Understanding resistance to organizational change

A cognitive approach

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Abstract

Title: Understanding resistance to organizational change: a cognitive approach

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Keywords: Organizational change, Resistance to change, Cognitive perception

Background: Organizational change is a naturally occurring phenomenon and is vital for the survival of organizations. However, the majority of organizational change initiatives result in failure. Resistance to change has been found to be the key reason for this organizational change failure. It is therefore important for change agents to understand and manage the change recipients’ resistance to change, in order to achieve organizational change success.

Research question: What role does the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change have, when assessing their resistance to change?

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to develop our understanding of the change recipients’ resistance to organizational change, as it is cognitively perceived, in order to enhance the existing knowledge of resistance and how it in turn can be successfully managed by change agents. In this way, our purpose includes contributing with a theoretical development in regards to the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change as well as providing change agents with managerial implications.

Method: A qualitative research approach was applied, which included a case study design consisting of multiple cases. Semi-structured interviews and observations were the methods used for collecting the empirical data. The ten respondents were selected from one Swedish company, based on a theoretical sampling method. The data analysis method included both a within-case analysis as well as a cross-case analysis.

Theoretical framework: The structure of the theoretical framework is based on three themes. The first theme considers organizational change, where our working definition and theories regarding organizational change are presented. The second theme considers resistance to change, where we define and present the theories regarding resistance to change. The third and last theme considers the change recipient’s cognitive perception of organizational change, where we provide our definitions of, and the theories regarding, the cognitive elements.

Findings: The change recipients’ cognitive evaluation of organizational change have an important role, when assessing their resistance to change. In regards to the change process, knowledge required to handle the change is found to be the most important cognitive element. Change usefulness is found to be the second most important one. Advantages and disadvantages, as well as change necessity, are not found to be important cognitive elements.
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7.1 Conclusion

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Appendix 4: Interview guide – Change recipients (Swedish)
1. Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction of the topic of this study. We will describe the relevance of investigating organizational change as an underlying basis for the importance of this study. We will conduct a problem discussion, where we identify our research gap, which forms the basis for our research question. Consequently, the research question will be presented and the purpose of this study will be established.

1.1 Problem background

Organizational change is a naturally occurring phenomenon and is vital for the survival of organizations. Change, the process of “.../moving from a known state to an unknown one.../” (Smith, 2005b, p.152), is in fact one of the most studied topics in the organizational sciences (Bouckenooghe, 2010). Today, the global business society is characterized by a constantly growing and ever changing business environment (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), which entails the importance of successfully managing organizational change (Michel, By & Burns, 2013). Consequently, organizational change is an interesting topic to explore, because of its relevance and actuality.

The majority of organizational change initiatives result in failure. Therefore, much research in regards to organizational change has focused on successful change management (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), where most researchers refer to an estimated failure rate of 70% (e.g. Ijaz & Vitalis, 2011; Jansson, 2013; Burns, 2015; Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). By the above established statement regarding the importance of organizational change in today’s organizations, it becomes clear that a change success rate of less than 30% constitutes a threat to an organization’s survival. To conclude, there seems to be a general consensus among researchers that the majority of change initiatives actually do fail (Michel, et al., 2013). We therefore consider organizational change failure a relevant issue to investigate further.

There are several explanations to why organizational changes fail. Many researchers acknowledge the fact that organizational change is highly context dependent (e.g. Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Smith, 2005b; Michel, et al., 2013). This entails that any “one-size-fits-all” approach to manage change is discarded (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015) and instead a tailored approach is emphasized in order to successfully manage change (Burnes, 2015). Another explanation for the low level of change success is the assertion that change management tend to focus on the technical aspect regarding change and therefore fail to address the human aspect (Bovey & Hede, 2001). In fact, in a recent literature review of organizational change success Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) suggest that future research should focus on the people side of change. In this study, we will focus on the explanation for change failure which is due to the change management’s lack of acknowledgement for the people aspect of change.

The people aspect of change involves change agents managing the change recipients’ negative reactions to change. There is much evidence that change is essentially about change agents, i.e. the people responsible for planning and implementing organizational change (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), managing the people affected by change, i.e. change recipients (Klonek, Lehmann-Willenbrock & Kauffeld, 2014), specifically their negative reactions to change (e.g. Smith, 2005c; Lines, 2005; Burns, 2015; Michel, et al., 2013). According to Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011) “.../a main determinant of the extent to which any change can succeed, is how change recipients react to organizational change.” (p.462). The change recipients’ negative reactions to change constitute a potential problem when engaging in change initiatives (Smith,
2005b), which has led to a comprehensive body of research investigating these negative reactions, conceptualized as resistance to change (Latta, 2015; Ford & Ford, 2010; Smith, 2005c; Bovey & Hede, 2001). Consequently, it is important for change agents to manage resistance to change, i.e. to decrease the resistance to a level where it does not constitute an obstacle for the change initiative to be accomplished, in order to achieve change success. According to Bovey and Hede (2001) one of the major difficulties for change agents is to successfully manage the change recipients’ resistance. This is supported by Pardo del Val and Martínez Fuentes (2003) who emphasize that “...proper management of resistance is the key for change success or failure.” (p.153). Therefore, achieving change success depends on the change agents’ proper management of change recipient’s negative reactions, i.e. resistance to change.

There have been previous research regarding resistance to change which has resulted in multiple suggestions of how to achieve organizational change success. These suggestions include examples of how to manage the change recipient’s resistance in order to prevent change failure (e.g. Appelbaum, Cesar Degbe, MacDonald & Nguyen-Quang, 2015; Thomas & Hardy, 2011; Smith, 2005a). Different researchers advocate different solutions which they argue to be the most efficient when managing resistance to change. Some examples are proper communication (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003; Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis, 2013; Erwin & Garman, 2010), leadership style (Appelbaum, et al., 2015; Rafferty, et al., 2013), creating readiness (Latta, 2015; Self & Schraeder, 2009; Smith, 2005a) and participation (e.g. Dent & Galloway Goldberg, 1999; Rafferty, et al., 2013; Thomas & Hardy, 2011; Erwin & Garman, 2010).

It is our understanding that the above mentioned solutions have been unsuccessful or that the knowledge about these solutions have not reached, or been applied by, the change agents, since resistance to change is still considered a widely spread issue that many organizations are struggling with. Furthermore, we acknowledge the fact that the existing suggested solutions are too general in their perspectives, and lack to take into account in what way resistance is fundamentally understood and attributed to the change recipients. We therefore find it necessary, as it is suggested by Oreg, et al. (2011) and Shao-Hsi, Ying-Fang and Shao-Wen (2012), to properly investigate the change recipients’ perspective in order to better understand resistance at its core, prior to determining a certain approach for successfully managing resistance to organizational change.

From the above mentioned reasoning we conclude that organizational change is essential if organizations are to survive in today’s global business society. However, the majority of organizational change initiatives fail, which appears to be due to the change management’s lack of acknowledgement for the people aspect regarding change. Managing change from a people aspect involves change agents managing change recipients’ negative reactions to change, i.e. resistance to change, which determines whether the change will succeed or fail. Previous researchers have offered several solutions for managing change, e.g. by proper communication, leadership style, creating readiness and participation. However, it is our understanding that these solutions have been insufficiently spread or unsuccessfully applied by the change agents. It becomes evident that resistance to change constitutes a challenge for change agents when dealing with organizational change. We argue that in order for change agents to manage resistance to change, they need to understand it. Consequently, in the following section we will consider one fundamental question not yet addressed in this study: why do people resist change?
1.2 Problem discussion

Resistance to change is considered to be the key reason for organizational change failure. In fact, resistance to change has been found to be a naturally occurring phenomenon when dealing with organizational change (Ford & Ford, 2010; Smith, 2005c; Bovey & Hede, 2001), and to be the most common response to organizational change initiatives (Latta, 2015). According to Burnes (2015), resistance to change is one of the most frequently cited reason for change failure in previous research, which is supported by e.g. Bovey and Hede (2001), Erwin and Garman (2010), Self and Schraeder (2009) who argue that resistance to change is the key reason for why change initiatives ultimately fail. Therefore, in this study, we argue that the change recipients’ resistance to change is the key reason for organizational change failure.

Resistance to change has been defined in multiple ways. The various attempts to define the concept of resistance has resulted in inconsistencies where resistance has no universal or generally accepted conceptual definition (Bovey & Hede, 2001), which entails problematic implications regarding both theory and practice. Nevertheless, there seems to be a general consensus among researchers that the concept of resistance is essentially an attitude, defined as “…/a tridimensional concept composed of cognitive, affective, and intentional/behavioral components. The affective component refers to a set of feelings about the change. The cognitive component refers to the opinion one has about the advantages and disadvantages, usefulness, and necessity, and about the knowledge required to handle the change. Finally, the intentional/behavioral reactions refer to the actions already taken or which will be taken in the future for or against change.” (Bouckenooghe, 2010, p.501, see also Jansson, 2013; Piderit, 2000). Here, an attitude can be seen as either a positive or negative evaluation of change in three dimensions; affective, cognitive and intentional/behavioral, where resistance is considered to be a negative one (Latta, 2015). Following this reasoning, individuals resist change because the change does not correspond to how one feels about, thinks about or behave in response to a specific change. Therefore, in this study, we define resistance as a negative attitude composed of cognitive, affective and intentional/behavioral components.

The cognitive component is an important part of resistance to change and needs to be further investigated. This component has been proven to have an impact on the affective component, which in turn affects the intentional/behavioral one (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Dew, Grichnik, Mayer-Haug, Read & Brinckmann, 2015). Furthermore, it has been suggested that little attention has been given the cognitive component and its association with resistance to change (Bovey & Hede, 2001). This is problematic since the cognitive component is an important part of resistance. Following the above mentioned definition of resistance, the cognitive component includes four elements, namely: (1) advantages and disadvantages about the change, (2) change usefulness, (3) change necessity and (4) knowledge required to handle the change (Bouckenooghe, 2010). Consequently, we propose that by understanding these four cognitive elements of an individual’s attitude, as they are perceived by the change recipients, one might assess their resistance to organizational change.

The above mentioned proposal entails that in order to successfully manage resistance to change, the change agent needs to acknowledge the influence of the change recipients’ cognitive perception of the change. This is supported by Oreg, et al. (2011) and Shao-Hsi, et al. (2012) who argue that it is necessary to take the change recipients’ perspective into account if their resistance to change is to be properly managed. Oreg, et al. (2011) further argue that the change recipients’ resistance must first be assessed by the change agent before any approach for managing that same resistance can be determined and implemented. To conclude, the importance
of assessing the change recipients’ cognitive perception of a change, i.e. the (1) advantages and disadvantages about the change, (2) change usefulness, (3) change necessity and (4) knowledge required to handle the change, becomes vital for properly managing resistance which in turn will facilitate the process of achieving successful organizational change initiatives.

To date, it appears that there has been no further investigation regarding the assessment of the above mentioned four cognitive elements and their association with resistance to change. We therefore find it both necessary and interesting to develop our understanding of these elements, specifically regarding the dynamics between them and their relative importance when assessing the resistance among change recipients. We believe that this will provide actionable knowledge that may facilitate the change agents’ task to successfully manage the change recipients’ resistance to organizational change, the key reason for change failure. In conclusion, in this study we will investigate how the change recipients cognitively perceive (1) advantages and disadvantages about the change, (2) change usefulness, (3) change necessity and (4) knowledge required to handle the change, in order to determine how this perception explains the change recipients’ resistance to change. Knowledge regarding this cognitive perception entails increased probability for achieving organizational change success.

1.3 Research question

What role does the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change have, when assessing their resistance to change?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop our understanding of the change recipients’ resistance to organizational change, as it is cognitively perceived, in order to enhance the existing knowledge of resistance and how it in turn can be successfully managed. More specifically, our purpose includes investigating the dynamics between the four cognitive elements and whether or not they differ in their importance when assessing the change recipients’ resistance to change. As a result, we will contribute with a theoretical development in regards to the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change as well as provide managerial implications for change agents. This will serve as theoretical implications for future researchers as well as practical implications for change agents in their attempts to better understand resistance to change and achieve organizational change success.
2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we will present the theoretical framework used in this study. The chapter will be divided into three parts, namely: (1) organizational change, (2) resistance to change, and (3) the change recipient’s cognitive perception of organizational change. This structure is illustrated below (see Figure 1). Each part will be provided with a summary and at the end of this chapter, we will present our analysis model (see Figure 2) which illustrates how each part of the theoretical framework has been applied when conducting this study.

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2.1 Organizational change

Organizational change is vital for the survival of organizations. In today’s global business society, which is characterized by a constantly growing and ever changing business environment (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), change in organizations is a constantly occurring phenomenon (Bouckenooghe, 2010). Organizational change is necessary for sustaining success (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), organizational development and growth (Michel, et al., 2013) and overall survival (Burnes, 2015). More specifically, the aim of organizational change is to adapt to the environment and to improve organizational performance (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003) but also to enable the achievement of organizational objectives (Lines, 2005). We find in accordance with previous researchers that the necessity for change is evident and that the successful implementation of change becomes imperative if organizations are to survive.

2.1.1 Defining organizational change

Change has been defined in various ways in the previous research literature. A few examples are as follows: “.../new ways of thinking, acting and operating.” (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003, p.148); “…/the process of moving to a new and different state of things.../” (Smith, 2005a, p.408); “…/establishing new understandings, new practices and new relationships. ” (Thomas & Hardy, 2011, p.323). For the purpose of this study we choose a working definition that we believe capture the core essence of change:
“Change involves moving from a known state to an unknown one, of ending the way things are done and doing things in new ways, of letting go.” (Smith, 2005b, p.152).

Following this definition, we understand organizational change as any change, which occurs within an organizational context (change is therefore the same as organizational change in the remainder of this study). Organizational change is an organizational phenomenon that result in something new, which is different from before. Consequently, what was once known ceases to exist, which entails the need to adapt to what is to come, i.e. the unknown.

2.1.2 Organizational change context
Organizational change is context dependent. This entails that there are no organizational changes that look exactly the same and therefore vary depending on the specific organizational change context (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Michel, et al., 2013; Burns, 2015). The approach for managing change should therefore be adjusted to the specific change context, rather than assuming a “one-size-fits-all” approach (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). The organizational change context varies depending on the type of change, change scale and duration, and need for initiation. This entails that changes can be attributed to any part of the organization including processes, formal structures and systems (Lines, 2005). Different organizational changes also vary in scale (small vs. large) and duration (short term vs. long term) (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). According to Bouckenooghe (2010), change may be initiated based on the need for improvements and organizational renewal but also because of the need for problem solving in times of difficulty. In order to fully comprehend an organizational change, we argue that it is important to acknowledge the organizational change context.

2.1.3 Change process and change content
Organizational change constitutes of both change process and change content. Here, change process is described as the implementation strategies for successfully achieving change while the change content refers to the change vision and desired outcomes (Lines, 2005). These two components of change (process and content) are found in the above established definition of change, since it involves “moving” (=process) and reaching an “unknown state” (=content). Therefore, the importance of considering both change process and change content when investigating organizational change is clearly implicated.

2.1.4 Change agents and change recipients
The human resources of an organization have a key role when implementing change. People, or more specifically employees, are the human resources of organizations and are essential in implementing and achieving change success (Smith, 2005b). In the context of organizational change, the employees can be categorized as change recipients and change agents (Klonek, et al., 2014). Change agents are the people responsible for the planning and implementation of a change (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), most likely in the role of a leading manager (Saka, 2003; Will, 2015). Change recipients are those who are affected by, and implement, the change (Klonek, et al., 2014). It is clear that there is a distinct difference between the role of a change agent and the role of a change recipient. Although, this does not prevent the change agent from being a change recipient simultaneously since the change agent very well can, and most likely will, be affected by and personally be implementing the change (Oreg, et al., 2011). However,
for the sake of this study, we understand change recipients as those who are affected by and implement the change while not being involved in leading the change.

