Embracing the Tides of Organizational Change

Explorations of the fixed-flexible continuum in attitudes towards change

By

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Abstract

Title	Embracing the Tides of Organizational Change - Explorations of the fixed-flexible continuum in attitudes towards change
Authors	Lotta Nurminen and Emma Toivola
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Purpose	The purpose of our research is to explore how employees who claim to embrace change consider the impact of personality and other factors as a reason for this attitude.
Research Questions	(1) How do individual employees who claim to embrace change talk about the impact of personality on their attitude towards change? (2) How do individual employees who claim to embrace change talk about the impact of other factors on their attitude towards change?
Theoretical Perspective	We based our theoretical perspectives on the literature within organizational change, personality theory and identity construction.
Methodology	We based our research on a qualitative research design and the interpretive paradigm.
Empirical Foundation	The empirical material for this thesis project was gathered from 10 semi-structured interviews with employees from a globally operating start-up venture headquartered in Finland.
Main Findings	We found that employees who claim to embrace change consider personality as a significant factor in affecting their attitudes towards change. The role of other factors such as experience was acknowledged as well in learning to like and adapt to change. However, we interpreted these employee narratives to be subject to organizational change discourse and thereby identity construction.
Conclusion	We identified distinct factors that employees who claim to embrace change consider in their attitude towards change. We discovered a fixed-flexible continuum in these factors, pertaining to personality, experience and identity construction.
Keywords	Organizational Change, Attitudes towards Change, Personality, Identity Construction

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Lotta Nurminen & Emma Toivola

Lund, 20th of May 2016

"I believe in change and I believe it's like the river, if it's calm, it's bad water, it should be running all the time, fresh water […]."

Employee, participating in our study

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

> "Some people seek change. They love it, and they will be in the
> avant garde." (Steinburg, 1992, p. 28)

Faced with quickening globalization and social change, attaining greater organizational agility, flexibility and innovation have become prerequisites for staying on top of the game called business (Gondo et al. 2013; Lawler & Worley, 2006). Therefore, a pivotal challenge for management in contemporary organizations is creating "a change-ready workforce that is equipped to handle fast, frequent and disruptive change" (Winter, 2012, p. 34). Companies place high value on employees who are capable of adjusting to changing expectations and thereby capitalizing on opportunities that allow them to develop their skills (Ngo & Loi, 2008; Roehling et al. 2000). A survey conducted by Society for Human Resource Management (2008) indicated that employers considered adaptability among the most desired abilities for both new and more experienced employees.

While the process of conforming to organizational change entails difficulties for some individuals, others adapt more easily and thrive in shifting conditions – considering change as an opportunity to grow and learn (Dunican & Keaster, 2015; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Literature on organizational change tends to vary on a polarized spectrum from resisting change to accepting change (Dunican & Keaster, 2015; Jóhannsdóttir et al. 2015), whereas less is known about individuals who purposely seek and embrace change (Caldwell et al. 2004), and strive to work in such contexts – which could be considered an ideal in the contemporary business environment. Researchers have contemplated where change-related attitudes stem from, and as commonly a complex phenomenon provided varying explanations for these differing reactions (Bouckenooghe, 2010; Choi, 2011).

Change literature supports the notion that both individual employee characteristics and aspects relating to the change process itself contribute to how people react to change (Caldwell & Yi, 2011; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Numerous scholars in the 21st century have directed their attention towards studying the dispositional predictors of a variety of individual

and organizational measures (e.g. Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). The role of personality has been of particular interest, as one of the approaches to managing human resources in a dynamic environment is establishing selection and staffing systems, which promote the hiring of individuals who are more adaptable and willing to work in shifting conditions (Le Pine et al. 2000; Thoresen et al. 2004). Since an individual's personality is believed to be relatively stable throughout their lifetime and significantly derived from genetics (McCrae & Costa, 1997), understanding change-related attitudes and adaptability as results of personal disposition would suggest them to be considerably fixed. However, it must be noted that the malleability of personality is a contemplated issue (Pervin, 1996).

Personality and personal traits have also been of substantial interest to researchers in the field of management and leadership. According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2016) many managers tend to claim their managerial work to be a subject of their own personality, enhancing the uniqueness of their particular style and their quest for authenticity. The descriptions of their management and leadership styles are based on their own self-views and perceptions of personality: their identity.

Contrasting the personality approach, others however have placed a stronger emphasis on the context-bound nature of attitudes towards change - attributing them to situational aspects rather than personality-based predispositions (Devos et al. 2007; Devos et al. 2001; Wanous et al. 2000). These studies indicate that personality is of minor relevance in determining how individuals react to organizational change, but rather their attitudes vary based on different factors in the specific change situation. This variation can also be attributed to other individual level differences, such as past experiences with change events (Choi, 2011). Taking this stance would also adhere to a more flexible view of attitudes towards change, opposing the predetermined perspective.

Apart from these opposing conceptualizations, there is an enduring consensus in literature treating resistance to change as an innate component of human nature (Coch & French, 1948; Dunican & Keaster, 2015; Oreg, 2003), which has overshadowed research on the assumption that for certain individuals a changing environment may act as a driving force rather than a threat. With the intense calls for flexibility and agility – even referred to as 'flexagility' (Wadhwa & Rao, 2003) - particularly from the management's side, modern organizations can

be characterized as environments where adaptability is key and change-seeking behavior a great asset for competitive advantage.

1.2 Problem statement

As organizations face the ongoing quest to remain competitive by ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the turbulences of the ever-changing business environment, the need to constantly consider organizational changes becomes inevitable (e.g. Georgalis et al. 2015). Some organizational forms – such as new ventures - may even be subject to more change than others. There is a strong consensus in organizational change literature acknowledging employees' change-related attitudes to differ on the individual level (e.g. Bouckenooghe, 2010; Oreg, 2003; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). However, there is substantially less agreement regarding what constitutes these attitudes due to the complexity of organizational change phenomena (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Choi, 2011).

With organizations calling out for continuous change efforts requiring adaptable employees who 'embrace change', we turn our attention to look at the individuals working in these environments (Ngo & Loi, 2008; Vakola et al. 2004). Since employees are located at the core of all change efforts due to their roles as change implementers or recipients, how they react to these shifting conditions can make or break a change initiative, and determine its ultimate success or failure (Fugate et al. 2012). Still, most studies within organizational change research tend to offer a view of employees as inherently change resistant rather than change 'embracing' (Caldwell et al. 2004; Dunican & Keaster, 2015; Georgalis et al. 2015). Thus, it is of interest to us to explore the determinants of employee reactions to change – particularly with the lens on the individuals who claim to embrace it.

The significance of investigating change recipients' individual characteristics has been gaining momentum in the past decade (e.g. Walker et al. 2007). The turbulences of the contemporary work environments highlight the relevance of a dispositional approach, as the intensity and frequency of organizational change entails high levels of uncertainty, exposing both employers and employees to continuously changing and commonly unknown demands. Whereas studies of dispositions have provided a lot of insights into human behavior, there is still a need to explore how disposition affects attitudes and adaptability to organizational

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change (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). As the relationship between personality and reactions to organizational change remains enigmatic (Choi, 2011), more can be gained from understanding the role of personality traits in organizational change. Thus, with the significance placed on personality within organizational change literature, we adopt it as our main focus.

Armenakis and Harris (2009) pose one of the most classic questions around organizational change by asking, "What do change recipients consider when making their decision to embrace and support a change effort or reject and resist it?" (p. 128). In our research, we address this question by considering the underlying factors that may contribute to their reaction of embracing or rejecting a change effort. Hence, we specifically aim to explore whether the attitude to embrace or resist change is predetermined and relatively fixed by personality variables, or whether - and potentially to what extent - other factors might make it more flexible from individual employees' perspective.

1.3 Research purpose and questions

The purpose of this research is to explore how employees claiming to embrace change consider the impact of personality and other factors as a reason for this attitude. Through exploring these employee perceptions, we contribute to research within organizational change by providing understanding to attitudes towards change and their perceived determinants. Based on the varying perspectives and the identified relevance for our research, we have developed the following questions to guide our study:

1. How do individual employees who claim to embrace change talk about the impact of personality on their attitude towards change?
2. How do individual employees who claim to embrace change talk about the impact of other factors on their attitude towards change?

We set out to explore these questions within a start-up venture that we are going to call Phoenix in our research. Phoenix is continuously undergoing incremental changes on the premise of domestic and global expansion. Since start-up ventures are commonly characterized as flexible and agile with less established routines and practices (Weiblen &

Chesbrough, 2015), we believe it is reasonable to assume that they often represent contexts subject to constant change. Hence, it is of particular interest to us to study how the employees at Phoenix view organizational change and the factors influencing their attitudes towards it. To our knowledge, no prior studies exploring the fixed-flexible continuum in attitudes towards organizational change have been conducted within this context regarding its continuously changing nature, making it an interesting setting to conduct our research in.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

Our thesis is comprised of six main chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, empirical findings, discussion and analysis, and finally our conclusion. As we have introduced our research in this chapter, we next move on to our review of existing literature on organizational change and personality to develop a theoretical basis for our study. We also briefly address other factors that may affect change-related attitudes. The third chapter is devoted to our methodology and addresses all the methodological elements we grounded our study on. In chapter four, we present the findings of our study and interpret them in the light of the existing theory in our discussion in chapter five. In our final chapter we provide our concluding remarks - most importantly in the form of theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations and suggestions for further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we delve into the theoretical perspectives our study is based on. We provide an overview of organizational change and the concept 'attitudes towards change'. Following these conceptualizations, we discuss the factors that have been suggested to influence attitudes towards change, with a particular focus on the role of personality.

2.1 Organizational change

Numerous change management books and academic journals begin with stressing the importance of organizational change in the mission to remain competitive - let alone survive - in the modern business world (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burnes, 2015; Georgalis et al. 2015; Dunican & Keaster, 2015; Saruhan, 2014; Savolainen, 2013). According to Beatty and Ulrich (1993) the "universal challenge of change" (p. 16) is discovering how organizations and employees cannot only keep up with, but to change faster than business conditions in their quest for survival and competitive advantage. The influence of organizational change on individuals - particularly their work-related attitudes - has been of interest to researchers within organizational behavior, work psychology and human resources since the late 1980s (Arnold, 1997). Since change represents a phenomenon that individuals and organizations face and undergo on a daily basis, questions regarding responses to change continuously emerge (Foster, 2010). Yet no consensus on where these responses stem from has been achieved, since individuals tend to vary in their reactions to change.

As a widely studied phenomenon, the research surrounding the topic of organizational change has evolved significantly over the last few decades. Many scholars have shifted their attention from the macro, systems-oriented approach - in which unsuccessful change efforts are accounted to implementation failures – to studying change from a more micro-level perspective entailing an increased interest for considering the role of individuals in organizations (Devos et al. 2007). In contemporary literature this micro-level perspective is often regarded as equally or even more important than organizational- and system-level variables for attaining successful change. It acknowledges individuals to be at the core of change efforts, as change and action only take place through organizational members in their roles as change implementers or change recipients (Choi, 2011; Fugate et al. 2012; Jones et

al. 2005). Schneider et al. (1996) go as far as to state "organizations as we know them are the people in them; if the people do not change, there is no organizational change" (p. 7). Hence, this perspective recognizes the cognitive-affective nature of organizational change (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006).

2.2 Attitudes towards change

The way in which people experience change is unique to every individual, thereby also causing variation in the way scholars conceptualize people's reactions towards organizational change (Bouckenooghe, 2010). Readiness for change and commitment to change represent examples of the more positively laden terms, while the term resistance brings attention to the more negative aspects of change. A broader, more inclusive term to characterize people's perceptions and reactions to change can however be referred to as "attitudes to change".

One of the most popular definitions of the term attitude is provided by Eagly and Chaiken (1993), who describe it as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p. 1). Attitudes represent certain regularities in the thoughts, feelings and predispositions to act that individuals possess toward a specific aspect of their environment (Secord & Backman, 1969). They serve as schemas enabling people to represent and organize information (Alas et al. 2011).

The division of attitudes towards change into three separate components is accredited to Elizur and Guttman (1976), and their tripartite model consisting of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions. Therefore, the way in which individuals think, feel and act in the face of change can manifest as strong positive attitudes and support for the change, or as strong negative attitudes and the intentions to oppose it (Piderit, 2000; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Piderit (2000) further advocates for an ambivalent view of resistance, by suggesting that individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviors towards a change initiative do not necessarily coincide, supporting the understanding of resistance as a multidimensional attitude.

Choi (2011) emphasizes the importance of creating conditions under which employees support organizational change. She discusses the attitudinal constructs researchers have focused on to achieve this end, outlining the main ones as the following: readiness for

change; commitment to change; openness to change, and cynicism about organizational change. A common factor these four concepts share is their reflection of individuals' overall positive or negative evaluations of a particular change initiative: acting as "the cognitive precursor" by determining whether people resist or grant their support for the change. Bouckenooghe (2010) identifies other significant constructs that have emerged in change literature, namely acceptance of change, adjustment to change and coping with change.

