involve them in decisions that affect them at work. Emotionally intelligent leaders should furthermore be in a better position to help include non-supervisors, preventing them from perceiving or experiencing non-inclusion when it comes to organizational change.

7.2.2 Doing things differently in retrospect

One particularly interesting point was observed from the open-ended interviews: All three higher-level employees reported that, in retrospect, they would have liked to have done something differently. Despite this, two of those participants added that they were unsure if doing things differently would have changed the outcome of the change process, as they were pleased with the outcome. These results are also interesting when compared to the results on the questionnaire. When participants were asked if they would have preferred to
have seen some things done differently, most participants across all hierarchical levels answered favorably. Around 70% of executives, 50% of managers, and 73% of non-supervisors, reported that they would have preferred some things done differently. It must be pointed out that these indicators are not identical, as the questionnaire item does not specify who should have done something differently, whereas the interview-participants were referring to their own actions.

These findings accentuate the differences in the two methods of measurement in the following ways. By examining the results of the questionnaires, one would assume that given the chance to repeat the process, a majority of participants would change some part of their actions during the process. However, we can see in the interviews that although three out of four participants report that they would have done something differently, they simultaneously hold the belief that the change in action would not have changed the outcome. This leads one to speculate if they would actually do things differently if given the chance, knowing that the outcome would stay unaltered. The interview method offers a more in-depth and nuanced look at the views of change participants, as can be seen by the above findings.

7.2.3 PERCEIVED NECESSITY OF CHANGE

The questionnaire results show that a majority, or 76% of all participants, independently of hierarchical positions, believed that the change was necessary. In other words, employees were generally positive towards the necessity of change. This is consistent with the multiple dimensions of attitudes as discussed earlier, as one of the key benefits of using the multiple dimensions definition to describe the attitudes of employees towards change, is that by conceptualizing each dimension separately allows for the possibility of different reactions along the different dimensions. Therefore beliefs about a proposed change might tend to be more positive than emotional responses to the change. Furthermore though, this might be explained in more detail through the cognitive and intentional dimensions. For example, it is possible that an employee is hesitant and resistant towards change in the organization, while simultaneously believing that the proposed change is necessary for the organization’s future (Piderit, 2000).
7.2.4 **Negative effects on position and personal benefit of the change**

No executives agreed with the notion that the change would affect their position in a negative way, which was in concordance with our expectations. The responses of non-supervisors were less confirmatory to what we would have expected; in the sense that non-supervisors, in general, did not seem to fear that the change would affect their position in a negative way. Only 13% of non-supervisory participants agreed with this statement. Additionally, there seemed to be little difference in responses of non-supervisors and managers.

The answers of non-supervisors were in many ways similar with those of managers, with a fairly broad distribution. This was partially contrary to expectation, as previous research has found differences in how groups perceive control concerning the future of their jobs. Managers have been found to have higher perceived control, compared to non-supervisors (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). Martin et al. (2006) similarly found managers to perceive the change process as being more stressful, compared to non-supervisors, but despite this feel like they have more control. Due to these earlier findings, we would have expected a difference in responses by managers and non-supervisors on this specific indicator. In spite of this, executives answered more positively, which was in line with our expectations, and this indicator may be considered partially confirmed.

It is interesting to compare responses on the item above to responses of the item *I believe the change will be beneficial for me personally*, which is intended to measure a similar construct, although it is mirrored (as one is positive, and the other negative).

As expected, a majority of executives agreed with the statement. A majority of non-supervisors did not expect the change to bring any benefits for them personally. More specifically, 85% of executives generally believed the changes would benefit them personally, compared to only 33% of non-supervisors. Only 8% of executives generally disagreed, compared to 40% of non-supervisors. These differences might be explained with the positional level in the hierarchy of each group, as executives and other employees at higher levels might have the power to contribute to decisions because they are directly involved in decision-making, while employees of lower hierarchical levels are less directly involved (Jones et al., 2008). This is also consistent with the findings of Martin et al.
who hypothesize that lower-level employees fared worse during change, due to being the group with the least amount of political influence within the organization.

It is possible that executives influence changes in such a way that they will benefit them personally, or perhaps this optimism is due to the fact that changes tend to affect the day-to-day processes of executives the least, as noted by Jones et al. (2008) which might make it easier to claim that the change will be beneficial (or at least not disadvantageous).

