Beyond small talk

The importance of informal communication for management consultants when integrating knowledge in projects

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Beyond small talk – The importance of informal communication for management consultants when integrating knowledge in projects

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Background**
The demand for management consultants in projects has been growing. However, many projects fail to integrate knowledge due to communication issues. Management consultants therefore need to be able to communicate and integrate knowledge in projects. Informal communication is very important and can be used to integrate knowledge efficiently in projects.

**Thesis aim**
The aim of the thesis is therefore to enlighten how informal communication affects the integration of management consultants’ knowledge in projects.

**Methodology**
This is a qualitative cross-sectional study, where primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve management consultants from nine different companies.

**Findings**
Informal communication affects management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects in several ways. Most commonly by creating trust and strong relations, which enhances the knowledge integration in projects. However, unfavorable unstructured communication can lead to uncontrolled knowledge that threatens the knowledge integration. Therefore, informal communication needs to be balanced, used in the right way and used in combination with formal communication to be as efficient as possible for knowledge integration in projects.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Marika Hermansson  Sandra Larsson
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1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction starts with a background that introduces the reader to the research field and discusses different perspectives and views of the chosen topic. The research problem is then discussed, which later leads to the aim of the thesis and the chosen research question. The introduction ends with an outline that explains how the thesis is structured.

1.1 Background

In order to meet with an environment that is changing, the need to work in projects and be flexible has increased as a working method for many organizations (Bredin & Söderlund, 2011). Almost all organizations do in fact work with some form of projects (Whitley, 2006). In order for a project to reach a good result, it is vital that project members have access to external resources since projects might not have all the resources needed in-house (Hoegl et al., 2003; Levinthal, 1997). Knowledge could therefore be seen as the most important resource in many projects (Grant, 1996a; Okhuysen & Eisenhardt, 2002). External knowledge is thus especially seen as crucial together with experience when establishing effective decision-making in projects that demand innovation (Janis, 1995; Neck & Moorhead, 1995). Many innovative ideas actually originate from outside the firms (Allen et al., 1983; Carter & Williams, 1957; Myers & Marquis, 1969), which supports the idea that external knowledge is necessary in many projects. Knowledge in projects i, in other words, needed in order to achieve effective results and external knowledge can specifically be used in order to fill the gap of the knowledge a project is missing.

Many projects rely on consultants in order to get external knowledge into their project. Consultants working with management are very popular and those management consultants usually apply behavioral science or business to a situation and diagnose or make recommendations with the hopes of developing future plans in an organization (Wienclaw, 2017). Management consultants normally work in projects (Ibatova et al., 2017) and together with the management of an organization with the means of improving the efficiency (Kolbina & Chumarina, 2016) in an organization in the need of help (Schein, 1987). If the work is done well, a management consultant can create a competitive advantage for a company and contribute to the strategic, operational and tactical effectiveness of the activities in a company (Ibatova et al., 2017).
Relying on external knowledge can although re-draw the boundaries of the organization, which can cause issues in the knowledge integration (McIvor, 2005). Issues that could arise due to this are lack of communication, quality and trust (Gottfredson et al., 2005; Weidenbaum, 2005). Effective communication can be said to be the most crucial success factor in projects and therefore communication is a critical core competency in all organizations (Project Management Institute, 2013). When working in a changing environment, such as a project, many researchers argue that the need for effective communication, which is adopted to a specific situation, is extra vital (Aiken & Hage, 1971; Burns & Stalker, 1966). Communication can hence not be overlooked due to being a key element of a project’s success in a competitive business climate (Project Management Institute, 2013). Clear communication between project members are seen as essential in order to achieve successful results (Johansson & Heide, 2008), but it can be hard to communicate in situations that are unfamiliar and contain unknown project members, such as consultants (Mooz et al., 2003). It is therefore vital that project members use different communication methods in order to communicate directly, clearly and as effectively as possible (Pritchard, 2013).

Communication in all forms, can therefore be understood to help the project members tackle issues that might arise when dealing with unfamiliar situations and new project members such as consultants that provide external knowledge. Lööw (2003) argues that communication becomes effective when the development of a common language starts, which is necessary when integrating knowledge in a project. As previously mentioned, knowledge and more specifically external knowledge is fundamental when working in projects. Knowledge, together with communication, does therefore seem like a factor to reach success within a project and hence makes the project more effective, especially since knowledge is seen as an important resource in a project.

Integrating knowledge is not seen as an easy task though, especially not when the knowledge is specialized such as knowledge from a consultant (Schmickl & Kieser, 2008). According to Tell (2011), knowledge integration can be seen as transferring and sharing of knowledge, the use of similar or related knowledge or a combination of specialized, differentiated and complementary knowledge. Integrating knowledge is not just important for exploiting existing knowledge resources, but it is just as crucial for developing new insights and meanings in projects (Prieto-Pastor et al., 2018). However, integrating knowledge is usually costly since it requires additional knowledge and a common knowledge base (Bae & Koo, 2008). Returning back to management
consultants whom offer specialized knowledge with external views that are needed in most projects, a demand to integrate their knowledge effectively in a project therefore arises. Since external knowledge, as previously mentioned, can cause boundaries to become re-drawn in an organization and thereby lead to issues in for example communication, it therefore becomes interesting to look into how management consultants work and handle such issues.

1.2 Research problem

Many organizations do not have the right managerial knowledge or specialized staff in all areas and therefore use consultants to solve their managerial problems. Management consultants are experts with specialized knowledge that usually work in projects to solve business problems and improve the business performance (Ksentini & Mezghani, 2016). Projects, being temporary, bring people that are unknown to each other together (Blomé, 2004), which increases the risk for miscommunication (Mooz et al., 2003). In order for a project to succeed it is critical with communication, both executives and project members worldwide agrees that poor communication is contributing to project failures (Project Management Institute, 2013).