One of the earliest academic contributions to studying attitudes towards change was Coch and French's (1948) study on overcoming resistance to change. In fact, research on responses to change has in the past tended to focus on studying resistance to change (RTC) - dichotomizing and oversimplifying the phenomenon (Piderit, 2000). As such, resistance has been widely recognized as a key contributor among the causes of failed change, with the blame often accounted to resistant employees rather than the change agents (Georgalis et al. 2015; Klonek et al. 2014). Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) argue that resistance is inextricably linked to the development of negative attitudes towards change. However, more recently some scholars have argued for a shift – or even a transformation - in research regarding change resistance (Burnes, 2015). Bareil (2013) distinguishes between two paradigms of resistance to change: the traditional paradigm where resistance is looked at as "the enemy of change", and the modern paradigm where resistance is considered "a resource" (p. 59). Some have even advocated for abandoning the term resistance, on the grounds that it provides a misrepresentation of what actually happens in the change dynamic (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Merron, 1993). Nord and Jermier (1994) however support "overcoming resistance to resistance", suggesting that rather than burying the concept researchers should seek to focus on addressing individuals' subjective experiences to gain a deeper understanding of what resistance is truly about.

Not even a decade after Coch and French published their article on resistance to change, Jacobson (1957) came up with a term located at the positive end of the spectrum, which he coined readiness for change. Bouckenooghe (2010) reviewed 58 journal articles discussing various aspects related to attitudes towards change (published between 1993 and 2007) and found that approximately 92% of the conceptualizations focused on two constructs: readiness for change and resistance to change. Since the conception of these two concepts, the positive-negative approach to attitudes towards change has dominated the literature. Seo et al. (2004) identify this dualism in attitudes towards change as a key feature in change processes. The

negative approach focuses on overcoming problems and weaknesses – or overcoming resistance, while the positive approach emphasizes the opportunities for improvement – highlighting the importance of openness, readiness and commitment to change (Bouckenooghe, 2010). The latter is rooted in "positive organizational scholarship" (Luthans, 2002).

Studies have found positive attitudes to be key in reaching organizational goals and success in change programmes, influencing the moral, productivity and turnover intentions of employees (Eby et al. 2000; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). However, it must be noted that the objectives of change initiatives cannot be reached simply through employees exhibiting positive attitudes towards the change. This entails that attitudes in themselves do not automatically constitute change outcomes but rather behavioral adaptation, which plays a key role in attaining successful change (van del Heuvel et al. 2014). Nevertheless, holding a positive attitude towards organizational change enhances individuals' willingness to consider and implement changes (Dunican & Keaster, 2015). A question that arises from these contemplations is what factors contribute to attitudes and behavioral adaptation to change. Several studies have been conducted on the premise of context and personal factors regarding attitudes to change (e.g. Van Dam et al. 2008); yet less is known about the predictors of behavioral adaptation (Shoss et al. 2012). Fugate and Kinicki (2008) argue for the relevance of a dispositional approach in today's turbulent business environment. As the attention has shifted to a micro-level perspective, with an emphasis on the role of individuals in organizational change it is of interest to consider the implications of their personal dispositions on their attitudes and adaptability to change.

2.3 Fixed factors in attitudes towards change

The emphasis placed on change management practices and processes has in the past overshadowed other significant factors that play a part in shaping people's reactions to organizational change (Herold et al. 2007). While vast research has focused on studying directly change-related factors, investigations have also been conducted regarding the influence of individual differences and personality variables on change reactions (e.g. Caldwell et al. 2004; Judge et al., 1999). However, these explorations can be characterized as

tentative, since no consensus of the most effective predictors has been reached to date (Herold et al. 2007).

> "Because uncertainty, fear of failure, sense making, and loss of control are largely in the eyes of the beholder and individuals vary in their coping resources to respond to changing demands placed on them, one would expect individual differences to be related to individuals' perceptions of and reactions to change" (Herold et al. 2007, p. 943).

This entails that individual level differences should be interlinked with the perceptions of uncertainty, probability of failure and loss of control people associate with change situations. Thus, in the following sections, we address the role of personality as an individual level factor that has been argued to affect change-related attitudes.

2.3.1 Personality theory

""Personality" is one of the most abstract words in our language, and like any abstract word suffering from excessive use, its connotative significance is very broad, its denotative significance negligible" (Allport, 1937, p. 25). Due to its cadence and attractiveness, the term has been the subject of everlasting interest and is rarely challenged in any context, as it is so remarkably elastic by nature. Hence, with no single correct definition and despite decades - or even centuries - of curiosity surrounding the concept, the meaning and usefulness of personality still remains uncertain (Allport, 1937; Cervone & Pervin, 2013; Murphy, 2013). Nevertheless, as the contemplated significance of personality and its relation to different phenomena persists in literature, connecting it to change-related attitudes can provide interesting insights to the interplay between the concepts. Staw et al. (1986) for example argue that disposition can significantly influence how individuals perceive the working world, thereby affecting the type of jobs that they seek.

Literature tends to treat the concepts of personality, traits, personal dispositions and individual characteristics as interchangeable, while there naturally are some distinctions. However, each of these concepts is based on the assumption that people can be characterized on certain dimensions, which remain relatively stable over time and can be used to predict

individual behavior (Staw & Ross, 1985). In this research, we use the following definition of personality: "relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, ideas, emotions, and behaviors that are generally consistent over situations and time and that distinguish individuals from each other" (Barrick & Mount, 2013, n.p.). Whereas individuals are unique and do not behave completely consistently across situations, substantial commonality and similar patterns can be identified among them. This allows the meaningful grouping of individuals into broad personality types (Murphy, 2013). Personality theory underlines the importance of these individual differences in understanding behavior within organizations.

Personality theories come in a wide range from psychodynamic theory to phenomenological theories, each of them capturing important information about human nature (Cervone & Pervin, 2013). While there are a variety of approaches to studying personality, trait theory has been among the most commonly used (Lilford, 2014). With no single dominant contributor or prime mover in the field, the work of Gordon Allport, Raymond Cattell and Hans Eysenck laid the foundation for this approach in the 20th century, which has and continues to be refined in the contemporary 21st century (Cervone & Pervin, 2013). The aim of personality trait theorists is not to establish descriptions of individual people, but rather to create a comprehensive descriptive scheme - a "personality taxonomy" – within which any or all of these individuals can be described.

2.3.2 Five-Factor Model of personality

Evidence of past studies on personality structure has concluded that the majority of personality-based consistencies in behavior can be explained through what is either referred to as the "Five-Factor" (FFM) or "Big Five" model (e.g. Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). This model is comprised of five broad personality dimensions that seek to account for the variation in human behavior. These five generic factors have persisted in psychology - evolving from Allport, Cattel and Eysenck's work - and their names have varied throughout the decades (Lubinski, 2000). Commonly they are labeled Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability or Neuroticism and Openness to Experience, outlined in Table 1. This dispositional approach assumes that individuals possess a set of stable traits, which are considerably inflexible and significantly influence individuals' affective and behavioral aspects in organizational contexts (Therasa & Vijayabanu, 2015). Each of these traits consists of five or six narrower traits (Lounsbury et al. 2016).

Table 1: Big Five Personality Traits

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	Traits associated with this dimension include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent, and artistically sensitive. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 5).
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	Traits associated with this dimension include being dependable, careful, thorough, responsible, organized, and planful. In addition to these traits, it consists of volitional variables, such as hardworking, achievement-oriented, and persevering. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 4).
AGREEABLENESS	Traits associated with this dimension include being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, softhearted, and tolerant. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 4).
EMOTIONAL STABILITY	Traits associated with this dimension include being anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (reversed). (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 4).
EXTRAVERSION	Traits associated with this dimension include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 3).

Enjoying substantial universal support, the Five-Factor model has become the most extensively researched and widely used model of personality (Lilford, 2014). However, it has not been spared from criticism either, particularly with regard to the vague specification of the five dimensions. Some researchers contest that these five dimensions cannot adequately encompass the domain of personality and many have advocated for the incorporation of additional dimensions (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Another limitation identified with the model is its simplicity leading scholars to question its ability to provide reliable information on personality. Further, some academics are skeptical with regard to the model's ability to explain human behavior and experiences. As the five dimensions are relatively independent, some scholars criticize its potential as an integrative model of personality (e.g. McAdams, 1992). Despite its constraints, the Five Factor model along its implications can be considered significant in the field of personality providing valuable insights to individual differences in

disposition (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Through decades of evolvement the framework is still recognized as one of the most applicable theories in personality research today (Wille et al. 2014).

2.3.3 'Big Five' traits in organizational change

The Five-Factor model is commonly considered an appropriate framework for studying attitudes towards organizational change on the individual level (e.g. Vakola et al. 2004). According to Lau and Woodman (1995) change-related attitudes are connected to a person's change schemata, defined as "mental maps representing the knowledge structures of change attributes and relationships among different change events" (p. 538). Individuals' reactions to organizational change are significantly related to their change schemata, which are significantly influenced by personality traits (Vakola et al. 2004). Hence, looking at the connections between the big five traits and organizational change provides understanding of how attitudes towards change may differ on the individual level.

In particular, the role Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness play in shaping individuals' reactions to novel or changing events has been of considerable interest to researchers (Caldwell & Yi, 2011). Individuals who score high on the former dimension tend to like novel situations more compared to their counterparts placing at the lower end of Openness to Experience. These individuals may be more adaptable to shifting conditions due to their wider range of experiences encountered, which can also cause them to be able and willing to challenge the status quo with their ideas when instability is present. In the organizational context they may appreciate novel ways of doing things and thereby potentially improving and changing the status quo (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Hence, high Openness to Experience characterizes individuals who respond well to the challenges of a changing environment (Le Pine et al. 2000).

Researchers have also made connections between organizational change and Conscientiousness. Individuals at the higher end of this spectrum have a strong sense of purpose and will, which makes them work hard to achieve their goals (Caldwell & Yi, 2011). Some studies have suggested that highly conscientious individuals may experience change negatively, as it can cause disruptions to their preferred approach of structure and discipline to reaching objectives (George & Jing, 2001; Le Pine et al. 2000). However, research has also

indicated that these individuals work harder than their counterparts to master situations associated with uncertainty and changing demands due to their achievement motivation and desire to maintain order in turbulent times (Herold et al. 2002).

Furthermore, studies have detected there to be a correlation between organizational change and Agreeableness (Vakola et al. 2004). This dimension characterizes people as compliant, kindhearted and considerate, entailing that the individuals placing on the higher end of the spectrum are assumed to be more inclined to have welcoming attitudes towards change and thus may potentially be more likely to embrace it. Moreover, in an organizational setting agreeable individuals can be recognized to avoid tension and arguments (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Piedmont & Weinstein, 1994), which implies that these types of employees are less likely to resist upcoming organizational changes and more hesitant to incorporate new procedures that may come along with these changes. Hence, individuals that score high in Agreeableness tend to possess more positive attitudes towards organizational change (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Vakola et al. 2004).

Research has also indicated Emotional Stability (also referred to as Neuroticism) to play a part in people's reactions in change-related conditions (Vakola et al. 2004). Individuals who place at the high end of the scale in this dimension are emotionally stable and can be considered as confident, secure and steady by nature. Their counterparts placed on the other end of the spectrum can in turn be defined as emotionally unstable or neurotic since they tend to be anxious, uneasy and worried (Judge & Bono, 2011; Piedmont & Weinstein, 1994). In an organizational setting, low Emotional Stability - or in other words high Neuroticism - tends to contribute negatively to individuals' attitudes towards change, making it difficult to tolerate an atmosphere subject to shifting conditions due to the unpredictability and stressfulness change processes often entail (Costa &McCrae, 1992).

Finally, some connections have been drawn between Extraversion and attitudes towards organizational change (e.g. Chiaburu et al. 2011). Extraverted individuals are positively oriented towards others, they possess a high need for activity and simulation, they seek excitement and tend to experience positive emotions (Piedmont, 1998). Saksvik and Hetland (2009) propose that due to their excitement and stimulation seeking behavior, combined with the tendency to experience positive emotions, extraverts may be more flexible and generally more appreciative of changes, indicating a lower tendency for resisting change.

2.3.4 Other personality variables in organizational change

Researchers interested in the relationship between personality and change have also identified and constructed other personality variables that may play an important part in attitudes towards organizational change. Some studies have recognized personality constructs such as dispositional resistance to change, personal resilience, locus of control and tolerance for ambiguity as significant in determining change-related attitudes (e.g. Brown & Cregan, 2008; Chen & Wang, 2007; Nicolaidis & Katsaros, 2011; Oreg, 2003; Oreg, 2006; Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Oreg (2003) conceptualizes individuals' internal inclination to resist or adopt changes as dispositional resistance to change. He argues that individuals differ on this stable personality trait, and these differences can predict attitudes towards specific changes. Individuals who score high on this dimension are less likely to willingly integrate changes into their lives and work. These individuals are also more likely to react negatively when change is imposed on them, with emotions such as anger, fear and anxiety characterizing their responses.

