

Towards the understanding of collective readiness for change: a multi-level view

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**Thesis Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration**

Institute Sustainable Industries Liveable Cities (ISILC)

Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

2022

Abstract

My professional interest as a business analyst influences this research into understanding the successful adoption of change. Readiness for change is an essential aspect of organisational change, with research consensus showing a positive correlation between readiness for change and the effectiveness of organisational change. However, the inability of many organisations to meet their desired change outcomes suggests we need to know more about readiness for change.

Readiness for change describes members' shared commitment to implement change and their confidence in their capability to make the change. While readiness for change involves social processes, in practice evaluation generally occurs at the individual level. A multi-level understanding of readiness for change, including individual, group and organisational levels, is still unclear.

Does readiness for change differ at the individual, group and organisational levels? Can we interpret multi-level readiness for change from the individual's readiness for change?

This thesis addresses these questions through a predominantly qualitative research design combining a questionnaire based on established scales and individual interviews with change practitioners.

This research is a phenomenological study as it explores the lived experiences of individuals experiencing readiness for change to develop a greater understanding of multi-level readiness for change. The convenience sampling method chosen incorporates an aspect of multilevel sampling design combining people who have experienced a workplace change and change professionals who have implemented a workplace change.

The findings of this research extend the literature on multilevel readiness for change. This research also showed the need for organisations to develop their own readiness for change framework to align with their culture. The high proportion of external change agents interviewed provided the additional finding that external change agents are often subjected to political influences undermining their change efforts and impacting their ability to deliver effective and timely change outcomes.

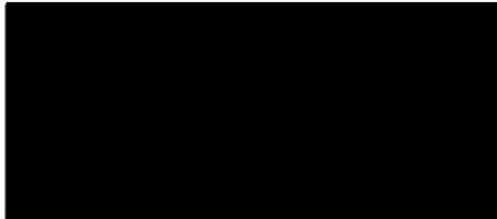
Key words: *multi-level readiness for change, organisational change, change management*

Doctor of Business Administration Declaration

I, Frances Menting, declare that the DBA thesis entitled 'Towards the understanding of collective readiness for change: a multi-level view' is no more than 65,000 words in length, including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work". "I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (Application ID: HRE17-128).

Signature:



Date 15/02/22

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the many participants in this research who contributed online in the trying circumstances of 2020, most of whom did not know me. It was genuinely heart-warming to receive such generous support amid the turmoil caused by Covid-19. I am so very grateful to you all.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Shahnaz Naughton. Dr Naughton single-handedly guided me through the process, from finding and understanding my research area, overcoming the trials of data collection, and then finally supporting me as I slowly completed the work. Dr Naughton's patience, understanding and wisdom were the rock I could depend upon, and I give her my heartfelt thanks. My thanks to Dr Romana Garma for stepping in when I needed more support towards the end of my journey. I appreciate her help and support. Thank you so much!

Additionally, I would like to thank Associate Professor Axel Korthaus for initiating my doctoral journey and supporting me through the initial difficulties when my approach was uncertain. I am so grateful for his support and understanding when choosing an alternate path.

I must also thank Victoria University for offering me the opportunity to chase the dream, providing funding, and generally being so supportive when things went awry. My fellow students kept me sane while providing support and encouragement. Of course, I must thank Dr Joanna Krezel for her never-ending patience, friendship and support.

And lastly, my heartfelt thanks to my long-suffering family. To my family – Thomas, Lachlan and Kirsten, who have given me their unqualified love and support despite their never-ending queries about 'haven't you finished yet?' To my amazing father, 99 years old and still with his never-ending thirst for knowledge and understanding that gave me the inspiration for my life-long learning journey. Thank you so much to my neglected family and friends, who are always there for me!

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

The increasing rapidity of changes to the business environment means that companies must constantly change to keep up with the evolving conditions. Global markets, denationalisation, deregulation and technological advances have created an increasingly complex environment (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Currently, businesses have to deal with a pandemic, adding to the already difficult conditions and requiring urgent, complex change decisions (Choflet, Packard & Stashower 2021; Yue 2021).

Implementing business change is a significant expense in both cost and time. The lack of success in organisational change implementation in meeting expected goals or desired outcomes has been consistent over decades despite the increasing need to implement change to survive within this changing environment (Beer & Nohria 2000; Burnes & Jackson 2011; Keller & Aiken 2009; Schwartz, Bouckenoghe & Vakola 2021; Self & Schraeder 2009; Weiner 2009). Ineffectual change creates additional challenges for an organisation. While many factors can impact the success of organisational change, people's attitudes towards change are a significant factor affecting successful change (Burke, Clark & Koopman 1984) and, therefore, the focus of this research.

1.1. Background of the research

In the dynamic business climate, organisations need to implement strategic change in order to survive. The success rate of transformational organisational change project implementation is poor, with many organisations unable to reach their expected goals or desired outcomes (Burnes & Jackson 2011; Hughes 2011; Keller & Aiken 2009; Self & Schraeder 2009; Weiner 2009; Schwartz, Bouckenoghe & Vakola 2021). While many factors can impact the success of organisational change, people's attitudes towards change are significant factors influencing successful change (Burke, Clark & Koopman 1984; Olafsen et al. 2020).

Organisational change success factors include aspects specific to the organisation, such as the type of change and the change approach, as well as the members' readiness for change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993; Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Organisational readiness for change describes members' shared commitment to

implementing change and their confidence in their capability to make the change. High organisational change readiness correlates with an increased likelihood of change initiation, effort and persistence on the part of members (Weiner 2009). Thus an organisation's readiness for change is a critical factor in its overall approach to change, as it will improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation (Choi & Ruona 2011).

While the change literature focusses on the individual's readiness for change, group readiness for change involves social processes and group decision-making (Amis & Aïssaoui 2013; Armenakis, A. A. & Harris 2009; Holt, Daniel T & Vardaman 2013; Robbins & Judge 2015).

Readiness for change can occur at the individual level, within groups (such as workgroups, units, and departments) or at the organisational level (Choi & Ruona 2011). However, readiness for change analysis has generally been at the individual level despite being a social process involving change and relationships at multiple levels across the organisation (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013; Nguyen et al. 2022; Wang, Olivier & Chen 2020; Yue 2021). While scales have been developed to evaluate individual readiness for change (Holt et al. 2007), some doubt exists as to whether these represent the group or organisational change. Holt et al. (2007) define readiness for change as the collective cognitive and affective acceptance, embracing and adoption of change.

Collective readiness for change can describe both group and organisational readiness for change – differentiating from the individual's. Holt and Vardaman (2013) propose that a shared vision of confidence in group capability may better indicate readiness for change than the individual's confidence in their abilities. Armenakis and Harris (2009) also reflect that other factors may influence the individual's readiness for change, including social differences such as group memberships. Understanding collective readiness for change includes the requirement for specific measurement tools (Weiner 2009) and understanding whether the precursors and results of change readiness differ at the individual, group, and organisational levels (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). This research aims to investigate the readiness for change at the group level, including social processes (Amis & Aïssaoui 2013).

Various authors have suggested that individual evaluation of commitment and readiness for change was a better predictor of change success (Ghouri et al. 2019; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002; Armutlulu & Noyan 2011; Appelbaum et al. 2017; Noufou & Mohammed Laid 2018). However, a multi-level and multifaceted nature of organisational readiness for change is supported by Weiner (2009), who utilised motivational and social cognitive theories to develop a model of determinants and outcomes of organisational readiness for change. Supporting Weiner's view, Amis and Aissaoui (2013) determined there is insufficient research on the collective effect of social interactions on the change process.

Choi and Ruona (2011) also posited readiness for change as multi-level, as it could occur at the individual level, within groups such as workgroups, units and departments, or at the organisational level. Their readiness for change model combines change strategies (change process) with learning culture (change context) while grounded in the concept that organisations only change through their members. Change strategies focused on involvement and participation empower individuals to examine their views and expose and address issues (Choi & Ruona 2011).

Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis (2013) argue that change involves both individual and group or collective sense-making in a social context, as individuals within the collective could influence the readiness of other individuals. This is supported by organisational behaviour theorists noting the differences between the decisions made by individuals and those made by groups, with the strengths of group decision-making including the greater diversity of views (Robbins & Judge 2015). Nguyen et al. (2022) also identify organisational communication as a critical antecedent for multilevel readiness for change

This investigation of collective readiness for change will be guided by the model developed by Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013). In this, the authors determine that shared cognitive beliefs (that change is required, the organisation can implement the change, and that the change will be positive for the collective group) along with collective emotional responses (group affective tone (George 1990)) affect collective readiness for change. They propose the inputs to change readiness as external pressures (drivers of organisational change such as industry, technology and government changes), internal context enablers (such as leadership, communication and participation in the change) and individual or group characteristics, depending on the (individual or group) level. Group readiness for change outputs includes change capabilities, collective performance,

supportive behaviours, and group attitudes (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Individual and group readiness for change also impact each other.

Thus, the knowledge gap identified is for understanding multi-level readiness for change through collective sense-making. Whilst scales evaluating individual readiness for change have been developed (Armenakis et al. 2007), further investigation is needed at the group level. This research will not evaluate the effectiveness of the organisational change; instead, it accepts that readiness for change positively influences organisational change effectiveness and attempts to understand multi-level readiness for change, including its effect on change implementation (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckennooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002; Nuygen et al. 2022; Oreg et al. 2003, Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Additionally, while there is consensus around the beliefs underpinning cognitive readiness for change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993), there is no agreement on factors impacting affective behaviour and their effect on readiness for change (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). This study addresses these issues, drawing on the following aim and research questions.

1.2. The aim of the research

This research aims to provide a greater understanding of multi-level readiness for change to enable organisations to better plan for change success.

The research questions provided below were designed to achieve this aim through the analysis of data collected in this work.

1.3. Research questions

Central research question:

What is the nature of group readiness for change?

This question is posed to understand group readiness for change based on the interviews and survey responses, using the sub-questions to provide a holistic picture of the group or collective readiness for change.

Sub questions:

What are the factors that determine group readiness for change?

Further to the central research question, this question examines the influences determining group readiness for change.

How does group readiness for change differ from that of the individual?

This question drives and is the crux of this research. We may find there is no substantial difference between group and individual readiness for change – this question is posed to identify whether this is the case.

How does group readiness for change impact change implementation?

This question aims to use enhanced knowledge around group readiness to further understand its impact on change implementation.

1.4. Justification for the research

A limitation of the change readiness literature is that it focuses on the individual's readiness, not taking a multi-level perspective despite the definition of readiness for change as an interpersonal social process (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013; Nguyen et al. 2022; Wang, Olivier & Chen 2020; Yue 2021). Researchers such as Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) aggregate individual-level data to determine organisational readiness for change, which may be an issue since relationships are not necessarily consistent through the levels of analysis. Therefore, the gap identified for this research is a greater understanding of multilevel readiness for change.

1.5. Research method

The initial 'what' and 'how' beginnings of these questions determine that we are undertaking exploratory research to build theories. The qualitative methodology and phenomenological approach are appropriate within the social sciences when exploring feelings and experiences and, as in this case, focusing on how participants in organisational change have interpreted and constructed their reality (Kalu & Bwalya 2017; Veal 2005; Yin 2013).

This research adopted two modes of data collection; survey combined with semi-structured individual interviews. The questionnaire was based on change climate, change process, and readiness for change scales in the literature (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckenoghe; Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002) and

expanded to include demographic data and data around the type of change and participant role to enable this researcher to develop understanding of readiness for change at the individual and group levels. Likewise, questions based on the readiness for change literature (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckenooghe; Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002) guided the individual semi-structured interview questions. Preliminary questions were asked about the general nature of the change example used and the involvement and role of the interviewee. The remaining questions dealt with the readiness for change circumstances from the interviewee's perspective. The participants' description of their chosen change experience enabled the researcher to investigate and create meaning from the multiple realities. As the themes of both collections of data were highly interrelated, they were compared to confirm and better understand the results, with inferences drawn to create a holistic explanation of the results.

Due to the limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic, the surveys and interviews were all conducted online. Participant selection was by convenience sampling, with two unrelated groups participating in the questionnaire and individual interviews. The criteria for selection were that the questionnaire participants had been involved in any work-based change and that interviewees were change professionals within the specific change they described. This subjective selection of participants involved an aspect of multi-level sampling design (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007). The purposeful sampling approach enabled the collation of an adequate number of completed surveys and interviews in a reasonably short timeframe through social media and networking. While the samples are not representative of the general population, they still enable insights towards answering the research questions. The data collected from the two sources were aligned using themes from the survey questions within the interviews, which enabled explanations and interpretation from the triangulation of the results.

1.6. Thesis outline

This thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter 2 examines the fundamental literature for this topic, introducing theories and previous research, leading to the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used, including the justification of the predominantly qualitative methodology, the issues and the context. Chapters 4 and 5 outline the thematic analysis of the surveys and interviews. Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the findings from both methods. Chapter 7 presents the conclusions, contributions and suggested research.

Chapter 2

2. Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores multi-level readiness for change and the role of readiness for change in organisational change to provide a basis for this thesis. The scope of this thesis does not allow an exploration of the enormous amount of literature on organisational change and readiness for change. Instead, the literature used represents a selection that links the research and underpins the research questions previously posed in Chapter 1.

Change is a constant within the business environment, and companies must constantly transform to keep up with the evolving conditions. Global markets, denationalisation, deregulation and technological advances have created an increasingly complex environment (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Currently, businesses also have to deal with a pandemic, adding to the already difficult conditions and requiring urgent, complex change decisions (Choflet, Pachard & Stashower 2021; Yue 2021).

Implementing business change is a significant expense in both cost and time. The lack of success in organisational change implementation in meeting expected goals or desired outcomes has been consistent over decades despite the increasing need to implement change to survive within this changing environment (Beer & Nohria 2000; Burnes & Jackson 2011; Keller & Aiken 2009; Schwartz, Bouckennooghe & Vakola 2021; Self & Schraeder 2009; Weiner 2009). Ineffectual change creates additional challenges for an organisation. While many factors can impact the success of organisational change, people's attitudes towards change are a significant factor affecting successful change (Burke, Clark & Koopman 1984) and, therefore, the focus of this research.

This review examines the current understanding of multi-level readiness for change, delving into the literature around readiness for change, how readiness for change contributes to organisational change and the relationship between organisational culture and readiness for change. It will follow that the importance of multi-level readiness for change in organisational change effectiveness is understated in the literature, requiring

improved understanding to enable change practitioners to implement more effective change.

2.2. Organisational change

Over the past few decades, the increasing globalisation has resulted in the flow of goods, people, and information becoming a significant feature of the global economy (Kanter 1999). Global strategies have replaced a country-centric approach; companies simultaneously produce global products for release, maintained by global procurement and marketing strategies. Companies reinvent themselves, abiding by global standards and collaborating for mutual advantage. Global markets, denationalisation, deregulation and technological advances have created an increasingly complex environment (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013).

Especially obvious in the chaos of a COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the twenty-first century has been an era of unprecedented change (Budur, Demir & Cura 2021; Choflet & Packard, Stashower 2021; Kamar et al. 2020; Liebhart & Garcia-Lorenzo 2010; Yue 2021; Zaman et al. 2020). Organisations need to adapt to the unpredictability of their environments and innovate to maximise their opportunities, to survive. Organisational change is an umbrella term describing organisational change efforts in areas as diverse as reengineering, restructuring and cultural change (Kotter 1996), with strategy-driven organisational change involving interrelated subsystems such as technology, management, personnel and organisational structures (Kettinger, Teng & Guha 1997). While the failure of many organisational change implementations to meet their objectives can be attributed to a range of factors, the workforce's attitude towards the change plays an integral role (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993; Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013).

Many theories of organisational change management have been espoused to describe why a large proportion of business transformational changes cannot reach their expected goals or desired outcomes, and many organisations spend excessive time and resources dealing with change failure (Kotter 1996; Schwartz, Bouckennooghe & Vakola 2021).

Organisational readiness for change describes members' shared commitment to implementing change and their confidence in their capability to make the change. High organisational change readiness correlates with an increased likelihood of change

initiation, effort and persistence on the part of members (Weiner 2009). Thus an organisation's readiness for change is a critical factor in its overall approach to change, as it will improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation (Choi & Ruona 2011).

When reviewing the organisational change literature of the 1990s, focussing on publications looking at the dynamics underlying organisational change, Armenakis and Bedian (1999) found there were four themes common to all change efforts. These include content issues (identifying the change itself), context issues (describing the organisation's internal and external environments), process issues (the actions taken to make the change) and criterion issues (assessing the outcomes). Later work by Pettigrew challenges the more linear, ordered and sequenced theories of change, using a specific change as the unit of analysis, and constructing a model to explain the more complex ways change develops. Pettigrew's model is based on a holistic view of change, including the history, context and change creation process. Pettigrew describes his change research methodology as exploring 'the contexts, content, and process of change together with their interconnections through time' (Pettigrew 1990, p. 268). Pettigrew determined the need for researchers to examine multiple contexts and levels of analysis, including time, history, process and action, linking the change processes to organisation performance, comparing international and cross-cultural research, studying aspects of the change sequence rather than continuous change processes, and including aspects of both the practical and academic. (Pettigrew, Woodman & Cameron 2001).

Developing the theme of looking at the process, context and content of change, as well as readiness for change as posed by Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) and Pettigrew (1990), Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) determined that the change literature lacked good conceptualisations of change climate, which they describe as 'general context characteristics conducive of change' (Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009, p. 562).

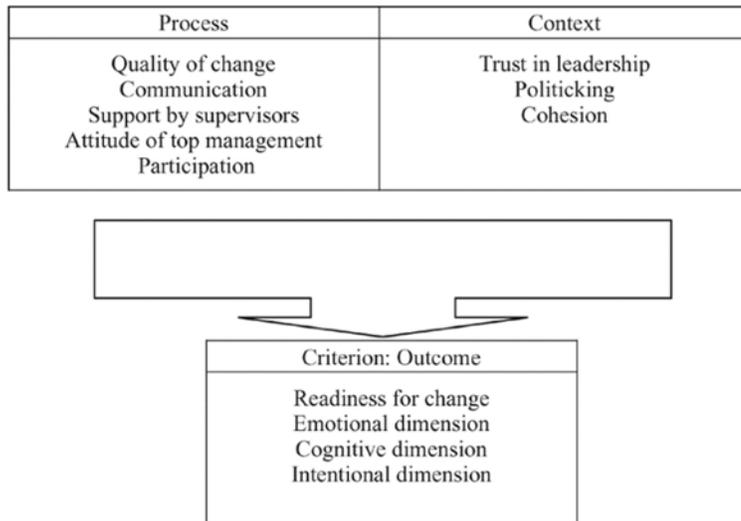


Figure 1: Classification of climate dimensions. (Bouckennooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009)

Bouckennooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) conclude that the instrument they designed shows reliability and validity, is a valid alternative to available tools and simultaneously assesses change climate, process and readiness for change. The need to include change climate is supported by Holt et al. advancing their Organizational Change Questionnaire–Climate of Change, Processes, and Readiness (OCQ–C, P, R), aiming to evaluate the internal context or climate of change, the process factors of change, and readiness for change, all of which had previously been identified as contributing to employees’ readiness for change (Holt et al. 2007). The framework for the OCQ–C, P, R comprises 11 dimensions: climate of change (general support by supervision, trust in leadership, cohesion, participatory management, politicking), the process of change (involvement in the change process, the ability of management to lead change, the attitude of top management toward the change) and readiness for change (emotional, cognitive, and intentional readiness for change).

There is some consensus, therefore, regarding the impact of organisational culture and climate, as well as process on readiness for change and thereby on organisational change outcomes.

Beer and Nohria (2000) identified the need for a greater emphasis on understanding the process of change to improve change implementation success rates, as the process of organisational change alters social behaviours to change the status quo. Lewin (1947;

1951), considered a founding father of organisational change management, developed several theories around altering social behaviours (Bakari, Hunjra & Niazi 2017). The most widely used is Lewin's three steps (CATS) model, commonly described as 'unfreezing, changing and refreezing'. While this theory is still widely accepted, detractors identify the oversimplification of the status quo as a frozen state as even more unrealistic in the current environment of constant change within which business needs to survive. Cummings et al. refute this description of Lewin's work, as the 1951 work is 'an edited compilation of his scattered papers published four years after his death in 1947' (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown 2016, p. 35). They argue that Lewin's (1947) position that 'planned social change may be composed of freezing, change of level, and freezing again in the new level.' (1947, p. 36) shows Lewin has identified the change process as continuous, with group dynamics an essential factor in constant change. (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown 2016, p. 50). They conclude that this focus on Lewin's CATS model has resulted in 'n-step thinking' at the detriment of 'process thinking about change' (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown 2016, p. 50).

Change process can be focused on the economic value or the organisational capability of the organisation, two competing theories of change as identified by Beer and Nohria (2000). Where the economic approach features a top-down leadership approach, maximising shareholder value, with minimal input by lower management or the general workforce, the organisational approach requires the emotional commitment of all workers to develop the organisational capabilities needed to improve the company's performance. In isolation, the economic approach can cause leaders to become more remote, while the organisational approach can prevent leaders from making tough decisions, so Beer and Nohria (2000) suggest that to best utilise the two theories, the leaders should set the direction while simultaneously engaging the workforce. Taking the time to implement any changes while transforming the culture, enabling innovation and changing direction as required, building incentives to reinforce the change and using consultants to empower employees will enhance the outcomes and improve the success of the change implementation (Beer & Nohria 2000). Armenakis, Harris and Field (2000) argue that the process should include strategies to promote change readiness, such as active participation/management of internal/external communication, formalisation activities, diffusion practices, rites and ceremonies, human resource management practices and persuasive communication, in other words, engaging the workforce. Active participation

would involve enactive mastery, vicarious learning, and participative decision-making – all of which would help show the participants the appropriateness of the change response. Persuasive communication is essential in all 5 of the core components of the change message (Armenakis, Harris & Field 2000). Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) note the mixed reactions of organisational members, despite the apparent success of the change efforts and determined that process models can help monitor and minimise adverse employee reactions to change inventions. Therefore the consensus is also that process strategies can be used to improve readiness for change and thereby facilitate organisational change. Change actors are essential in the change process, comprising change agents, change recipients and change targets (Wang, Olivier and Chen 2020).

Armenakis, Harris and Field (2000) identify the importance of change agent and organisational member attributes. They compare change agents to other leadership positions and opinion leaders, with their most important attribute as credibility. Organisational members who are innovators are more likely to embrace the change, with self-monitors more likely to be influenced by leaders. Change agents need to enlist support from these leaders to drive the change messages and engage individuals within the organisation. When delivering programs to improve readiness, such as mass communications to ensure the workforce understands both the reason for the change and that the organisation is capable of implementing a successful change, readiness needs to be built within the context facing the organisation (Pettigrew 1987) and be guided by the urgency of the change and the readiness of the employees.

Therefore the process aspect of organisational change can be described as continuous, involving multiple contexts where leadership and workforce engagement are used to modify social behaviours and thereby change the organisation. Readiness for change influences social behaviour modification and can be promoted by aligning the change context with the organisational culture and climate and utilising strategies within the change process.

2.3. Organisational culture

Instead of prescriptive approaches to creating organisational change success, Burnes and Jackson (2011) determined that factors relating to the organisation's characteristics, the type of change being conducted, and the organisation's approach to creating the change must be accounted for when looking at change success. In exploring whether poor

alignment between the value systems of the change intervention and the organisations' members contributes to the high failure rate of change initiatives meeting the change objectives, Burnes and Jackson (2011) determine that a small number of change approaches cannot cater for the variety of circumstances requiring organisational change. They suggest a contingency approach is required, where the match between the organisation, the type of change being implemented and the adopted approach to change are all taken into account.

Culture describes the socially accepted norms within the organisation, enabling the shared understanding of behaviour, social interactions and processes and differentiating it from other organisations. Martin defines organisational culture as "That's how we do things around here." (2012). As new members are integrated, the organisational culture nurtures a commitment to the organisation. "Culture could then be seen as a social glue contributing to keeping the organization together. It also offered a compass for indicating how to think, act and feel in the organization" (Alvesson, 2012, p68). Within organisations, the shared cultural ideas, meanings and principles guide how people think, feel, and behave.

Organisational culture is challenging to define and use, despite its importance in organisational performance outcomes. Various typologies can be used to study and understand organisational cultures, such as clan culture, corporate culture, and mercenary culture (Alvesson 2002; Martin 2012, Sarki, Abdulhamid & Mahmood 2017). Pettigrew also describes the role of organisational culture on organisational behaviour, with values, assumptions and beliefs influencing reasoning and decision making (Wallace, Hunt and Richards 1999).

Culture may generally be ignored as an everyday concept within most organisations but is often assessed and addressed when organisations are undergoing change efforts, particularly when integration is required, such as in business mergers or acquisitions. Working with the organisational culture by linking shared values, behaviour and management strategies can enable managers and change agents to more effectively facilitate change by relating the change to the dominant norms (Alvesson 2002; Martin 2012; Weiner 2009).

Organisational climate can be defined as the employee experience of the organisational culture and covers employee perceptions and experience of the “practices, policies, procedures, routines and rewards” (Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013, p. 644). An organisation contains multiple climates (Martin 2012; Myklebust et al. 2020; Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013). Culture is the context underlying the climate, supported by the collective individuals within the organisation. Organizational culture and climate are difficult to evaluate and change (Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013).

Burnes and Jackson note the depth of literature around aligning the organisational and individual values to promote the desired values, influence behaviour, promote employee commitment, and enhance success. They argue that the significance of the alignment depends on other factors also influencing the effectiveness of the implementation (Burnes & Jackson 2011). Burnes and Jackson found some support for the influence of value alignment on the acceptance of change interventions; however, they caution that the literature shows many other factors also play a part (2011).

The existing organisational culture and climate can be challenged when undergoing change. However, in a similar way to developing readiness for change through a change process, culture and climate can also evolve. While there is no straightforward relationship between organisational climate and readiness for change, organisational climate can be mediated by apparent organisational support or by trusting that employees and their contributions are valued by the organisation. Myklebust et al. propose organisational support and developing a climate that emphasises employee participation would increase readiness for change. (Myklebust et al. 2020). An innovative, risk-taking and learning organisational culture may support readiness for change. Weiner (2009) suggests that a positive organisational climate promotes organisational readiness for change.

The multi-level readiness for change framework developed by Rafferty et al. (2013) and the climate change framework provided by Bouckennooghe, Devos and Van den Broeck (2009) both include aspects of internal context enablers and change climate, respectively.

2.4. Readiness for change

Two issues encountered when introducing organisational change are persuading people to accept change and managing people’s attitudes to change (Bouckennooghe 2010).

People's attitudes towards change have been described interchangeably by many constructs such as resistance to change, commitment to change and readiness for change. Reviewing the literature around the concept of attitudes towards change, Bouckennooghe discovered that 90% discussed either resistance to change or readiness for change (Bouckennooghe 2010). Rather than focussing on resistance, research now emphasises creating a positive context for change success, and the more popular term now refers to 'readiness for change' (Armenakis & Harris 2009; Burnes & Jackson 2011). Readiness for change can be defined as an individual's belief in the need for change and confidence in their capability to implement the change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993).

Integral to Armenakis and Mossholder's theory are discrepancy and efficacy. They define discrepancy as articulating the difference between the current state and the desired end state, creating the belief that the change is needed. Efficacy is defined as the belief that the organisation has the capability to overcome the discrepancy. The seminal work by Armenakis investigating individual readiness for change has provided the basis for a range of research on individual readiness for change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993). Further work by Armenakis, Harris and Feild (2000) defines readiness for change as the cognitive beliefs, attitudes and intentions towards a change. Armenakis, Harris and Feild rationalise that if the readiness is high, organisational members will embrace change; therefore, the change is adopted while resistance is lowered. Utilising the work of Nutt (1986), Armenakis Harris and Field (2000) expand on their earlier work to determine five aspects of the change message required to create readiness for change. These need to be answered for the change message to create readiness. They are discrepancy (the need for the change), appropriateness (whether the change is an appropriate reaction to the need), self-efficacy (whether the organisation is capable of implementing the change), principal support (whether the leaders are committed to successfully implementing the change) and personal valence (what is in it for the individual). This definition describes readiness as purely the cognitive precursor to behaviour supporting or resisting the change.

Holt et al. (2006) evaluated instruments for individual readiness but did not successfully find an instrument that adequately assessed both internal and external factors, concluding that a more comprehensive model was required that comprised the change content, change process, internal context, and individual characteristics. They also concluded that the unit of analysis should consist of the individual, as individuals implement the change, and no

one individual can express the entire organisational change. They created the Readiness for Organizational Change Measure (ROCM), a framework utilising the five aspects of the change message (discrepancy, appropriateness, self-efficacy, principal support and personal valence) and the content, context, and process to develop their multi-dimensional scale to evaluate readiness for change (see Figure 2).

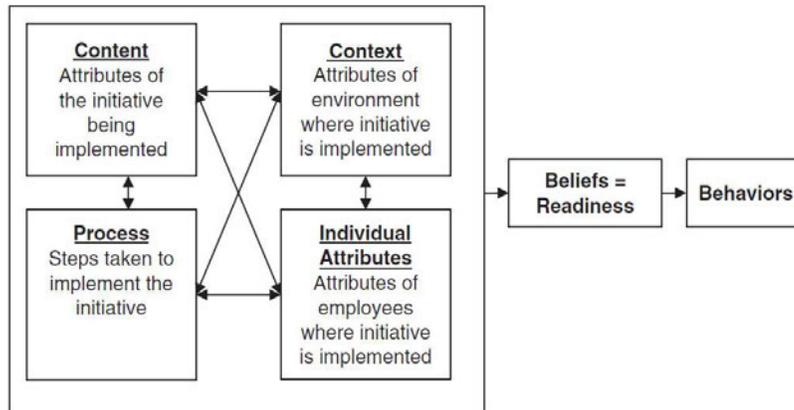


Figure 2: The relationship between content, process, context and individual attributes with readiness (Holt et al. 2007)

Including demographic variables (such as age, gender, education and organisational level), Holt et al. also incorporate readiness for change factors (appropriateness, management support, change efficacy, personally beneficial), personality variables (negative affect, locus of control, rebelliousness, general attitude towards change) and contextual variables (communications climate, perceived management ability) in their scale. Holt et al. conclude that while requiring refining to enable participants to discern the aspect of readiness being tested accurately, it gave an insight into the actions required to promote readiness (Holt et al. 2007). Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) noted it lacked both affective and intentional readiness for change factors and suggested it is difficult to distinguish the context scale from the content scale. Affective reactions can include aspects of stress invoked by a climate of constant change, but skilled invention can reduce the adverse effects of change-associated stress.

Beer and Nohria state that the outcome is dependent on group or teamwork, and Lewin also emphasises the ability of the group dynamics to facilitate and stabilise individual change and minimise the resistance to change. This last step in the process of corporate renewal is probably the most important. At this point, senior managers must try to adopt

the team behaviour, attitudes, and skills they have demanded of others in earlier phases of change. This adoption reinforces the role of the team or group in organisational change.

Armenakis and Bedian describe the relationship between readiness for change and commitment to change, with a commitment to change identified as having one of the most essential effects on employees' support for workplace change (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002). In defining commitment, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) determine that the focal behaviour is complying with the change requirements and that failure to comply leads to resistance to change. While they identify the three types of commitment leading to focal behaviour as affective commitment (the desire to comply), continuance commitment (the perceived cost of non-compliance) and normative commitment (the perceived obligation to comply), they determine that employees can simultaneously experience combinations of all three types of commitment resulting in the employee's commitment profile and different workplace behaviour. Herscovitch and Meyer suggest that openness to change and readiness for change will positively relate to affective commitment to change. Their supporting argument is that communicating the need for change and providing resources and training will increase affective commitment and potentially also increase normative commitment, though a relationship with continuance commitment is unlikely (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002).

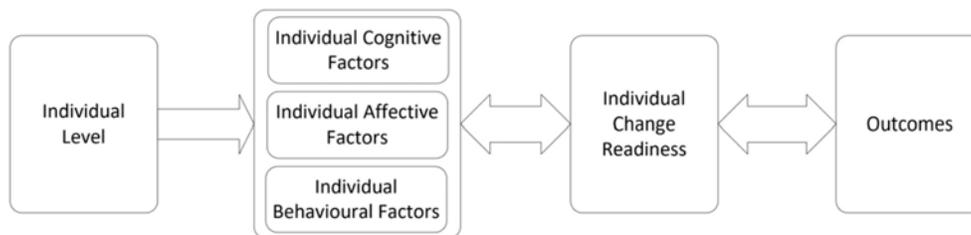


Figure 3: Individual readiness for change (Vakola 2013)

Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013) and Vakola (2013) agree that while there is general consensus around the cognitive aspects of individual readiness for change and that these are primarily based on Armenakis' work, there is an absence of research on the affective aspects of readiness for change. Rafferty et al. draw on attitude theory to support their assertion that both cognitive and affective aspects of change readiness are required.

2.5. Multi-level readiness for change

While earlier concepts of readiness for change focus on the individual, despite acknowledging readiness for change is a social phenomenon, more recent work has placed an increased emphasis on group and organisational readiness for change, identifying the need to understand multi-level readiness for change as well as the interdependencies between the levels. This is the area in which this research is placed.