Project members have their own vocabulary, behaviors, communications styles, attitudes and hidden agendas that they bring to the project environment (Mooz et al., 2003). This could become an issue for specifically consultants, whom sometimes are seen as outsiders (Schein, 1987) and might not use the same communication process as the clients (Schein, 1988). According to Mohe and Seidl (2009), there are communication barriers between consultants and their clients due to different communication systems. Communication connects every member of a project to a common set of goals, strategies and actions. If these components are not effectively shared within the project and understood by all project members, project outcomes can be jeopardized. It is in fact estimated that around 20% of all projects fail due to ineffective communication within the team (Project Management Institute, 2013).

Using both informal and formal communication is therefore very important in projects in order to succeed and to be able to integrate knowledge (Wieriora et al., 2009). Informal communication is unscheduled, spontaneous, interactive and rich, while formal communication is scheduled in advance with formal rules and languages (Kraut et al., 1993). According to Johnson et al. (1994),
informal communication channels are often more used, although depending on the situation, than formal ones in organizations. The main driver of knowledge integration is usually informal communication (Riege, 2005). Storwall (2010) argues that: coffee breaks at work actually makes you more efficient. Informal communication creates trust in projects and without trust it is hard to develop good relationships (Polat et al., 2018). However, “many organizations admit that they are currently not placing adequate importance on effectively communicating critical project information”, according to Project Management Institute (2013, p. 2). Lack of informal communication can prevent integration of valuable knowledge (Wieriora et al., 2009). Knowledge integration in projects is hard and it gets even harder if the project members do not use a common language (Lööw, 2003). However, knowledge integration is very important and management consultants need to be able to integrate their specialized knowledge in projects (Tell, 2011). Using informal communication in projects that is using a management consultant is therefore especially important since management consultants are usually seen as outsiders that do not have any previous trust or relations with the project members (Schein, 1987).

Based on this it can be concluded that earlier researchers have discussed knowledge integration in projects and how important communication is in order to be able to integrate knowledge in projects. Informal communication is seen as vital for a successful knowledge integration in projects. However, many projects fail to integrate knowledge due to the lack of communication. Many earlier researchers that discuss and define knowledge integration have referred to knowledge integration in technology-based firms (Tell, 2011). There are only a few researchers that generally discuss product, service and market knowledge (ibid). Almost all researchers in the field of knowledge integration also refer to a physical integration of knowledge in projects, processes, systems, services and solutions when discussing the outcome of knowledge integration (Berggren et al., 2011). However, when the outcome of knowledge integration is an immaterial resource, instead of a material resource, there is a lack of earlier research. The outcome of management consultants’ knowledge integration is a service and solution to a managerial problem (Wood, 2001), in other words an immaterial resource (Nissen, 2018). This immaterial resource is only one of all outcomes of knowledge integration that is seen as an immaterial resource. Researching about management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects therefore contributes with one part to
the field of knowledge integration, when the outcome of the knowledge integration is seen as an immaterial resource and that makes the topic relevant.

The demand for management consultants has remained high for many years and is still popular (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002; Kipping & Engwall, 2002; Stahl, 2016; Prajapati, 2018), which makes it an interesting topic to further investigate. The thesis has therefore strived to research how informal communication affect management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects. Focusing on a project level instead of the organization as a whole is important in the context of innovative tasks, which projects are often faced with. Most innovative projects are conducted in teams since teams are coupled with other functional areas for a successful project completion (Ancona & Caldwell, 1990). Since projects provide an immediate contextual environment for individuals, they likely also have major influences on their members (Hoegl et al., 2003). The problem within this thesis has therefore been studied from a project level, which contributes to relevant perspectives of how informal communication affect management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects.

1.3 Thesis aim and research question

The aim of the thesis is to enlighten how informal communication affects the integration of management consultants’ knowledge in projects. The following research question is hereby presented:

- How does informal communication affect management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects?
## 1.4 Outline

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<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>The first chapter is an introduction in order for the reader to get a general perspective of what is relevant in the thesis. The introduction includes a background that introduces the main topic and a discussion of the research problem, which leads into the thesis aim and research question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Theoretical framework</td>
<td>Since the reader gets a general view of the topic in the introduction, it is appropriate to follow it up and go deeper into the discussion by introducing theory. The chapter consists of a discussion about three different fields of theory, management consultants in projects, communication and knowledge integration. This leads into a theoretical model that explains the connection between the different fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Methodology</td>
<td>The method chapter is inserted after the theoretical framework since the research question of the thesis is very theoretical and the reader therefore needs to get an understanding of the phenomena by the help of theory, before going into empirical data. The chapter begins with framing the thesis problem and discussing the search strategy for the theory. Afterwards follows the research strategy and research design, data collection and data analysis. Lastly, the scientific research perspective, method critique and ethical aspects are discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Presentation of the thematical analysis</td>
<td>After the methodology it is appropriate to present the thematical analysis since the reader then has a fresh outlook of the methods. The chapter begins with introducing the thematical analysis. Afterward a discussion of the two main themes, informal communication and knowledge integration, follows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Revised theoretical model</td>
<td>After the presentation of the thematical analysis a revised theoretical model is presented. The chapter includes a presentation of a revised theoretical model based on the previous chapter. The revised theoretical model is further discussed and compared with the theoretical model. Lastly, the revised theoretical model is presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Discussion and conclusion</td>
<td>The discussion and conclusion naturally end a thesis and is therefore the last chapter. The chapter starts with a discussion that opens up the topic further. Afterwards a conclusion where the main findings are presented follows. Moreover, the theoretical contributions and limitations of the thesis are discussed. Lastly, suggestions for future research are presented.</td>
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*Table 1, The outline of the thesis*
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework starts on a more general note with information about projects and how they work before it goes into the different roles of a project and then highlights the need for external knowledge. Management consultants are hence needed in many projects and information about how they work and what they bring to a project is then explained. Since projects cannot function without communication, it becomes vital to further discuss different forms of communication and how they affect the project. In order for a project to become successful it is necessary with effective informal communication but also a functioning knowledge integration between the different project members. Knowledge integration is therefore explained lastly in the theoretical framework since it has a crucial role for a project and its outcome. The different parts in the theoretical framework follows that order to be able to introduce the reader to the general views before narrowing the research field down and explaining the topic further. The theoretical framework ends with a theoretical model that illustrates how the different fields are connected, which concludes that there is a need in explaining how the fields are connected in practice.