Locus of control (LOC) in turn, a concept initially proposed by Rotter (1966) refers to "an individual's perception of his or her ability to exercise control over the environment" (Chen & Wang, 2007, p. 504). Due to its unique standpoint addressing personal control over the environment, LOC has gained the attention of many researchers in exploring the relationship between individual differences and reactions to change (e.g. Chen & Wang, 2007; Judge et al. 1999; Oreg, 2003). The variation in LOC between individuals has been suggested as the cause of people experiencing change differently and exhibiting distinct change-related attitudes.

Wanberg and Banas (2000) studied personal resilience – a combination of self-esteem, optimism and perceived control - in predicting openness to organizational change, and found it to correlate with change acceptance. Other studies have supported the connection between these three variables and organizational change. Along the previously mentioned studies, Lau and Woodman (1995) for example associated openness to change with internal locus of control, which closely aligns with perceived control. Optimistic people are more inclined to assume that good things will happen to them in they way the approach the world (Scheier et al. 1994), making it reasonable to suspect that their way of projecting the potential

consequences of organizational change initiatives is more positive than their counterparts (Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Lastly, tolerance for ambiguity was first defined as a personality variable by Frenkel-Brunswick (1949). She characterized the individuals placing at the intolerant side of the spectrum by the tendency to resort to simplistic solutions, make hasty and overconfident judgments and neglect reality. At the other end of the scale, individuals with high tolerance for ambiguity perceive such uncertain situations as desirable and challenging (Furnham & Marks, 2013). They are claimed to be more receptive and adaptable to changing conditions, and tend to score high on the Openness to Experience dimension (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012). Furthermore, high tolerance for ambiguity has been connected to risk-taking and sensation-seeking behavior (McLain, 1993). Though tolerance for ambiguity was first conceptualized as a personality variable, more recently researchers have suggested it to be a context-specific construct rather than a trait, and that it should be examined through contextualized measures (Durrheim & Foster, 1997; Herman et al. 2010).

2.4 Flexible factors in attitudes towards change

Despite the interest in personality variables within organizational change, the relationship between personality traits and attitudes towards organizational change can be characterized as obscure. With innumerable factors influencing change processes on both individual and organizational levels, it becomes extremely complex to demonstrate the role personality plays in the equation (Choi, 2011). Our definition of personality ("relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, ideas, emotions, and behaviors that are generally consistent over situations and time and that distinguish individuals from each other" (Barrick & Mount, 2013, n.p.)) implies that personality traits are significant determinants of individual reactions to organizational change. Still, considering the importance Sveningsson and Alvesson (2016) place on self-views and perceptions personality – identity – particularly in managerial work, it must be questioned whether change-related attitudes are in fact fixed by personality traits or shaped in the continuous process of identity construction and thereby more flexible.

Supporting a more flexible view, while the previously mentioned studies have advocated for the significance of personality variables in change-related attitudes, others have determined

this relationship negligible (e.g. Devos et al. 2007; Devos et al. 2001; Wanous et al. 2000). These studies attribute attitudes towards organizational change to situational rather than personality variables. Choi (2011) emphasizes that whereas individuals might be supportive of organizational change in general, their attitudes towards a specific change initiative tend to vary for example based on their evaluation of how the change is implemented.

Along personality and situational variables, the significance of age and experience is commonly considered among individual difference factors in organizational change research to understand change-related attitudes. Posthuma and Campion (2009) identify a common stereotype regarding age in organizational change, considering older workers to be less flexible, less adaptable and more resistant to change. However, they also state that virtually no research has been conducted to examine its validity. Still, a connection to personality can be detected to this stereotype of change resistance and age, as some studies have shown that Openness to Experience tends to decrease over the life span – suggesting a more malleable view of personality (Donnellan & Lucas, 2008).

Researchers have also argued attitudes towards organizational change to be shaped by past experiences with change and their evolvement as these experiences change (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Choi, 2011). Experience with change projects has been particularly linked to the attitudinal constructs of commitment and openness to change on the positive side, and on the more negative side to cynicism about organizational change (Devos et al., 2001, 2007; Wanous et al., 2000). These studies also suggest that the situational variables in the particular organizational change initiative determine employees' attitudes towards the change and advocate for their conceptualization as states rather than personality traits (Choi, 2011).

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter we discuss the methodological approach chosen for our research. We begin by addressing the theoretical and philosophical foundations underlying our research, and follow with explaining our research design and process. Finally, we discuss the emphasis we placed on reflexivity, with noting the limitations and biases in our research.

3.1 Theoretical and philosophical foundations

It is of paramount importance to consider the theoretical and philosophical foundations the study is grounded on when conducting organizational research. Considering and choosing them appropriately is pivotal in attaining relevant, valid and qualitatively high research. Failing to carefully choose these foundations could thereby reflect on the relevance, validity and quality of our project (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) - which makes it crucial that they are adequately addressed and acknowledged at this point in order for us to establish valuable and coherent research. The choice of one's stance is complex due to several existing theoretical and philosophical foundations, yet it is not only based upon the anticipated research objective, as the individual preferences researchers possess also play a part in the decision (Polit & Hungler, 1991). Since these foundations and the methodological framework, including the basic assumptions on ontology and epistemology, shape any social research (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000) and thus ours as well, we clarify our stance and methods in the following sections.

3.2 Ontology and epistemology

One's ontological position refers to how that person sees "the very nature and essence of things in the social world" (Mason, 2002, p. 14). Our ontological position in this research adheres to constructivism, which asserts social phenomena and their meanings to be continuously constructed by social actors through interaction (Bryman, 2008). Hence, we believe that the social world is abstract with no single absolute truth or universally valid reality to be discovered (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Instead, our assumption is that individuals create their truths and realities through their unique perspectives, understandings

and contexts (Prasad, 2005), making them multiple and varying and only existent within human interactions and social constructions. Thus, in this research we assume that the way in which individual employees consider the role of personality and other factors in organizational change is highly subjective.

With our ontological standpoint addressed, we need to turn the attention to our epistemological position. Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge is concerned with "how social phenomena can be known, and how knowledge can be demonstrated" (Mason, 2002, p. 16). Our epistemological stance asserts that knowledge arises through interpretation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), and thus we aim to generate knowledge through interpreting the diverse perceptions expressed by our research participants, which thereby leads to an overall exploration of the social world.

3.3 Interpretive standpoint

Following our ontological and epistemological positioning, we adopt the interpretive paradigm in our research. From the interpretive standpoint, the researcher is concerned with "how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and constituted" (Mason, 2002, p. 3). Sandberg and Targama (2007) outline three central assumptions that underlie this paradigm: (1) reality is subjective, yet at the same time shared and negotiated with others; (2) knowledge about reality is continuously constructed through social interaction, with both subjective and social truths arising from individual and shared experiences; (3) individuals' actions reflect their interpretation and understanding of the world, as they behave in a way that makes sense to them. Hence, we conduct our research acknowledging these assumptions.

3.4 Qualitative research

To follow the underlying metatheoretical standpoints chosen for our research, we deemed qualitative research methods to be the most suitable for providing answers to our research questions. These methods are able to produce richly descriptive data (Merriam, 2002), which was essential for our research. Considering the complexity of the phenomena in this research, opting for qualitative methods allowed us to gain a deeper understanding and aligned with the

socially constructed view of reality adopted in our study. Further, these methods are sensitive and flexible to the social context in which data are generated and involve understandings of complexity, detail and context (Mason, 2002). Hence, our method can be characterized as an interpretive qualitative approach.

We used abduction in our research in order to connect the empirical material and existing theory. The abductive research strategy is concerned with a dialectical production of theory, data analysis and data generation, entailing that these processes happen simultaneously, compared to the more traditional approaches of deduction and induction (Mason, 2002). As we had a pre-understanding of existing perspectives on our research topics, we wanted to be able to continuously move between these theories from the literature and the empirical material gathered, which also gave us the flexibility to make adjustments where necessary. This verifies our hermeneutical stance, as we utilize the hermeneutic circle to move between our "pre-understanding and understanding" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 57). Thus, we began our research on the basis of existing theories concerning attitudes towards change and personality to which our empirical findings were then linked after having collected our data in the form of interviews.

3.5 Context

"Large corporations and start-up ventures are decidedly different organizations" (Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015, p. 66). Various attributes set them apart, namely with the former having what the latter lacks: power, resources, scale and routines, which enable the large corporations to run their business model efficiently. While start-ups usually have none of those, what they hold over larger organizations can be characterized as organizational agility – "the ability of a firm to face and adapt proficiently in a continuously changing and unpredictable business environment" (Kassim & Zain, 2004, p. 174). As start-up ventures tend to be organizationally agile and aspire rapid growth, it is reasonable to assume that their operations are subject to continuous change and development, making the start-up context an interesting and fertile field to study. Nonetheless, little is known about what makes these new ventures appeal to potential hires (Moser et al. 2015). Also, research stands to gain more insights on people who decisively seek to work in an environment where constant changes are a part of the daily routine (Caldwell et al. 2004). Start-up ventures play a particularly

important role in the Finnish business environment, as they are often hoped to adopt the part of the 'savior' to turn the sluggish economy around (Lehtinen, 2014).

The start-up scene in Finland has been in a global spotlight in recent years; with many innovative and promising IT companies attracting the brightest high-tech minds (Anteroinen, 2015; Cord, 2014; Tikkanen, 2014). One of these start-up ventures is a company called Phoenix (pseudonym). In just a few years, Phoenix has become a leading SaaS (Software as a Service) provider in its field. Since its inception in 2011, the company has expanded its operations to three different continents. The workforce has rapidly grown from a dozen employees in 2015 to over 50 in 2016. Subject to both international and domestic growth, Phoenix represents a dynamic environment where continuous change is a natural state. This turns our attention to look at the individuals working for the company.

3.6 Sampling and scene

We based the choice of scene for our research on several criteria. Due to the lack of pre-existing academic contributions on our topic, we considered ourselves to have some freedom regarding our choice of organization. However, extensive studies have been conducted on larger organizations with smaller ones, particularly start-up ventures, often being underrepresented in research (e.g. Doherty & Norton, 2013; Moser et al. 2015; Newman & Sheikh, 2014). Moreover, as start-ups are not as established and are commonly characterized by organizational agility in their quest for growth, we speculated this context to be subject to continuous change. This speculation was reinforced in an initial talk with our contact person at the company, who stated that after a year of working there s/he would not recognize the company as the same.

To gain rich data it was important for us to acquire a purposeful sample with regard to our interview participants (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). We wanted the interviewees to represent a mixed sample of the organization, as we believed this to allow us to gain more diverse perspectives. The employees taking part in our interviews had varying backgrounds in both their personal and professional lives and they represented several positions in the company, which can also be seen from the table below giving an overview of our respondents.

Table 2: Interviewees' positions at Phoenix

POSITION
HR & Recruitment Manager
Senior Business Development Representative
VP International Sales and Business Development
Business Development Manager
Operations Manager
Chief Security Officer
Customer Success Manager
Business Development Manager
Business Development Representative
Chief Financial Officer

We wanted to ensure that participating in the interviews was done on a voluntary basis, as we deemed this approach to increase the interviewees' comfortableness. Our contact person in the company selected potential employees for us to interview and provided them with an introduction to our backgrounds and research topic. In the end it was up to the employees to decide whether to participate in our study or not. Also, since we aimed at gaining responses that were authentic and honest in our interviews from the interviewees' perspective, we decided to keep the study anonymous to guarantee confidentiality of both our participants as well as the research site. Hence, we used pseudonyms for our interviewees and the company when presenting our empirical findings. The pseudonyms we gave for our participants were unisex to maintain their anonymity.

3.7 Interview structure

As our objective regarding the interviews was to collect rich perspectives on our participants' perceptions on the role personality – but also other potential factors – hold in attitudes towards organizational change, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. Hence, we created a guideline for the interviews to steer the conversation and ensure that all relevant themes were addressed. Still, the semi-structured approach also allowed us some freedom and flexibility, as it gave us the space to intervene and ask further questions where necessary. Moreover, this approach played an important part in encouraging our interviewees to give open responses in their own words as opposed to 'yes' or 'no' type of answers that would have inhibited us from gathering the type of richly descriptive data that was necessary for our research (Longhurst, 2010). To achieve this, we formulated our questions mainly in an open-ended manner.

We allocated 30 minutes for each of our interviews, which was an appropriate time frame to gain the insights we needed into the interviewees' perspectives on the topic, yet we needed to be mindful about our use of time and manage it accordingly. As we conducted the interviews during their working hours, we considered this time frame reasonable and respectful of the interviewees' personal duties. Hence, we only asked questions that were directly related to our research problem in order to ensure that the issues we wanted discuss were adequately addressed.

Our contact person at the company decided on whom we should talk to and scheduled the interviews for us, yet as we stated before their participation was completely on a voluntary basis. The ten people were selected to represent various demographic factors. As the company's corporate language was English and the participants were of different nationalities, this was the language we adopted in our interviews. We also asked our Finnish-speaking participants whether this was a comfortable choice for them, and they all agreed.