Multi-level readiness for change can occur at the individual level, within groups such as workgroups, units and departments, or at the organisational level (Choi & Ruona 2011).

Literature on individual readiness for change abounds, whereas collective readiness for change literature is scarce (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013; Nguyen et al. 2022; Wang, Olivier & Chen 2020; Yue 2021). Collective readiness for change describes the shared commitment to implementing change and confidence in the capability to make the change of the collective members (Armenakis & Harris 2009), leading to change initiation, effort and resolve (Weiner, Lewis & Linnan 2009).

Many works (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993; Armenakis & Harris 2002; Holt et al. 2007; Self & Schraeder 2009; Weiner 2009) have developed models to understand readiness for change and its significance in improving organisational change, Vakola (2013) notes the term describes a broad construct within the literature, without differentiation between individual, group or organisational readiness for change (Vakola 2013). A case in point is that Armenakis et al.'s definition of readiness as the cognitive precursor to resistance or support does not differentiate between the individual, group or organisation (Armenakis 1993; Vakola 2013). The role of the individual's willingness to adapt and support change is clear; change is facilitated through an individual's readiness to change. Organisations only change through their members, and change strategies focused on involvement and participation empower individuals to examine their views and to expose and address issues (Choi & Ruona 2011). Aspects of personal disposition such as openness to change, self-esteem and self-efficacy are precursors to positive attitudes towards change (Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis 2011). However, the role of the group norms and expectations in modifying the individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour is less clear, as are the dynamics between the individual, group and organisational readiness for change.

Vakola (2013) determines that individual and organisational change is supported by high individual readiness for change, which is a malleable trait depending on both the individual's personality and the change context—activating these positive traits before the change enables them to be moulded by past change experiences, the current organisational context, or the cognitive and affective processes. Nevertheless, the complexity of integrating change means that success and adoption depend on many individuals' actions, all contributing to the change effort. Where interdependence is high, shared confidence in collective capabilities (collective sense-making) could be more representative of readiness for change than the belief of the individual in their capability (Holt & Vardaman 2013). Lewin's (1947) concept of unfreezing references group influence when he describes the individual dependence on accepted standards as a resistance to change, but a change in group standards facilitates the individual to change to a new level. The impact of social interactions on implementing change has been overlooked (Amis & Aïssaoui 2013; Weiner, Lewis & Linnan 2009). Vakola states that collective perceptions and beliefs influence group readiness for change. While groups and readiness for change have been neglected in studies, literature on groups and resistance to change are far more prevalent. Aspects such as involving group members in understanding the need for the change and creating ownership of decisions and solutions have been identified as reducing resistance to change, with the inference that they would improve readiness for change (Vakola 2013).

Vakola identifies the limited amount of research on the employee's perception of the organisation's readiness for change, general neglect of group readiness research and the lack of multi-level dynamics in the theoretical and empirical work on readiness for change. Exploration of the multilevel approach requires investigating the various levels of readiness for change, their interrelationships and the readiness dynamics between them, giving a more holistic view of readiness (Vakola 2013).

Holt et al. (2006) reviewed the literature for all instruments purporting to measure readiness for change. While noting that conceptually, models for readiness suggest that readiness could differ at the individual, group and organisational levels as a multi-level construct (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999; Armenakis, Harris & Feild 2000), their research on readiness instruments did not support this.

However, Vakola supports the need for a multi-level approach as collective emotional reactions to change can develop through processes like emotional comparison and contagion. Individuals can take cues from their workgroups, using emotional comparison to evaluate and determine their emotional state. The individuals within a group may become emotionally in tune through behavioural mimicry, which promotes emotional contagion in social settings such as within groups (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013).

The primary influence of group readiness on that of the individual is through group norms, which by governing group behaviour impacts the individual's behaviours, beliefs and values. One of the three independent determinants of the theory of planned behaviour, the subject norm or the perceived social pressure to conform, is particularly relevant to both individual and group readiness to change (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980). The individual's readiness for change also impacts group behaviour through interpersonal and social dynamics, which may also impact the organisational readiness for change (Nguyen et al 2022).

The high interrelationship between the different levels of readiness for change and the importance of this in driving successful change means that organisations should consider investing in readiness as a core competency to cope with a continuously changing environment. Vakola determines that programs to develop constant change readiness and trust will improve organisational readiness at the strategic organisational level. At the group level, programs should promote high readiness to support change implementation, enabling change implementation and promoting group norms supporting the change. At the individual level, training and development programs should be undertaken to increase readiness.

Rafferty et al.'s (2013) definition of individual readiness for change includes the individual's beliefs that change is needed, the individual can undertake the change, and the change has positive outcomes for the individual, as well as the individual's positive emotional responses (current and to the future state). Their multilevel framework extends this, outlining the precursors and consequences of the individual, group and organisational readiness for change. Using the term collective readiness for change for the readiness of both the group and the organisation, they posit that it is influenced by social interaction processes and, in particular, by shared cognitive beliefs that change is

needed, the collective is capable of performing the change, and the change will have positive outcomes for the collective. Collective readiness for change is also influenced by the collective's positive emotional responses (current and future state). This contrasts with methods such as those of Bouckennooghe et al., where the responses are measured at an individual level and then statistically aggregated through shared variance validity to the workgroup or organisational level, identifying the differences in readiness between individuals, groups and organisations. In contrast, Rafferty et al. (2013) propose referent-shift consensus model should be used to assess collective readiness for change.

Rafferty et al.'s concepts of antecedents to readiness, comprising external pressures and internal context enablers, align well with the context of change described by Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) and Pettigrew (1990). The external pressures driving change include industry, technology and government regulatory changes, whereas internal context enablers include leadership, change participation and communication. Rafferty et al. note the importance of recognising the outcomes, identifying this as the least theorised and studied aspect of organisational change. They list change-supportive behaviours, job performance and job attitudes as outcomes at the individual level, with change capabilities, collective performance, change-supportive behaviours and group attitudes at the collective level.

2.6. Research gap

The literature review has shown the importance of readiness for change in achieving effective change implementation. High change readiness results in organisational members embracing and adopting the change while resistance is lowered (Armenakis, Harris & Field 2000). Readiness for change is a social phenomenon; however, much of the research relates to individual readiness for change and collective readiness for change literature is scarce (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013; Nguyen et al. 2022; Wang, Olivier & Chen 2020; Yue 2021).

The impact of social interactions on implementing change has been overlooked (Amis & Aïssaoui 2013; Weiner, Lewis & Linnan 2009). The role of the group norms and expectations in modifying the individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour has been neglected in the research, even though collective perceptions and beliefs influence group readiness for change (Vakola 2013).

More recent work has placed an increased emphasis on group and organisational readiness for change, identifying the need to understand multi-level readiness for change as well as the interdependencies between the levels. This is the area in which this research is placed.

The knowledge gap identified for this research is that while readiness for change involves social processes, we do not have a sufficient understanding of multi-level readiness for change. This research will therefore focus on further understanding the factors influencing multi-level readiness for change, identifying differences in factors affecting the individual compared to those affecting the group, and the impact of these factors on the change outcome.

2.7. Conceptual framework

The readiness for change literature tends to be focussed on the individual rather than as a multi-level construct. This section presents the conceptual framework for multi-level readiness for change to be used in the approach and methodology for this study, which is fully discussed in Chapter 3.

Drawing heavily from the work of Rafferty et al. (2013), Bouckenooghe, Devos and Van den Broeck (2009), Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), and Armenakis et al. (2007), the conceptual framework was developed to show multi-level readiness for change dependencies and relationships. It shows the change context influencing the change process used to implement the change. At both group and organisational or individual levels, cognitive, affective and behavioural factors influence each other as well as the collective and individual readiness for change.

External and internal factors

When looking at readiness for change, it is essential to take into account a number of aspects. These include the multiple contexts and levels of analysis describing the organisation's internal and external environments. These include content issues (identifying the change itself and including time and history), process issues (or the actions taken to make the change), studying aspects of the change sequence rather than continuous change processes, and linking the change processes to organisation performance (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999; Pettigrew 1990).

The framework for the OCQ–C, P, R as defined by Bouckenooghe, Devos, G & Van den Broeck (2009) comprises climate of change, covering aspects of the internal context, process of change covering aspects of the content and process issues, and readiness for change (emotional, cognitive, and intentional readiness for change). This research data collection includes aspects of the OCQ–C, P, R to cover the internal and external change factors and put the change and processes in the overall context.

Individual readiness for change

Readiness for change has been described in many ways – as beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions, and behaviours, with links and potential hierarchies between these concepts (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993). Self-determination theory states that beliefs create attitudes forming behavioural intentions that cause behaviour (Sheeran, Norman & Orbell 1999), so that receiving new information may change beliefs which ultimately may change behaviour. The theory of reasoned action adds subjective norms or the perception of social pressure to the mix (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975).

Attitudes influence the behaviour of individuals and groups, with shared beliefs and norms influencing attitudes (Seashore et al. 1983). Beer, Eisenstat & Spector (1990) describe the influence of roles and values on attitudes, leading to beliefs and then behaviour. Vakola (2013) identifies individual readiness to change, such as self-efficacy or the individual's confidence in their abilities.

There are contrasting views, such as those of Feldman and Lych (1988, p. 424):

“In general, if memories of beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or past behaviours exist, cues directing the activation of any one of these can cause it to be the direct determinant of a judgment or behaviour.” In other words, Feldman and Lynch dispute the hierarchy suggested previously, as their research on the measurement of these values demonstrates that any of the beliefs, attitudes, or intentions of past behaviour can lead directly to the new behaviour.

The framework, therefore, uses the term ‘behavioural factors’ to remove any suggestion of hierarchy. When faced with change, employee behaviour can be affective (feeling about the change), cognitive (perceptions about the necessity, advantages and

disadvantages of the change) and instrumental (actions which have or will be taken) (Elizur & Guttman 1976).

Further identifying both the previously accepted definition for readiness for change as the cognitive beliefs, attitudes and intentions towards a change (Armenakis, Harris & Feild 2000) with the need to include affective aspects of readiness (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002; Neves 2009; Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013), both of these aspects are included in the proposed framework design.

When looking at the individual cognitive factors, this research proposes to base their questions on the various works by Armenakis et al. (1999; 2007; 2002; 1993) and the work of Holt et al. (2007) that uses five aspects to the change message required to create readiness for change. These include discrepancy (need for the change), appropriateness (whether the change is an appropriate reaction to the need), self-efficacy (whether the organisation is capable of implementing the change), principal support (whether the leaders are committed to successfully implementing the change), and personal valence (what is in it for the individual).

Affective factors are based on the work of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), and aspects of the reasoned action approach Fishbein and Ajzen (2009; 1975) will be used to dissect the behaviour.

A comparison of the individual and group readiness analysis will be used to gain a further understanding of how they differ.

Group readiness for change

“It is important to note... that the creation of readiness for organisational change must extend beyond individual cognitions since it involves social phenomena as well... any individual’s readiness may be shaped by the readiness of others” (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder 1993, p. 683). Organisational phenomena such as readiness for change have the properties of dynamic systems, with critical antecedents, processes, and outcomes conceptualised and measured at multiple levels of organisational analysis (e.g., individual, group, organisation). We need to understand whether the precursors and results of change readiness differ at the individual, group and organisational levels

(Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013; Nguyen et al. 2022; Wang, Olivier & Chen 2020; Yue 2021).

Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis (2013) argue that change involves both individual and group or collective sense-making in a social context, as individuals within the collective could influence the readiness of other individuals. This is supported by organisational behaviour theorists noting the differences between the decisions made by individuals and those made by groups, with the strengths of group decision-making including the greater diversity of views (Robbins & Judge 2015). Group readiness for change involves social processes, including social differences such as group memberships (Amis & Aïssaoui 2013; Armenakis & Harris 2009; Holt & Vardaman 2013). Group dynamics facilitate and stabilise individual change, with group norms affecting group readiness (Lewin 1947; Vakola 2013).

This research will leverage group characteristics literature (George 1990), affective factors (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002) and the interrelationship of the individual readiness for change with that of the organisation as described by Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis (2013) and Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis (2003). The multilevel and multidimensional aspects will utilise the learnings from aspects as described by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), Meyer and Allen (1993), and Morrow (2011).

High organisational change readiness correlates with an increased likelihood of change initiation, effort and persistence on the part of its members (Weiner 2009). Thus, an organisation's readiness for change is critical in its overall approach to change. It will improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation (Choi & Ruona 2011).

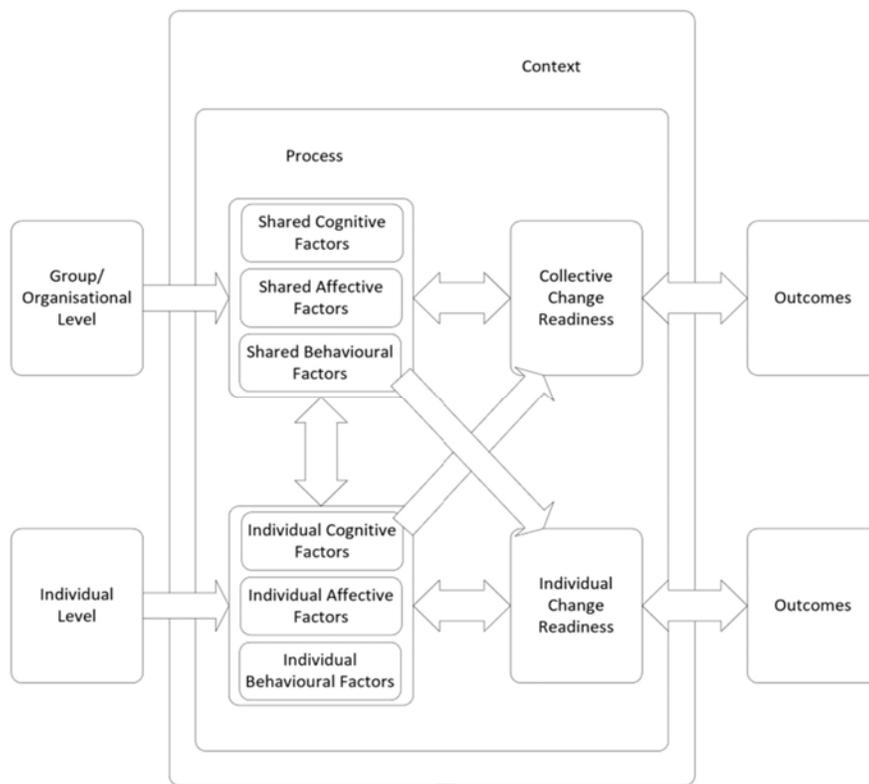


Figure 4: Conceptual framework for multi-level readiness for change

2.8. Conclusion

There is a profusion of literature about readiness for change and its impact on organisational change effectiveness, but no consensus on a clear definition of readiness for change. Furthermore, there is a clear gap in the literature around understanding multi-level readiness for change and, specifically, how group readiness for change differs from that of the individual. While group support influences the individual's behaviour, beliefs and values, there is little research on group readiness. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of multi-level readiness for change through an investigation of group readiness for change.

This thesis proposes a conceptual framework to improve understanding of multi-level readiness for change at the individual, group and organisational levels.

This chapter outlines the literature around organisational change and readiness for change and describes the gap identified in understanding multi-level readiness for change. It identifies how each of the research questions will be answered. The next chapter details

the research aims and objectives and the methods used to investigate multi-level readiness for change.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology and methods

3.1. *Introduction*

The previous chapter outlined the relevant literature underpinning this research, broadly describing organisational change and readiness for change before focussing on multi-level readiness for change. This chapter provides justification and the rationale for the methodology chosen to investigate multi-level readiness for change. Specifically, it addresses the adoption of qualitative methodology with dual data collection within this single inquiry program. The chapter also discusses the methods chosen, participant selection and data analysis approach.

3.2. *The conceptual paradigm*

The choice of which research methodology should be used to describe the process and procedures used for data collection and data analysis to achieve the aims of the research was made by evaluating the three primary approaches of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Bryman 2008; Creswell 2013). This evaluation was based on several factors, including the research aim of exploring multi-level readiness for change, the exploratory nature of the research questions, the need to engage participants who had experienced workplace change and the difficulty of undertaking data collection remotely during Covid-19 restrictions within the required timeframe (Rubhy 1998).

Readiness for change is a multifaceted and complex social process (Amis & Aïssaoui 2013; Armenakis & Harris 2009; Holt et al. 2007). Therefore, to understand the complexity of experiences and the broad range of factors influencing the readiness for change, the investigation of this construct at the multi-level should be explored through participants' lived experiences. The nature of this research should determine the supporting research paradigm or worldview (Creswell 2013), and since the research questions are exploratory in nature, a constructivist view of reality and interpretive paradigm are appropriate. Qualitative research is suitable for exploring complex phenomena which are difficult to measure with quantitative research (Kalu & Bwalya 2017), and therefore the choice of a predominantly qualitative methodology is appropriate

for a detailed understanding of readiness for change, particularly where the depth of the information is needed.

This research focuses on further understanding the factors influencing multi-level readiness for change, identifying differences in factors affecting the individual compared to those affecting the group, and the impact of these factors on the change outcome. This research explores the participants' lived experiences – interviews with professional change agents and a survey of individuals who have experienced a change – to answer the posed research questions.

As discussed in the next section, the focus on the lived experience guides a constructivist epistemology, interpretive paradigm, qualitative methodology and phenomenological approach using a combination of survey and interview methods.

The overall aims and objectives of the research are conceptualised in the diagram Figure 5 below.

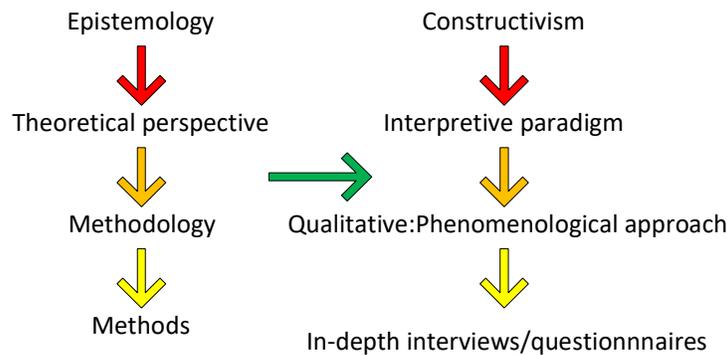


Figure 5: Theoretical framework - methods (Crotty 1998)

3.3. *Research paradigm*

This research paradigm section sets out the framework for the study or fundamental set of beliefs underpinning the research design (Denzin and Lincoln 2017).

3.3.1. *Epistemological position*

While there are differing views within the literature (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011) when identifying and describing the research paradigm, this research will use Crotty's (1998) framework to understand its epistemological positioning clearly. Crotty's widely

cited epistemological work underpins social science and business research (Creswell 2013; Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2010) and is, therefore, a suitable choice for an investigation into the impact of social interactions on readiness for change.

Crotty's (1998) description of epistemology was used to determine the epistemological position within the three broad views: objectivist, constructivist and subjectivist. Objectivism was discounted as the basis of either foundationalism or absolute reality, as well as because the observer's theoretical relationship with the subject does not support an investigation of participants' lived experiences and perceptions, which may not necessarily reflect reality. Subjectivism likewise was determined as not suitable for this research, as it implies that all judgements are nothing but personal opinions, merely relating to an individual speaker, or that it is the ultimate reality (Schwandt 1997, pp. 106, 48), running counter to the aim of this research in understanding multi-level readiness for change from participant experiences. Constructivism, however, with the emphasis on how people interpret and construct the social and psychological world, individually and collectively and, consequently, is appropriate to investigate a complex social construct such as readiness for change (Crotty 1998).

Constructivism has two aspects. Radical constructivism relates to the individual and the act of their knowledge, and social constructivism focuses on social processes and interaction (Schwandt 1997). Adopting the constructivist view, this research utilises both of these aspects as this is the most appropriate for understanding the social processes integral to readiness for change at the multi-level.

3.3.2. Interpretive paradigm

While the previous discussion offered a broad view that this research adopted, this section explores the theoretical perspective that extends this view throughout the research process. As this research investigates the complex interplay of organisational and personal factors, it adopts the interpretive perspective that accepts that the reality that people construct is a function of how individuals interpret the world.

The interpretive paradigm is focused on the attempt to understand individuals within the social context in which they operate. It emphasises complex social processes and, consequently, allows for interpretations and meanings to arise from the position of those

directly affected by the change and involved in the change processes. This interpretation is essential to understand the broad and intricate range of organisational, social and personal pressures that are likely to affect the individuals involved.

These phenomena are complicated and require an approach that extends beyond quantitative methods. Therefore, the research adopts interpretivism and a phenomenological approach that operates within qualitative research to achieve the objectives set forth in the research questions.

3.3.3. Qualitative and phenomenological approach

The research methodology chosen should depend on the purpose of the study and the research questions. This research aims to improve our understanding of readiness for change at both the group and individual levels, aligning well with qualitative research in its suitability for exploring complex phenomena which are difficult to measure with quantitative research (Kalu & Bwalya 2017).

Readiness for change involves both individual and group or collective sense-making in a social context, as individuals within the collective could influence the readiness of other individuals (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Organisational behaviour theorists support this and note the differences between the decisions made by individuals and those made by groups, with the strengths of group decision-making including the greater diversity of views (Robbins & Judge 2016). This collective social behaviour exists both for groups and within the organisation. People identifying as group members behave differently from isolated individuals, with increased cooperation within the group if the group is interested in the outcome (Charness, Rigotti & Rustichini 2007).

The research is exploratory in nature to answer the ‘what’ and ‘how’ research questions being posed (Veal 2005; Yin 2013). The qualitative approach is appropriate within the social sciences when exploring feelings and experiences and, as in this case, focusing on how participants in organisational change have interpreted and constructed their reality (Patton 2015; Veal 2005). The inferences drawn from qualitative research are summarised and inferred to provide a clear context. Therefore, the qualitative method was used to understand the deeper, more nuanced aspects of multi-level readiness for change. To understand the relationships between readiness for change at the individual, group and

organisational levels, we needed to talk to the individuals involved, as qualitative data gives a rich dialogue that may explain why respondents have given their answers.

A phenomenological approach with a focus on the meanings of an experience from the perspective of those experiencing it is particularly suitable to investigate the perceived experiences of change professionals and those affected by the change. The basis for this approach, originating in the work of Edmund Husserl (1970, 2012), is that the only certainty about the objects results from how these objects present themselves to people's consciousness. Creswell (2013) discusses phenomenology as a philosophical approach especially valued in studies exploring people's relationships and experiences. This key focus of the phenomenological approach based on descriptions of lived experiences as they are experienced by people, with the findings predominantly described and not interpreted, aligns well with the research focus on deriving meaning from the experiences of participants who have undergone workplace change. The core of the phenomena is the lived meaning of the experiences, as these are experienced during the change processes.

The concept of lived experience is integral to many qualitative approaches and is also true of this research, where we are investigating the experience of readiness for change of both the individual and group through the imposition of organisational change.

“Lived experience is experience that we live through before we take a reflective view of it.” (Van Manen 2014).

The re-living, reflection, and sensemaking from the lived experience of the change are fundamental to this research.

Additionally, readiness for change is being studied within the changing context, content and process of an organisational change and requires an understanding of how these influence readiness for change. This changing environment affecting readiness for change gives additional weight to the choice of qualitative methodology (Pettigrew 1990). The depth and comprehensiveness of qualitative data collection methods offer considerable advantages to the researcher, which would not be possible with a conventional quantitative statistical methodology.

3.3.4. Methods – Questionnaire and interviews

Two methods were chosen for this research, survey and semi-structured interviews. The multiple methods enabled an investigation into readiness for change from the perspective of those driving change and those undergoing change.

It is appropriate to use multiple methods when choosing one does not enable the investigated problem to be fully understood. Using both methods, two modes of data collection can provide a valid methodology for explaining complex organisational and social phenomena, such as readiness for change (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2009).

Surveys provide an investigative overview enabling researchers to evaluate and understand how many people hold a specific opinion and the relationships between those positions. Participants respond to predefined questions, giving little scope to expand our understanding past these questions and the associated Likert scale response (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999). Thus, the survey questionnaire was used for descriptive analysis.

The questionnaire for this study was designed to answer the research questions by providing a structured set of data (De Vaus 2002), with each case in the data grid being a unit of analysis, enabling the analysis of variation in variables across the cases as well as other characteristics that may be linked to the phenomena. The questionnaire serves several purposes. Surveying enabled access to the views of a number of participants that had experienced a workplace change who would otherwise be unable to participate through logistical constraints, particularly the necessity of collecting data within a constricted timeframe. Surveying also enabled the evaluation of multi-level readiness for change based on the established scales developed by Armenakis et al. (2007), Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) and Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) to allow triangulation of the results with those from the interviews.

Secondly, the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to obtain a detailed and wide-ranging understanding of readiness for change at both the group and individual levels, building on the quantitative analysis. The interviews aspired to understand the participants' lived experiences and make sense of their perceptions of readiness for change as participants within an organisational change (Kvale 1996). Researchers may obtain different answers depending on whether people are interviewed individually or within a group (Barbour 2008). However, the constraints around the data collection required using

only individual interviews to understand individual and collective (group, organisational) readiness for change.

Mixing methods is valid for explaining complex organisational and social phenomena, such as readiness for change (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2009). Thus a combination of surveys and interviews can provide a complete view of readiness for change (Di Pofi 2002). This research used two unrelated groups of participants: those completing the questionnaire and those participating in the individual interviews. The predominantly qualitative research with the inclusion of quantitative data (based on reliable and valid scales) can enable a framework to be developed (Creswell 2013). This can be described as paradigm relativism since the philosophical and methodological approach appear to be suited to the objective of this research, which is a framework for multilevel readiness for change (Plano Clark & Creswell 2007).

The qualitative and quantitative results were compared to confirm the results and obtain a greater depth of understanding or complementarity of results (Small 2011), as well as to explain any unpredicted results, drawing meta-inferences from the survey and questionnaire methods to explain the results comprehensively (Venkatesh, Brown & Bala 2013). This critical step required the survey and interview themes to be highly interrelated. The following sections provide details of the research design.

3.4. Research design

The research design was based on the key themes described in the literature review and the conceptual framework, including change context, change process, individual readiness for change, group readiness for change and organisational readiness for change. In order to build a comprehensive understanding of these themes, two groups of participants were required – those who had participated in the change and those who had led the change.

Those who led and drove the change could provide greater insight into the change strategy and how it was implemented – the change context and process - while providing descriptions of how they perceived the change was received on an individual, group and organisational level by those receiving the change. Specifically, they could provide explanations of how they were driving readiness for change and how they saw it being implemented.

Carlson (1965) defined a change agent, such as the interview participants, as a professional advocate for change who influences the direction and effectiveness of the intended change. Therefore, change professionals promoting the change would be expected to have an implicit understanding of the change context, the type of change being conducted and why the change was being implemented that may not be understood by those experiencing the change efforts. The change context has an impact on readiness for change and subsequent change success (Burnes & Jackson 2011).

Change agents have a crucial role in planning and implementing the change process (Bouckenooghe 2010). The organization's approach to creating change, the change process, affects readiness for change and, consequently, change success (Burnes & Jackson 2011). As the professionals implementing the change process, change agents can identify aspects of the implementation that affect the readiness for change in the change recipients. As the change affects the organization, groups and individuals, change agents are well-placed to understand and describe the impact of the change process on these three levels.

Those who had participated in the change could provide an understanding of their readiness for change while receiving the change experience – their lived experience of the change. They were also asked about the readiness for change at all three levels of individual, group and organisation.

Readiness for change is a broad construct, and the literature generally does not distinguish between individual or organisational readiness for change (Vakola 2013). Group readiness is generally neglected in the literature, and there is a lack of multi-level dynamics in the theoretical and empirical work on readiness for change. Using participants who had an experience of a workplace change, and asking about their perception of the readiness for change at these three levels, enabled this research to investigate readiness for change more holistically (Vakola 2013).

The predominantly qualitative research design was chosen based on the purpose of the study and the research questions posed. This is a phenomenological study as it explores the lived experiences of individuals regarding readiness for change and attempts to develop a greater understanding and awareness of multi-level readiness for change. This approach aimed to gain additional insights from participants' experiences when

implementing the change to better understand their readiness for change. The phenomenological approach, as used within this research, draws on the methodology which focuses on the lived experiences of the people who have all experienced the same phenomenon looking at the world from 'personal consciousness' (Groenewald 2004, p. 43). The focus is on the experience itself rather than the person having the experience. (Willis 2004).

Therefore, this research will adopt a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to understand multilevel readiness for change. When determining whether hermeneutic phenomenology or heuristic enquiry would be a more appropriate perspective, it should be noted that the researcher does not have the intimate knowledge or understanding of the complex environments within which the participants work to draw on her own experience. Therefore heuristic enquiry, requiring the researcher to reflect and express a composite picture of the experiences, including their essential meaning based on their own experience, is not suitable to meet this research's aims (Van Manen 2014; Willis 2004). Phenomenology or hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to describe the experiences of those experiencing the phenomenon, leaving the researcher's experience aside or bracketed, conducting a reflective interpretation of the lived experiences to reach a meaningful understanding (Moustakas 1994). The research will focus on the lived experiences of those managing and undergoing change to describe and interpret the experiences from their perspective to better understand multi-level readiness for change (Patton 2015; Van Manen 2014).

3.5. Participant selection

The participants were selected using a purposeful approach. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research and particularly suits this research where two distinct cohorts were required – change professionals directing change efforts and those receiving the change. The recruitment and participation were both conducted online.

The search for professional change agents was conducted through social media – specifically LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a social networking site. Social networking sites are a valuable tool to gain access to populations hard to reach or get involved with (Baltar & Brunet 2012). Social networking sites also enabled snowball sampling or asking one participant to recommend others (Groenewald 2004). LinkedIn contains a number of professional groups, including the Change Management Network and Association of

Change Management Professionals. A number of related groups, such as Change Leaders Network, were also linked to these groups and provided more expansive access to research participants.

An invitation to participate in the research was posted on the LinkedIn change professionals network. This included the background summary of the research, its purpose and university ethics approval for the research, including a copy of the “Information to Participants” and “Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research”. Participants (mostly change agents) were invited to participate in two ways, surveys and interviews.

Firstly, survey participants were asked to participate if they had experienced a workplace change. Respondents self-identified that they had experienced a workplace change and accepted the request by completing the questionnaire. A total of 89 useable survey responses were completed.

Second, participants with experience as change agent professionals were invited for in-depth semi-structured interviews, describing a change implementation process in which they had been involved. Change agents were identified by their role as either an internal or external change lead as discussed through initial conversations (emails, text) while scheduling the interview. Several participants registered their interest in being interviewed. A total of 17 professional change agents were interviewed.

Both sample sizes were based on pragmatic considerations, time constraints and project manageability. These sample sizes are appropriate given the epistemological and theoretical approach, this study's aims and scope, and the data's quality and richness (Vasileiou et al. 2018).

In this non-probability sampling, there was a subjective but purposive selection of the participants, while all the eligible participants within the population were not given an equal and random chance of being selected (Etikan 2016). The selection of all participants in both samples was based on easy accessibility and willingness to participate.

The interviews were intended to be in person but completing the interviews and obtaining survey responses during Covid-19 in 2020 meant that all interactions, including interviews, were conducted remotely. Many of the original participants (pre-Covid-19)

could no longer participate due to their own challenges and changing circumstances. Consequently, the only option was to select and recruit participants using an online platform.

The advantages of using online interviews included reaching more geographically dispersed participants in a shorter time frame (Saleh & Bista 2017). Collecting all data concurrently ensured that enough responses would be accumulated promptly during the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic and various lockdowns. The methodology chosen has enabled a suitable collection of data to support a robust discussion of readiness for change.

3.6. Data collection and analysis

There were two modes of data collection: questionnaire (survey interviewing) and open-ended semi-structured interviews. These methods were chosen as they were the most appropriate for this type of research, where the understanding of change participants when experiencing change and the views of the change professionals driving change provide an in-depth insight into readiness to change to match the study's aims and objectives.

Consequently, the only criteria for participation were for those surveyed to have participated in a workplace change and for those interviewed to have been in a change professional role within an organisational change. The 2 data sources were chosen to lessen bias and enhance the research's data credibility, thereby more accurately answering the research questions (Eisenhardt 1989; Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014; Yin 2013).

3.6.1. Quantitative data collection

The questionnaire aimed to collect data to improve understanding of readiness for change at the individual and group levels. It also aimed to provide data enabling the researcher to compare the diversity of views to the demographic data and the data around the type of change and participant role. The questionnaire was built upon readiness for change and change climate scales in the literature (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002; Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Armenakis et al. 2007). to meet these aims, enabling the researcher to draw causal inferences from the data and use these to determine causal links.

The survey was administered online. The questionnaire was created through Qualtrics. The questionnaire link was available from early-2020 via email and social media -

LinkedIn and various Facebook groups. Participation was anonymous, requiring approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey. As Qualtrics saved the responses, various analytics, such as the survey completion, were available. This allowed the researcher to exclude responses with minimal or no value as they were less than 80% complete, accounting for approximately half the questionnaires but ensuring the full complement of answers was available to compare answers relating to group behaviour to those of the individual.