2.1 Management consultants in projects

2.1.1 Projects

Project-based organizations are used to confront and manage the fast-changing markets and technological uncertainty, according to Hobday (2000) and March (1995). The need to be flexible and innovative has therefore led to more organizations that are using projects as a method to move forward, argue Bredin and Söderlund (2011). Project-based organizations has therefore increased during the last years and almost all organizations work with some form of projects (Backlund & Sundqvist, 2018; Whitley, 2006). In project-based organizations the projects are the core of the organization and different projects are integrated with each other to some extent (Hobday, 2000). However, various researchers have different opinions regarding how integrated the projects are. Bredin and Söderlund (2011) argue that all projects are integrated with each other in project-based organizations. On the contrary, Hobday (2000) argues that projects work on their own and are independent but there is some connection between the projects. According to Whitley (2006), it is
similar projects that are integrated with each other and those projects distinct the identity of organizations and their knowledge and capabilities, which leads to competitive advantages.

Project-based organizations can be recognized through being goal oriented, team oriented and knowledge-intensive, interdisciplinary and cross-functional with temporary projects (Bredin & Söderlund, 2011). Those projects in project-based organizations can be defined as a mission that needs to be completed within a limited period of time, limited budget and a specific content (Berggren & Lindkvist, 2001). Since a project needs to be completed within a limited period of time, there are deadlines that project members need to meet, which can lead to time pressure and stress (Stjernberg et al., 2008). This is something that project members need to be able to deal with. According to Lundin and Söderholm (1995), a project should involve tasks, a set timeframe, a project team and a transformation. A working method for achieving change is therefore often described as a project (Larsson, 2012). In order for a project to be successful, communication needs to be clear (Larsson, 2012; Westland, 2006). Project members must be able to communicate effectively and ensure that the information is interpreted in the way it was supposed to (Larsson, 2012).

### 2.1.2 General roles and responsibilities in projects

Project members within projects do usually not have a common experience-base, which might prevent a successful communication (Wikström, 2000). Projects, being temporary, bring people that are usually unknown to each other together. Members of a project therefore have different conditions, knowledge and responsibilities (Blomé, 2004), which could lead to increased creativity and innovation (Larsson, 2012). A project team can be defined as “a selected group of individuals with complimentary skills and disciplines who are required to work together on interdependent and interrelated tasks for a predetermined period to meet a specific purpose or goal” (Anantatmula, 2015, p. 9).

Defining roles and responsibilities for each project member is very important in order to promote teamwork and reduce conflicts (Anantatmula, 2015). Making sure that the tasks for each role are clear and that the responsibilities do not overlap, is essential in order to avoid conflicts and to effectively achieve the project’s goal. These roles and responsibilities need to suit the project
members skills and expertise in order to be effective (ibid). The project manager within the project is responsible for making sure that the project achieves its purpose and that the project members have different skills and knowledge that complement each other (Larsson, 2012).

A project team usually consist of individuals from different parts of an organization (Larsson, 2012). However, sometimes individuals outside the organization, such as consultants, are a part of the project due to the need of external knowledge (Wood, 2001). There are different types of expertise that consultants can offer to projects, for example expertise in management and administration, production, research, human resources, information, communication and marketing (ibid). Many organizations do not have the right managerial knowledge or specialized staff in all areas and therefore need a management consultant to solve the managerial problems within the organization (Ksentini & Mezghani, 2016). The management consultants´ knowledge needs to be integrated in the project and the consultant needs to be a part of the project team to facilitate an effective knowledge integration (Tell, 2011). Management consultants will further be discussed in order to get a deeper understanding of their roles in projects.

2.1.3 The management consultant

During the 1980’s and 1990’s the field of management knowledge grew rapidly. The consulting industry expanded throughout different fields and consultants within management hence increased in popularity. Management consulting has become an industry within a number of large multinational firms (Kipping & Engwall, 2002) and the demand for management consultants has been growing (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002). Modern management consulting can be seen as an institution, carrying advice across time and place and straight into the boardroom with managers. According to Kipping and Engwall (2002), management consultants are seen as having unique knowledge of management techniques, while consulting organizations are seen as knowledge intensive firms with the ability to explore and generate management knowledge through activities that are connected to knowledge management. In order to truly understand what a management consultant does, it is advisable to break down the concept and look at the meaning of a consultant (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002).
Consultant as a profession and as an expert first appeared during the nineteenth century and was formerly exercised by only engineers or technicians but it wasn’t until in the 1940’s that consultancy firms emerged (Kipping & Engwall, 2002). The primary product of a consultant is basically the intellectual capital they hold, which explains business and organizational strategies and to manage relationships. A consultant can never guarantee a certain outcome since the future is always uncertain. The only thing they can do is to offer their best recommendations for success and be prepared to respond to unexpected changes, while collaborating closely with their clients in developing a strategy, part of achieving a goal. The final outcome of a consultants’ service can therefore be seen as a goal (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002).

However, it is not always clear when to choose a consultant to do the job or not, there are several indicators that can help making the decision. Appelbaum and Steed (2005) argued that management consultants provide competences that are not available elsewhere since they have varied experience, have time to study the client's problem, are professionals, independent and have the ability to create action to solve a problem. Management consultants can for example work on a short-term basis and support activities that handle risk assessment or strategic planning. A management consultant can also work on a longer-term basis and help with the process of organization development, which will help the organization to become more effective and manage the changes (Wienclaw, 2017).