We deemed that it was very important for the success of our interviews to conduct them in an environment where the participants felt comfortable to share their experiences and opinions with us. We were provided an office at the site for the interviews, which we considered to be an appropriate environment for reaching this objective.

Furthermore, to increase their comfortableness we reminded the participants of the anonymity of the study and asked them to speak freely. We also ensured them that there were no right or wrong answers to our questions and that we were highly interested in anything they had to share. Prior to the interviews, we gave the participants limited information about our topic so that their answers would be affected by our research purposes as little as possible.

We started the interviews by asking the participants some introductory questions about their views and attitudes towards change in general. This enabled us to form a relationship with them and allowed the conversation to start flowing. We had organized our interview into three main themes, including attitudes toward organizational change, personality within organizational change and other factors in organizational change.

3.8 Data collection and analysis

We conducted all of our 10 interviews during two consecutive days in April 2016. On the first day, we had six interviews and the rest four on the following day. We recorded each interview, which allowed us to not be distracted by note taking and direct our full focus on the interviewees. Recording the interviews also enabled us to listen to them multiple times, which was beneficial for a deeper understanding. We transcribed each interview within the same day they were conducted to maximize accuracy.

While we acknowledge the simultaneous nature in the relationship between data collection and analysis - meaning that the interpretation of data already started during the interview process – the purpose of this section is to describe the formal steps we took after transcribing the interviews.

To start off the analysis, we first read through all of our interview transcriptions with the objective of gaining a general impression of the data, rather than looking for any specific aspects. Following this action, we reread the texts and wrote down initial thoughts of the aspects we found interesting. The third read signified the start of our detailed analysis, which entailed codifying the data.

We carried out our analysis by first individually and then collectively analyzing the transcribed interviews. The codifying process consisted of color coding, adding comments and creating tables. We utilized theme identification techniques discussed in Ryan and Bernard (2003), namely by looking for repetitions, metaphors and analogies; transitions, similarities and differences; and missing data from our transcriptions. These techniques allowed us to establish categories that we deemed most important for answering our research questions, entailing that all of our identified categories could not be included in our findings. Subsequently, we established encompassing labels to characterize our categories: attitudes towards organizational change, 'us' and 'them' in the context of organizational change, and other factors affecting attitudes towards organizational change. In order to ensure validity in our research, we attempted to remain guided by our overarching research questions and develop an understanding of our findings through those questions.

3.9 Reflexivity

A pivotal effort that should be put forward during the research process is self-questioning, in the form of meaningful and strategic reflexive acts both in terms of the researching subject and the research object (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Mason, 2002). Reflexivity refers to "thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your own thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see" (Mason, 2002, p. 5). To build on this definition, reflection is concerned with "avoiding empiricism, narcissism and different varieties of social and linguistic reduction" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 269). Therefore, being reflexive entails that it is essential to consider weaknesses inherent in the mode of thought we embrace and can easily be restrained within, as the results of interpretation are engaged in a problematic relationship with their external context (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

Since we as the researchers played an active role as the primary instruments in analyzing and interpreting our interview participants' perceptions, it was essential for us to take part in reflexive acts. Just as any qualitative research, ours too was subject to various biases we as researchers hold. Merriam (2002) advocates that instead of eliminating them, they need to be identified and monitored as they may significantly influence data collection and

interpretation. Hence, we need to address our biases and limitations as they inevitably shaped our research.

3.10 Biases and limitations

Firstly, our limited theoretical knowledge alongside our narrow experience in conducting research can be identified as a limitation. Since researchers are often inclined to base their analysis on conceptualizations they are already familiar with, the traditional theories in the field of organizational change and personality might have directed us to examine our data in a constrained manner (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). However, as we acknowledged this limitation during our research, we sought to enhance our range of interpretations by attempting to gain understanding on supplementary theoretical concepts and models concerning our area of study. Also, we believe us working together as a team had a positive effect on the level of self-awareness we exercised throughout our research as the collaborative working-style helped us to identify each other's biases and prior understandings, which added value and diversity to our interpretations.

Furthermore, the short time frame of the whole thesis process accounts as another limitation. Since it took us some time to gain access to a suitable site for our research, the lack of time remarkably affected the collection of our empirical data, as we conducted all 10 of our interviews on the course of two consecutive days. Hence, we were unable to thoroughly reflect upon the interviews before having completed all of them. Moreover, the lack of time restricted our abilities to conduct additional interviews and make other observations at the research site, which could have potentially provided us with more valuable information and contributed to a deeper understanding of our empirical material. Thus, we were left with the assumption that the opinions and views the interviewees shared with us concerning their personality and other factors and the effect they believed they had on their attitudes towards change, represented subjective and socially constructed truths.

One of our biases in our study stems from the prior knowledge we had and personal ties to the organization. Also, the company has gained visibility in the media over the past few years as one of the most promising Finnish start-up ventures. These factors might have influenced our judgment of the statements the respondents voiced during our interviews. Moreover, a

few of our friends are employed in the company and they participated in our study and thus our own relationships might have affected our interpretations on their views of their personality as well as their attitudes and adaptability to change. We might also have been inclined to analyze the data in a way that the findings would be of interest and useful for the company due to our personal connections. However, by acknowledging the possible impact of these biases and limitations, we believe to have reached a deeper, more impartial analysis.

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

As soon to be graduating Master's students from the programme Managing People, Knowledge and Change we have grown particularly interested in the organizational change aspect when considering potential future employers. While start-up ventures tend to lack the brand recognition of larger, more established organizations, they have managed to gain attractiveness in the eyes of candidates in our home country of Finland, particularly with the help of recent success stories such as Rovio and Supercell. As stated before, we believe start-ups to be subject to continuous change due to their less established structures and processes, which allows for increased agility. However, from a theoretical perspective and personal experience we felt that the majority of conversations around change on the individual level were negatively loaded, with resistance commonly surfacing as a key term on the topic. Thus, we wondered how these two issues aligned: what type of people would take on positions in organizations with continuous change? This led us to contemplate the role of personality around organizational change, and whether certain personality traits would make individuals more inclined to embrace and adapt to organizational change.

In this chapter, we are going to present our empirical findings regarding our research aim. We will first dive into our respondents' ideas of the start-up scene and organizational change in general terms, after which we will continue by presenting the data regarding our interviewees' perceptions of their attitudes towards organizational change. Then we will look into our findings concerning our participants' descriptions of themselves as well as others and how they viewed the relationship between their personality and their attitudes and adaptability to change. Lastly, we will present our findings regarding other factors affecting attitudes towards change, which arose in our interviews.

4.1 Start-up context and organizational change

> "Start-ups they do things like on the fly, quick, this is it maybe,
> let's do it this way." – Hayden

Due to the lack of power, resources, scale and established routines often enabling increased organizational agility within start-up ventures, we assumed this context to be subject to continuous change. Hence, to start off our empirical findings we want to explore our

interviewees' perceptions of these companies, most importantly regarding their organizational change aspect. A few of our participants had previous experience in the start-up world, yet most were new to this type of a setting. The ones already familiar to the start-up context described their past experiences as positive, which was supported by the fact that they had chosen to enter this kind of a venture again. The quotes below indicate how the strong presence in the Finnish media and a few global success stories had shaped our interviewees' perceptions regarding the appeal of start-up ventures, considering particularly Finnish start-ups as attractive employers and as viable competitors for more established organizations.

> "I think nowadays media makes is sound quite sexy and like cool and stuff like that." – Dylan

> "I always liked start-ups, […] I've been involved in that world already so I like the fact that most of the time it's young people working and also that the stakes are high and that's motivating at the same time […]." – Blair

> "Professionals in general, they are so against joining start-ups, but […] it's challenging nowadays, it's like challenging us, a lot of small companies prove they can make it, like they can be successful and a good example Supercell or Angry Birds […] if you speak in the concept of Finland" – Hayden

> "One of the reasons why I chose to move to Finland […] because my goal was to work for a Finnish start-up. So I had a quite a clear goal when moving here." – Charlie

However, despite the commonly alluring image of start-up ventures presented in the media, our interviewees were also highly aware of the unpredictable nature and high failure rate of these types of companies - to many it came "in the job description" (Cameron). This translated to a feeling of instability, of not knowing what would happen in the long run and the importance of agility in continuously shifting conditions. Our interviewees emphasized the need to make quick decisions and change course quickly in this environment.

> "Start-up is a very risky business as you probably know there's a very high chance of failure if you don't get everything right. Even if you get it right what you're doing needs to have a market for it so there's a lot of factors coming to it […]." – Jamie

> "When you apply for a job […] we look for to feel secure, kind of permanent. Start-ups are not, will not give you that feeling because they are start-ups like they are trying something, it might work, it might not and most in general like 90% maybe are failing and you can hear that, you can see that […]." – Hayden

> "[…] In an agile environment […] you're forced to make quick decisions and you can change direction, it's not a set out path, you're kind of getting there like this (wave-movement) […]."
> – Cameron

This less established nature and high level of organizational agility at Phoenix reflected in our interviewees' answers. Regardless of the duration of their employment – ranging from 2-15 months - they all thought that the company had gone through changes in various fronts of the business. Particularly, changes in processes, headcount and location were mentioned and commonly accounted to the rapid growth the company had been facing particularly within the past year. Since the beginning of 2015 to the point of our interviews in early April 2016, Phoenix had moved to new premises three times and the workforce had more than quadrupled.

> "Oh well definitely the amount of people has been growing, rapidly, I think we have recruited about 17 new people during this year […] so of course the headcount but then again we have also moved to a different premises and we can see all the growth now better than before […]." – Alex

Our interviewees also described Phoenix to be transforming into a more established organization with set structures and processes coming into place, yet they were aware of further changes happening in the future. While all of our participants unanimously saw Phoenix as a fast changing context, many also highlighted that the changes they were experiencing were on the smaller scale, incremental disruptions to their operations and not as drastic as "employee co-operation negotiations", a procedure that tends to have a highly negative connotation in the Finnish society. Still, they described change as a continuous phenomenon present at the company with every week something new coming in and conditions constantly shifting.

> "[…] There will be a lot of changes that we've seen will come, so we know that change will come because we're growing fast and

changes need to come so, I think I've seen changes, yes, and there's more changes coming (laughter)." – Charlie

"I mean in this company we have a lot of changes but it's like small changes, we don't have like employee co-operation negotiations kind of thing […]." – Dylan

However, our interviewees commonly talked about the changes at the company as "improvements" and most were quick to name specific positive organizational changes that they had experienced at Phoenix, with less favorable ones – if they had occurred – hardly being mentioned. This led us to further explorations of our participants' perceptions and attitudes towards organizational change.

4.2 Attitudes towards organizational change at Phoenix

As we were interested in how our interviewees considered different factors in their attitudes towards organizational change, we first wanted to explore their views on the phenomenon itself. Our findings regarding our interviewees' attitudes towards organizational change will be presented in more detail in the following sections under the themes of "the flowing river" and "the double-edged-sword".

4.2.1 The flowing river

"I believe in change and I believe it's like the river, if it's calm, it's bad water, it should be running all the time, fresh water […]." – Hayden

When talking about a changing environment, most of our interviewees described it as a source of excitement, having change aligned with "living an exciting life" (Dylan). A common perception of change was that it meant moving forward, that it was something that needed to happen to get from point A to point B. Many of our interviewees also described it as a learning experience, something that enabled them to get out of their comfort zone, challenge themselves and improve their capabilities.

"For me change is moving forward." – Cameron

"I think it's fun (laughter), it's exciting. I wouldn't like if I think what company I'd want to work in, I wouldn't want to be in a company that doesn't change at all and doesn't like move and I wouldn't want to work in a company that is completely traditional that doesn't do anything new and innovative. So I think change is quite important." – Dylan

"[…] I think change is always good because it puts you to your 'uncomfort' zone and then it forces you to kind of put everything out there and make the best of your skills and learn more […]".
– Alex

Hence, all except one of our participants described change as a positive phenomenon - many referred to it as something that was "always good" and claimed to seek it in their lives, particularly in the beginning of our interviews. Even Charlie, our only interviewee who admitted to not liking change stated that s/he had unintentionally been looking for change in his/her life. Many also said that they had no problem changing the way they do things.

"I love change, I get bored without change. Yeah, yeah, no I seek change and if I see something that's not changing I'll change it. So it needs to, everything needs to have a purpose or not exist."
– Sam

"No, change is awesome, I mean no change is just bit boring, I guess." – Jamie

"[…] I don't have any problems with change, I can modify my, the way that I do things […]." – Blair

"Not necessarily, well, it, it might look like it (laughter). If I look back, yes, but I don't see myself as a person who looks for change, but yeah inadvertently I have been seeking change."
– Charlie

A changing environment entailed not knowing what course things would take even in the short term, but for the most part our participants considered this an encouraging fact. The fast moving and dynamic atmosphere was considered preferable for most of our respondents.

