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On the Pursuit of Change: The Role of Middle Managers in Promoting Organizational Entrepreneurship

An empirical study exploring middle management's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship with a change program

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Abstract

Background: In today's dynamic market environment, change and entrepreneurship are considered important for organizations to keep gaining a competitive advantage. Previous literature on change management primarily focuses on the importance of top management and employees during change, while underexposing the potential key role of middle managers in driving and implementing change. Furthermore, the literature has yet to reach any consensus about the middle manager's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the literature by exploring the role of middle managers in promoting entrepreneurship during a change process.

Method: This research is conducted through a qualitative single case study, using mainly in-depth interviews for primary data collection.

Findings: The findings show the activities of middle managers during change aimed at promoting entrepreneurship. The activities indicate that middle managers act as change intermediaries, sense-makers, expectation managers, and take up additional roles to promote entrepreneurial activities among organizational members. In addition, the findings show that middle managers can act as secret change agents to promote entrepreneurship and drive change.

Conclusion: The empirical evidence suggests that middle managers might have a key role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship during the implementation-phase of a strategic change.

Key terms: Change process, Entrepreneurship, Middle management, Organizational development

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List of abbreviations

TM	Top Management
CMT	Country Management Team
MM	Middle Management
OL	Operational Level
MWB	Must-win Battle
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The contemporary business environment is becoming increasingly dynamic and competitive, and organizations need to adequately respond and adapt to it in order to survive and be successful (Stouten, Rousseau & de Cremer, 2018). Adaptation can be related to organizational change, which is considered a chaotic and fearful process (Heckmann, Steger & Dowling, 2016), but according to Peterson (2018), this is where growth takes place. Therefore, organizational change is considered an important feature of an organization's operational and strategic level in order to increase the likelihood of gaining a competitive advantage (Anyieni, Ondari, Mayianda & Damaris, 2016; Balogun, Hope Hailey & Gustafsson, 2015).

To increase the likelihood of a successful change program, an organization's top management (TM) team, traditionally considered change leadership, appoints internal and/or external change agents to manage the process (Cummings & Worley, 2008; Rosenbaum, More & Steane, 2018). Change management is tasked with preparing, initiating, implementing, institutionalizing, and helping individuals, groups, and organizations with planned organizational change (Cummings & Worley, 2008; Hoch, 2012). Earlier literature points towards change agents as key to drive change throughout the organization, and change recipients, the targets of change, as important for its success (Chebbi Yahiaoui, Sellami, Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2019; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Sirkin, Keenan & Jackson, 2014). In particular the roles of TM and employees are highlighted as pivotal, due to their function as initiators, receivers, supporters, enablers and/or resisters to change (Chebbi et al., 2019; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017). However, large organizations have an additional management level, called middle management (MM), who, according to Buick, Blackman, and Johnson (2018) potentially play a pivotal role in the outcomes of change programs. Earlier literature places little emphasis on the role of MM during a change process and how they affect its outcome (Buick et al., 2018) by influencing organizational members (van der Voet, Kuipers & Groeneveld, 2016). According to Balogun (2003), MM is theorized to be situated between the strategic and operational levels (OL), taking an intermediary function as both change

agent and recipient. According to Gutberg and Berta (2017) MM could thereby potentially function as information and communication gatekeepers from top-down to bottom-up, translating strategies and messages from TM to the OL. By translating, Balogun (2006) proposes that MMs make sense of the change, thereby reducing uncertainty and stress in change recipient, assuming a sense-maker role (Buick et al., 2018; Vos & Rupert, 2018). Guiette and Vandembemt (2017) further argue that MMs communicate bottom-up as well, making sense of ideas and feedback from the OL (Platzek et al., 2014). Pereira, Chiappetta Jabbour, Finne, Borchardt and Santos (2020) additionally propose MM to assume a brokering role to ensure commitment to a change program. The brokering role entails MM to broker TM and employee expectations and change program benefits and consequences between the OL and TM. This could support the notion of their pivotal role during a change process (van der Voet et al., 2016) by potentially driving a proposed change through an organization (Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019). However, within change management literature, there seems to be a lack of consensus regarding MM's roles in driving and implementing a change.

Besides change agents and its recipients, other researchers (Dey, 2017; Kuratko, Hornsby & Hayton, 2015) point towards entrepreneurship on both an individual and organizational level, to drive and institutionalize a successful change program. Earlier literature (Ireland, Covin & Kuratko, 2009; Kuratko, Hornsby & Hayton, 2015) identifies entrepreneurship as a way for organizations to adapt to market shifts, as it allows for a continuous renewal of the organization's structure, culture and processes. Entrepreneurship and its activities are commonly linked to the development of innovations, business expansions, entry into new markets, and wealth creation (Ahmetoglu, Tsivrikos & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018; Mahringer & Renzl, 2018; Sarasvathy, 2003), and could gain an organization a competitive advantage (Ireland, Hitt and Sirmon, 2003). Organizational members (TM, MM and OL-employees) are suggested to exhibit entrepreneurial traits (proactiveness, autonomy, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness and innovativeness) in order to continuously drive change and create a change-ready organization (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Ireland, Covin & Kuratko, 2009; McKenney et al., 2018).

Both change management and entrepreneurship are suggested by literature to contribute to an organization's survivability and gaining a competitive advantage (Cummings & Worley, 2008; Ireland et al., 2009; Kotter, 2005). As such, traditional organizations are recommended to promote

organizational entrepreneurship (Guggenberger & Simon, 2019; Hillenbrand, Kiewell, Miller-Cheevers, Ostojic & Springer, 2019). Earlier research suggests that entrepreneurship and its underlying traits can be nurtured among organizational members (Sarasvathy, 2004). Therefore, organizational entrepreneurship could be promoted through a change program focused on providing organizational members the freedom to exhibit entrepreneurial traits and undertake entrepreneurial activities (Chebbi et al., 2019; McKenny, Short, Ketchen Jr., Payne & Moss, 2018). In order to promote these activities among organizational members, literature emphasizes the pivotal role of TM (Glaser, Fourné & Elfring, 2015). However, as with driving change, MM could also play a potential key role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship, as they are suggested to interact more closely with organizational members on all organizational levels (Balogun, 2003; 2006; Wu, Ma & Wang, 2018). Platzek, Pretorius and Winzker (2014) theorize for managers to assume entrepreneurial roles to promote organizational entrepreneurship, such as an idea, knowledge, and innovation manager, who could guide ideas and knowledge bottom-up. This would allow managers to assume an entrepreneurial role model function, thereby potentially promoting entrepreneurship (Platzek et al., 2014; Teece, 2016). However, literature about MM's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship is largely theorized with only a few empirical suggestions and as such underexposed and superficially explored (Chen, Chang & Chang, 2015).

The motivation of this thesis stems from the authors having noticed that earlier literature predominantly covers the pivotal role of TM and employees during a change process and the promotion of organizational entrepreneurship and its underlying traits and activities. Therefore, the authors identify a *theoretical problem* related to a lack of deeper understanding of MM's role during a change process (Buick et al., 2018) and the promotion of organizational entrepreneurship (Chebbi et al., 2019). Specifically, there seems to be a lack of deeper understanding and consensus regarding the role of MM in promoting organizational entrepreneurship with a change program (Buick et al., 2018; Chebbi et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2015; Platzek, Pretorius & Winzker, 2014; Wu et al., 2018). In addition, the authors identify a *practical problem* related to the role of MM during a change process. A deeper understanding of MM's role in change processes and promoting organizational entrepreneurship could allow change leadership to be aware of a more holistic picture when designing and implementing organizational change. Furthermore, it could also

increase the capacity of internal change management by using MM's as active and willing change agents.

1.2 Research question and purpose statement

This thesis responds to the aforementioned literature gaps regarding the roles of MM during change and in promoting entrepreneurship. Therefore, the thesis aims at exploring the role of MM in promoting organizational entrepreneurship, and thereby responding to the literature gap regarding MM's role during change processes. This is done by conducting an exploratory case-study at an anonymous, Dutch organization where MM is represented as individuals in a management function, reporting to TM and not part of the OL. This organization has initiated and is currently in the implementation-phase of an organization-wide change process aimed at promoting organizational entrepreneurship. For this reason, this thesis aims at answering the following research question:

“What is middle management’s role in promoting entrepreneurship during a change process towards organizational entrepreneurship?”

In addition, this thesis aims to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the disciplines of change management and corporate entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the authors hope to inspire others and instill an interest for future research in this area. From a *theoretical* perspective this thesis enriches the literature of change management by incorporating entrepreneurship. It provides change management with empirical data and a deeper understanding about MM's roles functioning during a change process, and their influence in promoting institutionalizing entrepreneurship within an organization. From a *managerial* perspective, this thesis provides insights about the role and activities of MM in promoting entrepreneurship, and during a change process. This could guide and provide valuable insights to practicing managers who want to promote entrepreneurship into their organization, to pay increased attention to the role of MM.

1.3 Research limitations

The academic fields of change management and entrepreneurship are broad and complex and not every aspect might be taken into account. Furthermore, the role of MMs within both fields is

primarily suggestive and diverse in nature, therefore not all the suggested roles might have been taken into account during this thesis. This could potentially lead to a less holistic view of MM's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship. Moreover, this thesis is limited in scope to a single case-study in one specific country, industry, and organization, whereas MMs activities and roles could vary across countries, industries, and organizations. Furthermore, due to the limited timeframe of ten weeks, the authors conducted eleven interviews with TMs, MMs and one operational level employee. Increases in both the quantity of interviews, and the diversity with regards to interviewee functions, would have been feasible to provide a more holistic picture of MM's role. As such, the thesis' findings are limited in diversity and any conclusions drawn from it cannot be generalized and should therefore be applied with care.

In addition, this thesis analyzed the role of MM during an ongoing change process of about one year, while the thesis itself was limited in time to ten weeks, therefore any inferences cannot be made from the collected data to its actual outcome(s). Due to the time-limit, the authors could not observe and follow-up on the process outcomes and any long-term effects of MMs activities towards entrepreneurial behavior. As such, the authors made the conscious decision to limit the scope of the study and chose to analyze the organization's soft-side by gathering qualitative data from MMs during the implementation-phase. Gathering qualitative data meant not finding statistical evidence of MMs influence in promoting entrepreneurial behavior. In addition, an open approach to data gathering could have potentially resulted in the occurrence of biases of both researcher and participant. Furthermore, this focused perspective did not allow for authors to analyze other organizational aspects which could have affected the change process as well, such as its structure, hierarchical setup, international orientation and market orientation.

1.4 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter one has introduced and presented the topic, problem formulation, research question and research limitations. Chapter two will provide the current academic knowledge about change management, the suggestive and theorized roles of MMs and potential activities related to these, and how they promote entrepreneurship. The chapter concludes with the authors own reflections upon the literature. Chapter three presents the methodology and research design in order to answer the research question. It will cover areas such as data collection

method, data analysis and the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. Chapter four presents the findings from the interviews with TM and MM and will connect these to the relevant literature. Chapter five will connect the findings to the relevant literature and provide a discussion where the findings are interpreted in light of the relevant literature, and in which new insights emerge. The thesis finishes with a conclusion, limitations and recommendation for future research in chapter six.

2. Literature review

As this thesis is researching the role of MM in promoting organizational entrepreneurship with a change program, the literature review will elaborate on MM's roles, activities, and influential factors affecting these. As a general introduction, the chapter first provides background information on change management and the drivers of change, putting emphasis on MM and entrepreneurship. This is followed by an introduction of previous literature suggesting and theorizing about MM's role in promoting entrepreneurship and during a change process. The review then moves on to discuss potential activities, which could be indicative of the suggested MM roles. To better understand the suggested MM roles and activities, various factors influencing their organizational position will be introduced next. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

2.1 Change management

Every organism on our planet is constantly evolving and adapting to its environment, learning to survive, and social constructions like organizations, cannot escape this cycle of change (Cummings & Worley, 2008). For organizations to thrive and survive in today's dynamic business environment, organizational change, and the management thereof (Kotter 1995) is considered important. Literature on change differentiates between various types of change, but many include activities and events disrupting the status-quo to gain the organization a competitive advantage and argue for the need of change management (By, 2005; Cummings & Worley, 2008). Cummings and Worley (2008) argue for continuous change when organizations are situated in a turbulent market. As such, Moran and Brightman (2001, p. 111) describe change management as the "process of continually renewing an organization's direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers". Organizations able to continuously change are often called "learning organizations", which refers to the internal learning processes to acquire and develop knowledge (Pu & Soh, 2017). Earlier literature associates learning with entrepreneurship and organizational performance (Weinberger, Wach, Stephan & Wegge, 2018; Ireland, Hitt, Camp & Sexton, 2001), because learning entails continuous renewal of an organization's assets (Kuratko et al., 2015) and the implementation of strategy (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). As such, Dey (2017) views entrepreneurship as a driver of change, and Tamayo-Torres,

Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, Llorens-Montes and Martínez-López (2016) argue for the creation of an entrepreneurial culture to further drive change throughout an organization. According to Winter (2003) and Wang and Wang (2017) change leadership and agents should possess dynamic capabilities in order to embed learning into routines and successfully drive and implement change, which then creates a natural response of organizations to internal and external conditions.

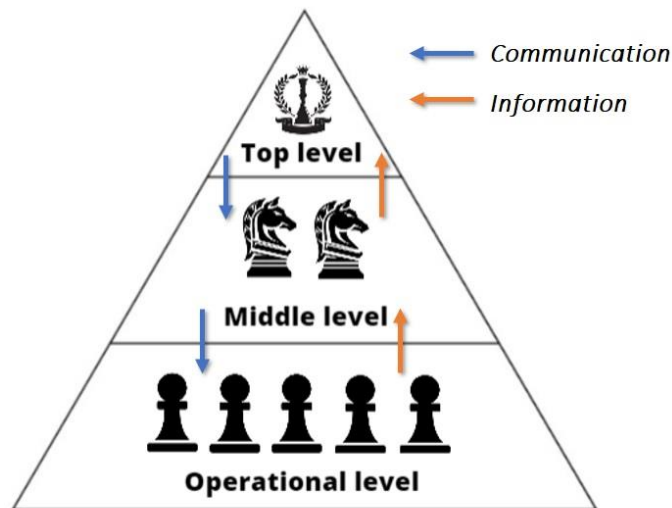


Figure 1: Three organizational levels: top level consistent of TM, middle level consistent of MM, and the operational level, consistent of operational employees (own illustration).

The organization can be depicted as a pyramid structure with a top level consistent of TM, middle level of MM and OL of operational employees (Figure 1). As such, change on the strategic level is suggested to impact the internal power distribution (Yukl, 2013) and the organizational and hierarchical levels from top to bottom and up (Bankins, Denness, Kriz & Molloy, 2016; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017). Change impacts an organization's structural, cultural and process levels, and involves all organizational members from TM, to MM, to the OL (Anyieni et al., 2016; Stouten et al., 2018). Therefore, change management could be seen as largely focusing on the human-aspect, the people who are impacted by the change (Change recipients; William, 2016). Change management models on how to successfully drive change throughout an organization are commonly focused on TM support and employee engagement, commitment, and communication as important enablers (Stouten et al., 2018; William, 2016). Those researchers suggests that organizational members are the drivers of change (Stouten et al., 2018), and that possibly their entrepreneurial behavior and the culture in which they operate could be of key influence to promote

entrepreneurship (McKenny et al., 2018; Platzek et al., 2014; Straatmann, Rothenhöfer, Meier & Mueller, 2017; Tamayo-Torres et al., 2016; Teece, 2016).

2.1.1 Organizational members

Top management and Operational employees

According to Chebbi et al. (2019) change management has three interdependent facets: why, what and how of change. In earlier literature, change is traditionally viewed as being initiated, planned and driven by the TM team, assuming the role of change agents, as it will impact the lower levels of the pyramid (Balogun et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; William, 2016). As change agents, TM is suggested to link the content of change to an organization's strategy, culture and/or structure (Why, Oreg, Bartunek, Lee & Do, 2018). Then the context (What), in which operational members operate, has to change (Appelbaum, Cameron, Ensink, Hazarika, Attir, Ezzedine & Shekhar, 2017), which is followed by identifying the processes on how to change, how to overcome barriers and increase change acceptance (Dumas & Beneicke, 2017). In addition, earlier literature (Buick et al., 2018; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; Page & Schoder, 2019) extensively and thoroughly reports an increased success of change programs when TM supports the change process, effectively driving change top-down throughout the organization. However, Jarrel (2017) as well as Meaney and Pung (2008) record that over half of all change programs end up in failure. Therefore, to successfully drive and implement change, earlier research has extensively suggested that a top-down drive of change might no longer be applicable (Lawrence, 2015; Tkaczyk, 2015), and that an institutional logic, as proposed by Kanter (2012) might be more beneficial to drive change (Kanter, 2015). This logic argues for the involvement of, and value creation for, all stakeholders to institutionalize change (Arnold, 2010; Chebbi et al., 2019; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017), without explicitly mentioning the theorized importance of MM. Therefore, earlier literature extensively argues for the involvement and participation of OL-employees during a change process, as this is viewed to increase commitment, willingness and readiness to change (Armenakis, Harris & Feild, 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; Knight, Patterson & Dawson, 2017; Hoch, 2012). However, some researchers (Buick et al., 2018; Chen, Chen & Chang, 2015; Gutberg & Berta, 2017; Tabrizi, 2014) mention a missing link to convey the change message from TM to OL, and propose and theorize the importance of MM as a key strategic linkpin for successful change. Academia therefore

recommends TM to empower, support and involve change recipients of the middle level by providing them resources and creating a psychologically safe environment, which would then allow them to motivate and involve the operational levels (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Buick et al., 2018; Ortega, van den Bossche, Sánchezd-Manzanares, Rico, & Gil, 2013; Urban & Wood, 2015; William, 2016).