By having established that change recipients are affected by, and implement, change this entails that change recipients themselves need to change in order for the organizational change to be successful. This is supported by Bovey and Hede (2001) who claim that organizational change is not possible without individual change. Furthermore, change recipients have reactions to change (Oreg, et al. 2011) which will differ from one another since “Every individual experiences change in a unique way.” (Bouckenooghe, 2010, p.501). However, these reactions are either positive or negative (Smith, 2005c) where resistance is considered to be a negative reaction towards change. In fact, it has been suggested that resistance to change is the key reason for change failure (e.g. Burnes, 2015; Bovey & Hede, 2001; Erwin & Garman, 2010; Self & Schraeder, 2009). We therefore acknowledge the need for individual change and that change recipients experience change differently and may have negative reactions in the form of resistance.

2.1.5 Summary

We understand organizational change as any phenomenon that involves moving towards something new, which is different from before, within an organizational context. Organizational changes are context dependent and are initiated due to the need of renewal or problem solving and can be attributed to any part of the organization with varying scale and duration. Regardless of need for initiation, type, scale, and duration, change always includes both change process and change content. Change process and change content are two vital parts of organizational change, which are inseparable and directly attributed to the definition of change.

The employees involved in the organizational change, i.e. change agents and change recipients, play important roles when implementing organizational change. However, there is a clear distinction between them, which entails that the change agent takes the leading role in implementing the change, while the change recipients are the ones directly affected by the implementation and end result. Consequently, individual change among change recipients is implied and necessary for organizational change success. Change recipients also experience change differently and have unique perspectives on change, which in turn can cause both positive and negative reactions. Here, a change recipient’s negative reactions can be understood as resistance to change, which in turn has been found to be the key reason for organizational change failure.

In this study, we will apply the above mentioned theories regarding organizational change as a basis for our understanding of the organizational change in which change recipients are naturally active. Here, the organizational change includes both change process and change content, which derives from the organizational change context. This is important to take into account when investigating resistance, since resistance to change originates from the initiation and implementation of an organizational change. Therefore, the interview guide used for collecting our empirical data regarding the organizational change context includes questions based on the theoretical framework regarding organizational change (see Appendix 1). The relationship between organizational change and resistance to change is illustrated in the analysis model below (see Figure 2) and will be considered in our analysis.
2.2 Resistance to change

Resistance to change is considered to be the key reason for why organizational changes fail. In fact, resistance to change is considered a naturally occurring phenomenon when dealing with organizational change (Ford & Ford, 2010; Smith, 2005c; Bovey & Hede, 2001). This is supported by Latta (2015) who argues that resistance is the most common reaction to organizational change initiatives. The fact that resistance to change is one of the most frequently cited reasons for change failure in previous research (Burnes, 2015) further implies that resistance should be considered the key reason for organizational change failure, and therefore a relevant issue to investigate further.

2.2.1 Defining resistance to change

There have been countless attempts to define resistance, which entails a high level of complexity when investigating the concept (Bovey & Hede, 2001). E.g., it has been suggested that resistance stems from the organizational culture (Latta, 2015) and that it is shown as an employee’s undesirable response to the change in their efforts to maintain the status quo (Jansson, 2013). Furthermore, resistance has been considered as any phenomenon that obstructs the change process (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003). It becomes evident that resistance to change is a complex phenomenon investigated by many researchers with various approaches and with varying results.

From the above mentioned reasoning, there appears to be no universal definition of resistance to change. However, when looking at the previous research on resistance as a whole, the overall approach by previous researchers is to view resistance as essentially being a change recipient’s negative attitude towards organizational change (Burnes, 2015; Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bouckenooghe, 2010; Latta, 2015; Ijaz and Vitalis, 2011). Therefore, in this study, resistance is considered as a change recipient’s negative attitude towards change and is specifically defined as:

“...a tridimensional concept composed of cognitive, affective, and intentional/behavioral components. The affective component refers to a set of feelings about the change. The cognitive component refers to the opinion one has about the advantages and disadvantages, usefulness, and necessity, and about the knowledge required to handle the change. Finally, the intentional/behavioral reactions refer to the actions already taken or which will be taken in the future for or against change.” (Bouckenooghe, 2010, p.501).

Following this definition, it is evident that resistance as an attitude consists of three components (cognitive, affective and intentional/behavioral). Since this study only focuses on the cognitive component of a change recipient’s resistance (see 1.2 Problem discussion), the resistance is determined by the evaluation of the four cognitive elements, namely: (1) advantages and disadvantages about the change, (2) change usefulness, (3) change necessity, and (4) knowledge required to handle the change. These four cognitive elements are evaluated based on the change recipient’s perception of change in positive and negative terms, where resistance is considered a negative one (Latta, 2015). However, this does not imply that all four elements have to be negatively evaluated in order for resistance to occur, because of attitude ambivalence (Piderit, 2000).
2.2.2 Attitude ambivalence
The occurrence of attitude ambivalence among change recipients is important to understand in order to appropriately identify and address resistance to change. Attitude ambivalence entails that a change recipient can have both positive and negative evaluations simultaneously between and within the three components (affective, cognitive and intentional/behavioral), which is dependent on the change recipient’s perception of change (Piderit, 2000; Lines, 2005; Prediscan & Bradutanu, 2012). Since this study only focuses on the cognitive component of a change recipient’s resistance, this entails that attitude ambivalence might occur between, as well as within, the four elements ((1) advantages and disadvantages, (2) usefulness, (3) necessity, and (4) knowledge) of the cognitive component. Ambivalence between the cognitive elements will occur if, e.g. the recipient finds the change necessary to implement, but at the same time feel like he or she does not have enough knowledge about the new unknown state in order to feel comfortable with the change. Accordingly, if the change recipient, e.g. finds the change to have both advantages and disadvantages, this entails the occurrence of ambivalence within a cognitive element. In this study, we argue that any negative evaluation attributed to the four cognitive elements is to some degree considered resistance.

2.2.3 Resistance to change process and change content
As established above (see 2.1.3 Change process and change content), organizational change consists of both change process and change content. Consequently, a change recipient’s resistance may vary depending on whether the change process or the change content is being considered. Accordingly, a change recipient’s resistance might be directed towards either change process or change content, or both (Lines, 2005; Latta, 2015; Dent & Powley, 2003). More specifically, the resistance can be a response to the way the change is planned to be implemented as well as to the expected outcome of the change. Latta (2015) acknowledges that this explains why change agents are confronted with resistance, even though the change content is generally supported by the change recipients.

From this reasoning we argue that the change recipients’ resistance may vary depending on whether the change process or the change content is being considered. In this study, we will take into account the change recipients’ resistance towards both change process and change content, since they are two important and unavoidable parts of an organizational change.

2.2.4 Positive and negative resistance to change
Resistance to change has been found to be both positive and negative. In previous research, resistance to change is very often regarded as an obstacle that has to be overcome or eliminated when an organization is about to change (e.g. Appelbaum, et al., 2015; Self & Schraeder, 2009), but there are in fact some researchers who claim that resistance can have positive implications for organizational change (e.g. Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bouckenooghe, 2010; Ford & Ford, 2010). Ford and Ford (2010) argue that resistance to change should be seen as a natural response from change recipients that are engaged and committed to the organization, and want to be involved in something that they consider important to them. Consequently, Ford and Ford (2010) insist that organizations should use the resistance as feedback. This positive view on resistance is supported by e.g. Oleg (2006), Smith (2005c), Pardo del Val and Martínez Fuentes (2003), Jansen (2000) and Latta (2015), who all claim that the resistance can be a useful tool when dealing with organizational change in the form of improvements of change initiatives, ethical scrutiny and concern from committed employees.
Nevertheless, by assuming that the organizational change is in line with established ethical norms and that the resistance is a result of feedback, i.e. improvements from concerned change recipients, we argue that resistance still should be regarded as an obstacle for implementing the change intended. We arrive at the conclusion that resistance, both in a negative and positive sense, has to be managed in one way or another in order to achieve change success.

2.2.5 Summary

Resistance to change is a naturally occurring phenomenon when dealing with organizational change, and has been found to be the key reason for change failure. Although there appears to be no universal definition of resistance, there seems to be a general consensus among researchers that resistance is essentially a change recipient’s negative attitude towards change. Here, we argue that a change recipient’s cognitive perception of a change, more specifically the (1) advantages and disadvantages about the change, (2) change usefulness, (3) change necessity, and (4) knowledge required to handle the change, determines the change recipients’ experienced resistance towards the change.

By considering resistance as a change recipient’s negative attitude towards organizational change, resistance can vary depending on whether it is directed towards the change content or the change process. Furthermore, resistance can be regarded as an obstacle for achieving change, while at the same time also be considered as positive feedback for improvements attributed to the change. However, resistance to change has to be managed if change success is to be achieved.

The purpose of this study is to develop our understanding of resistance to organizational change, as it is cognitively perceived by a change recipient, which is why we need to establish the current knowledge regarding resistance. Resistance to change is a well-researched topic and we believe that we have captured the core essence of resistance in the theoretical reasoning above. Questions included in the interview guide used for collecting our empirical data are based on the theoretical framework regarding resistance to change (see Appendix 3). Furthermore, the above mentioned reasoning will be considered in our analysis when evaluating the change recipients’ resistance to change, and how it might be explained by the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change. This relationship is illustrated in our analysis model below (see Figure 2).

2.3 The change recipient’s cognitive perception of organizational change

It appears that little research addresses resistance to change as a change recipient’s cognitive evaluation of an organizational change. In fact, Oreg, et al. (2011) claim that previous researchers have been investigating resistance to change without association with any of the three components of resistance (affective, cognitive, intentional/behavioural), as it is defined as an attitude. However, the cognitive component of resistance, which is described as a change recipient’s perceived (1) advantages and disadvantages about the change, (2) change usefulness, (3) change necessity and (4) knowledge required to handle the change, has been proven to have an impact on the affective component, which in turn will affect the intentional/behavioural one (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Dew, et al., 2015). In more general terms, cognitive resistance is the result of the change recipient’s evaluation of an organizational change (Oreg, et al., 2011), and it has been suggested that more attention should be given to the cognitive component and its association with resistance to change (Bovey & Hede, 2001).
By establishing our emphasis on the four above mentioned elements attributed to the cognitive component, it follows that these four elements should be clearly defined and described, in order to investigate the change recipients’ resistance to change and fulfill our purpose. The element regarding advantages and disadvantages has been found in previous research and will be discussed in the following section. However, there appears to be no evident existing research regarding the remaining three elements (i.e. (1) change usefulness, (2) change necessity and (3) knowledge required to handle the change), and their association with resistance to change. Perhaps these elements are generally taken for granted when dealing with organizational change, and therefore not investigated further, or might have been consciously dismissed or overlooked. Therefore, we take it upon ourselves to define these elements based on their general descriptions found in today’s dictionaries, in order to better understand these elements and to determine our approach in how these are to be applied when investigating the change recipients’ resistance to change.

2.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages

The most prevalent cognitive element found in the existing research literature is the one of advantages and disadvantages. In some instances, the cognitive dimension has been described in terms of what the change recipient thinks about the change, regarding the matter of perceived values or the benefit or harm that the change will bring the individual (Erwin & Garman, 2010; Latta, 2015). Lines (2005) further argues that change will be evaluated in degrees of favor or disfavor. This is in accordance with Bovey and Hede (2001) as well as with Self and Schraeder (2009), who argue that the change recipient’s perception of personal gain or loss, as a result of the change, will determine one’s resistance. The above mentioned reasoning is in line with the cognitive element regarding the change recipient’s perceived advantages and disadvantages attributed to organizational change. In accordance with previous researchers, we argue that any disadvantage, as it is perceived by the change recipient, attributed to the change is to some degree considered resistance.

2.3.2 Usefulness

In the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2011), usefulness is the derivative of useful, where something is useful when it is “able to be used for a practical purpose or in several ways” (p.1593) and “able to be used advantageously” (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, 1999, p.1565). Furthermore, “If something is useful, you can use it to do something or help you in some way” (English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2001, p.1729). Therefore, it is our understanding that the level of change usefulness depends on how useful the change is considered by change recipients in terms of achieving a practical purpose which is advantageous for the individual. More specifically, a negative evaluation of change usefulness entails that the change recipients evaluate that the change cannot be used advantageously in reaching a specific practical purpose for oneself, which in turn will result in resistance to change.

2.3.3 Necessity

The third element includes necessity, which is something that is necessary (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, 1999; Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). Here, necessary can be defined as e.g. needed, essential, indispensable, inevitable or logically required. According to the English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (2001) “the necessity of something is the fact that it must happen or exist” (p.1026). In the context of change, the evaluated necessity depends on if
the change recipients consider the change needed or essential and that the mere existence of change is necessary for themselves. Accordingly, we argue that if the recipients do not consider the change necessary, i.e. evaluate the change necessity negatively, they will resist the change.

2.3.4 Knowledge
Knowledge, which is a part of the last element, is defined as the information one has acquired through learning, education or experience (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, 1999; Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). Furthermore, knowledge is about the individual’s understanding of a subject (English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2001). Our conclusion regarding the change recipient’s evaluation of the knowledge required for handling the change is based on what one knows and understands about the change, which is acquired by previous learning, education or experience. Following this reasoning, resistance will occur if the change recipient evaluate that one does not have the knowledge required for dealing with the change.

2.3.5 Summary
Understanding resistance as a change recipient’s cognitive evaluation of organizational change appears to have been overlooked in previous research regarding resistance to change. This is problematic since this is an important part of resistance and should be better understood when managing change. However, there has been research regarding a change recipient’s perceived advantages and disadvantages about organizational change, which entails that resistance will occur if the change recipients perceive disadvantages regarding a specific organizational change. The remaining three cognitive elements do not seem to be mentioned or defined in previous research. As a result, we took it upon ourselves to define these elements. Accordingly, change usefulness involves whether the change recipients perceive the change to be of use in an advantageous way. If not, resistance will occur. Change necessity refers to whether the change recipients perceive the change to be needed and must be implemented. Here, resistance will occur if the change recipients perceive the change as unnecessary. Lastly, the knowledge required to handle the change is the information and understanding a change recipient perceives to possess as a result of previous learning, education or experience. Consequently, if a change recipient lack information and understanding about the change, resistance will occur.

In this study, the four cognitive elements, will be specifically investigated and purposely applied in order to achieve our purpose and to answer the research question of this study. The above established definitions of the four cognitive elements have been used when conducting our qualitative interviews as a basis for our interview guide (see Appendix 3). Since these elements are our main emphasis in this study, they will be thoroughly discussed and analyzed in the analysis. More specifically, as illustrated in the analysis model below (see Figure 2), we will investigate these four elements as a result of organizational change, their relative importance and the dynamics between them, and how these elements might explain the change recipients’ resistance to organizational change.
2.4 Analysis model

Figure 2: The analysis model used for analyzing what role the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change have, when assessing their resistance to change.
3. Methodology

In this chapter, we will present the research approach applied in this study. We will describe the selection and collection of data used for our literature review, which has served as a basis for our theoretical framework. Furthermore, we will describe the method for collecting empirical data, as well as the method of selecting the sources necessary for our collection of empirical data. We will also provide a description of our method for data analysis, and end the chapter by establishing the generalizability, validity and reliability of our findings, as well as our ethical considerations.

3.1 A qualitative research approach

In order to investigate a change recipient’s resistance to change as well as to establish an understanding regarding the investigated organizational change context, we applied a qualitative research approach to gather the empirical material necessary. Applying a qualitative methodology allows us to investigate an individual’s attitudes, which will contribute with a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon (Gillham, 2010). Furthermore, a qualitative approach entails descriptions and interpretations of verbal and visual empirical data (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016), which was necessary in order to achieve the purpose of this study and to answer the research question. More specifically, qualitative methods are “...used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant.” (Hammarberg, et al., 2016, p. 499). Therefore, we argue that a qualitative investigation into a change recipient’s resistance to change and to understand the organizational change context, is especially appropriate to answer our research question and to fulfil our purpose.