"I think it's more exciting in that sense that you never know what your work week might look like (laughter), so that's a good thing […]." – Alex

"I think like flexibility, that's for one thing. And also the fact that it's really fast-moving and dynamic and like things happen like you don't know today what's gonna happen next week."
– Morgan

4.2.2 The double-edged sword

As our interviews progressed, however, we got to hear more negative aspects of change. Robin referred to it as a "double-edged sword", meaning that change could be good yet also overwhelming if there was no prior priming for it, a view that was shared by Morgan and Jamie. Some of our interviewees felt that a changing environment could get distressing, if both personal and professional life were subject to extensive and continuous changes at the same time. Hence, it was important to have a foundation somewhere, and keeping one aspect stable was helpful in adapting to changes in the other.

"[…] Sometimes it can be frustrating that stuff changes that you just have finished something and then "Oh! We have to change it!" (laughter), but then again you learn more and you get the experience […]." – Alex

"[…] I've done this mistake a couple of times now that you change location, job, and in kind of in a life situation where everything is changing as well and it becomes very difficult when home is not stable and your work is not stable, and you're in a new place so kind of even your surroundings are not stable […]. But yeah, I would say that if you can keep one of those stable that helps a lot." – Sam

"My personal life is quite steady, so it makes it of course easier to be in an environment than at work where everything would be changing in both sides of the life, that might be a bit of a difficult thing (laughter)." – Alex

Our interviewees also highlighted the significance of employee involvement and sense making in organizational change. The majority of our participants stated that it was extremely important for them to know why a certain organizational change was happening, and that it

was communicated effectively. If these two requirements were filled, most said they would have "no problem with change" as long as it was the best thing for the company and they were able to see the 'bigger picture'. A specific challenge Phoenix was facing on this front concerned its multicultural workforce.

> "If it doesn't make sense then it doesn't make sense. And, and it doesn't have to be like if it doesn't make sense for me even, like if it makes sense in a bigger picture also." – Charlie

> "Communication is important, so you need to be able to communicate what is going to change and why and especially in a small company like this communication is quite important and we've noticed that it's quite challenging as well, cause we have four offices and we have a lot of people - we only have like less than half of the employees are Finnish - so we have a lot of different cultures so it makes it more difficult for people to adapt to different things in change." – Dylan

However, towards the end of our interviews we started hearing more opinions about having difficulty in dealing with organizational change if it did not fit one's current situation or threatened to compromise one's skill sets.

> "Change is good […] when it fits your kind of current situation. If it doesn't then it probably takes a bit of kind of chewing and getting used to." – Morgan

> "[…] In general I'm open for changes as long as they go, they fit into my expectation and within my responsibility, they fit also my profile, I will accept them. […] Basically I accept any change with the challenge that will empower me and make me use of my skill and my abilities." – Hayden

Still, the generally positive outlook on change persisted, as our interviewees either considered change as a 'means to an end', entailing that they appreciated it since through change they could achieve greater goals. The rest, who did not directly describe change as an approach to gain something, accounted their positive view of change for their inner restlessness and dislike for stability.

> "[…] I guess I appreciate change and I think that it's because I see the reason behind the changes, the value that change can bring to me if I adapt myself […]." – Jamie

> "I enjoy it [change] so I really like working in a, I get bored very easily, so being in a company where everything is changing all the time you have new problems to solve compared to yesterday makes it much more interesting […]." – Sam

4.3 'Them' in the context of organizational change

Since we were particularly interested in personality within organizational change, we wanted to hear our interviewees' opinions on whether or not they thought it was an important factor in determining change-related attitudes. Most of our interviewees considered it a crucial factor, highlighting a separation between 'us' and 'them'.

> "I want to be in an agile environment where you're forced to make quick decisions and you can change direction, it's not a set out path, you're kind of getting there like this (wave-movement) - it's ehm, which is you know challenging and it's not for everyone, just as big corporations are not for everyone necessarily […]."
> – Cameron

> "That's [a fast changing environment] a good thing. I know that it doesn't fit everybody. […] Of course, there are different start-ups but like the general start-up as such, it doesn't fit everyone. But I think like if you think of us, for example, we've kind of managed to gather people who are like very adventurous and that's a very important feature I think when you work in a start-up." – Morgan

> "So the people here are great, so if you have a lot of people who resist change it can really kill the atmosphere, because they're just like "no, no, no" and then you're like "well, but it's much better if you…" "No!", so it just really kills it, so to be with likeminded people who all want to just kind of go forward […]." – Sam

The quotes above indicate that our interviewees did not view the fast changing start-up environment as suitable for everyone, and that liking change and being confident with it were prerequisites for entering such a company. Some of them also believed being adventurous to be an important characteristic when working in a start-up environment, something that most

of them also talked about with regard to their own personality. Our respondents felt that the people they had gathered at Phoenix fit these requirements and thereby considered it effortless to work together and grow further as a company.

> "When we hire for example new BDRs we also look that like what, what's their position on change because it's not that you're gonna have to do this and this and this, a list of five things, no, no - it's that can change and modify all the time so we want people that don't necessarily want to just be stuck in one position."
> – Blair

As stated before, most of our interviewees considered the role of personality highly significant in attitudes and adaptability to organizational change. A strong "definitely" or "absolutely" was a common first reaction when being asked this question. Our participants perceived that some people preferred safer and more stable surroundings, and disliked not knowing what was going to happen, as it would take them out of their comfort zone.

> "Yes, I do think so. I think it depends a lot on what you want out of life because a lot of people like to just you know stay in one place and do kind of the 'safe' thing and then I think a lot of people who like to work in a place that seek for change, they look for adventures and they want to live maybe an exciting life and people and then some people just want to kind of know what's gonna happen." – Dylan

> "Yeah, it does. Oh definitely. I mean if, let's say it's a process driven work and I mean, two things, one if the person has been long term at the company and then there's a change that's difficult because then you're used to working your way so then it's hard to make a change, but definitely I mean I guess everything when it comes to change has to do with personality in the end because if you make a change then there's a person who has to implement that change so, so it's definitely up to personality I would say."
> – Charlie

Our interviewees also emphasized factors they considered to play a significant role in one's ability to work in an atmosphere where there is constant change, such as the start-up scene. Most of them considered their overall accepting mindset towards change to translate to their positive attitudes towards it.

> "Change is good (laughter). You have to feel good about change otherwise it's eh, you shouldn't be in this kind of an environment." – Cameron

> "[…] You need to be confident in yourself with change because sometimes you won't get any guideline on how to do stuff you just need to figure out and if it's right, great, if it's wrong well there's nothing bad about it you just learn from it, you just don't repeat it again." – Blair

Our respondents emphasized that change was something one had to feel good about and confident with to work in the kind of environment that Phoenix represents. Along similar lines, a view that arose in a couple of our interviews was that the fast changing start-up context was not a suitable setting for people who strived for perfection. The lack of set structures and support was considered something that not everyone was able to handle, and thus should not enter such an environment.

> "That's something we, I always talk about in interviews, that you have to be okay with being in an imperfect world that changes all the time, if you're looking for set structures, if you're looking for everything to be perfect, you think that we can, even if we have an ambition to do it […] if you think that's gonna happen, you're gonna be really disappointed and then you shouldn't join us. Because as good as you may be, you know, if you can't live and thrive in that environment, if you can't pick up the ball and say we need to change this you know I'm gonna run with that, then I think it's not the right environment for you to be in […]."
> – Cameron

> "You have to absolutely be very comfortable with the fact that there is no support, so if you come from a big company whenever you have a problem you call this person and that person and this person, you don't have that here. So you just have to solve it yourself, on top of which then again probably you can't do everything perfectly, so if you're a perfectionist a start-up is a very difficult place to be, so you have to accept that it needs to work and that's enough." – Sam

4.4 'Us' in the context of organizational change

Again, as we were mainly interested in the role of personality in organizational change in our study, we asked them to explain their own personality around organizational change to gain deeper insights on the aspects of their own personalities. Our interviewees mostly acknowledged traits that they believed affected their attitudes towards change in a positive way, thus improving their adaptation to change.

In order to understand the perceptions our interviewees hold of themselves around change, we are going to explore our respondents' descriptions of themselves in this section of our findings. The different personality traits mentioned will be presented within three themes, "welcoming challenges", "making compromises" and "taking chances".

4.4.1 Welcoming challenges

Some of our respondents characterized themselves as restless, which meant avoiding stability for them. Hence, they saw it as an essential factor in their welcoming attitude towards change, as mentioned previously in our findings. While some of our respondents implied that personality-wise they needed change in their professional life but were more inclined towards stability in their personal life, others said to be avoiding steadiness in all fronts of life. Moreover, they highlighted that they tend to get bored doing the same tasks time after time, which they saw as a part of their personality as well.

> "Well, I'm very restless, so if you get bored from stability then I guess by definition you're on the other side. So if you can't, I don't know, I've just always been like that, both private life and work, so. I didn't have to change much, it's the other way […]." – Sam

> "[…] There has been a constant change. But I think it's also because I'm the kind of person who like kind of goes for it and needs the change." – Morgan

> "In organizations I'm actually looking forward to it. And that's something cause personality-wise I can't kind of do the same thing over and over, I'm sure everyone feels the same way about that. So not just the tasks but lifestyle-wise I feel like at this point

I wanna kind of maybe stick to one for a little more before kind of
having another change again now that I […] kind of wanna settle
in for a bit." – Robin

Most of our respondents also brought up creativity in our interviews, as they claimed to be the type of people who liked to contribute to creating and building something new and finding new ways of doing things, also connecting it to the negative aspects they saw in working for larger, more established organizations. Hence, they recognized themselves to enjoy the lack of guidelines or set structures that a continuously changing environment encompassed, which also gave them the freedom to execute tasks in their own way and realize their creative character. Thus, many of our respondents believed Phoenix to be a great employer fit for them personality-wise.

"I like that because it gives me the, like the freedom of think of
new things and how to do things and I don't have anyone telling
me like okay you have to do it this way because this is how we do
it […]." – Blair

"[…] They [more established companies] tell you what to do and
you just do it. But here I've been able to be more experimental
with what I do and I just gotta prove it with whatever evidence I
have." – Robin

In relation to creativity, some of our respondents stated that problem solving was one of the things they considered important to keep them motivated. In fact, some of them characterized themselves as challenge seeking and believed it to come naturally to them, which they could particularly notice in terms of their professional life. Most of our interviewees also claimed to enjoy the multiple roles that the start-up scene allowed them to take on, which made their work less boring due to the variety of tasks – something that they personality-wise appreciated and acknowledged as a contributor to their attitudes towards change. Our respondents viewed working for Phoenix as an opportunity to challenge themselves and considered it rewarding as they could see the influence their input had on the company.

"Definitely the fact that you wear 'multiple hats' in so that you
have different kind of tasks to do rather than to be just a one small
piece in a huge machine, but you can see the effect that you make
to the whole business, that's the most important thing." – Alex

"[…] I wanted to do a lot of different things so then in a start-up you get to do a lot of different things so you're not just doing one specific thing but you're like in different roles." – Dylan

"There's obviously goods and bads I enjoy and but I think it's not that subtle especially working here cause actually our roles are changing all the time so things are not settled in that sense […]." – Robin

"[…] You have more sense of achievement here when you do something." – Blair

4.4.2 Making compromises

Another set of attributes that our interviewees used in characterizing themselves were positivity and easy-goingness, which they believed made them more adaptable to changes and thus more fitting to work in a continuously changing atmosphere that the start-up scene represented. Furthermore, particularly Alex and Dylan associated their easy-going nature with not complaining about small or insignificant things, which they supposed had affected their positive outlook on change.

"Well I think I'm the kind of person that […] I don't complain a lot so that's also a factor that if every small thing is bothering you that is changing or going wrong and you complain about it and start to feel negative about that, that's a negative factor of course, […] I tend to think quite positively in general, and not complain that much, rather do than just complain and not do (laughter)." – Alex

"I guess I'm quite easy-going and I'm quite adaptable and so I don't like complain about little things too much, I'm just like "okay that's fine", kind of that type." – Dylan

Moreover, flexibility was seen as one of the key traits in working in a changing environment among our respondents, since they thought it helped them to adapt to changes that took place in the workplace. Some of them viewed flexibility as the ability to accept that their own opinions were not necessarily right and claimed that they were flexible in terms of their decisions. They saw the openness for other employees' suggestions as a good trait in their personality and believed it affected their ability to adapt to change positively. For some,

being flexible represented the ability to make compromises in change processes, which they detected in their own personality. They claimed to be willing to embrace change in an organizational setting if it made sense for others and the company, even if it did not align with their own expectations.