Middle management

Literature is in consensus about MMs central position within an organization, placing them between the top and operational layers, as depicted in figure 1 (Yukl, 2013). Within an organization, MM's function is to interpret and implement policies and programs from senior management (Yukl, 2013) to the OL and their teams (Balogun, 2003) and are considered to be more closely connected to the operational employees (Bower & Gilbert, 2007; Buick et al., 2018). In Gutberg and Berta's (2017) review of the literature, MMs can assume various positions within an organization, such as product managers, project managers or human resources managers. In this thesis, MMs are assumed to be individuals taking up a managerial position below senior management and are not part of the OL. According to Yukl (2013), earlier literature about change management suggests that a successful change implementation is supported and carried by many MMs. However, the literature primarily suggests and found some support for the participation and roles of MM in driving and potentially leading change (Buick et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2015; Gutberg & Berta, 2017; Tabrizi, 2014).

Change-related capabilities

In order to drive change further and potentially promote entrepreneurship (Teece, 2016), Wang and Wang (2017) argue for organizational members to exhibit change-related capabilities. They distinguish between two approaches to strategic change: i) ad hoc problem-solving and ii) dynamic capabilities. Ad hoc problem-solving is described as unstructured and is thought to draw upon existing capabilities, such as individual (entrepreneurial) traits (Fugate, Prussia & Kinicki, 2012; McKenny et al., 2018) to handle change (Winter, 2003). In contrast, dynamic capabilities have been suggested to enable an organization to recognize the need for changes and adapt and reconfigure its resource-base (Krzakiewicz, 2013; Schweiger, Kump & Hoormann, 2016).

Therefore, Sun and Andersson (2008) propose that dynamic capabilities facilitate the speed of change due to their absorptive nature. This absorptive nature is argued to allow an organization to recognize, assimilate and apply external knowledge for strategic change (Yi, He, Ndofor & Wei, 2015), and might stimulate an organization's self-renewal and entering new markets (Jiménez-Barrionuevo, Molina & García-Morales, 2019). Jiménez-Barrionuevo et al. (2019) further highlight the importance of entrepreneurial employees who, according to other studies, are able to develop these capabilities, which could help to drive change (Dey, 2017; Schweiger et al., 2016) and promote organizational entrepreneurship (Teece, 2016).

2.1.2 Entrepreneurial members

Sartori, Costantini, Ceschi and Tommasi (2018) indicate that change could be managed by education, training and innovativeness, as personal improvement leads to new ideas, which are commonly generated by organizational members and might be a suitable response to changes according to Gibbs (2007). The generation of new ideas is commonly associated with entrepreneurship (Weinberger et al., 2018), which is suggested by Dey (2017) to be an important driver of continuous change. Dey (2017) further suggests that (the pursuit of) entrepreneurship on both the organizational (Kuratko et al., 2015) and individual level, (Lukeš, 2012) might be important. According to a description provided by Ireland et al. (2009, p.21), organizational entrepreneurship can be seen as “*vision-directed, organization-wide reliance on entrepreneurial behavior that purposefully and continuously rejuvenates the organization and shapes the scope of its operations through the recognition and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunity*”. Therefore, previous researchers theoretically link organizational entrepreneurship to the individual level of an organization (Sarasvathy, 2004), suggesting the importance of entrepreneurial organizational members (TM, MM and OL-employees). In addition, entrepreneurial activities have been positively linked to profitability (Mahringer & Renzl, 2018), innovativeness (Dey, 2017), competitive advantages (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) and survivability (Ahmetoglu, Tsivrikos & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018), effectively fine-tuning organizations to their environment. For this reason, Dey (2017) and Kuratko et al. (2015) reviewed change and corporate entrepreneurship literature and theorized that entrepreneurship might be an important driver and enabler of continuous change throughout an organization. More recently, Chebbi et al. (2019) highlight the necessity and relevance for organizations to plan and deploy change programs aimed at

institutionalizing entrepreneurship and promoting entrepreneurial activities (Dey, 2017). Recent literature about MMs influence in implementing innovative activities and outcomes, which is connected to idea generation (El Haiba, Elbassiti & Ajhoun, 2017), indirectly suggest that they could potentially affect the implementation of organizational entrepreneurship (Schubert & Tavassoli, 2020). Earlier research theorizes and suggests that in order to promote entrepreneurial activities and creativity among organizational members, leadership and change agents ought to exhibit entrepreneurial behavior themselves (Cai, Lysova, Khapova & Bossink, 2018).

As aforementioned, earlier studies often theorize about MM's role in driving a successful change process in general. Furthermore, literature primarily theorizes, indirectly links, and largely underexposes their role in successfully driving a change process aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among organizational members (Chen et al., 2015). To get a more differentiated view of MMs and how they affect an organization, the next section will introduce primarily theoretical suggestions and some empirical support concerning the role of MM during a strategic change process, in successfully implementing a change, and in promoting entrepreneurial behavior.

Entrepreneurial traits:

Teece (2016) argues that managers should possess sensitive people-skills and be creative and entrepreneurial themselves in order for them to promote organizational entrepreneurship, suggesting the need for entrepreneurial management and leadership.

An individual's personality traits have been discussed in literature as indicative of one's attitude, cognition, preference and self-efficacy towards both change (Fugate et al., 2012) and entrepreneurship (Schinduette et al., 2019). According to the notion of Fugate et al. (2012), individuals exhibiting flexibility, optimism and adaptability are positively oriented towards change and could therefore be considered change ready (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Both older and recent studies (e.g. Miller, 1983; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Mckenny et al., 2018; Schinduette et al., 2019) have indicated that central to the facilitation and promotion of organizational entrepreneurship is the entrepreneurial orientation of managers which affects whether an individual, a group or an organization is able to exhibit entrepreneurship (Chen et al., 2015). These individual traits have

been suggested as an antecedent of entrepreneurial activities and might be important for managers trying to instill entrepreneurship among its members. In addition, previous research has suggested that they are positively linked to business performance, value creation (McKenny et al., 2018; Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin & Frese, 2009) and in driving change (Dey, 2017). Entrepreneurial orientation consists of five traits, which varies in levels, and do not have to be exhibited concurrently to be thought of as entrepreneurial (Linton, 2019; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Miller, 1983):

1. *Innovativeness* portrays a propensity to engage in new ideas, experimentation, and creative processes (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). It also refers to an individual's creativity, which is central to innovativeness (McKenney et al., 2018).
2. *Risk-taking* refers to “*bold action in the face of uncertainty*” (McKenny et al., 2018, p. 510) and business ventures with uncertain outcomes (Parrish, 2008). It is commonly associated with the unknown, success, loss, and calculated risks (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2012).
3. *Proactiveness* refers to the tendency to anticipate future changes and undertake appropriate activities to capitalize on the opportunity or mitigate the risk (McKenny et al., 2018). It implies that the organization adopts an opportunity-seeking behavior, thereby “*beating competitors to the punch*” (Miller, 1983, p. 771).
4. *Competitive aggressiveness* refers to an organization’s confrontational posture towards competitors as either attackers or defenders and could be accomplished by setting ambitious goals (McKenny et al., 2018).
5. *Autonomy* refers to the freedom and independent action of an individual (or group) in developing and implementing an idea (Wales, Gupta & Mousa, 2011). It refers to the ability and mindset of individuals to be self-directed in the pursuit of opportunities (McKenny et al., 2018).

2.2 Literature on the roles of middle managers during change and entrepreneurship

Over the years, change management literature has extensively and thoroughly researched best-practices and guiding principles on how to increase a change program’s successful institutionalization. Change researchers have developed models to help organizations successfully strategize, implement and institutionalize organizational change. The two most commonly

described models are Lewin's three step model, unfreeze-change-refreeze, from 1947, and Kotter's eight step model from 1995 (Odor, 2018). More recently Dalmua and Tideman (2018) argue for "five core processes of leading complex change" (p. 14). These previous studies primarily focus on and highlight the vital role of TM and the importance of employee involvement and participation (Armenakis et al., 2000; Dalmau & Tideman, 2018; Kotter, 1995; Vos & Rupert, 2018; William, 2016). However, the studies do not explicitly mention the potential key role MM could play in driving and institutionalizing change (Buick et al., 2018; Tabrizi, 2014). A few scholars (Balogun, 2003; 2006; Buick et al., 2018; Gutberg & Berta, 2017; Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019; Pereira et al., 2020) have researched and suggested potential roles and contributions of MM in successfully driving and implementing a change. This indicates a lack of literature on the roles of MM in institutionalizing a change program. The recent theoretical study by Stouten et al. (2018) argues for managerial involvement in initiating, executing, leading and institutionalizing change (Heyden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman & Ansari, 2017). Both studies, however, do not explicitly mention MM and how they could potentially play a role in this process. Moreover, the change management models and Stouten et al.'s (2018) review do not mention entrepreneurship as a possible determinant for successful change implementation, even though entrepreneurship literature strongly argues for its importance in organizational renewal (Ahmetoglu et al., 2018; Ireland et al., 2009; Kuratko et al., 2015; Mahringer & Renzl, 2018) and its traits to drive change (Ireland et al., 2009; McKenney et al, 2018). The combination of literature on change management and entrepreneurship is underexplored and only superficially explores the potential key role of MM in promoting organizational entrepreneurship and as change drivers (Chen et al., 2015; Lassen, Waehrens & Boer, 2009; Wu et al., 2018). As such, section 2.2 will highlight the most commonly suggested roles of MM during a change process and in promoting organizational entrepreneurship.

2.2.1 Intermediaries

Balogun (2003) builds on previous research and suggests MM to take an intermediary, central position within an organization, and proposes that they might be important for driving change both top-down and bottom-up, encouraging internal commitment and change-supportive behavior (Buick et al., 2018; Yukl, 2013). The notion of MM as change intermediaries is agreed upon by various researchers who extended this role (Bankins et al., 2016; Buick et al., 2018; Cao, Bunger,

Hoffman & CheRobertson, 2016; Gutberg & Berta, 2017; Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019). MM is proposed by Gutberg and Berta (2017) to act as information and communication gatekeepers from TM to the OL, and vice versa (Figure 1). Gutberg and Berta (2017) argue that MM has access to internal knowledge from TM and the OL, as such their intermediary role could allow them to act as both change recipient and change agent. This is agreed upon by other researchers who propose MM to function as a bridge and mediator between the operational and strategic levels of an organization (Balogun, 2006; Buick et al., 2018; Lassen et al., 2009; Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019). MM is suggested to receive the change message from change leadership, which includes the necessity, benefits and implications of the change (change recipient function), and communicates this to the OL (change agent function), thereby driving the change throughout the organization (Balogun, 2003; 2006; Bankins et al., 2016; Gutberg & Berta, 2017). In addition, Cao et al. (2016) as well as Gutberg and Berta (2017) found that MM could also receive feedback, information and knowledge from the OL regarding implementation issues, solutions and ideas, which they then communicate to TM (Buick et al., 2018). MM acts as a communication, knowledge and idea filter, or gatekeeper to TM and the OL (Buick et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2015; Gutberg & Berta, 2017; Wu et al., 2018), allowing them to create sustainable changes and behavioral adaptations (Wiedner, Barrett & Oborn, 2017), establishing a continuous feedback loop.

In this regard, MM is implicitly suggested to play a role in addressing organizational members' readiness to change (Armenakis et al., 2000) by making sense of the change (Balogun, 2003) and broker expectations (Pereira et al., 2020) via communicating TM's change message and vision (Chen et al., 2015; Gutberg & Berta, 2017; Wu et al., 2018). TM is therefore recommended by Armenakis et al. (2000) to positively frame and communicate the change message top-down in order to create commitment and readiness to change among organizational members. Moreover, MM is suggested to be closer to the OL (Bower & Gilbert, 2007), compared to TM, and might therefore be closer to implementation issues, solutions, and employee feedback (Buick et al., 2018). In this regard, Cummings and Worley (2008) suggest that MM might therefore be better equipped to assess and evaluate the implementation and institutionalization of change, over time. Heyden, Sidhu and Volberda (2015) argue MM might therefore be better equipped to generate change support.

2.2.2 Sense-makers

As strategic change is a cyclical, chaotic phenomenon, altering daily work routines of organizational members, it might induce fear, uncertainty, and stress in its recipients (Heckmann et al., 2016; Sætren & Laumann, 2017). Organizational members might try to make sense of the change by interacting with peers and supervisors, and a key role could be reserved for MM as sense-makers, which could reduce resistance to change (Balogun, 2006; Buick et al., 2018; Vos & Rupert, 2018). MM is not only suggested to act as sense-makers of change to the OL but are also ascribed in theory with this function towards TM, due to their central organizational position (Guiette & vandenbempt, 2017; Pereira et al., 2020). In contrast to the traditional belief that it is TM who assume the influential roles in an organization, other studies (Balogun, 2003; 2006; Bankins et al., 2016; Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019) highlight MM's potential influence in assuming key roles during change. Nizam and Mohd Nazari (2019) found support that MM has micropolitical power to shape and manipulate the meaning of change, suggesting this could either diverge to or converge from TM's perception (Balogun, 2006). Bankins et al. (2016) further proposes that MM, in this way, could either potentially help overcome change-related implementation barriers, or be the resisters of change themselves (Campbell, Carmichael & Naidoo, 2015; Vos & Rupert, 2018). These findings point towards the potential importance of MM and their pivotal role in positively or negatively influencing organizational members' view on change, and thereby affecting a change program's outcome (Erkama, 2010).

2.2.3 Brokers

In their recent study on the role of MM, Pereira et al. (2020) found empirical support that MMs drive and generate commitment to organizational change by engaging TMs and the OL as well as broker expectations between both levels regarding the change program's content and benefits (Buick et al., 2018). In addition, the brokering role entails interpreting TM communication regarding the intent of change and translating it to the OL to provide role clarity, address resistance and implement change (Buick et al., 2018). Furthermore, MM can provide OL-feedback to TM regarding possible implementation problems (Wiedner et al., 2017), solutions (Buick et al., 2018) and ideas (Platzek et al., 2014). Open and honest communication about the program's content and implications, as well as knowledge and ideas originating from both levels, could align change recipients' view of the change (Pereira et al., 2020), potentially creating commitment and readiness

to the proposed change (Armenakis et al., 2000; Buick et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2016). Chebbi et al. (2019) found support that management ensures commitment and readiness to change by using reward systems possibly conveying the expectations of TMs by rewarding the desired behavior (Cerasoli, Nicklin & Ford, 2014).

2.2.4 Promoting entrepreneurship

As aforementioned, entrepreneurship could be a potential driver of change (Dey, 2017), as such it could be of interest to organizations to promote organizational entrepreneurship (Chebbi et al., 2019; Hillenbrand et al., 2019). Previous research found evidence about the importance of TM, and some empirical suggestions about MM in driving and promoting entrepreneurial change (Chen et al., 2015; Glaser et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2018). Chen et al. (2015) researched MM as corporate entrepreneurs and found empirical support of MM's contribution to entrepreneurial activities among organizational members. However, they strongly argue for more research related to MM and entrepreneurship, as it is an underexposed area. Furthermore, other authors build on previous literature to theorize MM to be key in promoting entrepreneurship among organizational members by identifying opportunities, renewing capabilities, and negotiating new ideas (Ireland et al., 2009; Lassen et al., 2009). In a more recent theoretical study by Wu et al. (2018), they built on previous literature and argue that MMs are potentially key change agents in institutionalizing corporate entrepreneurship due to their intermediary function. They suggest that MM helps with the development of new (dynamic) capabilities as well as push and implement those throughout the organization. In addition, Hornsby, Kuratko, Shepherd and Bott (2009) found that both TM and MM have more success in implementing their ideas, compared to the OL, as such, Teece (2016) argues for entrepreneurial managers to promote organizational entrepreneurship. However, there is not much literature explicitly researching the role of MM in promoting entrepreneurship, the focus lies mainly with the importance of management and employees in general in promoting entrepreneurship. A few researchers do suggest that MM could be important in promoting entrepreneurship (Cai et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2015; Dey, 2017; Platzek et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2018). Platzek et al. (2014) theorizes three managerial roles, which could be potentially ascribed to MM: knowledge, idea, and innovation managers, which seem to be contingent on the aforementioned roles as the following will show.

Knowledge manager

Gutberg and Berta (2017) argue for MM's role in information dissemination, which could, theoretically, be extended to MMs assuming the role of a knowledge manager who collects and analyses information. Theoretically, a knowledge manager controls the flow of information top-down and bottom-up (Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019; Platzek et al., 2014), thereby potentially allowing the recognition of opportunities and risks to further drive change (Dey, 2017). In addition, Chen et al. (2015) and Wu et al. (2018) argues this might allow MM to guide ideas and thereby promote organizational entrepreneurship, due to their intermediary organizational position.

Idea manager

Platzek et al. (2014) suggests that management could assume the role of an idea manager, who creates a match between new ideas and the organization's strategic direction, which would allow it to enter new markets and create innovations (Platzek et al., 2014). This role could be extended to MM, because literature conducted by Lassen et al. (2009), Chen et al. (2015) and Wu et al. (2018) argues that, due to their intermediary position, MM could communicate and guide OL-ideas bottom-up (Gutberg & Berta, 2017), thereby potentially promoting organizational entrepreneurship (Chen et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2018). This is closely related to the aforementioned brokering (Pereira et al., 2020) and sense-making roles (Balogun, 2006), because the idea manager brokers and makes sense of OL-ideas and communicates them to TM (Guiette & Vandembemt, 2017), potentially securing resources and thereby driving the idea. This is closely related to Dey's (2017) suggestion that entrepreneurship is a potential driver of change, because as an idea manager, the MM is required to exhibit entrepreneurial traits in order to stimulate entrepreneurial behavior among organizational members (Teece, 2016), which is agreed upon by Wu et al. (2018).