When engaging in qualitative research the issue of subjectivity is always present since the empirical data is analyzed through the interpretations of the researchers, but also since complete objectivity is impossible to achieve (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to manage the challenge of subjectivity it is argued by Strauss and Corbin (1998) that the empirical data should be compared, case by case, and also that the cases should be compared with existing theories. Therefore, by being aware of the above mentioned challenges attributed to a qualitative research approach, personal perceptions and interpretations, i.e. bias, have been avoided which decreases the subjectivity while increasing objectivity. Furthermore, a structured and systematic comparison between the empirical material and the theoretical framework ensures objectivity and unbiased results.

3.1.1 Case study design

The qualitative method used in this study was a case study consisting of interviews and observations. A case study is an appropriate approach when investigating a phenomenon in the currently existing reality, in which the research subjects are naturally active (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Furthermore, a case study involves detailed and rich descriptions of empirical data collected from the research subjects (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), which suits the purpose of this study. Our case study method consists of multiple cases, where each case represents one individual. One of the cases consisted of one individual who was interviewed separately, since this particular case involved the empirical material necessary to understand the organizational change context, which has been investigated. The remaining cases consisted of the individuals who were individually interviewed and observed, with the purpose of investigating a change
recipient’s resistance to change. Multiple cases are beneficial since this approach generate more generalizable and testable results, as well as a variety of empirical data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) which have been structured and analyzed. Furthermore, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) argue that the multiple cases approach is suitable for developing an understanding of a certain phenomenon, which is the purpose of this study.

There are certain challenges with the case study method, one of which is the comprehensive amount of empirical data which is to be analyzed. This might easily lead to complex and narrow results that cannot be generalized and lack overall perspective (Eisenhardt, 1989). Our awareness of this issue decreased the possibility of this bias by being present and only keeping our research focus in mind during our analysis process.

3.1.2 Interviews and observations

The collection of empirical data was conducted through individual interviews, where all cases, except the one used for understanding the change context, involved observations. Both interviews and observations are argued to be appropriate qualitative methods when conducting case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gillham, 2010). Interviews are highly efficient when collecting rich empirical data since it has its basis in human conversation where the interviewee is encouraged to provide their own answers and express themselves in their own terms (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Furthermore, interviews provide empirical data concerning feelings, thoughts and intentions (Patton, 1987). Observations involves watching and listening to people, which includes allowing the observer to provide clarifying questions while observing the interview (Gillham, 2010). In this study, the observations have been used as analytical support when conducting our analysis. We argue that it was necessary to include both interviews and observations, since they are complementary.

The interviews were semi-structured and by applying this method, the interviewers may use prepared questions, while being allowed to adjust and add questions during the interviews (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Therefore, the interview guides in this study was used as frameworks, containing predetermined questions, based on the themes from the theoretical framework (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 3), while being able to adjust and add questions during the interviews when necessary. As a result, relevant empirical data was ensured to be collected in a relatively standardized way. According to Patton (1987), this minimizes data variation and facilitate the comparison of empirical data which is necessary when conducting an analysis.

Present during each interview were the interviewee (i.e. the research subject) and two interviewers (i.e. the researchers), one of which asked the questions while the other one observed and took notes. In order to minimize variation in the empirical data, we did not only use the same semi-structured interview guide, but were also consistent in the roles of interviewer and observer. More specifically, one person always acted in the role of the interviewer, while the other one acted in the role of the observer. The interview regarding the change context was conducted by phone and both interviewers were present. A separate semi-structured interview guide was used, where one of the interviewers asked the questions. No observations were noted during this interview.

The interviews were recorded and conducted in Swedish since both interviewers and interviewees are Swedish. We argue that by using the native language, the interviews were more relaxed and easy flowing, but we also believe that the answers given by the interviewees were more natural and nuanced as opposed to answers given in English. The recordings were
transcribed and sent to the interviewees for verification and approval for using the transcript as empirical material and as the basis for analytical discussion.

A challenge with applying interviews is the risk of biased and one-sided results provided by the interviewees (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This issue was managed by establishing requirements for theoretical sampling of research subjects (see 3.3.2 Selection of respondents) where the respondents are presumed to provide different perspectives and therefore responses during the interviews.

3.2 Literature review

In this study, we have been using scientific articles and books in order to make a comprehensive literature review, which has served as the basis for our theoretical framework. The main source of our literature review are scientific articles. These articles have been accessed through Summon, i.e. a discovery-service including various databases, which is provided by the library at Halmstad University. In addition to the scientific articles, books have also been used for our theoretical framework. These books are in essence English dictionaries which were accessed at, and provided by, the library at Halmstad University. All sources for our literature review were selected based on their relevance for the theoretical framework, but also as a basis for our methodology approach. Furthermore, we aimed to choose sources with high actuality, in order to include more recent and updated research regarding the theoretical framework. As a result, the majority of the selected scientific articles have been published in the last five years.

When searching for scientific articles, the main keywords used were “Organizational change”, “Resistance to change”, and “Resistance to organizational change”. These keywords were chosen because of their relevance to the topic of our study and association with our research question. Our aim when selecting scientific articles was to find the ones with highest relevance to our topic (i.e. resistance to organizational change) by choosing articles from journals involving the topic of organizational change management (e.g. Journal of Organizational Change Management; Leadership & Organization Development Journal; Journal of Business Research).

Since this study has an emphasis on the people aspect regarding resistance to organizational change, i.e. on the change recipients, additional keywords used when selecting articles were “Change recipients’ attitudes to change”, “Change recipients’ responses to change”, and “Change recipients’ reactions to change”. Here, the most relevant articles were found in journals involving human aspects (e.g. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science; Human Resource Planning; European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology).

3.3 Empirical data

In this section, we will present the method for selecting the sources necessary for the collection of the empirical data. This includes the selection of the company which has been serving as our research object, as well as the selection of respondents within the same company.

3.3.1 Company selection

When making our company selection we chose a company which has been undergoing, and is still undergoing, organizational change. The organization is a Swedish company within the service sector, offering insurances and financial services. The organization has several offices
allocated around the country, one of which is located in Gothenburg and was serving as our research object. In this study, the company will be anonymous due to their request.

### 3.3.2 Selection of respondents

The selection of the respondents, i.e. the employees, was based on a theoretical sampling method. By applying theoretical sampling, the cases are chosen depending on the probability of contributing with relevant data necessary for a purposeful analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). In this study, the basic requirements for each case selected were that the research subject only has been, or still is, in the role of a change recipient and situated at the company’s Gothenburg office. An additional requirement was that the selected respondents were to be equally divided between two work groups. The first requirement is obvious, in order to investigate change recipients, the research subjects must be change recipients. The second requirement of working in the Gothenburg office is because it was the most convenient one, regarding distance and network connections. The equal division between two work groups, which is the last requirement, is because of the probability of collecting diverse responses and gaining various perspectives.

After applying the above established basic requirements for theoretical sampling we ended up choosing twelve individuals appropriate for interviews and observations. Out of these twelve individuals, ten were also available and voluntarily agreed upon participating as respondents. Although there is no ideal number of cases for conducting a case study, it has been suggested that a number between four and ten cases are appropriate (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore, we seized the opportunity of selecting all ten of the appropriate and available research subjects, to ensure that enough empirical data was collected.

Since one of the requirements for the theoretical sampling of respondents includes an equal division between two work groups, five of the respondents are representing work group 1 while the remaining five respondents are representing work group 2 (see Table 1). The difference between the work groups is that they have different work tasks, while working within the same department. More specifically, the respondents included in work group 1 have work tasks involving managing small amounts of documents due to the simple nature of their customer matters. Furthermore, most of their work tasks are managed digitally. Regarding work group 2, these respondents have work tasks involving large amounts of documents since their customer matters are more complex and comprehensive. Most of their work tasks are managed in paper form, as opposed to digitally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work group 1</th>
<th>Work group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>Respondent F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent B</td>
<td>Respondent G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent C</td>
<td>Respondent H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent D</td>
<td>Respondent I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent E</td>
<td>Respondent J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: The respondents divided into their respective work group.*
The respondents were not prepared in advance, besides knowing that their participation would contribute with empirical material for this study, regarding the ongoing organizational change at their company. The dates for when each respondent was interviewed are shown in the table below (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Date of interview (yyyy-mm-dd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>2016-03-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent B</td>
<td>2016-03-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent C</td>
<td>2016-03-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent D</td>
<td>2016-03-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent E</td>
<td>2016-03-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent F</td>
<td>2016-03-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent G</td>
<td>2016-03-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent H</td>
<td>2016-03-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent I</td>
<td>2016-03-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent J</td>
<td>2016-03-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: The respondents’ dates of interview.*

In order to understand the change context in which the respondents are naturally active as change recipients, an additional respondent was selected. This respondent is the change program leader and were chosen because of the probability of providing relevant and accurate information about the change context. For the purpose of this study, the change program leader will be referred to as the change agent. The information collected from this change agent (interviewed 2016-03-17) will serve as our empirical material regarding the organizational change context, and will be analyzed as it is illustrated in the analysis model (see Figure 2).

### 3.4 Data analysis

The method for data analysis was divided into three steps. The first step involved a general analysis of the empirical material provided by the change agent, in order to understand the organizational change context in which the respondents have been naturally active. The second step was a within-case analysis, where each case was analyzed separately. In this way the comprehensive amount of data was purposively structured which facilitates the process of finding unique patterns attributed to each case (Eisenhardt, 1989). Based on the observations, we argue that the respondents were honest and that their answers have been trustworthy. Therefore, we could rely on the collected empirical material. The within-case analysis was the underlying
basis for the cross-case analysis, which was the third step of the method for data analysis.

The cross-case analysis entailed a comparison of the cases in order to find potential similarities and differences between them (Eisenhardt, 1989). This was achieved by comparing each case with one another. The accuracy and reliability of the novel findings were increased by the cross-case analysis approach through the structured and diverse way of processing the collected data (Eisenhardt, 1989).

We were two researchers conducting this study which is beneficial since we could contribute with different perspectives on the collected data, which in turn increased the probability of discovering novel findings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, the confidence of the potential findings is enhanced when using multiple investigators (Eisenhardt, 1989).

3.5 Generalizability

Statistical generalization involves the possibility of using research findings and results in large populations and multiple contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this study, we are aware that the findings derive from one single company and one specific context which implies that the results are not applicable on other companies and in different contexts. This entails that a statistical generalization of our findings in this study is not possible. However, we argue that our findings are analytically generalizable due to our data analysis approach which include both a within-case and cross-case analysis. An analytical generalization is achieved by providing rich descriptions and interpretations of the results which can be attributed to other contexts (Yin, 2006). By applying multiple cases in this study a variety of empirical data has been collected, which generates more generalizable and testable results (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Furthermore, our findings are not directly tied to this particular company but rather to the concept of resistance to change as a cognitive component of an attitude. Therefore, we argue that our findings can be analytically generalizable to individuals in other contexts who experiences resistance to organizational change.

3.6 Validity

When conducting a qualitative study, it is important to acknowledge the internal and external validity of the findings. The internal validity involves to which extent the selection and collection of empirical data is in accordance with the presented theories (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this study, we have assured internal validity by selecting a company and respondents by applying a theoretical sampling method based on the theoretical framework. The interview guide used for empirical data collection was based on the theoretical framework, which also ensured the internal validity of our findings.

The external validity of research results involves to which extent the findings are generalizable (Bryman & Bell, 2007). As mentioned above (see 3.5 Generalizability), the results of this study will not be statistically generalizable but rather analytically generalizable.

3.7 Reliability

Both internal and external reliability is important to consider when conducting a qualitative research study. To ensure internal reliability, i.e. to minimize bias (Bryman & Bell, 2007), we aimed to apply an objective perspective on the empirical data collected by both interviews and
observations. Furthermore, we conducted a structured and systematic analysis approach to avoid subjectivity. By being two researchers conducting this study we had the advantage of comparing our interpretations, which increases the internal reliability of our findings.

External reliability involves to what extent the results can be trusted and reconstructed (Bryman & Bell, 2007). It is impossible to replicate the same social context present during the investigation, especially when the company and the respondents are anonymous. Therefore, it is important for the researchers to explain the methodology process for selecting and collecting empirical data in order to uphold the external reliability. In this study, we have described the requirements for data selection by a theoretical sampling method and described the data collection design. Included in the data collection design is the interview guide, which is presented in the appendix chapter.

3.8 Ethical considerations

We were aware of that the process of conducting qualitative interviews entails ethical issues regarding human rights and personal integrity, which are important to take into account (Qu & Dumay, 2011). There are obvious ways to manage this, e.g. by maintaining one’s dignity and causing no harm, but also by assuring confidentiality (Qu & Dumay, 2011). It was important for us to meet the request of anonymity for both the company and the respondents when conducting this study. This was fulfilled by not mentioning the company by name but rather describe it in a general sense to eliminate the risk of company recognition. Furthermore, the interviewees are not mentioned by name or referred to in terms of specific positions within the company.

Since the interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s office, the identity of the interviewees could not be guaranteed anonymity in regards to their office colleagues. However, the interviewees were aware of this and chose to participate on a voluntarily basis without any compensation.
4. Empirical data

In this chapter, we will first present the change context in which the respondents have been naturally active, as it is described according to the change agent. Then, we will render the information collected from the respondents during the interview sessions made in this study. Since the interviews were conducted in Swedish, the citations presented as empirical data have been freely translated. The cases will be summarized and the result from each case will be presented in a table.

4.1 Organizational change context

The ongoing organizational change involves the implementation of a company-wide IT-system, or support system. Due to the requested anonymity, the IT-system will be referred to as Alias in this study, but is in fact called something else. The purpose of initiating this change is based on multiple reasons, one of which is the need for digitizing the comprehensive amount of documents, which previously were managed in paper form, and entails a new way of working for the employees. Another purpose of implementing Alias is to integrate several separate systems into one, making the work processes more efficient and effective. Furthermore, Alias will also facilitate the work tasks for the employees where the same work methods are applied in all departments throughout the company. The change process of implementing Alias has been incremental, initiated in the spring of 2013 and is expected to be completed in the end of 2017. Here, the change process includes the way of implementation, but also the technological solutions associated with Alias. The change content includes the digitization of documents in one single IT-system which is to be the same for the entire company.

4.2 Respondent A

The respondent described Alias as an electronic document management system. According to the respondent, the purpose of the implementation of Alias is to manage the communication with their customers electronically and to manage all documents regarding each customer in Alias. This entailed that the respondent no longer had to manage documents in paper form. The respondent thought it would be a better way to manage the communication with their customers, and all their documents, electronically, and when the change was first initiated, the respondent thought it was fun and that it felt modern. According to the respondent, the change process was initiated by Alias being implemented all at once, which entailed that from one specific date, the recipients were supposed to handle all of their work tasks in the new system.

The respondent’s work tasks are not very different from before Alias was implemented, since the work tasks, goals and duties are the same, but that the working situation has changed in the way the work tasks are performed and accomplished. For example, the respondent does not need to go to the printer to pick up documents and send them manually, since this is now managed electronically. Since the respondent’s work tasks are performed electronically, the respondent spend a lot more time in front of the computer after the implementation of Alias and explains that the working situation has become more static. When asked to describe whether the working situation has improved or become worse after Alias was implemented, the respondent answered that it had improved.

The group that the respondent is a part of had been prepared through a pilot testing about one year before the implementation of Alias. The respondent claimed that this made them more
prepared for the challenges that Alias might bring in the initial state of the implementation. To learn how to use Alias, the respondent was taught by a group of Alias experts that had been introduced to an Alias testing environment. The respondent did get enough knowledge to be able to manage the change with Alias and learned how to use Alias quickly. The respondent has had earlier experiences from organizational changes, but these have been smaller and more incremental. Alias is the first fundamental technological change the respondent has ever experienced and this is something that the respondent has been waiting for.