The management consultants’ expertise is needed in all economic cycles of a firm. During a recession, consultants are needed for their cost-cutting and reengineering strategy competencies. In times of positive economic expansion, consultants help organizations accelerate their growth and predict for emerging economic trends. It is also easy to enter the profession itself and many growing organizations are in need of consultants, the profession is hence predicted to keep growing and remain popular (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002). Consultants can operate in different fields (ibid), but in this thesis the focus lays on management consultants and their knowledge.

### 2.1.4 Consultancy as knowledge

Management consulting can be described as a knowledge industry since it is about selling knowledge and experience in order to turn a client organization into a more efficient and effective
operation (Golembiewski, 1993; Greiner & Metzger, 1983; Schein, 1988). A consultant can create value for their clients with their expertise in different ways, here follows four ways. First, they can transfer expert knowledge that is specialized (Bessant & Rush, 1995). Second, they can share their knowledge between two different firms (Hargadon, 1998). Third, they provide access to specialized services delivered by either the other organizations or the consultant. Finally, they have a diagnostic role in helping the clients to articulate and define their needs to knowledge and expertise (Bessant & Rush, 1995). In all these roles the consultant is seen as the one that possesses expert knowledge (Kipping & Engwall, 2002). Experience also helps the consultants to determine the activities needed in the change process, staffing, timing and so on (ibid).

Managers require the support of expert knowledge from consultants in order for the organization to develop (Huczynski, 1993; Kipping & Scheybani, 1994). Management consultants are hence seen as an important source of knowledge to their clients’ organizations. They are expected to provide knowledge on a high level continuously, consulting organizations can therefore be seen as knowledge intensive firms (Robertson & Swan, 1998; Starbuck, 1992). A central aspect in such a firm is their internal handling of knowledge, their so-called knowledge management (Chard, 1997; Hansen et al., 1999; Martiny, 1998). Management consultants actually use earlier knowledge from past practices and codify and transfer it through internal knowledge management systems. They can then shape a future practice by applying it in a new context with a new client based on previous past practices and interaction with other knowledge carriers they have had. It could hence be argued that consultants and the firms they work in, get their knowledge from their clients (Kipping & Engwall, 2002).

The process of knowledge management has in other words, a central position in management consulting companies since knowledge in this industry is generated through ongoing client assignments. Collecting and making knowledge available to the rest of the organization is the core of the process and that is linked to the value of the service that a consultant can deliver to its clients (Hansen et al., 1999; Sarvary, 1999). Previous studies mostly discuss knowledge that is created in the process in technology-based firms (Tell, 2011) and details about how knowledge is created, spread and applied in management consulting are not explained (Kipping & Engwall, 2002).
2.1.5 Critique towards management consulting

Management consulting has received critiques, the value of management consulting services has been said to be highly uncertain and the knowledge in the consulting process has also been questioned. Critiques say that successful consulting has little to do with knowledge but rather with the ability the consultant has to reduce their client's angst and manage their perception of the value of the consulting service (Kipping & Engwall, 2002).

Managers have high standards that can be achieved by two basic managerial needs, predictability and control. Social and personal esteem is also needed. These needs can be fulfilled by management consultants if a manager needs help to handle the pressure. Predictability and control are then supported by consultants since they refer to and use management concepts that are built up around cause and effect relations that are rather simple (Clark & Salaman, 1998; Huczynski, 1993; Watson, 1994). The consultants usually use management concepts to frame a problem and then categorize it and a remedy is then outlined. In this process a consultant usually establishes her- or himself as the actor who can lead the client to what their desired outcome is (Berglund & Werr, 2000; Bloomfield & Best, 1992; Sturdy, 1997). Since the consultant here refers to a technical rationality the uncertainty by the client is reduced since they are presented with a step to step result with simple cause and effect relations. This gives the impression of a controlled change process and that the consultant knows what he or she is doing (Rogberg & Werr, 2000; Sturdy, 1997; Werr, 1999). The need for social and personal esteem is also fulfilled by the management consultant since they use theories and images during the consulting process, which contributes to the reproduction of the managerial role as an important one (Kipping & Engwall, 2002). Clark and Salaman (1998, p. 153) even state “they tell managers why they are important, why they matter, why their skills are critical”.

A management consultant can be described as someone who is providing the client with simple management concepts that characterize the organization as a controllable entity and confirm that the manager is important according to Kipping and Engwall (2002). These management concepts hence become an essential part of a management consultants knowledge base (ibid). Some even argue that the management concepts that are used can be seen as trends rather than functional knowledge (Abrahamsson, 1991; Furusten, 1995; Kieser, 1998).
The knowledge content in the consulting service can also be questioned since the service is intangible, which makes the service hard to standardize and the value is then derived from the interaction between a client and a consultant (Kipping & Engwall, 2002). The value creation in management consulting is more about creating the client's impression of value, which makes impression management a central aspect of management consulting (Clark & Salaman, 1996). The impact of consultants is hence dependent upon beliefs about them being able to offer something that is of value for their clients, those beliefs are often formulated by subjective myths and symbols through language (ibid).

2.1.6 The importance of relationships

Management consultants’ main offer to their clients is their management knowledge. The management consultants will hence only be able to justify certain decisions or support a particular course of action based on the level of their knowledge. The nature of their knowledge as a product can therefore determine the activities of the consulting industry to a large extent (Clark, 1995; Mitchell, 1994). The quality of the consulting service is thus hard to measure and test beforehand since consulting as a process takes place during the interaction of the consultants and their clients (Kipping & Engwall, 2002). Since the effect of consultancy is hard to evaluate, consultants have long relied on their reputation and personal relationships in order to convince their clients of the quality of their services (Kipping, 1999).

Teamwork is critical in the work of a management consultant. Consultants usually prefer to apply the collective minds of a group to a problem. The workstyle of a management consultant is collaborative and many different hierarchical relationships are needed. Teams where management consultants operate in usually range from two to fifteen, largely depending on the scale of a project. Most consulting firms use the same team structure, which is a team that is either on site at the client's office for the entire project or offsite at the consultants’ office with periodic visits to their client (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002).