Innovation manager

Platzek et al. (2014) further points out the role of an innovation manager related to designing and guiding ideas through the implementation stages and promoting new innovations. Teece (2016) further argues that entrepreneurial managers interpret OL information for an organization's leadership in order to push innovations. Evidence found by Wu et al. (2018) suggests that MMs might be entrepreneurial change agents, who contribute in the development of entrepreneurial capabilities, which is argued to rejuvenate the organization, adapting it towards its environment

(Ahmetoglu et al., 2018). They further argue that MM might therefore act as a coach to the OL, empowering them to act upon new ideas (Platzek et al., 2014), which is associated with entrepreneurship (Weinberger et al., 2018). Leadership (TM, MM) acting as a coach and entrepreneurial role model, argues Cai et al. (2018), stimulates the promotion of entrepreneurial behavior among organizational members, thereby further driving change (Dey, 2017). This points towards MM as a possible determinant in driving change and a successful change outcome (Bankins et al., 2016; Lukeš, 2012; Mahringer & Renzl, 2018).

2.3 Managerial activities related to change management and promoting entrepreneurship

Earlier literature on change management has elaborated on managerial practices, which contribute to the institutionalization of change programs and the promotion of organizational entrepreneurship. Stouten et al. (2018) in their review of change management practices and academic research on change, summarize certain practices as used by practicing managers and scholarly literature. They suggest that managers, thereby implicitly including MM, should include their employees in change (Knight et al., 2017), use social networks, stimulate goal-setting and learning (Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; Kao, 2017), and promote experimentation with the change (Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; Wiedner et al., 2017). These practices could be indicative and related to MM's intermediary, brokering, sense-making and entrepreneurial roles, as will be elaborated on in this section.

Social networks

Pereira et al. (2020) found evidence that MMs undertake various activities to try to engage the OL and other MMs during a change process. Stouten et al. (2018) mention social networks to be critical in influencing organizational change. Social networks relate to a members' relationships among peers and groups they belong to (Stouten et al., 2018), and might help entrepreneurs to recognize opportunities (Shu, Ren & Zheng, 2018). In addition, Ma, Huang and Shenkar (2011) argue that social networks could promote entrepreneurial behavior, potentially due to a psychologically safe environment (Anyieni et al., 2016). Moreover, Chen et al. (2015) suggests that MMs, due to their extensive social networks, could play a role in promoting a desired behavior. As such, Soenen, Melkonian and Ambrose (2017) suggests management to generate a high level of trust among

colleagues and in leadership, as it could positively influence members' commitment and acceptance to change. In addition, early involvement of organizational members in the change process, allows the use of their social networks to invoke shared values and garner (political) support (Battilana, Gilmartin, Pache, Sengul & Alexander, 2010; Erkama, 2010). This could result in less silo-formation among departments and teams, thereby increasing intra- and inter-collaborations (Woiceshyn, Huq, Blades & Pendharkar, 2019). This could positively influence the communication of the change message, thereby persuading other (team) members to cooperate with the proposed change (ten Have, ten Have, Huijsman & Otto, 2016; Soenen et al., 2017).

Learning and experimentation

Kao (2017) argues that learning is important in all change processes and requires a psychological safe culture, which allows for experimentation and behavioral change. Learning goals could be used to aim at recognizing and rewarding team efforts and goals (Kadariusman & Herabadi, 2018), which Hornsby et al. (2013) argues would increase inter- and intra-organizational collaborations. Some authors, such as Dumas and Beneicke (2017), or Heyden et al. (2015), connect this to the encouragement of members to learn, innovate and experiment. Furthermore, Chebbi et al. (2019) and Hill, Seo, Kang and Taylor (2012) argue to reduce administrative tasks to free time in recipients' agenda and allow space for them to learn about the change and experiment with it (Hornsby, Kuratko, Holt & Wales, 2013). They additionally argue to provide training and education as an incentive to recipients to stimulate change-supportive behavior, innovativeness and participation. This is suggested by Hornsby et al. (2013) to allow recipients to actively participate in changes, innovations, and entrepreneurial activities, thereby possibly promoting entrepreneurship (Weinberger et al., 2018), which according to Dey (2017) could possibly drive change further. Furthermore, management is suggested by Hiatt (2006) and Stouten et al. (2018) to aim learning processes at developing organizational members' change-related capabilities, such as ad hoc and dynamic capabilities (Wang & Wang, 2017). As aforementioned, these capabilities can be associated with driving change and promoting organizational entrepreneurship (Jiménez-Barrionuevo, Molina & García-Morales, 2019; Schweiger, Kump & Hoormann, 2016).

Internal marketing strategy

Chebbi et al. (2019) proposes internal marketing as a way to motivate internal stakeholders, without mentioning MM explicitly, about a change program, and commit them to embrace entrepreneurship. Internal marketing strategies can be used by management to show the necessity of change, and help with a successful implementation, thereby potentially overcoming employee resistance by motivating and involving them (Armenakis et al., 2000; Chebbi et al., 2019). Furthermore, internal marketing techniques can include media, visualization, story-telling and reward systems. All three could potentially generate a shared understanding, sense-making and interpretation of the change vision and message (Chebbi et al., 2019; Sonenhein, 2010). This could address organizational members' readiness for change and create a safe corporate culture (Armenakis et al., 2000; Ortega et al., 2013), potentially promoting entrepreneurship (Cai et al., 2018).

2.4 Influence of organizational structures on managerial practices and roles

There are various factors influencing the execution of managerial tasks and responsibilities. Previous literature argues about the importance of TM in influencing the change process, promoting entrepreneurship, and involving employees (Armenakis et al., 2000; Chebbi et al., 2019; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; Yukl, 2013). Other researchers argue about the effects of the corporate culture in affecting the role of managers in change (Cummings & Worley, 2008; Haffar, Al-Karaghoul & Ghoneim, 2014; Yukl, 2013) and in promoting entrepreneurship (Cai et al., 2018; Ireland et al., 2009; Tamayo-Torres et al., 2016). This section will therefore elaborate on the influence of TM and the corporate culture on the aforementioned suggested roles and activities of MM. Understanding these factors guides towards creating a more holistic understanding of managerial (including MM) roles in change processes by showing relevant contextual factors.

2.4.1 Top Management support

As aforementioned in section 2.1, TM is traditionally viewed as the change leaders, initiating, implementing, and driving a change program, effectively enabling its potential success (Armenakis et al., 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017). However, Kanter (2015) proposed the importance of other internal stakeholders in driving change, and Dumas and Beneicke (2017) advocate change management to be open and participative. As such, TM is proposed to

motivate, empower, and enable organizational members in order to generate change-readiness and a change program's successful outcome (Armenakis et al., 2000; Battilana et al., 2010; Cummings & Worley, 2008). Armenakis et al. (2000) recommend TM to formulate a positive change message and vision to appeal to organizational members, thereby generating change-readiness. Chebbi et al. (2019) suggests TM to provide resources for the change, and free time in change recipients' agendas to experiment with the change. Stouten et al. (2018) argues for TM to build a guiding coalition for the change, and Wu et al. (2018) suggest TM to involve and support MM as potential key drivers of change, which is supported by Chen et al. (2015), Hansell (2018) and Pereira et al. (2020). Furthermore, Gutberg and Berta (2017) insist TM to support MM in making sense of their intermediary and leadership function during change by developing their managerial capabilities (Wang & Wang, 2017). This would empower them and provide role clarity, making sense of their potential leadership role and providing confidence (Hansell, 2018). According to them and other researchers (Buick et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2018) this could lead to their active participation, commitment, feedback and therefore possibly driving change and institutionalizing a desired behavior.

2.4.2 Corporate culture

Earlier literature (ten Have, ten Have, Huijsmans & Otto, 2016) supports the notion that an organization's culture is an important enabler or resistor for change (Bailey & Raelin, 2015; Martínez-Iñigo et al., 2012; ten Have et al., 2016), as well as entrepreneurship (Ahmetoglu et al., 2018; Ortega et al., 2013). As such, the corporate culture could affect organizational members' in their daily tasks and affect MMs in their roles in general and during change (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Teece, 2016). However, the researchers do not mention how MM could potentially affect a culture to become either an enabler or resistor to change.

A corporate culture is traditionally characterised as a pyramid (figure 1), indicating the existence of hierarchical distances between the OL and TM. Hierarchical distance refers to the number of reporting layers between organizational members and could be a barrier influencing change-commitment and outcomes. Hierarchical distance increases the discrepancy between OL-employees with a clear understanding of implementation problems and TM (Hill et al., 2012). It could therefore negatively impact MM's role as a potential change intermediaries and gatekeepers

of information and communication (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Cao et al., 2016). Related to this distance is organizational inertia, which potentially reduces an organization's absorptive capacity, making it apathetic towards learning (Godkin, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2008) and entrepreneurship (Jiménez-Barrionuevo et al., 2019). As such, corporate culture could be a source of inertia, acting as a barrier to change (Godkin, 2010), due to internal political resistance (Bower & Gilbert, 2007), socio-cognitive obstacles (Ginsberg, 1994) or commitment to change (Hill et al., 2012).

As such, change management literature argues for employee involvement and participation, with the support of TM (Battilana et al., 2010; Buick et al., 2018; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017). For this reason, TM is suggested to create a psychologically safe culture to support organizational members during change, which could allow them openly and honestly discuss the pros and cons of change (Griffin, Parker & Mason, 2010), thereby potentially reducing the hierarchical distance (Hill et al., 2012). In addition, Hill et al. (2012) argues this might help members to identify and increase the freedom to act upon problems associated with the change. This is argued to reduce members' resistance to change (Bailey & Raelin, 2015) and by Straatmann et al. (2017) to induce change-supportive behavior. As such, a corporate culture could induce acceptance or resistance to change in organizational members (Armenakis et al., 2000). Furthermore, Kingen and Wilkerson (2011) suggest that such a culture stimulates knowledge and resource sharing, indicating continuous learning, development of absorptive capabilities (Jiménez-Barrionuevo et al., 2019) and promoting intra-organizational collaborations (Woiceshyn et al., 2019). In addition, it is discussed to stimulate change-acceptance by allowing both OL-employees and management the freedom to experiment with the change (Arnold, 2010), express creative and opportunity-recognizing behaviors (Cai et al., 2018), and as such is suggested to further the development of innovative capabilities (Al-kalouti, Kumar, Kumar, Garza-Reyes, Upadhyay & Zwiegelhaar, 2020) and problem-solving skills (Fugate et al., 2012). As such, Mckenny et al. (2018) describes a psychologically safe culture to be characterized by individual and group entrepreneurial orientations. Such a culture is argued to develop members' entrepreneurial traits and dynamic capabilities (Cai et al., 2018), Chen et al., 2015; Ortega et al., 2013), potentially stimulating the exhibition of entrepreneurial traits (Platzek et al., 2014) and activities (Tamayo-Torres et al., 2016). Furthermore, Dey (2017) suggests that entrepreneurial traits and activities drive change throughout an organization, and Teece (2016) additionally argues for entrepreneurial managers to

do as well. The researchers in this paragraph, however, do not mention how MM could potentially play a role in inducing such a culture, promoting entrepreneurship, and driving change.

Resistance to change

Heckmann et al. (2016) suggest that resistance inevitably originates from organizational members, because change is connected to the concept of 'loss' (Yukl, 2013, p. 81), bringing about stress, fear and uncertainty. Furthermore, Bailey and Raelin (2015) theorize that resistance to change might be related to stable personality traits of organizational members. To reduce resistance and generate change-readiness, literature points towards entrepreneurial and change-supportive traits (Armenakis et al., 2000; Fugate et al., 2012; Schinduette et al., 2019).

Resistance to change has been found to not only originate from its recipients (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987), but also from change agents, those who are involved in the institutionalization of the change (Vos & Rupert, 2018). Change agents might unconsciously resist change due to homogenous mental models (Valle Santos & Teresa Garcia, 2006) whereby management becomes blind to new knowledge, misses opportunities and loses the ability to learn (Ginsberg, 1994) and misses opportunities (Ginsberg, 1994). In addition, change agents might not be unbiased observers, as they might be afraid of losing power, control, and resources (Hammond, Keeney & Raiffa, 2006), thereby resisting change.

2.5 Chapter summary

As the literature has shown, change management literature has yet to find consensus regarding the roles of MM in a change process, and particularly in promoting entrepreneurship. By their central position, situated between TM and OL, MM could be seen as an organizational player developing and maintaining more (relational) interactions with other organizational members (Bower & Gilbert, 2007). Therefore, MMs are potentially important in an organization's willingness and readiness to change. In addition, MMs is suggested to exhibit change- and entrepreneurial-related traits and capabilities in order to drive change and promote organizational entrepreneurship. Furthermore, due to their unique organizational position, they might be more closely attuned to develop these traits and capabilities at the OL, compared to TM.

Combining previous literature, Gutberg and Berta (2017) propose MM's role during organizational strategic change to be described as a three-step process:

1. Communicating the need and necessity for change
2. Mobilizing support for change from both the OL and TM
3. Evaluating the implementation of change during and after the process.

This process seems to enable MM to assume the roles related to the promotion of organizational entrepreneurship, such as knowledge, idea, and innovation managers. However, as the literature has shown as well, the influence of TM and corporate culture is considered important due to their impact on managerial roles and entrepreneurial behavior. Organizational factors could shape the way MMs perceive and carry out their functions as well as influence the allocated freedom, space, and time to act entrepreneurial, thereby influencing other organizational members' behavior and functions.

3. Methodology

This chapter introduces and explains the chosen methodology for the study. This chapter opens with an introduction and explanation of the research approach and design, which is followed by a presentation of the data collection method and analysis description. The chapter closes with an explanation of how the validity and reliability was guaranteed, concluding with a chapter summary.

3.1 Research approach & design

This thesis researched how MM's role is affecting an organization's transitioning towards organizational entrepreneurship by use of a change program, indicating its exploratory nature. Therefore, this thesis researched a social phenomenon where the pertinent information lay with the human factor and factors affecting them. As such, it was suitable to adopt a research design allowing for the discovery of ongoing processes and to understand the linkages between patterns, as this allowed the researchers to contribute to academia and provide insights to practitioners (Saunders, Lewin & Thornhill, 2016). For this reason, the researchers adopted a constructionist and interpretivist perspective to the research, as well as a qualitative research strategy and an abductive approach.

The constructivist and interpretivist perspective were chosen for two main reasons: first, the researchers actively created knowledge and attached subjective meanings to the observed phenomena and associated social contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Second, as constructivism emphasizes assessment of (inter)personal meanings and considers knowledge to be a product of social and personal processes, it was an appropriate perspective considering this thesis' objective (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Thirdly, the researchers intend was to create new understandings via thoughts and reflections (Saunders et al., 2016). In addition, the thesis tried, in an exploratory way, to explain a social phenomenon related to the concepts of "change" and "entrepreneurship" by use of a research question of the "What" nature. Both concepts are not unique in their nature to any business but combined might be rare within certain traditional industries. This merited the use of a case-study methodology, in particular of the common-case rationale, as the thesis focused on one organization to gain insights about the change process (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018; Yin, 2014).

The study considered an abductive research logic, which entails moving iteratively from an inductive to deductive approach in order to create categories and concepts from the empirical data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). This allowed the thesis to create an explanation and understanding of the studied phenomenon.

The challenge of the thesis' approach and perspective was to make sense of, and create new understandings of, the gathered data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Therefore, to increase the thesis' clarity, the researchers matched the research question to the thesis' purpose. The purpose and research question of this case-study is to study a complex social phenomenon of MM's role during a change process. This entailed in-depth data gathering in order to convey information, as such, a qualitative research strategy is recommended (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Using qualitative data, participants were able to consider a broad spectrum of factors and were able to tell a narrative, which nuanced the thesis' findings (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Therefore, interview questions were tailored to be open-ended, which allowed participants to tell a story, and to construct meaning out of the context and interaction with colleagues (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002). A qualitative strategy is suited to address the thesis' complex organizational, managerial, and business issues, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the case. It allowed the researchers to take into account various factors important to the research question, and to create interpretations and develop descriptions of the researched phenomenon. For this reason, a positivist approach was not suitable as it would have limited the researchers' ability to include unforeseen factors (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). A quantitative method was also not recommended, as this method is used to answer a descriptive question, discerning the relationship between variables, not in-line with the thesis' purpose (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

3.2 Data collection method

Considering the research question, both primary and secondary data were taken into account (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002).

3.2.1 Primary data

Interviews allowed for the collection of in-depth knowledge about a participants point of view and their surroundings, which yielded an accurate and clear picture of the participants position, and/or

role and behavior (Collin & Hussey, 2014; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002). Furthermore, when the logic of a situation was unclear, interview questions allowed for a clearer picture (Collin & Hussey, 2014). Interviews were set-up to be semi-structured, containing predetermined questions of the open-, closed- and probing nature (Collin & Hussey, 2014; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002). The nature of the interview and its questions provided flexibility by allowing participants to tell their own narrative, providing their perspective and elaborate on matters they found relevant. This was important, because the thesis builds on attaining in-depth knowledge about factors unknown to the researchers (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002). Open questions allowed participants to provide elaborate responses, whereas closed questions were used to confirm and elicit a response when participants provided an unclear answer to the open question(s). Probing questions were used to elicit deeper responses when participants provided responses that were of particular interest to the research question. In this thesis, the unit of analysis was organization X's ongoing organization-wide change process, as this is a central aspect to the research question. The units of observation were organization X's MMs, which are central to the research question. The researchers made use of snowball sampling as contact had been established with one senior manager, who further pointed towards suitable interviewee candidates.