The respondent uses Alias daily to manage every task in the working situation, except for one key work task which is currently managed through another system. According to the respondent, this key work task is supposed to be included in Alias in the future. All of the remaining work tasks that are expected to be carried out by the respondent are managed in Alias. The respondent explains that the ability to accomplish the necessary work tasks is dependent on Alias, since that is where all the documents are and where the communication with customers is managed. The expected work tasks could not be dealt with without Alias and the respondent would not be able to work without Alias.

The advantages with the change regarding Alias is, according to the respondent, that the communication with the customer is done digitally and that the documents are managed electronically. Since the documents are no longer in paper form, the respondent does not physically have to look for different documents in multiple archives and no documents are getting lost. Previous work tasks involved a lot of “copy-paste” since the respondent used different systems for writing and sending letters, which was solved by using Alias as the only system, which is advantageous.

Even though there are advantages with Alias, the respondent expresses with a laugh, that it is easy to find disadvantages. One disadvantage mentioned by the respondent is the vulnerability associated with Alias. If Alias does not work, the respondent cannot finish the daily work tasks. This was possible before Alias was implemented, since the work tasks did not depend on the internet and technological solutions, but rather relied on paper documents. Another disadvantage is the double work associated with the system. The respondent describes this double work as tasks in the system that are already dealt with, but which are still showing in the system as tasks that have not been dealt with. Therefore, the respondent has to double check whether or not the task has been dealt with, by basically start the task once again, and end the task once more. The respondent thinks that this extra work is frustrating and time consuming and does not know if this is actually a function or if it is a bug in the system.

When asked about the expected end result with Alias, the respondent thinks that the excluded key work task will be included in Alias as well, and that the respondent will not have to use any additional IT-system to accomplish this task. The respondent does not think that the end result with Alias will entail that single tasks will be performed faster, but that the overall process from starting point to completion will result in time savings due to the digitalization.

When asked to answer if the respondent experience resistance to the change associated with Alias, the respondent answered:

“No, no I don’t. I mean, I think this is good but, no, I experience no resistance.”

The respondent continued and explained that the change process with Alias is a challenge and that there is no point in having too high expectations on a new system and to believe that this
new system will solve all the problems, because it will not. When asked to elaborate, the respondent clarifies that the technical solutions associated with Alias are faulty, while at the same time having a positive attitude towards the change. The respondent does not want to go back to the old working system which included manual paperwork, but explains that the change with Alias will not be completed without additional technical hassles and will bring some gray hairs along the way.

4.2.1 Summary
The respondent does not experience resistance to change, neither towards change process nor change content. When considering the cognitive elements, we find that the respondent only experiences advantages regarding the change content and disadvantages which are directly associated with the change process. Both change process and change content are considered useful to the respondent, which therefore entails change usefulness. Regarding the change necessity, the respondent experience the change content to be necessary while considering the change process as unnecessary. The respondent has the knowledge required to handle the change, both regarding change process and change content. These results are illustrated below (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four cognitive elements</th>
<th>Organizational change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td>Change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.*

4.3 Respondent B
According to the respondent, Alias is a system that has been built especially for their company. All communication goes through this system, except for communication by phone, which is mostly used in the respondent’s daily work. The documents involved in the respondent’s previous work tasks are no longer in paper form, but are instead digital files in the system. When we ask about the purpose of implementing Alias, the respondent thinks it was to make the work tasks paperless, but does not really know for sure. The biggest difference in the respondent’s working situation, from before Alias was implemented, is that all manual paperwork has been removed and that all documents and information needed is in the system. The respondent does barely remember the first reaction to the change with Alias, but explains that it was neither positive or negative, it just was. The respondent uses Alias almost exclusively, with the exception for some other work tasks that are conducted in another system, since these functions are not yet included in Alias. When asked if it is possible for the respondent to execute the daily work tasks necessary without Alias, the answer is yes, but it will require a lot of paperwork.
The respondent is a bit disappointed with the change process of implementing Alias. The respondent explains that the implementation has been carried out in steps, where one version was released at first and that this version has been updated and developed successively, as the recipients give their feedback,

“You complain about something and then something happens, even though it takes time, and then you complain about the next thing and then something happens.”

According to the respondent, the recipients were just thrown into the system with only one day’s preparation, which the respondent think was a bad way to go about it. A suggestion given by the respondent was to gather all recipients and give them proper information all at the same time, so that everyone could go back to their offices and test and learn on their own before Alias was initially implemented. The respondent thinks that this would increase the feeling of being prepared among the recipients. When asked to establish if the implementation of Alias is finished, the respondent answered no, followed by that the respondent does not believe so.

Despite the lack of proper education and training, the respondent has enough knowledge to perform the necessary work tasks in Alias today. When it comes to earlier experiences regarding organizational change, the respondent claimed that changes happens all the time in the company and that the respondent is adapting to them. According to the respondent, there has been so many changes in the past few years that one never has the time to settle down before a new change is about to come. The respondent claims that it was the same thing with Alias, but explains that it is a matter of habits and that the respondent is the kind of person that adapts,

“Well, either I will have to find a new job, or I will have to adapt. And I am like a fish in the water, I adapt.”

The respondent’s overall impression of Alias is that it works well, when it works. The advantages with Alias is that one does not work with documents in paper form anymore and that it is modern,

“It is more modern and everything becomes digital. It feels like you have to keep up with the technological development.”

The disadvantages mentioned by the respondent is vulnerability, that it shuts down now and then and that an update in one place, always seem to affect other functions in other places in Alias. As a result, the system fails to serve the users in the way it is supposed to. Another disadvantage is that it is hard to get an overview in the system if there are a lot of documents involved in the work tasks. In these cases, the respondent has to print some of the documents to get the overview needed. Furthermore, the respondent thinks that Alias should involve more functions that could facilitate the work tasks.

The respondent does not experience resistance to the change with Alias. The respondent thinks that the change is necessary, since it is more modern to work digitally, and claims that the change is needed if the company is to follow the technological development. According to the respondent, modernity is a good thing. However, the respondent does express resistance towards the technology associated with Alias, since it is vulnerable and often fails to serve the users. In conclusion, it is not the change regarding Alias that makes the respondent feel resistant, but rather the technological defects of Alias.
“If they get it to work, everything, and if it is not so vulnerable, I think it will be super.”

4.3.1 Summary

The respondent experiences resistance to the change process, but not to the change content. In general, the respondent does not experience resistance to the change of implementing Alias. The respondent finds both advantages and disadvantages with the change, where the advantages are only associated with the change content, while the disadvantages are only associated with the change process. Regarding the change usefulness and change necessity, the respondent finds the change process to be neither useful or necessary, while the respondent considers the change content to be both useful and necessary. The respondent is considered to have the knowledge required to handle the change of implementing Alias. These results are illustrated below (see Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four cognitive elements</th>
<th>Organizational change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td>Change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.

4.4 Respondent C

The IT-system Alias is the main work tool including all work functions, except for one key function, which the respondent believes is going to be included later on. The respondent assumes that the digitalization of documents involved in their work tasks was the purpose of implementing Alias, but does not really know for sure. The respondent uses Alias for all work tasks necessary, except for the work task performed by the currently excluded key function. It would have been possible to perform the daily work tasks without Alias, but it would have taken the respondent a lot of extra time, at least two hours per day for sorting and administration. The first impression that the respondent had, when the information about the implementation of Alias was received, was positive,

“I was happy because I like to have things digital.”

The implementation process was described as painless. From one date all new documents regarding one’s work tasks were to be registered in Alias, while all the old documents in paper form were to be successively added through scanning. This process took about a couple of months and ran rather smoothly. However, the respondent wished that the change agents would have involved the recipients in the system and asked about their opinions regarding the Alias’s functions prior to the implementation. The respondent thinks that it would have been good to include some recipients in the development process of Alias, instead of only using the recipients
when the system was about to be tested and implemented. Another thing that the respondent would have preferred regarding the change process, is that the change agents would have done the updates before the initial implementation, instead of releasing an unfinished product and “fix” it along the way. Furthermore, the respondent thinks that the response from the change agents is lacking,

“They hear what we have to say, but since they already have released [Alias] and some updates, it is not much that can be fixed now, so it will have to wait until update two or three /.../ Sure, they listen, but most often they cannot do anything about it.”

Regarding the knowledge about Alias, the respondent has enough to be able to perform the work tasks necessary. The education and training the respondent received before the implementation consisted of one day with information about how the system worked, and after this, the IT-support was present at the offices to assist for a certain period of time. The respondent has previous experiences regarding organizational change, but these were considering movement of business areas and employees rather than implementation of IT-systems.

There is a big difference between the working situation now and the working situation before the implementation of Alias. In essence, all documentation went from being performed manually in paper form, to being processed digitally through Alias. When asked to clarify whether the working situation has become better or worse, the respondent answered both, since Alias entails both advantages and disadvantages. The respondent explains that when working with paper documents there was a lot of sorting and managing the documents, which took several hours each day. Furthermore, documents in paper form were easily sorted incorrectly and therefore had a tendency to disappear. When working with Alias, there are few documents getting lost and all of the documents are digitally sorted in one place. According to the respondent, this is advantageous since this saves a lot of time. In this way, the working situation has improved.

The disadvantages, on the other hand, is that Alias is not reliable and that there are many functions in the system that are not working properly. The respondent thought that when Alias was implemented, the system would facilitate the work tasks and make them go faster. Today, the respondent thinks it is not reliable enough to trust and the respondent has to double check every move. When asked to establish the respondent’s experienced usefulness of Alias, the answer is worthless, since there is a lot of problems with the system. The respondent explains that there are very few days when everything is working painlessly and at the times when Alias is down, the respondent cannot work at all,

“It is very few days you can sit all day long and everything works painlessly.”

The respondent explains that the above mentioned disadvantages are the reasons for the respondent’s worsening working situation, but also for the respondent’s experienced resistance. However, the respondent does not experience any resistance to the change with Alias as a whole. On the contrary, the respondent thinks it is fun with changes, especially IT changes such as this one. It is a competitive advantage to have a well working IT-system and the respondent claims that you will need one in order to be an attractive employer. According to the respondent, implementing Alias is a necessity if the company is to follow the technological development. Therefore, it is the respondent’s opinion that the advantages exceed the disadvantages,

“If one is about to compare Alias or not Alias, I prefer Alias with the defects that it has, because in the end it facilitates much more and much, much less things disappear.”
4.4.1 Summary

The respondent does not experience resistance to the change of implementing Alias, as a whole or towards the change content. However, the respondent is resistant towards the change process of implementing Alias. The advantages found by the respondent are directly associated with the change content, while the disadvantages are directly associated with the change process. The change usefulness is negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, but positively evaluated in regards to the change content. The change necessity and the required knowledge about the change are both positively evaluated when considering both change process and change content. These results are illustrated below (see Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational change</th>
<th>Change process</th>
<th>Change content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.

4.5 Respondent D

The respondent describes Alias as the IT-system where the respondent does most of the work tasks. The purpose with Alias was to make the company’s customers able to perform their business with the company on their own, according to what the respondent thinks. The respondent uses Alias all the time, except for one work task which involves a function which is performed in another system. All of the respondent’s daily work tasks can be performed even without Alias, as long as the old system is still in place.

The respondent describes the change process as sudden, and explains that everything came at once, about three years ago right before summer vacation, which the respondent finds strange. When asked if the respondent has any suggestions for how the change process should have been managed, the respondent explains that,

“I am not the one that interferes with other’s actions and put time on ideas and that, there are so many others who does that, so most often I do not care about doing that.”

The respondent explains that the change involving the implementation of Alias was considered good and necessary, since the previous system was old. However, the respondent thinks that the system did not turn out to be facilitating the work tasks and that it is not reliable, which entails that the respondent sometimes has to perform the same work tasks twice. The respondent thinks that the latest updates have not been very good and that one cannot trust the system to work. The respondent explains that it is problematic to not know if the system does the right things or works as it is supposed to. As a result, the respondent does not think that Alias is useful.
The respondent does not exactly remember how the recipients were prepared for the implementation of Alias. The respondent only remembers that the recipients were about to test something for a short time before the actual implementation. When we asked if the respondent had enough knowledge to manage Alias today, the respondent claimed that it is far from enough knowledge. The respondent has been through several organizational changes before in this company, but does not think that the company is very modern.

When asked about the advantages about Alias the respondent respond that it is hard to see the advantages but continues explaining that the respondent can see one advantage with Alias, since it is time saving when the work tasks does not include much documents or information. Therefore, if the work tasks are not very complicated, the respondent thinks that Alias works quite well. The disadvantage with Alias is that the system does not always work as it is supposed to. The respondent explains that all of a sudden there can be some new function in the system that was not there the day before, and that functions that were working the day before is suddenly not working anymore. The respondent is tired of these adjustments with the system that appears not to be improvements, but rather affect the respondent’s ability to perform the daily work tasks negatively.

The respondent does not experience any resistance towards the change regarding the implementation of Alias, with the exception that it was strange that it was released right before the summer holidays. The respondent explains that the old system was not better than Alias, but the respondent think that it was more reliable. Furthermore, the respondent does think that it was necessary to implement a new IT-system, but not necessarily Alias. The respondent would like something that works better than Alias.

4.5.1 Summary

The respondent does not experience resistance, neither in regards to the change process, change content or the change as a whole. The respondent evaluates advantages and disadvantages, necessity and knowledge negatively in regards to the change process, and positively in regards to the change content. Change usefulness is positively evaluated in regards to the change content, but the respondent’s evaluation of the change usefulness, in regards to the change process, is both positive and negative. These results are illustrated below (see Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.
4.6 Respondent E

According to the respondent, Alias is an IT-system which is being implemented throughout the company, with the purpose of making the work processes in all the departments within the company as equal as possible. The difference between the respondent’s previous work situation and the one now with Alias is that all management of documents is processed digitally, as PDF-files, instead of in paper form. The respondent uses Alias as a management system for documents, but cannot perform all work tasks only in Alias, but have to use another system for one key function which is not yet included in Alias. The respondent could basically perform the daily work tasks without Alias and instead work with paper documents. The respondent adds that, although it would be possible, it would be going against the respondent’s work description. The change process is explained as incremental since there are small adjustments and improvements happening occasionally, and that the change has been active since day one, when all documents were transferred into Alias.

The first reaction towards the change of implementing Alias was positive, since it was a new IT-system where the work tasks could be performed digitally. The respondent explains that working with Alias is time saving and that it is advantageous to keep track of all the documents and what has been done. Everything is gathered at one place. When asked about any disadvantages about the change with Alias, the respondent is not able to say, since it is still not finished and the respondent does not know what the end result with Alias will look like. The respondent explains that unfinished things are never good, but does express that there are things today, such as all the scrolling and clicking in the Alias, is something that can be improved by creating shortcuts.

The respondent explains that there were some educational occasions where the recipients were to become prepared for the implementation of Alias. After that they were basically thrown into it. When asked if the respondent has enough knowledge to manage Alias today, the respondent thinks so, but is not sure. The respondent explains that perhaps there are things that the respondent should know, but does not, and therefore does not know if the knowledge the respondent has is enough. However, the respondent does have enough knowledge to be able to perform the daily work tasks. When asked if the respondent experience resistance to the change with Alias, the respondent replies with a no. When asked to elaborate, the respondent explains that it is because the respondent thinks that the company should keep up with the technological development and that the respondent is generally not resistant. It is necessary to implementAlias if the company is to keep up with the technological development.

There have been many hassles and errors associated with Alias, but the respondent would not like to go back to the way it was before Alias was implemented. The respondent explains that change can feel hard at first but that the other thing is soon forgotten and one gets used to the new.

“You get used to it. It is like that, we humans, you have to accept the situation and once you’ve accepted it, you will see the advantages. Because, usually, it gets better.”

4.6.1 Summary

The respondent does not experience resistance to the change as a whole, the change process nor the change content. The respondent finds one disadvantage associated with the change process, while the advantages are associated with the change content. Regarding the three remaining cognitive elements, i.e. change usefulness, necessity and knowledge, the respondent’s evaluation
is positive, both regarding change process and change content. These results are illustrated below (see Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Necessity</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.