On site work holds great value to the client since the people who are working directly with the project are present, according to Biswas and Twitchell (2002). Many companies prefer on site consultants who interact with them daily, which helps building the relationship between the client
and the consultant. A relationship between them is critical since the consultant will convince the client to use their recommendations. The strong relationship can then act as a powerful barrier to other firms approaching that client. Offsite consultants may not develop these strong relationships and are therefore not seen as effective as onsite consultants (ibid). Downsides with being present on site could be that the consultants do not have access to resources located at their home offices and they have to rely on communication through phone and mail to communicate with the department when preparing a presentation for the project. An onsite consultant might also feel controlled by their clients due to constant surveillance, which might lead to pressure and less creative thinking. The risk with this is that they might lose their objectivity towards a project if they are there for too long and should therefore work with different projects in different industries to keep their objectivity as consultants (ibid).

Offsite consultants need to keep a strong communication with their clients over phone and mail in order to establish a relationship, which creates trust and confidence among the clients (Biswas & Twitchell, 2002). Trust is a factor that is built up along the process between a consultant and a client as the organization go through changes and innovates. This trust then helps the parties with more difficult problems in the future since trust strengthens the relationship, which gives the parties more confidence in staying ahead of innovation (ibid). Communication is therefore vital in projects and especially in projects with an offsite consultant (Larsson, 2012), communication will therefore be discussed further.

2.2 Communication

2.2.1 Communication in projects

The purpose of communication is to make others understand and act upon it in the same sense. Communication can be seen as a formal process to accomplish desired common goals in an organization (Rayudu, 2010). The cornerstone of an effective project is communication and most of it is driven by individuals, personalities and preferences making the communication in a project temporary and rather unstable. Communication in projects is seldom done due to needs, protocols, processes and procedures. One key reason that projects fail is hence insufficient communication, therefore every project member needs to be able to communicate with each other (Pritchard, 2013).
Good project communication is built on clarity, organizing the communication by the help of different roles early on in the project is hence necessary (Pikington, 2013). Effective communication is as important in a large project as in a small one. But if more people are engaged, more challenges in communication arise. One to one communication is relatively clear since there is only one recipient to the message. When more people enter the project, communication hence has to be effective and clear and several communication tools need to be applied. Effective communication in a project will change the project for the better since it will build more lasting customer relationships and assure that everyone understands the common goals (Pritchard, 2013). Communication can thus only be effective when the message is shared and understood with one another (Rayudu, 2010).

Basic communication includes a sender, a receiver and a message. The message is transmitted through a medium such as voice, written words, instant messages and so on, after being encoded by the sender, see figure 1. When the message travels through that medium, several filters are applied, such as language, understanding and physical distance. This alters the message and arrives for decoding by the receiver. When the message is received other distractions or noise may disturb, such as a noisy phone call. The message is then received and decoded and may produce some feedback that is sent back to the sender in several forms. Feedback could be either spoken, written or body language. When the feedback is provided it becomes a message and the communication cycle begins again (Pritchard, 2013). It is also noteworthy to point out that communication includes both present and past information (Rayudu, 2010).

![Communication model](image)

*Figure 1, Communication model (based on Pritchard, 2013)*
The choice of medium will thus become important in this cycle. The medium will determine how the information is filtered, decoded and received. Using the same language is hence essential in order to avoid misunderstandings. There are always obstacles that could arise, the sender might for example have issues in sending the message or the receiver might not understand the message in the same way as the sender. One way to know if the communication has been understood by everyone is to use common approaches such as forms, templates and structures that clearly communicate exactly what the receiver needs to know (Pritchard, 2013). There can be no communication if the information is not understood by the receiver in the same sense as what is intended by the sender (Rayudu, 2010).

### 2.2.2 Formal and informal communication

Communication can be divided into formal communication (Park & Lee 2014; Price, 1997) and informal communication (Fish et al., 1992). Communication that is formal often refers to communication styles that are planned and organized and allowed by management, they also have rules, standards and processes (Kraut et al., 1993; Price, 1997). Formal communication could provide an interaction that might improve the level of participation among the project members and hence create many new opportunities for knowledge transfer, which could affect the project performance positively (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). Project members can use emails, meetings or official meetings to communicate and integrate their knowledge. Even though these regulations are formal, members still follow their personal characteristic and intentions to fill the content of that message. Trust is a great factor in delivering a more reliable communication in teams, since the lack of trust might for example lead to that communication is delayed or that the quality of communication is low due to insufficient knowledge and misinforming (Polat et al., 2018).

Informal communication basically means the opposite of formal communication. Face-to-face conversations in non-work settings such as after work meetings, lunches, events and so on describes what informal communication could be like (Park & Lee, 2014). Informal communication arises on behalf of informal relationships between the people that are concerned, and it grows spontaneously from personal and group interests. Informal communication could be simple things such as a glance, nod, smile or a gesture. An informal channel is usually the most effective way to transfer information from informal communication (Rayudu, 2010).
Informal communication could also be held through technological tools as email, chats and voicemails and they are commonly used in every working area as standard tools. The positive sides with these are that all engaged parties do not have to be close in order to participate in interaction by the help of technological tools. In fact, the frequency of informal communication is higher in successful teams than in less successful teams (Polat et al., 2018). A person’s informal contacts are seen as relevant to many outcomes such as individual and team performance (Baldwin et al., 1997; Mehra et al., 2001). Another essential factor that informal communication contributes with in projects are the openness it brings, which could enhance the possibility of accessing and getting new knowledge. Informal communication does in other words make it easier to communicate and acquire knowledge that is needed, especially in projects that are often executed across time and space (Hoegl et al., 2003).

However, informal components are harder to manage than formal components since informal contexts relies on the individuals’ motivation to achieve a project goal (Hoegl, et al., 2003). What especially distinguishes informal communication from formal, is the features of intimate, private and close relationships. Project members in these close relationships may for example openly talk about mistakes or future plans that are related to the team, the company or a certain person. This can be a risky process that can include both gain and loss, trust is an unavoidable factor for all parties engaged in the process. It is hard to develop a close relationship by the help of informal communication without specifically trust (Polat et al., 2018). A downside with informal communication is hence that it could transfer both information that is correct and not correct such as rumors. It therefore depends upon the people in the group and their honesty and credibility since informal communication can transfer information quickly (Rayudu, 2010).