3.2.2 Secondary data

In addition to the primary data, secondary data from internal sources, such as company reports, its website and internal documents was used as potential information sources. This data provided the researchers with a holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon and enhanced data triangulation. Secondary data can be analyzed exhaustively, thereby providing the researchers with more perspective pertaining historical events, ongoing processes, comparative and contextual data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002). However, the use of secondary data is limited as it is not collected with the researchers' purpose in mind and might not fit well with the thesis' purpose.

Before considering the potential use of any secondary data in this thesis, the data was evaluated with three criteria in mind: i) answering the research question and meeting the thesis objectives, ii) benefits should be higher than the costs, and iii) accessibility to the data (Saunders et al., 2009).

If any of these criteria was not met, the secondary data was not included for the purpose of this thesis.

3.2.3 Sampling

A sampling strategy was utilized to both find an appropriate case organization to the thesis purpose, and to find relevant study participants. A suitable organization had to meet three criteria: first, it had to be engaged, or just concluded, an organizational change program. Second, the change had or has to affect multiple internal stakeholders, in order for the change to be of high organizational priority. Thirdly, the organization had to be considered a large company according to the EU's standard (≥ 250 employees: "European Commission", 2020). Organizational size was considered important as such an organization usually has multiple hierarchical layers, such as the MM-level. To find an organization meeting these criteria, the researchers exploited and utilized their personal networks. After a fruitful initial search, the researchers established contact with the strategic country manager of the organization, which initiated the research. One requirement for conducting the research was the possibility of offering anonymity to the organization and its interviewees due to the researchers access to sensitive information pertaining the strategic direction of the organization. This was later mutually agreed upon to enable the research. Anonymity provided an additional benefit, as interviewees could provide more in-depth information without fear of repercussions.

After initial contact and the mutual agreement, the contact person was asked to identify other potential interviewees which would be suitable for the thesis' purpose. These interviewees were also asked to identify relevant candidates indicating the use of snowball sampling. Suitable candidates were considered to be part of the middle layer as this thesis studies the roles of MM. However, in order to gain a more holistic overview of the role of MM, a few candidates were chosen from the top and operational layers as well. Participants originated from different organizational departments in order to provide various perspectives to the change process and outcome, contributing to the holistic understanding of the phenomenon (see Table 1):

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

	Interviewee A	Interviewee B	Interviewee C	Interviewee D	Interviewee E	Interviewee F
Position	TM	MM	MM	MM	OL	MM
Interview Duration (min)	50	108	80	90	60	75
Date of Interview	2020/03/24	2020/04/07	2020/04/15	2020/04/21	2020/04/21	2020/04/22

	Interviewee G	Interviewee H	Interviewee I	Interviewee J	Interviewee K
Position	MM	TM	MM	TM	MM
Interview Duration (min)	60	60	60	60	60
Date of Interview	2020/04/22	2020/04/23	2020/04/28	2020/04/29	2020/04/29

3.2.4 Conduction of Interviews

Due to the current situation with regards to the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, interviews were held virtually by use of Microsoft Teams as the main contact channel. However, the use of virtual applications limited the observation of bodily language, and the general appearance of participants, compared to face-to-face interviews (Remenyi, 2011). Nevertheless, this allowed the thesis to obtain in-depth knowledge at the convenience of the participants.

Before the start of an interview, permission to conduct the interview was asked, and the purpose and background of the thesis was explained to provide participants with an understanding of the thesis' purpose. In addition, the researchers stated that communication during the interview was strictly confidential, meaning that personal information will not be shared with people internal and external to the organization. Furthermore, after the interview, participants were able to omit anything they did not want to be kept within the interview records. The interview was structured into three sections: first introductory questions related to general information about the organization, the change program, and the participants' internal role. Second, questions concerning the change program's content, initiation, implementation, process and the participants role. Third, holistic questions based on previous answers, to allow participants to reflect on matters not yet suggested.

3.3 Data analysis

The intent of the data analysis is to make sense of the collected information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), therefore, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2009), the thesis took a template analysis approach. This approach involves creating a coding template from the gathered qualitative data, thereby summarizing important and relevant themes. Codification of themes allowed the researchers to recognize and explore underlying patterns and relationships within the qualitative data sets of the interviews.

The analysis started with the organization and preparation of the gathered data, meaning interviews were transcribed, in order to prepare for the next analysis steps. Next, all the data was read to provide the researchers the opportunity to reflect on the data's meaning. This was followed by the identification of a priori themes by codifying some of the data expected to be relevant. This step entailed the categorization of data from the transcripts and labelled with relevant terms in order to generate codes, descriptions and themes (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). This was followed by reading through the data sets of the interviews in order to find and mark underlying connections and relationships important to the research question. Aspects corresponding to a priori themes were coded, if not, new themes were developed. Themes and links were grouped, resulting in an initial template to be applied to the data sets of the other interviews, and a revision of codes during this process was possible (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4 Validity and reliability

In order for the thesis to be regarded as qualitative, validity and reliability issues were taken into account (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Validity refers to the accuracy of a measure, and how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. Validity in qualitative research can be related to four kinds of validity; i) descriptive, ii) interpretative, iii) theoretical, and iv) generalizable (Ghuri & Grønhaug, 2002; Thomson, 2011). Generalizability was not considered, as the aim was not to produce any statistical generalizations. The researchers made various commitments to adhere to the other three factors of validity. The researchers provided i) data triangulation, by taking multiple perspectives into account to ensure themes are established from converging data sources, ii) rich descriptions, iii) member checks, iv) peer debriefings, and v) discussions and clarifications regarding the common pitfalls of researcher and participant biases (during interviews and the subsequent interpretation of the data).

Reliability in qualitative research primarily relates to the consistency of a measure, whereby a small amount of variability in findings is tolerated. This means, however, that the methodology should yield data similar to, but is allowed to differ in richness within similar areas (Leung, 2015). To ensure reliability, the researchers applied the suggestions of Creswell and Creswell (2018) by i) describing the process in detail, ii) assessing and analyzing interview transcripts on errors, and iii) performing member checks after the codification of data sets. This ensured transparency and strengthened the replicability of the thesis (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4.1 Ethical concerns

To ensure participant integrity, the researchers ensured and offered anonymity and confidentiality of all data and participants throughout the research process. Furthermore, the researchers communicated the background, purpose and aim of the thesis as well as usage of data and information to the interviewees. To avoid misrepresentation and false portraying of statement meanings, data used in the thesis, such as quotes, were sent to the participants beforehand, which allowed them to remark on it. These measures were taken in order to avoid the invasion of privacy, harm to personal feelings, and negative consequences of the participants in stature (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provided the rationale about how the thesis objectives were achieved. In order to answer the research question, a qualitative approach was employed, and a single, anonymous, case study approach was taken, to allow for in-depth data collection about the social phenomenon. Primary data was gathered by conducting interviews with three TMs, seven MMs, and one OL-employees of various departments, across the case organization. Secondary data was included to provide background information about the organization and its change program. To ensure quality of the thesis, validity and reliability measures were taken, evaluated, and adhered to.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings. First, the case is described by introducing the organization and the current ongoing change program. This is followed by a description of MMs activities during the change process. The empirical findings were gathered by conducting interviews with one OL-employees, three TMs and seven MMs. Of the seven MMs, five were must-win battle owners and two were not, the concept of must-win battles will be explained in section 4.1.

During the interviews, when MMs were asked about their roles during change and in promoting organizational entrepreneurship, they responded by providing examples of their activities related to communication, project management, and their must-win battle (MWB) projects. These activities are potential indicators of MM's role(s) during the change program aimed at promoting organizational entrepreneurship.

4.1 Case description

This thesis uses the Dutch subsidiary of a global organization, with a global headquarters in the US, and the European headquarters in the UK, to answer the research question. As the organization wishes to remain anonymous, its name will not be mentioned throughout the thesis. The subsidiary has various market activities, such as a wholesaler, retailer and distributor, and is currently undergoing a change program aimed at promoting organizational entrepreneurship. However, the subsidiary is subject to the UK and US TM team, which focuses and controls on short-term results and financial gains. As such, the UK and US TM team created and installed strongly controlled key performance indicators (KPI) related to this focus for the subsidiary organizations. The Dutch country management team (CMT), the subsidiaries TMs, is therefore expected to control its managers and employees on these KPIs related to short-term financial results. As such, the global organization is argued by the interviewees to not support entrepreneurial activities due to the involved costs of proposed entrepreneurial projects. When a project is proposed, MM has to present a strong business case aimed at proving short-term financial gains. Even when a project is considered promising, if the project only has long-term financial gains, the UK and US TM team will not provide resources to pursue the project. Despite these constrictions, the Dutch CMT still

aims to implement this change due to a perceived market shift, which requires more flexibility, intra-organizational collaborations, and creativity.

Strategic pillars and must-win battles

The studied change program was initiated by the Dutch CMT at the beginning of January 2020. The CMT aims to gradually change the organization top-down, and as such started its change at the TM level, followed by the MM level, and lastly the OL. The goal is to have organizational members believe, understand, and live the change, thereby pointing towards empowerment and entrepreneurial behavior. The change initiative was developed for various reasons, the most important one being the market pressure to become more flexible as an organization. As such, the CMT, without involving organizational members, decided to transform the organization from departmental silos, where organizational members work in isolation, towards a more collaborative form. The CMT decided on creating an entrepreneurial organization with more intra-organizational collaborations. To achieve this, the CMT decided on implementing the 'Kaizen principle', meaning to empower employees (MM and OL-employees) to be proactive and experimenting, as the CMT believes that MM and OL-employees are the key drivers for the change program's success.

[MM K]: *"I give them [my team] the authority to hit their KPI, like coming up with their own plan. The people in my team are not used to it, they are used to receiving strict orders. I ask them What are your plans? What are your targets? What are you going to achieve this year? What does your budget look like?"*

The CMT structured the change according to seven strategic pillars, defined as seven areas of improvement, where the organization was and is currently lacking. Each strategic pillar was assigned a 'sponsor', a TM responsible for the pillar's progress. After the brainstorming session among the TM's, they decided on involving the organization's 70 MMs as they were considered to be important to further drive the change. MM has been identified by the CMT as crucial for driving, implementing and institutionalizing the change and entrepreneurial behavior among organizational members. The interviewed TMs argue this is because MM is more closely connected to the OL and is therefore more easily able to grasp their and the customers' wants and needs. In order for

them to drive the change throughout the organization, CMT acknowledges that MM needs to first “believe it, understand it, and live it” (TM A):

[TM H]: “MM is crucial and instrumental in setting strategy, they know best what is happening at the customers and OL, they are the voice of the employees to a large extent. At the same time, they need to be there for their people, they need to deal with both [TM and OL] demands, while balancing between KPIs and financial demands.”

As such, the CMT organized a two-day strategic event to inform the 70 MMs about the proposed change. MM was asked to participate in the creation of three ‘must-win battles’ (MWB) for every strategic pillar. Each MWB is considered to be a top one priority, and was assigned, or voluntarily accepted, a MM owner, having in total 21 MWBs and owners. The MWB areas relate to various objectives, such as developing a business intelligence and data driven strategy, improving customer intimacy and loyalty, and developing an omnichannel care delivery approach for the organization. The interviewed TMs state that MMs are allowed to develop their own ways on how to achieve their MWB projects, indicating them towards entrepreneurial behavior. However, the CMT did not decide on creating a MWB, or KPI, aimed at developing organizational entrepreneurship or to increase intra-organizational collaborations explicitly, only implicitly via other MWBs.

[MM B]: “There is no must-win battle about being entrepreneurial. It's sort of a side effect, a very welcome, and very engineered side effect the way we approach it. You got a vehicle where you can coach people into entrepreneurship.”

In addition, some of the interviewed MMs indicate that, even though the strategic days were informative, the change message conveyed to them by TM was too complex to further convey it to the OL. Other MMs indicate they were only involved at the beginning of the change process, without further involvement later on, as they are not responsible for a MWB. The interviewed OL-employee even considered the change and its message “managerial mumbo-jumbo” (OL E), and feels the change does not add anything new, as many of the OL-employees are already acting entrepreneurial and many are already empowered by their respective MMs.

[OL E]: *“It doesn’t feel like anything has changed from before. Not many of the MM and OL-employees are involved at all, I don’t feel involved [...] The OL is already doing this and they’re finding their own detours [...] they do their own projects, you can’t count on the higher levels”.*

CMT Support

During the implementation of the change program, the CMT states they try to support, empower, encourage, and motivate their MMs as much as possible. They argue that this enables the responsible MWB-MM to perform their assigned MWB-duties. In addition, TM has regular (three monthly) feedback and contact to discuss MWB progression and implementation issues. Furthermore, MM is given ‘*Carte Blanche*’ by CMT to look for a suitable way to achieve their MWB objectives and goals, allowing them to act as an organizational trailblazer and they expressed their hope that MM will exhibit entrepreneurial behavior as well. The MMs were given authority to make their own decisions, allowing MM to view their MWB as their ‘own child’, thereby hoping to motivate and enthuse them, generating willingness and commitment to the change program. The majority of the interviewed MWB-MMs are positive and enthusiastic about the change initiative, because they feel empowered and are encouraged to exhibit entrepreneurial behavior. CMT supports MM by providing resources, coaching, and learning trajectories, opportunities to experiment and pursue their own ideas, within the organizational boundaries. The CMT also started a training program for MM related to activities regarding leadership and change. This was done to empower and enthuse them for the change, and also to overcome the internal barriers. Some CMT indicate that barriers primarily come from path-dependent TMs and MMs, and changing their ways is difficult, but by celebrating wins and encouraging them it is said to be possible. In addition, those who did not seem to agree with the change program were dismissed from the organization, implying the dismissal of some TMs and MMs. CMT also provided this authority to MMs, allowing them to decide in which OL-employees they want to invest time, and who they want to dismiss from the organization. Many of the interviewed MM argue that this additionally allowed them to drive change and promote the entrepreneurship throughout the organizations:

[MM K]: *“I did a restructuring, those who do not exhibit change-related traits I had to let go and hire new people who do exhibit this.”*

However, even though CMT said to support and empower MMs, some MMs state the opposite. Not every MM was happy with the responsibility of owning a MWB, because it came on top of their already assigned organizational duty. They argue that MM already has too many tasks related to their KPIs as received from the UK and US TM teams. The change program responsibilities are piled on top of this already existing workload by the CMT, overburdening some MMs, who then have to filter the workload content to their teams, consisting of OL-employees and non-MWB MMs, in order not to overburden them. On top of this criticism, some MMs do not perceive all TMs as role models for the change, stating *“some TMs talk the talk, but then do not walk the walk”* (MM B). TMs role model function, they argue, is necessary for MM to further sell and drive change and entrepreneurship by selling it to their team and being a role model.

In addition, the interviewed MMs who are not responsible for an MWB do not feel very much involved by the change program. Those MMs were involved in the strategic days but are not regularly updated with regards to MWB progressions and issues, nor the change message from the CMT. Therefore, they perceive the change as necessary, but do not notice anything changing. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees indicate that the organization is still run traditionally, despite the ongoing change process to transform it. However, most of the interviewed MMs are positive and enthusiastic about the change initiative and are performing certain activities to drive the initiative throughout the organization. To drive the change and promote entrepreneurship, MM argues for using enabling practices to energize peers and OL-employees, such as using the internal social networks to search for the “right” people with change-related capabilities and promote experimentation.

4.2 Middle managements’ practices in driving change and promoting entrepreneurship

Many of the MMs were involved early on during the strategic change process, and 21 out of the 70 MMs assumed responsibility of an MWB. When asked about their roles in achieving their MWBs to drive change and entrepreneurship, the interviewees responded by providing examples

of activities, actions, and practices they undertook and are currently undertaking. The findings point towards MMs roles as communicating both top-down and bottom-up, as well as influencing and affecting the behaviors of organizational members towards the change and promotion of entrepreneurship. In addition, the findings point towards unorthodox intermediary roles of MM to drive change and influence (entrepreneurial) behavior.

4.2.1 Communication and information sharing

Being in the center of the organizational pyramid, the MMs identified that their role is primarily about communication and information sharing both top-down and bottom-up. MM perceive communication and information sharing as an important aspect of their function during the change process in order to drive it and promote entrepreneurial behavior. In addition, the change program itself was described by MMs as “*information sharing and transparent communication*” (MM G).

[MM I]: “*One of the most important things is communication. What is happening, what are we doing, working on etc.*”

MM perceives their role to be central to the information and communication flows towards and from the OL and top level. In this sense, the MMs analyze, filter and make-sense of information, knowledge and communication from the CMT to the OL and vice versa. As such, the roles of MM can be described to provide information and knowledge and communicate top-down to the OL and bottom-up to the CMT and potentially the UK and US TM team.