The VU ethics information to participants was provided at the start of the survey, outlining the research and contacts for any ethical concerns (see Appendix B). Continuation with the survey conveyed implicit acceptance and agreement to participate.

3.6.2. Qualitative data collection

For the qualitative research, 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted with change professionals during mid-2020, held virtually using Microsoft Teams. Text, email, and messaging were approaches used to schedule the interviews. All interviews followed the semi-structured interview questioning format, with interviews taking on average 60 minutes. Recording interviews was unanimously accepted. Some interviewees did not wish to be video-recorded, and in some instances videoing was stopped due to poor internet reception.

Confidentiality was addressed at the beginning of each interview, with assurances made that the interviewees and organisations discussed would not be identifiable. Additionally, the participants received the VU ethics information to participants document prior to the interview, outlining the research and contacts for any ethical concerns (see Appendix A).

The semi-structured interview questioning format was used as a reference to ensure all the aspects of the conceptual framework (as discussed in Chapter 2) and key constructs covered in the survey were covered. Semi-structured questions allowed for flexible, nuanced discussion following the interviewees' thoughts and allowing the researcher to summarise, ask follow-up questions and ensure the meaning was clear. The researcher used member checking to confirm understanding and reduce researcher bias (Creswell 2018). The researcher consciously took an open approach to ensure that participants used their means to interpret the social context and assign meaning to their experiences as they were experiencing these themselves (Somekh & Lewin 2005).

The interview subjects were all identified as change professionals and were asked to reflect on a change where they had that role when answering the questions.

3.6.2.1.Semi-structured Interviews

Using interviews within this research was to obtain an in-depth understanding of readiness for change at both the group and individual levels, building on the quantitative analysis to answer the research questions. The semi-structured interviews aspired to understand the participants' lived experiences and make sense of their perceptions of readiness for change as participants within an organisational change (Kvale 1996). Researchers may obtain different answers depending on whether people are interviewed individually or within a group (Barbour 2008). However, the constraints around the data collection required using only individual interviews to understand individual and collective (group, organisational) readiness for change.

Individual readiness for change questions developed from the cognitive and affective scales of Armenakis et al. (2007) and Herscovitch & Meyer (2002) were added to questions to generally understand the discussed change and the personal circumstances from the interviewee's perspective. The semi-structured interview questions also aimed to investigate the participants' views of their, their team's, and their management's perceptions of the change experience they had chosen to describe, so the researcher could use the interviewee's life descriptions to understand the described phenomena Kvale (1996). The range of divergent views from interviews (Kvale 1996) was used to build a coherent picture, using the interpretive or constructivist lens to create meaning from the multiple realities, emphasising co-construction (Plano Clark & Creswell 2007).

Strauss (1995) notes the lack of a theoretical basis for much qualitative research, which Kvale uses as an illustration to underline the importance of basing interviews on theory. In the case of this research, the theoretical underpinnings have been made very clear. Kvale emphasises the interviews as means of constructing knowledge through the interaction of both the participants, with the inter-view being the exchange of ideas. The semi-structured questions enabled the researcher and participants to develop this lived worldview and understanding.

The interview questions were developed from the readiness for change theories discussed in Chapter 2 and specifically to develop the themes of the questionnaire further, enabling triangulation of the results.

3.6.2.2. Interview protocol

The research interviews were all carried out using Microsoft Teams. Interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews use questions following the research topic of interest but allow the researcher or interviewee to diverge into areas of interest, providing the flexibility to develop a detailed understanding of the topic (Gill et al. 2008). Utilising the semi-structured interview approach has enabled the researcher to base the questioning on a conceptual framework, with questions used to guide the interview but not restrict the interviews to develop a better understanding of multilevel readiness for change.

See Appendix A: Individual face-to-face interviews for complete details.

While consent to participation is not necessarily indicative of continued consent (Farquhar & Das 1999), those participating in the individual interviews were reminded of the need for their consent and asked if they wished to withdraw. Participants were reminded that the interviews would be held in confidence, and neither the participants nor the organisation (if revealed) would be identifiable within this thesis.

The participants were all issued with an outline of the research, contact details for any issues and copies of the consent (see Appendix A).

The principal method to remove bias used in this research was member checking, which consisted of following up with participants to confirm what they meant. This strategy had the added benefits of building trust and collaboration (Lincoln & Guba 2013).

The interviews were recorded using Microsoft Teams, which had the benefit of creating a rough transcript. The transcript was edited and compared to the recording for accuracy. Transcripts were then imported into NVivo to enable themes relating to the research questions to be identified. Notes regarding the interviewer's perception of the interview were not taken since all interviews were conducted virtually and sometimes without vision due to participant preference or technical difficulties. However, since the interviews were semi-structured, the interviewer used the opportunity to question the interviewee freely about any concerns to gain insights regarding their behaviour.

All interviews were online, with most videoed. The recordings, transcripts and questionnaires were stored following the ethics approval requirements.

3.6.1. Instruments

3.6.1.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire is based on the published scales of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) and Armenakis et al. (2007). These scales covered aspects of change climate with characteristics of commitment and cognitive and affective readiness for change, with the authors noting the validity of combining their scales to create a more comprehensive assessment. While using existing validated scales in research is recommended (Bryman & Bell, 2014), the scales were modified to suit the study context and to eliminate language issues. These scales have been used to investigate readiness for change and applied at the individual level, with each individual treated as a case (Seashore et al. 1984).

The questionnaire was widely distributed, and the only criterion was for the respondent to have been involved as part of a workplace change. The first section of the questionnaire contained questions created for this research to understand the change being implemented and the demographics of the respondents. If respondents indicated that they were involved in implementing the change, they were asked about their role and any issues/challenges they experienced.

Table 1: The change, general questions and demographics

Scale	Response Type
Briefly describe the change you experienced	Free text
Were you involved in implementing the change at your workplace?	Selection: Yes/No
What was your role in implementing the change?	Free text
In retrospect, what would you have done differently?	Free text
What were the major challenges you experienced?	Free text
In which industry are you employed?	Section
In which country do you work?	Selection
How many years have you been employed at your workplace?	Section
What is/was your role?	Free text
Are you a change management professional?	Selection: Yes/No
What is your age?	Selection

Which of the following genders do you most identify with?	Selection
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Age, gender and tenure questions were included as they have been shown to have a statistically significant difference in the scores of employees' readiness to change (Mardhatillah & Rahman 2020). Questions around the change were to enable an understanding of the types of change experienced by the participants.

Individual readiness for change, commitment and change climate

Readiness for change aspects of the organisational change effort is based on Armenakis et al.'s (2007) scale, which identified five important precursors that determine organisational change recipients' degree of readiness for change. The five precursors they used are discrepancy (need for the change), appropriateness (whether the change meets the identified need), efficacy (capability to implement the change initiative), Principal support (support from leaders, including opinion-makers) and valence (the attractiveness of the change outcome). Questions from each of the five measures were chosen to assess cognitive readiness for change.

Table 2: Cognitive readiness for change, Armenakis et al. (2007)

Original scale	Measure	Adapted scale
The change in our operations will improve the performance of our organization	Appropriateness	My workgroup believed the change in our operations would improve the performance of our organisation
The change that we are implementing is correct for our situation	Appropriateness	I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation
The change that we are implementing is correct for our situation	Appropriateness	My workgroup believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation
A change is needed to improve our operations	Discrepancy	I believed the change was needed to improve the situation the organisation was in
I believe we can successfully implement this change	Efficacy	My workgroup believed we could successfully implement the change

I am capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed organizational change	Efficacy	I felt I was capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed change
I am capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed organizational change	Efficacy	My workgroup believed they were capable of successfully performing their job duties with the proposed change
We have the capability to successfully implement this change	Efficacy	I believed we had the capability to successfully implement the change
My immediate manager is in favour of this change	Principal Support	My immediate manager was in favour of these changes
My immediate manager is in favour of this change (PS)	Principal Support	My workgroup believed our immediate manager was in favour of the change
The top leaders support this change	Principal Support	My workgroup believed our top leaders supported the change
This change will benefit me	Valence	I believed the change would benefit me
This change will benefit me	Valence	My workgroup believed that the change would benefit them

Commitment questions were based on Herscovitch and Meyer's (2002) three-component model of organisational commitment and included at individual and group levels to obtain a broad understanding of commitment. The three commitment aspects used include affective commitment (desire to remain), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (perceived obligation to remain) to represent an employee's commitment profile when they experience varying combinations of all three mindsets simultaneously, in order to gather a broad understanding of change commitment.

Table 3: Commitment, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002)

Original scale	Measure	Adapted scale
I believe in the value of this change.	Affective Commitment	I believed in the value of the change
I believe in the value of this change.	Affective Commitment	My workgroup believed in the value of the change

This change is a good strategy for this organization.	Affective Commitment	I believed the change was a good strategy for my organisation
This change is a good strategy for this organization.	Affective Commitment	My workgroup believed the change was a good strategy for the organisation
This change serves an important purpose.	Affective Commitment	The change served an important purpose for the organisation's future
I have too much at stake to resist this change.	Continuance commitment	I had too much at stake to resist the change
Resisting this change is not a viable option for me.	Continuance commitment	My workgroup felt resisting the change was not a viable option for them
I do not feel any obligation to support this change. (R)	Normative commitment	I did not feel any obligation to support the change
I do not feel any obligation to support this change. (R)	Normative commitment	My workgroup did not feel any obligation to support the change
I would feel guilty about opposing this change.	Normative commitment	I would have felt guilty about opposing the change
I would feel guilty about opposing this change.	Normative commitment	My workgroup would have felt guilty about opposing the change

Change climate scales were based on the Organizational Change Questionnaire–Climate of Change, Processes, and Readiness (OCQ–C, P, R) developed by Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009), which can be used to assess the internal context or climate of change, the process factors of change, and readiness for change. The scale comprises five change climate dimensions, three change process dimensions, and three readiness-for-change dimensions. In order to assess the change process, questions were taken from the quality of change communication, participation, the attitude of top management toward change, and support by supervisors measures. Emotional and intentional readiness for change questions were included. As identified by Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis (2013), Armenakis et al.'s (2007) scale deals with cognitive readiness for change and therefore, Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck's cognitive readiness for change questions were not included (2009).

Table 4: Change climate, process and readiness for change, Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009)

Original scale	Dimension	Measure	Adapted scale
Corporate management team is actively involved with the changes.	Change process	Attitude of top management toward change	Top management's commitment to the change was visible
I experience the change as a positive process.	Readiness for change	Emotional Readiness for Change	I was experiencing the change as a positive process
I find the change refreshing.	Readiness for change	Emotional Readiness for Change	I had a good feeling about the change
I am willing to make a significant contribution to the change.	Readiness for change	Intentional readiness for change	I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change
I am willing to make a significant contribution to the change.	Readiness for change	Intentional readiness for change	My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change
I want to devote myself to the process of change.	Readiness for change	Intentional readiness for change	I was keen to participate in the process of change
I want to devote myself to the process of change.	Readiness for change	Intentional readiness for change	My workgroup was keen to participate in the process of change
Decisions concerning work are taken in consultation with the staff who are affected.	Change process	Participation	Decisions concerning work were taken in consultation with the staff in the group who would be affected
Staff members were consulted about the reasons for change.	Change process	Participation	Staff members were consulted about the reasons for change
I am regularly informed on how the change is going.	Change process	Quality of change communication	I was regularly informed about how the change was going
Information provided on change is clear.	Change process	Quality of change communication	I received adequate information about the forthcoming change

Information provided on change is clear.	Change process	Quality of change communication	The information I have received adequately answered my questions about the change
Information provided on change is clear.	Change process	Quality of change communication	The change was clearly communicated and understood by the recipients
Information provided on change is clear.	Change process	Quality of change communication	Information provided to the group regarding the change was clear
There is good communication between project leaders and staff members about the organization's policy toward changes.	Change process	Quality of change communication	There was good communication between project leaders and staff members about this organisation's policy toward change
Our department's senior managers coach us very well about implementing change.	Change process	Support by Supervisors	Our organisation's senior managers coached us very well about implementing the change
Our department's senior managers have trouble in adapting their leadership styles to the changes.	Change process	Support by Supervisors	Our business area's senior managers had trouble in adapting to the change
Our department's senior managers pay sufficient attention to the personal consequences that the changes could have for their staff members.	Change process	Support by Supervisors	Our business area's senior managers paid sufficient attention to the personal consequences that the change could have for their staff members
Corporate management team keeps all departments informed about its decisions.	Change climate	Trust in Leadership	Management kept all areas of the organisation informed about its decisions
If I experience any problems, I can always turn on my manager for help.	Change climate	Trust in Leadership	If I experienced any problems, I could always turn to my manager for help
If I experience any problems, I can always turn on my manager for help.	Change climate	Trust in Leadership	Our business area's managers spoke up for us during the change process
Two-way communication between the corporate management team and the departments is very good.	Change climate	Trust in Leadership	Two way communication between management and business areas was very good

A shift-referent approach was taken when designing the group readiness for change questions. Based on the work of Chan (1998), this is an alternative approach to aggregating individual readiness for change to that of the work group or organisation when studying organisational phenomena with a multi-level approach. Referent shift-consensus is similar to direct consensus, but the referent is shifted before being evaluated at the higher level. In this approach, the individual's assessment of a situation is given, and the individual is then asked how others in their team assess the same situation. This enables both the individual level assessment and collective assessment, where the referent and perspective have changed from the individual to the team. As proposed by Rafferty et al., the shift-referent model acknowledges that while individual readiness to change may differ, individuals may develop a shared perception of the group and organisation's readiness for change through social interactions. An example of the shift referent approach, as seen in the questionnaire, are the questions 'I believed the change was a good strategy for my organisation' and 'My workgroup believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation'.

Please see Appendix B1 for the complete questionnaire.

3.6.1.1.Semi-structured interview design

The interview design was structured to understand the specific change being discussed, the change context (4 questions), change details (3 questions), Individual readiness for change (3 questions), group readiness for change (4 questions) and organisational readiness for change (5 questions). There were a total of 21 set questions asked.

Each interviewee was asked to think about a workplace change in which they had participated as a change professional. Since each interview described an exclusive change, the initial discussion needed to allow the interviewer to understand the change being described prior to asking open-ended questions around themes based on the conceptual framework of multi-level readiness for change.

A description of the change was followed by questions about the change context, including the size of the change, the interviewee's position, responsibilities and workplace tenure.

The change process was discussed through questions around the need for the change and benefit to the organisation, appropriateness of the change with particular emphasis on value and alignment with the situation and strategy, and implementation strengths and challenges.

Readiness for change discussions were held at the individual, group and organisation levels. Individual readiness for change questions were based on the affect on the individual, participation, and communication. Group readiness for change questions used looked at team affect, manager support and involvement, consultation and communication, and team commitment. Readiness for change at Organisation Level involved questions around sponsor support, organisational adaptability and readiness, and change impact.

Please see Appendix A1 for the full interview format

3.7. Data analysis and techniques

3.7.1. Quantitative analysis

The questionnaire was developed in Qualtrics software as provided by Victoria University. Once the data collection period (end of June 2020) was completed, the data was exported from Qualtrics into Excel format.

All the multiple-choice responses were mandatory to compare some of the individual and group responses. This then became the criteria for acceptance; responses that did not meet this criterion were rejected. There was a total of 89 accepted responses.

The Excel file with all accepted responses was imported into IBM SPSS software. SPSS is a statistical software package provided by Victoria University. SPSS was used to analyse the data to enable the researcher to interpret the results.

Frequency counts

Frequency distributions were calculated and tabulated for the demographic results, individual readiness for change results, group readiness for change, and organisational readiness for change results.

Shift referent testing

In order to test the shift-referent approach as described by Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis (2013), a Crosstabs comparison was used to determine any association between the individual and group values. The Crosstabs comparison requires ordinal values (whole numbers) to provide Goodman and Kruskal's gamma and p values. Gamma and p can be used to identify a measure of association or a relationship between the data samples (Upton & Cook 2014). Gamma has an advantage over chi-square as it does not need a value of 5 or more in each cell, which was relevant to the data we had.

In this case, the association would mean that the individual and workgroup perceptions are dependent on each other for the specific question asked, so there is a relationship between them.

The Likert responses were recoded from 1 through to 5, then collapsed further by recoding from 1 through 3. This allowed the Crosstabs analysis to be performed.

These results were then interpreted using the calculated gamma (Rea & Parker 2014) and in line with the readiness for change literature.

Comments regarding the impact of the change

Survey respondents were asked for any additional comments. This non-mandatory free text was analysed according to the topics identified and the relationship with the change outcome. These results were discussed further.

3.7.2. Qualitative analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted in line with the phenomenological approach taken in this research.

Interview coding

The transcribed interviews were imported into NVivo to make coding easier. The interviews averaged an hour, with 17 interviews. Coding makes the data easier to analyse and is also an early type of analysis, enabling the researcher to gain understanding and insights into their data (Linneberg & Korsgaard 2019; Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014).

Initial coding used the deductive approach utilising themes from Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), Bouckenoghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) and Armenakis et al. (2007).

The underlying literature was the basis for developing a coding frame or list of codes. The coding frame was then systematically applied to the interviews (O'Connor & Joffe 2020).

The data was divided into five sections based on the conceptual framework and the interview structure. The themes of these sections included the change context, change details and readiness for change. Readiness for change was further separated into the individual, group and organisational readiness for change. Therefore, the initial coding frame for deductive coding loosely followed the interview progression.

Patterns were identified across the interviews. Whilst the change implementations differed, common themes occurred around the context, content, change implementation process, individual and workgroup. The coding was logically expanded and developed as pattern coding provided additional themes pertinent to the framework and the research questions. When expanding the coding, an inductive approach included more abstract themes involving social interactions amongst the actors (Miles & Huberman 1984). After these codes were created, identified and applied within NVivo, a further inductive step required the identification of additional themes and patterns from the data to obtain a holistic thematic data representation (Miles & Huberman 1984; Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014). Constant code revision was needed to refine the findings and continually align and compare them with the framework and questionnaire results to enhance the analysis, resulting in new themes being introduced and some reclassification of themes. The coding process was deemed to have finished once the emerging themes were similar to those previously identified, and no new themes were identified (Denzin & Lincoln 2017).

3.8. Ethics

Ethics approval (Application ID: HRE17-128) was obtained from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC), with the application having been developed according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Victoria University requires doctoral research to comply with its ethical guidelines. Ethics approval is required to proceed, and in this research, it applies to the people involved in the survey and interviews. Aspects of ethics applying to this research include maintaining participant privacy and the confidentiality of the information provided.

Participants in the survey could not be identified from the information requested. Interview participant privacy was maintained by using an alias and not revealing information about the organisation discussed in the interviews within the thesis.

Information confidentiality was maintained by securing the data, ensuring it was not accessible to anyone except the researcher. All data was saved on the researcher's personal laptop, password-protected, and McAfee malware protected. No hard copies of data were made.

Informed consent to participate was provided to survey and interview participants. All participants were given the research details and informed of their right to unconditionally withdraw at any stage of the research by ending the interview or closing the survey. Permission to record interviews was requested and obtained.

3.9. Summary

This chapter describes how the methodology and methods were chosen for this research into multilevel readiness for change. This research utilised participants obtained through social media platforms and personal networking for a single interpretive investigation. It employed a predominantly qualitative methodology using the dual data collection methods of surveys and semi-structured interviews to address the aims, objectives and questions posed. There was a single data collection. The questionnaire was used to obtain individual and group readiness for change statistics by asking questions about participants' perceptions of their group's response. The semi-structured interviews were used to interpret and further understand the quantitative data through triangulation and co-constructing meaning. The analysis approach was a concurrent/triangulation design with merged results described by Luzzo (Plano Clark & Creswell 2007, p. 380). The predominantly qualitative approach enables significant research through the broad range of participants interviewed and surveyed.

The next chapter details the nature of the data obtained and the data analysis and implications for readiness for change at the individual, group and organisational levels.

Chapter 4

4. Thematic analysis of questionnaire results

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology of the study. It included the rationale for the constructivism epistemology, the interpretivist theoretical perspective, the predominantly qualitative methodology, and questionnaire and semi-structured individual interview methods. Chapters 4 and 5 will present the results from the survey and themes from the interviews with the change managers, respectively. Chapter 6 will discuss the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 to obtain a greater depth of understanding or complementarity of results (Small 2011) and explain any unpredicted outcomes.

This chapter will present the survey results and be used as a baseline view of the readiness for change diversity of individual survey respondents and their perspective of the group and organisational readiness.

Questionnaires can provide an investigative overview, enabling us to evaluate and understand how many people hold a specific opinion and the relationships between those positions. However, the participants respond to predefined questions, giving little scope to expand our understanding past these questions and the associated Likert scale response (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999). The questionnaire also included some free-text questions to obtain a broader understanding of the change they were describing.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the demographic profile of respondents, followed by an SPSS analysis of the individual, and group, a comparison of individual and group responses, and organizational results of change readiness, commitment and change process. Free text comments are discussed.

4.1.1. Demographic profile of survey respondents

Standard demographics questions were included in the survey, covering age, gender, and work country. Additionally, questions about work included years employed at the workplace, role, whether they were involved in the change implementation and whether

they self-identified as a change professional. There was no requirement for participation other than having experienced a workplace change. There were 89 completed responses.

Table 5: Demographics

Age						
Range	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
%	16.7	19.0	32.1	29.8	2.4	
Gender						
Gender	Male	Female	Other			
%	13.1	85.7	1.2			
Were you involved in implementing the change at your workplace?						
Answer	Yes	No				
%	53.9	46.1				
In which country do you work?						
Country	Australia	Canada	Malaysia	Sri Lanka	United Kingdom	United States
%	53.9	4.5	1.1	1.1	4.5	34.8
How many years have you been employed at your workplace?						
Year Range	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21-30 years		
%	58.6	13.8	16.1	11.5		
Are you a change management professional?						
Answer	Yes	No				
%	24.7	75.3				
	Executive level	Manager	Group leader	Group member	Specialist	
%	11.2	30.3	13.5	27.0	18.0	

All participants described their roles, which were diverse, without much overlap or grouping (see full results in Appendix B.3). Content analysis enabled roles to be reclassified and grouped, and the grouped roles were analysed to provide insight into whether the role impacts the respondent's readiness for change responses.

Almost 25% of the respondents self-identified as change professionals. However, when looking at the data more closely, the roles as described did not correlate with the type of change professional interviewed as described in Chapter 5. This supports the research design requiring two groups of participants; those who had participated in the change and

those who had led the change. The surveyed participants had predominantly participated in the change rather than driven change.

The survey sample contained a higher proportion of women to men than the general working population. The greater female response rate aligns with other research showing that females are more likely than males to respond to surveys generally (Smith 2008). Female employees have also been shown to feel more positively about their social relationships within organisations, and thereby stronger organisational commitment (Madsen, Miller, & John 2005)

The survey respondents' ages are somewhat skewed to an older demographic than the current Australian workforce. The sample mean of approximately 42 is older than the current average working age of 39 years (National Skills Commission 2021). There has been some correlation between age and organisational commitment, though whether this is because older employees are in more managerial positions or it pertains specifically to age is unclear. Over 40% of the surveyed participants identified as executives or managers, potentially giving rise to more significant organizational commitment responses (Madsen, Miller, & John 2005).

There was a mix of workplace countries, the bulk being Western countries (Australia, USA, UK and Canada), with two survey participants being from Eastern countries (Sri Lanka and Malaysia). Easterners, such as those from Malaysia and Sri Lanka, display high levels of resilience or even optimism when facing difficult situations compared to Westerners, which can be attributed to national cultural differences (Guan, Deng & Zhou 2020). The last census showed that Malaysian and Sri Lankan-born residents now make up 0.7% and 0.6% of Australia's population, respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020). However, we have not asked those surveyed about their heritage within this research, the data from these participants did not skew the results, and it is not justifiable to remove these as outliers.

The survey sample demographic frequencies are captured in the table above. For full details, see Appendix B.4.

4.1.2. Individual readiness for change

Individual survey questions are based on aspects of cognitive readiness for change (appropriateness, efficacy and valence) as identified by the scales of Armenakis et al. (2007), aspects of emotional readiness for change, change climate (intentional readiness for change and quality of change communication) based on Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck's (2009) scale, and affective commitment to change based on Herscovitch and Meyer's (2002) scale. Eighty-nine completed responses were received.

Table 6: Level of agreement or disagreement about individual aspects of readiness for change (Q 4.1 through Q8.4)

#	Question	Strongly disagree %	Somewhat disagree %	Neither agree or disagree %	Somewhat agree %	Strongly agree %
Understanding of the change						
4.1	I received adequate information about the forthcoming change	5.6	11.2	6.7	38.2	38.2
4.2	The information I have received adequately answered my questions about the change	5.6	9.2	11.2	41.6	32.6
4.3	I was regularly informed about how the change was going	4.5	13.5	5.6	36.0	40.4
Need for the change						
5.1	I believed in the value of the change	1.1	1.1	7.9	18.0	71.9
5.2	The change served an important purpose for the organisation's future	4.5	2.2	7.9	21.3	64.0
5.3	I believed the change was needed to improve the situation the organisation was in	4.5	4.5	9.0	15.7	66.3
5.4	I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	2.2	6.7	4.5	12.4	74.2
5.5	I believed the change was a good strategy for my organisation	4.5	6.7	5.6	15.7	67.4
Change Implementation						

#	Question	Strongly disagree %	Somewhat disagree %	Neither agree or disagree %	Somewhat agree %	Strongly agree %
6.1	The change was clearly communicated and understood by the recipients	6.7	14.6	6.7	39.3	32.6
6.2	I believe resistance to the change was adequately addressed by management	9.0	19.1	15.7	29.2	27
Individual effect						
7.1	I had a good feeling about the change	5.6	7.9	11.2	28.1	47.2
7.2	I believed the change would benefit me	6.7	7.9	14.6	30.3	40.4
7.3	I felt I was capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed change	3.4	7.9	5.6	23.6	59.6
7.4	I had too much at stake to resist the change	6.7	5.6	28.1	19.1	40.4
7.5	I believed we had the capability to successfully implement the change	2.2	12.4	3.4	27.0	55.1
7.6	I was experiencing the change as a positive process	4.5	6.7	14.6	29.2	44.9
Individual involvement						
8.1	I was keen to participate in the process of change	2.2	2.2	5.6	23.6	66.3
8.2	I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	0	0	5.6	20.2	74.2
8.3	I would have felt guilty about opposing the change	9.0	6.7	14.6	23.6	46.1
8.4	I did not feel any obligation to support the change	55.1	16.9	13.5	5.6	9.0

Looking at the aspects of individual readiness for change presented in Table 6 above, the question with the highest level of agreement was ‘I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change’ (74.2% strongly agreed, 20.4% somewhat agreed). Noting also that there was no disagreement with this statement by any participants, resulting in overwhelming agreement (94.4%). This question was taken from the Organizational

Change Questionnaire–Climate of Change, Processes, and Readiness (OCQ–C, P, R) developed by Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (2009) and relates to participation as part of the change process.

There was also strong agreement for the statement ‘I believed in the value of the change’ (71.9% strongly agreed, 18% somewhat agreed) relating to affective commitment, ‘I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation’ (74.4% strongly agreed relating to the appropriateness of the change, 12.4% somewhat agreed) and ‘I was keen to participate in the process of change’ also relating to participation (66.3% strongly agreed, 22.3% somewhat agreed).

Overall, only four questions had less than 70% overall agreement. Interestingly, the question having the most disagreement was ‘I did not feel any obligation to support the change’ relating to normative commitment (55.1% strongly disagreed, 16.9% somewhat disagreed), as this result confirms support for the change.

There was also considerable disagreement with the questions ‘I believe resistance to the change was adequately addressed by management’ (9.0% strongly disagreed, 19.1% somewhat disagreed) and ‘The change was clearly communicated and understood by the recipients’ (6.7 Strongly disagreed, 14.6 somewhat disagreed) even though there was overall more agreement with both of these questions. Neither question was from the published scales but written by the researcher to identify the importance of management support within individual readiness for change.

The strong agreement overall is an indication that respondents felt strongly about the questions posed from the published scales used (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002) regarding the individual’s perception of the appropriateness and efficacy of the change, the change valence, or what’s in it for the individual, emotional and intentional readiness for change, the quality of change communication, and affective, continuance and normative commitment.

4.1.3. Group readiness for change

In order to allow comparison of the individual and group responses, there were group questions based on the same aspects of cognitive readiness for change (appropriateness, efficacy and valence) as identified by the scales of Armenakis et al. (2007), aspects of

change climate (emotional readiness for change, intentional readiness for change and quality of change communication) based on Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck's (2009) scale, and affective commitment to change based on Herscovitch and Meyer's (2002) scale.

Table 7: Level of agreement or disagreement about group aspects of readiness for change (Q 9.1 through Q13.5)

#	Question	Strongly disagree %	Somewhat disagree %	Neither agree or disagree %	Somewhat agree %	Strongly agree %
Group effect						
9.1	My workgroup believed that the change would benefit them	5.6	13.5	6.7	39.3	34.8
9.2	My workgroup believed the change in our operations would improve the performance of our organisation	5.6	19.1	10.1	33.7	31.5
9.3	My workgroup believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	6.7	7.9	10.1	25.8	49.4
Group interactions						
10.1	My immediate manager was in favour of these changes	4.5	5.6	4.5	18.0	67.4
10.2	If I experienced any problems, I could always turn to my manager for help	10.1	7.9	3.4	25.8	52.8
10.3	Our business area's managers spoke up for us during the change process	9.0	13.5	13.5	21.3	42.7
10.4	My workgroup believed our immediate manager was in favour of the change	3.4	7.9	11.2	19.1	58.4
10.5	My workgroup felt resisting the change was not a viable option for them	2.2	4.5	19.1	33.7	40.4
10.6	My workgroup would have felt guilty about opposing the change	2.2	10.1	23.6	31.5	32.6
10.7	Our business area's senior managers paid sufficient attention to the personal consequences that the change could have for their staff members	14.6	22.5	5.6	25.8	31.5
Group information						
11.1	Information provided to the group regarding the change was clear	5.6	11.2	4.5	36.0	42.7
11.2	There was good communication between project leaders and staff members about this organisation's policy toward change	4.5	14.6	11.2	32.6	37.1

#	Question	Strongly disagree %	Somewhat disagree %	Neither agree or disagree %	Somewhat agree %	Strongly agree %
11.3	Decisions concerning work were taken in consultation with the staff in the group who would be affected	15.7	13.5	14.6	25.8	30.3
11.4	Staff members were consulted about the reasons for change	12.4	9.0	9.0	32.6	37.1
Group involvement						
12.1	My workgroup believed in the value of the change	3.4	6.7	7.9	28.1	53.9
12.2	My workgroup believed the change was a good strategy for the organisation	4.5	7.9	6.7	36.0	44.9
12.3	My workgroup did not feel any obligation to support the change	27.0	38.2	12.4	13.5	9.0
12.4	My workgroup was keen to participate in the process of change	3.4	6.7	15.7	36.0	38.2
12.5	My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	4.5	4.5	11.2	27.0	52.8
12.6	My workgroup believed they were capable of successfully performing their job duties with the proposed change	3.4	6.7	10.1	39.3	40.4
12.7	My workgroup believed we could successfully implement the change	2.2	6.7	10.1	44.9	36.0

Looking at the aspects of group readiness for change summarised in Table 7 above, the question having the highest level of agreement was ‘My immediate manager was in favour of these changes’, which relates to principal support (67.4% strongly agreed, 18% somewhat agreed).

There was also overwhelming agreement (close to or over 80%) for ‘My workgroup believed they were capable of successfully performing their job duties with the proposed change’ (40.4 strongly agreed, 39.3% somewhat agreed) and ‘My workgroup believed we could successfully implement the change’ (36% strongly agreed, 44.9% somewhat agreed), both relating to efficacy; ‘My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change’ relating to participation (52.8 strongly agreed, 27% somewhat agreed), ‘My workgroup believed the change was a good strategy for the organisation’ relating to the appropriateness (44.9 strongly agreed, 36% somewhat agreed), ‘My workgroup believed in the value of the change’ relating to affective commitment (53.9 strongly agreed, 28.1% somewhat agreed),

Interestingly, the question having the highest disagreement was ‘My workgroup did not feel any obligation to support the change’ relating to normative commitment (27% strongly disagreed, 38.2% somewhat disagreed).

While there was also considerable disagreement with the questions ‘Our business area's senior managers paid sufficient attention to the personal consequences that the change could have for their staff members (14.6% strongly disagreed, 22.5% somewhat disagreed), and ‘Decisions concerning work were taken in consultation with the staff in the group who would be affected (15.7% strongly disagreed, 13.5% somewhat disagreed). Both questions related to support by supervisors within the change process in the OCQ–C, P, R.