4.7 Respondent F

The respondent starts with explaining that Alias initially was meant to be a system that integrated all departments in the company and to gather all the relevant documents for a specific customer at one place. Today, the respondent considers Alias only as a system for managing documents, where all documents are gathered as digital files, as opposed to physical documents in paper form. The respondent’s first reaction towards the change of implementing Alias was very positive and thought that this was going to be really good since the company invested a lot of time and money into this system.

The respondent uses Alias daily, but only to perform some of the daily work tasks, while other work tasks are performed without Alias. The respondent explains that this is because some functions are not yet included in Alias, but also since the respondent sometimes chooses not to use it. The idea with Alias is that all daily work tasks are to be included in Alias at some point, but that this is not the case today. Furthermore, when the respondent chooses to work outside the system, this is because there is a lot of documents involved, and therefore print and work with the documents in paper form instead. Therefore, it is possible for the respondent to perform the daily work tasks without Alias, since these work tasks could be performed if the necessary documents are in paper form.

There is no difference in the respondent’s work tasks when comparing how it was before Alias was implemented and now. However, the respondent finds it difficult to work digitally and to manage all the documents digitally, since Alias does not work as it is supposed to, and does not include all of the necessary functions. Furthermore, the respondent thinks it is easy to forget things and has to access several system sites to perform the necessary work tasks.

When asked if the working situation has improved or has become worse, the respondent explains that it has become worse if there are complex work tasks associated with a customer, but that it has improved if there are simpler customer matters. Accordingly, the respondent thinks that Alias performs worse than the previous system, when it comes to work tasks that include a lot of documents and information, but performs better than the previous system if the work tasks do not
include that much documents and information. The respondent continues and clarifies that it is the huge amount of documents that becomes problematic when using Alias.

The respondent acknowledges that there are great advantages associated with Alias. For example, it is possible to work from anywhere, from home, from abroad and at the office. It is flexible that way. Another advantage is that the risk of losing documents or file the documents at the wrong place is minimal. The respondent continues and explains that previously it sometimes happened that documents in paper form were forgotten. This does not occur when using Alias, since the system has a function where the user is reminded of active documents regarding a specific customer.

When asked about the disadvantages about Alias, the respondent explains that it is in essence the working situation by, and with, the computer. There is a lot of scrolling and clicking which entails bodily pains and discomfort for the respondent. Also, it is tiring to work in front of a computer screen all day long. The respondent is not used to this way of working and explains that the working situation might be an issue of making it a habit. In fact, the respondent has been working with paper files for the last 20 years and find it to be a challenge and a readjustment to work only digitally.

The respondent has been involved in many organizational changes previously and find that these experiences have been very advantageous when being involved in the change with Alias,

“I believe that if one is to be working with changes, one needs to have a positive view regarding change. I mean, it does not always have to be bad. Changes are often initiated to make things better.”

There have been educational occasions where the respondent has learnt the different functions with Alias, what is possible to do in the system, but also what cannot be done. The respondent would like some additional improvements regarding Alias so that the recipients will have a system that is able to manage all of the documents and is easy to operate.

The respondent does not experience resistance to the change with Alias. In 2016, one is supposed to work digitally. The respondent thinks that the change with Alias should be continued, rather than shut down if the company does not choose to implement a different system, which is better than Alias. In fact, the respondent thinks that the company chose to implement the wrong system from the very beginning. The respondent expresses that the fundamental flaw with the system is that it is supposed to suit all of the processes in the different departments, which has resulted in compromises for every department. The respondent thinks that if Alias would have been developed and adapted to each department instead of the entire organization, the usefulness would have been considered higher by the recipients.

It is not the change of digitalization that the respondent resist, it is rather the technological solution that was implemented that is the problem. The respondent still has hope that the change with Alias will improve, but also believes that Alias will never be the ultimate solution. According to the respondent, Alias was implemented too early and entailed unforeseen consequences which caused huge problems in the beginning of the implementation. There were functions that failed to be included and the wrong people were involved in implementing Alias. These problems have been fixed and adjusted along the way, but there are still some serious issues with the system that needs to be solved. In the future, the respondent believes that all of
the employees at the company will work digitally, but is not certain that this will be done through Alias.

4.7.1 Summary
The respondent is not generally resistant towards the change of implementing Alias. However, the respondent does experience resistance towards the change process, but not towards the change content. The respondent finds advantages and disadvantages which are both associated to the change process and change content. The change usefulness is also both positively and negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, while being only positively evaluated in regards to the change content. The change necessity is negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, while being positively evaluated in regards to the change content. The respondent is considered to have the required knowledge to handle the change, both in regards to the change process and change content. These results are illustrated below (see Table 8).

Table 8: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.

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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>+ −</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>− +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.8 Respondent G
The respondent describes Alias as an IT-system, which the recipients use for their work tasks. The respondent thinks that Alias was implemented because the existing systems were too old and expected a system that would facilitate the work processes and that work tasks that were previously performed manually, would be managed digitally instead. The respondent explains that this is not the case today and thinks that perhaps this will be carried out in the future, since the change is still under development. The respondent does not want to speculate about how the expected end result will affect the respondent’s working situation, since the development of Alias has been going on for so many years and the respondent does not know exactly how it is supposed to look like once it is finished. The only thing the respondent know for sure is that everything is to become digital.

It has been a couple of years since Alias was first implemented, but the respondent is still not so familiar with the system, since the respondent’s work tasks does not involve using Alias to a great extent. The respondent does not use Alias daily, and it can take several days before the respondent need to use it for work tasks. But when the respondent is using Alias, it is to perform work tasks that involve writing documents and to find and read documents. If all documents were in paper form, the respondent would be able to perform the work tasks without Alias. In fact, the respondent still has old documents that are still not registered in Alias, and since the
respondent can do all the work tasks necessary without using Alias, the implementation of Alias was not considered necessary according to the respondent.

Since the respondent does not use Alias so frequently, it is hard to get used to the functions and how to operate the system. Today, the respondent does not think that Alias is useful when performing the daily work tasks since they involve a lot of paperwork which is not included in Alias. However, if it is less complex matters that need to be handled, Alias can be useful. The respondent explains that tasks that does not include a lot of information and documents may be managed in a good way through Alias, but the more documents and numbers that has to be included in the work task regarding a customer, the harder it gets to manage the work task through Alias. The respondent hopes that when the change with Alias is finished, all of the work tasks will be easier to perform and that the system will work with all the expected functions.

The respondent explains that when in use, the system has both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage that the respondent describe is that the documents does not have to be managed by going to the printer, but rather can be managed digitally in Alias. The disadvantage is that it takes a lot of time for Alias to process great amounts of documents, and that all documents regarding one customer is opened at once, instead of being able to choose some documents to open. Furthermore, it is hard for the respondent to get an overlook of the documents when they are shown digitally, and explains that the respondent is only able to see perhaps two documents at a time. The biggest disadvantage according to the respondent is that when Alias was implemented, it was not finished and still, the recipients were supposed to use it when performing their work tasks. The respondent thinks that the company should have invested more money to get a finished system from the beginning with the functions they needed.

The respondent was involved in a previous change regarding an IT-system where the users were well prepared and had several educational occasions regarding the system. The respondent thinks that this approach was much better than the one used when implementing Alias. The respondent explains that there was an educational occasion a long time ago, which is now forgotten and explains that the respondent often has to ask the colleagues for help.

The respondent experiences resistance to the change with Alias, since it has not been proven to contribute with improvements for the respondent’s work processes and since it was not operational when it was first implemented. The respondent does not believe that an unfinished system should be put in place which causes problems for the users, which in turn disrupt the work tasks necessary to assist their customers. Also, the time and people spent on fixing and problem solving regarding the system require resources that the respondent argues that the recipients do not have. The respondent concludes that the experienced resistance can be described as a result of the faulty, unfinished system, which the recipients are expected to develop, even though they are not supposed to and therefore utilize resources which could have been used for performing the recipients’ primary work tasks regarding customer service.

4.8.1 Summary

The respondent does experience resistance to the change of implementing Alias as a whole and also towards the change process. However, the respondent does not experience resistance towards the change content. The respondent finds disadvantages with the change process and advantages with the change content. The change usefulness is both positively and negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, while only being negatively evaluated in regards to the change content. The change necessity is negatively evaluated in regards to both change
process and change content. The respondent is considered to have knowledge about the change content, but not about the change process. These results are illustrated below (see Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four cognitive elements</th>
<th>Organizational change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.

4.9 Respondent H

Alias is the new IT-system which is to replace the old systems and to integrate all processes within the whole company. To date, the respondent explains that Alias is used as a document management system where one key function is not yet included, but which should be in the future. In essence, the respondent uses Alias for writing documents. Otherwise, the respondent think that it is not possible to use the system to perform the daily work tasks and manage the documents necessary for dealing with customers. Instead, the respondent prints all of the documents necessary from the archive in Alias and manage the documents in paper form. This is not something that the respondent wants to do, but rather have to do in order to perform the work tasks necessary without making mistakes. This is especially a necessity when the documents associated with a customer grow to a comprehensive amount. Without Alias, the respondent can execute the daily work tasks easily and explains that respondent is not at all dependent on using the system.

The respondent does not recall the first reaction to the implementation of Alias, but believes that there was no reaction at all. The respondent explains the change process as “limping” since Alias was not yet completed when it was first implemented and that the users were expected to develop it, even though it is not possible to do so. The respondent does not think that delivering an unfinished product which the recipients were supposed to develop successively, was a good way of conducting the implementation process. The respondent explains that the complaints and suggestions about Alias have been addressed to the project leaders of the change, but that there has been no response. When it comes to initial education about Alias, the respondent claims that there has not been any,

“There has been some small presentations, and some discussions here and there, but no, I cannot say that. No education, no.”

Today, the respondent has enough knowledge about Alias to handle the expected daily work tasks but learns something new about the system every day together with the other recipients.
The respondent had too high expectations when Alias was first implemented. The respondent has experienced organizational changes before, and thinks that these experiences might have brought unnecessarily high expectations on Alias from the very beginning, since the respondent has not had any problems with the former organizational changes. The respondent expresses that there is a great difficulty in integrating all of the company’s departments’ processes, since they all differ from one another. Implementing Alias has therefore resulted in a big compromise for all of the departments. The respondent has spent a lot of time discussing and developing Alias with other recipients, which is not an official part of the respondent’s work tasks, and which requires time and expertise, which the respondent basically does not have. The respondent explains that the respondent does not mind getting involved in developing Alias, but rather finds it hard to do so when there is no time set aside for doing this in addition to the respondent’s original work tasks.

The respondent does not think that there are any advantages with Alias as a system. However, there are advantages associated with the change of digitalization, such as environmental ones. When asked about the disadvantages regarding Alias, the respondent answers that it is in essence everything that has been said during the interview. The biggest disadvantage is the amount of time spent on discussing, developing and fixing Alias, which is basically time taken from their customers.

The respondent claims that there is no experienced resistance towards the change of implementing Alias. When asked to clarify, the respondent explains that there is no resistance towards the digitization, but rather to the technological solutions associated with the IT-system which the recipients have received,

“According to me, the implementation process and the product in itself is too crappy. And I think it is a shame, because it has cost so terribly much time, energy and will.”

The respondent describes the technological solution as substandard and is disappointed in the way the change has been managed by the change agents. When asked about the necessity of initiating the change, the respondent thinks that the implementation of a new system and to digitalize the organization were necessary, but not necessarily in the form of Alias. The respondent explains that there is no doubt that digitalization would be possible with another system with different functions than the ones in Alias. The respondent has seen these different solutions in other equivalent companies, and claims that it is working there.

The respondent believes that in the future, the change of implementing an IT-system will be accomplished and that all the necessary documents and work tasks can be managed digitally, even though it is a rough way of getting there,

“- How do you think that the end result with Alias will affect you?
- You mean except for a heart attack?”

The respondent adds that the single work processes will not be faster than before, because of the nature of their business, but that there can be a lot of improvements which will facilitate the work tasks that have to be done. It is the respondent’s understanding that there is no possibility for all of the recipients to get the functions that they need in Alias. This means that the management of documents is too limited in Alias and that the change agents will need to put this function outside Alias in order for the recipients to fully be able to work with it. In conclusion, even though there are huge amounts of documents associated with their work tasks, the respondent believes that they can be managed digitally, if only there was another system than Alias in place.
4.9.1 Summary
The respondent is not resistant towards the change of implementing Alias. However, the respondent does experience resistance towards the change process, but not towards the change content. The only element which is being positively evaluated in regards to both change process and change content is the knowledge required to handle the change. The remaining elements are positively evaluated in regards to the change content, while being negatively evaluated in regards to the change process. These results are illustrated below (see Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four cognitive elements</th>
<th>Organizational change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.

4.10 Respondent I
The respondent describes Alias as a system for managing documents and work tasks associated with their customers and that Alias is their most important IT-application. The system is in an IT-environment which is meant to be used by all departments throughout the company. The biggest difference from the previous systems used is that Alias will include much more information, such as all documents, and that everything will be digitalized. The respondent uses Alias every day since about half of the documents needed are filed in Alias. The remaining documents are still not registered in Alias, but are instead in paper form. In the beginning of the change with Alias, the respondent thought that it was necessary to implement since they were supposed to work in the digital environment. Today, the respondent does not feel that Alias is necessary at all, since there are still many work tasks that are performed in other systems or in other ways. The only thing Alias is essentially used for is to file documents digitally.

The respondent explains that before Alias was implemented there was a brainstorming session where everyone could express their needs with an expert. However, today, these needs have still not been fulfilled or become a reality. At this brainstorming meeting, the respondent was told that the system would not be fully completed when first implemented, but would rather act as a “shell” that would be developed by adding functions along the change process. However, the respondent explains that their opinions have been ignored and dismissed. The respondent continues and explains that the system is not suited for the whole organization and that the different needs are not the factors which are being emphasized when developing Alias. The respondent explains that there are a lot of work tasks which requires functions that are not yet included in Alias. Therefore, these work tasks are performed in other systems or in other ways. This entails that the other systems cannot be shut down or removed, which is the idea behind implementing the new system.
There was basically no preparation, such as education or training, for the respondent before Alias was implemented. The respondent feels like it is one’s own responsibility to figure everything out, which is very time consuming. Today, the respondent estimates a 70-80% level of knowledge regarding Alias but adds that this is not knowledge that is being used purposively for managing the work tasks, but rather it is used to fix problems. According to the respondent, this knowledge is useless, since it does not facilitate the work tasks.

When the respondent first got the information that Alias was going to be implemented, the respondent thought that the change would be a good thing. In the beginning, the respondent had a lot of confidence in the change agents and their competence, but it turned out that the agents were not as competent as it seemed and the respondent has lost hope in today’s change agents,

“I just felt that I trusted IT people, and I do not do that today. /.../ I do not think they will fix this.”

Another concern that the respondent pinpoints is the startup of the change and explains that Alias was implemented right before the summer vacations. The respondent expresses the frustration with this:

“If one is to implement a change, there has to be a fantastic initiation that doesn’t involve ‘Let’s release it and then go home for vacation’. That is what happened.”

Since the system was released right before summer vacation, the respondent felt abandoned with the new system.

“There was nobody to ask. Then you will get this attitude that ‘this is shit’. And that is very hard to rebut when you are sitting here alone with all responsibility and you cannot even send a letter.”

There are no advantages with Alias according to the respondent. One disadvantage is that the respondent cannot get an overview of the huge amount of documents which are digital in the system. The respondent believes that it would be possible to get an easy overview of the documents if there was another system in place, but that this is not possible with Alias. The respondent does not think that Alias fits the necessary work tasks, which is dependent on large amounts of documents. The respondent explains that the recipients were forced into a change that did not suit their needs to be able to perform their daily work tasks. The respondent continues explaining that it is the work tasks that involves a great amount of documents and information that do not suit Alias, and that the recipients’ requirements therefore cannot be met.