Contrary to expectation, executives were the group who was most concerned that the change process might increase conflict in the company. 62% of executives generally reported having this concern, compared to only 30% of managers and 40% of non-supervisors.

Earlier research suggest that non-supervisors typically focus more on emotional issues, such as conflict, while executives tend to be more occupied with process and outcome concerns (Jones et al., 2008). We would therefore have expected non-supervisors to be the group most concerned about conflict issues.

It is possible that executives possess more experience and expertise of change processes, and are therefore more knowledgeable on what is involved in organizational change, such as concerns regarding increased conflict. It is also possible that they are concerned that a change process they helped devise will cause conflict. The non-supervisors, who are on the receiving end, may be more in touch with how the change affects their day-to-day interactions with co-workers, and as a result might have more realistic expectations, and less worries.

During the interviews, a non-supervisor expressed the opinion that he had limited experience with planning and execution of organizational change, and did therefore not see it as his role to criticize during the process. He added that in the end the particular change process had worked out as planned, which showed the experience of his supervisors, which he chalked down to experience, and that it was not "something you could learn in school".
It is interesting to compare the findings of concerns about increased conflict, with results from whether participants felt like they had been involved in the process. On that indicator, executives were in the majority of those who agreed, while both managers and non-supervisors generally disagreed. It is an intriguing contrast, that despite reporting more involvement in the process (implying a higher level of control), executives are those who are most concerned about negative conflict outcomes. On the other side of the coin we have managers and non-supervisors, who report not being as involved in the process, but who also report less concern about conflict. It is of course not possible to establish a causal relationship, and say that involvement in the process causes increase in worry, but it is an interesting point. Another thing that must be emphasized, is that this trend does not answer if the lower-level employees are unhappy with their lack of involvement. It is conceivable that a certain amount of these participants hold the same views as our non-supervisor interviewee, and are content with others making the important change decisions. In that case, ignorance may be bliss when it comes to change processes.

7.2.6 EASIER TO SOLVE CERTAIN TASKS

Although most indicators showing differences in perception based on hierarchical position showed clearest differences between executives and non-supervisors, one item showed managers to be least content. This item was the change process has made it easier for me to solve certain tasks. On this item, only 25% of managers generally agreed, compared with 69% of executives and 40% of non-supervisors.

This difference possibly derives from the fact that managers tend to focus more on the implementation part of the process, as supported by findings of King et al. (1991) and Covin & Kilman (1990). This focus might cause managers to be concerned about factors that disrupt implementation, such as increased conflict and an altering in work processes that may make some tasks more difficult to solve.

The managerial focus on implementation issues was present during the interviews, where both managers focused on implementation issues to a greater extent, than did the other two groups. The interview participants who identified themselves as managers were more concerned with implementation issues, while the executive talked more about planning and
delegation challenges. This is possibly due to the differences in responsibilities between those two positions, where executives are in charge of planning and delegation, and managers are more involved in the hands-on implementation process.

7.2.7  **Positive Impact on Relationship with Co-workers**

Interestingly, on the subject of whether participants believed the change would have a positive impact on their relationship with co-workers, executives were most positive out of all participants, with 77% of them generally agreeing with the statement, compared to managers 55% and non-supervisors 40%. While this would have been consistent with our expectations in the beginning, it is interesting when compared to how executives were the group that was most concerned with changes increasing conflict within the company. A minority of non-supervisors believed the change would have a positive impact on relationships. It seems then, that while executives are generally concerned about the change increasing conflict, they simultaneously hold the belief that it will have a positive impact on co-worker relationships. This finding is not easily explained, but may be connected to how conflicting views are not easily measured on a questionnaire scale.

By applying the theory of emotional intelligence on this subject, it may be considered whether a lack of emotional intelligence, i.e. the awareness of emotion in the self and others, is present amongst the participating leadership. While the executives generally agreed that the change would have a positive impact, it may be argued that they fail to understand the non-supervisors and assume they are of the same viewpoint and opinion (Lieberman, 2007).