The low ‘neither agree nor disagree’ percentages are an indication that respondents felt strongly positive about the group impact of the appropriateness of the change, the efficacy of the change, change valence (or what’s in it for the group), participation in the change, intentional readiness for change, quality of change communication, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

4.1.4. Comparison of individual and group readiness for change

As seen previously, some questions, originally from individual scales, were also posed at the group level. Evaluation of relationships between these pairs of questions allowed us to determine whether a referent-shift consensus model adds to our understanding of group readiness for change (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013).

The referent-shift approach involves the rewording of questions, from the individual’s to the group’s perspective:

e.g. ‘I believed in the value of the change’ would be written as ‘My workgroup believed in the value of the change’.

Table 8:Shift-referent comparison – Individual and workgroup

#	Question	Strongly disagree %	Somewhat disagree %	Neither agree or disagree %	Somewhat agree %	Strongly agree %	Question	#
5.1	I believed in the value of the change	1.1	1.1	7.9	18	71.9		
		3.4	6.7	7.9	28.1	53.9	My workgroup believed in the value of the change	12.1
5.4	I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	2.2	6.7	4.5	12.4	74.2		
		6.7	7.9	10.1	25.8	49.4	My workgroup believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	9.3
5.5	I believed the change was a good strategy for my organisation	4.5	6.7	5.6	15.7	67.4		
		4.5	7.9	6.7	36	44.9	My workgroup believed the change was a good strategy for the organisation	12.2
7.2	I believed the change would benefit me	6.7	7.9	14.6	30.3	40.4		
		5.6	13.5	6.7	39.3	34.8	My workgroup believed that the change would benefit them	9.1
7.3	I felt I was capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed change	3.4	7.9	5.6	23.6	59.6		

		3.4	6.7	10.1	39.3	40.4	My workgroup believed they were capable of successfully performing their job duties with the proposed change	12.6
7.5	I believed we had the capability to successfully implement the change	2.2	12.4	3.4	27	55.1		
		2.2	6.7	10.1	44.9	36	My workgroup believed we could successfully implement the change	12.7
8.1	I was keen to participate in the process of change	2.2	2.2	5.6	23.6	66.3		
		3.4	6.7	15.7	36	38.2	My workgroup was keen to participate in the process of change	12.4
8.2	I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	0	0	5.6	20.2	74.2		
		4.5	4.5	11.2	27	52.8	My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	12.5
8.3	I would have felt guilty about opposing the change	9	6.7	14.6	23.6	46.1		
		2.2	10.1	23.6	31.5	32.6	My workgroup would have felt guilty about opposing the change	10.6
8.4	I did not feel any obligation	55.1	16.9	13.5	5.6	9		

	to support the change							
		27	38.2	12.4	13.5	9	My workgroup did not feel any obligation to support the change	12.3

Table 8 above shows a comparison of the individual and group questions.

Although the individual and workgroup-related percentages differ, **Error! Reference source not found.** shows a general trend of consensus (noting that the final question 8.4 was reversed). Individuals were more likely to strongly agree with the questions than they believed their team agreed with it.

Individuals most strongly agreed with the statements ‘I believed in the value of the change’ relating to affective commitment, ‘I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation’ relating to the appropriateness of the change, and ‘I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change’ relating to participation as part of the change process. Moreover, these were also the most strongly agreed with workgroup-related statements, though to a lesser extent.

The Likert scales were then recoded to group them into three numerical groups to see whether this simplified grouping showed a statistical difference between the individual and group response comparisons. 1 (Strongly disagree) and 2 (Somewhat disagree) were both recoded to = 1 (Disagree). 3 (Neither agree nor disagree) was recoded to 2 (Neutral), and 4 (Somewhat agree) and 5 (Strongly agree) were recoded to 3 (Agree).

This second recoding exercise enabled a Crosstabs comparison of the three groups or as a 3-point Likert scale. The recoded Likert scales were analysed using a CROSSTABS test in SPSS to confirm relationships using the Chi-square test. The chi-square test is helpful in determining the probability of correlation between qualitative, unordered data. It enables us to understand whether we can attribute the statistical spread to chance (Franzblau 1958). For ordinal values (i.e. whole numbers, as in this case, where numbers were assigned to values), gamma is a measure of association (Upton & Cook 2014). Gamma has an advantage over chi-square as it does not need a value of 5 or more in each cell, which was an issue with our limited data.

Gamma values range from -1 to 1, with zero meaning no association and a gamma of 1 meaning a perfect association. Variables are associated if they are not independent of each other. In this case, it would mean that the individual and workgroup perceptions are dependent on each other for the specific question asked, so there is a relationship between them. Appendix B6 Interpretation of calculated gamma (Rea & Parker 2014) shows the association interpretation of calculated gamma.

The outlier question pair is 'I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change' and 'My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change'. See Appendix B.5 Individual and workgroup relationship interpretation for the full results.

There is a low association on the 5-point Likert scale, and when grouped into three responses, the Gamma value was 0.45, and the p-value was 0.379. The more significant p-value no longer supports the rejection of the null hypothesis. We can interpret this to mean the individual and workgroup responses are not consistent.

The question was appropriated from the Organizational Change Questionnaire–Climate of Change, Processes, and Readiness (OCQ–C, P, R) (Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009), relating to intentional readiness for change. Behavioural/intentional readiness to change is defined as the effort and energy organizational members are willing to invest in the change process (Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009). Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) reported that individuals had a general willingness to meet change requirements even when they did not show commitment to the organisation and change. Herscovitch and Meyer suggest that a reluctance to resist the change or commitments to supervisors or peers could discourage resistance. However, they suggest a willingness to support change and readiness for change will be positively related to affective commitment to change and possibly normative commitment (though the obligation might exist regardless of readiness for change), but not to continuance commitment (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002).

This result suggests that the shift-referent approach, as discussed, may be useful in identifying differences in intentional readiness for change between the group and the individual, but the majority of the shift-referent questions used in this research did not show questions statistical differences.

4.1.5. Comments regarding the impact of the change

This selection allowed respondents free text entry for any additional comments, the impact of the change on the respondent, their group and workplace, and how Covid-19 had impacted their workplace and themselves psychologically.

See Appendix B for the complete survey.

This question, ‘Please enter any additional comments you would like to make regarding your perception of the changes,’ was designed to understand the change outcome.

As the question was not mandatory, 62 respondents answered the question.

Table 9: Topics influencing the change and outcome

Topic	Frequency	Positive outcome	Negative outcome
culture	1		1
disempowerment	7	2	5
empowerment	20	20	0
good communications	5	5	0
good management	4	4	0
Lack of Resources	2	0	2
Poor communication	10	2	8
Poor implementation	1	0	1
Poor management	7	1	6
Teamwork	1	1	0
Technology	6	6	0
Training	2	2	0
Willing to contribute	2	2	0

Table 9 above shows the topics noted in the comments, the frequency and the outcome as described by the respondent.

All responses included the themes of leadership or management and the appropriateness of the change. Interestingly, most outcome responses were categorised similarly to the

answer to the question: ‘The organisation had a climate and culture that supported the change’, with only 3 out of the 62 being different.

The frequency total of 68 was caused by some of the 62 answers, including multiple topics due to the free format answers.

4.1.6. Organisational readiness for change

Questions assessing organisational support and readiness were based on aspects of principal support from the scales of Armenakis et al. (2007), aspects of attitude of top management towards change and support by supervisors based on Bouckennooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck's (2009) scale.

Table 10: Level of agreement or disagreement about organisational aspects of readiness for change (Q 14.1 through Q15.3)

#	Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total	Missing
Organisation support								
13.1	My workgroup believed our top leaders supported the change	4.5	6.7	5.6	20.2	62.9	100	
13.2	Our organisation's senior managers coached us very well about implementing the change	16.9	18.0	16.9	24.7	23.6	100	
13.3	Management kept all areas of the organisation informed about its decisions	12.4	15.7	14.6	29.2	28.1	100	

13.4	Two way communication between management and business areas was very good	12.4	23.6	14.6	27.0	22.5	100	
13.5	Top management's commitment to the change was visible	7.9	6.7	10.1	28.1	47.2	100	
Organisation readiness								
14.1	Our leaders understood the complexity and adapted well to the change	6.7	13.5	5.6	34.8	37.1	97.8	2.2
14.2	Our business area's senior managers had trouble in adapting to the change	25.8	27.0	11.2	27.0	6.7	97.8	2.2
14.3	Resources required for the change were readily available	13.5	13.5	12.4	30.3	28.1	97.8	2.2
14.4	The organisation was well-prepared for this change	16.9	15.7	15.7	30.3	19.1	97.8	2.2
14.5	The organisation had a climate and culture that supported the change	14.6	12.4	12.4	23.6	34.8	97.8	2.2

Table 10 above shows a summary of the questions about the organisation and leadership. The following legend identifies the reference and category.

Looking at the aspects of organisational readiness for change summarised in Table 8 below, the questions having the highest level of agreement were 'My workgroup believed

our top leaders supported the change' relating to principal support, and 'Resources required for the change were readily available' which related to organisational support for the change.

There was also significant support for 'Our leaders understood the complexity and adapted well to the change' relating to trust in leadership. 'The organisation had a climate and culture that supported the change', and 'The organisation was well-prepared for this change' were also well-supported and related to the change climate and added to investigate senior management communication and adaption to the change and organisational support for the change.

Interestingly, the most significant disagreement was with the question 'Our business area's senior managers had trouble in adapting to the change', which also supports the organisation's change management.

The strong agreement overall is an indication that respondents felt strongly about the management's support for change, including Principal support, The attitude of top management towards change, and Support by supervisors.

There were also some questions added which were not from the literature scales. These questions were added to investigate senior management communication and adaption to the change and organisational support for the change. These included 'Management kept all areas of the organisation informed about its decisions', 'Two-way communication between management and business areas was very good', 'Our leaders understood the complexity and adapted well to the change', 'Our business area's senior managers had trouble in adapting to the change', Resources required for the change were readily available', 'The organisation was well-prepared for this change' and 'The organisation had a climate and culture that supported the change'.

Of the 65 free text results provided, 22 were viewed negatively (33.8%), and 43 were viewed as positive (66.2%).

4.2. Summary

This chapter describes and analyses the quantitative data used within this research to investigate multi-level readiness for change.

There was statistical support for the factors of multi-level readiness for change previously identified in the literature using a questionnaire based on published scales (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002). Analysis of the data showed a small statistical difference between readiness for change at the group and individual level, relating to whether the group and individual were willing to make a significant contribution to the change. Furthermore, change outcomes were positively skewed towards participation in the change, intentional readiness for change, the quality of change communication and support by supervisors.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, will analyse the qualitative data gathered and the overall results. Chapter 6 will discuss the quantitative and quantitative findings of Chapters 4 and 5 to obtain a greater depth of understanding or complementarity of results (Small 2011) and explain any unpredicted outcomes.

Chapter 5

5. Thematic analysis of the interviews

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the quantitative data analysis, detailing the participants, data, and quantitative findings relating to the research questions. This chapter will similarly outline the qualitative data: identifying the data, analysis and qualitative findings. Chapter 6 will discuss the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 to obtain a greater depth of understanding or complementarity of results (Small 2011) and explain any unpredicted outcomes.

This chapter will analyse and discuss the change professionals' views in detail. Notably, while the questionnaire participants had self-assessed as part of a workplace change, the researcher and peers assessed the interviewees as change professionals. The research participants were significant members within the change efforts rather than having change imposed on them, and many were consultants, so they would not be involved in the ongoing change outcomes within the organisation. This creates a different perspective on the change efforts' needs, implementation, and outcomes.

This qualitative analysis aims to use the rich data provided by the interviews to improve our knowledge of the more nuanced aspects of multi-level readiness for change. The interviews were wide-ranging, describing many aspects of the change process from those implementing a previous change at their respective workplaces. Necessarily, this thesis will focus on the discussion most relevant to the research questions, with the themes explored relating to the change context, change content including process, and readiness for change at the individual, group and organisational levels. These five themes run through both the interviews and the questionnaire. The remaining discussions are an opportunity for future research in this area. The interview script in full can be seen in Appendix A: Individual face-to-face interviews.

Microsoft Teams was used to record the interviews, generating an initial transcript. This transcript was edited, imported into NVivo and coded. Thematic analysis aided patterns, categories and themes to emerge. The thematic analysis followed the general process of

familiarisation with the data, systemically generating initial codes (O'Connor & Joffe 2020), searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and writing up (Braun & Clarke 2012; Creswell 2018). Both the interview questions and questionnaire were structured to incorporate and align some themes, and sub-themes have emerged and are identified under the theme headings through a further inductive step to obtain a holistic thematic data representation (Miles & Huberman 1984; Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014). The coding process was considered complete once the emerging themes were similar to those previously identified, and no new themes were identified (Denzin & Lincoln 2017).

The final coding frame contained five themes: change context, change content including process, individual readiness for change, group readiness for change, and organisational readiness for change.

Interview quotes are verbatim but substituted with ellipses for brevity and readability. Colloquialisms such as 'um', 'yeah' or 'like' were removed for legibility, ensuring the quote's meaning was not changed.

The respondents have been given aliases and are referred to by R[name] to distinguish them from cited authors. For example, Alice will be referred to as RAlice.

5.2. Theme 1: Change context

Change context includes the organisation's internal and external environments. Holt (2007) defines context as the attributes of the environment around the change. Contextual issues focus on both the organisation's external and internal environments. External conditions related to the change context include government regulations and requirements, technology, market forces and competition. Internal conditions include technological requirements, resource efficiency, and previous change experience (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999). Some factors influencing change context are supervisor support, trust in leadership, participation in management and politics.

5.2.1. Background of the changes

The following table shows interviewee details by alias. Most of the change professionals self-identified as female change leads. There was a wide range of industries identified

with the highest numbers in finance and retail. See **Error! Reference source not found.** for demographic details of the interviewees

Table 11: Interviewees

Alias	Position	Industry	Medium	Gender
Alice	CEO	Health	Video	Female
Bea	Change Lead	Finance	Audio	Female
Cathy	Head of Transformation	Retail	Audio	Female
Di	Change Lead	Retail	Video	Female
Erin	Business Improvement Engineer	Manufacturing	Audio	Female
Faye	Portfolio Lead (Change and implementation)	Government	Audio	Female
Greg	Change Lead	Agribusiness	Video	Male
Hannah	Change manager (Training focus)	Manufacturing	Audio	Female
Isla	Change manager/Project Lead	Finance	Video	Female
Julia	Change Lead	Finance	Video	Female
Kira	Change Lead	Retail	Video	Female
Lena	Change Manager	Insurance	Video	Female
Mia	Change Manager	Mining	Video	Female
Nola	Head of organisational development/HR	Government	Video	Female
Oscar	Change consultant	Finance	Video	Male
Pia	Communications Team Change Lead	Not for Profit	Audio	Female
Ruth	Change project manager	Education	Audio	Female

The interviewees described a workplace change they had participated in as a change professional. Some general questions were posed:

1. Could you please describe the change you have selected to use?
2. How many people were impacted by the change?
3. What was your position and responsibilities within your workplace at the time of the change?

4. How many years had you been in your role at the time of the change?

The responses are summarised below.

5.2.1.1. Alice (referred to as RAlice)

Alice was the CEO of a government-owned organisation in the public health area, providing services mainly to children and the elderly. The organisation had approximately 1000 employees and an annual turnover in the hundreds of millions. The implemented change was to adapt the product delivery to a commercial model, gain efficiencies and deliver a profit to the government. It also enabled further services to particularly vulnerable clients. The change outcome delivered over six years was very positive, with phase 2 changes yet to be implemented.

5.2.1.2. Bea (referred to as RBea)

Bea was the change leader for a global technology implementation program that went live two weeks after she commenced at a finance organisation. While the late appointment meant she could not influence the change preparation, readiness was a significant concern. Globally there were 15000 employees affected. Drivers for the change included efficiencies, process streamlining and subsequent cost savings. The deployment was one drop, with 22 technology systems reduced to 12. Simultaneously implementing all the functionality created a high-impact change to processes and operating models and, therefore, to the workforce and the adoption by the employees. While the timeframe for implementation is unknown, the change outcome was poor.

5.2.1.3. Cathy (referred to as RCathy)

Cathy was the Transformation lead for a significant facilities management transformation at a major retail company encompassing most of their facilities, leading to major organisational transformation. A business review had identified the changes required for considerable cost benefits, but the company management had misunderstood the considerable investment, fundamental process changes and detailed planning required for change implementation. Some 300 personnel were affected over an 18-month implementation process. The interviewee assessed the change implementation as very poor.

5.2.1.4.Di (referred to as RDi)

Di was the consultant change lead for a retail supply chain automation implementation, including end-to-end processes, purchasing, supply chain, warehousing and reordering. This automation improved the margin of profit, which is notoriously small within this retail sector due to its high costs. The implementation required significant behavioural change as store managers no longer had control over stock ordering. The change occurred over three years and impacted approximately 20000 employees, with a good change outcome.

5.2.1.5.Erin (referred to as RErin)

Erin was the change lead for a lean manufacturing implementation evolving over three years, which impacted some 700 employees. The manufacturing sector struggled to compete with countries like China or South Africa regarding manufacturing costs. The adoption of lean manufacturing was part of the strategy to become more efficient and cost-effective, thereby preserving manufacturing remaining in Australia. The change outcome was considered to be very good.

5.2.1.6.Faye (referred to as RFaye)

Faye was the consultant portfolio lead for an organisation-wide technology change within the government sector. The change involved transforming the organization to be customer-experience-focused and digitally adept. The organisation was a late adopter of digital technology. RFaye was involved with the change implementation for 20 months, and there is ongoing continuous improvement. The change affected some 1200 employees, with a good change outcome.

5.2.1.7.Greg (referred to as RGreg)

Greg was the consultant change lead for a digital transformation in an Australian global agribusiness company, with a workforce of about 30,000 people covering South America, Europe and the US. The change was to implement a human capital management or HR system, replacing several disparate systems with one consolidated system ensuring reporting visibility throughout the organization. The change process occurred over three years with a good outcome.

5.2.1.8.Hannah (referred to as RHannah)

Hannah was the consultant change manager for a lean manufacturing implementation in the pharmaceutical industry, reducing costs by moving to the on-demand manufacture of goods. The change process occurred over a year and impacted some 1400 employees, with a good change outcome.

5.2.1.9.Isla (referred to as RIsla)

Isla was the consultant stream lead and change manager for an insurance supplier change within a finance organisation. There were six work streams: people and culture, technology, communications to suppliers, customers and staff, staff engagement, new staff onboarding and training, implementation of a new location, and cultural alignment—a regulatory change requiring additional pivots partway through the supplier change efforts added to the complexity. The organisation employed Isla before the change initiation, which impacted 300 staff and 500 supplier staff. The change process occurred over nine months with a very poor outcome.

5.2.1.10.Julia (referred to as RJulia)

Julia was the consultant change lead for a technological change within a large organisation in the finance industry, affecting some 50,000 people. The change moved the organisation off Lotus Notes and onto Microsoft platforms to uplift its technology and better collaborate with external parties such as vendors, suppliers and customers. Julia had recently joined the organisation to lead another project but requested to lead this project. The change process happened over 21 months, with very good outcomes.

5.2.1.11.Kira (referred to as RKira)

Kira was the change lead for a sales restructure, employed within a manufacturing organisation. Kira had already implemented several changes within this area of the organisation prior to this opportunity. The sales team had a low return on investment and a high labour cost that could be modified to increase efficiency, generate better customer service, create career paths and decrease costs. The change was implemented over three years, covering 260 staff and leading to very good outcomes.

5.2.1.12.Lena (referred to as RLena)

Lena was a consultant change manager for a company acquisition in the insurance industry. This change required the acquired organisation to be collocated and integrated into the acquiring organisation while catering to the differing clientele. Assessing and contact centre processes were modified to adopt the best practices of both organisations and ensure cultural alignment. Lena joined the organisation soon after the business case was approved. The implementation occurred over one year, involving some 280 staff. The change outcome was assessed as good.

5.2.1.13.Mia (referred to as RMia)

Mia was the consultant change manager for a human resources software implementation within the mining sector. The software solution replaced the manual and paper-based system of performance reviews, leading to a more straightforward system, increased system efficiency, and improved staff and manager engagement. Mia was working on a contract basis and had already completed several projects. The project was completed over six months, involved 1500 personnel, and led to very good outcomes.

5.2.1.14.Nola (referred to as RNola)

Nola was the organisational development manager implementing a significant cultural shift within a local government authority. There were leadership issues within middle management, notably a lack of leadership and management skills. Areas this impacted included project deliverability, accountability, reporting requirements, people management and feedback, as evidenced by the results of a commissioned engagement survey. The change involved 800 people and took three years to implement, with a very good outcome.

5.2.1.15.Oscar (referred to as ROscar)

Oscar was a consultant business transformation and change manager who implemented a service management tool in a large financial organisation. Oscar's role was as part of the software organisation that was successful in bidding for the change implementation work after the previous efforts by the financial organisation had failed to implement the change successfully. The change occurred over 18 months, impacting some 3500 personnel, with a very good change outcome.

5.2.1.16.Pia (referred to as RPia)

Pia was the consultant communication team change lead for a not-for-profit organisational integration transformation. The change significantly impacted how the long-standing organisation operated, being an internal merger of two parts into a new operating model to provide a consistent approach to service delivery. Pia was specifically contracted for this role. The change implementation occurred over two years, impacting some 10000 people, with a very good change outcome.

5.2.1.17.Ruth (referred to as RRuth)

Ruth was the IT project manager for an organisational restructure and relocation within an education facility. The change involved the campus changing from a traditional to a vertical campus, impacting staff, the workplace, and work processes. It was a cultural as well as a physical change. Ruth had just started work at the organisation at the restructuring and relocation initiation. It was completed a year later with a very good outcome.

5.2.2.External pressures

This section was predominantly informed by the interview questions “Could you please describe the change you have selected to use?” and “How would you describe the need for the change?”.

Organisational change can be instigated by various external pressures, driven by global, country, state, industry or technological forces. Organisations must adapt to the changing needs of their environments to transform to maximise opportunities and survive.

Several changes identified in the interviews outlined the effects of the environment on the context of the change.

Government requirements or legislation drove some of the changes.

“The basis of the change was really a government request for the organization...to be returning some money to the shareholder, who was the government....it had...been given the ability to offer these services in the private market. And so, the government expected the organization to show some sort of profitability, given that all the other people out there in this part of the marketplace were making money.” (RAlice)

“The business owner was also involved in some of the industry research...and reviews...and actually contributing to the insights into the regulatory change... some of the regulations that would be coming that we would be forced to meet... “A lot of pressure, legal challenges and of course also technology, [the] pace of change and a competitive environment...So it was a highly complex, highly change fatigued area with a lot of cultural and environmental issues.” (RIsla)

The following quotes identified survival due to high manufacturing costs featured as external pressures:

“Of all the sort of changes and the need for the change, the fact that...an organization could go under if it doesn't change is probably one of the most motivating things to actually have to deal with.” (RHannah)

“For us, it was really a survival thing, and sadly the plant's pretty much shut down now. There are only one or two things they produce now. Yeah, cause Manufacturing, as I'm sure you know, got completely offshored.” (RErin)

There were a number of participants identifying the need for improving technology within an organisation:

“That was the primary driver...efficiencies, streamlining of processes, cost savings, etc. So I say it was, I think strategically with a longer-term view, becoming much more of a digitally-driven organization. , an online organization...I think from a technology point of view; it was a good decision, a good investment.” (RBea)

“It was the whole end to end, automating the whole end and or bringing automation into the whole end to end supply chain and buying process...(They) have a very, very small margin of profit, very small, so they have to be operationally excellent...(It) was imperative to get on that bandwagon.” (RDi)

“Essentially what the change entailed was transforming the organization...to becoming more customer-focused - customer experience focused and more digital.” (RFaye)

“The climate was different from country to country, and I think some of that also comes down to external factors. What other things culturally were happening in those countries, where there are elections going on... were there data privacy laws coming into effect, were there migrations of people having refugee crisis, were there droughts that year and was that affecting their customer base because it was an agribusiness company so very, very literal climate concerns there in terms of people's attention to what we were trying to do.” (RGreg)

“Yeah, so it was basically taking the organization from using a, you know, an antiquated email platform Lotus notes to using outlook and then also swapping out the chat app. So, Lotus notes used Sametime as a conversational chat tool. And so, along with the outlook, it was introducing Microsoft Link at the time, so the precursor to Skype and making sure that people could transition to that, Microsoft-based world for their Mail and their collaboration.” (RJulia)

“People were interested. They were sick of the old paper-based system; they were interested in using new technology.” (RMia)

“The change was definitely needed, and that had been identified by the internal organization of the bank, and hence they embarked on that program of work to align all of the business units, together, in a way that they could actually work across the enterprise as opposed to within the silos...it’s a cost-driven, but also a customer experience-driven....” (ROscar)

“So there are a lot of layers of the change if you like...bringing in new technology to be at the leading edge of education provision...there were so many new pieces of technology, so the academics had to adopt the new ways of teaching and learning and delivery of content.” (RRuth)

The reasons for introducing technological change include competitive advantage.

The industry sector for the various changes included three government or government-owned organisations, five in the finance sector, two in retail, three in manufacturing, and the remainder in one of the Agriculture, Fast-moving Consumer goods, Insurance, Mining and Education sectors. While it is not appropriate to generalise with such a small sample, it is noticeable that two changes out of the 5 in the finance sector had outcomes classed as very poor.

In summary, a range of external pressures was placed on organisations leading to the change context, including government requirements or legislation, high manufacturing costs featured as external pressures and the need for improving technology within an organisation to meet industry standards.

5.2.3. Organisational culture

The socially accepted norms, values and principles that comprise an organisation’s culture are unique to the organisation and generally guide behaviour, whereas the organisational climate is the employee perception and experience of the practice of the organisational culture (Alvesson 2002; Martin 2012; Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad

2013). Both culture and climate aspects were identified by the participants as impacting readiness for change.

RCathy identified the uniqueness of each organisation's culture:

"Every organization I've worked in has been, you know, has its own culture and its own unwritten rules, and in this particular organisation, the unwritten rule was that profit was king, and you did what you were told. Unless you were in the union, in which case you could threaten to go on strike. Hum. And everything was built around that." (RCathy)

Aspects of the culture and values were identified as necessary when looking at how change should be implemented:

"It was very evident that people actually - and that culture - weren't attuned to self-serving...It's just not an instinctive place to go to for people - they're very relationship-driven. They very much go to other people for help. So, the first port of call for everybody was the HR support team." (RBea)

"...just holding them accountable and just holding the values. So I'd be reinforcing the values...the next year, when we ran the engagement survey, all the commentary in there did not question the values whatsoever. They were actually using the values as part of the vernacular...So the values were embedded. The values weren't even questioned. It was part of their vernacular...we won the battle with the values." (RNola)

"So the culture...is hierarchical and top-down." (RDi)

"People had a strong emotional connection to the organization that you don't see in a corporate setting. People were working there...because of who the organization was. And their values aligned with the organization, and there were other aspects of the organization that they got heavily involved in that weren't to do with their actual day-to-day jobs. it was like a family...It provided so much more than just employment...." (RPia)

"Some countries...people might be somewhat resistant to change, culturally it was very much you're told to do something, and you do it. So, in that regard...they probably weren't necessarily happy about it, but there was a lot less sort of resistance that we noticed...they did sort of get on with it and pass it along. In those other places like Colombia, maybe there was a little bit more of a lax attitude to it, but you had these pockets, these sort of communities sort of come together to help with this that were very passionate about it and could relate to their people locally about whatever their concerns were." (RGreg)

“We suddenly got their value around service. So, we oriented the entire thing, not communications genuinely oriented the entire [change] solution around how do you give back better service.”
(RDi)

In the midst of a cultural change implementation, the establishment of new cultural values meant that middle manager bad apples had their views challenged by those around them.” (RNola)

“So, a good change strategy has to breathe - I've never thought of it like that, but it has to breathe in and out all the time. What I would do is find out what's the purpose of this overarching project. What are the benefits that they need to achieve? I don't - they do. And then, I would write my strategy very much, focusing on the benefits that that company needed to achieve, that it committed to the board. Now very few change strategies do that. Very few. I didn't worry about values. What I would worry about was culture alignment, which is where values get tied up. I would worry about values in terms of making sure that the change project leveraged the genuine company values, not their espoused ones. But yeah, genuine things they valued and again and by leverage, I mean really leverage. I mean, I would write the change strategy and change plan understanding... if I understood a value that was genuinely in the hearts and minds of the organization, that would dictate how I went about most of the change.” (RDi)

Some participants noted the need to align the culture to achieve effective change:

“...the change came off the merger and acquisition [and] it clearly was an organizational imperative to align similar structures...the benefits would be at multiple levels...financial benefits...an alignment in approaches and processes as well as systems... integration benefits...Clearly, there's a culture benefit in aligning these teams to ensure that we have one mindset in terms of how the organization's contact centres work, and what is the organization's culture in terms of customer relationships.” (RLena)

“How do we together co-create a meaningful change?” (RLena)

Whereas other participants noted the difficulty of changing the culture and behaviour or organisational climate:

“It was behaviours and culture...once I got to that absolute nub of it, I could change everything...even then, it took three to 10 years for the behaviours to change. But every project is going to have one of those in it. And if you don't get to the bottom of that and think about behaviours and values and practices rather than just technical change, you won't deliver the right stuff.” (RDi)

“Culturally, I think it was probably a bit of a shift, more so like the middle management layer...you're removing a lot of things that they would have just turned to someone and had someone in HR do...That was probably surprisingly the hardest nut to crack.” (RGreg)

“[A]...number of the managers had complained that they were just really confused about the process...partly it was about building a culture because part of the performance review process is also about having those one-on-one meetings with your team, understanding their strengths, weaknesses, goals and how you can best engage your team to do the best work...not just for remuneration and benefit but it's part of how to get quality from your team and how to assign your team to the work that best fits them.” (RMia)

“So it was a highly complex, highly change fatigued area with a lot of cultural and environmental issues.” (RIsla)

“...this was the biggest change that they had experienced in, probably most of their working lives, and you had a lot of not only the culture but just the nature of the employees. A lot of people had worked there their whole life. They didn't know anything different. They never worked in a place that had activity-based working...So they really didn't understand the nature, the intent.” (RRuth)

The importance of organisational culture, values, and climate and behaviour when implementing change was identified as a theme by a number of the participants. Organisational readiness for change is supported by a culture accepting innovation, risk-taking, and learning as well as by a positive organisational climate with flexible policies and procedures (Weiner 2009).

5.3. Theme 2: Change process

Change content refers to the specific change implementation and is therefore unique to the organization as it undergoes the change. The change process is a combination of the change being implemented and how the change has been dealt with, covering areas of principal support (leader support for the change, participation in the change, actions performed by change agents, and communication strategy and quality).

The questions asked included:

“How would you view the appropriateness of the change?”, and

“How was this change being implemented? E.g. strengths, articulated, communicated, your role, major challenges, what you would have done differently?”.

5.3.1. Change content

Once the discrepancy or need for the change has been identified, readiness for change is supported if the change being implemented is believed to be appropriate to the need (Holt et al. 2007). Most interviewees agreed that the change they were involved in was appropriate, with solutions well-chosen from their perspective.

“The journey of change was to bring, particularly the professionals in the organization, along the journey to understand that you can compete in the private market and you can do a very good job, and you can have very high quality and not corrupt your values, not necessarily corrupt your ability to be a good professional and that the private sector in health care isn't a greedy villain. It can be a very respectable organization.” (RAlice)

“The solution itself and the introduction of it: totally appropriate. The solution...is very well known in the industry. It's seen as being a much more customer-focused solution which is very in line with the organisation's ethos...It seemed to be the right one for the organization. I've heard great things about it out in the workplace.” (RBea)

“Well, I think it was very appropriate because ...it aligned to the strategic direction of government...the organization strategy aligns to government strategy, so that meant that it was the right direction.” (RFaye)

“That was it; really, manufacturing was changing: offshore competition, the cost base in Australian manufacturing is much higher than offshore, so what could they do to cut costs to still deliver good quality product and keep going.” (RHannah)

“...the change was very much needed...The organization needed to get onto the current email platform to be able to better communicate with external parties – so vendors, suppliers, various others and customers, for that matter...And also...really embracing new and more modern ways of working. They needed to.” (RJulia)

“...we had a really strong why. There was a lot of that financial why? But there was also ...the people side as well. We were struggling to find territory managers, and we needed to find a career progression way that people could come into the business. So that solved that problem.” (RKira)

“So, it's a cost-driven, but also a customer experience-driven, it's an impact on the external business because the more that internal aspects of IT are resolved the quicker the external stakeholders can achieve the results they need to achieve when dealing with the bank.” (ROscar)

Other interviewees noted the change as appropriate to them as change agents but doubted whether those experiencing the change within the organisation would agree:

“...it was a survival thing. It came out of head office...And it was something that they...could see that it made a lot of sense, and so they wanted the world to adopt this process...it was top-down driven - we want this so that we are more profitable and better run organization...it was very strategically aligned...don't know if that really would feel real for people on the factory floor.” (RErin)

“The need for change was the industry movements, the regulatory, environmental change and customer demand. So that was understood...The appetite for it was not necessarily agreed with across the organization, but there was definitely the need. We were able to identify that.” (RIsla)

Moreover, some participants disputed the appropriateness of the change in both instances due to the magnitude of the proposed change:

“The change was that consultancy had come in and...produced a 360-page document that the senior leadership thought a plan...the executive sponsor, did not realize the amount of change that had to take place and the kinds of change and the cost that would be involved in affecting the change. There was a political issue in that the reason the review was done in the first place...and it didn't say that any of that at all.” (RCathy)

“My God, the change, like seriously, the amount of change! I... actually flagged for them that they've tried to do too much...the opinion about whether this was appropriate to be one of the higher priority ones or not would depend. For the people that were in that area... it's the most important thing. But for everyone else, it's a side issue.” (RIsla)

Most participants agreed with the appropriateness of the change from the change agent perspective, though some thought the size of the proposed change was too large. Two interview participants identified the change was inappropriate for the organisational circumstances, and it is interesting that they both rated the change outcomes as very poor.