Many work tasks that are associated with Alias, and in some cases depend on Alias, takes a lot of time, time that the respondent does not have. The respondent admits that there are work tasks that become delayed because of problems with Alias and feels like there is no one acknowledging this. The respondent does not think that the person who should bring the recipients’ requirements to the change agents is competent enough to have that responsibility, since this person does not have as much experience of working with Alias as the recipients have. The respondent thinks that the communication between the IT department and the operational departments is too weak and has to be improved. There has to be people that knows both IT and the operational work tasks, and the respondent also thinks that these different competences should be encouraged by the company.
The respondent feels that the recipients need to defend themselves in order to justify the time spent on Alias in the initial state of the change process, but also at times when Alias is not working properly. The respondent claims that there is no time for the actual work tasks anymore, which in turn affect their customers. For those who work with customer matters which involves a large amount of documents, should be able to choose to work with Alias on a voluntarily basis. If the work tasks get too comprehensive to overlook in Alias, one should be able to work with documents in paper form instead. It is mainly the management of large amount of documents that frustrates the respondent.

When asked if the respondent experience resistance to the change with Alias, the answer is yes. The respondent thinks that they should stop using Alias as it was supposed to be used and instead go back to managing the documents in paper form and only use Alias as an archive for the documents that belong to the finished work tasks associated with their customers. The respondent is very resistant and feel no trust in the people managing the change, and does not believe that the problems with Alias will be solved.

When we ask if the respondent would like a digitalized system that worked, the respondent’s answer is:

“Yes! Who wants all these passwords, systems, rules and graphics? One would love to work in one single system. But then you have to invest and investigate the needs in a totally different way and you need a much more expensive system.”

The respondent clarifies that the respondent wants to have just one system for all processes, as long as it works and is adjusted to their needs. The respondent would rather work digitally than in paper if the system would have worked.

4.10.1 Summary

The respondent experiences resistance towards the change as a whole as well as the change process, but not towards the change content. All four cognitive elements are negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, while all the four cognitive elements are positively evaluated in regards to the change content. These results are illustrated below (see Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four cognitive elements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.
4.11 Respondent J

According to the respondent, Alias is the new IT-system which is being implemented with the purpose of digitalizing the management of documents instead of having physical documents in paper form. The respondent uses Alias for all the daily work tasks, except for one which is performed in another system. Since some of the respondent’s documents are still in paper form, the respondent would be able to perform the daily work tasks without Alias. However, this would not be possible once all documents are made digital.

The respondent’s first reaction to the change was that it was good to make everything digitalized, but soon after Alias was implemented, the respondent realized that the system was not a complete and fully finished product and that it was not suited for the respondent’s needs. The system was implemented all at once and all new documents after the implementation date were registered directly into Alias. The change process has been described as a bit difficult and badly executed since Alias was not finished once it was implemented. Furthermore, the change agents wanted the recipients to develop the system by giving their opinions, which in turn has been ignored. The respondent is tired of constantly giving feedback to people who do not listen and explains that the recipients got a presentation of the system before it was implemented and that it was the recipients who were supposed to continue developing Alias. The respondent does not really remember if there was any initial training or education regarding Alias but recall that it was tricky to handle the new system. Today, the respondent thinks that the knowledge about Alias is enough to manage the work tasks necessary, but do not know all of the functions associated with Alias.

There is still a lot of work with making Alias useful for the respondent. However, the respondent explains that although the change process with Alias has been difficult, it is of no use to think about the negative aspects, but rather to focus on what is positive, in order to be able to move on. The respondent thinks that it is a huge advantage to use Alias during the first contact with a customer and when the matter is easy, because it is fast when all documents are digitized and it is easy to share documents with other colleagues.

The respondent describes the disadvantages as the difficulty in operating it easily and experiences time consuming processes. But the biggest disadvantage is that it is unsafe in regards to security flaws. The secrecy is faulty and it is important that the right documents is sent to the right persons and that some documents cannot be accessed by whomever. Furthermore, there is no overview of documents in Alias and the digital documents cannot be edited. Also, all functions are not included in Alias, which entails the need of an additional system.

The respondent experiences resistance to the change with Alias since it has been taking such a long time to implement it and that the recipients were thrown into a system that they were not prepared for. Also, the respondent experiences a frustration because of the ignorance for their suggestions. The resistance is directed towards the system itself, since the respondent finds it necessary to work digitally in 2016.

4.11.1 Summary

The respondent experiences resistance with the change of implementing Alias as a whole and is resistant towards the change process. However, the respondent does not resist the change content. The respondent finds advantages associated with the change content, while finding disadvantages associated with the change process. The change usefulness is both positively and
negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, but positively evaluated in regards to the change content. The change necessity is positively evaluated in regards to the change content, while being negatively evaluated in regards to the change process. The knowledge required to handle the change is both positively and negatively evaluated in regards to the change process, and positively evaluated in regards to the change content. These results are illustrated below (see Table 12).

Table 12: The respondent’s experienced resistance and evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.
5. Results

In this chapter, we have summarized the tables presented in the previous chapter (see Table 13). These results will serve as our basis for the analysis conducted in the following chapter, as it is illustrated in the analysis model (see Figure 2).
6. Analysis

In this chapter, we will conduct our analysis. The analysis will be based on the analysis model (see Figure 2) and the similarities and differences between the cases will be discussed and compared in relation to our theoretical framework.

6.1 Organizational change context

The change of implementing Alias is characterized by different factors, which form the organizational change context. First, there can be different types of change (Lines, 2005), where the change of implementing Alias is considered to be the type of change involving the IT infrastructure and the employees’ working situation. According to Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015), an organizational change can vary depending on the scale and duration. The implementation of Alias is company-wide and is expected to be implemented during five years. Therefore, the change of implementing Alias is considered to be a large-scale and a long term organizational change. Bouckenooghe (2010) argues that changes are initiated because of different needs. Here, we consider the change of implementing Alias to have been initiated because of the need for improvements of the employees’ working situation and renewal of the IT infrastructure. It is important to acknowledge that organizational change constitutes of both change process and change content (Lines, 2005), which derives from the organizational change context. Here, the change process includes the way of implementation, but also the technological solutions associated with Alias, i.e. Alias itself. The change content includes the digitization of documents in one single IT-system, which is to be the same for the entire company.

6.2 Resistance to change

According to e.g. Latta (2015) a negative evaluation of the cognitive component, and therefore of the cognitive elements included in this component, will result in resistance to change, as it is defined as a change recipient’s negative attitude towards change (Bouckenooghe, 2010). When considering all of the respondents’ established evaluations regarding the cognitive elements (see Table 13), we find negative evaluations among all of the respondents. This entails that all of the respondents are expected to experience resistance to change to some degree (Latta, 2015; Bouckenooghe, 2010). We find that seven of the respondents experience resistance towards the change process, while none experienced resistance towards change content. Out of the seven respondents who are resistant to change process, there are three respondents who experience resistance to the change as a whole. This leaves us with three respondents who do not experience resistance to neither change process, change content nor the change as a whole. This finding has two important implications: (1) that resistance to change as a whole does not necessarily have to occur, even though resistance to change process is occurring, and (2) that resistance to change does not necessarily have to occur, even though there are negative evaluations of the cognitive elements. These implications therefore contradict the expected outcome argued by Latta (2015) and Bouckenooghe (2010) and entail the need for further investigation.

A possible explanation regarding the above mentioned implications, might be that the evaluations of the cognitive elements are not equally important when explaining the respondents’ experienced resistance. Perhaps a negative evaluation of a certain element has a more important role in the respondents’ experienced resistance, than a negative evaluation of any other element. The need for analyzing the cognitive elements in regards to their relative importance is therefore emphasized. Another possible explanation might be that it is the dynamics between the positive
and negative evaluations among the four cognitive elements that generate a certain amount of resistance. Perhaps it is the combination of negative evaluations among two or more cognitive elements that explains the respondents’ experienced resistance, rather than assuming that any negative evaluation of any cognitive element automatically generate resistance. The need for analyzing the dynamics between the cognitive elements is therefore emphasized. To conclude, in order to determine the role of the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change, when assessing their resistance, (1) the cognitive elements’ relative importance and (2) the dynamics between them will be emphasized in the remainder of this analysis.

As previously acknowledged, it is important to take into account that resistance can be directed towards either change process, change content, or both (e.g. Lines, 2005), since this might explain the resistance towards change as a whole. When considering the respondents’ experienced resistance towards change process and change content (see Table 13), we find that none of the respondents experience resistance towards change content and that seven of the respondents experience resistance towards change process. This finding entails that resistance to change as a whole might occur even though there is no experienced resistance towards change content, but also that resistance to change as a whole might not occur even though there is experienced resistance towards change process. Based on this, we find that an established experienced resistance to change process or change content, cannot solely explain the experienced resistance to change as a whole, which confirms the importance of acknowledging both change process and change content as it is argued by e.g. Lines (2005). However, since none of the respondents experience resistance towards change content, we cannot investigate the role of the change recipients’ cognitive perception of change in regards to change content, when assessing their resistance to change as a whole. As a result, in the remainder of this analysis, we are limited to only focus on the respondent’s evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process, in order to investigate the role of the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change, when assessing their resistance to change.

When considering the respondents’ evaluation of the cognitive elements in regards to change process (see Table 13), we find that some respondents evaluate an element both positively and negatively simultaneously and that some respondents have both positive and negative evaluations of the elements regarding the change process. This finding entails ambivalence, which might occur both between cognitive elements, as well as within a single element (e.g. Piderit, 2000). In order to deal with this ambivalence, we will consider the occurrence of ambivalence within a cognitive element, to be either positively or negatively evaluated. In other words, if experienced ambivalence occurs in a cognitive element, this element can be considered to be negative, since this element in fact is to some degree evaluated negatively. Accordingly, the same element can also be considered to be positive, since this element in fact is evaluated positively to some degree. Furthermore, we will consider the occurrence of ambivalence between the cognitive elements regarding change process, to be as they are, i.e. either positively or negatively evaluated. In this way, we are able to find patterns of prevalence regarding the evaluations among the cognitive elements and this also enables us to investigate the cognitive elements separately, while taking into account the dynamics between them.

We have now established our emphasis on analyzing the cognitive elements, both in regards to their relative importance and the dynamics between them. Furthermore, this analysis will only be considering the evaluations of the cognitive elements in regards to the change process, while taking into account the occurrence of ambivalence. In order to conduct this analysis in a systematic and structured way, the respondents have been divided into three analysis groups.
which are based on their level of experienced resistance to change. Analysis group 1 consists of the three respondents who experience resistance to change as a whole (see Table 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent G</th>
<th>Respondent I</th>
<th>Respondent J</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change process</td>
<td>Change content</td>
<td>Change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 14: The respondents with experienced resistance to change and their evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.**

Analysis group 2 consists of the four respondents who experience resistance towards change process, but do not experience resistance to change as a whole (see Table 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent B</th>
<th>Respondent C</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
<th>Respondent E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change process</td>
<td>Change content</td>
<td>Change process</td>
<td>Change content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 15: The respondents with experienced resistance towards change process and their evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.**

Analysis group 3 consists of the three remaining respondents who do not experience resistance, neither in regards to change process, change content nor change as a whole (see Table 16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
<th>Respondent E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change process</td>
<td>Change content</td>
<td>Change process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16: The respondents with no experienced resistance and their evaluation of the four cognitive elements in regards to the change process and change content.**
The remainder of this analysis chapter will be structured as follows: firstly, we will analyze the cognitive elements separately, i.e. one by one, based on the above mentioned analysis groups. In this way, we will find if the elements differ in their relative importance for explaining the respondents’ experienced resistance. And if so, how this relative importance is distributed among the cognitive elements. Secondly, we will analyze the cognitive elements simultaneously, i.e. combined, based on the above mentioned analysis groups. In this way, we will find if the dynamics between the elements might explain the respondents’ experienced resistance. And if so, how these dynamics can be explained by different combinations of the cognitive elements. Thirdly, we will conduct a discussion regarding our findings in relation to our theoretical framework. Lastly, we will offer our theoretical contributions.

6.3 The cognitive elements’ relative importance

6.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages
When considering the advantages and disadvantages regarding analysis group 1, we find that all respondents evaluate this element negatively. Since the respondents in analysis group 1 experience resistance to both change process and change as a whole, a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

Regarding analysis group 2, we find that all respondents evaluate this element negatively. Here, the respondents only experienced resistance towards change process, but not towards change as a whole. Therefore, the perceived disadvantages might only explain the respondents’ experienced resistance to change process, but not to change as a whole. As a result, a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process, but not towards change as a whole.

In regards to analysis group 3, we find that all respondents evaluate this element negatively. Here, the respondents do not experienced resistance towards neither change process, change content nor change as a whole. As a result, a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages might not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

When comparing the three analysis groups in regards to their evaluations of advantages and disadvantages, we find that all of the analysis groups evaluate this element negatively, despite their different levels of resistance. Therefore, a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages cannot explain the respondents’ experienced resistance to change. Based on these findings, we conclude that perceived disadvantages do not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

6.3.2 Usefulness
When considering the change usefulness regarding analysis group 1, we find that all respondents evaluate this element negatively. Since the respondents in analysis group 1 experience resistance to both change process and change as a whole, a negative evaluation of change usefulness might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

When considering change usefulness regarding analysis group 2, we find that all respondents...
evaluate this element negatively. Since the respondents only experienced resistance towards change process, but not towards change as a whole, their negative evaluation of change usefulness might only explain the respondents’ experienced resistance to change process, but not to change as a whole. As a result, a negative evaluation of change usefulness might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process, but not towards change as a whole.

Regarding analysis group 3, we find that all of the respondents evaluate this element positively. Here, none of the respondents experience resistance to neither change process nor to change as a whole. Since all of the respondents evaluate this element positively, we are not able to determine whether a negative evaluation of change usefulness can explain their (lack of) experienced resistance to change or not. In result, we cannot determine whether or not a negative evaluation of the change usefulness have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

When comparing the three analysis groups in regards to their evaluations of change usefulness, we find that the respondents included in analysis group 1 and analysis group 2 evaluate this element negatively, while analysis group 3 evaluate this element positively. This entails that the respondents who experience resistance, either to change process, change as a whole, or both, evaluate change usefulness negatively, while the respondents who do not experience resistance to change evaluate this element positively. This entails that a negative evaluation of change usefulness has an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. However, since analysis group 1 and analysis group 2 differ in their resistance to change as a whole, but are both experiencing resistance to change process, this evaluation is only important when assessing resistance to change process, but not to change as a whole. Based on these findings, we conclude that a negative evaluation of change usefulness has an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

6.3.3 Necessity

When considering change necessity regarding analysis group 1, we find that all of the respondents evaluate this element negatively. Since all of the respondents included in this analysis group experience resistance to both change process and to change as a whole, a negative evaluation of change necessity might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

Regarding analysis group 2, we find that three respondents evaluate this element negatively, while one respondent evaluates this element positively. Since a negative evaluation of this element is more prevalent than a positive one (3 out of 4), change necessity is considered to be negatively evaluated by this analysis group. Here, the respondents only experience resistance to change process, but do not experience resistance to the change as a whole. This indicates that the negative evaluation of change necessity can only explain their experienced resistance to change process, but cannot explain the experienced resistance to change as a whole. To conclude, a negative evaluation of change necessity might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process.