Top-down communication and information sharing

Both CMT and MM have expressed opinions about MM playing a crucial part in driving the change towards entrepreneurship downwards, institutionalizing it in the organization. As such, the CMT formulated a compelling change message to motivate and enthuse the MM, and for them to filter and communicate further down the organization. MM believes that communicating the change in an open and honest fashion, creates commitment and willingness in their teams and other departments towards the change process:

[MM K]: *“If you have a culture where you celebrate the good things, then it is much easier to talk about the bad things. You have to be open and honest about the good and bad things.”*

Furthermore, they argued that one way to stimulate and try to change their employees’ behavior towards the Kaizen-principle is related to information sharing. This was described as something which would increase and generate employees’ suggestions and improvements to the current processes and methods by increasing their understanding of the whole process and change initiative:

[MM G]: *“I share a lot of information, all information that I can share, I will share with my people [OL-employees]. It needs to come from middle management [the information], as the top management can’t be on the floor. Make sure that people on the floor are really working on the projects, and involve them, making them a part of the team. Instead of making it just a managerial party.”*

In order to drive the change towards entrepreneurship further down to the OL, the CMT asked MM to convey its change message top-down. The interviewed MMs did so by conveying the change message towards their teams and MM-peers who are co-participants in the MWB. They did so by making sense of the proposed change, translating it towards the OL and conveying the expectations of the CMT about MM-peers and OL-employees:

[MM I]: *“I try to explain the financial goals, translate them to the team and explain what it means for the team and the company...”*

The MMs recognized that one of their functions, concerning top-down communication and information sharing, is related to what was going to be passed down onto their own teams. The MMs recognize the need to involve OL-employees in order to drive the change, but also realize that not all information is relevant, therefore they seem to act as a filter. Filtering the change message will only convey relevant information and knowledge to the OL, such as its benefits, implications and need for the change, without “*managerial mumbo-jumbo*” (OL E). This had the intention of not overburdening the team with too much work or information:

[MM I]: “*For me, I try to act as a filter for my team. Ok, you can push me, but I will be the filter [emphasis added] on what is being pushed on to them [the team]. I feel responsible for protecting my team.*”

One activity the MMs recognized they undertook in order to increase the efficiency of their teams is breaking down assigned tasks and responsibilities and then convey it to their teams. Breaking down tasks and responsibilities allowed MMs to make sense of the change for their teams and OL-employees, as well as their MM-peers, generating a more holistic understanding of the change. In addition, it allowed MMs to make sense of OL-employees’ role and responsibilities in and during the change process. This was described by the MMs to further drive the change and create more willingness to change among organizational members. In addition, this was also expressed as a way to stimulate entrepreneurial activities and behavior from the OL-employees, so that they could understand the bigger picture and be able to make their own contributions towards the change. Furthermore, as the interviewed MWB-MMs were given *carte blanche* regarding the means and the how in achieving their MWB, they must therefore also convince the CMT of their proposal, who in turn have to convince the UK and US TM teams to allocate resources to the proposals. As such, those MMs try to co-develop strong business cases with their teams, and other OL-employees and MM-peers, to convince the top to forward their entrepreneurial ideas. MM therefore described the importance of motivating the OL about the necessity and benefits of the change via communicating the change message.

[MM G]: “*You need to make business cases, and you need to defend your business cases. You need to be able to communicate how and why this is going to help us. [...] I think I can convince top management so that they can go ahead of some of the projects.*”

Bottom up communication and information sharing

When communicating the message from the TM to the OL, the MMs recognized they play an important role in communicating bottom-up as well, in order to drive the change towards entrepreneurship in a beneficial way. MM argues they are conveying and filtering information, knowledge, solutions and issues bottom-up. They argue this would allow the CMT to better

understand the wants, needs and issues of the OL and to relay information relating to customer activities and customer relationships.

[MM F]: *“[...] translating these policies to the employees of [customer and organization] works, but they [OL] are closer to the customer needs, so they know better about their wants and need.”*

The bottom up communication also relates to when the MMs are being put under too much stress from the top. Two MMs stated that they perceive it to be their responsibility to voice their, and their team’s opinions or concerns on the workload being put on them and to speak their minds when they are being overtasked. By speaking up, the MMs argue that only then the sponsor will provide the required resources and support to overcome certain implementation issues, and even reduce the workload to be manageable. The consequences of not speaking up would lead to an increased workload and deficient work results, and the sponsor might argue that the MMs and their teams did not deliver the promised results and KPI’s. In addition, it might have a detrimental effect on the MMs teams’ long-term ability to carry out organizational responsibilities. MM realizes that employee involvement is key to drive the change towards organizational entrepreneurship, and try to involve their teams, and even customers and other MM-peers, in various ways. Customers and OL-employees are described as having great potential for coming up with improvement suggestions and innovative ideas, which they then relate back to the CMT. As such, MM actively asks and seeks feedback from employees regarding implementation issues and innovative solutions, and from customers regarding their wishes, wants and needs.

[MM G]: *“Ask for feedback a lot. Actively involve them [OL-employees and customers] in projects. I believe that people that are working on the floor know best what would be helpful for improvements. It's necessary to think bottom-up instead of top-down for improvements.”*

By actively involving their employees in various projects and processes, the MMs also related their role to that of a coach and mentor, as they provide guidance and support to their team. When the teams convey change implementation concerns or issues, the MWB-MMs act as a spokesperson for their team, conveying these concerns to the sponsor. The communication from

their team was seen as critical, allowing the MM to decide where further efforts needed to be directed and where opportunities for advancements could be made.

[MM K]: *“Middle management needs to be coaches towards their employees and team, empower them, involve them, support them [...] professionally and personally [...] and communicate regularly with them.”*

4.2.2 Promoting entrepreneurial behavior

The interviewed MMs argue that the findings regarding communication, as mentioned in section 4.2.1, allows them to influence the behaviors and mindsets of organizational members of all organizational levels and departments. In order to drive change and promote entrepreneurship, MM states it is necessary to try to change the behaviors and mindsets of organizational members throughout the organization. In order to do so, they consider communication is to be key and the common thread in driving change. MM undertakes various other roles and activities to drive change towards organizational entrepreneurship, which are indirectly related to the communication key function. MMs argue for their (entrepreneurial) role model function, selecting allies from the CMT, MM and OL, empowering employees for experimentation and starting small, local project initiatives.

Entrepreneurial role models

One aspect of what the MMs perceived as their responsibility in driving the change towards entrepreneurship throughout the organization, was that they were functioning as entrepreneurial role models for their employees and others. It was recognized that, to have a greater impact on peers and OL-employees, it did not suffice by only speaking about how things should change, but that the words needed to be backed up by activities confirming the message. Some of the MMs argue that to promote entrepreneurial behavior among peers and OL-employees, they themselves need to act entrepreneurial as well. They argue that increased communication and intra-organizational collaborations are a way towards this as it will improve daily work by sharing best practices. As such, three MMs proactively initiated entrepreneurial intra-departmental projects to increase intra-organizational collaborations and drive organizational entrepreneurship. One MM undertook an entrepreneurial action by initiating an experimental project aimed to increase the

autonomy of the organization via information communication among departments. This then empowered them to collaborate and function autonomously, and individuals can proactively cooperate both intra- and inter-departmental, without external influence:

[MM C]: *“I believe not in one central department [...] I believe in autonomy of each department, and enabling them by information access and resources [...] to conduct analysis themselves. [...] An information mindset [emphasis added] is promoted throughout the company to improve autonomy and collaborations among departments, enhancing their daily practices. [...] what naturally will start is that the people [MM and OL-employees] will become more process-minded.”*

As aforementioned, being a role model, and promoting entrepreneurial activities, allowed for the generation of an entrepreneurial MM. These entrepreneurial MMs influence the behavior and mindset of OL-employees to commit to the change and exhibit entrepreneurial behavior by instilling enthusiasm among OL-employees. The MMs further argue that this would then allow the OL-employees to drive this mindset further to their peers. The interviewed OL-employee argues that her MM-supervisor is an entrepreneurial role model, coach and mentor to her, this MM empowered her to act entrepreneurial. The OL-employee further stated that the MMs undertake entrepreneurial activities themselves, as well as supports the OL-employees in their projects, not leaving them completely to their own devices:

[OL E]: *“I am allowed to organize my own processes and involve all units, I pioneered the process and got to do it my way, the Kaizen way. [...] I got to form my own alliances, partnering with other colleagues [OL-employees] to collaborate with work processes.”*

Many of the interviewed MMs argue that to drive change and to increase organizational entrepreneurship, an inclusive culture and environment is necessary. In such an environment, they argue, the MMs, their teams, peers and other OL-employees should be able to openly and honestly communicate with each other, people should feel included. As such, all of the interviewed MMs act upon what they preach by acting as an entrepreneurial role model who involves people, makes them feel valued, celebrates wins and is transparent in communication:

[MM K]: *“I try to maintain an open and honest culture, an inclusive culture. [...] people should be able to talk about the good or bad things, they should feel valued. [...] I try to show results and celebrate wins.”*

In addition, to change members’ mindset and behavior to become more entrepreneurial, two MMs argue that ‘learning’ and ‘development’ play a big part. As entrepreneurial role models, the MMs argue they themselves need to be able to continuously learn from failures as well as promote this mindset among their teams and OL-employees.

[MM B]: *“Mistakes are necessary to take the next steps; this is what I promote in my team and department. Keep on experimenting and learning. Risk-taking and proactiveness are needed to drive and implement this change, so as middle managers, we also need to be entrepreneurial.”*

[MM K]: *“I also believe in this growth mindset. We play, we work hard, we want to be successful, there is this growth mindset, so we fail and learn from it, but don't fail once again on the topic.”*

Moreover, both MM and OL-employees argue that the CMT has to support and empower MM, for them to be able to promote such a culture in their departments or within their MWB-teams.

[MM F]: *“My projects are being praised; my acting entrepreneurially is being praised as well by my sponsor [CMT]. [...] I receive feedback, [...] trial-and-error is allowed, [...] we communicate openly and honestly, and I receive variable rewards.”*

In order to initiate such projects and gather a critical mass of both peers and OL-employees, the entrepreneurial MMs need to create goodwill among peers and OL-employees in the departments. The MMs argued it was necessary to communicate the necessity and benefits of the projects to peers and OL-employees, which would then motivate them to join and support the project. They argue that this is a requirement due to the organizational structure, because MM and OL-employees are still judged on their ability to perform and show short-term financial gains. As such, the MMs need to motivate peers and employees to support their projects, thereby creating a sufficiently large support-base to drive the project, the change program and as such organizational entrepreneurship.

Decision-makers

Some TM's and MMs have noticed that not all organizational members are willing to change and become entrepreneurial, as this was not the traditional way of working within the organization. Those people perceive the old way as the correct way, indicating the rigidity and formality of the organization the CMT is trying to change. Therefore, some sponsors of strategic pillars empower their MWB MMs to allow them to replenish the workforce in favor of the change program. This is argued by the CMT to send a message throughout the organization, indicating the need for change to act more flexible and entrepreneurial:

[MM K]: *“You have to have the right people at the right place. [...] I search for entrepreneurial employees, I want to collect a critical mass of the right people to tackle barriers and make the change successful.”*

In addition, according to two of the interviewed MMs, getting the “right” people in the “right” place also entails appointing and selecting the correct allies among peers and OL-employees. The “right” place refers to the MWBs the MMs are trying to accomplish by gathering a critical mass. As aforementioned, MMs need to motivate peers and OL-employees to join their projects. Motivating peers is done by lobbying and creating goodwill among departments, gathering a support-base for the project. Other MMs also appoint influential OL-employees who understand the necessity and benefits of the projects, within departments to gather a critical mass and further drive the MWB-projects. Influential employees are viewed as those able to carry the initiative further throughout the organization, they are respected by their peers and are more likely to achieve positive results. These employees are able to influence even more people by spreading the benefits of the initiatives and convincing others to join the MWB-project, gathering a strong support-base for the MM. They can also become role models themselves and thereby promote organizational entrepreneurship among their peers.

[MM B]: *“What you do is that you get allies. You get people [OL-employees and MM] you trust and who have the same struggles. What you do then, you detect one of the guys who understand it,*

but it has to be someone within that group which already has a level of respect from his or her colleagues. And this guy is able to hold their hand and uplift the rest as well.”

In addition, to further strengthen and empower these employees, the two MMs support them by communicating clearly and honestly, as well as acting as coaches.

[MM K]: *“You don't have to spend much time on the people who don't get it, you have to make room and time for the people who get it, and make those people important. More people will follow the change then.”*

Experimentation

To drive the change towards entrepreneurship further throughout the organization, the interviewed MMs consider their function to be that of a project manager. This role is closely related to the aforementioned activities and roles as communicators, role models and selectors.

[MM I]: *“In the end you can perceive my role as a sort of project manager, who has to put all relevant and right people together at the table and also be responsible for the output of the team.”*

As aforementioned, sponsors and MMs believe that the *Kaizen principle* of allowing experimentation and small wins, are the key to drive the change towards organizational entrepreneurship. A general trend in the interviews was that MM described entrepreneurship as closely linked to experimentation. The CMT tries to encourage entrepreneurship throughout the subsidiary via experimentation, which they call the ‘kaizen principle’, as explained in 4.1. Both sponsors and MMs believe that the kaizen principle of experimentation and small, quick wins are the key to drive the change towards organizational entrepreneurship. The interviewed sponsors further argue that it is MM who should be responsible for setting-up small projects and experimentations, as they are more closely attuned to the OL and the organization’s customers. As aforementioned, MM tries to therefore act as an entrepreneurial role model to their teams and peers, and the majority argue for an inclusive culture and team environment. Such an environment allows the MMs, their teams, other OL-employees, and customers, to be creative and develop their own ideas and innovations to the issues they perceive. This will allow the MM to better perceive their needs and wishes, compared to the TMs, who should be responsible for the overall progress

and empowering and motivating both MM and OL. In doing so, MMs collect and analyze information from the OL and relate it back, via business cases, to the CMT and potentially the UK and US TM team. As such, MMs who initiate and promote experimentation and small projects, as well as partake in them, are able to drive change and promote entrepreneurial behavior among the organizational members. For MM to drive the kaizen-principle throughout the organization, CMT support and them being role models are necessary to convince the MM of the necessity. To promote the experimental activities among OL-employees, MMs try to act as a coach and mentor, empowering and enabling them to become more proactive and risk-taking. They allow the OL-employees to come up with solutions and new ideas to the implementation issues they themselves perceive. However, not all the ideas are always taken into account, as a project leader, the MM promotes new ideas only if they are in congruence with the organization's strategic direction and in adherence to the change program. The MM argues that the traditional directive style is no longer applicable, the OL-employees need to be provided with their own responsibilities, such as goals, aims and budgets.

[MM K]: *"I give them [my team] the freedom to be more entrepreneurial. I say that I need more productivity... come up with a plan. I won't come up with a plan for them."*

By doing this, the MMs promote experimentation and calculative risk-taking to keep on learning, thereby invoking self-driven activities from peers and OL-employees, driving entrepreneurial behavior. The MWB MM teams are encouraged to experiment, be proactive, find solutions and learn from failures. The MM, in addition, then act as a role model, they celebrate the wins with the team to encourage and enthuse them, thereby driving and implementing the change:

[TM J]: *"I try to learn from failures and mistakes, then move forward to reach our set targets, take those learnings and wins and losses with me. [...] This is what I promote within my team and department, keep on experimenting and learning. [...] Calculated risk-taking and proactiveness are needed to drive and implement the change [...] middle managers should be entrepreneurial, celebrate the wins with your team and allow them to do the same to their employees."*

Furthermore, the MMs argue that they can then support the OL-employees and build a strong business case together with them, to try and convince the CMT and thereby the UK and US TM team, to gather resources and support to drive the project. In a sense, by allowing for experimentation, the MMs try to guide and promote ideas and innovations from the OL, to the TMs:

[MM G]: *“My goal is to upgrade their working level to a higher role. I am challenging [emphasis added] them on everything they are doing, asking if we can automate this or if it is necessary. [...] Every 2 or 3 weeks we take out small projects to improve these processes.”*

Other MMs argue that they promote the kaizen principle and guide OL-employees and even peers towards organizational entrepreneurship by starting small, with quick wins. They provide the teams and peers with a goal and allow it up to themselves to find the best way to achieve the goal as a way to instill full autonomy. An example are the aforementioned MMs who undertake entrepreneurial projects, such as the data mindset and thereby gathering a critical mass among peers. Small local initiatives are easily won, they are used to enthuse and motivate departments and OL-employees and are then celebrated. With these small, local initiatives, the MMs try to empower employees to come up with innovative solutions, which are then guided in business cases to the TMs.