7.2.8  **Clarity of Communication**

63% of the questionnaire participants responded that they felt that the benefits of the change process had been clearly communicated to them. This reflects positively on those responsible for planning and communicating the changes examined in our research. During the interviews, all participants felt that communications had went smoothly, and were pleased with that aspect of the process. As mentioned earlier, Kotter (1995) established a framework for organizational change that involved a series of steps necessary for successful change, with one of the steps being communication of vision. The first step of Kotter's
model states the need for those initiating change to create a sense of urgency. One of the ways to do that is by effective communication. A majority of the participants in our study answered that they believed the change to be necessary, indicating that a sense of urgency had been created. Furthermore, there is a general satisfaction among participants when it comes to communications, which might suggest that the leadership has done a good job of creating a sense of urgency and communicating to their subordinates.

This does however raise an interesting question about which change process participants choose to discuss. For example, it has to be considered unlikely that an executive would choose to discuss a change process that they had deemed unnecessary. It is also worth considering if participants are more open to speculation about which things might have been better executed on their part, due to the fact that the process was successful and because goals were met. Admitting fault during a process that ended up being unsuccessful may be more uncomfortable for the participants.

Furthermore, these considerations also open up speculation as to whether participants generally choose to discuss change processes that reflect positively on themselves but exclude discussing those that do not. Ultimately this difference in responses between the questionnaire and the interviews highlights a fundamental difference in the strengths and weaknesses of predetermined questions on the one hand, and open-ended questions on the other. Participants may well have conflicting views and opinions towards the change process, and this nuance may not be easily captured on a 7-point Likert scale.

There was no indication of executives focusing more on communications issues than the other two groups from the questionnaire data, which is consistent with findings by Jones et al. (2008). Despite this, during the interviews, all higher-level participants expressed communications concerns, whereas the non-supervisor did not. These findings may however be considered to be inconclusive, due to the small sample size of the interviews not warranting between group comparisons.

7.2.9 LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK

Martin et al. (2006) found that upper level employees reported higher levels of support from their superiors, a finding that was not replicable in our study. There was no apparent difference in satisfaction with superior support based on hierarchical level, but instead there
was a general satisfaction with leadership support and feedback across levels. Haugh & Laschinger (1996) found that executives and managers reported higher levels of support from leadership, as well as more access to information. In our study, all participants were generally satisfied with the level of leadership support.

It is interesting to note, that we did not detect much resistance to change in general, regardless of hierarchical position. Most participants were content with the amount and quality of communication and leadership support during the change process. 76% of participants, across hierarchical levels, believed that the change was necessary, and in general the participants were pleased with communications during the process. These factors may positively influence employee perceptions of leadership.

### 7.3 Summary

In summary, we found support for the notion that executives perceived themselves as being more included in the process, compared with lower-level employees. They were also more likely to report that they participated in decision-making during the process. Non-supervisory staff tended to be the group that felt least included and had the least amount of influence.

On the subject of whether or not participants would have preferred things done differently, a difference in the nature of questionnaires and interviews was highlighted, with the interview exhibiting a more complex and contradictory belief amongst participants.

A majority of participants, or 76%, agreed that the change was necessary. This may reflect favorably on leadership in those companies examined, but it also raises speculation as to whether participants, when allowed to chose a change process to discuss, would chose to discuss a process they deemed unnecessary.

No executive believed that the change process would have negative effects on their position, while a majority of them believed that the change would be beneficial for them personally. For lower-level employees it was the opposite, as they were more pessimistic about the benefits the change would bring them personally, and were more inclined to agree that the change would have negative effects on their position.
Executives were more concerned about the change increasing conflict in the company, but simultaneously believed the change would have a positive impact on relationships between co-workers; a seemingly contrasting proposition. The inverse relationship was found among managers and non-supervisors, who were less concerned about effects on conflict in the company, but more on effects on relationships between co-workers.

In general, participants rated the change process positively. A majority believed that the change was necessary, satisfaction with leadership support was high and there was little detected resistance.

We will now turn our focus to the conclusion, where we will examine what practical implications these findings may have for both staff and companies going through organizational change, as well as limitations, and suggestions for further research.
8. CONCLUSION

In this section we will reflect on the research design, practical implications, limitations, and suggestions and considerations for further research.

8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study examined employee perceptions and attitudes based on hierarchical positioning within the organization. The framework for the study was partially based on research conducted by Jones et al. (2008), who identified three main categories of issues during organizational change: emotional and attitudinal issues, process issues and outcome issues. These categories then had several sub-categories, a total of 12 factors. In their research, it became clear that some issues were more salient to higher-level employees, than lower-level employees.