Small informal groups are usually formed because of work and social relationships. They are hence not formed on the basis of positions and lines of authority. The organizational structure is in other words, not reflected in informal relations. There are no formalities, rules or procedures in this type of communication, no control and authority are needed in order to make it function. Informal communication can therefore be very effective since information can be transferred fast. Management sometimes takes advantage of informal channels to spread information to the rest of the organization (Rayudu, 2010). Informal communication is therefore a type of communication
that can be seen as very effective since it is open, unstructured and not steered by any rules or formalities, this is also the perspective the thesis views informal communication from.

2.2.3 The connection between communication and trust in teams

Besides communication, trust is also seen as an important factor of success in teamwork (Polat et al., 2018). Having clear definitions of roles and responsibilities will help to create an environment of trust between the project members (Anantatmula, 2015). In a project team it is vital to achieve a specific outcome by valuing others in a team, this can be done by following a common purpose and having mutual accountability (Deeter-Schmelz & Ramsey, 1995). The features in a team will differentiate from every team by different work structures and the social relations and behaviors that are present between project members. Many factors affect behaviors and relations, trust is one factor that plays an important role in a team (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975). If there is a lack of trust within the team many negative factors, which can affect the performance of the organization and behavioral outcomes of individuals may arise (Polat et al., 2018). According to Moe & Šmite (2008), low trust can cause low socialization and a lack of socio-cultural fit and monitoring, which will cause inconsistencies and disparities in work practices and bring doubts about the intentions of the other project members. Trust does instead provide an open information exchange and facilitate confidence in a team and makes members feel more secure about themselves and take more risks than holding it back (Polat et al., 2018).

In order to reach success in a team, both trust and communication hence need to be present (Polat et al., 2018). It is therefore vital that organization do not take either for granted, especially not communication, which should be actively managed (Suchan & Hayzak, 2001). Communication is not related to just daily routines but contribute to technical and practical processes such as learning, innovate thinking and creativity. Creative and efficient use of communication will develop relationships in a team, enables sharing and storing of information and also supports the growth of members (Henttonen & Blomqvist, 2005; Suchan & Hayzak, 2001). Providing a climate for communication will thereby become extra vital in environments, which need innovativeness, creativity and speed for new developments (Polat et al., 2018).
Trust is considered as an emergent state, which refers to motivational, cognitive and affective states of teams and functions in a team context, inputs, processes and outcomes (Marks et al., 2001). Trust can be said to provide a basis for any sort of relation (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998) and lack of trust decreases the relationship (Polat et al., 2018). Trust has become known to affect outcomes and processed indirectly and thereby change relationships within teams (ibid). Many studies have previously reported an indirect relationship with team performance and trust (Porter & Lilly, 1996). Many scholars still argue that there is a need to study the indirect processes of affective, behavioral and cognitive variables on team effectiveness (Ilgen et al., 2005). But it is noteworthy to point that group processes and thereby effectiveness will vary according to the nature of the task in a team (Hackman & Wageman, 2005).

Trust can be seen as a multilevel concept and will show different results in different organizational levels (Schoorman et al., 2007), this thesis will only look at trust as a key factor of success in a temporary work setting such as a team or a project and disregard other levels of an organization where trust is present. Furthermore, trust and clear communication within a project team may also lead to other essential factors that are needed in a team in order to reach success, such as strong relationships, team autonomy, empowerment and better time management (Polat et al., 2018). Those factors will be discussed further.

### 2.2.4 Relationships through communication

The importance of reciprocal relationships emerges when communication is efficient and trust is present in a team. Trust is seen as vital as communication in the different stages of any relationship. Close relationships create interdependence and interaction possible in the team, which will lead to project members contributing with actions such as integrating information with each other (Wickramasinghe & Widyaratne, 2012). It is essential that members of a team build good relationships, in that way they can work together for a common success. But communication is needed in order to do so, without any communication, no one can build a relationship (Polat et al., 2018). Communication can be seen as the means of human interaction that link people together and form a relationship (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998).
2.2.5 Autonomy

In teams where trust is present, teams become more autonomous, which supports a cross-functional collaboration between team-members (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 1998). It also reduces possible bureaucratic constraints and makes the project members develop relationships more easily. Autonomy in teams increases team possessiveness, cooperative negotiation and shared work so project members can find an opportunity for developing familiarity and trust (Polat et al., 2018). By developing strong relationships and finding chances to know each other, individuals in a team also find more stability (ibid). This stability can help individuals to gain familiarity to others working styles and different way of thinking, which will support collaboration (Pelled et al., 1999). If project members then feel they have a positive relation to each other they hence feel protected and thereby collaborate more effectively (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2011).

2.2.6 Empowerment

Empowerment is another factor than can be developed if trust is established in a team. It gives responsibility to all members and people tend to care more about social relations and develop trust in an open climate (Polat et al., 2018). Empowerment in this sense can be explained as the degree of power that is given to the team to direct, manage and lead itself (Manz & Sims, 1991). At a team level, empowerment is a social structure that consists of cognitions that are shared and influenced by interactions with several project members. Since project members have knowledge of the boundaries of the ask, they will use their power to decide ways that the goal can be accomplished, this clarity make project members see things more positive (Polat et al., 2018).