5.3.2.Sponsorship

Change agents need to enlist support from the leaders to drive the change messages. Consistent leadership messages and actions are required, with credibility as the most critical leadership attribute (Armenakis, Harris & Field 2000; Rafferty et al. 2013; Weiner 2009). This was identified by RDi and RAllice:

*“The sponsors, sponsor management and stakeholder management are just so important...If the sponsor goes rogue or if they're not being managed well and they don't understand what's going on well enough, it's a very dangerous situation to be in because they're very powerful people. They can stop a project at a moment's issue. But did I get good support? I would suggest they were spending a lot of money, so they gave us good support, but it was a day-to-day thing.” (RD*i*)*

*“If the CEO isn't saying to be driving this, it won't happen well. I had a chairman of the board who really was the architect of it from the beginning. He knew what the government wanted. He knew what he wanted. He trusted me, and he supported me, and that made it so much easier. I see people trying to effect change in organizations where the person above them isn't really supporting them, and - It can't work...when the CEO is engaged, you'll get somewhere. That's just a commentary on leadership.” (RA*l*ice)*

Several respondents found and appreciated good sponsor and management support, noting the positive influence on their ability to implement the change:

*“Know I can go to him and say...there's an issue, and he's going to give me the time and help me solve it. He also was terrific in that he would lead by example.” (RE*r*in)*

*“Basically the head of the whole manufacturing...technology side, he was really supportive, so that was absolutely key. Because I knew if I got into a dust-up or it got to a point where there was something I couldn't manage...he was always there and had my back. So that was really important...there's only so much of that you can personally do. For some people, that's just not enough...so you need other people...to be the ones to influence them. Which, in some cases, had to be the boss....” (RE*r*in)*

*“We had wonderful support from all sponsors, the three stream leads...it's one of the joys of being a change manager when you have a really good sponsor on board who understands the need for change and has a level of maturity in his understanding of change, and you have stream leads who are committed to their roles. It just makes your work so much easier.” (RL*e*na)*

*“...it was a really fantastic project...We had strong sponsorship from the HR, the global HR director. She was quite willing to do whatever we needed her to do...she nominated a strong figurehead from one of her HR managers ... as the team was forming, he turned up, he said... I don't know what you need me to do, but I'm sure we'll figure it out. I thought, Great...so he was really fantastic.” (RM*a*)*

“I will call out that I think the leaders played a significant and excellent role in driving the change forward. They were really a model of how to lead through change. And...that was absolutely

fundamental to the success of the program. Unwavering in their support and in their dedication to what they were doing...It was the senior leaders; they were the ones who were fantastic at driving the change, supporting the change, verbalizing the change, being role models for the change. Unwavering in their support and their leadership.” (RPia)

“Well...It was like..., they knew it was important, and they made the time for it...And I mean, that doesn't happen everywhere...I'd say they were walking their talk in the sense that it was happening. It needed to happen. It was for the good of the business. It was to help the business survive and prosper, and everyone needed to get on board. You know? So, what was it going to take to make sure that this was managed so that it was implemented well.” (RHannah)

“Yeah, ... we had wonderful support from all sponsors, the three stream leads...it's one of the joys of being a change manager when you have a really good sponsor on board who understands the need for change and has a level of maturity in his understanding of change, and you have stream leads who are committed to their roles. It just makes your work so much easier.” (RLena)

“I've got a willing, a willing lead in the in the HR Department and he didn't know not what we needed to do but gee he was willing to drive the bus, so he was really fantastic.” (RMia)

“The general manager was a key sponsor, so we did a lot of communications out through the general manager to make sure that it was consistent, it was supportive, the approach of it was collegial, it incorporated the values and the concept principles. We were fortunate that that was his natural style anyway, so he got it very fast. He was very passionate about the whole idea, and he could see that it was working, and it gave him and the leadership team a common language, and it gave them all something to talk about.” (RNola)

“Unwavering. Unwavering. Fantastic, the best I've seen, and I've been doing this for a long time.” (RPia)

However, there were also instances where change agents bemoaned the lack of support and the added effort required to try to overcome these influences:

“The head of our steering committee was that particular manager's direct manager, so our steering committee would sometimes we would put forward the facts, and she would say, “no, just do it this other way because that's what I've been told is best” ...sometimes I felt I didn't have that top-level management support...” (RRuth)

“It took a good while to get that senior team on board together with that broad team together, but we managed to do that. The challenge really came when we hit the next level. Because at that next level, whilst in theory, they were willing, putting it into practice was a lot harder.” (RFaye)

“There was a bit of resistance. I think at that HR manager level, in that clearly, they’re going to be protective of their HR team or the resources that work underneath them. That being said, I think early engagement, consistent engagement, doing the things we did, like bringing them over for workshops and building those relationships, helped us to address some of those concerns early.” (RGreg)

“That’s a Hell, no!...that sponsor verbally said to me, look if you need help, if you need me to drive something out, you just tell me. And so when I did, actually, I got slammed for it and publicly critiqued. Look, look, this is the thing. It was very much; this was one of the people that didn't want to hear the negatives. ... So it was definitely not even sponsorship. They talked the talk, but they didn't walk the walk.” (RIsla)

“We had a new general manager, they want to put their own mark and change the whole branding and well, the reason why this is working because we keep the branding consistent because people realize this is all connected to something they asked for. So that was a challenge with the new leadership.” (RNola)

The range of responses confirmed the need for strong principal support, that this support contributed to positive change outcomes and, therefore, to the need for change agents to engage sponsors and drive support if it is not initially forthcoming.

5.3.3. Participation

Active participation within the change process, including participative decision-making and voluntary learning, helps the participants to understand the appropriateness of the change response, thereby increasing readiness for change (Armenakis, Harris & Field 2000, Rafferty et al. 2013). A number of the respondents noted the impact of employee participation in the change efforts:

“But then we were back on track, and we basically set up this test and learn scenario where we would test the assumptions, and then we would pivot and do a different thing. So, I think the core team were very committed.” (RCathy)

“There was an industrial relations subcommittee; there was a field force subcommittee, so they would review all the changes and have an opportunity to influence ...how things were

implemented, maybe when they were able to input additional information to us that we didn't know, for example, on systems or priorities or culture...the subcommittees definitely influenced the How and the When of those, those changes.” (RCathy)

“Each production line had kind of different challenges so that what works for one wouldn't always work for the other, so I try to give them sort of like a target, a beacon to work towards, and then they could decide the how. But if somebody came up with a really fantastic solution that we thought would work across the board, ...We thought, well, that will work for everyone, so that was an example of what we were rolled out after one team came up with that. We then rolled it out to all the production lines. What was on the list, and how it was up to them. But we said that's going to be a standard.” (RErin)

These interviewees identified that positive participation drove nuanced change and enhanced the change effort.

5.3.4. Change agent

A strong sub-theme evolved around the role, responsibilities and difficulties experienced by the change agent. The interviewed participants were predominantly engaged in the change being implemented, with 12 of the 17 either engaged as a consultant or employed shortly before or even during implementation. The term ‘external change agent’ is used to describe the transient nature of their employment.

Politicking

Politics and the need to understand and participate in organisational politics to deliver the change was evidenced by a number of external change agents brought into the organisation specifically for the change role. Being external, this is naturally more difficult as they do not have an intimate understanding of the organisational culture.

“At any level it can be political....that's part of a consultant's job, is if there's somebody that needs to get blamed, blame the outsider. And good, so be it.” (RDj)

“If I had decided to take the job, which I wouldn't have done if I'd known what had happened...I would have understood that the exec sponsor needed his ego stroking on a more regular basis than I did. I didn't get him onside...from the beginning. He didn't like this male V female at all. And I didn't really understand that. I thought I was working for the sponsor, but it turned out the executive sponsor was the one that was pulling all the strings and was trying to get the sponsor

sacked. Didn't understand that. Should have understood that much quicker in the process than I did." (RCathy)

"The project team engaged with our business and the future one. But didn't engage with the administrator who was heavily involved in the process....It was flagged by me quite early - but when they did...get them to review training content, that was when they [said]... you've forgotten all of these...So, I had to rework a whole bunch of stuff. This is part of the politics that were involved there, and when I raised the risks of that sort of stuff happening, it was very much shut down. Very dysfunctional." (RIsla)

"I couldn't break through that barrier. I never could, I tried to go around her, and I know that there were times when my boss did try, but I also got burnt badly, really badly in that project. It was really, really dysfunctional." (RIsla)

"I probably would have made sure I had more senior director contact with the client...I probably would have just made sure there was a bit more of my high-profile contact. The project itself...from a change perspective, it was a really good job done...I didn't hang around that level. It wasn't all that appropriate to either...But I may just have been able to help with whatever politics was going on...I may just have been able to help that." (RDi)

"That sponsor verbally said to me, look if you need help, If you need me to drive something out, you just tell me. And so when I did, actually, I got slammed for it and publicly critiqued." (RIsla)

Decision making

Challenge of decision making process and managing the change implementation:

"There's been curves and changes, and we as an organisation are still making decisions, and the project can't communicate to you until those upper levels make those decisions ...So there's some real challenges there." (RIsla)

"There were some decisions to not have some of the parties involved early in the piece, which was not necessarily aligned with my recommendation, but that's that was some of the business decisions that were made that we had to roll with." (RIsla)

"As a project manager, you tend to want to control those change messages or manage that stakeholder engagement fairly closely because that...give you a bit of a better outcome. But because it was a big program of work, a lot of those things were centrally managed by the program. And because they didn't have the insight around the technology and around the around

the specifics...if I was going in there again...[I] would have tried to keep a bit more of that under my wing so that I could manage it a bit more closely.” (RRuth)

Organisational-specific knowledge

The external change agent’s difficulty in gaining a rapid understanding of the specific organisation’s business was highlighted, with particular emphasis on the time constraint’s impact on developing this knowledge. This raised issues around change delivery, effectiveness, and trust in the change agent’s ability to deliver the change. Using subject matter experts alleviated some of the issues, particularly where they were embedded within the change team.

“...generally change professionals may not really know the business drivers. They know how to manage individualised change...But it's also about understanding how the broader impact on business impacts on them. So, therefore, they can have appreciation and understanding.”(ROscar)

“I think this is one of the challenges of being a change person. How much of the detail can you really understand? You know, it's difficult to gather 20 years of business knowledge in a short amount of time. Possibly I could have added more value if I had understood the business in more detail. But that was clearly not my forte; my forte is to work closely with those business leads to understand as much as I can and utilise their knowledge to effect the change. But you always feel that. And I could have had more meaningful conversations if I had more depth in that space.” (RLena)

“In retrospect, I would have had more time with those managers and those leaders, that Middle Management layer... to build their trust. Yes, I was working with their directors ... to have their directors work with them...but in some instances, I was working with them quite directly on an ongoing basis. And, they didn't really know me. ...they got to know I was trustworthy and things like that...they would say to me, but you don't understand my business...I didn't have time for those conversations.” (RFaye)

“And then we had an SME - subject matter expert - from the HR Department embedded in the change team...So, having this woman have a dotted line to me really allowed me to engage effectively and to put effective engagement plans in place.” (RMia)

“People don't quite understand the reliance that [the] change [agent] has on the subject matter experts. We cannot become subject matter experts, but we need them to advise us.” (RPia)

“We had ... Divisional Relationship managers...so that each of the divisional groups had that kind of key conduit to technology. So, two way; they could carry information in and get stuff back out, and those roles became my best friends.” (RJulia)

The external change agents identified aspects of politicking, decision making and organisation-specific understanding making their role in managing effective implementation of change more difficult. Additionally, trust is seen as essential, tying in with Armenakis, Harris and Field’s (2000) determination of credibility as the most essential attribute of change agents.

5.3.5. Communication strategy and quality

The importance of communication to the change process was identified by a number of respondents, requiring tailored communication strategies to support the specific organisational requirements.

“So, you...have to influence the team, the project team itself, and build some sort of integrated Road map...of all the things that different people would need...So Change’s job was very much to look inwards at the project team as well as outwards, and you have to use influence...to find a way of...building the relationship and supporting all these people who desperately need information...so that they start to learn they can't just go straight out there because another ten of their peers have probably gone straight out to the same person with different information they need....” (RDj)

“You have to go down the line. So, you have to find out what the communication mechanisms are that work and use those channels, and not overuse them...you've got to be very careful what you say...it goes down through the very defined mechanism through store manager through to the back office through to the staff. You've got to have the unions on board, so you're very, very careful....” (RDj)

“There were messages that went out through the leaders...that went out on a week or fortnightly basis from the directors down to the manager and then the manager’s responsible for talking to their teams about it. If the team then had questions, the first port of call with those questions was with their manager...if the manager couldn't answer those questions, the manager was then responsible to go and seek the answers. The idea was that then we continue to upskill the managers in what was going on, as well as the central point of information. It wasn't OK to just kind of go, ‘I don't know; they didn't tell me that’.” (RFaye)

“The leadership on board with the fact that we needed to actually define these down to a specific level and actually put someone on the hook for doing these in each country.” (RGreg)

“Disinterested to aggressively demanding information she could not provide.” (RIsla)

“We worked very, very closely from a change perspective with our deployment lead within the program...so that she could be building out a program and then she would feed that back to us so that we could see when groups were going, validate it, and then we were able to set our communication engine to align to that. So, we automated our communications through the access database because there were just so many comms that needed to be sent out...we worked out our... sequencing of communications, how far out we wanted them to start, so that meant we had to be very close to that migration schedule. Create tranches of the organization that would slot into almost kind of weekly buckets. And then the communications could just start to be, delivered based on how the tranche was sequencing through the schedule... our change champions had their communication sequence, so they needed to be communicated to before their people, and so we kind of just got this crazy engine going.” (RJulia)

“That was quite fortunate to have a communications manager who supported the delivery...[we had] the change champion forum, leadership teams, steering group, we had ongoing project team meetings as well. And apart from those forums where we kept these key stakeholders engaged, we also create various communications that aligned almost the ADKAR Model, if you will - You know, the awareness, the desire and knowledge. All of that was part of that early communication, especially the awareness and desire creation. For our lower levels of staff and also at an organizational-wide level, we also identified various channels that we could utilize to keep the organization as an entire team aware of the progress of this particular piece of work....” (RLena)

“We had multiple methods...a cascading a communications tool where the ELT, once a month, would decide what they’re messaging out...workshops where we actually cascaded out the engagement survey scores, and they were workshopped...the first year we presented the results. In the second year, we trained up the managers to present the results...explain their survey results to their staff so they could come...up with ideas...to improve their personal engagement scores...And then there were the normal emails...we even had posters for some of the program as well...tried to just keep it alive as much as possible at any communications venue.” (RNola)

“...we had extensive posters of the values around the organization. Every meeting room had a value. We had the values brought up on the [computer] screen saver... we didn't go the stickers. The values were in all our corporate and strategic documentation. Our newsletter was designed around the values, so under each value, we would have a news item...we'd have something that

was linked to that sort of value. That's how our newsletter monthly newsletter was; this cascade document was structured.” (RNola)

Many of the respondents highlighted the type and quality of the change communication and the importance of these to managing change efforts:

“...we had fairly standard sort of communications things like newsletters...monthly...Yammer internally for social media...In other countries, well, they weren't sitting in front of a computer...so we had to look at other ways around that. Quarterly, the leaders of every country were coming to Australia to participate in workshops there, so I would always be loading them up with key messages for them to take back and give at their town halls or all Staffs.” (RGreg)

“We did a lot of video...we could record one video and then have translation...for those places where they didn't have computers... all the way down to poster campaigns and things that were printed materials or things that were taken home with paychecks as they were handed out...in case literacy was not high, even in their native language. So having something that they could take home, particularly if they weren't the person who's managing finances in their household...They can take it home and hopefully get help from someone who can read it to them, explain... what's going to be happening with the way they said they got paid.” (RGreg)

“We had multiple... so there was formal communication through emails. We also had briefing sessions. We had attendance at team sessions and so on to get a lot of Q&As through...We also had status reports and updates that went through from the project team to key stakeholders. We had a website that actually had lots of things like the FAQs; also training materials, links through the information, and so on. So that was helpful. Those are all communications. We did have workshops and human-centred design activities and also sprints that were associated with the Google-style design thinking activities around our approaches and so on. So, there were some really good elements. I'd say that it was the chaotic mess that had nuggets of gold.” (RIsla)

“We had HR representatives at each of the mine sites...I would provide them with all the communications they disseminate the communications out, our program, our sponsor did.... we did a series of email and briefing communications for the senior leadership team. And for a director level, so, and she did all of those briefings and just a bunch of emails. Personal email – this is me reminding you - not group emails. Bunch of lunch and learns - they were very successful. Its performance management. People pricked their ears up. Even if they know that their pay is not going to be affected, didn't affect the bonuses, so we had no reward and recognition.” (RMia)

“There was definitely a lot of engagement and communication activities. There was a lot of direct contact with the leadership. There were surveys, all that practical sort of stuff. And there was an

open mailbox for questions that was actively managed. There was regular communication going out about the program. So in some sense, people had the option to opt-in, to as much of that as they wanted to... change always has to take a very practical lens, and so our focus was far more geared to those employees that were considered a high-impact...there's not endless resources in change.” (RPia)

Poor communication experiences, whether restricted or rushed, hampered the quality of communication as well as the change implementation efforts.

“They were lacking.” (RBea)

“In this particular organization, the unwritten rule was that profit was king, and you did what you were told...And everything was built around that. So yes, I feel like we did communicate in different ways at different levels as much as we humanly could. But it was restricted by the organization.” (RCathy)

“So, I think the University sort of said, “Hey, we've decided to do this, and it starts in two weeks ’ time”. And that just wasn't enough time for people to get their heads around it. And they're major changes when you're talking about people, the way it really affects the way they live, where they park their car, how they have their lunch...if we could go back, we would have asked them to start a bit earlier with that. It was too abrupt.” (RRuth)

Communication quality and strategies varied across the various change efforts described by the interview participants, but there was a clear consensus on its importance in driving the change process.

5.4. Theme 3: Individual readiness for change

When looking at the individual cognitive factors, this research proposes to base their questions on the various works by Armenakis et al. (1999; 2007; 2002; 1993) and the work of Holt et al. (2007) that uses five aspects to the change message required to create readiness for change. These include discrepancy (need for the change), appropriateness (whether the change is an appropriate reaction to the need), self-efficacy (whether the organisation is capable of implementing the change), principal support (whether the leaders are committed to successfully implementing the change), and personal valence (what is in it for the individual).

The questions asked were:

“How does this change affect the individual?”

“To what extent were the individuals involved in this change?”

“How were the individuals kept informed about the change?”

5.4.1. How does this change affect the individual?

This question was based on the works by Armenakis et al. (1999) and Holt et al. (2007), identifying personal valence (what is in it for the individual) as one of the precursors for readiness for change.

Empowerment

“Look, it certainly empowered people. It certainly broke down barriers to make the workplace more accessible for a lot of people. People...felt they had a voice and were being listened to. ...So that was fantastic.” (RNola)

“So some roles might feel that they haven't got the skills and therefore they feel that...they had a lot of history and experience, but this is a whole new way of working, and they might not be able to do it. So, there's fear underneath it which would drive resistance which would drive significant pushback. Others would feel great; this is computerized... I'm going to be able to do this.” (RDi)

“From an individual point of view...what surprised me, and I think this is the culture of the organization at an individual level, people were just willing to give it a go...I thought with the amount of information and support and engagement that - or lack thereof - that's gone out to you guys, I'm really shocked that you are still open to “you know what, I'll give it a shot”...ordinarily I've experienced in the past people who would react individually and go “No way, don't know what's going on, not touching it with a barge pole” So that was the first thing that really surprised me is people's willingness to still try. So that was quite...overwhelmingly positive.” (RBea)

“... the new hires into the new roles, so for them, it was a very positive experience on the basis that they were all they have this real camaraderie about them. Because they all kind of started on the same day, they went through induction on the same day...they have this really different camaraderie to those that started at different time...because we're listening to them and solving their problems as we went, then that was a real positive.” (RKira)

“...the frontline guys, they got new uniforms, they got access to people they've never had access before, they had a voice other than the union which they'd never had before so that they had very positive benefits from it..” (RCathy)

Role change impacts

The impact of changes to roles was identified as providing difficulties:

“...it changed how they did their job. And some elements of their job disappeared because they were automated. And because the information was captured online, we tried wherever possible to reuse that information, rather than having it entered for a second time.” (RFaye)

“...there was there was some, I guess, suspicion: Can we trust that the system will get it right? What happens if there's an error? Will it spit out an error if it becomes apparent there's an error to the system? And, of course, making sure the system does it correctly in the first place is all about the information we put in there and how we set it up. It's only going to be as good as we make it....” (RFaye)

“Well, the biggest shock...was the automated reordering...It affected every single store. Every single store manager, every single person who was buying stock, ordering stock. So that was the toughest group. And in every change project, you've got ... the role that is pivotal...It's the one that if you mess with it...the whole program would be stopped. So, they were the most impacted in a negative way from their perspective.” (RDi)

“If they were in Middle Management, it affected them a lot...their roles expanded. They had different team members under them who...had different KPIs and different drivers before they joined the team. If they didn't keep their job, then it ... a very difficult situation for them...no, they had mostly negative benefits with that - they got given challenges, not benefits.” (RCathy)

“The manufacturing process, that part wouldn't change, but it was the supply chain, and ... the ERP system and the procurement and the ordering... things would be ordered to be produced, versus when it would get to the stage that stock levels are in a certain level, therefore it's time to produce some more...And the supply chain area was the most impacted...in terms of the individual impact that probably really where it was around....” (RHannah)

“And then the third group that were impacted by the change was really the rest of the company. ...They had to do a whole new suite of reporting because we have a different customer base. ...their workloads have significantly gone up. We've absolutely looked at that, and we've increased on their headcounts within Departments where needed.” (RKira)

“Just the big change, the fact that they were so much change going on for those employees at one time, it wasn't just our little technology project, it was all of the other things that they were being subjected to...They were dealing with quite a lot.” (RRuth)

“They could see the logic of it theoretically, so when we talked to them about how they personally use digital in their lives, we got them to share their own experiences with us; they got it from up from that perspective. And yet, when it came to actually changing what they did on a day-to-day basis, that's where they struggled. Because that's how they'd always done it...It takes a lot of effort to fundamentally change everything we do and to change that mindset. Actually, it's much easier to change our day-to-day stuff than it is to change our mindset.” (RFaye)

“The effect on individuals were they were a lot more accountable now, and it was a lot more transparent about whether or not that they were at least adhering to my process...the team leaders of the production lines were the most exposed cause...it was on their shoulders to make sure that the operators were following these procedures and processes that we put in place. And some of them...embraced it as a sort of leadership opportunity, or they were just...more naturally organized than others, and this was an excuse to get everything in line. But for others...[they] saw it as extra work and didn't think it was important, and for them, the effect was hard because they didn't want to do it.” (RErin)

“...territory managers...were faced with a lot of job insecurity and a lot of ambiguity in their roles. ... we continue to recruit for territory managers so they can see new people being brought into that old model, which eliminates some of that concern about the old model disappearing. And what we've said is that we're going to continue with both models...So...that has eliminated some of the problems that we've had with regards to job security.” (RKira)

Personal characteristics

The impact of personal characteristics on change response and adoption was highlighted by a number of respondents:

“Within the organization, I could see layers of differing capacity to accept the changes that were about to about to unfold.” (RAlice)

“What was really interesting for me than from a personality perspective was whilst there are people who are team leaders who wanted to be in that top position, that's how they wanted to play it. But there were like a bunch who didn't care about being at the top, but they certainly didn't want to be in the bottom. So, I feel like you really need that spread, and the transparency was really key...And you had lots of different personalities in there...the whole early adopters or the early followers. So, I had a couple of people that, just for whatever reason, either liked the concept or were naturally that way, or just really driven. And once they got on board, they kind of influenced everyone else. It didn't have to be me trying to influence everyone.” (RErin)

“All those sorts of fears about personal failure, personal risk, self-esteem risk, etc. What happens if I look silly in front of my co-workers who think I'm brilliant and come to me for advice type thing.” (RFaye)

“I guess immediately following, you have your learning curve? We've got it out there now. So, there was a dip in overall organization productivity, and I suppose comfort and confidence that then quickly elevates itself. At an individual level, you would have had people that would have taken longer than others to acclimatize. So, at that very individual level of task and what I'm responsible for. they could have been in some places, more problems, in other places vastly less problems based on competency, comfort, unable to transition through change kind of thing.” (RJulia)

“And also, I think people some people are never comfortable with change, particularly if they are in an environment that hasn't had to change in 100 years. And so, that, that was certainly felt at the individual level.” (RPia)

“People who haven't undergone such significant change for any long period of time ...become fearful of change just because they're frightened, they won't be able to do it... All those sorts of fears about personal failure, personal risk, self-esteem risk, etc.” (RFaye)

The affect of the change on the individuals was strongly identified around themes of empowerment, role changes, and the effect of personal characteristics on an individual's ability to cope with the change.

5.4.2. To what extent were the individuals involved in this change?

Active participation, such as participating in decision-making and enabling learning, will improve readiness for change by demonstrating the change implementation's appropriateness and viability (Armenakis, Harris & Field 2000).

Most participants identified strategies to encourage individual involvement, with many selecting individuals who would be vital in influencing others within the organisation:

“I set up quite a few think tanks ...and we would bring...a whole cross-section of the organization and we would have issues that we were trying to resolve, and we would get them all to talk about it and try to solve the problems...there was a whole...network of people that were coming in and helping solve problems, and they go back to where they worked and tell that story.” (RAlice)

“Now we had to actually put on some classes for some people that never had a had a PC... a lot of people then started vying for promotion in positive ways, but I think that helped people engage

because they were getting something out of it for them. That was, translating into building their own strengths and their own understanding of business. They got an understanding of business. They got an understanding of budgets, and they got an understanding of computers.” (RAlice)

“You wouldn’t get all...store managers...out of the business ever, so we would always have a real person delivering the change and...involved in the designing of the change. So a store manager would have been helping us design it. We would pick champions and...people who are high influencers...because it has to be credible... the aim was always to get credible people from the role involved and not have ivory tower deliver anything. Now you are ivory tower delivering it, but you have to have that credibility.” (RDj)

“They were engaged to a certain degree where possible. But it was trying to balance that timeliness with the ability to corral and run workshops and get engagement. ...what we actually ended up doing is we ended up getting nominees from teams, so they were represented rather than necessarily all being involved...and then we made that individual responsible for going back to their team and sharing with their team what the workshop had been, what they talked about, etc. etc.” (RFaye)

“They participated, the different levels. So, the workers that implemented the processes, they weren't as engaged; they were more recipients of the change. Whereas it was more management level that were engaged as stakeholders to help with the scoping and their process creation and things...there was that connection of getting stakeholders that were impacted to participate in the program.” (RHannah)

“They put together the business case as far as which of the platforms we should use, why we should use them, benefits of each one of them. And I think what really happened with the case for change and with their getting the buy-in from them was really that we're able to show them that we were listening to them. We were happy to support them, and having them involved in providing a solution to a problem that they presented to us was really good.” (RKira)

“We created multiple engagement forums...and the acquired organization was represented or all of those forums. It wasn't a question of this is a change that's happening to you, rather it was a question of how do we together co-create a meaningful change, for us together, to achieve what is now a common organizational goal...while there was an initial lack of engagement possibly, we started to see that lift after a few of these conversations...once that trust was built and the people feel that they were truly being heard, and their contributions would have been considered.” (RLena)

“The way to address that was actually involvement in the business requirements gathering workshops, early to ensure they were instrumental to be part of the new solution as opposed to actually just being told here it is.” (ROscar)

The notion of creating a groundswell of support that would drown out those opposed to the change was identified:

“...the 5S champions worked together with the team leaders to implement the change, so they had a lot of influence over the extent...they did have a lot of involvement in it. They did. If they chose to. I guess there was some scenarios where the team leaders or particular team leaders were really like disengaged and therefore chose not to be as heavily involved, and then they just had to cop whatever was decided....but for the most part, everyone was...Because you get that groundswell where suddenly you're weird if you do it and suddenly you're weird if you don't...we got 95% of people over the line, and it was good enough.” (RErin)

“In those countries like in Colombia where there was...community...we did hit sort of a critical mass tipping point. There might have been resistance, but eventually, we had enough people who had adopted and saw the benefits for themselves that they were telling their mate or telling their co-worker, why aren't you doing it this way? We're doing it this way. You should do it this way...So, you get that groundswell of support that sort of helps sell it for you as such, and breaks down that sort of last few. When you get to 80%, the last 20% erodes roads pretty quickly in terms of their resistance when they see that everyone else around them is doing it, and there's a benefit.” (RGreg)

Some participants noted the limited or lack of information provided:

“...it was really thrown at people. Hey, this is how we're doing it now, and this is what I mean, I was shocked....it's really quite outrageous that you think you can just turn the system on like that with that amount of support and think that people are just going to know what they're doing....” (RBea)

“I think the individuals involved; if I ask them now, honestly, they probably say it was done to us. We didn't really get much opportunity to participate in the decision-making. And that would be fair because it's a very hierarchical organization.” (RCathy)

The notion of developing active participation, whether the whole population or through key influencers, to create a groundswell of readiness for change was generally accepted by the participants.

5.4.3. How were the individuals kept informed about the change?

This question was posed to understand how the change communications were received by the employees, as this would affect their understanding of the reason for the change and how it was being implemented and make a determination on whether they thought the organisation could successfully implement it the change.

“You have to go down the line. So, you have to find out what the communication mechanisms are that work and use those channels, and not overuse them...you've got to be very careful what you say...it goes down through the very defined mechanism through store manager through to the back office through to the staff. You've got to have the unions on board, so you're very, very careful...things like the certification was very clever because it was a tangible way you could look at things with traffic lights, and you could look at it at a store level or at a regional level or at a state level or at a country level.” (RDi)

“And that would be purpose-built to each audience because there were many populations who are directly impacted but at different times...So, you've got to do rolling communications and engagement always using one of their people...we would get someone with credibility so that when they said jump, the...[team said]... OK, we'll jump.” (RDi)

“So we used email. We used videos. We used paper, and we used the tearoom. Every platform that we had, we would use at some point, and we tried to mix it up. Some people respond better to videos than a paper...thing about the corporate plan. And of course, the two or three times a year management meeting with the sort of middle managers was a real face-to-face, touch and feel meeting for them, and they'd get...the information about how the organization was doing. They'd all get some sort of...awards... We didn't just give awards out for the best; we tried to find as many platforms upon which we could compliment people...” (RAlice)

“So you go around to the team rooms, and someone had printed them off and put them in there, or they'd be pinned up next to the computer that was down on the on the production line or in the warehouse, so they did sort of share it amongst themselves...Most of the communication, once it was done, was about sort of keeping the conversation going and maintaining the rage if you like, which...needs to be refreshed cause after a while, it just becomes noise, doesn't it? ...It was on the Intranet. We even had a website dedicated to it.” (RErin)

“...we had fairly standard sort of communications things like newsletters...monthly...Yammer internally for social media...In other countries with they weren't sitting in front of a computer...so we had to look at other ways around that. Quarterly, the leaders of every country were coming to Australia to participate in workshops there, so I would always be loading them up with key

messages for them to take back and give at their town halls or All Staffs...We did a lot of video...we could record one video and then have translation...for those places where they didn't have computers... all the way down to poster campaigns and things that were printed materials or things that were take home with paychecks as they were handed out. ...in case literacy was not high, even in their native language.” (RGreg)

“We had multiple... so there was formal communications through emails. We also had briefing sessions. We had attendance at team sessions and so on to get a lot of Q&As through. We also had status reports and updates that went through from the project team to key stakeholders. We had a website that actually had lots of things like the FAQs; also training materials, links through the information and so on...We did have workshops and human-centred design activities and also sprints that were associated with the Google-style design thinking activities around our approaches and so on. So, there was some really good elements. I'd say that it was the chaotic mess that had nuggets of gold.” (RIsla)

“We had HR representatives at each of the mine sites...I would provide them with all the communications they disseminate the communications out, our program, our sponsor did.... we did a series of email and briefing communications for the senior leadership team. And for a director level, so, and she did all of those briefings and just a bunch of emails. Personal email – this is me reminding you - not group emails. Bunch of lunch and learns - they were very successful. Its performance management. People pricked their ears up...” (RMia)

“There was definitely a lot of engagement and communication activities. There was a lot of direct contact with the leadership. There were surveys, all that practical sort of stuff. And there was an open mailbox for questions that was actively managed. There was regular communication going out about the program. So in some sense, people had the option to opt-in, to as much of that as they wanted to... change always has to take a very practical lens, and so our focus was far more geared to those employees that were considered a high-impact...there's not endless resources in change.” (RPia)

All change agents recognised the necessity of finding which communication mechanisms worked best, the need for a range of communication methods, and not overloading the organisation with communications.