Based on this, and the rest of the literature on hierarchical change reactions, we expected attitudes and perceptions to differ across levels of the organization in our study. Although there were several indicators showing a difference between groups, there were also numerous indicators where participants did not differ based on hierarchical position. This was consistent with findings of Jones et al. (2008), and Martin et al. (2006), who despite finding differences based on hierarchy, noted a general trend of the same themes and concerns across levels.

Out of 27 items on the questionnaire, 10 were deemed to show sufficient variance to warrant further analysis. Five of these 10 factors belonged to the category of emotional and attitudinal issues, four factors were in the category of process issues and one belonged to outcomes.

Executives reported higher levels of satisfaction on all of the emotional and attitudinal items, which was as expected. Non-supervisors reported the least amount of satisfaction on these factors, out of all three groups.

The only outcome category issue to be represented was whether participants believed that the change had made certain tasks easier to solve. Interestingly, this issue was the only one
where the managers’ group was the least content group. Managers in general, did not seem to think that the change had made it easier to solve certain tasks.

In general, participants were pleased with outcomes issues, such as the success and positive impact of the change; process issues, such as communication and leadership support and feedback. The most polarizing results came from the emotional and attitudinal category of issues, such as influence on co-worker relationships, negative affect on position and personal benefit of the changes. On these indicators, executives tended to be positive, while managers and non-supervisors seemed to be less enthusiastic.

The interviews were intended to give a more holistic picture of perceptions. One factor in particular, whether participants would have wanted things done differently, appeared to highlight a conflicting view among participants, as discussed earlier. This finding would not have surfaced if we had only employed questionnaires. Another issue solely raised during the interviews was the tempering of expectations in the planning stages. This is an example of how it is impossible for researchers to make an exhaustive list of issues on a predetermined questionnaire, and furthermore displays one of the benefits of the open-ended interview approach; i.e. that participants raise the issues they believe are important.

8.2  PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Most participants expressed satisfaction with the level of leadership support and feedback they received during the change process. This reflects positively on the leaders of those companies. There was also a general satisfaction with the clarity and amount of communications during the change, which may be connected to the high approval rate of leadership. However, there was a clear gap between the responses of executives on the one hand, and non-supervisors on the other when it comes to factors such as perceived personal benefits of the change, and concerns about negative effects on position. This further emphasizes the need for leaders to be aware of the fact that their own attitudes and perceptions in regards to organizational matters are not necessarily shared by others in the organization. This must be accounted for when planning and delegating tasks related to change, as well as during communication to members positioned lower in the hierarchy.

The findings underline the need for leaders to consider the intergroup nature of organizations, especially during organizational change. To this end, it might in some cases,
be beneficial to tailor communications specifically to members of a hierarchical group. For instance, employees lower in the hierarchy, who are pessimistic about the prospects of the change being beneficial to them, may need another type of communication than executives.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research

Studies such as the one conducted and presented in this thesis inevitably come with several limitations. For instance, a limitation of this study (as well as most studies on change management) is the fact that attitudes and perceptions were only examined at one point in time. It is quite possible that perceptions differ at different stages of the change process.

Many change management scholars, such as Lewin, Kotter and Bridges, tend to agree that change recipients go through a series of stages during a change process. During each of these stages participants may hold different views. For this reason, other researchers might consider a longitudinal design, where data would be collected over a period of time, in order to see how perceptions change over time. Due to the fact that we had to conduct our research within a specific time frame, this was not a possibility.

Other aspects of the research were also limited due to time constraints, for instance the amount of time we were able to secure with the participants during the open-ended interviews. It is not uncommon for researchers to interview participants for upwards of 90 minutes, with the first part of the interview only serving the purpose of collecting background information, and for interviewer and participant to get comfortable with each other (Isabella, 1990). The duration of the interviews in our study was 25 minutes on average, which naturally limits the amount of topics covered to some extent. This then becomes a trade-off between getting acceptable participation on one hand, and getting detailed information on the other. It is unlikely that many people would have volunteered to participate in a 90-minute interview, as it is a big time commitment.

Although the sample size used in the research was argued for and justified earlier, a larger and more diversified sample could arguably have given more significance to our findings and increased generalizability.