2.2.7 Time

Time is another factor that can affect the communication process (Kraut et al., 1993). Projects are often faced with pressure to complete and deliver their projects (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000; Park et al., 2008). Project members have therefore deadlines, tight schedules and a limited amount of time (Stjernberg et al., 2008). This means that project members usually work under time pressure and the informal communication decreases (Kraut et al., 1993; Wiewiora et al., 2009). Communication is also a process that requires time in order for project members to interpret each other correctly.
However, since projects are temporary, the communication process is harder and decreased communication can have a negative influence on knowledge integration in projects (Ren et al., 2018). Earlier research shows that project teams do not have enough time for communication and knowledge sharing due to strict deadlines and schedules (Abbasnejad, 2012; Loo, 2002; Wiewiora et al., 2009; Zhao et al., 2015). Since projects are usually characterized by a tight time plan, project members attitudes, tasks and actions can then be affected (Connelly et al., 2009; Zhao et al, 2015), which will give members less time to communicate within the team and share knowledge (Cheng et al., 2009). Making sure that project members have enough time to communicate in order to complete the project is therefore important for knowledge integration. Communication is hence seen as a major part of knowledge integration and has significant influence on knowledge integration. Knowledge integration will therefore be discussed further.

2.3 Knowledge integration

2.3.1 Defining knowledge

Various researchers define knowledge differently. Grant (1996a) and Okhuysen and Eisenhardt (2002) argue that knowledge is the most important organizational strategic resource for all organizations. Simon (1973) on the other hand argues that knowledge is an organizational asset that is used for information, rules and procedures with the aim at increasing the efficiency of organizations. However, organizational knowledge can also be seen as a flow of information, according to Nonaka (1994). This organizational knowledge can either be explicit knowledge or tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). Explicit knowledge is written down in books and can therefore easily be transferred (Nonaka 1994; Nonaka et al., 2000). In contrast, tacit knowledge is hard to transfer since project members need to experience it (Nonaka 1994; Nonaka et al., 2000; Polanyi, 1966). Tacit knowledge can also be seen as knowing how, while explicit knowledge can be seen as knowing what (Lubit, 2001). Kogut and Zander (1992) on the other hand, categories knowledge as information and know-how. Information is knowledge that can be transferred without loss, while know-how is practical skills or expertise that explains how to do something (ibid). Information is in other words similar to explicit knowledge and know-how is similar to tacit knowledge. These different types of knowledge need to be integrated in organizations (Tell, 2011), however knowledge integration can be defined in different ways and will be discussed further.
2.3.2 Defining knowledge integration

Various researchers also define knowledge integration in different ways. Knowledge integration as a phenomenon was firstly mentioned by Smith (1776) who identified the importance of knowledge. Later on, Hayek (1945) discussed the use of knowledge in society and the coordination of knowledge integration. According to Tell (2011), knowledge integration can be defined based on three main approaches. Firstly, knowledge integration as sharing or transferring knowledge. Mitchell (2006) is one of the researchers that define knowledge integration as transferring knowledge, since organizations get access to external knowledge through external-to-internal transfer of knowledge. Secondly, knowledge integration can be defined as use of similar or related knowledge, according to Tell (2011). Brusoni et al. (2005) argue that individuals that are specialized in related areas integrate knowledge more easily than individuals in a project with different specialized knowledge. Lastly, knowledge integration can be defined as the combination of specialized, differentiated, and complementary knowledge (Tell, 2011). Grant (1996a) is one of the researchers that define knowledge integration as the capability to combine specialist's knowledge into a common understanding to create a new product, better service delivery and process efficiency. Okhuysen and Eisenhardt (2002) argue that knowledge integration is the process where individual's knowledge is transformed into collective knowledge within the organization. Furthermore, Enberg (2007) defines knowledge integration as a process where the goal is to benefit from knowledge between different individuals that has different knowledge bases. Yang (2008) agrees to some extent and defines knowledge integration as an organizations capability to integrate different individuals' knowledge.

Almost all researchers that discuss knowledge integration refers to knowledge integration in technology-based firms (Tell, 2011). These researchers see the outcome of knowledge integration as a physical integration of knowledge in products, processes, systems, services and solutions (Berggren et al., 2011). The outcome is in other words seen as a material resource. However, the outcome of knowledge integration can also be seen as an immaterial resource. Management consultants that are working outside the organization delivers a service or solution to organizations and projects (Wood, 2001). The knowledge that consultants integrate in projects is therefore seen as an immaterial resource (Nissen, 2018). In projects, different projects members are usually specialized in different fields and therefore have specialized knowledge (Larsson, 2012). Project
members therefore need to be able to combine this specialized knowledge in order to succeed (Tell, 2011). It can therefore be understood that the specialized knowledge of the management consultants needs to be combined with the knowledge of the other project members in order to reach a successful outcome of the knowledge integration. It is thus necessary to point out that management consultants need to share and transfer parts of the knowledge since it is impossible to only combine specialized knowledge itself. Some transferring and sharing need to be done in order to create a common understanding of a phenomenon and a common knowledge (Grant, 1996b; Postrel, 2002). Parts of this transferred and shared knowledge will be saved and brought to other projects. Defining knowledge integration as the combination of specialized knowledge with the need of transferring and sharing some knowledge is therefore used throughout the thesis and what the remainder of the text refers to when discussing knowledge integration made by management consultants in projects.

2.3.3 Knowledge integration in projects

The integration of knowledge is not only important for exploiting existing knowledge resources, it is also important in order to develop new insight and meanings in projects (Prieto-Pastor et al., 2018). To gather and share information is part of a project's successful completion, especially for organizations that are involved in innovative projects (Hansen, 1999). Project members that are specialists in a field should integrate their knowledge in order to create new knowledge, according to Berggren et al. (2011). Knowledge integration usually occurs in the beginning of a project (ibid). However, according to Gersick (1989), projects with a deadline usually slows down in the middle of the project to reflect, take in new information and analyze the project, before continuing. Lindkvist and Tell (1998) agrees to some extent that using deadlines, milestones and time-controls leads to a pause in the middle of the project, which promotes reflections and moderates too imaginative behaviors. It is individual project members in those projects that create knowledge, while the role of the organization is to articulate and extend the knowledge (Grant 1996a; Nonaka, 1994; Polanyi, 1966). However, it is important that project members exchange and discuss ideas in order to promote reflection, sense-making and learning. Project members need to think together and exchange ideas in order to reach project goals (Berggren et al., 2011).
Knowledge creation is hard and especially the creation of tacit knowledge since it is highly personal and hard to formalize (Nonaka, 1994) and therefore individual project members usually know more than they can tell (Polanyi, 1966). The knowledge conversion that holds the key to knowledge creation is the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge, since it can easier be received and understood (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). However, converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is challenging, but sometimes it might be possible and worth it (Nonaka, 1994; Polanyi, 1966). Face-to-face communication and dialogue between project members are very important in order to be able to convert tacit to explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). Project managers should therefore make sure that there is availability of suitable meeting points for interactivity (Berggren et al., 2011).