5.4.4. Individual commitment

Individual commitment aspects that emerged from the interviews included affective commitment and the appropriateness of the change.

Affective commitment to change is typically associated with significant support behaviour (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002) and readiness for change.

“...It wasn't popular among some of them, but ... some people emerged who started to say to me, look, we knew this had to happen...for a lot of them, in the end, they enjoyed the process. They felt they were doing well; they were giving a good service, and they could hold their heads high in the industry because we were doing well and we got a lot of awards...So there the organisation started getting accolades for what it was doing and...that in the end really helped cement the pathway.” (RAlice)

“We were fundamentally trying to increase the engagement of the staff so we could improve productivity across the organisation. And we did achieve that. So through that process, some people left because they were uncomfortable. We had some older personnel deciding earlier than later to retire.” (RNola)

“So some roles might feel that they haven't got the skills and therefore they feel that...they had a lot of history and experience, but this is a whole new way of working, and they might not be able to do it. So, there's fear underneath it which would drive resistance which would drive significant pushback. Others would feel great; this is computerised... I'm going to be able to do this. There would be people in between who we'd have to nurse along to show they actually could do it, and there were lots of change techniques...that we did to make sure that all people move forward. And then ...if there are serious resistors, we have to listen to why they're resisting cause it might be a very good reason and usually is. But at the end of the day, if there's a serious resistor causing influence, then there's another change strategy for that. But every one of these people is impacted in quite a significant way depending on what stakeholder group they are...It's a big question ...” (RD1)

“It was mixed, really, and it probably goes back to what I said earlier on. You had those people that were just like so ready to be in in the current century, and then you had the others that were, so nervous about shifting ...” (RJulia)

“So there was a lot of consternation in amongst that business team because there were differences of opinion. So some of the frontline staff, if you draw that curve of people that are leading and onboarding with the change right back to the laggard if you imagine that curve, half of those people were advocating for things and pushing for particular ways of doing things. And then there were a whole bunch of people who actually, sort of doing their best to drag it down. Or even sort of publishing untruths, running against the change and disrupting the change itself by

misreporting things or By, just generally being obstructive and, not sort of getting on board.”
(RRuth)

“...the organization that was acquired felt...intense change. There was a sense of vulnerability, and they were concerns and fears about job losses...the anger, the denial, the resentment, the antagonism like I've expressed in terms of the one manager particularly, was something that was experienced more intensely by the organization that was acquired....” (RLena)

“The change that the individual felt within the IT organization was initially one of fear...the unfamiliarity with the new technology was significant.” (ROscar)

“They were affected because there was a new vision, a new organizational vision if you like, there were changes to how they operate...simplifying, some of those back-end pieces, and so that for people was a change that they had to come to terms with. And also, ...some people are never comfortable with change, particularly if they are in an environment that hasn't had to change in 100 years. And so, that was certainly felt at the individual level. For some people, there were job losses, so that was obviously a very personal and individual impact.” (RPia)

The respondents identified a range of affective responses, from excitement, fear, anger, resentment, resistance, and some employees not committing but leaving their organisations due to the change.

The individual's perception of the appropriateness of the change has been identified by the seminal work of Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder (1993) as critical to the individual's readiness for change.

Developing personal insight into the appropriateness of the change was a significant achievement identified by RAlice:

“And one of the most powerful things [we] ran a session with all these regional and district managers, and we actually got a group of young actors to come in and model up what we had seen happening at the front desk and how we thought it should be. So, this is the before, and this is the after. It resonated. It was at one of those days you never forget in your career where you can see a bunch of people go, “I've got it”.” (RAlice)

However, the other responses were far more pragmatic, identifying their responses as 'realistic':

“Some were for it, and some were against it. And sometimes, this is just being realistic as opposed to having a utopian view. Sometimes you have to make changes because that's the financial constraints of the organization, so you still have to go ahead with them regardless. And I believe change's role is to as much as possible limit the negative impact of that, but you'll never remove it completely. Yeah.” (RPia)

“So again, it depended on how they were impacted by the change, so how it affected them...some responded well, others not so...one of the key focus areas is that we took time to engage with the people leaders. So we had a number of forums and activities that were specifically directed to people leaders who had to lead teams during this period of change...Some were for it, and some were against it. And sometimes, this is just being realistic as opposed to having a utopian view. Sometimes you have to make changes because that's the financial constraints of the organization, so you still have to go ahead with them regardless. And I believe change's role is to as much as possible limit the negative impact of that, but you'll never remove it completely.” (RPia)

5.5. Theme 4: Group readiness for change

The questions asked were:

“How does this change affect the teams? E.g. benefits, performance, appropriateness.”

“Who led and guided the teams? E.g. manager support and involvement, group resistance, opposition, benefits.”

“Was the information provided to the teams sufficient? E.g. consultation, clear communication.”

“How committed was the team to the current change? How did they perceive the value of the change & strategy, support, participation, contribution, ability to implement the change?”.

5.5.1. How does this change affect the teams?

Whereas at the individual level, the affects identified were around empowerment, role change and personal characteristics, the themes identified at the group level were about benefits and disadvantages.

RIsla identified the range of benefits and disadvantages which would be felt by various groups within the organisation through the change implementation.

“The administrator... for them it was no change to the job role itself...it was behavioural, cultural, technical change, shift for them and a very complex environment because of all of the regulatory change happening as well...

...the incumbent business, of course, they were going to be eventually made redundant... Over the long term, that was going to be a reduction in business.

The service provider that did the emails and web chats and so on..., we had to teach them how to understand what are those different communications and how to handle all of those questions...So that was complicated.

...the new business had to form brand new teams. We had to develop a culture with them because...[with] some of our core business team...were going to be co-located. and keep that customer focus going...

[The]team that was providing insurance... one of the most impacted teams. So they had to understand the brand new product...the brand new processes...the brand new system, and technology. They had to keep going with the existing activities. They had to work to design a brand new product with them. They also had to move location to a new space where they were co-located...So that team had heavy impacts.

...There were, of course, marketing teams...a team that provided financial advice... engagement managers for businesses...had to really understand the effects of the PMIF laws that came in last year...that was actually one of the really painful teams.

And of course, marketing and then reporting teams because they'd have to slightly adjust how they were doing their bits and pieces. The technology team because they were heavily involved in the project itself...And our facilities management team, and people from HR work, health and safety and so on, because they were our teams that were going to be located there, those teams had to be across all of that. And our learning and development team as well because of the training purposes.....So all of those teams had impacts internally.” (RIsIa)

RDi also noted the differences between how the groups would be affected and outlined her strategy to focus on the highly impacted groups and develop purpose-built readiness for change plans to be delivered:

“So, if they're high impacted and it might be 20 or 30 different stakeholder groups that are high-impacted, we have to pay attention to all of them. So there will be times where there's a low-impacted group like suppliers, but they're still impacted. So, we've still got to pay attention to them...Well, for some stack of groups, they would see there were no benefits, so it's a very different change solution. The change team are building to help them get on board compared with a team where there's very obvious benefits for them. So, the first thing we're doing is doing a very articulated impact assessment of each of the stakeholder groups...if we had a group that was very

important, we might identify every single person in it. We would develop a readiness plan that would have different traffic lights in it. We'd identify where the resistance was individually. If we're coming up to go live and we really needed to know they were going to come across the line, we might do purpose-built stuff just for a subgroup, for a small group that really weren't on board or really didn't have the capacity to it, or really were too busy or whatever their - but we mapped out what their issues were so we really knew each individual there if it was a group that absolutely had to get on board. So, I remember we had a very detailed spreadsheet readiness spreadsheet for some groups. Some groups, you just do surveys and say how ready are you and where are your problems, and do you know this, that and the other - so it's a standard readiness survey, but others we actually really purpose-built it. We knew every single person there - might have been 30 or 40 people there. We honed in on the supervisors. We particularly found where the issues were with particular subgroups and which particular supervisors had issues. So, it was very purpose-built - the art in all of that readiness, the art in the readiness, is a very good impact assessment. And then take it down to a really, very good readiness assessment if you're worried about certain people adopting the change or not. Because at the end of the day, that's the bottom line.” (RD1)

5.5.2. Who led and guided the teams?

Manager support was identified by a number of respondents as heavily impacting their role and the change result.

A number of the change agents had positive managerial support:

“The regional managers were key because the regional managers had under them all the centres that related to their region. And under the regional managers were the district managers and the district managers all had a centre that they managed. they were pivotal for the leadership and the ones where the regional managers got on board quickly, travelled quickly and did well quickly.” (RALice)

“Yeah, I'd say, minimal of it. From an HR point of view, I'd say the sponsor, the executive HR, she really did try to drive support and encouragement and allow the time and opportunity for people to vent frustrations, find opportunities for improvement. So, ... within that team level, because they understood - especially the leader of that team understood the impact. But outside of that, just say out in the business, there was no leadership advocacy or because there was just no education for them to even do that.. they didn't have any vested interest as to why should I support this change and what does it mean for my team? And How do I drive some of those messages - they wouldn't have. They wouldn't have had a clue. So, it was very much everyone

was very much at an individual level, and what the change meant for them, and then try to navigate that.” (RBea)

“... they were supportive at a team level.” (RBea)

“Yeah, so...from my primary sort of contact of the HR manager of every country, we got very early buy-in from them. This was something that they had been asking for, so...they were seeing the fact that this project was running as a win anyway. This is going to give them a lot of benefits they were looking for as they ran their operations locally. So, I had their buy-in pretty straight away.” (RGreg)

“Yes, I think they lead by example. They were on message. And they, really, I would say they took ownership of it. Yeah.” (RHannah)

“A lot of them weren't necessarily experienced leaders. They had been promoted from within the organization...all the leaders had been on training courses. ...As I looked across that cohort, there were particular people that stood out as quite strong power brokers in that cohort. And they really were the people that I started with and worked really hard with. Because of the influence that they had...as we went through the change, for a lot of the managers as their role became clearer from the perspective of communication, keeping their teams informed, making sure that the people that actually attended the workshop came back and updated teams, that sort of thing, as they got more into the running that part of it. They felt that they had a role...it helped some of them actually in their own management-type roles. Because...before there was in some areas...because individuals had come up within the team, and then become the manager of the team, there was some blurred lines between being somebody in the team and being the manager.” (RFaye)

“In each state, we have a state sales manager. So, they are responsible for their own state and then they have direct reports depending on how many headcounts they've got as to how many direct reports in the form of regional sales managers. And then you have the territory manager. So, we were really lucky that we were dealing with a really flat organisational design, which obviously always makes change easier. We did a lot of prep with our leaders on change, so I use the bridges models of change to talk them through the emotions that their people are going to go through.” (RKira)

“There's only a small management group in Hong Kong and China, and so because they are again those sort of directive cultures, so as soon as the global HR director said please, I'd like you to engage with this and we made it easy... it was... they were very good. That no, I shouldn't say very good. They jumped on the bus = they're directive cultures...the HR manager, he was 100%

there, so I really was very fortunate. That's not normal, not normal, but it was a fortunate position....” (RMia)

Some change agents experienced issues with middle management or specific team managers:

“...what I've always been very watchful of is, if the layer underneath me is all very supportive, but when they started working with the layer under them, it's sort of not. You can't be two-faced about this if you're supporting it, you've got to support it, and I was always very watchful for that sort of behaviour.” (RAlice)

“Absolutely. I mean, ... the project managers under me doing each of the seven pillars probably had more interaction with teams at the frontline, like individuals at the frontline, than their managers did. Their managers were just very hierarchical. It's a dog-eat-dog world, and they were just out for themselves...I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of people who were collaborative as opposed to being combative.” (RCathy)

“Anecdotally, we were very much aware that there was a leadership issue. And anecdotally were very much aware particularly, whilst the senior leadership team was very engaged, wanted to right thing, and there was a couple of new sorts of younger people that had joined the leadership team, and they were there for all the right reasons, we knew there was this issue at the next level down in the sort of middle management space.” (RNola)

“[Middle manager] response is mixed is what I'd say. Some of those that were more highly impacted were probably struggling. Whereas some of those that weren't really as impacted sort of breezed through. So ... it does come back to how the individual is feeling, and in effect, whether they agree with the change or feel threatened by the change. And of course, when you're talking about job losses, then often people naturally think of themselves, and so, that's always a challenge. But we worked with them. Things like people leader talking points, and things like that to help support them into delivering the change in their areas.” (RPia)

“The managers who ran the teams that were directly affected by the recommendations all had differing levels of readiness to change. So, the field force, the person who ran the field force, he was highly resistant to some of the people changes that had to take place and the structural changes. The managing director of the sub-contracting company who was being absorbed into the mother ship was highly resistant because he had run a tight ship based on making a profit, whereas the mother ship was all about service levels to the stores, not really bothering about profit...some of the managers involved were highly resistant, but because it's very hierarchical, it was all backstabbing...It wasn't a very open discussion when people had opposition, so if one

group weren't happy with the change, they would just sabotage it rather than have a discussion with their manager or their manager's manager, going all the way up to the sponsor.” (RCathy)

Working with key influencers, peer pressure and critical mass helped to get some managers on board with the change:

“By and large, yes, yes, ... there were one or two who didn't quite buy-in or were too busy with day-to-day work. And but ..., once you build a critical mass in these spaces, and there's enough people doing what they've committed to do, then there are people who will struggle along, but ultimately feel that group pressure to deliver.” (RMia)

“Yes, so you use the culture. If the regional director said we're doing this? Everybody would look up and grumble, but they would do it. So, if you call that person a manager - was a very senior manager, but you have to go to them, and you have to convince them that things have to change. So, you have got to get them on board. If you don't, then there. But at the end of the day, then what you - what you're doing with that culture is - if 20 regions are on board and one isn't, you then have to show that one up. You use the culture again just to go higher as a manager, and you basically get them to show up.” (RDi)

“...we had one team with the majority of the staff across those five teams who had the idea that was their idea, and they wanted to drag those other teams in. So we had resistance from the other teams. We had some running interference and so on. And then, as I say, that manager with the most skin in the game, I guess, also became a little bit difficult to deal with. But I guess, on the whole, if you were giving their score out of 10 and saying were they on board with the change or not, I'd probably say a 6 or 7 in terms of advocacy. And we just used the Steering Committee for working through most of the difficulties.” (RRuth)

While most change agents had support from the team managers for the change, a few found middle management or specific team managers uncooperative. Some of the strategies used to gain team manager support included: working with key influencers, applying peer pressure through the management structure and developing a critical mass of support to ensure cooperation.

5.5.3. Was the information provided to the teams sufficient?

The interviewees identified the need for appropriate communication mechanisms, a range of communication methods and managing the volume of communications when asked how the individuals were kept informed. Some respondents identified the difficulty of providing sufficient information:

“Definitely no consultation and clear communication, they were lacking...there was a plan for, post live surveys to get feedback and everything, and that was not followed through...” (RBea)

“[We should have]...possibly arranged face-to-face meetings with Melbourne impacted staff sooner. We had a number of virtual meetings, but ... there's tremendous benefit to face-to-face meetings and being in person with another individual. Because if that initial trust is created early on, it adds benefit later on...I might have worked more intensively on the communications piece;...there were opportunities to do a better job on that. I think my focus was primarily on the change because we had a communications manager...and she was fantastic. She was just the consummate professional - I think that I could have possibly provided a few more opportunities for us to engage the broader business more. Effectively.” (RLena)

“There was, there was just multitude of communications. Was all of it effective? No.” (RCathy)

“You need to engage with as many people as possible and resolve all those fears...the University sort of said, “Hey, we’ve decided to do this, and it starts in two weeks’ time”,. And that just wasn't enough time for people to get their heads around it. No. And they’re major changes...so if you're changing that, people need to understand and be able to adapt.” (RRuth)

“Well, it’s interesting, yeah, because what they would do, they would engage, but there was no information flowing through. It would be, you know, there’d be weekly meetings, etc. But it was all very high level and not tangible. So, the local teams couldn't actually do anything with the updates – they would give us more project updates versus real information that could mean something to people in the business in regards to how them as individuals and their role that they are performing, what it meant to them. Um, that's what they couldn't, you know.... Obviously, in the business environment that we're in at the moment, where everyone is so pushed for time, you want any time that you take people out of their day-to-day function to inform them - you want it to be meaningful, you know, and I think they felt look, there's nothing meaningful to really share that means something to them so we won't share it. So, yeah, it was kind of like everything was kind of running late in the background that would really make a difference.” (RBea)

RGreg described the added difficulties of global communications, with the US and Europe accessing newsletters and Yammer where “...everyone's using it, even shop floor people using it on their phones and stuff”, whereas in other countries “They weren't sitting in front of a computer. They weren't really using that, so we had to look at other ways around that...for those places where they didn't have computers, they would actually run those videos like at the start of shift meetings...so that everyone is going to be across it, all the way down to

poster campaigns and things that were printed materials or things that were take home with paychecks as they were handed out.” (RGreg)

While the communications strategies were identified and carried out, the delivery had mixed success.

5.5.4. Team commitment

How committed was the team to the current change? How did they perceive the value of the change & strategy, support, participation, contribution, and ability to implement the change?

5.5.4.1. Appropriateness

A number of respondents identified the value or appropriateness of the change to the team:

“They’d probably have the view of whatever their store manager thought...adopt the view of whatever their influencers said. They’re very busy people. So, the main mantra was don't get in the way of their day-to-day job unless you can add value to it. So, they had a lot of reasons to resist it. We were adding things to their job and changing their job a lot. But the bottom line is you’ve got to get a case for change that's meaningful to them. And if you can't, it's got to be meaningful up the line so they can understand this is what's going to keep their jobs, for now, so again, that's a real meaningful case for change. It's just a different voice.” (RDi)

“So don’t know if that really would feel real for people on the factory floor. And also, we didn't want people to panic or then look for other jobs thinking that our factory was closing. So, it was a very fine line. They sort of knew broadly that - because we had lost business to China and it started to happen more and more, so it was becoming more real - towards the end, it was definitely more real. I think they were pretty committed because we did get such good results, so...if you look at the outcome and how embraced it was, there was commitment there.” (RErin)

“Yes, there definitely was commitment. And that was the whole idea, to make sure we had something that was simple that would enable people to implement that. So that was the whole premise of everything. It had to be really accessible and really easy for people to implement. We altered this training program. ... typically, it's a four-day program, and we altered it to a point where it was a 5-hour program. We cut it down to the nuts and bolts, and it actually became a really tight program which was worked really fantastic.” (RNola)

5.5.4.2.Support

Team support for the change was identified by a number of respondents:

“The Department management committee, because it was part of their bonus structure, think once I was able to get it in there, I saw a big uplift in the commitment towards the program. And generally, the way the deployment work was then, they would have passed that down to their section managers...So, I think that definitely helps drive commitment in that environment. That would seem to be where people-focused.” (RErin)

“I think if I had to look at it overall and summarize it in a more holistic sense. You would say that it made them think about their processes. By and large, I think the default reaction was nervousness and caution. And then you progressively worked through that. Unanimously, they wanted to be close to it.” (RJulia)

“How committed were they? That’s a really interesting question...I would say 70-80% committed. They had some questions. But they were sort of committed to doing it, but they weren’t necessarily 100% confident in how it would go. I think that there were variations in that, though, based on age groups, certainly. There were different levels of concern at different age groups. And, uh, that would be for a variety of reasons. Perhaps for people who are a bit older and a bit less tech-savvy, there were fears that they wouldn’t be able to do it, or that they’d take too long or what happens if they made a mistake. So that was concerning for them, so that would hold them back a little bit. There was some real enthusiasm with people who were perhaps a younger cohort. And in fact, that would almost be...it almost came across sometimes like a kind of arrogance. Let’s just get on it. Let’s just do it. Do we really need all this preparation? Can’t we just do it? And there were no variations in between. So...from a logic perspective, everybody understood why we needed to make the changes we did. But the confidence or the commitment waned a bit at different times based on an individual perspective. How hard it was being, or how confusing or how overwhelming at different points. Especially when you know in your mind, you’re trying to take in new information and assimilate it with information that you’ve already got, and it doesn’t work. You can’t assimilate it because it’s so different. You have to give up what you already got if you like. That time where people feeling overwhelmed and confused, I think that’s hard, and that’s when your commitment tends to dip.” (RFaye)

“Yes, very much so. So, a good example of a commitment that came through was the relationship managers, the business development managers. They didn’t give two hoots. They didn’t want to know anything at all about it until the PMIF laws came in, and then all of a sudden, some of their business relationships are going: “Well, what about this?” Once that actually started to hit the media, then we’ve got people coming to us who have up until now gone, “go away, I don’t want

to hear from you. This is this is really minor. It's not a big deal". And then, all of a sudden, they're hammering us, and they were really rude and aggressive about it. Hammering us for information, and then we didn't have it for them. It's like, well, hang on a minute. This is, there's been curves and changes, and we as an organization are still making decisions, and the project can't communicate to you until those upper levels make those decisions and you want me to tell you how this is. I hear you, but hold your horses, buddy! So there's some real challenges there." (RIsla)

"So...they were very gracious by and large. I would say they were very gracious in their willingness to support the change without fully understanding it." (RPia)

5.5.4.3. Group participation

Respondents identified participation within the change as contributing to the commitment:

"I felt they had a pride in their work and they felt good about it...And then people could see that they were getting rewards and awards and acknowledgment and that it was all beginning to work." (RAlice)

"But then we were back on track, and we basically set up this test and learn scenario where we would test the assumptions, and then we would pivot and do a different thing. So, I think the core team were very committed." (RCathy)

"There was an industrial relations subcommittee; there was a field force subcommittee, so they would review all the changes and have an opportunity to influence...how things were implemented, maybe when they were able to input additional information to us that we didn't know, for example, on systems or priorities or culture. But the overall 'you will do this' - They didn't have any input to that. So, the fundamentals for each of the Seven pillars were set in stone... Those fundamental decisions - nobody had any influence on those. But the subcommittees definitely influenced the How and the When of those, those changes." (RCathy)

"...underneath them were teams of people like the office manager and the technical people ...They were much more open to the suggestion...they were in the day-to-day, doing the service, giving the people and they would have their competitors in the private market down the road, and they could see that they were making money and we weren't...And so, what we decided to do was, first of all, find the leaders in the Middle Management Group who were not blockers and make sure they were in key spots and then start training the people underneath." (RAlice)

“Because of the manager advocating for it, we probably had 70% of that team that were really trying hard to make it work. And then we had one other team that was highly engaged. So even though it wasn't their idea, they were doing all possible to make it work and to work with the technology and to work through any daily issues or problems or challenges that came up. And then the other three teams were really pulling the elastic band back, as I say; they were being dragged along. But luckily, there weren't too many of them, and we felt like we had enough ‘rah rah’ folks to keep it moving forward.” (RRuth)

5.6. Theme 5: Organisational readiness for change

The questions asked included:

“Did you get adequate support from the sponsors of the change? E.g. Importance, commitment, encouragement.”

“Is the organisation ready to adapt to this change? E.g. Ability to implement, coping, adjusting, performance.”

“How do you see the impact of this change - benefits/negatives? E.g. status, relationships, future”.

“Are there any culture or engagement survey results that you can share regarding the outcomes of the change?”.

5.6.1. Is the organisation ready to adapt to this change?

The respondents also identified the ability of the organisation to adapt to change:

“So when we laid out the road map for the executive leadership team, they could see that we could do this. The coup was training staff internally to make it affordable, and so that reflected the long-term financial strategy of the organization. It incorporated all those requirements as well, so it was seen as a real positive for the organization about doing more with less and incorporated a whole lot of things about developing our own people providing opportunities. So being a government organisation, you had to definitely be able to demonstrate that we were able and had the capability to deliver that. We were tested, though, because we had to run it through the executive leadership team first to sort of see, and they said No, that was brilliant. So that was terrific.” (RNola)

“What they obviously struggled with is that lack of preparation. That lack of readiness”. When asked about their perception of the organization's ability to implement change and whether they thought they could do their jobs based on what was going to be implemented.” (RBea)

“I'd say that the maturity level is so low they don't know what they don't know.” (RBea)

“Because that's one thing that the organization is very good at, is packing away all those lessons learned, and they really did spend a lot of time collecting feedback from everybody, so that'll make the next couple of changes of that type much more beneficial.” (RRuth)

“They did see that they didn't quite all have the skills that required to manage something as a complete program of work.” (ROscar)

“...was really being clear on the case for change because we knew in the organization that we were in that they would have happily stayed on Lotus notes forever and a day, right?” (RJulia)

“Oh, [they] definitely had implemented changes previously, and the changes were successful. I would say this was probably one of the largest changes they'd undertaken for a number of years...They took a lot of lessons learned out of this particular program...that's one thing that the organisation is very good at, is packing away all those lessons learned, and they really did spend a lot of time collecting feedback from everybody, so that'll make the next couple of changes of that type much more beneficial.” (RRuth)

“Some were for it, and some were against it. And sometimes, this is just being realistic as opposed to having a utopian view. Sometimes you have to make changes because that's the financial constraints of the organization, so you still have to go ahead with them regardless. And I believe change's role is to, as much as possible, limit the negative impact of that, but you'll never remove it completely. Yeah....So there was some that found the old ways very stuffy and old and were eagerly looking forward to embracing the change. And then there were others that had spent their entire career there, who found this very unsettling, and we had to pay quite a lot of attention to them because we didn't want to diminish their value or contribution previously. So there was a natural tension that existed within the organization. Some who wanted it to go faster and quicker, and others that just wanted to slow down, and it was too much.” (RPia)

“Oh yes. Yeah...they were already doing the process, just not very well. We also - because part of what we did was it...we made it easier for them to engage with the performance review process.” (RMia)

“The readiness assessments also gave us a view of where there were people who are not - for whatever reason - not delivering the messages or not doing their bit, and we provided more support. It was not seen as a question of judgment. Sometimes it was very, very genuine delivery pressures that just did not allow their teams to be released for a morning meeting. So, there are realities and operational realities...that have to be taken into cognizance when delivering a

change because we're not delivering a change into this perfect world, we're delivering it into reality, and we need to take cognizance of that and then support ways. Yeah.” (RLena)

“When you get to 80%, the last 20% erodes pretty quickly in terms of their resistance when they see that everyone else around them is doing it and there's a benefit.” (RGreg).

5.6.2. How do you see the impact of this change?

While a simplistic outcome of the change is provided in the background of the interviewees, there are nuances to the outcomes, where results were beyond those envisaged, not achieved or were positive but still somewhat mixed.

The following participants identified benefits achieved by the change implementations:

“It was very successful... recognised as having improved revenue and reduction of costs because of what they did basically. So it delivered on its promise.” (RDi)

“So, did they find it meaningful? Stores do what they're told to do at the end of the day. Providing the key people like store managers can see the merit of it. They need to see the merit of it. They need to see their line supporting it. They need to see what's in it for them because there was some overtime which was good for them at the time, so that helped a little bit, although it didn't help store managers because they don't want overtime budget on there. So, did they see it as beneficial? Now you talk to one of your people in the stores, and they wouldn't think anything of any of this cause it's in their blood, and it's in their paradigm. It wasn't then. You're talking about a serious paradigm shift and affecting the day-to-day way that I do my business. So, you've got to have a bloody good change to make sure that they are willing to go with that.” (RDi)

“We got extraordinary results...the whole commerciality of the organization increased quite considerably... two or three very important streams that were not in the private sector, and that was the seriously impaired children and the seriously impaired adults. And clinicians felt that they were the very important people, and they were...if we gave money back to the government... then we had every right to ask for money to increase what we needed for these very challenged people, and the government gave us money in the end for that.” (RAlice)

“Oh, the benefits...you'd ask why they didn't do this 20 years ago, not why they're doing it now...there were so many benefits...There was a more consistent vision, more consistent mission and operating structure. It was a significant financial uptick from this. it was a greater opportunity to deliver services to the community...The significant increase in opportunity to do what they do best.” (RPia)

“So, there's two aspects of it...on go-live date and post-go-live. And ... if we look at the go-live date, it was really a massive success because it is amazing what a few cupcakes and a coffee station can do when you want to make a change...Yeah, and ... there was just wonderful energy and wonderful positivity that occurred on day go live, and we gave out these little water bottles as well with the new branding, the Co-branding. So, they were real tangible artifacts that said that we are now in your organization, And it also spoke about this Oneness, as it were, and we also created multiple communications that went out on various channels on the day ... that was really successful...And post-go-live, we created almost a war room, and change was part of that war room. So not only did we understand the practical technology challenges, but we also utilized that as an opportunity to understand where people were experiencing challenges - in terms of dealing with the new process or didn't quite understand the training or the work - change challenges as it were. And we provided ongoing support.” (RLena)

RRuth had previously identified the large scale and fast pace of change, which resulted in mixed benefits:

“...despite the projects being relatively successful, some of the elements that were implemented were rolled back...because it was just too much all at once. There was a lot of change fatigue.” ... it's been so beneficial for the students...the University got a big jump in their satisfaction levels...So from the student success point of view, it's been really wonderful.” (RRuth)

There were also several adverse outcomes.

RBea was brought in to be the change lead two weeks prior to go live, so she defined her goal as ensuring the HR department could survive the onslaught of requests about the new system. Afterwards:

“My boss introduced me because I'm just formally in this role now....”Oh [RBea] was the change lead on the...project”, and after the meeting, I said to him, don't ever do that to me again. Just say I was the change lead in HR, don't associate me with [the project] because...we all know it was a shocking implementation, and I just don't want to be associated with my name on it.” (RBea)

RIsla noted despite the organisation embracing the case for change, the delivery meant the desired outcomes were not achieved.

“Sure, they bought into the case for change. They absolutely bought in...by the time we got to delivery, they'd all bought in totally. It was the failure of the delivery of the project....No, they

weren't ready...So that ... is going to also be a huge thing that they're not going to get. They are recreating exactly what they've already got.” (RIsla)

Similarly, RCathy was vehement about the change delivery and impact on the change lead:

“Did they implement everything? No, they did not...I would hazard a guess that they did not realize the financial benefits because they did not want to invest...” (RCathy)

5.7. Summary

This chapter describes the qualitative data used within this research to investigate multi-level readiness for change. The interviews covered a variety of organisational changes from the perspective of the change professionals interviewed who had participated in the change.

Five themes emerged. These were: Change context: the background, external pressures and internal context enablers; Change process: based on the change content, principal support, participation and change agent; Individual readiness for change: Individual readiness for change: identifying change affects, individual involvement and communication; Group readiness for change: looking at how the teams were affected, how they were led and informed and their commitment; and Organisational readiness for change: detailing sponsorship support, an organisation's ability to adapt and the change impact.

The interviewees generally agreed that external pressures affecting the organisation's viability created the greatest need for change. The primary examples were technological changes impacting competitive advantage, manufacturing costs undermining profitability and legislation requirements.

Most of the implemented changes were deemed appropriate to the strategy and the need for the change, with less successful outcomes for those considered less appropriate. Clear goals, engagement, and resources were required for a successful outcome.

Most interviewees found the individuals were mainly positive about the change, working through any issues. However, there was a differing individual capacity to accept the change based on the impact of the change and the individual's personal characteristics. Involvement and information also positively affected individual readiness for change.

There were considerable differences in how groups were impacted within the various organisations, and their response depended on the manager's support and involvement. Information to the teams was critical to the outcomes, and support for the strategy and participation in the change outcome also influenced the teams.

Of note were the change agents' responses on the organisation's support in their role.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, will discuss the qualitative and quantitative findings of Chapters 4 and 5 to obtain a greater depth of understanding or complementarity of results (Small 2011) and explain any unpredicted outcomes.

Chapter 6

6. Discussion

6.1. *Introduction*

The previous two chapters outlined the qualitative and quantitative thematic analysis, detailing the research's results, participants, data, and findings. This chapter will discuss the findings, the research outcomes, and the implication of these outcomes on organisational change implementation.

The key aim of this research project was to investigate multi-level readiness for change and, specifically, to increase the understanding of group readiness for change and whether it differed from that of the individual. As discussed in Chapter 4, the survey results only showed a minor statistical difference between the individual and group perspectives. Similarly, data obtained through semi-structured interviews and discussed in Chapter 5 did not clearly indicate differences between individual and group readiness. Nevertheless, the findings indicate a subtle variation of readiness for change amongst teams and individuals within the teams. While personality variables and intentional factors were found to impact individual readiness for change, group and supervisor support were found to be significant factors in group readiness for change.

Industry outsourcing of the change agent's role for specific change programs can result in external change agents being hampered by limited understanding of the organisation, the organisational culture and internal politics. Discussion of the impact of organisational culture on change appears to reject a 'one size fits all' approach. The statistical differences between group and readiness for change are also briefly discussed.