> "I say that I'm always positive about stuff like, I'm open, like one of my things that I like of myself is that I won't shut down an idea just because I don't like it. Even if I think that no that's a bad idea, I still, okay if you for example a BDR tells me to do this, okay well let's try it, and then let's see if it worked or not, it might be that my assumption was wrong. So, I think that could be one good thing of my personality that I'm open to that." – Blair

4.4.3 Taking chances

Some of our interviewees did not particularly talk about their personality when naming characteristics about themselves that they thought accounted to their attitudes and adaptability to change. A couple of our respondents portrayed optimism as a part of them. A few of them admitted to not being particularly excited about certain changes but were still prepared to embrace them by focusing on the 'bigger picture' and the potential benefits, which they believed had enhanced their ability to adapt to change.

> "I mean, I don't like change, I don't think people, there are people who like change, I'm not a big person who's like "aaah change" but we have to change and changes sometimes are good, you have to make changes in order to get where you want and, and I'm not afraid to take a risk if that means changing what I'm doing because I see the 'longer' picture." – Charlie

Furthermore, many of our interviewees described their tolerance for failure as one of the most important elements contributing to their ability to adjust to change. They continued to support this by stating that they accepted the fact that sometimes they themselves and other people make mistakes, especially in a fast-changing environment. Our respondents also viewed failure as an opportunity to learn and develop rather than considering it as something negative. They claimed that they were not afraid of failing and in fact characterized it as one of the pivotal factors in their adaptation to change.

> "Well, I guess I have a really high tolerance towards failure because I think if you're not afraid to fail and you can learn you know that you can learn from it, then there's nothing to be afraid of. I guess that's the only thing, like the bottom line of being able to adapt to changes." – Jamie

When discussing their tolerance to failure, some of our interviewees mentioned they had a low threshold for taking risks, which they believed to also play a part in their attitudes and adaptability to change. They especially emphasized the fact that at the end of the day they were not afraid of putting themselves out there and grasping opportunities, even though there always was a chance for failure. They stated that they saw past the risk and focused on the potential outcome of the situation.

> "I've made some mistakes etcetera, and I still make mistakes […] I think that's a really key character you need to have is, is see opportunity over risk, so I accept that we make mistakes, I accept that we're gonna lose sometimes […]." – Cameron

Being adventurous was also another quality that appeared in our interviews as many of our participants used it to describe their personalities. They stated that their own desire to gain new experiences, which they had accomplished through travelling to unfamiliar places, alongside constant relocations, had added to their ability to adapt to and embrace change.

> "I don't know, I guess I've always been the type that I like to look for exciting things and adventure […]." – Dylan

4.5 Setting personality aside

However, despite first having accounted change-related attitudes and adaptability to personality our interviewees started acknowledging the influence of other factors as well. Experience in particular was connected to these attitudes and adaptability, and change was considered something that one could get used to, and even start liking. In fact, some of our interviewees admitted to not always having had a positive attitude towards change, but through accumulating more experiences this outlook on change had turned around. They particularly highlighted the importance of encountering successful changes, as they were

believed to lead to "a positive idea about the change" thus making it "easier to kind of adjust to that" (Alex).

> "Yeah, definitely. Ehm personality, I feel like has to do experience, too. Sometimes if you're used to change then you just kind of go along with it, even if you might not necessarily initially think you're gonna like it but if it happens, it happens, right. So yeah I feel like some people are still very much kind of like, you know there are people out there who wanna stick to their own ways and the same you know and that's fine. I feel like I'm a bit of a mixture nowadays." – Robin

> "Ehm, I think it's something that I have learned how to adapt to change, and it's in my opinion something that you learn, it's based on your own experiences, if you have been used to work in a company for ten years then you're used to that and it will be very hard to modify the way that you live on top of that." – Blair

> "Yeah. Um, I don't know if I was born with that but when I grew up I experienced a lot of changes when I was really young […]. So I experienced a lot of these changes already so let's say I'm very used to it." – Jamie

> "[…] So since then it's I, I don't know, I started liking change like I don't like to stay in one place for longer than two or three years […]." – Blair

> "Yeah, I think it has an affect on that. I think some people might want to be more in a like comfortable surroundings in that sense that they don't maybe prefer change as much as someone else but then again everyone can learn to live with the change and learn to also want change I think, because I think before I jumped into my career life I was really, I didn't enjoy that much change but once you get into an organization where you have to kind of do the change that you can live with that and start to even like it." – Alex

The influence of culture was acknowledged in this sense as well. Some of our participants saw that culture played a role in attitudes and adaptability to change. Not only was culture considered to have an effect on one's general attitude towards change, but also how one related to specific aspects of change. Particularly the Finnish culture was perceived one of high resistance to change.

"Obviously yes, I think, okay I'm not gonna criticize Finnish people here but, I think Finnish are a conservative society, they are so much against change and this need to change. Well, when you meet a Finn who wants to change, really that's "he's too much changing" […] those guys, they make it, they make the success. In general people, again, Finnish people they obey the rules the law, they want the way they like, they try to avoid conflicts. Means they don't want to get to any new changes like changes […]. So in general people they don't like change because change will put you in a situation where you don't feel comfort."
– Hayden

Furthermore, a view that also arose in our interviews was the separation of one's personality between professional and personal life, exemplified in the quote below. Some of our interviewees implied their behavior to differ depending on the context. As already mentioned in our findings, some of our participants recognized to seek and enjoy change in their career while privately most said to appreciate more stable surroundings.

"[…] I think that necessarily […] your personality is not the same privately and professionally." – Cameron

5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter we summarize and discuss our empirical findings in the light of the theoretical perspectives provided in our literature review. We particularly reflect on the emphasis our respondents placed on personality in organizational change, yet question this emphasis through the alternative perspective found of experience explaining attitudes towards change. Finally, we provide our interpretation of the phenomenon.

5.1 Attitudes towards change

The vast majority of our respondents – nine out of ten – described their attitudes towards change as positive and change as something they 'sought' in their lives. This could lead us to believe that the people within Phoenix – an organization continuously undergoing incremental change – would be relatively more open and adaptable to organizational changes. While many admitted that change came with its anxieties and frustrations, their general outlook remained positive through recognizing the value change could bring to them as a learning and growing experience – aligning with Wanberg and Banas' (2000) view. They particularly acknowledged that change was something that needed to happen if the company was to move forward, which meant that 'feeling good about change' was not a matter of debate but rather a prerequisite for working at Phoenix.

However, it must be noted that the organizational changes the company had gone through were at least described as minor disruptions, which may have prompted this sense of positivity. Many of our respondents also described change situations at the company that they perceived had been carried out well, particularly in terms of communication, sense making and getting employees onboard early on in the process – again potentially prompting their sense of positivity towards organizational change. On the other hand, we might also perceive these rather belittling statements regarding the extent of the organizational changes at Phoenix as stemming from a generally positive attitude towards change.

As the general tone about change remained positive in our interviews, we sought to gain a deeper understanding of where these reactions stemmed from. Since we placed our main focus in our study on the significance of personality within organizational change, we were

particularly attentive to understand how the two were interrelated. Hence, it was of interest to us to explore our respondents' perceptions of the role of personality in organizational change, and how they described themselves around the phenomenon. In the next sections, we will discuss a fixed view of attitudes towards change that the emphasis on personality entails.

5.2 Towards a fixed view of attitudes to change

If we understand personality according to our definition of "relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, ideas, emotions, and behaviors that are generally consistent over situations and time and that distinguish individuals from each other" (Barrick & Mount, 2013, n.p.) we might also perceive attitudes towards change as tied to personality and thereby relatively fixed. The importance our respondents placed on the role of personality in organizational change could be interpreted as adhering to this view, at least to a certain extent. This entails that the strong consensus regarding the interrelated nature of the two concepts supports a perception of attitudes towards change being subject to and determined by personality traits. Statements such as the one below advocate for this standpoint:

> "I guess everything when it comes to change has to do with personality in the end […]." - Charlie

Furthermore, describing the continuously changing environment that Phoenix represents as 'not for everyone' due to poorly fitting personality and Phoenix employees as the kind of 'appropriate adventurous and likeminded people' for the setting enhances this perception. Thus, we are going to explore our respondents' descriptions of themselves through the existing theory linking personality and organizational change in the next section.

5.2.1 Big Five in attitudes towards change

Since the majority of our respondents believed personality to have an effect on one's attitude and ability to adapt to organizational change, we could utilize personality theory to support this view. In fact, relatively direct connections can be drawn from the ways in which our respondents characterized themselves to existing research connecting personality traits and organizational change. We were able to recognize numerous characteristics that we could interpret to align with the Five-Factor model of personality. These connections can be seen

from the table below summarizing our findings regarding our respondents' descriptions of themselves. Hence, in this section we are going to discuss and analyze our findings in the light of the big five traits.

Table 3: The Big Five personality traits in our empirical findings

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	Traits associated with this dimension include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent, and artistically sensitive. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 5).	Traits our respondents used when describing themselves associated with this dimension include being adventurous, creative, open-minded, change seeking, and failure-tolerant.
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	Traits associated with this dimension include being dependable, careful, thorough, responsible, organized, and planful. In addition to these traits, it consists of volitional variables, such as hardworking, achievement-oriented, and persevering. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 4).	Traits our respondents used when describing themselves associated with this dimension include being achievement-oriented.
AGREEABLENESS	Traits associated with this dimension include being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, softhearted, and tolerant. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 4).	Traits our respondents used when describing themselves associated with this dimension include being easy-going, flexible, and willing to make compromises.
EMOTIONAL STABILITY	Traits associated with this dimension include being anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (reversed). (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 4).	Traits our respondents used when describing themselves associated with this dimension include being positive, and easy-going.
EXTRAVERSION	Traits associated with this dimension include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active. (Barrick & Mount, 1991, p. 3).	Traits our respondents used when describing themselves associated with this dimension include being restless, adventurous, and positive.

Looking at the Five-Factor model, as we stated in our literature review, individuals placing at the higher end of the Openness to Experience spectrum are more inclined to like novel situations, be more adaptable to shifting conditions and respond better to the demands of a changing environment than their counterparts at the lower end of the scale (Caldwell & Yi, 2011; Le Pine et al. 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1997). A high need for change also characterizes open individuals (Walker Russ, 1993). Many of our respondents described themselves in terms that suggested them to be open to experiences, particularly with regard to their adventurous and creative nature, and their open-minded stance regarding other people's ideas – even ones that they were not personally convinced about at first hand. Many of them stated that they exhibit change-seeking behavior and have a high need for change in their lives, particularly with regard to locations and tasks. Based on these statements, we could interpret their personalities to align with the Openness to Experience trait, indicating their attitudes towards change to be positive.

Secondly, we can draw a few connections to Conscientiousness from some of our respondents' explanations of themselves. As stated, there is an ambivalent view in literature regarding how organizational change and Conscientiousness are interrelated (Caldwell & Yi; 2011; George & Jing, 2001; Le Pine et al. 2000). Studies have suggested highly conscientious individuals to experience change negatively, while others have advocated them to be better equipped to excel in situations characterized by uncertainty and shifting demands (Herold et al. 2002). Some of our respondents described themselves as achievement-oriented, which could be interpreted as them placing at the higher end of the Conscientiousness spectrum, insinuating them to welcome change and thus be more adaptable to a constantly shifting atmosphere.

We could also detect elements of Agreeableness from some of our respondents' characterizations of themselves. As agreeable individuals tend to avoid tenses and disagreements through cooperativeness, exhibiting more compliant and flexible behavior - they have been advocated to be less likely to resist organizational change and more adaptable to new policies and procedures that change may entail (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Vakola et al. 2004). Agreeableness could be identified particularly from expressions of easy-goingness and flexibility, with notions of 'not complaining about little things' possibly interpreted as avoiding tenses and disagreements. Furthermore, willingness to compromise due to 'seeing the bigger picture' in organizational change could be understood as Agreeableness. As many

of our respondents used these traits to describe their own personalities, we could interpret them to be agreeable and thus react to changes more positively.

As stated in our literature review, Emotional Stability characterizes individuals who are calm, resilient and secure – with a capability to manage their emotions in various exchange contexts (Choi et al. 2015; Saksvik & Hetland, 2009). At the other end of the spectrum, Emotional Stability is referred to as Neuroticism. Individuals who place at this end of the scale tend to be nervous, anxious and worrying. Neuroticism is connected to resistance to change and exhibiting pessimistic attitudes towards work in general (Saksvik & Hetland, 2009). Thus, we could speculate based on some of our respondents' descriptions of themselves as possessing a positive outlook on life and not being concerned about little things, that they could be characterized as 'emotionally stable' and thereby display more positive attitudes towards change compared to more neurotic individuals.

Finally, we could also identify some links to the dimension of Extraversion from our respondents' descriptions of their personalities. As extraverted individuals are recognized to have a high need for activity and they tend to look for excitement (Piedmont, 1998), we could detect that our respondents who 'personality-wise' claimed to be restless and get bored easily by staying in the same place or executing the same tasks over and over again, might place high on the Extraversion scale. Also, extraverted people tend to be generally positive (Piedmont, 1998), and thus we could speculate the positivity that some of our respondents accounted to their personalities to be explained by not only Emotional Stability but also a higher level of Extraversion. Hence, based on the challenge seeking, adventurous and positive nature many of our respondents believed to have, we could characterize them as extraverts, which perhaps makes them more suitable for a start-up venture as extraverted individuals are recognized to be more appreciative of change and thus hold more welcoming attitudes towards it (Saksvik & Hetland, 2009).