When considering analysis group 3, we find that two respondents evaluate this element negatively, while one respondent evaluates this element positively. Since a negative evaluation of this element is more prevalent than a positive one (2 out of 3), change necessity is considered to be negatively evaluated by this analysis group. In this analysis group, the respondents do not
experience resistance to neither change process nor to change as a whole, which indicates that the negative evaluation of change necessity cannot explain the experienced resistance to change. To conclude, a negative evaluation of change necessity might not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

When comparing the analysis groups in regards to their evaluation of change necessity, we find that all of the respondents in analysis group 1 evaluate this element negatively. This indicates that a negative evaluation of change necessity might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. However, when considering analysis group 2 and 3 we find that negative evaluations are more prevalent, both within and between the analysis groups, than positive ones. As a result, we find no clear difference between the three analysis groups regarding the respondents’ evaluations of necessity, even though they experience different levels of resistance. Based on these findings, we conclude that a negative evaluation of change necessity does not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

### 6.3.4 Knowledge

When considering the knowledge required to handle the change in regards to analysis group 1, we find that all of the respondents evaluate this element negatively. Since all of the respondents included in this analysis group experience resistance to both change process and to change as a whole, a negative evaluation of the knowledge required to handle the change might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

Regarding analysis group 2, we find that all of the respondents evaluate this element positively. Here, the respondents only experience resistance to change process, but do not experience resistance to the change as a whole. However, since none of the respondents evaluate this element negatively and we are not able to explain their experienced resistance to change process. As a result, we cannot determine whether or not a negative evaluation of the knowledge required to handle the change have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

When considering analysis group 3, we find that to respondents evaluate this element positively, while one respondent evaluates this element negatively. Here, a positive evaluation of knowledge is more prevalent than a negative one (2 out of 3), and is therefore considered to be positively evaluated by this analysis group. The respondents included in this group does not experience resistance to either change process or change as a whole. Since knowledge is considered to be positively evaluated, we are not able to explain the respondents’ (lack of) experienced resistance to change. As a result, we cannot determine whether or not a negative evaluation of knowledge required to handle the change have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

When comparing the analysis groups regarding their evaluation of the knowledge required to handle the change, we find that analysis group 1 evaluates this element negatively. This indicates that a negative evaluation of this element might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. Regarding analysis group 2, we find that all of the respondents evaluate this element positively and that this evaluation is more prevalent than a negative one, in regards to analysis group 3. Since analysis group 1 is the only analysis group that experience resistance to change as a whole, and also is the only analysis group that evaluates knowledge negatively, this indicates that a negative evaluation of knowledge does have an important role
when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. However, this importance is only applicable when considering change as a whole, but not when considering resistance to change process, since both analysis group 1 and analysis group 2 experience resistance to change process, but evaluate this element differently. Based on these findings, we conclude that a negative evaluation of knowledge does have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change as a whole.

6.3.5 Discussing the findings

From the above conducted analysis, when considering the cognitive elements separately, our findings suggest that perceived disadvantages do not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. A negative evaluation of change usefulness does have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process. A negative evaluation of change necessity does not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. Regarding the knowledge required to handle the change, a negative evaluation of this element does have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. In result, a change recipient’s negative evaluation of knowledge will result in resistance to change process, as well as resistance to change as a whole, while a change recipient’s negative evaluation of usefulness will result in resistance to change process, but not necessarily in resistance to change as a whole. Furthermore, a change recipient’s perceived disadvantages and negative evaluation of change necessity will not result in resistance to change. These findings are illustrated in the table below (see Table 17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four cognitive elements</th>
<th>Change process</th>
<th>Change as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 17: The cognitive elements’ role of importance, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.*

According to Latta (2015), negative evaluations of the cognitive elements are to result in resistance to change. Our findings are both in line and in contradiction with this argument, depending on which elements that are being considered. This indicates that different cognitive elements differ in their importance, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. Here, we find that knowledge is in line with the above stated argument, and that this element is of greatest importance, since the evaluation of this element has been suggested to determine whether or not a change recipient will experience resistance to change as a whole. As a result, if a change recipient does not have the knowledge required to handle the change, regardless the evaluation of the remaining three elements, the change recipient will experience resistance to change. This finding suggests that in order for a change agent to manage a change recipient’s resistance to change, it is vital that the change agent ensures that the change recipient considers oneself to have the knowledge required to handle the change.
The evaluation of change usefulness has been suggested to determine whether or not a change recipient will experience resistance to change process, which makes this element the second most important when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. This finding is partially in line with the above stated argument by Latta (2015), since the experienced resistance is only directed towards change process, but not towards change as a whole. As a result, if a change recipient does not find the change to be useful, regardless the evaluation of the remaining three elements, the change recipient will experience resistance to change process. This finding suggests that in order for a change agent to manage a change recipient’s resistance to change process, it is vital that the change agent ensures that the change recipient considers the change to be useful.

We find that our findings regarding the evaluation of advantages and disadvantages and change necessity are not in line with the expected outcome argued by Latta (2015). Our findings suggest that a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages, regardless the evaluation of the remaining three elements, do not result in experienced resistance to neither change process nor change as a whole. Accordingly, a negative evaluation of change necessity, regardless the evaluation of the remaining three elements, do not result in experienced resistance to neither change process nor change as a whole. As a result, if the change recipient perceives disadvantages about the change or perceives the change to be unnecessary, resistance will not occur. In result, it is not vital that the change agent ensures that the change recipients do not perceive disadvantages about the change or consider the change to be necessary, in order to manage a change recipient’s resistance to change.

In conclusion, if the change agent is to be assured that no resistance to change will occur, neither to change process nor to change as a whole, the change agent needs to ensure that the change recipients perceive the change process to be useful, as well as perceive themselves to have the knowledge required to handle the change process.

6.4 The dynamics between the four cognitive elements

When considering the cognitive elements simultaneously, regarding analysis group 1, we find that all of the elements are negatively evaluated. Since this analysis group experiences resistance to both change process and change as a whole, this indicates that all elements combined might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

Regarding analysis group 2, when considering the cognitive elements simultaneously, we find that advantages and disadvantages, change usefulness and change necessity is negatively evaluated, while knowledge is positively evaluated. Since this analysis group experiences resistance to change process, but not to change as a whole, this indicates that perceived disadvantages, combined with a negative evaluation of change usefulness and change necessity, might have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process.

When considering the cognitive elements simultaneously in regards to analysis group 3, we find that advantages and disadvantages and change necessity are negatively evaluated, while change usefulness and knowledge are positively evaluated. Since this analysis group does not experience resistance to neither change process nor change as a whole, this indicates that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity might not have an important role, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.
When comparing the analysis groups, while considering all of the four cognitive elements simultaneously, we find four possible combinations. The first combination involves advantages and disadvantages and change necessity. Here, we find that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity will not result in resistance to neither change process nor change as a whole. Based on these findings, we conclude that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity do not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

The second combination involves change usefulness and knowledge required to handle the change. Here, we find that a combination between a negative evaluation of change usefulness and knowledge will result in resistance to change process, as well as to change as a whole. Based on these findings, we conclude that a negative evaluation of change usefulness and knowledge have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change, when combined with each other.

The third combination involves advantages and disadvantages and change necessity, as well as change usefulness. Here, we find that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity and a negative evaluation of change usefulness will result in resistance to change process. This indicates that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity (the first combination), might still have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process if this combination in turn is combined with a negative evaluation of change usefulness. Based on these findings, we conclude that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity and a negative evaluation of change usefulness, have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change, when combined with each other.

The fourth, and last, combination involves all four cognitive elements. Here, we find that a negative evaluation of all four cognitive elements combined with each other will result in resistance to change process, as well as resistance to change as a whole. This indicates that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity (the first combination), might still have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process if this combination in turn is combined with a negative evaluation of change usefulness and a negative evaluation of knowledge. Based on these findings, we conclude that perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity, a negative evaluation of change usefulness, and a negative evaluation of knowledge have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

6.4.1 Discussing the findings
When considering the analysis regarding the dynamics between the cognitive elements, our findings suggest that a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages, combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity, does not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. Furthermore, a negative evaluation of change usefulness, combined with a negative evaluation of knowledge, have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. Perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity and a negative evaluation of change usefulness have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change process. This combination combined with a negative evaluation of knowledge required to handle the change, have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change as a whole. These findings are illustrated in the table below (see Table 18).
Table 18: The combinations of the cognitive elements and their role of importance, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>Advantages and disadvantages</th>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Necessity</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously acknowledged, negative evaluations of the cognitive elements are expected to result in resistance to change (Latta, 2015). When considering our findings regarding the dynamics between the cognitive element, we find that they are both in line with, but also in contradiction to, this argument. The first combination is contradictory since perceived disadvantages combined with a negative evaluation of change necessity does not generate resistance to change. In a previous section (see 6.3.5 Discussing the findings), we concluded that, separately, perceived disadvantages and a negative evaluation of change necessity do not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. Here, we can conclude that even though these two elements are combined, resistance to change will still not occur. However, if these two elements are combined with a third element, namely change usefulness, resistance to change process will occur, which in this case make them important. Furthermore, they are also considered important if these two elements are combined with change usefulness and knowledge required to handle the change, since this entails that resistance to change as a whole will occur.

In line with the above established argument, is the second combination involving a negative evaluation of change usefulness and a negative evaluation of knowledge required to handle the change, since this combination result in resistance to change. As previously established (see 6.3.5 Discussing the findings), we concluded that, separately, a negative evaluation of change usefulness will result in resistance to change process, while a negative evaluation of knowledge required to handle the change will result in resistance to change as a whole. It is therefore not a surprise that when combined with each other, these elements have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

6.5 Discussion

The knowledge about the change has been found to be the most important cognitive element, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. This might be explained by considering the answers given by the respondents. We find that the respondents who experience resistance to change process, as well as to change as a whole, do not perceive themselves to have the knowledge required to handle the change process. These respondents state that they simply do not understand how to use Alias properly. Here, we argue that if the respondents do not understand how to use Alias, i.e. lack knowledge, it is most likely that they will perceive disadvantages about Alias, perceive Alias to not be useful and to be unnecessary as well. This indicates that a negative evaluation of knowledge might result in negative evaluations regarding
the remaining three elements. As a result, this might explain why knowledge is to be considered the most important element when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

However, even though knowledge is not negatively evaluated, the remaining three cognitive elements still can be. This might be explained by the negative evaluation of change usefulness, which has been found to be the second most important element when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. When considering the answers given by the respondents we find that those respondents who do not perceive the change to be useful, experience resistance to change process, i.e. Alias. Here, we argue that if the respondents perceive that Alias is not useful, it is most likely that they will perceive disadvantages about Alias and perceive Alias to be unnecessary as well. However, perceiving Alias to not be useful, does not entail that they lack knowledge about Alias. This indicates that a negative evaluation of change usefulness might result in perceived disadvantages and a negative evaluation of change necessity, but not necessarily a negative evaluation of the knowledge required to handle the change, which has been established to be the element that determines whether or not a change recipient will experience resistance to change as a whole. As a result, this explains why a change recipient can perceive disadvantages and evaluate change usefulness and change necessity negatively, while still not experience resistance to change as a whole. Since we argue that a negative evaluation of change usefulness does not result in a negative evaluation of knowledge, this might also explain why a negative evaluation of change usefulness only result in resistance to change process, but not to change as a whole. This further confirms that change usefulness is considered to be the second most important element when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change.

Advantages and disadvantages and change necessity have been found not to be important cognitive elements, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. The importance regarding advantages and disadvantages might be explained by the fact that finding disadvantages can be generally assumed to be found, regarding anyone and anything. It is therefore not surprising that all of the respondents find disadvantages regarding the change of implementing Alias, and that this cannot solely explain their experienced levels of resistance. The importance regarding change necessity might be explained by the fact that perceiving a change to be unnecessary, does not necessarily entail that the change is not useful or that the change recipient does not have the knowledge required to handle the change. Therefore, since a negative evaluation of change necessity cannot explain a change recipient’s negative evaluations of change usefulness and knowledge required to handle the change, a negative evaluation of change necessity cannot explain the experienced resistance to change. As a result, if a change recipient perceives disadvantages about the change or perceives the change to be unnecessary, we are not able to explain the probability of a positive or negative evaluation of the remaining elements.

When considering the answers given by the respondents, we find that the purpose of the change of implementing Alias is perceived similarly and that it is generally supported by the respondents. The respondents have, and have had since the beginning, a positive attitude towards the digitization of their work processes, which explains why the respondents do not experience resistance towards the change content. As a result, we are not able to investigate the role of the cognitive perception of change content, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance. However, we are able to conclude that although the change content is generally supported by the recipients, resistance may occur. This confirms that it is important to take into account both change content and change process when investigating resistance to change, which is argued by Lines (2005).
When emphasizing the change process, we find that negative evaluations of the cognitive elements are more prevalent than positive ones. Also, seven respondents out of ten experience resistance towards change process, where three out of these seven also experience resistance to change as a whole. When considering the answers given by the respondents as a whole, this result is not surprising. It is clear that the process of implementing Alias, and the technical solutions associated with Alias, have been faulty and has caused negative reactions among the respondents. Some are tired of the change since it has been going on for a long time without clear improvements. Some have just adapted to the way things are today without putting too much thought into the change. Some are clearly displeased and frustrated, even angry, because of the discomfort the change has caused the respondents in their working situation and because of the change agents’ ignorance regarding the respondents’ feedback. It is clear that these different reactions explain the different levels of experienced resistance, but it does not explain why the respondents in fact have these different reactions towards the change of implementing Alias.

Perhaps an explanation to this is the fact that different respondents are more or less involved and committed to the change, as a result of their unique personality. An example is Respondent D who clearly states that the respondent is generally not one to get involved or interfere in others business, and does therefore not consider oneself to be resistant towards the change, even though the respondent has a lot of opinions in regards to it. Perhaps this respondent’s indifference explains why the respondent is considered to evaluate all four cognitive elements negatively while still not experiencing resistance to neither change process nor change as a whole (see Table 13). Another example is Respondent H, who is constantly involved in the change process, even though it is neither expected nor required by the respondent. Naturally, this respondent will have a lot of opinions regarding the change which are representing the evaluations of the cognitive elements and in turn the experienced resistance to change. In fact, according to e.g. Ford and Ford (2010) this resistance can be described as positive resistance to change since this resistance is based on feedback given by the change recipients who are naturally interested and engaged in the change. The above mentioned examples indicate that a change recipient’s tendency to get involved in, and committed to the change, can explain a change recipient’s level of experienced resistance to change.

Another possible explanation for the respondents’ different levels of experienced resistance, can be associated with their differences which are a result of their division between the two work groups. Therefore, the respondents who belong to work group 1 are illustrated below, as well as the respondents who belong to work group 2 (see Table 19 and Table 20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational change</th>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
<th>Respondent C</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
<th>Respondent E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change process</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change content</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: The respondents belonging to work group 1.
When considering the respondents in their respective work groups, we find that the three respondents who experience resistance to the change of implementing Alias, all belong to the same work group, namely work group 2. Furthermore, all of the respondents who do not experience resistance to neither change process, change content nor change as a whole, is included in work group 1. This indicates that the experienced resistance might be a result related to their work group belonging. As previously mentioned (see 3.3.2 Selection of respondents), work group 1 and work group 2 differ in the amount of documents managed and to the extent the work tasks are performed digitally. Here, work group 2 manage large amounts of documents and have not been performing their work tasks digitally to a great extent. This might be a possible explanation for the occurrence of resistance in work group 2. When considering the answers given by the three respondents who experience resistance to change as a whole, we find that the negative evaluations of the cognitive elements in fact are related to the large amounts of documents which are to be managed digitally. Based on this finding, we conclude that the difference of resistance to change between the respondents is a result of their work group belonging. This is an interesting finding, since this entails that a change recipient’s evaluation of the cognitive elements is influenced by the change recipient’s specific working situation. More specifically, we argue that the change of implementing Alias entails a greater adjustment of the working situation regarding the respondents belonging to work group 2, than of the working situation regarding the respondents belonging to work group 1. As a result, the extent to which the change entails an adjustment of the change recipient’s working situation can explain the level of experienced resistance to change.