The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 forms the structure for the discussion of multi-level readiness for change.

6.2. *Change context*

The change context includes the organisation's internal and external environments. These include content issues (identifying the change itself and including time and history), process issues (or the actions taken to make the change), studying aspects of the change

sequence rather than continuous change processes, and linking the change processes to organisation performance (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999; Pettigrew 1990).

6.2.1. Organisational culture and readiness for change

Organisational culture can be described as the social sharing of experiences, ideas, meaning and values by people within a company, guiding how they think, feel and act appropriately. Alvesson notes, “Culture is as significant and complex as it is difficult to understand and ‘use ’in a thoughtful way” (Alvesson 2002, p. 1). It refers to the socially accepted norms within an organisation. An organisation’s culture differentiates it from other organisations (Alvesson 2002). As identified by RCathy:

“Every organisation I’ve worked in has been, you know, has its own culture and its own unwritten rules.” (RCathy)

Organisational culture links organisational behaviour and management strategies, enabling organisations to function in an organised way, maintain knowledge and support change. Culture is often evaluated and managed when organisations are undergoing change efforts rather than in a day-to-day context. This is illustrated by RLena, who was cognisant of the need during an acquisition implementation:

“Clearly, there’s a cultural benefit in aligning these teams to ensure that we have one mindset in terms of how the organisation’s contact centres work, and what is the organisation’s culture in terms of customer relationships.” (RLena)

Cultural implications are often assessed when undertaking acquisitions, mergers, and systemic knowledge management. The importance of culture in this context leads to a question raised by RLena:

“How do we together co-create a meaningful change?” (RLena)

Culture is the “glue holding the organisation together” (Alvesson 2002). This statement is especially true in organisations where change has reduced the emphasis on the role and created more emphasis on worker flexibility, commitment to the organisation or knowledge sharing. This focus enables a more organic organisation, confirming the importance of values, ideas and behaviour to drive employee attitudes and commitment, to deliver service, knowledge and information services.

“Organisations only change and act through their members and even the most collective activities that take place in organisations result from some amalgamation of the activities of individual organisational members” (George & Jones 2001, p.420). In order to be more successful, change should be tied to and emphasise the organisational values to promote acceptance of the change (Martin 2012). RD*i* supports this proposition. During the interview, she briefly discussed the strong service-oriented values of healthcare organisational change:

“We suddenly got their value around service. So, we oriented the entire thing, not communications genuinely oriented the entire [change] solution around how do you give back better service.” (RD*i*)

In this case, the strong alignment of the change to the organisational values meant it was accepted and successfully implemented.

Weiner (2009) agrees, stating, “Organisational culture, for example, could amplify or dampen the change valence associated with a specific organisational change, depending on whether the change effort fits or conflicts with cultural values” (p. 4). Working with and enhancing shared values and culture promotes the commitment for the change to succeed. “This is the power of organisational culture and its shared values, beliefs, and norms” (Martin 2012, p. 464). RI*s*la had to contend with royal commission outcomes, productivity commission outcomes and an ASIC review, all requiring change pivots as she tried to implement a finance industry change:

“So it was a highly complex, highly change fatigued area with a lot of cultural and environmental issues.” (RI*s*la)

The pace of change (some necessitated by the new legislation) combined with resistance to the required cultural change created conflict, and objectives were not met.

Organisational climate is the employee experience of the organisational culture. Climate, or what employees see happening in the organisation, covers employee perceptions and experience of the “practices, policies, procedures, routines and rewards” (Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013, p. 644). Multiple climates exist within an organisation (Martin 2012; Myklebust et al. 2020; Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013). Culture is the context underlying the climate, supported by the collective individuals within the organisation

and is difficult to change. Both organisational climate and culture are difficult to evaluate (Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013).

Change can be seen as a challenge to the existing culture and change climate. As RNola highlighted in her interview:

“In the midst of a cultural change implementation, the establishment of new cultural values meant that middle manager bad apples had their views challenged by those around them.” (RNola)

As identified further in this interview, embedding behaviour and cultural change within the broader organisation enabled some of the previously accepted behaviours to be questioned.

Myklebust et al. (2020) determined there is no straightforward relationship between human relations climate and readiness for change but that it can be mediated by perceived organisational support or the belief that the organisation values employees and their contribution. They propose organisational support, and developing a climate that emphasises employee participation would increase readiness for change. Just as readiness for change develops through a change implementation, change climate can also evolve. While Myklebust et al. suggest reviewing and evaluating organisational climate prior to organisational change, the changing nature of climate suggests that review should occur throughout the change process. So while the current readiness for change frameworks have some elements of change climate built into them, the lack of clarity around organisational climate suggests these are too prescriptive and do not consider the complexity of changing culture and climate.

The change climate framework provided by Bouckennooghe, Devos and Van den Broeck (2009) comprises ten dimensions covering the process, context and readiness for change outcomes, all of which have previously been identified as contributing to employees' readiness for change (Holt et al. 2007). The OCQ-C, P, R was developed to include change climate, which they describe as 'general context characteristics conducive of change' (Bouckennooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009). Context or change climate dimensions include trust in leadership, politicking, and cohesion. However, it is debatable whether the climate dimensions identified deliver change climate awareness and link to the underlying organisational values, a need the interviewees have identified as essential.

Rafferty et al. (2013) describe a multi-level readiness for change framework with external pressures, internal context enablers, and group or personal characteristics, leading to cognitive and affective change readiness to provide overall change readiness.

Neither of these frameworks explicitly includes elements of culture. The internal context enablers identified by Rafferty et al. (2013) include participation, communication and leadership, and while you can maintain alignment of the change implementation with culture is an aspect of leadership, the relationship is not clear.

While developing the commercialisation of a government-owned health service organisation which was at odds with the service ethos of the clinicians, RAlice tempered this with the request for additional funding for the most vulnerable clients, seriously impaired adults and children, which was in line with the organisational culture:

“And clinicians felt that they were the very important people, and they were...if we gave money back to the government... then we had every right to ask for money to increase what we needed for these very challenged people, and the government gave us money in the end for that.” (RAlice)

This aligns strategically with the cultural service values of the healthcare organisation but is not adequately covered by either Bouckennooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck’s or Rafferty’s frameworks when looking at change climate and how the change implementation aligns with the cultural values.

RD*i* provided an anecdote where she realised the aim and objective of the organisational change were counter to the expressed organisation culture. This understanding occurred through a random conversation, enabling her to counter any adverse outcome by involving top management in communications to support an implicit cultural change and reverse the behaviour, without which the change would not deliver the required benefit.

“It was behaviours and culture...once I got to that absolute nub of it, I could change everything...even then, it took three to 10 years for the behaviours to change. But every project is going to have one of those in it. And if you don’t get to the bottom of that and think about behaviours and values and practices rather than just technical change, you won’t deliver the right stuff.” (RD*i*)

Understanding the organisational culture and climate when implementing change cannot be underestimated.

The need to utilise culture when implementing change, while identified by several interviewees, was encapsulated by the interviewee RDi:

“A good change strategy has to breathe...in and out all the time. What I would do is find out what’s the purpose of this overarching project...I would write my strategy very much focusing on the benefits that that company needed to achieve, that it had committed to the board...what I would worry about was culture alignment which is where values get tied up. I would worry about values in terms of making sure that the change project leveraged the genuine company values, not their espoused ones...and by leverage, I mean really leverage...I would write the change strategy and change plan understanding... if I understood a value that was genuinely in the hearts and minds of the organisation, that would dictate how I went about most of the change.” (RDi)

This interview emphasised the importance of linking organisational culture and values when writing the change strategy and developing the change implementation plan. In order to gauge the organisation’s culture, it is critical to conduct business readiness for change assessments (at the organisational, group and individual levels) to obtain an understanding before the change strategy and plan can be developed. This highlights the importance of linking organisational culture and climate with the change strategy to achieve the desired change outcomes.

Organisational climate, in general, is a complex construct and challenging to evaluate. Climate evaluation is made more difficult by the need to customise it to make it more relevant to the individual organisation. (Ostroff, Kinicki & Muhammad 2013). The lack of explicit organisational culture alignment within readiness for change frameworks, despite its need, is due to both the difficulty of evaluation and because it is unfeasible to develop generalisations that cover the diverse range of organisations and organisational changes being implemented. In summary, the findings of this research show that each organisation will need to develop their own readiness for change framework to align with its organisation’s culture.

6.3. Change process

Change process can be driven by the economic value or the organisational capability of the organisation (Beer & Nohria 2000). The economic approach prioritises shareholder value, contrasting with the organisational approach, which utilises building workers’ emotional commitment to develop the organisational capabilities. The process should engage the workforce by including strategies to promote change readiness (Armenakis,

Harris and Field 2000). Change agents have an essential role in the change process, as important as that of other leaders (Armenakis, Harris & Field 2000; Wang, Olivier and Chen 2020).

6.3.1. Role of the external change agent

Although this research set out to investigate group and individual readiness for change, a key finding that emerged from the data relates to the role of external change agents and their involvement in the change process for which they are hired.

The significance of change agents or change professionals and their specific knowledge and skillset in designing change strategies and plans is well recognised in the field. Consequently, more recently, there has been a steady growth of employees within the profession. However, the terminology used to define change agents is unclear; project managers, Human Resource (HR) professionals, and organisational development professionals also call themselves change managers or change professionals. While some organisations hire permanent full-time change professionals, an increasing number of change agents are hired as change management contractors (Caldwell 2001). Contractors provide high-quality expertise at relatively low cost and short notice (Bruns & Kabst 2005). In this research, seventeen change professionals were interviewed. Four of the seventeen were identified as full-time employees at the organisation before the change they discussed. This research recognised the remaining thirteen as external change agents since they were hired expressly for the change project (three as direct employees and the remainder in contract roles).

The role of change agents is well documented, dating back to Lewin's (1947) change theory. Since then, several authors have tried to define change agents. An early definition of external 'change agents' was an outside agent helping implement a planned change to improve a system (Lippitt, Watson & Westley 1958, p. 10). Carlson (1965) defined a change agent as "a person who attempts to influence the adoption decisions in a direction he feels is desirable" (p. 4), a professional who advocates for change, significantly influencing the direction and effectiveness of the intended change. Gallaher (1965) states that "the way the (agent) plays his role is one of the more crucial variables in the success or failure of attempts to direct change" (p. 37). Bennis (1969) goes further and defines change agents as "the helper, person or group, who is attempting to define change" (p. 5). Case (1990) identified two types of change agents "those who are full-time employees of

organisations undergoing change (“inside” change agents) and independent “external” consultants whose association with changing organisations is fleeting” (p. 1). The change agent is identified as critical to defining and directing the change.

Ronald Havelock (1973) argues that disparate people can occupy the role of change agents. He claims that an effective change agent can work from a position inside or outside the immediate change environment, though each has distinct advantages and disadvantages. An outsider often possesses a higher degree of objectivity and is usually freer to work in various ways with different members of the client system. However, the external change agent is often an unknown and possibly threatening entity, susceptible to suspicion and mistrust. Apart from the issues raised by Havelock (1973) relating to “suspicion and mistrust”, very little research has been conducted in this area. The subsequent literature (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999; Cawsey 2016; Gerwing 2016) has not identified change agents as either internal or external to the organisation. Gerwing (2016) more recently defined the change agent, in their area of responsibility, as “anyone skilled in initiating, facilitating and implementing organisational change and enables others to deal with these change efforts.” (p. 26).

The themes emerging from this research contribute to Havelock’s contention on suspicion and mistrust. This research shows that external change agents lack access to the key or clear information and are often blocked from meeting with the change sponsor (senior executive) with politics at the forefront. The following sections will discuss these findings.

6.3.2. Politics and external change agents

A view of politics as both necessary and natural has developed from the processual-contextual perspectives such as those by Pettigrew (Pettigrew 1987). “Change and innovation are politicised processes.” (Buchanan & Badham 2008, p. 4). Change agents must be willing to intrude into the politics of change to promote the change they are pursuing while discrediting other options (Buchanan & Badham 2008). External change agents not understanding the culture of politics within the organisation compounds this situation. Add to this that the external change agent is susceptible to “suspicion and mistrust”, as proposed by Havelock (1973), and the political situation becomes more difficult.

Several external change agents noted the political effect on their role due to them being new to the organisation. There can be personal and organisational risks to change agents through organisational resistance and undermining change initiatives (Buchanan & Badham 2008). RDi's comment was direct:

“At any level it can be political....that's part of a consultant's job, is if there's somebody that needs to get blamed, blame the outsider. And good, so be it.” (RDi)

Buchanan and Badham (2008) propose that the change agent will face “covert resistance and subversion” (Buchanan & Badham 2008, p. 6) from others, even though the change agenda may have general support. The consequences of this resistance to the overall change effort can be severe. Impacts identified in this research include the inability to effectively manage readiness for change and the need to develop inferior change strategies to circumvent the political play. These impacts have led to change implementation delays and contributed to change failure.

“Change intensifies political power” (Buchanan & Badham 2008, p. 3), and formal channels may not be the best way to deal with these threats. Change agents may need to engage in their own politicking. Ignoring the politics can damage the change initiative, negatively affect those hoping to benefit from the change and injure the change agent's reputation (Buchanan & Badham 2008). RIsla's experience demonstrated these adverse effects:

“That sponsor verbally said to me, look if you need help, If you need me to drive something out, you just tell me. And so when I did, actually, I got slammed for it and publicly critiqued.” (RIsla)

RIsla noted in the interview that this led to a total breakdown of communication with the sponsor and created difficulties with the sponsor's team, the people most affected by the change. RIsla was also emotionally harmed by the experience. As an external change agent, it was much harder for RIsla to identify and engage in politicking to counter the situation. When change agents are unwilling or unable to engage politically, they will be taken advantage of by those that are. The change agent needs to manage the political situation proactively, and this is difficult if it is not understood (Buchanan & Badham 2008).

Buchanan and Badham also identify problems with “empire-building political players who seek only personal advantage and satisfaction establish control over an

organisation's change agenda" (Buchanan & Badham 2008, p. 45). Political measures will be required to counteract these plans; otherwise, there will be considerable damage, and change outcomes may be modified to accommodate the politicking, resulting in poor or abandoned long-term outcomes. RCathy regretted misunderstanding the political plays in progress and the personal risk.

"I thought I was working for the sponsor, but it turned out the executive sponsor was the one that was pulling all the strings." (RCathy)

RCathy was emotionally scarred by the process, blaming herself for not understanding the power play more quickly and, in the process, creating problems that exacerbated the misunderstanding and affected outcomes.

Power and politics have long been accepted as potentially detrimental elements of change processes (Kaarst-Brown 1999). While these issues can arise with internal teams, it is more challenging to identify and succeed in political games as an external change agent.

6.3.3. Communication and decision making

Caldwell (2001) asserts that change consultants are in a client-centred relationship, with the client directing the change and the change consultant implementing the decisions. While external change agents drive the change, the business makes the decisions around the change implementation. A number of the interviewees identified the change efforts halting through a lack of timely decisions.

RGreg discussed a multinational HR project, which, when he arrived, was confused. The executives were clear on the required outcomes, but there was a gap between this, the technology supplier and ownership by the HR business units. He needed:

"...the leadership on board with the fact that we needed to actually define these down to a specific level and actually put someone on the hook for doing these in each country." (RGreg)

Once the organisation had identified and assigned the roles and responsibilities, the project could proceed. RGreg drove the decision-making process, but the business needed to make the decisions.

When the media identified legislative change concerns, RIsla noted that business relationship managers' attitudes changed from:

“Disinterested to aggressively demanding information she could not provide.” (RIsla)

This was the second pivot in that particular change implementation, leading to the observation:

“There’s been curves and changes, and we as an organisation are still making decisions, and the project can’t communicate to you until those upper levels make those decisions ...So there’s some real challenges there.” (RIsla)

As well as identifying the impact of slow decision-making, RIsla noted decisions made that went against her recommendations as the change lead:

“There were some decisions to not have some of the parties involved early in the piece, which was not necessarily aligned with my recommendation, but that’s that was some of the business decisions that were made that we had to roll with.” (RIsla)

These decisions ultimately negatively impacted the change implementation; the program was not fully completed, and the subsequent change program implementation would compound the issues caused by the previously-unfinished implementation.

RCathy described many mini steering committees she helped set up within the business. They could influence how things would be implemented and provide additional information but had limited decision-making powers.

“...the fundamentals for each of the Seven pillars were set in stone... Those fundamental decisions – nobody had any influence on those. But the subcommittees definitely influenced the How and the When of those, those changes.” (RCathy).

Working through the management structure is extremely important within a strictly hierarchical structure. RDi spoke of utilising the culture by obtaining senior management approval so those at lower organisational levels would participate. According to RDi:

“you have to go to them, and you have to convince them that things have to change. You have got to get them on board. If you don’t, then it stops there.” (RDi)

The hierarchical structure required managerial support throughout the organisation to accept any change.

In the experience of those interviewed, change agents were employed in consulting roles after the project was identified, the strategy was set, and they were required to refer decisions back to the business for resolution. Delays and lack of involvement in the decision-making process had adverse effects on the change process, and strategies were needed to be developed to drive a timely business decision-making process.

6.3.4. Clarity of information

External change agents may lack the detailed organisational knowledge required to implement change effectively. Many consultants identified issues with understanding the organisation in which they were working. “Both change strategists and implementers must implicitly understand how the organisation functions in its environment, how it operates, and what its strengths and weaknesses are. Such understanding will assist in developing alternative scenarios that the proposed changes could create. This will facilitate crafting an effective implementation plan.”(Mento, Jones & Dirndorfer 2002, p. 50) External change agents must understand the organisational culture and climate and how it functions to create the change strategy and achieve the necessary change outcome.

Despite being qualified and experienced as a change professional, gaining the business knowledge required to perform their roles could be challenging. From RPia:

“People don’t quite understand the reliance that [the] change [agent] has on the subject matter experts. We cannot become subject matter experts, but we need them to advise us.” (RPia)

RPia articulated the constraints of implementing change with a limited understanding of the organisation. Gullers and Gref (2021) suggest that while the external consultant has the necessary experience and knowledge, they do not have organisation-specific knowledge, such as a sufficient understanding of the organisational culture, internal systems and processes. This combination of inadequate knowledge and role as an external change agent may create change resistance.

RCathy recognised the executive sponsor had misunderstood the consultant’s report as a blueprint for the change, not realising the expenditure required to achieve the results:

“...so not absorbing the message afterwards that you’ve got it wrong. We can still get you [x] million, but it’s going to be done in a different way, and that was my major challenge.” (RCathy)

Despite the lack of investment by the organisation, a rolling series of changes leveraging the previous change's savings was implemented. However, the difficulties posed by the misinformation meant the original implementation plan could not be used, and the strategic objectives, and the financial benefits, would not be realised.

External change agents require precise and accurate information to deliver change effectively. As articulated by ROscar:

"...generally change professionals may not really know the business drivers. They know how to manage individualised change...But it's also about understanding how the broader impact on business impacts on them. So, therefore, they can have appreciation and understanding."(ROscar)

It takes time to develop an understanding of the business. As a consultant, the time required to build understanding and relationships is not always available. RFaye noted regret about the lack of time:

"They would say to me, 'but you don't understand my business'. And it would have been great to be able to have a longer conversation with them...But sometimes I didn't have time for those conversations." (RFaye)

RDi was not provided with the information that the proposed organisational change she was implementing ran counter to the expressed retail behaviour. Without gaining this knowledge, the organisation would not have adopted the changes. Gaining this understanding enabled her to counter the potential change resistance by involving top management in communications to reverse the behavioural norms, without which the change would not deliver the required benefit.

RLena acknowledged the general difficulties of understanding the organisation as an external change agent and the potential to improve change implementation with a more thorough knowledge:

"I think this is one of the challenges of being a change person. How much of the detail can you really understand? You know, it's difficult to gather 20 years of business knowledge in a short amount of time. Possibly I could have added more value if I had understood the business in more detail. But that was clearly not my forte; my forte is to work closely with those business leads to understand as much as I can and utilise their knowledge to effect the change. But you always feel

that. And I could have had more meaningful conversations if I had more depth in that space.”
(RLena)

RFaye noted the business voiced its concerns about her perceived lack of knowledge:

“In retrospect...I would have had more time to actually be able to build their trust...they didn’t really know me...they got to know me and...to know I was trustworthy and things like that, but they didn’t really know me. And they would say to me: “but you don’t understand my business”. And, it would have been great to be able to have a longer conversation with them and to get them to tell all about it, and then be able to just question as we went through. But sometimes, I didn’t have time for those conversations.” (RFaye)

The lack of time available to gain knowledge and understanding of the organisation was identified by RLena and RFaye. “Change agents develop and articulate a need for change; once the change agent is perceived as credible and trustworthy, information exchange takes place” (Tann 2021, p. 46). Trust is the most important personal asset for change agents, and they need to work to create and maintain the confidence of all stakeholders. The organisation community has limited patience for misinformation and mistakes; they will start to lose trust in the change agent (Swing 2009).

The interviewees highlighted unclear and incomplete information's impact on the change efforts. The multidimensional and complex concept of credibility appeared in most participants’ stories. External change agents need time and support to understand the business and change impacts to implement change successfully.

6.3.5. Change sponsors (senior management)

The change sponsor is an individual within the organization with the appropriate authority to approve the change and formulate the change goal (Katalin, Béla & Zoltán 2017). Sponsors consist of senior management who can provide regular, personal, visible, and verbal support for the change. Sponsors can help remove roadblocks and provide resources and deal with political interference. While encouraging appropriate risk-taking, these sponsors can also accept responsibility for failures and make timely decisions. (Weidner 1999).

As articulated by RDi, the importance of sponsors cannot be underestimated:

“But the sponsors, sponsor management and stakeholder management are just so important. Just so key...if they’re not being managed well and they don’t understand what’s going on well enough, it’s a very dangerous situation to be in cause they’re very powerful people.” (RDi).

RIsla could not connect with the sponsor’s delegate. Weekly half-hour meetings were declined continually after the first meeting:

“I couldn’t break through that barrier. I never could, I tried to go around her, and I know that there were times when my boss did try, but I also got burnt badly, really badly in that project. It was really, really dysfunctional.” (RIsla)

This had a significant detrimental effect on both the change success and RIsla. The refusal to engage and subsequent silent treatment such as that experienced by RIsla can be interpreted by onlookers undergoing the change as a lack of sponsorship. Onlookers may also not engage with the change but wait until it passes (Weidner 1999).

The role of the change sponsor is critical to change success, and change agents also benefit by maintaining close contact and periodically updating their sponsors (Gullers & Gref 2021). RDi suggested that her change management style, designating the leadership and communications roles to business leaders, meant that she was not always aware of political issues. In retrospect, she conceded:

“I probably would have made sure I had more senior director contact with the client...I may just have been able to help with whatever politics was going on.” (RDi)

An increasing number of external change agents are change professionals hired as change management contractors (Caldwell 2001). The change agent is critical to defining and directing the change. While external change professionals have deep knowledge of implementing change, they may have limited knowledge of the organisation, organisational culture and climate, and internal processes. They need time and support to understand the organisation and build credibility. Else, they may be looked on with suspicion and mistrust (Havelock 1973) and face covert resistance and subversion. As change is a politicised process (Buchanan & Badham 2008), change agents need to engage in this process, or advantage will be taken of them. Handling these political situations will be more problematic if the political situation is not understood or without sponsor support (Buchanan & Badham 2008).

The respondent interviews reveal that these issues have not been resolved. External change agents not embedded within the organisation struggle to implement effective change. External change agents need to be entrenched within the organisation from the change inception and given time to understand the organisation and build their credibility. They need to have and maintain change sponsor support throughout the change process. This area requires future research.

6.4. Individual readiness for change

Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder (1993, p. 681) defined change readiness as an individual's "beliefs, attitudes, and intentions" regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organisation's capacity to successfully undertake those changes". Rafferty, Jimmieson, & Armenakis (2013) expand individual readiness for change to include the individual's beliefs that change is needed, the individual can undertake the change, and the change has positive outcomes for the individual. It also acknowledges the individual's positive emotional responses (current and to the future state). The authors propose that readiness for change should be described as a multilevel framework outlining the precursors and consequences of the individual, group and organisational readiness for change. Further, they posit that the collective readiness for change (at group and organisational levels) is influenced by social interaction processes and includes shared cognitive beliefs that change is needed, the collective can perform the change, and the change will have positive outcomes for the collective. Similarly to the individual level, their definition accepts the importance of the collective's positive emotional responses (current and the future state).

While the research findings overwhelmingly support the literature (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002; Oreg et al. 2003; Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013), some aspects that emerged from the data analysis deserve further discussion.

Impacting individual readiness for change are demographic variables (such as age, gender and organisational level), readiness for change factors (appropriateness, management support, change efficacy, personally beneficial), personality variables (negative affect, locus of control, rebelliousness, general attitude towards change) and contextual variables (communications climate, perceived management ability). Positive job attitudes, including job satisfaction and organisational commitment, were identified as the key

outcomes of individual change readiness (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). The findings of this research support the importance of these variables.

The surveyed sample generally agreed more with the statements about the change they were describing, with relatively low percentages disagreeing with the statements posed in the affirmative. The respondents were 85% female, and research has female employees feel more positively about their social relationships within organisations and more substantial organisational commitment (Madsen, Miller, & John 2005). That 55% identify as executive, manager or group leader roles could also potentially explain the higher organisational commitment responses (Madsen, Miller, & John 2005).

94% of survey respondents identified with 'I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change', which related to participation in the change process (Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck (=2009). This level of agreement could also be attributed to the management and leadership roles undertaken by the respondents. Similarly, considerable agreement with the other aspects of change readiness assessed: appropriateness, efficacy, valence, and affective, continuation and normative commitment could be explained by the older ages and more senior roles undertaken by the participants.

There was considerable disagreement (29%) in the surveyed respondents with 'I believe resistance to the change was adequately addressed by management. There appears to be a positive correlation between resistance to change, burnout, job stability and reduced commitment (Srivastava & Agrawal (2020). This perception of reduced commitment could also inform the lower agreement with the statement 'My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change' than 'I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change' (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002).

There was strong overall agreement among the surveyed respondents about published scales used (Armenakis et al. 2007; Bouckenooghe, Devos & Van den Broeck 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer 2002) regarding the individual's perception of the appropriateness and efficacy of the change, the change valence, or what's in it for the individual, emotional and intentional readiness for change, the quality of change communication, and affective, continuance and normative commitment. However, research participants

especially highlighted some additional variables that were not discussed to the same extent despite being previously identified.

6.4.1. Personality variables

Operating within the broad group of personality variables, affective or emotional factors that include fear and excitement about the change emerged in some participants' stories. The sense of excitement or fear of the change is closely related to people both fearful of and excited by the change. This supports the inclusion of personality variables into some of the readiness for change scales, such as the personal attitude towards change (Holt et al. 2007). Affective commitment can be described as the desire to comply (Herscovitch & Meyer 2002). Affective reactions can include aspects of stress invoked by a climate of constant change, but skilled invention can reduce the negative effects of change-associated stress (Armenakis & Bedeian 1999).

The survey results show a small but still significant proportion of results disagreeing with the statement 'I felt I was capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed change', as 11.3% disagreed, with a further 5.6% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Narrating the experiences they observed with the change processes, several interview participants specifically identified fear in this context. When discussing emotions she saw being experienced, RFaye said:

"All those sorts of fears about personal failure, personal risk, self-esteem risk, etc. What happens if I look silly in front of my co-workers who think I'm brilliant and come to me for advice type thing." (RFaye)

"So some roles might feel that they haven't got the skills and therefore they feel that...they had a lot of history and experience, but this is a whole new way of working, and they might not be able to do it. So, there's fear underneath it which would drive resistance which would drive significant pushback." (RDi)

In this case, the notion of fear included not only elements directly related to the change processes but reached broader into long-term professional implications.

Later research suggests indirect and direct relationships between change beliefs, positive emotions and behaviour during the change. Rafferty & Minbashian (2019) identify the need to consider positive emotions about change as this constitutes a critical difference in

change readiness. They determine the need to develop both change beliefs and positive emotions about change to enhance employees' change readiness and change-supportive behaviours. Emotions play a central role both in commencing the change process and in sensemaking activities dealing with the issues and concerns arising from implementing the change (George & Jones 2001). While several of the interview participants identified this, it was clearly articulated by RAlice:

"...It wasn't popular among some of them, but ... some people emerged who started to say to me, look, we knew this had to happen...for a lot of them, in the end, they enjoyed the process. They felt they were doing well; they were giving a good service, and they could hold their heads high in the industry because we were doing well and we got a lot of awards ...So there the organization started getting accolades for what it was doing and...that in the end really helped cement the pathway." (RAlice)

Sensemaking is the response to the change, an active process of scanning, interpretation and action that can be part of a social process but also performed at the individual level (Kieran, MacMahon & MacCurtain 2022). This underlines the importance of evaluating and enhancing affective as well as the cognitive aspects of readiness for change when implementing change.

6.4.2. Intentional factors

Another group of factors that the participants highlighted were the intentional factors, including employees leaving the organisation as a negative outcome of the change. This was not identified in the surveyed results, where almost 60% agreed with the statement 'I had too much at stake to resist the change' from Herscovitch and Meyer's (2002) scale and related to continuance commitment. However, several interviewed respondents identified a link between these outcomes and intentional readiness for change, age and tenure. RNola illustrates this point:

"We were fundamentally trying to increase the engagement of the staff so we could improve productivity across the organisation. And we did achieve that. So through that process, some people left because they were uncomfortable. We had some older personnel deciding earlier than later to retire." (RNola)

While previous studies (e.g. Piderit 2000, Meyer 2001, Neves 2009) have identified that behavioural readiness for change can include acts of compliance, defiance and omission,

and behavioural commitment can include actions like remaining with the organisation or exerting extra effort, the findings of this research highlight the relationship between these actions and the age and tenure.

6.4.3. Critical mass

Finally, an interesting observation emerged regarding the identification of the turning point within organisations when the critical mass of involvement converted the remaining sceptics.

“When you get to 80%, the last 20% erodes pretty quickly in terms of their resistance when they see that everyone else around them is doing it and there’s a benefit.” (RGreg).

A recent study by Parke, Tangirala and Hussain shows that while supervisor or change agent peers have a more significant effect on group adoption of the change in the early stages, during the latter part of the change adoption, when behavioural expectations are more explicit, peer-led interventions have a positive impact and work with supervisor-led interventions to increase organisational citizenship behaviour. They found that in the early stage of change adoption, peers are reluctant to act as change agents and can be resistant to peer influence. In the later stages of change implementation, peers can become effective change advocates within their groups, with peer influence changing as the change efforts progress (Parke, Tangirala & Hussain 2021).

6.5. Group readiness for change

Whilst organisations only change through their members and change strategies are focused on involvement and participation to empower individuals (Choi & Ruona 2011), group norms and expectations can modify the individual’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour (George & Jone 2001).

Shared confidence in collective capabilities (collective sense-making) could be more representative of readiness for change than the belief of the individual in their capability (Holt & Vardaman 2013), with a change in group standards supporting the individual’s readiness for change (Lewin 1947). As described above, a change in the critical mass of involvement and peer group pressure to adopt change can improve group readiness for change and thereby influence the individual’s readiness for change. Involving group members in understanding the need for the change and creating ownership of decisions

and solutions have been identified as reducing resistance to change, with the inference that they would improve readiness for change (Vakola 2013).

Internal context enablers, including leadership, change participation, and communication, lead to outcomes of collective performance, change-supportive behaviours and group attitudes at the collective level (Rafferty et al. 2013). Multi-level readiness for change contributes to developing dynamic capabilities for change implementation, correlating with increased change initiation, effort and persistence on the part of its members. Thus, multi-level readiness for change is critical in an organisation's overall approach to change, as it will improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation.

Factors related to the readiness for change at the group and organisational levels identified by the change professionals participating in this research predominantly aligned with the current literature. Interview participants commented on the ability of the group to support and influence the change implementation as enhancing group readiness for change. They also identified supervisor support as essential to group readiness for change, noting that supervisors may need support to fulfil this aspect of their role.

6.5.1. Group support

The importance of group dynamics in readiness for change was featured strongly in the interviews. While people have distinct individual readiness for change, they are also influenced by their group and social interactions. The group has a collective readiness for change based on social norms and experiences. This is in line with group behaviour by George (1990), who suggests that the relations exist between the group level and personality, affect and behaviour at the individual level of analysis. The individuals within the workgroups are there through choice, and they collectively, but through their individual behaviour, determine the nature of the group and the group norms and behaviours. George (1990) notes that the group's affective tone controls the group's attractiveness. A positive affective tone attracts members and positive behaviour, with a negative tone providing an unpleasant setting for group members encouraging absenteeism and reducing citizenship behaviour (George 1990).

This effect was negligible within the strongly hierarchical institutions where the groups had minimal contribution but heavy compliance. Where a team lead solution was enabled

and supported, added benefits included team ownership and satisfaction with the solution and reinforcement that there was management support. Readiness for change outcomes at the group level include change-supportive behaviour of the workgroup and positive workgroup attitudes (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013).