[TM J]: *“A successful change hinges on making things smaller, smaller pilot projects [...] easily digestible chunks. If you make things smaller, it is also much more fun to work on. [...] It should be doable and can be successful, small wins, and people should be proud of those wins, get energy from it, so celebrate the wins to energize people. So for me a hurdle can be taken away by partly making the projects in the end smaller.”*

MM uses smaller projects to manage the expectations of TMs, peers, and OL-employees, making things easier to accomplish and convince the upper management levels. One MM responsible for a new-to-the-industry MWB tries to internally promote and implement a novel strategy. However, as this is a grand entrepreneurial and experimental project, it is difficult to implement immediately. As such, the MWB MM starts small by introducing a tiny part of the strategy within the

departments, allowing for quick successes to build a business case to convince the CMT as well as the UK and US TM team. This example touches upon the MM being a role model, as the MM acts entrepreneurial and promotes this behavior. It also touches upon experimentation and local initiatives to drive the organizational change and promote organizational entrepreneurship. In addition, other MMs use smaller projects to allow for an overview of the change, making sense of what is happening and cutting the change initiative into easier to understand pieces. One of the MMs argues for storytelling, because some plans are too big to implement, it might be too hard to convince the OL-employees:

[MM K]: *“[...] people do not always understand Kaizen, they don't want to change [...] and currently don't believe the change, they don't feel it [...] I start small pilot-projects, with suitable people, for a sure-fire win. [...] starting small might work with the tools you have.”*

Four of the MMs believe in small short-term wins, because the organization is heavily focused on short-term financial gains, as such showing immediate results without cost is important. Furthermore, the MMs argues to take smaller steps, make the MWB-project more easily digestible for those involved:

[MM K]: *“Make sure the pace is right because cultural changes are hard, people want to see results right away, thereby expectation management is very important. [...] Show results, celebrate wins.”*

4.2.3 Activities hidden in the dark

Due to their central position in the organization, MMs argue they function as an intermediary link, connecting the initiatives from the top to the activities of the OL. However, on occasion, the organizational structures and regulations inhibit them from undertaking entrepreneurial and change-related activities. For example, the UK and US TM team control heavily on short-term financial gains, and shy away from entrepreneurial activities as they might be too costly in the short term. Therefore, freely undertaking entrepreneurial activities, and exhibiting entrepreneurial behavior is restricted, however, the CMT still tries to implement organizational entrepreneurship due to a perceived market need. One MM stated this discrepancy nicely, outlining in the first part

that change is related to delivering results, and in the second part that one must be hidden entrepreneurial about it:

[MM B]: *“The explicit change is that you need to deliver some things. The implicit change is that you need to be entrepreneurial about it. [...]”*

As such, some MMs describe unorthodox ways to circumvent these barriers and traditional ways of doing things, and still be able to drive the change and carry out their intermediary functions. Undertaking these practices allows them to continue driving the change towards organizational entrepreneurship. These MMs relate an entrepreneurial organizational member to someone who achieves results and gets things done, no matter what. The three MMs relate these practices to decision-making, as is this a slow process in the case-organization. They describe these practices as an *‘hidden role’* during a change process, which allows them to *‘force’* the organization into action by creating a challenge that needs to be solved. The hidden role relates to MMs themselves going against the status-quo, undertaking activities which circumvent the established norms and routines. One MM argues that this is one-way MMs can promote entrepreneurial behavior and change mindsets by acting as an entrepreneurial role model for both top and bottom organizational members. It shows to the top that the organizational structures are a barrier and more support is needed, and to the OL that there are various ways for them to act entrepreneurial both within and outside of the confined organizational areas. The same MM argues that this is not necessarily a good way for decision-making, as it might result in less adherence to organizational rules:

[MM I]: *“This process [Creating a problem that needs to be solved] is one way of doing it but it's not a good way in the long term. [...] instead of discussing a decision-problem that needs to be solved [...] to get some results you need to create some shortcuts to force the organization into decision-making.”*

The organization is described as a *“money-driven machine”* (MM B), focused on short-term wins and financial gains, resulting in the occurrence of these hidden roles. The UK and US TM team controls hard on financial gains to its subsidiary CMT, which has to do the same for its MM and OL-employees, therefore the CMT cannot always support and enable MM to carry out their MWB-

responsibilities. As such, MM who are not fearful of the UK and US TM team, undertake these hidden roles and exhibit behavior and practices referred to as “*guerilla tactics*” (TM H; MM B). This is described by TMs and MMs, as a specific method of undertaking activities and thereby achieving results in the benefit of the organization, but outside of its confines:

[MM B]: *“Try to search for weak spots in this resistance, a framework that doesn’t cost anything, just time.”*

It is the MMs themselves who then pursue their own strategies and vision and gather a critical mass among peers and OL-employees to drive these changes, without letting the CMT know about it. The managers take it upon themselves to be responsible for initiating projects and getting results when the procedures and regulations of the organization are inhibiting them. Therefore, not all the TMs might be aware of these hidden activities undertaken by the MMs and their teams, many of them seem to go unnoticed and only a select few are surfacing. While further asking about this hidden, unorthodox role, the emphasis was put on the individual MMs. The MMs argue that they only exhibit these behaviors due to personal and intrinsic motivation to act in the best interest of the organization, its employees, and its customers. They relate this back to their central position in the organization as an intermediary link, allowing them to steer the organization in the correct direction and further drive change and entrepreneurship. They argue that the CMT does not always work in the best interest of employees and customers, and that structural barriers prevent them from acting in ways best for employees and customers.

[MM B]: *“You believe in something, and check if it's in the best interest of the company, not necessarily in full compliance of what they [CMT] asked of you, but delivering what they should have asked for.”*

5. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the role of MM's during a change process aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, with the aim to respond to the aforementioned literature gaps related to MM's role during a strategic change process and promoting entrepreneurship. As such, this thesis draws on the change management literature and the entrepreneurship literature in order to answer the following research question: *What is middle management's role in promoting entrepreneurship during a change process towards organizational entrepreneurship?* This was done by conducting a case-study at organization X, while qualitatively assessing and analyzing MM's role during the implementation of such a change process. This chapter provides an analysis about the most relevant empirical findings and will discuss them in conjunction with the relevant literature. The first part discusses the change program in conjunction with the MM, the second part discusses MM's role in promoting entrepreneurship, the third part highlights the intermediary role and the fourth part discusses MM as secret change agents and strategic directors due to their unorthodox activities. The chapter finishes with a chapter summary.

5.1 Introducing change

The case description shows that the strategic pillars were developed by the CMT without participation of other organizational members. However, change management literature (Battilana et al., 2010; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Kanter, 2015; Page & Schoder, 2019) extensively argues for the involvement of other organizational members early on during the process due to its perceived benefits on employee empowerment, engagement, commitment, participation (Armenakis et al., 2000; Hoch, 2012; Knight et al., 2017). Involving employees early on during the development of a strategic process could increase the likelihood of strategy innovativeness (Friis & Koch, 2015) and generate awareness of the ongoing change program (Hiatt, 2006) and thereby its success (Dumas & Beneicke, 2017; Heyden et al., 2015). However, Sundbo (2008) and Kotter (1995) rather argue to use a specialized group during the idea-development stage of a change program, which is supported by Garrad and Chamorro-Premuzic (2016). They found that employee involvement during the idea-development stage might indicate stress and could be time-consuming due to discussing too many ideas.

The CMT did, however, involve the MM by co-developing 21 MWBs and allocating 21 responsible MMs to achieve these MWBs as they see fit, providing autonomy. Previous literature does not particularly highlight the importance of MM involvement and empowerment in change processes and in promoting entrepreneurship. Researchers primarily highlight the importance of TM and other internal stakeholders, without mentioning the potential key role of MM in this regard (Chebbi et al., 2019; Dumas & Beneicke, 2017). However, the interviewed CMT argues that MM is in fact important to drive the change towards entrepreneurship, as they are more closely connected to the OL-employees. As such, they try to promote MMs entrepreneurial behavior, and involve and empower them, as they are considered important implementers and drivers of the change. Previous literature implies the benefits of employee empowerment and involvement, without focusing on MM per se (Armenakis et al., 2000; Battilana et al., 2010; Hoch, 2012; Knight et al., 2017). However, the findings suggest that empowerment of MM, and them acting as entrepreneurial role models, to drive the change. MMs allow calculative risk-taking, empower employees to bring new ideas and act proactively, this seems to motivate them to accept the change and exhibit entrepreneurial behavior. In addition, the CMT implies that MM is better equipped to drive these changes as they are more connected to the OL with closer relationships. The findings suggest that it entuses and motivates OL-employees to adhere to the change, and exhibit entrepreneurial behavior themselves, and the CMT indicates that MM is better equipped to do so. This shows that MM have a potential key position to drive change and promote organizational entrepreneurship among other members, complementing previous research by Buick et al. (2018), Chen et al. (2015), Gutberg and Berta's (2017) and Pereira et al. (2020), Teece (2016) and Wu et al. (2018).

However, the findings additionally indicate that some MMs receive too much responsibility and are in danger of having a work overload, or too much left to their own devices. As such, providing too much empowerment might not be beneficial according to Lee, Cheon, Kim and Yun (2017). They found a curvilinear relationship between leadership empowerment and employee performance, suggesting a decline in performance when too much empowerment is given. Furthermore, Yukl and Becker (2006) argue that empowerment is not always effective, because employees might not be used to receiving empowerment. This is related to the findings, because traditionally the case-organization is run in a traditional top-down manner, where obedience is

rewarded and entrepreneurship not. The findings point that some OL-employees and MMs still function in this traditional way, not perceiving the benefits of empowerment. According to Sherf, Tangirala and Venkataramani (2019) this might inhibit idea-generation and implementation from bottom-up.

The findings also imply that not every MMs is evenly concerned or involved with the change initiative. Some MMs are indifferent to the change program, treating it like a hobby project, or do not allocate time to it. The findings indicate this might be due to a lack of understanding the necessity of the change, an unclear change message, not getting the right CMT and peer support, not having enough free time to work on the change, or just disagreeing with the change. This is in contrast to Balogun's (2003) and Hornsby et al's (2013) argument of allocating free time to change recipients' (including MM) agenda to allow experimentation with the change, which could motivate them for the change and possibly promote entrepreneurial behavior (Chebbi et al., 2019; Chen et al. 2015; Wu et al., 2018).

5.2 Promoters of entrepreneurship

During the analysis of this change process, we found that MM's assume various roles to promote organizational entrepreneurship. These roles are linked to different activities as described by MM, and many of them could potentially alter organizational members' behavior. The findings portray that MMs are involving their teams, other OL-employees and MM-peers during the development of their MWB-projects to drive change and organizational entrepreneurship, behavior and activities. This is in congruence with Karlsson and Skålén (2015) who perceive employees as valuable innovators with a better view on customer problems. By involving them in innovative or entrepreneurial activities, it might build strong customer relations and satisfaction (Singh, 2000). Furthermore, as aforementioned in section 5.1, employee involvement brings positive benefits towards a change programs outcome (Armenakis et al., 2000; Hoch, 2012; Kanter, 2015).

Experimentation

The findings indicate that MMs seem to promote experimentation in their teams and allow them to learn from failures. Being able to learn from experimentation is suggested as crucial for driving change (Kao, 2017), and fostering absorptive capabilities among employees is considered to be

important (Sun & Anderson, 2008). Jiménez-Barrionueva et al. (2016) argue that entrepreneurial employees are able to develop and realize an organization's absorptive capabilities, implying that MMs could play a potential role as well. Furthermore, Wales, Parida and Patel (2013) suggest that an organization's absorptive capacity exhibits a curvilinear relationship with financial performance, implying that too much absorptive capacity can have negative financial outcomes. In the light of this, the UK and US TM team could therefore be thought of as acting like a buffer for the case organization, as they are emphasizing financial control. By choosing which employees to engage in tasks and by empowering them, the MMs show that they have an important role in developing these capabilities within the organization. These capabilities allow organizational members to assimilate knowledge which could be in favor of the change program (Yi et al., 2015). Schweiger et al. (2016) argue that this would stimulate the recognition of the need for change, which could contribute in driving it throughout the organization as well (Dey, 2017).

In addition, the MMs divide MWB-projects into more easily understandable and digestible “chunks” for their teams, in order not to overburden them. As such, it is suggested that MMs are in a better position to employ, what Stouten et al. (2018) calls “transitional structures”, which allow for a more gradual change progression, thereby possibly developing change-readiness among members (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). These structures allow for a provision of space and time for members to experiment with the change (Golden-Biddle, 2013; Hornsby et al., 2013) and could motivate recipients to actively participate in changes and entrepreneurial activities (Chebbi et al., 2019; Kao 2017; Weinberger et al., 2018). Some MM indeed indicate to provide time to their teams and OL-employees to act entrepreneurial, which seems to work as new ideas and initiatives are being generated. Furthermore, the literature agrees that local experiments (Buick et al., 2018; Stouten et al., 2018) could stimulate opportunity-recognizing behaviors (Cai et al., 2018), innovative capabilities (Al-kalouti et al., 2020) and problem-solving skills (Fugate et al., 2012), thereby possibly promoting entrepreneurial activities (Wu et al., 2018).

Decision-makers

The findings show that the CMT empowered and enabled MMs to drive and implement change by refreshing the organization's workforce. MMs are allowed to decide who is part of the organization and who is not, by dismissing OL-employees who do not exhibit change- and entrepreneurial-

related capabilities. MMs argue they hire OL-employees and team members who exhibit dynamic capabilities, which literature argues to be those who are able to recognize the need for change and better respond and adapt to them (Winter, 2003). Wang and Wang (2017) implicitly link these capabilities to an entrepreneurial mindset and potentially entrepreneurship. This implies that MMs, by replenishing the workforce with entrepreneurial members, are able to promote entrepreneurial behavior by sending a clear message to the OL. Using a punishment system, or implicitly conveying threats might weaken employees' voluntary cooperation (Fehr & Falk, 2002) to adhere to the change towards entrepreneurship. As such, MM might not be promoting organizational entrepreneurship, but discourage it by using these systems.

Furthermore, by selecting these "right" people, it appears that MM only focuses on those exhibiting entrepreneurial behavior and traits. However, Taylor (2011) argues that this might create an excess of entrepreneurial organizational members, which is not necessarily good, and Garvan and Levesque (2006) argue a balance is recommended. In addition, by selecting only those one sees as the "right" people, it might indicate that managers select those with the same mindset and behavior, potentially warding against different thoughts (Garrad & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). This might lead to the development of homogeneous mental models, which negatively impact a change process and the development of innovative solutions (Garrad & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016; Valle Santos & Teresa Garcia, 2006). In addition, this might be detrimental for organizational performance (Bremmer, 2014) and its innovativeness (Nagji & Tuff, 2012).

Entrepreneurial role models

In addition, the interviewed TMs and MMs argue that MM should exhibit entrepreneurial traits and act as role models for their teams, peers, and other OL-employees in order to drive change and entrepreneurship. The findings indicate that due to MMs central organizational position, they motivate OL-employees and MM-peers to exhibit entrepreneurial behaviors and activities. This lends support to Wu et al.'s (2018) proposition that MM plays a decisive role in institutionalizing entrepreneurship due to their intermediary position. Furthermore, these findings are in congruence with Cai et al. (2018) and Teece (2016) who argue that an entrepreneurial manager, assuming a role model function, can promote organizational entrepreneurship. Linder and Bothello (2015) have also recognized the importance of MM and their autonomous activities which can propel the

organization's strategic activities. The interviewees suggest that MM are better equipped to do so, compared to TMs and OL-employees, with a possible exception made for influential employees. However, although the interviewees, primarily from the managerial level, implies that MMs should be role models and assume these roles, one OL interviewee confirms this in section 4.2. As Morgenroth, Ryan and Peters (2015) state, a role model only exists, because of the existence of role aspirants, individuals who, due to their beliefs and values, actively mimic another person, the proposed role model. Moreover, the findings only point towards one potential role aspirant, as such, even though the findings point towards MM as entrepreneurial role models as suggested by literature, more empirical evidence is recommended.

Knowledge, idea, and innovation managers

The findings related to MMs driving change and promoting entrepreneurship (section 4.2) indicate that MM is displaying characteristics according to the roles as theorized by Platzek et al. (2014) in order to promote organizational entrepreneurship. As such, the findings seem to provide empirical evidence towards these potential, theorized MM roles. This is confirmed by the interviewed OL-employee, who argues that her entrepreneurial behavior and activities are encouraged, and that she is being motivated and empowered to present her ideas to issues. However, it should be noted that only one OL-employee was interviewed, implying that other OL-employees might think or experience this differently.

The '*knowledge manager*', according to Platzek et al. (2014), is the one who controls the flow of information top-down and bottom up. As the MM's described their role towards their teams as being the filter and the one who disseminates information, the MM's can be viewed as exhibiting this role. The MM's stated that by sharing information and keeping the employees á jour with the organization at large, they both made the work more fun and stimulated their activity and their possibility to contribute with their own ideas. However, the MM who describe themselves as "filters" towards their employees do in fact decide what and how much (i.e. limiting) information to pass on which might have a negative impact on employees by limiting their creativity and commitment (Teece, 2016). Regardless, the findings support Wu et al's (2018) arguments that MMs, due to their intermediary position, use the information and knowledge gained top-down and bottom-up to drive and promote entrepreneurial activities, as they co-develop business cases for

potential entrepreneurial ideas. This is also aligned with the findings of Dey (2017) who suggests that this behavior can drive change.

Some MMs exhibited traits of being an '*idea manager*' (Platzek et al., 2017), which is theorized to create a match between new ideas and the organization's strategic direction. The idea manager is exemplified by the findings, as some of the interviewed MMs were promoting their MWB-projects in order to generate autonomy and intra-organizational collaborations among departments and OL-employees. The purpose was to help the departments and OL-employees to create new offerings and alter their ways of doing business, thereby potentially undertaking new activities and creating new business. Furthermore, the findings appear to show that the MMs were receiving feedback from the OL about new ideas and innovations and are co-developing business cases to convey these findings back to the CMT, thereby matching ideas to the entrepreneurial strategic direction. This indicates agreement with Wu et al.'s (2018) arguments that some MMs are able to gather ideas from the OL-levels and then help gain support for these ideas, thereby driving and promoting organizational entrepreneurship.

MMs also creates the impression to assume the role of an '*innovation manager*' as theorized by Platzek et al. (2014), who guides ideas to implementation and promotes new innovations. The findings suggest that the MMs take up this role, as they act as a coach for their teams, guiding and helping when they share ideas and suggestions. In addition, MMs were found to co-develop business cases with OL-employee ideas and suggestions, to submit the CMT. Cai et al. (2018) suggests this to stimulate entrepreneurial behavior and thus driving the change program (Dey, 2017). The findings provide evidence for this suggestion, as OL-employees feel more empowered, and MMs argue that more entrepreneurial ideas are coming from the OL. Moreover, some of the MMs can potentially be viewed as having traits of an entrepreneurial effectuator and role model as they build a participatory culture, which brings in more internal stakeholders who can contribute towards the realization of ideas and projects (Sarasvathy, 2001; Teece, 2016). The findings indicate that the MMs were also empowering their teams and OL-employees. MMs provided their teams with the freedom and responsibility to structure their work autonomously. Weinberger et al. (2018) argues that the empowerment of employees stimulates entrepreneurial activities, which the findings support, as teams became more productive and new ideas are being shared and acted upon.