Furthermore, considering how our respondents talked about themselves, we could interpret them to be low in their dispositional resistance towards change - a personality trait conceptualized by Oreg (2006). If we were to take our respondents' statements at face value, we could conclude that personality indeed does play a part in determining reactions to change, a stance that is supported by the Five Factor model we used as the main personality theory in our research. Based on our respondents' descriptions of themselves and the

characteristics they perceived important in embracing organizational change, individuals who are extraverts, agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable and open to experiences would be more positive towards and better equipped to handle the expectations of a changing environment. Thus, they did describe their attitudes towards change and their own personalities in ways that according to the theoretical perspectives would suggest them to be good fits for a company continuously undergoing organizational change.

When contrasting our respondents' descriptions of their personality around change with the dimensions presented in the Five Factor model, we noticed that they only used traits that account to positive attitudes towards change. Although having a chance to do so, our respondents avoided stressing any aspects of their personalities that theoretically could have contributed to their attitudes towards change in a negative way. Even Charlie, our only respondent who admitted not being particularly excited about change, did not name characteristics that would have proposed him/her to possess a more negative stance on change. However, most of our respondents referred to traits that according to the Five Factor model could be claimed to have a negative impact on attitudes towards change when talking about other people, which created an 'us' versus 'them' positioning in our interviews. Many stated that not everyone was comfortable with change and thus not suitable for working in a constantly changing environment due to the type of person they are.

5.2.2 Broader concepts in attitudes towards change

As mentioned in our empirical findings section, the role culture plays in attitudes towards change arose in some of our interviews. In particular, the national culture of Finland was brought up as Finnish people were portrayed as conservative and extremely change-resistant. We could contemplate this view to align with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as Finland scores relatively high on uncertainty avoidance (59), which implies that Finnish people are not fond of uncertain and risky situations that change is likely to entail. Thus, according to Hofstede's framework, Finns would not be ideal candidates for working in a continuously changing environment, such as the start-up scene, since they have a preference for security and tendency to avoid ambiguity (The Hofstede Center, n.d.).

Our respondents also highlighted that in order to work in the kind of atmosphere that Phoenix represents, one needs to be comfortable with change, which according to many of them was a

factor they looked for in new hires. As the majority of our respondents described themselves as change-friendly, we could detect the 'change-embracing attitude' they believed to possess in their answers as well. Self-confidence arose in our interviews as one of the characteristics that our respondents considered a key feature in the attitude of embracing change, which can be linked to the dimension of Emotional Stability (Robins et al. 2001). As already mentioned, emotionally stable individuals are more inclined to welcome change in their lives (Costa &McCrae, 1992), which aligns with our respondents' view needing to be being confident in oneself in order to cope with changing conditions.

Moreover, perfectionism was recognized as a trait that would make it more difficult for an individual to work in the fast-changing start-up scene due to the lack of structures and guidance alongside the high chance of failure start-up ventures are subject to. While our respondents did not use this trait to describe themselves, some of them claimed it was not a favorable trait in such an environment. Although perfectionism is usually viewed as a multi-dimensional personality feature, it is still related to the dimension of Emotional Stability (Flett et al. 1989). Research has shown there to be a significant link between perfectionism and Neuroticism (the other end of the dimension), as individuals possessing a perfectionist character tend to be more anxious and hence can be described as neurotic (Hill et al. 1997). As stated previously, Neuroticism usually results in negative reactions to change, which indicates that our respondents' descriptions of people who are fit to work in a continuously changing environment align with the Five Factor model.

The acceptance of failure and lack of structure that some our respondents claimed to possess and also considered important for people working in a continuously changing environment, could be linked to tolerance for ambiguity. Furthermore, many of our respondents characterized themselves as not being afraid to take risks, which also aligns with this dimension (McLain, 1993). As stated in our literature review, tolerance for ambiguity was originally conceptualized as a personality trait, but more recently it has been argued to represent a construct subject to context-specific variables (Durrheim & Foster, 1997; Herman et al. 2010). However, tolerance for ambiguity is often linked to individuals who score high on Openness to Experience, which suggests it to be relatively stable (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012). Thus, these varying views lead us to further questioning of the fixed-flexible continuum of change-related attitudes.

Still, Vakola et al. (2004) claim that when selecting change agents, focusing on personality traits can determine the success of change efforts. They argue that the emphasis on personality also goes beyond change agents, but that dispositions should be taken into consideration when selecting employees for such roles or assignments that innately involve change. However, while our respondents highlighted the importance of personality in affecting attitudes towards organizational change, more malleable views were suggested as well. As these other factors were mentioned in explaining attitudes towards change, we need to explore a more flexible view of them. Hence, the next section will be devoted to a flexible view of attitudes towards change.

5.3 Towards a flexible view of attitudes to change

The explorations of our respondents' descriptions of themselves and others around change leave us to wonder whether these claims are adequate to understand attitudes towards organizational change. Despite all of them acknowledging the effect that personality traits have on attitudes and adaptability to change, notions of 'learning to live with change' and 'learning to like change' would suggest to us that personality in itself could be perceived as only a minor factor in organizational change, as also supported by numerous studies (e.g. Devos et al. 2007; Devos et al. 2001; Wanous et al. 2000), suggesting a more flexible view of attitudes and adaptability.

Past studies have proposed attitudes towards organizational change to be tied to individuals' prior experiences with change (Choi, 2011). Understanding change-related attitudes as subject to experience would imply that rather than being relatively fixed, they can be shaped through varying events. This would provide us with a flexible view of attitudes towards change. While our respondents unanimously stated personality to be a factor in one's stance towards change, the majority also acknowledged the role experience played in affecting reactions to change. Some even considered this a more dominant factor. They perceived particularly experiences of successful changes to prompt positive attitudes towards change – recounting stories of well carried out organizational change events at Phoenix. Some of them confessed to not always having had a positive outlook on change, but that it was something they had learned to like and appreciate – yet it was not necessarily something inherent to them. Furthermore, our respondents admitted their attitudes to vary based on other change-

related factors, such as communication, personal life situation and the necessity of the change. While at first they described change as 'always good', we could detect contradictions in many of our respondents' statements. When explaining what a bad change effort meant to them, they commonly gave examples of events where the change did not match their expectations or their particular situation well.

However, if we understand personality traits as relatively enduring and stable, the quote below may suggest that neither personality nor experience, nor other situational factors might be enough to explain our respondents' statements about their attitudes towards organizational change in our study – as particularly change within organizations was portrayed so positively.

> "[…] I think that necessarily […] your personality is not the same privately and professionally." – Cameron

Many of our other respondents seemed to have the same line of thought with Cameron as they recognized themselves to like and seek change in their work life while in their personal life they said to prefer more stable surroundings. It was also acknowledged that particularly relocation was a challenging process, as it entailed simultaneous changes in professional and private life, making adjusting to changes in organizational context more difficult. Thus, a balance between change and stability was preferred. Hence, while our respondents depicted their attitudes towards change to be highly positive in the organizational context, many recounted themselves to be much more resistant towards changing conditions outside of work. With these partly opposing and contradictory perceptions regarding whether attitudes towards change are relatively fixed or relatively flexible, we turn to look at other explanations for our respondents' positivity about organizational change.

5.4 Towards a discursive view of attitudes to change

> "Dominant discursive practices circle around and form the kind of thought systems and ideologies that are necessary for the formation of a consensus that extends into what is taken to be agreed upon, what is held to be aesthetically and ethically of value, and what is often simply taken to be true" (Bamberg et al. 2011, p. 180).

According to Hardy et al. (2005) looking at organizational phenomena through a discursive approach goes beyond a focus on language and how it is used in organizations. The discursive approach emphasizes that rather than simply reflecting organizational reality, language constructs it (Grant et al. 1998). In this section, we are going to discuss a discursive view of attitudes towards change, by which we refer to the discursive practices within organizations and how they may have been involved in our interviews.

5.4.1 Organizational Change Discourse

When this discursive approach is applied to the organizational context, we could argue that the dominant discourse around organizational change centers on notions about its inevitability due to business growth, innovation, competition, and evolving consumer tastes – all of which are claimed to be increasing and altering at an accelerating rate (e.g. Cullen et al. 2014; Dunican & Keaster, 2015). Innumerable academic books and articles in organizational literature have been written on this topic, leading management to call out for continuous change efforts. This discourse around the inevitability of change could be identified in our interviews as well, with statements such as "things need to change […] I mean if you stop changing things then you'll end up like Nokia" (Dylan) being common place, adhering to the inevitability of organizational change. Furthermore, notions of the meaning of change as 'moving forward' align with organizational change discourse.

With flexibility and agility being organizational 'buzzwords' in the modern change-driven business environment, companies place high value on employees who are capable of adapting to shifting conditions and expectations (Lawler & Worley, 2006; Ngo & Loi, 2008; Roehling et al. 2000). Vakola et al. (2004) characterized the profile of the "positive to organizational change" employee (p. 104) as open to new experiences, extravert, agreeable and conscientious. Attributes aligning with these characterizations are commonly found in job postings and hyped in management discourse, and interestingly we could detect these characterizations in our respondents' descriptions of themselves as well.

Hence, we can claim that being positive about change and embracing it can be considered an ideal constructed in organizational and societal discourse. This could lead us to question whether – or perhaps more likely how – these discursive practices influenced and shaped the way our respondents described themselves in our interviews. In fact, the almost solely

positive ways in which they portrayed themselves – particularly in relation to others – directs us to consider the role of identity construction, or more specifically of our respondents constructing their identities to fit the profile of the "positive to organizational change" employee and presenting themselves as 'employable'. Furthermore, the lack of stories about negatively experienced organizational change events ("usually you remember the good ones, not the bad ones" – Blair) enhances our skepticism about simply accounting their described attitudes to personality, experience or other directly change-related factors. In the next section, we will introduce the concept of identity and discuss how looking at identity could actually potentially be more relevant to understanding our respondents' attitudes towards organizational change in our research.

5.4.2 Identity in organizational change

> "'Identity' is a matter of claims, not character; persona, not personality; and presentation, not self" (Ybema et al. 2009, p. 306).

Despite the contested nature of identity research, some consensus has been reached regarding the fundamentals. The concept of identity relates to questions about the self or selves, aspiring to provide understanding to who a person ('who am I?') or a group ('who are we?') is from the subjective perspective (Alvesson, 2004). Personal identity (versions of our notionally unique characteristics) and a social or collective identity (understandings of selves as members of social categories) partially constitute one's self-concept or identity at the individual level, acting as a bridge between the individual and society (Coupland & Brown, 2012; van del Heuvel et al. 2014). Identities are not just allocated or entirely controlled, but also 'worked on' as people author versions of their selves. Thus, identity formation is complex and iterative since "identities are aspired to as much as they are ascribed, both regulated and resisted, negotiated, accepted and disdained" (Coupland & Brown, 2012, p. 1). According to Ybema et al.'s (2009) view of identity as a matter of claims and presentation, we might need to look at our respondents' descriptions of themselves as a matter of identity construction rather than their personality. Costa and McCrae (1994) maintain that personality traits significantly contribute to identity formation and they can manifest as expressions of identity, yet pure claims about one's personality are not equivalent to their personality - but rather closer to their personal identity.

Recent scholarship claims that identity is inextricably linked to social practices and discourse, as "individuals constantly strive to shape their personal identities in organizations and are shaped by discursive forces" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1168). This entails that both social and discursive practices are significant in framing and defining the ways in which individuals and groups present themselves to others and conceptualize themselves. Hence, identity construction takes place in discourse as speaking subjects negotiate identities in social contexts, leading them to emerge in the form of subjectivity: the sense of self, including one's feelings, thoughts and orientations (Bamberg et al. 2011; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). This negotiation is an on-going process, as identities are continuously formulated and reformulated. Looking at identity as subject to discursive forces would suggest in our research that the discourse surrounding organizational change might lead our respondents to present themselves in ways that correspond to this discourse, constructing their identities accordingly. Hence, identity construction might provide deeper insights as to why our respondents' statements adhered to the ideals in organizational discourse.

Considerable attention has been directed towards the discourses individuals draw from when authoring their organizational selves and "the subject positions that these prescribe, highlight, marginalize, and proscribe" (Coupland & Brown, 2012, p. 2). The way in which individuals draw from these discourses is generally selective and often skeptical, as people tend to aspire for selves that are moral, coherent and successful (Goffman, 1959). While it must be noted that not all statements of selves are positive, as we stated, our respondents were quick to describe their personalities through favorable attributes that particularly supported the view of themselves as positive towards and adaptable to change, with hardly any negative aspects emerging. All of our respondents talked about change as a positive phenomenon, aligning with the discourse of 'embracing change' and presenting themselves in close resemblance to Vakola et al.'s (2004) idea of the "positive to organizational change" employee (p. 104). We could also interpret the lacking accounts of negative organizational change events as adhering to this construction of a 'moral, coherent and successful' self.