6.6 Theoretical contributions

In this study, resistance to change has been defined as a negative attitude where resistance is a result of the negative evaluations regarding the cognitive elements (Bouckenooghe, 2010). Our findings suggest that this statement is correct and is therefore confirmed. Attitude ambivalence is argued to be naturally occurring when evaluating one’s cognitive elements (e.g. Piderit, 2000) and have been found to occur among the change recipients in this study. This ambivalence was expected to contribute with resistance to some degree, since a negative evaluation result in resistance, but has in this study been dealt with by using this ambivalence as a way of finding patterns and explaining the elements’ prevalence. As a result, we confirm that ambivalence is naturally occurring when a change recipient evaluates the cognitive elements, but cannot confirm that this ambivalence entails a certain degree of resistance.
It is clear that it is important to acknowledge both change process and change content when investigating resistance to change, since these are two inseparable parts of organizational change (Lines, 2005). In this study, we confirm that resistance to change might occur even if the change content is generally supported, which is in line with e.g. Latta (2015). However, we are not able to confirm to which extent experienced resistance to change process or change content might explain the experienced resistance to change as a whole. This could be an interesting topic to investigate further, in order to develop an understanding of whether there is a relative importance between resistance towards change process or resistance towards change content, when assessing the resistance to change as a whole.

Our findings further suggest that different change recipients have different tendencies to get involved in and be committed to the organizational change that affects them. This relates to the argument by e.g. Ford and Ford (2010) that resistance can be regarded as positive, as opposed to negative. In this study, we argue that this resistance can be regarded as positive, which confirms this statement. However, we also argue that it is too simple and insufficient to consider resistance as either positive or negative, but rather argue that the experienced resistance is considered to be negative but that the extent to which one experience resistance can depend on the change recipient’s tendency to get involved in and be committed to the change. Therefore, our contributions to the theoretical framework include that the change recipient’s tendency to get involved in and committed to the change can explain the evaluation of the cognitive elements and therefore explain the extent to which one experiences resistance to change.

Another important contribution to the theoretical framework is the fact that the change recipients’ evaluation of the cognitive elements and experienced resistance to change can be a result of the extent to which the change recipients have to adjust their working situation. Here, we argue that a change recipient who is faced with a greater adjustment of the working situation, as a result of the change, is more likely to experience resistance, than a change recipient who do not need to adjust one’s working situation as much.

Our most important contributions regarding the understanding of resistance to organizational change is in regards of the cognitive elements and the dynamics between them, when considering the change process. Previous researchers appear to have only determined that perceived disadvantages will result in resistance to change (e.g. Bovey & Hede, 2001). Here, our findings are considered contradictory, since a negative evaluation of advantages and disadvantages has been found to not have an important role when assessing a change recipient’s resistance. Regarding the three remaining cognitive elements, i.e. change usefulness, change necessity and knowledge required to handle the change, there have been no evident previous research. Here, we argue that knowledge is the most important element when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. This entails that knowledge is the cognitive element which determines whether or not a change recipient will experience resistance to change. Regarding change usefulness, we argue that this element is the second most important element when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. This entails that change usefulness is the cognitive element which determines whether or not a change recipient will experience resistance to change process. Naturally, a combination of change usefulness and knowledge is also important when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. These findings are not surprising since the evaluation of a change to not be useful and lack of knowledge required to handle the change is expected to result in resistance. However, change necessity has, as well as advantages and disadvantages, been suggested not to be important when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change, which is in contradiction to what was expected. This finding suggest that even though
a change recipient perceives disadvantages about the change and perceives the change to be unnecessary, resistance will not occur.
7. Conclusion, managerial implications and recommendations for future research

In this chapter, we will present our conclusion and answer our research question. We will also offer our managerial implications for change agents in their attempts to successfully manage change recipients’ resistance to change. Finally, we will offer our recommendations for future researchers in their attempts to further develop an understanding of resistance to organizational change.

7.1 Conclusion

As a result of our findings, we can conclude that the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change does have an important role, when assessing their resistance to change. However, this importance varies depending on which cognitive elements that are being considered and is only applicable in regards to the change recipients’ perception of change process. More specifically, the change recipients’ negative perception of organizational change process in regards to the knowledge required to handle the change, have the most important role when assessing their resistance to change. The change recipients’ negative perception of organizational change process in regards to change usefulness, have the second most important role when assessing their resistance to change. The change recipients’ negative perception of organizational change process in regards to advantages and disadvantages, as well as change necessity, have no important role when assessing their resistance to change.

7.2 Managerial implications

In this study, we contribute with knowledge regarding the cognitive elements’ relative importance and the dynamics between them, when assessing a change recipient’s resistance to change. This knowledge has practical implications for change agents. Firstly, we find that it is important for a change agent to take into account the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change. This entails that when initiating and implementing an organizational change, it is important to take into account the human aspect rather than only the technical one. More specifically, the change agents should not only focus on planning and structuring the technical solutions associated with the organizational change, but also put their time and energy on considering the employees affected by the change, i.e. the change recipients. In this way, the change agents might better understand any resistance to change that might occur among the change recipients, and how this resistance in turn can be managed in order to achieve change success.

Our second managerial implication is in regards to the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change. Here, we find that it is important to take into account the negative evaluation of the knowledge required to handle the change as well as change usefulness. More specifically, if a change agent is to successfully manage change recipients’ resistance to change, one is to ensure that the recipients perceive themselves to have the knowledge required to handle the change, as well as perceive the change to be useful. We argue that if the change agents focus on ensuring that the change recipients have the knowledge required to handle the change, there is a great possibility that they will also find the organizational change to have advantages, to be useful as well as necessary. In order for change agents to ensure that the change recipients have the knowledge required to handle the change, they have to properly communicate the purpose of
the organizational change since this includes why the change is being initiated and implemented, as well as the expected outcomes. We also find that a continuous communication between the change agents and change recipients during the implementation of the organizational change is important to ensure that the change recipients have the knowledge required to handle the change. Furthermore, the change agents also have to communicate and perhaps also teach how the change recipients are to handle the organizational change in order to be able to perform their work tasks. In conclusion, our recommendations to the change agents include to simply have an initial presentation of the organizational change where the purpose of the change is properly emphasized to the change recipients. Furthermore, we recommend the change agents to have a two-way communication during the implementation of the organizational change, where the change agents can interact with the change recipients while the change recipients can give their feedback to or share their concerns with the change agents. Lastly, we recommend that, if needed, the change agents should organize educational and training occasions for the change recipients, where they will receive and learn the practical knowledge required to handle the organizational change.

Thirdly, and lastly, we find that it is important for the change agent to take into account that different change recipients might have different tendencies to get involved in and committed to the change. Furthermore, the change agent need to take into account the extent to which the change recipients’ working situation is adjusted as a result of the organizational change. More specifically, when assessing the change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change, the change agents need to adjust their way of managing the resistance to change depending on the change recipients’ tendencies to get involved in and committed to the change, as well as the change recipients’ adjustment of the working situation. This entails that the change agents need to tailor their way of communicating by ensuring that the change recipients who are not very involved in or committed to the organizational change have received the information about the organizational change needed in an easy and clear manner. For the change recipients who are very involved in and committed to the organizational change, the change agents need to ensure that these individuals have an easy and clear way of communicating their feedback to the change agents. Furthermore, the change agents need to tailor their educational and training occasions, depending on the extent to which the change recipients have to adjust their working situation. Here, we find that if the change recipients have to adjust their working situation to a great extent, the education and training need to be more comprehensive than for the change recipients that do not have to adjust their working situation to a great extent. In conclusion, we recommend that the change agents’ way of managing resistance to change by communication and educational and training occasions, should be tailored to the change recipients.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Our recommendations for future researchers include the cognitive elements in order to further enhance the understanding of resistance to organizational change. More specifically, since this study considers a specific organizational change context, it would be interesting to investigate the role of change recipients’ cognitive perception of organizational change in regards to other contexts. Furthermore, since the conclusions in this study only are applicable in regards to the change process, it would be interesting to conduct an investigation including resistance in regards to the change content. In this way, the relative importance between resistance towards change process or resistance towards change content, when assessing the resistance to change as a whole, can be investigated.
References


## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview guide - Change agent

**Organizational change context**

- What is [Alias]?
- What is the scale of the implementation of [Alias]?
  → Parts of the company/the entire company
- When was the change of implementing [Alias] initiated?
- When is the change of implementing [Alias] expected to be completed?
- Why was the change of implementing [Alias] initiated?
  → Renewal/problem solving

**Change process and change content**

- What has the change process been like?
  → Incremental implementation/"all at once” implementation
- What is the purpose of the change of implementing [Alias]?
- What is the end goal with the change of implementing [Alias]?

### Appendix 2: Interview guide - Change agent (Swedish)

**Förändringskontext**

- Vad är [Alias]?
- I vilken utsträckning har [Alias] implementerats?
  → Delar av företaget/hela företaget
- När initierades förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?
- När förväntas förändringsarbetet med [Alias] vara slutfört?
- Varför initierades förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?
  → Förnyelse/problemlösning

**Förändringsprocess och förändringsinnehåll**

- Hur har förändringsprocessen gått till?
  → Stegvis implementering/”allt-på-en-gång” implementering
- Vad är syftet med förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?
- Vad är slutmålet med förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?
Appendix 3: Interview guide - Change recipients

**Organizational change**

- **Organizational change context**
  - What is [Alias]?  
  - What is the purpose of initiating [Alias]?  
  - How does your working situation today differ from before [Alias] was initiated? 
    → Better/worse  
    → New/the same way of working/routines  
  - What is the scale of the implementation of [Alias]?  
    → Parts of the company/the entire company  
  - Why was the change of implementing [Alias] initiated?  
    → Renewal/problem solving

- **Change process and change content**
  - What has the change process been like?  
    → Incremental implementation/”all at once” implementation  
  - What is the end goal with the change of implementing [Alias]?  
  - How do you think that the final result of the change of implementing [Alias] will affect you?  
    → Positively/negatively

- **Reaction to the change**
  - What was your first reaction when [Alias] was going to be initiated?  
    → Positive/negative  
  - What is your personal perception about [Alias] today?  
    → Positive/negative

**Resistance to change**

- **Resistance to the change process and/or the change content**
  - Do you experience resistance to the change process of [Alias]?  
    → If yes, why?  
    → If no, why?  
  - Do you experience resistance to the change content of [Alias]?  
    → If yes, why?  
    → If no, why?  
  - Do you see yourself as a resistor to [Alias]?  

- **Resistance to change as an obstacle and/or as feedback**
  - Do you have any suggestions to how the change of implementing [Alias] could have been accomplished in a better way?  
    → If yes, can you give any examples?  
  - Have you been given the opportunity to share your suggestions/complaints with the change agents?  
    → If yes, did you get any attention from the change agents?
The change recipient’s cognitive perception of organizational change

- **Advantages and disadvantages**
  - Has [Alias] facilitated your working situation?
    → If yes, in what way?
    → If no, why not?
  - Has [Alias] complicated your working situation?
    → If yes, in what way?
    → If no, why not?
  - What (personal) advantages do you find with [Alias]?
    → Favorable/benefit/gain
  - What (personal) disadvantages do you find with [Alias]?
    → Unfavorable/harmful/loss

- **Usefulness**
  - In what way do you use [Alias] in your work?
    → Some/all/no work tasks
  - How often do you use [Alias] in your work?
    → Daily/sometimes/never
  - In what way does [Alias] help you to accomplish your work tasks and reach your goals?
    → Useful/not useful
  - Does [Alias] have any practical advantage for you?
    → Useful/not useful

- **Necessity**
  - Do you think it was essential for you individually to implement [Alias]?
    → If yes, why?
    → If no, why not?
  - How necessary was it for you individually to change IT-systems?
    → Necessary/unnecessary
  - Is [Alias] necessary for you in order to be able to accomplish your work tasks and reach your goals?
    → If yes, in what way?
    → If no, why not?

- **Knowledge about the change**
  - How were you prepared for the change?
    → Information/education/training
  - How would you like to have been prepared for the change?
    → Information/education/training
  - Do you consider yourself to have enough knowledge about [Alias] to be able to manage it in your work?
    → If yes, how did you get this knowledge?
    → If no, why not and what is missing?
  - Do you have previous experiences with organizational changes?
    → If yes, has this experience affected your attitude towards [Alias]?
Organisationsförändring

- **Förändringskontext**
  - Vad är [Alias]?  
  - Vad är syftet med förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?  
  - Hur skiljer sig ditt arbete idag gentemot hur det var innan [Alias] initierades?  
    → Bättre/sämre  
    → Nya/samma arbetssätt/rutiner  
  - I vilken utsträckning har [Alias] implementerats?  
    → Delar av företaget/hela företaget  
  - Varför initierades förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?  
    → Förnyelse/problemlösning

- **Förändringsprocess och förändringsinnehåll**
  - Hur har förändringsprocessen gått till?  
    → Stegvis implementering/”allt-på-en-gång” implementering  
  - Vad är slutmålet med förändringsarbetet med [Alias]?  
  - Hur tror du att slutresultatet med förändringsarbetet med [Alias] kommer att påverka dig?  
    → Positiv/negativt

- **Reaktion till förändringen**
  - Vad har din första reaktion när du fick reda på att [Alias] skulle införas?  
    → Positiv/negativ  
  - Vad är din personliga uppfattning om [Alias] idag?  
    → Positiv/negativ

Motstånd till förändring

- **Motstånd till förändringsprocessen och/eller förändringsinnehållet**
  - Upplever du att du känner ett motstånd till förändringsprocessen med [Alias]?  
    → Om ja, varför?  
    → Om nej, varför?  
  - Upplever du att du känner ett motstånd till förändringsinnehållet med [Alias]?  
    → Om ja, varför?  
    → Om nej, varför?  
  - Ser du dig själv som en motståndare till [Alias]?

- **Motstånd till förändring som ett hinder och/eller feedback**
  - Har du förslag på hur förändringsarbetet med [Alias] hade kunnat genomföras på ett bättre sätt?  
    → Om ja, kan du ge några exempel?  
  - Har du fått möjlighet till att dela med dig av dina förslag/klagomål till förändringsledarna?  
    → Om ja, har du fått gehör från förändringsledarna?  
    → Om nej, varför inte?
En förändringsmottagares kognitiva uppfattning av organisationsförändring

- **Fördelar och nackdelar**
  - Har [Alias] underlättat ditt arbete?
    → Om ja, på vilket sätt?
    → Om nej, varför inte?
  - Har [Alias] försvårat ditt arbete?
    → Om ja, på vilket sätt?
    → Om nej, varför inte?
  - Vad ser du för (personliga) fördelar med [Alias]?
    → Gynnsam/förmån/vinning
  - Vad ser du för (personliga) nackdelar med [Alias]?
    → Skadlig/missgynnsam/förlust

- **Användbarhet**
  - Hur använder du [Alias] i ditt arbete?
    → Några/alla/inga arbetsuppgifter
  - Hur ofta använder du [Alias] i ditt arbete?
    → Dagligen/ibland/aldrig
  - Hur hjälper [Alias] dig att genomföra dina arbetsuppgifter och uppnå dina mål?
    → Användbart/ej användbart
  - Har [Alias] en praktisk funktion för dig?
    → Användbart/ej användbart

- **Nödvändighet**
  - Tycker du att det var behövligt för dig individuellt att implementera [Alias]?
    → Om ja, varför?
    → Om nej, varför inte?
  - Hur nödvändigt var det för dig individuellt att byta IT-system?
    → Nödvändigt/ej nödvändigt
  - Är [Alias] nödvändigt för dig att genomföra dina arbetsuppgifter och uppnå dina mål?
    → Om ja, på vilket sätt?
    → Om nej, varför inte?

- **Kunskap om förändringen**
  - Hur förbereddes du på förändringen?
    → Information/utbildning/träning
  - Hur skulle du vilja att du förbereddes inför förändringen?
    → Information/utbildning/träning
  - Anser du att du har tillräckligt med kunskap om [Alias] för att kunna hantera det i ditt arbete?
    → Om ja, hur har du fått denna kunskap?
    → Om nej, varför inte och vad saknas?
  - Har du några tidigare erfarenheter av organisationsförändringar?
    → Om ja, har denna erfarenhet haft betydelse för din inställning till [Alias]?