However, MM is recommended by Elnaga and Imran (2014) to exercise caution when empowering employees to act autonomously. They argue that employees might have too much responsibility, inhibiting their daily work. Other employees might have too little knowledge to make good business decisions, while others might misuse their new power.

Platzek et al. (2014) suggests an integration of these roles by managers to drive organizational entrepreneurship, and the findings support this notion. It seems that MM is able to assume *multiple entrepreneurial roles*, such as simultaneously assuming the function of a knowledge manager and idea manager in order to further drive the change and entrepreneurial behavior to other organizational members, portraying their organizational diversity (Buick et al., 2018; Gutberg & Berta, 2017). Platzek et al. (2014) argues for this feat but does not mention the potential of MM to spread these roles throughout the organization, affecting the mindset of others and as such promoting and driving organizational entrepreneurship. For example, the aforementioned MM who promotes autonomy throughout the organization, appears to stimulate and motivate other organizational members to assume the role of a knowledge manager. This project allows departments to collect and analyze information, thereby developing their absorptive capabilities to detect new opportunities and risks. Sun and Anderson (2008) argued that absorptive capabilities might lead to entrepreneurship, and the findings indicate that MM might help develop these capabilities in organizational members. This suggests that (entrepreneurial) MMs could drive entrepreneurial behavior (Teece, 2016) and could be key change agents in promoting organizational entrepreneurship (Wu et al., 2018).

One non-MWB-MM does state that she does not feel the change, as she is not involved much in the change program but does state that she guides and implements ideas bottom-up. Furthermore, one OL-employee was interviewed who stated she could contribute ideas and felt empowered, but the findings do not reveal whether other OL-employees could do the same, as such placing these findings in a larger organizational context is difficult.

Despite the evidence pointing towards Platzek et al.'s (2014) theorized role, which MMs seem to assume to promote entrepreneurship during a change program, the findings in section 4.2.2 shows that some employees including MMs, are still working in the traditional way, discouraging

entrepreneurial activities and behavior, even during change towards entrepreneurship. These MMs do not seem to assume the aforementioned entrepreneurial roles as theorized by Platzek et al. (2014), actually pointing in a reverse way. Hewlett (2016) argues that managers might discourage idea-generation and entrepreneurial activities, or just not communicate it to TM, because they are stuck in the traditional way of working, or identify strongly with the status-quo, afraid of losing power (Yuki, 2013), which the findings seem to confirm. However, Sherf, Tangirala and Venkataramani (2019) furthermore state that this could also occur due to an organization's short-termism inhibiting managers to guide and implement OL ideas, and as such, organizational entrepreneurship, which section 4.1 clearly states.

5.3 Change intermediaries

The findings further imply that the interviewed MMs were able to assume these entrepreneurial roles due to their central position within the organization. The findings indicate Balogun's (2003) suggestion of MMs role as change intermediaries during change processes, communicating and conveying information and knowledge top-down and bottom-up (Buick et al., 2018; Gutberg & Berta, 2017), as depicted in figure 1.

According to Bower and Gibert (2007), in a large organization, TMs are more concerned with the organizational strategic direction, while operating managers (MM) are more attuned to the OL. The findings explicitly and implicitly suggest that MMs take a central position within the case-organization and thereby assume the role of a change intermediary during the change process. This role seems to enable MMs to promote entrepreneurial behavior and activities throughout the organization, thereby driving and implementing the change towards entrepreneurship via open and honest communication top-down and bottom-up. As such, the findings provide support to Buick et al.'s (2018), Chen et al.'s (2015) and Wu et al.'s (2018) proposal that MM, due to the intermediary position, could play a role in addressing resistance and readiness to change via communication. While assuming the role of a change intermediary, the findings further indicate that this enables MM to manage the expectations of both OL-employees and TM, while additionally making sense of the ongoing process and ideas. These findings thereby suggest MM to take a brokering and sense-making role in order to further drive change towards

entrepreneurship, as suggested by literature (Balogun, 2003; Buick et al., 2018; Guiette & vandenbempt, 2017; Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019; Pereira et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2018).

5.3.1 Communicators and motivators

The findings support Yukl's (2013) notion of MM's central position in the organization and indicate the role of a change intermediary as suggested by Balogun (2003). The case organization's MM drive changes top-down by communicating the change message, and bottom-up by gathering OL-feedback and communicating it to TM. This seems to encourage commitment and change-supportive behavior towards entrepreneurship, which is in congruence with the arguments provided by Buick et al. (2018), Chen et al. (2015); Gutberg and Berta (2017) and Wu et al. (2018).

Strategic linkpin

The findings imply that MM is a bridge between the CMT and OL-employees (Balogun, 2006; Buick et al., 2018; Nizam & Mohd Nazari, 2019), by acting as information, knowledge and communication gatekeepers from the top-down and bottom-up (Gutberg & Berta 2017). This allows them to broker expectations between both levels, thereby driving change and promoting entrepreneurship. However, as change indicates a loss (Bailey & Raelin, 2015), potentially of resources and power (Yukl, 2013), this function could allow the managers to resist the change as well (Hamel & Välinkangas, 2003) by manipulating the change message in a negative way (Nizam and Mohd Nazari, 2019). However, the findings point towards Balogun's (2003) change intermediary suggestion, as the MMs appear to act as a change recipient and agent. As a change recipient, MM receives the change message from the CMT during the change process, conveying the necessity, benefits and implications of the change. As a change agent, the majority of the interviewed MMs conveyed this message down to their peers, departments, teams, other OL-employees and customers. One might argue that the MMs here function as spokespeople of the CMT (Cummings & Worley, 2008), by just conveying the message, expectations, and information, without really driving the change towards entrepreneurship. However, the findings indicate that the MMs undertook various activities, such as experimentation and empowerment to drive the change and promote entrepreneurship. In addition, they used the information from the top, and social networks and knowledge from the bottom, to drive the change and promote entrepreneurial behavior, confirming Wu et al.'s (2018) suggestion.

The findings did not imply MM to have access to sensitive internal knowledge from the CMT, as proposed by Gutberg and Berta (2017), but do imply that MM has access to internal knowledge from the OL. Section 4.2 of the findings further support Cao et al.'s (2016), Buick et al.'s (2018) and Gutberg and Berta (2017) notion about MMs receiving feedback from the OL about change implementation issues, innovations, and new innovative ideas, and championing them to the CMT (Tarakci, Ateş, Floyd, Ahn & Wooldridge, 2018). The findings show that the interviewed MM provides feedback and champions ideas from their teams to the top (Tarakci et al., 2018) by co-developing business cases to provide the CMT with relevant, filtered information about possible new business ventures and opportunities. The interviewed OL-employee argues this is empowering and helps to drive the entrepreneurial mindset throughout the organization. This seems to be in congruence with the idea, knowledge and innovation managerial roles in which MM could potentially promote organizational entrepreneurship (Platzek et al., 2014). The interviewed MMs argue that receiving OL-employees' feedback is key to drive change, and the interviewed TMs argue this is necessary to gain a clear picture of the ongoing change process. This indicates that both TM and OL-employees perceive the importance of MMs and their role in the organization. Some researchers (Young & Jordan, 2008; Mihalache, Jansen, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2014) emphasizes the importance of the TM in driving change and exploiting opportunities, while others (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Hill et al., 2012; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007) argue for the importance of employee involvement in implementing and driving change and organizational entrepreneurship (Urban & Wood, 2015), implying that MMs also play an important role.

Building relationships

As a presumably change intermediary, MMs appear to use two-way open and honest communication to cause a positive snowball-effect in driving change and promoting entrepreneurial activities, as suggested by Teece (2016) and Wu et al. (2018). The interviewees argue that this addresses recipients' fear towards change and that it might reduce potential resistance, thereby agreeing with Bailey and Raelin (2015) and Armenakis et al. (2000). It additionally supports the notion of MM's brokering role by aligning perception of the change between TMs and OLs (Buick et al., 2018).

The findings imply that some of the MMs try to use their social networks to gather a critical mass of influential employees and form alliances among peers and departments to help implement their MWB-projects and/or ideas. Other MMs co-develop business cases to build a positive relationship with their teams, and to then influence TMs about the importance of their solutions and ideas. The use of social networks to appoint influential employees and forming alliances is in line with Sarasvathy's (2001) aforementioned effectuator theory. This theory states that entrepreneurs use the options available to them in order to accomplish their goals. They find the right people with the correct competencies to involve in projects and negotiate alliances with shared benefits. Some of the interviewed MMs exhibit these behaviors and can therefore be viewed as entrepreneurial role models, promoting entrepreneurial behavior throughout the organization (Cai et al., 2018; Teece, 2016).

Moreover, Stouten et al. (2018) argues that employee (MM and OL-employees) involvement and social networks mobilizes energy among members for the change, and Ma et al. (2011) suggests it promotes entrepreneurship. The findings indicate that MMs try to gather a critical mass to accomplish their MWB projects, thereby driving change and promoting organizational entrepreneurship. This seems to be in congruence with Wu et al's (2018) claim that MM can gather a critical mass to stimulate entrepreneurial behavior and activities. The findings further imply that MMs do this by motivating, using and appointing influential employees, or opinion leaders, for the change, who can then positively influence other organizational members. Change management literature (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Karlsson & Skålen, 2015; Valente & Pumpuang, 2007) argues that opinion leaders, by being role models, can be used to drive change and promote a desired behavior, however they primarily argue that TM should appoint them, without mentioning MM. These findings, however, indicate that MM are capable of appointing and using opinion leaders to drive change, because of their close connection and positive relationship with the OL. This confirms Soenen et al's (2017) notion that a positive relationship between MM and the OL might motivate for change, which Chen et al. (2015) extends to the promotion of entrepreneurship. The findings only find implicit and indirect evidence of this notion, because when the change message is conveyed clearly from top to bottom, the OL-employees are suggested to exhibit less resistance and view the change as a positive enabler. As aforementioned, change management

literature perceives the use of opinion leaders as necessary to overcome change and promote behavioral change. However, when critically reviewing Armenakis and Harris (2009) reflections, they state that opinion leaders can serve as change agents, the authors speculate this might also imply that they could potentially resist change as well. It might mean that managers (including MM) want to identify opinion leaders to spot those who could resist the proposed change the hardest, and exercise caution when choosing them as change agents, because change is closely connected to the concept of loss (Bailey & Raelin, 2015; Yukl, 2013, p. 81). This might mean that (influential) employees might lose their influential position and prestige, resulting in a resistance to change (Godkin, 2010; Oreg, 2006). As such, opinion leaders could be those forwarding the resistance to change within an organization, therefore, careful identification is required (Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). One could take this a step further and state that not every manager might want change to happen due to the same concept of loss (Yukl, 2013), being stuck in the traditional way of working or identify strongly with the status-quo (Hewlett, 2006). The thesis' authors speculate that these managers could potentially use like-minded opinion leaders in order to maintain the status-quo (Bower & Gilbert, 2007; Hamel & Välinkanas, 2003; Hammond et al., 2006; Proudfoot & Kay, 2014). However, the findings did not provide evidence for this phenomenon, but it should be noted that not all organizational members were interviewed, potentially missing those who (actively) resist the change. This might indicate that MMs not only assume the role of a positive change intermediary, but potentially a negative one as well.

Change motivators

Furthermore, due to their intermediary position, some MMs also use other enabling practices, such as intangible rewards, like (learning) goals, praises and recognition to promote desired behavior and motivate members towards the change, addressing their resistance and readiness to change. Literature on performance management (Cerasoli et al., 2014; Groen, Wouters, Wilderom, 2012; Ittner, 2008) agrees with this notion, as intangible rewards are indicated to intrinsically motivate employees, and Chebbi et al. (2019) argues for the use of reward systems to drive and achieve organizational change. The MMs argue that using goals would lead teams to feel responsible for team outcomes, while providing them with the autonomy to generate their own ideas. Literature on goal setting agrees with this notion, as goals can intrinsically motivate individuals (Cerasoli et al., 2014) and increase commitment and belief in the change (Blatstein, 2012). According to

Stouten et al. (2018), goals can also be used to stimulate learning and problem-solving skills (Fugate et al., 2012) and thereby stimulate creative behavior (Cai et al., 2018; Mahringer & Renzl, 2018). In contrast, some scholars (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky and Bazerman, 2009; Seijts & Latham, 2005) argue that goal setting is not the panacea as has been portrayed. Goals can be too challenging, causing negative impacts such as decreased learning and motivation and might narrow focus. Furthermore, some TMs have empowered their MWB-MMs to be able to use a punishment system by deciding who to dismiss from and keep within the workforce, as discussed in 5.2 “*decision-makers*”. The MMs thereby convey the message and expectations of the CMT about the importance of the change program, indicating MM brokering roles. Organizational members (TMs, MM & OL-employees) exhibiting entrepreneurial- and change-related traits are “rewarded” with keeping their function, while others are punished with dismissal. This is in congruence with Kadarusman and Herabadi (2018) research that using both reward and punishment systems can motivate organizational members to commit to a change. The findings seem to confirm this, as MM could indeed play a significant role in promoting entrepreneurial behavior and activities, as proposed by Buick et al. (2018), Chen et al. (2015) and Wu et al. (2018). However, according to Kerr (1978) reward systems might have adverse effects, because it rewards the behavior they are trying to discourage, while not rewarding the desired behavior. As such, punishing non-entrepreneurial employees, might lead to employees exhibiting fake entrepreneurial behavior to please supervisors and not to lose their organizational position (Shumski, Olien, Rogelberg, Allen & Kello, 2018). Furthermore, Fehr and Falk (2002) argue that using punishment systems weakens employees’ voluntary cooperation, as they perceive it as an hostile intention towards themselves. However, the findings actually point towards the opposite, as MM and OL-employees seem to be motivated by the punishment to adhere to the change program.

Change process evaluators

As MM are closer to the OL compared to TMs, the findings suggest they are better equipped to evaluate the implementation and institutionalization of change, as proposed by Gutberg and Berta (2017), and indirectly by Chen et al. (2015). Every three months the MWB-MMs have an evaluation about the MWB progression by the CMT, as such the MM perceived themselves to be project leaders, responsible for their teams’ output. Therefore, they continuously ask for feedback, set goals, monitor, evaluate and improve their teams’ output and progress, as such they empower

employees (Ortega et al., 2013) and evaluate the progression of change over-time, as proposed by Cummings and Worley (2008) and Yukl (2013). In addition, Cai et al. (2018) and Mahringer and Renzl (2018) argue that goal setting can be used to monitor change-related behavior and evaluate change progress over-time. Some MMs encourage their teams to act proactively and autonomously, empowering them to come up with their own solutions and ideas to issues. The MMs give the impression of coaching their teams, review proposals, evaluate team and individual progression and results, praise their work, and celebrate successes, which seem to lead to and drive new innovations. As such the findings indicate Platzek et al.'s (2014) entrepreneurial managerial roles, and Sartori et al.'s (2018) evidence that change can be managed by education and training, and that personal improvement leads to potential new ideas. The MMs argue that this drives the change, as OL-employees who receive the opportunity to act entrepreneurial influence other teams to do the same (Teece, 2016). The findings appear to show that MM promotes OL activities by focusing on proactiveness and autonomy which could lead to new ideas (McKenny et al., 2018) and the exhibition of entrepreneurship (Weinberger et al., 2018). This suggests that entrepreneurship, and the entrepreneurial behavior of organizational members, might contribute to changing the organization and driving the change further (Dey, 2017; Kuratko et al., 2013).

5.3.2 Interpreters of meaning

The findings regarding communication of the change message, sharing of information, receiving feedback, and interpreting CMT-messages, points towards MMs managing expectations. This might confirm Buick et al.'s (2018) and Pereira et al.'s (2020) suggestion of MMs brokering role, and their sense-making role (Balogun, 2006; Vos & Rupert, 2018) as indicated in section 2.2 '*brokers*' and '*sense-makers*'.

The majority of the interviewed MM communicate the change message down to their teams and other OL-employees to create an understanding of the change and its implications and benefits. The MMs implies that when they themselves, peers, teams, and OL-employees understand what is expected of them and the potential benefits, they are more committed to the change, indicating MM's brokering role (Pereira et al., 2020). To generate understanding, the MMs argue they filter and translate the message's content and policies, thereby making sense of the message. However, the findings do not indicate to what extent the managers make sense of the message for the OL-

employees. Some of the interviewed managers argue that the OL does not yet believe, live and understand the change, indicating that not every MMs assumes the sense-making role to promote entrepreneurship and drive change. It is further argued that those MMs themselves do not believe, live and understand the change, thereby pointing towards TMs to first make sense of the change, before MMs are able to communicate it top-down (Buick et al., 2018; Gutberg & Berta, 2017). The MMs do argue that by filtering certain pieces of the message, such as negative implications and complex information, they reduce the workload pushed onto their teams. This is suggested to reduce the burden on teams, provide role clarity and address their resistance, which confirms Buick et al.'s (2018) notion of MM's brokering role. In addition, the interviewees argue that this allegedly promotes entrepreneurial behavior and activities, as teams have more space and time to experiment with the change and come up with their own suggestions to customer issues, which is confirmed by the interviewed OL-employee. As such, it points towards Platzek et al.'s (2014) theory of managers assuming a knowledge and innovation manager role to promote entrepreneurship. In this sense, the MMs effectively manipulate the meaning and understanding of the change, making it easier to digest and understand by their teams. This is in accordance with Nizam and Mohd Nazari's (2019) evidence of MMs having the micropolitical power to shape and manipulate members to converge to or diverge from the proposed change, and possibly entrepreneurial behavior (Wu et al., 2018). However, the strength of the manipulation is insufficiently highlighted in the findings, which could indicate that the power behind the manipulation might not be as strong as suggested by the interviewed MMs.