Delving into an important part of one's personal identity, Fugate and Kinicki (2008) define work identity as an individual's self-definition in the work context. This work identity directs, regulates and sustains behavior. Hence, one's self definition drives individuals to enact behaviors that are consistent with their self-view. As even noted by one of our respondents, people may have different 'personalities' at work compared to their personal

lives. Looking at our respondents' descriptions of themselves as identity construction, particularly with regard to their work identities could provide us with a deeper understanding of how individuals' attitudes and adaptability to change are established – especially highlighting the need to portray themselves as positive towards change at work. Their descriptions of change and their change-related attitudes could be especially connected to work identity construction, since the context may require them to present themselves as employees equipped to handle the demands and expectations that shifting conditions entail, as was acknowledged for example when addressing the criteria for new hires. Moreover, Elovainio and Kivimäki (2001) argue that individuals with strong work and professional identities perceive themselves as considerably more competent to tackle the kinds of ambiguous situations that a changing environment tends to bring about. They claim that a strong identity can potentially explain sustained behavior and strain in the long term, which could also explain our respondents' perceived capability to work at Phoenix and positivity towards organizational change.

We can further elaborate on this argument by addressing the concept of employability. According to Rothwell and Arnold (2007) "employability concerns the extent to which people possess the skills and other attributes to find and stay in work of the kind they want" (p. 23). Researchers have become interested in the concept of employability in relation to identity and organizational change (e.g. Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Nazar & van der Heijden, 2012). Self-perceived employability and presenting oneself as employable are important in identity construction particularly in the midst of the uncertainties in the modern business world. This adheres to our previous argument on work and career identities, as the context may influence the individuals at Phoenix to create a self-view of employability – enhancing their self-perceived competence to tackle ambiguous situations and sustained behavior. This may be particularly relevant taking into consideration the sluggish economy in Finland, entailing difficulties in finding employment (Lehtinen, 2014).

Ybema et al. (2009) emphasize the effectively relational nature of identity, which entails that the emergence of identities takes place through the articulation of similarities and differences. To discursively separate the 'self' from the 'other' is an inherent part of identity formation and construction, as notions of "who we are not and, by implication, who others are (and are not)" (p. 306) are intimately connected to this process. This can be referred to as self-other identity talk, and it is commonly constructed within dominant discourse. We deem this self-

other identity talk as one of the most prevalent aspects and themes of our interviews, as our respondents presented clear separations of 'us' and 'them' in attitudes and adaptation to change. Remarks about 'not everyone fitting the environment' and 'I have a lot of friends who would not be comfortable with the uncertainty and lack of structure here' highlight this separation, by dividing 'us' to the people who are comfortable with change and 'them' to the people who are not.

We can further build on this point by discussing the facet of social identity. According to Hogg and Terry (2000) "to varying degrees, people derive part of their identity and sense of self from the organizations or workgroups to which they belong" (p. 121). This 'social identity' is tied to intergroup social comparisons, meaning that 'in-group' members seek to confirm and establish favorable distinctive evaluations between themselves and the out-group. Hence, the members belonging to this in-group are inclined to develop a positive image of the group and protect this image created (Turner, 1975). This emphasizes our previous argument, and could provide understanding as to why our respondents' evaluations of out-group members were less favorable. As stated, many characterized the people working at Phoenix as 'likeminded' and 'adventurous', who have to be comfortable with change. We can interpret this as a result of social identity construction: establishing a positive image of the group and protecting it through favorable distinctions and evaluations between Phoenix employees and those who are not. Our respondents commonly referred to their Phoenix colleagues as a "family", which we could interpret as a strong social identity and identification with the workgroup.

Lastly, Dutton et al. (1994) define organizational identification as the "degree to which a member define[s] him/herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization" (p. 239). The idea behind this concept is that the members who strongly identify with the organization are less prone to differentiate between their self-interests and organizational interests. As it is understood at Phoenix that the company needs to continuously keep changing particularly due to growth and expansion, a strong organizational identification could also explain statements such as the example below that indicates the importance of not only personal, but the company's interests.

> "If I perceive it as a good change, then it motivates me, if it's
> something that I think that it's […] good for the company and
> good myself as well, then it's motivating." – Morgan

Some of our respondents strongly identified with the start-up context, for instance with Jamie defining him/herself as a "start-up person". Furthermore, our respondents may have considered the 'sexy' image in the media and the attractiveness of start-up ventures in Finland something they wanted to identify with, thereby shaping their identities and identification with the company.

We believe that these explanations of constructing a moral, coherent and successful perception of self all with regard to one's personal identity, social identity, work identity and organizational identification can provide us with a deeper understanding of the basis for our respondents' statements and how attitudes towards change are constructed. "To the extent social research is an empirical enterprise, most of it seems to be connected to how people use language – sometimes how language uses people – in particular situations. Interviews, for example, are obviously rich in linguistic interaction" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000, p. 1126). Hence, looking at our interviews as identity construction shaped by discourse may bring more value to our study rather than concluding attitudes towards change to be simply fixed by personality or flexible through experience or other factors.

5.5 The three views combined

Theoretically, two extreme positions could be taken in order to explain behavior: the first one purely trait-oriented, and the second solely situation-oriented. The trait-oriented position focuses on the person and disregards the situation, while the situation-oriented position does the exact opposite (Murphy, 2013). However, based on our findings neither position provides us with a comprehensive understanding of individuals' reactions to organizational change.

While it might be a desirable view that personality traits, which are considered relatively stable attributes, could divide individuals into those being comfortable with change and those who are not, we do not believe it to be adequate to explain where reactions to change stem from. This theoretically fixed position would not provide a thorough understanding of organizational phenomena and change induced reactions. We take a stance that supports the

view of certain individuals being more positive and equipped to handle the challenges of change, but acknowledge that this positivity and higher adaptability may result from the interplay of multiple factors, of which personality could be one.

6 CONCLUSION

The rapid pace of development in the volatile business landscape requires organizations to continuously reflect on how not only to stay ahead of the competition but also to survive in the first place. These considerations of competitive advantage and 'survival of the fittest' tend to manifest themselves in the form of organizational change. How employees relate to these changes has been of interest to researchers particularly since the late 1980s (Arnold, 1997). The complexity of change phenomena provides many intriguing facets to study. We chose to look at personality in organizational change, as personality traits have gained considerable attention in various fields of organizational studies, while understanding that there are also other variables to be taken into consideration (e.g. Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2016).

In our research, we aimed to answer two questions:
1. How do individual employees who claim to embrace change talk about the impact of personality on their attitude towards change?
2. How do individual employees who claim to embrace change talk about the impact of other factors on their attitude towards change?

In the next section, we are going to outline how our findings provided answers to these research questions.

6.1 Main findings

We found that the individuals working at the continuously changing context of Phoenix considered organizational change a positive phenomenon that allowed them to grow and learn. This also implied the ability to move forward as an organization. They described their attitudes towards change as positive, though they recognized that change also entailed frustrations and uncertainty as a 'double-edged sword', for example if the change effort was not executed well or did not align with their expectations.

The impact of personality was seen as significant in attitudes and adaptability to change. Most of our respondents felt very strongly about having the right kind of personality, and

considered it a prerequisite for working at Phoenix. They described themselves in terms that they deemed important for being able to work at a continuously changing context, and highlighted that such an environment was not suitable for everyone. However, they also recognized the significance of other factors in organizational change. Namely, experience with change events was accounted to prompting positive attitudes towards change and some considered it the main factor in determining change-related attitudes. Furthermore, aspects such as sense making, communication and employee involvement were recounted as important factors.

We deemed that based on the way our respondents described themselves, looking into identity construction could provide us with a deeper understanding of our respondents' views on the factors affecting attitudes towards change. With the understanding of the contemporary organizational change discourse we interpreted that these discursive practices may have influenced the way our respondents described themselves around change. Particularly as our respondents' descriptions of themselves were almost solely positive with a rather clear separation between 'us' and 'them', we were directed towards identity work and construction. We concluded that identity might be of high relevance for explaining attitudes towards change.

6.2 Theoretical contribution

Our research is subject to a number of theoretical contributions. Following from our discussion and analysis, we claim our findings can provide insights into the existing research within organizational change and factors determining change-related attitudes. First and foremost our research delivers a deeper understanding of individuals who claim to embrace change, an attitude that has received relatively little attention in organizational change literature (e.g. Caldwell et al. 2004). We provide interpretations on various positions from which attitudes towards change can be looked at, exploring the fixed-flexible continuum in change-related attitudes.

Our findings support resembling personality traits that researchers have advocated individuals working in changing contexts should ideally possess. Namely, the way our respondents talked about the impact of personality on attitudes towards change adhered to Vakola et al.'s (2004) idea of the "positive to organizational change employee" as agreeable,

extravert, conscientious and open to experiences. This also supports the view of other scholars who consider the role of personality significant in determining change-related attitudes (e.g. Caldwell & Yi, 2011; Wanberg & Banas, 2000) – providing a more fixed view of attitudes towards change.

Furthermore, our findings reinforce the notion that other factors, such as experience and aspects directly related to the specific change situation influence attitudes towards organizational change, as has been suggested by numerous researchers as well (e.g. Choi, 2011; Devos et al. 2007; Devos et al. 2001; Wanous et al. 2000). Experience surfaced as a pivotal determinant of one's attitude towards change according to our respondents. As Choi (2011) suggests, while individuals may differ on their general attitudes towards change with some being more positive than others, most still have different attitudes towards specific change initiatives even on the individual level depending on the particular factors in the change situation, in a similar line with our findings.

Finally, our findings emphasize the importance of identity work and construction within organizational change. As for example Sveningsson and Alvesson (2016) highlight the desire for employees to account their skills and accomplishments to their personality traits, we claim that it is essential to consider the role of identity in how employees talk about the impact of different factors in their attitude towards change. Moving beyond factors such as personality and experience can provide a more comprehensive understanding of where change-related attitudes stem from. This is also supported by Nord and Jermier (1994) who emphasize the importance of delving into individuals' subjective experiences in order to better understand what resistance – and thereby potentially other attitudes towards change - are truly about.

Hence, based on our findings we maintain that there may be individuals who adapt more easily and thrive in changing conditions due to the opportunity to grow and learn that change often entails – a view supported by for example Dunican and Keaster (2015). Yet, accounting change-related attitudes to one specific factor overlooks and undermines the interplay between different variables, highlighting the ambiguity and complexity of organizational change phenomena and subsequent individual level reactions. Thus, it should be of interest to consider the combination of personality traits, experience, contextual variables and identity construction to explain attitudes towards change.

6.3 Practical implications

We believe that our research can also provide various practical implications. Firstly, we claim that our study highlights factors that may be important for employees working within continuously changing contexts. For instance, considering employees and candidates' personality and past experiences with change events can contribute to finding individuals who are potentially better equipped to work in such environments. Yet we can also emphasize that employees may be able to learn to become more adaptable and meet the demands of a changing environment, which places less focus on fixed characteristics or previous merits.

On the other hand, we claim that organizations have to be wary of how individual employees and potential candidates talk about their attitudes to change, entailing that a strong sense of positivity towards organizational change does not exclude the need for well carried out change processes. With this statement, we denote that simply being positive about change in general does not constitute change outcomes. Hence, we argue for the significance of communication, sense-making and employee involvement for successful change efforts.

Finally, we advocate for the need to understand identity work and construction processes in organizational contexts. In particular, the discourse around organizational change that highlights the ideals regarding the type of individuals companies seek to hire can lead to identity struggles as these individuals strive for matching the criteria set up for them.

6.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

While the theoretical field of organizational change and personality can be characterized as robust, researchers have advocated for a better understanding of the role individuals play in change processes and how disposition affects attitudes and adaptability to organizational change (Devos et al. 2007; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). As vast research has focused on individuals who resist change – pertaining to a negative stand, much less is known about individuals who not only accept change, but also seek and embrace it. Hence, much more can be gained through directing attention to these individuals, not only in terms of their personality but also in various other respects.

While we mainly looked at how individual employees considered the impact of personality on their attitude towards change, there is more to learn from other individual difference factors. Whereas we had a strong focus on the Five-Factor model due to its easily applicable nature, other personality theories could also be utilized in this type of research. Furthermore, deeper understandings could be gained through choosing different types of organizations to conduct similar studies in.

Having outlined various theoretical contributions and practical implications for our research in the sections above, we acknowledge that there are also certain limitations – apart from those already outlined in our methodology chapter – that we have to address. In particular, we need to mention that our study was limited to a specific organization - thereby not giving us a comprehensive view of how individual employees claiming to embrace change consider the determinants of their attitudes towards organizational change in a wider context. Still, conducting our research in one specific organization allowed us to collect in-depth data, which contributed to the quality of our research. Lastly, we recognize that the size of our sample and the time frame we were working in were rather constrained, entailing that a larger sample and a longer process would have allowed for a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

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