Finally, it could be beneficial for future researchers to consider collecting data from alternative sources, as the self-report nature of measurement is limited to some extent. Employees may have a distorted view of their role in the process, and factors such as
memory of events can play a role. Furthermore, factors such as response bias may influence outcomes (i.e. participants may answer questions the way they think researchers want them to answer). To counter this, researchers might find it beneficial to collect data from alternative sources, like supervisor ratings or other performance indicators, in order to corroborate statements made by participants.
9. LIST OF REFERENCES


Work and Organizational Psychology, 14(3), 263-89.


10. APPENDICES

10.1 APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Change Management Questionnaire

The following is a questionnaire about changes and change processes in your organization. It should only take between 3-5 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and all of your responses are strictly confidential; individual responses will not be seen by anyone within the organization.

We appreciate your help.

* Required

How would you define the change process you are currently experiencing / have recently experienced? *

(e.g. merger of departments, downsizing, merger of companies etc.)

Below each of the following statements please indicate where on the scale between 'Strongly Agree' and 'Strongly Disagree' most reflects your experience or opinion.

The 7-point scale is as follows:

1 – Strongly disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat disagree
4 – Neither agree or disagree
5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree
The change process has affected work relationships in a positive way *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I believe the change process will positively influence relations between me and my co-workers *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I feel that the change was necessary *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I think that changes in this organization, in general, tend to work well *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

Changes seem to create more problems than they solve *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I fear that the change might affect my position in a negative way *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I think the change might cause uncertainty about work-roles in the company *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I believe the change will be beneficial for me personally *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I think the change will increase conflict in the company *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I am confident that I will be able to influence the extent to which the changes will affect my job *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I feel like I have been included in the change process *

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

I believe that the change fits well with the overall company culture *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I fear that the change may threaten some part of the company culture *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

The implications of the change have been clearly communicated to me by my superiors *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I know what to expect from the change process *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I feel like I have a voice when it comes to the change process *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I actively participate in the decision-making, in matters that affect me at work *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I'm concerned about implementation issues related to the change process *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

For the most parts, change processes tend to run smoothly around here *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

It is really not possible to change things around here *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I am confident in my ability to deal with the planned structural changes *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

My superiors have been supportive throughout the process *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I can generally count on good feedback from my superiors *

Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree
I would have preferred some things done differently *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I feel like the change will have a positive impact *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I feel like the change has been successful so far *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

It is my opinion that the change will be permanent *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

I am pleased with the way the change process has been handled *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

The change process has made it easier for me to solve certain tasks *
Strongly Disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly Agree

Background Information

The following information is needed to help us with the statistical analyses of the data. This information will allow comparisons among different groups of employees and comparisons between groups, within the organization.

All of your responses are strictly confidential; individual responses will not be seen by anyone within this organization. Thank you for your cooperation.

Year of birth *

Sex *

Female

Male

Educational level *

• High school
• Undergraduate degree / Bachelor's degree
• Graduate degree / Master's degree
• Doctorate (Ph.d)
• Other:

Hierarchical Position *

• Employee / Non-supervisor
• Manager / Supervisor / Middle management
• Executive / Senior Management
• Other:

How long have you worked at this organization? *

How long have you held your current position? *

Would you be willing to be contacted for a short follow-up interview? (max. 30mins)

If yes, please leave your e-mail in the field below. The interview is strictly confidential, and your responses will remain anonymous. In return we would be willing to provide a free copy of the final thesis

If you are interested in receiving a free copy of the thesis, please leave your e-mail in the field below
10.2 Appendix B: The Interview Guide

Interview guide

Introduce research and thank interviewee for participating.

Background

- Participants in the research are divided into three categories: non-supervisors, manager, and executives. Where would you place your self within these categories?
- What kind of change process is the company undergoing?
  - Could you describe the change briefly?
- Is the process finished?
- What was your role in the process?
- What aspect of the change process did you find most positive and most negative?

Emotional and attitudinal

- Do you think the change was necessary?
- Do you think the change has had an effect on relationships between employees?

Process

- How would you rate the process of communicating information regarding the change to employees?
- Do you think employees, in general, were positive towards the change?
- What was the biggest challenge brought on by the change?

Outcomes

- Would you say the company was in a better or worse position after the change?
- Would you have done some things differently?

Anything else?