Furthermore, MM asks and communicates OL-feedback about implementation issues, innovations, and new ideas, to TM by filtering out unnecessary information to only communicate relevant information bottom-up (Gutberg & Berta (2017)). When MM assumes this intermediary communication role, TM argues it can help overcome implementation problems at the OL (Wiedner et al., 2017) and provide empowerment to MM and OL-employees, agreeing with Bankins et al.'s (2016) arguments. However, section 4.1 shows that not everywhere throughout the organization the change is felt nor seen, potentially refuting Gutberg and Berta's (2017) MM gatekeeper function. One of the interviewed TMs argued that MMs are useful to make sense of the change implementation issues as felt and perceived by the OL as they are the voice of employees, the interviewed MMs confirm this. This statement aligns with Balogun and Johnson's (2004) and

Guiette and Vandembemt's (2017) notion of MM as sense-makers of change due to their close social connection to the OL. As MM filters OL ideas and knowledge, it might mean they play a role in resource-allocations towards certain innovations, potentially assuming a mediation role (Buick et al., 2018). The findings confirm this statement, as MMs co-develop strong business cases to gain resources and funding for their conjoint projects. This seems to be in line with the knowledge manager role of Platzek et al. (2014), and with Wu et al.'s (2018) proposal that MM can drive and implement organizational entrepreneurship by translating market needs into innovations (Lassen et al., 2009). Furthermore, feedback is suggested to reduce the power distance between TM and the OL (Geys, 2014) by improving the relationships between parties (Yukl, 2013), suggesting the brokering role of MM (Pereira et al., 2020). However, OL-employees can also provide false feedback to the MM in order to secure their own well-being, power position and/or show competence (Geys, 2014; Hamel & Välinkangas, 2003). When MM relays this feedback to the top, it could provide a skewed image of the change progression, potentially negatively impacting the change. This could indicate that MM might not broker expectations bottom-up or function as a gatekeeper, but rather acts as a hatch for an individual, framed message. As such, MM might want to exercise caution when relaying feedback to the top.

Other MMs use story-telling and small-scale pilot projects to reduce the workload on their teams, provide role clarity and make sense of the change towards organizational entrepreneurship, pointing towards MMs sense- and brokering roles (Balogun, 2006; Buick et al., 2018; Pereira et al., 2020). This additionally seems to promote entrepreneurial behavior and activities, as explained in section 5.2 '*experimentation*'. Furthermore, Sonenshein (2010) theorized about how managers could use narratives to make sense of the change, thereby influencing members to converge to or diverge from the proposed change, and the findings show that MM might play a key role here. Storytelling has been suggested as a powerful tool for managers to influence employees and their behavior (Sole & Wilson, 2002), and the finding shows MM could play a key role here due to their intermediary position. However, story-telling could also have undesired side-effects, according to Sole and Wilson (2002), who argue that employees can be biased by how a story is told and "seduced" by its content, making it difficult to critically evaluate and decipher the message within the story. This would weaken MM's potential role as information gatekeepers and sense-makers. In addition, storytelling can become story-selling, potentially altering the original message by

changing the way in which the story and its dialogue are being communicated (Carr & Ann, 2011). The findings indicate that some of case-organization's MMs undertake story-selling to drive the change, however, it seems to promote entrepreneurial behavior, as long as the MM assumes an entrepreneurial role (Teece, 2016).

5.4 Secret change agents

The case-organization has a clear-cut hierarchy, meaning decisions are taken by the UK and US TM team, making any change proposal by a country subsidiary organization difficult. As such, some of the interviewed MMs indicate the need to perform activities 'behind the scenes' in order to continue driving the change towards entrepreneurship. Some MMs described that they had to do activities in an unorthodox way to achieve results. In addition, to "*make things happen*" and to drive change in their areas, two of the MMs argued that they would sometimes fabricate 'problems' or 'challenges', which would steer the organization into certain decisions and activities. Literature does not address such MM activities in order to promote entrepreneurship and drive change, therefore it remains unclear. However, Sundbo (1996) describes this phenomenon as 'free entrepreneurship' indicating an individual undertaking entrepreneurial activity by itself, which he proposes is necessary for idea generation. He further argues that it is not as efficient as organized entrepreneurship and will likely result in failures due to inefficient resource allocation. The findings in section 4.2.3. suggest agreeing with Sundbo on both points, as these hidden activities lack resources, but are perceived by one TM as important for the change program's success and to drive organizational entrepreneurship. In addition, de Wit and Meyer (2010) potentially relate the unorthodox activities to '*guerilla tactics*' and consider it a sign for a need for change. Pascale and Sternin (2005) are discussing something similar in their *business review article*, and suggest that managers who undertake such activities are to be considered "*secret change agents*" who, against all odds and restrictions, create the impression to prevail and do things in a radically better way. They argue that change leadership overlooks these agents, which our findings point towards, and suggest TM to empower them, as they are the ones who truly undertake change management. The findings show that these activities are used by MM to gather a critical mass of organizational members to drive and implement their own projects and ideas, and as such entrepreneurship, which is in congruence with Wu et al's (2018). Furthermore, Cai et al. (2018) argue that entrepreneurial leadership, those undertaking the hidden activities, could stimulate the promotion of

entrepreneurial behavior by influencing members' mindset to act entrepreneurial (Teece, 2016). In addition, these roles seem to spread the theorized managerial roles of Platzek et al. (2014) throughout the organization's departments, thereby potentially driving change (Dey 2017). This indicates that MM could possibly be stimulators and orchestrators of organizational entrepreneurship, potentially confirming Chen et al.'s (2015) and Wu et al.'s (2018) claims. However, this phenomenon in driving change and organizational entrepreneurship seems to be largely underexposed in change management literature.

5.4.1 Strategic directors

These hidden activities resemble the example of Bower and Gilbert (2007) describing a story of a curious controller who got a request to build a large chimney and decided to investigate it further. Once the controller reached the site where the chimney was ordered, he discovered that the manager in charge had built a whole new factory. This example shows how managers act according to what they think is best for the organization, without informing leadership of their intentions. The findings describe something similar, as some MM argue they had to act in ways which normally would not get organizational support. Bower and Gilbert (2007) propose that lower level managers (OL and MM) are the drivers of strategy by enhancing or undercutting the strategic initiatives from the top. Some MMs indeed state that they rather focus on what is best for the organization instead of blind compliance to the CMT, thereby referring to the fabrication of 'problems' or 'challenges' in order to steer the organization into certain decisions and activities. As such, MM can be perceived as potential drivers of strategy, and in some perspectives, they might even be the ones shaping the strategy of the organization as they decide where to focus attention and allocate resources (Bower & Gilbert, 2007). A recurrent example is that of the MMs who promote autonomy to departments, and the MMs who decide which ideas are being supported by co-developing business cases for these ideas to gather (financial) resources. However, the strength of their action in affecting the strategy remains unclear. In addition, these activities could allow the MMs to either diverge from or converge to the change program as proposed by TM, thereby assuming the role of (hidden) change champions or change resistors. The findings indicate the former, as MMs are driving the change towards entrepreneurship.

Linder and Bothello (2015) argue that TM support and decision-making rights are vital antecedents for MM strategic activities. However, this was not expressed as a critical antecedent for the MMs undertaking the hidden activities. This behavior might be perceived as entrepreneurial, because it relates to managers trying to realize their ideas without organizational support (Sundbo, 1996; Pascale & Sternin, 2005). This emphasizes the possible importance of personal motivation, as career derailment might be a real outcome for the MMs engaging in such endeavors, especially when unsuccessful (Kuratko et al., 2005). Moreover, Burgelman (1983) relates entrepreneurial activities in an organization to autonomous strategic behavior occurring when organizational members recognize opportunities exceeding those proffered by TM, which allows members to go beyond formal job descriptions. The examples from MM showcase that they cannot be only thought of as change intermediaries (Figure 1), but might also influence other organizational members towards entrepreneurship with their activities (Wu et al., 2018), thereby driving the case-organization's change program.

5.5 Chapter summary

Analysis of MMs activities strongly support MM to assume the roles during change as suggested by the literature review section 2.2., despite the research limitations as stated throughout chapter 5. The findings indicate that MMs do in fact have an important role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship during change, in various ways. MMs assume the roles of a knowledge, idea and innovation managers as theorized by Platzek et al. (2014) to promote organizational entrepreneurship, and additionally spread these roles to other organizational members.

MM was enabled to do so, due to their intermediary function, which allowed them to communicate top-down and bottom-up. By doing so, they were able to share knowledge and information, thereby promoting and driving entrepreneurship and change. In this same regard, MM seems to act as sense-makers and filterers of the change message from TM to the OL, thereby reducing the OL's workload, which would allow them to experiment with the proposed change. In addition, MM appears to convey OL-feedback about implementation issues, solutions, ideas and innovation bottom-up, thereby building business cases to convince the TM about the feasibility of their initiated MWB-projects.

Interestingly, some MMs convey the impression to behave as ‘*secret change agents*’ (Pascale & Sternin, 2005) by driving change and promoting entrepreneurship by undertaking unorthodox activities. This potentially highlights MMs entrepreneurial behavior during a change process, assuming the roles as theorized by Platzek et al. (2014) and spreading organizational entrepreneurship by being an entrepreneurial role model (Teece, 2016; Wu et al., 2018). Furthermore, these activities might impact the strategic direction of the organization, underlining the importance of MMs in change. However, the literature on these MM hidden activities and roles remains unclear and underexposed in change management literature.

6. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by firstly connecting the previous sections with the research aim and objective. Secondly, the managerial implications are presented, ending with recommendations for future research.

6.1 Research aim and objective

The thesis' objective was to investigate MM's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship during a change process towards organizational entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the aim of the thesis was to enrich the literature of change management and entrepreneurship by providing empirical data and a deeper understanding of MM's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship, and in change processes. The relevance of MM is supported by the current findings which show that they exhibit roles promoting entrepreneurship.

The findings from this thesis contribute to the current literature on several aspects. The empirical findings support Platzek et al.'s (2014) theorized roles of an innovation, idea and knowledge manager who can spread, promote and implement organizational entrepreneurship. The findings indicate that MMs, due to their intermediary position, play a key role in assuming these roles and undertaking the related activities. The MMs appear to be able to influence the mindset and behavior of organizational members to undertake entrepreneurial activities and exhibit entrepreneurial behavior by acting as an entrepreneurial role model (Teece, 2016). This role model function suggests allowing them to spread Platzek et al.'s (2014) theorized roles, the change, and entrepreneurship, throughout the organization as well.

Furthermore, the MMs appear to assume the role of sense-makers by assuming a communication and knowledge gatekeeper both top-down and bottom-up. They make sense of the change message from TM and feedback as received from the OL (Buick et al., 2018; Gutberg & Berta, 2017). The MMs seem to be those who filter information and knowledge to not overburden their teams, while championing ideas from the OL to the top, thereby driving the change and promoting entrepreneurship. In addition, the MMs appear to assume a brokering position, conveying the expectations from TM down to the OL by using rewards and punishments. The MM shows the

capability to replenish the workforce autonomously, keeping those who exhibit change-accepting and entrepreneurial behavior, and dismissing others, thereby promoting organizational entrepreneurship. Taking these roles together, MMs creates the impression to be able to negotiate and mediate between the OL and TM. MM communicates the expectations of TM and changes content and consequences to the OL, while conveying the wishes and needs from the OL back to TM. In this sense, MM could take up a negotiating, or mediating role due to their intermediary position, about the content of the change, and try to find the best way to please both levels, maintaining positive relationships, in order to increase the likelihood of a successful change implementation.

In addition, we found that MMs act as “*secret change agents*” by undertaking unorthodox activities during the change process, without the consent of TM. This allows them to covertly drive the change and promote organizational entrepreneurship by motivating and affecting organizational members' behavior (Wu et al., 2018). Furthermore, it seems that these unorthodox activities allow MMs to potentially influence and/or steer the organization's strategic direction as well (Bower & Gilbert, 2007), assuming a “*strategic directors*” role. The strength of this influence remains unclear, however, during a change process, which is chaotic in nature, the influence of these activities on an organization's strategy might be enlarged.

When analyzing MMs activities, we found that many of these theorized roles, such as brokering, sense-making and Platzek et al.'s (2014) entrepreneurial roles, could relate back to MMs intermediary role. As such, we conclude that MMs are indeed the change intermediaries as proposed by Balogun (2003), even in a change process towards entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, we think that the concept of an “*intermediary change agent*” might be too ambiguous and should be used as an umbrella term, harboring many of the suggested MM roles. We propose that this term might not emphasize MMs activities related to the other suggested roles, thereby potentially obscuring or diminishing their value. As such, we argue that calling MM a “change intermediary” is interesting for the practical field, as it shows their potential role as a key change agent, but it could be of less interest for academic purposes. For academic purposes, we propose to de-emphasize the umbrella term “change intermediary” and propose academia to focus on other MM roles as a stand-alone function.

We conclude that MMs are the key change agents as proposed by literature (Buick et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2018) to drive, implement and potentially orchestrate the emergence and implementation of organizational entrepreneurship.

6.2 Managerial implications

The findings of this thesis suggest the importance of the MM as key drivers and implementers of organizational entrepreneurship and change. As MMs assume a central organizational position with close relationships with the OL and TM, they can mediate, translate, and make sense of the expectations and wishes between both levels. As such, change leadership is recommended to involve MMs early on in the change process, and empower and motivate them in order for them to effectively drive the intended change. When leadership wishes to promote organizational entrepreneurship, they are additionally recommended to empower MMs and allow them to assume an entrepreneurial role model function in order to effectively drive change and motivate members to act entrepreneurial.

In addition, we recommend leadership to pay close attention to MMs, because some might undertake unorthodox activities due to organizational restrictions, which can be considered truly entrepreneurial and a sign of a need for change. During change, we recommend leadership to positively highlight and promote these unorthodox activities in a controlled fashion, as these are what change management is truly about and could lead to positive change outcomes.

6.3 Future research

As this thesis has dealt with MM's role in promoting organizational entrepreneurship during a change process, several new research venues have opened up. First, we propose change management researchers to focus on the underexplored potential (entrepreneurial) hidden activities which MM undertakes to promote entrepreneurial behavior and drive change. In addition, these potentially affect corporate strategy and it would be of interest to focus on the strength of this influence in general, and the implications on strategy during a change process. Secondly, we propose researchers to focus on entrepreneurial MMs as role models, and how they in particular drive entrepreneurship throughout an organization. Thirdly, we suggest researchers to investigate

whether MMs can resist entrepreneurial behavior and change by using opinion leaders, which are commonly found to drive and promote change. Fourthly, we propose researchers to include the field of entrepreneurship within change management literature and put more emphasis on entrepreneurship as a change by itself.

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Appendix A

Interview guidelines

The interview questions are constructed to obtain an understanding of the current change process in the case company, specifically towards the role of the middle manager and how they drive the change towards entrepreneurship. The interviews are semi-structured meaning that the researchers will not strictly adhere to the questions and will allow the participant to respond freely and communicate what they experience as relevant. As the questions are guidelines, whenever a participant approaches or mentions a topic or theme which is of particular interest to the research question, follow-up questions and probes (which are aimed towards a more YES/NO nature to spark further questions) are utilized to extract more information from the participant which can lead the researchers to other questions besides the premade ones.

Before starting each interview, the background and purpose of the interview was presented. Anonymity was offered to safeguard the information and to not jeopardize the organization of the participants.

Introductory questions:

1. Can you please tell us about your background?
2. What are your roles and responsibilities in the organization?

Questions relating to the change process

1. In a few words, what is this change program about?
2. Can you walk us through the initial development phase of the change strategy to now?
 - a. Can you elaborate on your involvement?
 - b. How was it communicated?
 - c. Were you able to develop and then contribute your own ideas during the development of the change program? How so?

- d. Has the development of the change program been an iterative process? And is it still an iterative process?
3. What do you think of the change program?
 - a. Do you think the proposed change program is correct for the problem as perceived by Manuel? Why?
 - b. Do you think the change can be successfully implemented?
 - c. Do you think you have the required capabilities to successfully help implement the change program?
 - d. Do you think the change program is sufficiently supported throughout the organization?
4. Can you walk us through your role and responsibilities in the change program/process?
 - a. What is your perspective on entrepreneurial employees?
5. How are you promoting the change towards entrepreneurship in your department and throughout the organization? Can you walk us through the various activities you undertake?
 - a. How are you affecting your colleagues and team in this program/process?
 - b. How are you ensuring more innovativeness from your subordinates? What about entrepreneurship?
 - i. What kind of activities are you undertaking towards this?
 - c. Are your subordinates able to pursue their own projects in which they are interested? If yes, how? If no, why not?
 - d. Do you allow your subordinates, or other employees the freedom to pursue their projects? What is your view on trial-and-error?
 - e. Are there any challenges related to this?
6. How has this change program/process affected the way you collaborate with other departments/teams?
 - a. What activities do you undertake to promote intra-collaborations, such as within departments or among team members and other employees?
 - b. How has it affected your role?
7. How are you working towards the goal of this change program?
 - a. Is this process promoting new ways of working? And if so, how?

- b. How are you ensuring the implementation of the change program in your department?
8. Is this change program affecting your role in the organization? If so, how?

Questions aimed at giving the Participant chance to reflect in a broader sense

1. Taking in consideration your previous questions, on a broader level, what do you think is the goal of this change process?
 - What activities are you taking towards this?
 - How is your role contributing to this?
2. How do you try to overcome the challenges that you have identified in this change program?