When designing the change strategy, several change professionals participating in this research noted the need to assess the change impact on all the different stakeholder groups as a precursor to designing the change strategy. Groups with minimal impact require less involvement and communication. Those groups severely impacted require more detailed analysis and may require individual impact analysis. The importance of understanding and driving the group readiness for change as articulated by RDi:

“So, if they’re high impacted and it might be 20 or 30 different stakeholder groups that are high-impacted, we have to pay attention to all of them....So, the first thing we’re doing is doing a very articulated impact assessment of each of the stakeholder groups...if we had a group that was very important, we might identify every single person in it... we actually really purpose-built it. We knew every single person there - might have been 30 or 40 people there. We honed in on the supervisors. We particularly found where the issues were with particular subgroups and which particular supervisors had issues. So, it was very purpose-built - the art in all of that readiness, the art in the readiness, is a very good impact assessment. And then take it down to a really, very good readiness assessment if you’re worried about certain people adopting the change or not. Because at the end of the day, that’s the bottom line.” (RDi)

Groups that are impacted but see no real benefits will need to be treated differently from those identified with benefits from the change. A further explanation was provided by RDi:

“Well, for some stack of groups, they would see there were no benefits, so it’s a very different change solution. The change team are building to help them get on board compared with a team where there’s very obvious benefits for them.” (RDi)

Therefore, the ‘what’s in it for me’ at the individual level can be directly translated to the same question at the group level. Modifying the change strategy to deliver group readiness for change delivers change-supportive behaviour of the workgroup and positive workgroup attitudes (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013), ensuring the effective adoption of change.

6.5.2. Supervisor support

The change professionals noted the value of supervisor support for the team. Strong support by supervisors enabled strong team support. If support was lacking at any managerial level, it compromised the change implementation and required additional strategies to identify and manage issues with sub-groups. Groups highly impacted by the change meant more effect on the supervisor, requiring more support for the supervisor and thereby supporting their team.

“ there were particular people that stood out as quite strong power brokers...And they really were the people that I started with, and worked really hard with. Because of the influence that they had...” (RFaye)

Change agents needed to work with key influencers, generate peer pressure from other managers and develop a groundswell of support to get some managers on board with the change:

“By and large, yes, yes, ... there were one or two who didn't quite buy-in or were too busy with day-to-day work. And but ..., once you build a critical mass in these spaces, and there's enough people doing what they've committed to do, then there are people who will struggle along, but ultimately feel that group pressure to deliver.” (RMia)

Survey participants were overwhelmingly in agreement with the statement ‘My immediate manager was in favour of these changes’; at over 85%, it had the highest agreement score. Taken from Armenakis et al.’s (2007) cognitive readiness for change scale, the group belief that principal support for the change exists will impact the group embracing the change initiative.

Supervisors, or immediate managers, have a critical role in sensemaking, both in reviewing and challenging the appropriateness of the proposed changes, interpreting the organisational vision for change and developing a shared understanding and plan of implementation. This can lead to further spirals of sensemaking and sense-giving through the organisation and within groups (Kieran, MacMahon & MacCurtain 2021). As a group, organisational members share, compare and review information around the change in an “iterative, social and discursive manner” (Kieran, MacMahon & MacCurtain 2021).

While individual and group readiness for change has been found to have limited differences, they are pursued to improve the success of organisational readiness for change. At the group and individual levels, readiness for change contributes to developing dynamic capabilities for change implementation (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). This was supported by the interviewed participants, who, as change professionals, all identified with the need to support readiness for change during change implementation.

6.6. Summary

This chapter describes the findings of this research, the research outcomes, and the implication of these outcomes on organisational change implementation through the structure of the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2.

The importance of aligning change efforts to organisational culture and climate was highlighted in this research. The complexity of organisational culture and change, and its uniqueness to each organisation, compounded the difficulty of their evaluation and incorporation into readiness for change frameworks. The findings of this research show that each organisation will need to develop their readiness for change framework to align with its unique organisational culture.

The high proportion of external change agents interviewed gave rise to the findings that external change agents are often subjected to political influences undermining their change efforts. This can impact their ability to deliver effective and timely change outcomes.

This research aims to investigate multi-level readiness for change and, specifically, to increase the understanding of group readiness for change and whether it differs from that of the individual. The survey results only showed a minor statistical difference between the individual and group perspectives, while interviews did not uncover differences between individual and group readiness. Nevertheless, the findings indicate a subtle variation of readiness for change influences amongst teams and individuals within the teams. While personality variables and intentional factors were found to impact individual readiness for change, group and supervisor support were found to be significant factors in group readiness for change.

The following chapter, Chapter 7, will present the conclusions and implications of this research.

Chapter 7

7. Conclusions and implications

7.1. Introduction

Current literature dealing with readiness for change offers little differentiation between individual and group levels. While group support is a well-recognised influence on the individual's behaviour, beliefs and values, the impact of group readiness appeared to receive limited attention in the change context.

A selection of significant works dealing with readiness for change provided the conceptual basis for the thesis providing a backdrop for the investigation into multilevel readiness for change. This thesis offers a framework that allows for a greater understanding of multi-level readiness for change and its impact on readiness for change outcomes.

The phenomenological approach used in this research focused on the participants' lived experiences through semi-structured interviews with professional change agents. Their experiences were augmented and counterposed by a survey of individuals who had experienced a change in the workplace. This approach enabled the survey respondents' views to be consolidated and statistically analysed whilst also empowering change professionals' stories to develop as they described their participation and multi-level readiness for change within a change. This multi-stage qualitative approach enabled significant research through the broad range of participants interviewed and surveyed and framed the thesis structure.

The participants in this study, interviewed and surveyed, described differing experiences throughout multi-levels of readiness for change. The data obtained did not clearly indicate differences between individual and group readiness. However, the findings indicated that the group and individuals could affect each other's readiness for change. There were also variations within teams and between the individuals within the teams, often related to how heavily impacted the teams were by the change.

The significance of change agents in designing and implementing change is well recognised. Some organisations employ internal change professionals to manage change

processes; however, an increasing number are outsourced, hiring external change agents as change professionals in contract roles. Out of seventeen change professionals interviewed in this study, thirteen belonged to the latter group. External change agents will often be unfamiliar with the organisation, the organisational culture, the organisational climate and particularly the organisation's internal politics. The key themes emerging from the interviews with external change agents are issues because they are not adequately embedded within the organisation. Their limited understanding of the organisational climate and behaviours of the organisations leads to problems associated with organisational politics.

Change is politicising, and therefore change agents are required to intervene in politics to promote and implement the change. Being external, these change agents may encounter mistrust as an outsider. Their lack of insider knowledge makes it challenging to recognise the internal politics, which can impact every aspect of their change role, leading to a lack of information, poor sponsor support, slow decision making and political attacks. External change agents need time to become embedded within the organisation to understand the organisational behaviours and engage in politicking to promote the change process and protect themselves. The ability to employ political measures and understand the power play is challenging and frequently not recognised as a critical skill change agents require.

Findings are discussed in greater detail below.

7.2. Research conclusions

This section discusses the research findings, firstly for each of the research questions, and second, around the role of the external change agent and organisational culture on readiness for change.

7.2.1. What are the factors that determine group readiness for change?

This research found that the same variables underpinning individual readiness for change are valid for group readiness for change. These variables include demographic variables (such as age, gender, education and organisational level), readiness for change factors (appropriateness, management support, change efficacy, personally beneficial), personality variables (negative affect, locus of control, rebelliousness, general attitude towards change) and contextual variables (communications climate, perceived management ability).

The change impact on the group has an effect on readiness for change and requires identification as a precursor to designing the change strategy. Groups with minimal impact require less involvement and communication. Those groups severely impacted require more detailed analysis and may require individual impact analysis. Groups that are impacted but see no real benefits will need to be treated differently from those identified with benefits from the change. Therefore, the 'what's in it for me' effect on readiness for change at the individual level can be directly translated to the same question and effect at the group level.

Strong support by supervisors enables strong team support. If support was lacking at any managerial level, it compromised the change implementation and required additional strategies to identify and manage issues with sub-groups. Groups highly impacted by the change result in a more significant impact on the supervisor, meaning the supervisor then requires more support from the organisation to support their team. Supervisors also have a critical role in group sensemaking, which can lead to further spirals of sensemaking and sense-giving through the organisation and within groups.

A positive affective tone is effected by attracting positive behaviour, which encourages prosocial behaviour and increases readiness for change. Several participants commented on the ability of the group to support and influence the change implementation as enhancing group readiness for change.

7.2.2. How does group readiness for change differ from that of the individual?

Group readiness for change is heavily impacted by group dynamics. Individual readiness for change is influenced by group and social interactions, giving rise to a collective readiness for change based on social norms and experiences. There is a relationship between the group level and personality, affect and behaviour at the individual level of analysis. The group's affective tone controls the group's attractiveness, with a positive affective tone attracting members, positive behaviour and prosocial behaviour.

Organisational culture also impacts the group role, where groups in strongly hierarchical institutions had minimal contribution but heavy compliance, but a team-supportive culture enabling team lead solutions gave rise to team ownership and increased group readiness for change.

Sensemaking, the dynamic process of scanning, interpretation and action, can be performed at the individual level but is more commonly a social process within the group. Group members share information about the change, iteratively comparing and reviewing the information. Supervisors have a critical role in enabling sensemaking within their teams. The impact on the group of the proposed change affects both the group's readiness for change and the difficulty of supervisors fulfilling their roles. Supervisors have a more significant effect on early group adoption of the change, but later in the change, when behavioural expectations are more apparent, peer-led interventions have more effect, showing how social interactions can create group readiness for change.

7.2.3. How does group readiness for change impact change implementation?

Organisations only change through their members; therefore, the role of the individual's willingness to adopt and support change is clear that change is facilitated through individual readiness to change. The group and social interactions influence individual readiness for change, which guide behaviour and provide sensemaking and sense-giving. There is a relationship between the group level and personality, affect and behaviour at the individual level of analysis. Multi-level readiness for change contributes to developing dynamic capabilities for change implementation, correlating with increased change initiation, effort and persistence on the part of its members. Thus, multi-level readiness for change is critical in an organisation's overall approach to change, as it will improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation.

7.2.4. What is the nature of group readiness for change?

Group readiness for change is the collective readiness for change based on the group's social norms and experiences. The social process of sensemaking within the group, where change information is shared and evaluated, promotes change readiness. Team-supportive organisational cultures support ownership of the change and increase group readiness for change. Supervisor support is also highly influential in adopting change.

Whilst change is facilitated through individual efforts and readiness to adopt change, group interactions such as sense-making, sense-giving, and prosocial activities affect individual readiness for change. Increased change initiation, effort and persistence developed

through multi-level readiness for change contributes to improved organisational change success rates and leads to more effective change implementation.

7.2.5. Role of the external change agent

Although the research set out to investigate group and individual readiness for change, a key finding that emerged from the data relates to the role of external change agents and their employment and involvement in the change process.

An increasing number of external change agents are change professionals hired as change management contractors. The change agent is critical to defining and directing the change. While external change professionals have deep knowledge of how to implement change, they may have limited knowledge of the organisation, organisational culture and climate, and internal processes. They need time and support to understand the organisation and build credibility, otherwise they may be looked on with suspicion and mistrust and face covert resistance and subversion. As change is a politicised process, change agents need to engage in this process, or advantage will be taken of them. Handling these political situations will be more problematic if the political situation is not understood or without sponsor support.

The respondent interviews reveal that these issues have not been resolved. External change agents not embedded within the organisation can struggle to implement effective change. External change agents need to be entrenched within the organisation from the change inception and given time to understand the organisation and build their credibility. They need to have and maintain change sponsor support throughout the change process. This area requires future research.

7.2.6. Organisational culture and readiness for change

A second key finding, not explicitly related to group readiness for change, relates to the need for organisations to develop a readiness for change framework to align with their organisational culture.

Organisational culture is the social sharing of experiences, ideas, meaning and values by people within a company, guiding how they think, feel and act appropriately. Organisational culture links organisational behaviour and management strategies, enabling organisations to function in an organised way, maintain knowledge and support

change. In order to be more successful, change should be tied to and emphasise the organisational values to promote acceptance of the change. Organisational climate is the employee experience of the organisational culture. Culture is the context underlying the climate, supported by the collective individuals within the organisation and is difficult to change. Both organisational climate and culture are difficult to evaluate.

Change can be seen as a challenge to the existing culture and change climate. While the current readiness for change frameworks have some elements of change climate built into them, the lack of clarity around organisational climate suggests these are too prescriptive and do not consider the complexity of changing culture and climate.

Understanding the organisational culture and climate when implementing change cannot be underestimated. Organisational climate, in general, is a complex construct and challenging to evaluate. Customising climate evaluation to the organisation makes evaluation more difficult. Despite its need, the lack of explicit organisational culture alignment within readiness for change frameworks is due to both the difficulty of evaluation and because it is unfeasible to develop generalisations that cover the diverse range of organisations and organisational changes being implemented. In summary, the findings of this research show that each organisation will need to develop their own readiness for change framework to align with its organisation's culture.

7.3. Summary and conclusion

Group dynamics have a significant impact on group readiness for change. While people have distinct individual readiness for change, they are also influenced by their group and social interactions. The group has a collective readiness for change based on social norms and experiences. This research also identified different strategies required depending on how severely the change impacted the group. Supervisor support enabled strong team support, and supervisors of highly impacted teams needed additional support for their role.

The prevalence of external change agents within this research enabled an understanding of the difficulties they face and the skills and support required for them to manage the change process effectively. The research also identified the need for organisations to develop change frameworks that align with both the organisation's culture and change climate.

High readiness for change at the individual, group and organisational levels correlates with an increased likelihood of change initiation, effort and persistence on the part of its members. Thus, an organisation's readiness for change is critical in its overall approach to change. Multi-level readiness for change, support for external change agents and change initiatives aligning with organisational culture and climate will improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation.

7.4. Contribution to knowledge

This thesis has used a phenomenological approach to investigate multi-level readiness for change. While there is a vast amount of literature on readiness for change at the individual and organisational levels, the group level literature is sparse. The survey and interviews enabled an in-depth look at individual and group readiness for change in various organisations.

This research makes three significant contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it supports the concepts and factors affecting individual readiness for change while identifying personality variables, intentional factors and the peer support of critical mass as particularly influential on the individuals within the group. This research acknowledges group readiness for change as based on group dynamics, recognising the importance of group and supervisor support on group readiness for change, and the need for change strategies to promote group readiness to improve organisational change success rates and lead to more effective implementation.

Secondly, this research highlights the need for explicit organisational culture alignment within readiness for change frameworks. While aspects of change climate are often included, these generalisations are not sufficient to cover the diversity of organisations and organisational changes being implemented. The complex nature of culture and climate requires evaluation in line with the specific organisation's culture and change objectives, thereby linking the change efforts, specifically readiness for change, to the underlying organisational values.

Thirdly, this research identifies the trend toward contracting external change agents in organisational change and the impact on effective change implementation, which expands the theory of politics in change management. The change agent plays a critical role in implementing change. However, external change agents may have limited knowledge of

the organisation, organisational culture and climate, and internal processes. This impacts their effectiveness in managing change as the process is politicised, requiring deep organisational understanding and political engagement to meet the change objectives.

7.5. Practical contribution

In addition to the contribution to knowledge, this research makes a number of practical contributions that organisations undergoing change should consider. The need to drive change for competitive advantage within organisations has never been greater. Change efforts are already costly, and poor implementation can lead to delays, increased costs and the risk that the project objectives are not realised. Any knowledge leading to an improvement in change effectiveness is valuable to business overall.

This research highlights the need for explicit organisational culture alignment within readiness for change frameworks. While the current readiness for change frameworks have some elements of change climate built into them, the lack of clarity around organisational climate, and the difficulty of climate evaluation, suggest these are too prescriptive and do not consider the complexity of the impact of change on culture and climate. This should be addressed when preparing a change strategy by evaluating the organisational culture and climate relevant to the specific organisation and the change being implemented.

The specificity of the readiness for change framework to the organisation means a universal readiness to change framework cannot be successfully applied. The practical implication is that organisations need to develop their own framework that reflects their climate, culture, and the change context rather than a standardised approach.

The predominance of external change agents in the participant sample enabled this research to understand some of the issues surrounding this role. External change agents are often employed in a consulting role after the project is identified and the strategy is set in place. They need to be given the time to acquire knowledge and garner support and credibility within the organisation to implement change effectively.

This research shows that embedding external change agents in the organisation from the change inception is recommended. The change agents will still require politicking skills to perform this role, but early engagement will enable a greater understanding of the

organisation, processes and behaviours and support the change agent in their role. The practical implication is that the benefit of the temporary nature of the engagement of external change professionals in consulting roles must be balanced against early involvement in the change process and support provided to enable a thorough understanding of the organisation, processes and behaviours.

7.6. *Research limitations*

The qualitative, interpretive methodology used enabled the exploration of group readiness for change through lived experiences of those leading and receiving change. While enabling a greater depth of the topic to be explored, the qualitative methodology could lead to subjectivity and a lack of generalisability of the results (Frechette et al., 2020). However, this research aims for transferability of findings rather than generalisability while proposing a theoretical generalisability in that the collected data was evaluated in the context of the existing literature.

Gathering data for the research was challenging. I applied to a number of organisations, hoping to be able to embed my research within a transformational change program they were implementing. Initial discussions were held with a law enforcement agency where there was considerable interest in this research topic. After several meetings, my application was not successful due to internal challenges within the organisation. A second organisation in the health sector was approached, and while initially interested, the situation again was similar, and the outcome was unsuccessful. These two organisations had the potential to enable a large-scale and extensive study. Leading into 2020, while approaching other organisations, the pandemic led to setbacks in terms of data accessibility, which has impacted the outcomes.

The research participants were drawn from a diverse range of organisations and change efforts. Data collection within a single organisation and change implementation would provide additional insights through further research.

The thesis does not evaluate the effectiveness of the organisational changes. This was a result of the pragmatic use of participants who had experienced different changes rather than a single large-scale study of one organisation. The practical impact on the thesis findings is that the range of change contents, internal and external environmental factors and change processes, all of which impact the change outcome (Armenakis, A. A. &

Bedeian 1999; Pettigrew 1990), could not be analysed within the timeframe and size of this research. The theoretical correlation between organisational readiness for change and change effectiveness (Choi & Ruona 2011; Weiner, B 2009) which underpins the findings around organisational culture and the role of the change agent on change outcomes was accepted but not tested in this research.

This research utilised interviews with individuals representative of the groups involved in the change. Focus groups from the affected teams would have enabled observation of the group interactions, providing more understanding of the social aspects of group readiness for change.

Covid restrictions meant that all interviews were conducted remotely. This made them less intimate than face-to-face interviews, reducing the connection between the researcher and the participant.

7.7. Opportunities for future research

Several topics have been identified as deserving further research. The research limitations identified above, including limited access to data and the diversity of the data collected, meant that the analysis and findings were not as focused as they could be with a single extensive data set. Investigation of group readiness for change within a single large organisational change would provide a targeted population, enabling the comparison of groups directly affected by the same organisational culture, climate, change context and implementation process. This presents an opportunity for future research.

Since group readiness for change involves social interactions, focus group research would enable observations of the social interactions and their impact on group readiness for change which may be explored in the future.

Another area that would benefit from further insight is the role of external change professionals, particularly in the context of having a more limited understanding of the organisation, organisational culture, climate and behaviours. As this research suggests, the early involvement of the change agent could improve organisational change effectiveness. This area deserves further exploration.

Appendices

Appendix A: Individual face-to-face interviews

A.1 Interview Format and questions

Introduction

Introduce myself and thank the participant for participating in the interview.

Describe my research, what a DBA is, the purpose of the interview

1. Can you think of a workplace change you have experienced as a change professional, that we could use for the interview? Perhaps one that you think might provide some insights into multi-level readiness for change?

Change context

2. Could you please describe the change you have selected to use? i.e. your understanding of the change. (This is to provide some context so that I can understand the change that occurred.)
3. How many people were impacted by the change?
4. What was your position and responsibilities within your workplace at the time of the change?
5. How many years had you been in your role at the time of the change?

Change details

6. How would you describe the need for the change? E.g. benefit, sense, reason, worth, gain to the organisation
7. How would you view the appropriateness of the change? E.g. value, purpose, alignment with the situation, strategy
8. How was this change being implemented? E.g. strengths, articulated, communicated, your role, major challenges, what you would have done differently?

Readiness for change at Individual Level

9. How does this change affect the individual?
10. To what extent were the individuals involved in this change?
11. How were the individuals kept informed about the change?

Readiness for change at Group Level

12. How does this change affect the teams? E.g. benefits, performance, appropriateness
13. Who led and guided the teams? E.g. manager support and involvement, group resistance, opposition, benefits
14. Was the information provided to the teams sufficient? E.g. consultation, clear communication
15. How committed was the team to the current change? How did they perceive the value of the change & strategy, support, participation, contribution, ability to implement the change?

Readiness for change at Organisation Level

16. Did you get adequate support from the sponsors of the change? E.g. Importance, commitment, encouragement
17. Is the organisation ready to adapt to this change? E.g. Ability to implement. coping, adjusting, performance
18. How do you see the impact of this change - benefits/negatives? E.g. status, relationships, future
19. Are there any culture or engagement survey results that you can share regarding the outcomes of the change?

Closing: Thank you for your time and invaluable insight.

A.2 Request for participants

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **Towards the understanding of collective readiness for change: a multi-level view**.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Frances Menting as part of a Doctor of Business Administration at Victoria University under the supervision of Assoc/Prof Shahnaz Naughton from the College of Business].

Project explanation

This research will contribute to a greater understanding of whether and how the factors at the group level differ from those previously identified for individual evaluation of readiness for change, thereby helping business leaders such as change managers to develop strategies, skills and tools to improve change effectiveness.

What will I be asked to do?

You are being asked to participate in an interview and/or complete a survey. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to become involved. If you do consent, you are entitled to refuse to answer any question if you do not feel comfortable and may withdraw from completing the survey at any stage.

How will the information I give be used?

The information provided will be used for my DBA thesis, journal articles and in conference presentations. Your information will not be identifiable within any of these.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are no potential risks associated with participating in the project.

How will this project be conducted?

This project will consist of volunteers completing interviews and survey responses. Interview data will be coded, categorised and analysed using NVivo, a qualitative analysis software. Multiple regression analysis will be performed on the questionnaire data using SPSS, a quantitative analysis software. The data from the interviews and questionnaires will be further analysed to create a holistic explanation of the results.

Who is conducting the study?

Chief Investigator: Dr Shahnaz Naughton - shahnaz.naughton@vu.edu.au
Student Researcher: Frances Menting - magteld.menting@live.vu.edu.au

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

B.1 Questionnaire introduction and questions

About this survey

Thank you for participating in this survey

This study is part of a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) project entitled 'Towards the understanding of collective readiness for change: a multi-level view'.

The research aims to understand how group and individual readiness for change differ.

Data collected through this survey will contribute towards developing a multi-level readiness for change framework.

This survey asks you to think about a workplace change you have experienced.

The information collected is about your personal experience of the change therefore no company information is required.

Your information will not be identifiable and the data will be destroyed after the study.

The chief investigator is Dr Shahnaz Naughton - shahnaz.naughton@vu.edu.au and student researcher is Frances Menting - magteld.menting@live.vu.edu.au

Change

Question	Response type	Values
Briefly describe the change you experienced	Text	

Were you involved in implementing the change at your workplace?	Selection	Yes No
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A no response will move directly to General Questions

What was your role in implementing the change? Text

In retrospect, what would you have done differently? Text

What were the major challenges you experienced? Text

General Questions

Question	Response type	Values
In which industry are you employed?	Selection	List of Industries
In which country do you work?	Selection	List of countries

How many years have you been employed at your workplace?	Selection	0-5 6-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 40+ prefer not to say
--	------------------	---

What is/was your role?	Text
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Are you a change management professional?	Selection	Yes No
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Your understanding of the change

Question	Response type	Values
I received adequate information about the forthcoming change	Selection	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

The information I have received adequately answered my questions about the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

I was regularly informed about how the change was going	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Need for the change

Question	Response type	Values
I believed in the value of the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

The change served an important purpose for the organisation's future	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I believed the change was needed to improve the situation the organisation was in	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I believed the change was a good strategy for my organisation	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Change Implementation

Question	Response type	Values
The change was clearly communicated and understood by the recipients	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I believe resistance to the change was adequately addressed by management	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Individual effect

Question	Response type	Values
I had a good feeling about the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

I believed the change would benefit me	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I felt I was capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I had too much at stake to resist the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I believed we had the capability to successfully implement the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

I was experiencing the change as a positive process	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Individual involvement

Question	Response type	Values
I was keen to participate in the process of change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I would have felt guilty about opposing the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
I did not feel any obligation to support the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Group effect

Question	Response type	Values
My workgroup believed that the change would benefit them	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
My workgroup believed the change in our operations would improve the performance of our organisation	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
My workgroup believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Group Interactions

Question	Response type	Values
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My immediate manager was in favour of these changes	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
If I experienced any problems, I could always turn to my manager for help	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Our business area's managers spoke up for us during the change process	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
My workgroup believed our immediate manager was in favour of the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

My workgroup felt resisting the change was not a viable option for them	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
My workgroup would have felt guilty about opposing the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Our business area's senior managers paid sufficient attention to the personal consequences that the change could have for their staff members	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Group information

Question	Response type	Values
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Information provided to the group regarding the change was clear	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
There was good communication between project leaders and staff members about this organisation's policy toward change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Decisions concerning work were taken in consultation with the staff in the group who would be affected	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Staff members were consulted about the reasons for change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Group involvement

Question	Response type	Values
My workgroup believed in the value of the change	Selection	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
My workgroup believed the change was a good strategy for the organisation	Selection	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
My workgroup did not feel any obligation to support the change	Selection	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
My workgroup was keen to participate in the process of change	Selection	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
My workgroup believed they were capable of successfully performing their job duties with the proposed change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
My workgroup believed we could successfully implement the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Organisation support

Question	Response type	Values
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My workgroup believed our top leaders supported the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Our organisation's senior managers coached us very well about implementing the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Management kept all areas of the organisation informed about its decisions	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Two way communication between management and business areas was very good	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Top management's commitment to the change was visible	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Organisation readiness

Question	Response type	Values
Our leaders understood the complexity and adapted well to the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
Our business area's senior managers had trouble in adapting to the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Resources required for the change were readily available	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
The organisation was well-prepared for this change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
The organisation had a climate and culture that supported the change	Selection	Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree

Change impact

Question	Response type	Values
----------	---------------	--------

<p>Please enter any additional comments you would like to make regarding your perception of the changes.</p>	Text	<p>Strongly agree</p> <p>Somewhat agree</p>
<p>We are particularly interested in the impact of the changes on you, your workgroup and your workplace</p>		<p>Neither agree nor disagree</p> <p>Somewhat disagree</p> <p>Strongly disagree</p>
<p>Currently organisations are facing the challenges imposed by Covid-19. How has this impacted your workplace?</p>	Text	
<p>How do you feel change re Covid-19 has impacted you psychologically? in any other way ?</p>	Text	

Diversity & Inclusiveness: Demographics

Question	Response type	Values
<p>What is your age?</p>	Selection	<p>Under 21</p> <p>21-34</p> <p>35-44</p> <p>45-54</p> <p>55-64</p> <p>65+</p> <p>Prefer not to say</p>

Which of the following genders do you most identify with? Selection

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to say

B.2 Questionnaire analysis conversions

3.1 Yes/No

Value	Conversion
Yes	1
No	0

Industries

Value	Conversion

Countries

Value	Conversion

How many years have you been employed at your workplace?

Value	Conversion
0-5	1
6-10	2
11-20	3
21-30	4
31-40	5
40+	6
prefer not to say	-1

Selection

Value	Conversion
Strongly agree	5
Somewhat agree	4
Neither agree or disagree	3
Somewhat disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

Age

Value	Conversion
Under 21	1
21-34	2
35-44	3
45-54	4
55-64	5
65+	6
Prefer not to say	-1

Gender

Value	Conversion
Male	1
Female	2
Other	3
Prefer not to say	-1

B.3 Participant Role Data

Role	Valid percentage
Achievement Coach	1.1
Administrative Assistant	2.2
Administrative Support to Executive Director	1.1
Animal Attendant	1.1
Associate Director of Advancement	1.1
Brand Manager	1.1
Business analyst	6.7
Business Development	1.1
Business improvement	1.1
Case manager	1.1
CEO	1.1
Chaplain	1.1
Claim Team Manager	1.1
Clinical Applications Manager	1.1
Clinical Governance Coordinator	1.1
Communications Coordinator	2.2
COO	1.1
Coordinator	1.1
Corporate Accountant	1.1
Corporate Controller	1.1
Director	1.1
Education Product Development Manager	1.1
Eligibility specialist	1.1
Executive Director	1.1
Faculty coordinator	2.2
Financial accountant	1.1

Gaming Assistant	1.1
Global corporate real estate manager	1.1
Head of brand	1.1
Head of Content	1.1
Head of People and Operations	1.1
Head of Training	1.1
Head Teacher - Principal	1.1
Health safety manager	1.1
Instructional designer	1.1
Intelligence Analyst	1.1
Library technician	1.1
Manager	5.6
Market Development	1.1
Marketing program manager	1.1
Media Adviser	1.1
Medical Practice Manager	2.2
News Coordinator	1.1
Owner/Manager	1.1
People & Culture Assistant, Events	1.1
Physician	1.1
Product Manager	1.1
Product Marketing	1.1
Product specialist	1.1
Program Director	1.1
Project Coordinator	1.1
Public servant - grant administration	1.1
Quality Analyst	1.1
Quality manager	1.1
Registered nurse	2.2

Retail appliance demonstrator	1.1
Sales	1.1
ScrumMaster	1.1
Senior Buyer	1.1
Senior change Manager	1.1
Senior Customer Account Specialist	1.1
Senior Engineer	1.1
Senior Lecture/Programme Leader	1.1
Senior Project Manager	1.1
Social Worker	1.1
Staff Union Representative	1.1
Supply Chain Manager	1.1
Teacher	6.7
Underwriting manager	1.1
Vice President	1.1
Total	100.0

B.4 In which Industry are you involved?

Industry	Valid percentage
Accommodation and food service activities	1.1
Administrative and support service activities	5.6
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3.4
Construction	1.1
Education	27.0
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1.1
Financial and insurance activities	5.6
Human health and social work activities	16.9
Information and communication	9.0
Manufacturing	1.1
Other service activities	9.0
Professional, scientific and technical activities	6.7
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	5.6
Real estate activities	1.1
Transportation and storage	2.2
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	3.4
Total	100.0

B.5 Individual and workgroup relationship interpretation

	#	Question	Gamma	p	Statistical analysis interpretation (individual to group relationship)	Question	#
5-pt Likert	5.1	I believed in the value of the change	.58	<0.01	Low association	My workgroup believed in the value of the change	12.1
Grouped			.83	<0.01	Very strong association		
5-pt Likert	5.4	I believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	.81	<0.01	Very strong association	My workgroup believed the change that we were implementing was correct for our situation	9.3
Grouped			.97	<0.01	Very strong association		
5-pt Likert	5.5	I believed the change was a good strategy for my organisation	.80	<0.01	Very strong association	My workgroup believed the change was a good strategy for the organisation	12.2
Grouped			.92	<0.01	Very strong association		
5-pt Likert	7.2	I believed the change would benefit me	.645	<0.01	Strong association	My workgroup believed that the change would benefit them	9.1
Grouped			.766	<0.01	Very strong association		
5-pt Likert	7.3	I felt I was capable of successfully performing my job duties with the proposed change	.462	<0.01	Low association	My workgroup believed they were capable of successfully performing their job duties with the proposed change	12.6
Grouped			.726	<0.01	Strong association		
5-pt Likert	7.5	I believed we had the capability to successfully implement the change	.668	<0.01	Strong association	My workgroup believed we could successfully implement the change	12.7
Grouped			.769	<0.01	Strong association		

5-pt Likert	8.1	I was keen to participate in the process of change	.707	<0.01	Strong association	My workgroup was keen to participate in the process of change	12.4
Grouped			.788	<0.01	Very strong association		
5-pt Likert	8.2	I was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	.514	<0.01	Low association	My workgroup was willing to make a significant contribution to the change	12.5
Grouped			.450	.379	Low association		
5-pt Likert	8.3	I would have felt guilty about opposing the change	.637	<0.01	Strong association	My workgroup would have felt guilty about opposing the change	10.6
Grouped			.724	<0.01	Strong association		
5-pt Likert	8.4	I did not feel any obligation to support the change	.622	<0.01	Strong association	My workgroup did not feel any obligation to support the change	12.3
Grouped			.710	<0.01	Strong association		

B.6 Interpretation of calculated gamma (Rea & Parker 2014)

Measure	Interpretation
0	No association
0.01 – 0.09	Negligible association
0.30 – 0.59	Low association
0.60 – 0.74	Strong association
0.75 – 0.99	Very strong association
1.00	Perfect association

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