Hansen et al. (1999) identified two strategies that consultants use to exchange, transfer and extend knowledge to other project members. The first strategy is codification, which relies on databases where knowledge is codified and stored. The second strategy is personalization, which focus on the individual who carries the knowledge and aims at foster connection between individuals, where person-to-person contacts are necessary (ibid). Organizations usually focus on one of the strategies and uses the other one as a supporting role. However, a major challenge for consulting organizations is the utilization of knowledge (Kipping & Engwall, 2002). Integrating specialized knowledge from a consultant is far from easy (Berggren et al., 2011). In the extreme case it can even be impossible to integrate completely specialized knowledge since the other project members do not have the required common knowledge (Grant, 1996b; Postrel, 2002). However, there are some mechanisms that can make knowledge integration easier, which will be discussed further.

2.3.4 Mechanisms for knowledge integration

Knowledge plays a significant role in organizations, but many organizations fail to facilitate knowledge integration (Yang, 2008). Using mechanisms is therefore essential in order to integrate knowledge successfully. Grant (1996b) argues that there has to be coordination between project members. Therefore, project members need to have the following four mechanisms; rules and directives, sequencing, routines and group problem-solving and decision making in order to be able to integrate knowledge successfully (Grant, 1996a; Grant, 1996b). Interaction through communication between project members are necessary for decision making and problem solving,
according to Grant (1996b). Personal communication is however especially important for the interaction between members (ibid). Okhuysen and Eisenhardt (2002) on the other hand argue that there are three other mechanisms that are essential for efficient knowledge integration, where knowledge integration is conducted by formal intervention such as managing time, questioning others and sharing information. Organizations that are using these mechanisms to integrate knowledge do also need to create a common language (ibid). Therefore, it is important for project managers to invest in learning a common language. A common language will also lead to decreased communication issues, which is important when integrating knowledge (Lööw, 2003).

Furthermore, Davies and Brady (2000) points out that routines, learning processes and organizational changes are important in order for a project to be more efficient when integrating knowledge. Whitley (2006) agrees that routines are important for coordinating and directing teams of specialists to reach innovation goals and afterwards integrate the knowledge. Faraj and Sproull (2000) claim that specialists and expertise need to be coordinated in order to integrate knowledge efficiently, where routines, milestones and meetings are supporting mechanisms. Milestones, deadlines and time management are essential for knowledge integration since working under pressure increases members efficiency to create a common knowledge, according to Söderlund (2011). Moreover, Tiwana and McLean (2005), argue that good relations are needed in projects to create trust between project members, which facilities knowledge integration. Through this it can be seen that there are different mechanisms that are essential for knowledge integration. However, integrating knowledge is difficult and the following part will discuss some of the knowledge integration challenges.

2.3.5 Challenges with knowledge integration

Knowledge integration is, as previously mentioned, very challenging, according to Berggren et al. (2011). Firstly, it is very challenging to integrate knowledge due to the lack of time, since project members need to learn fast at the same time as being efficient (Okhuysen & Eisenhardt, 2002). It might be hard for project members to have formal and informal meetings because of the time limit, which might threaten knowledge integration (ibid). Projects are often widely distributed in different locations, which creates a geographical distance in projects. The distance can bring barriers to integrating knowledge by influencing the communication in a project (Maurseth &
Verspagen, 2002; Wahlstedt, 2014). When projects become more geographically distributed, languages, cultures and customs of project members get more diverse, which could lead to more communication issues and project members might interpret knowledge differently (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000; Wahlstedt, 2014). Creating a common language and knowledge is therefore very important, but very challenging (Okhuysen & Eisenhardt, 2002).

Trustworthiness and making sure that the project members trust each other is also challenging since project members are usually unknown to each other, but it can enhance knowledge integration (Szulanski et al., 2004). Communication is a form of social interaction and can therefore be seen as the foundation of an effective knowledge integration (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Hendriks, 1999; Meyer, 2002). Knowledge integration therefore requires good communication between the project members, but communication is not an easy task and many projects fail due to communication issues (Schmickl & Kieser, 2008; Ren et al., 2018). Having good communication in a project is therefore essential for an efficient knowledge integration.

2.4 Theoretical model

In this chapter several theories have been used and the following theoretical model, see figure 2, shows how the different theories are connected. The model explains that management consultants and other project members in a project integrate knowledge with each other, however this thesis focus on the management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects. According to the theory that have been used in this chapter, the following connections can be made. Communication, both informal and formal, affects the knowledge integration in projects. But the thesis has drawn a limit to informal communication only, since it is seen by many as the main driver to integrate knowledge in projects. Management consultants and the other project members usually communicate informally, which affects the knowledge integration and its outcome. Informal communication is needed and contributes to trust, which leads to several different factors in a project such as relations, autonomy and empowerment. Those factors affect the knowledge integration in a project. Other than that, time is also seen as a factor that affects the whole project, both the informal communication and knowledge integration. Parts of the integrated knowledge, especially the knowledge that is shared and transferred, will thus be saved in a person’s mind and used once more for further projects. The knowledge will thereby not be lost after the project is done since the
management consultant and other project members takes the knowledge they have gained in one project and uses it for other projects as well.

![Diagram of Project Knowledge Integration](image)

*Figure 2, Theoretical model*

Through this chapter it can be concluded that many researchers in the field of knowledge integration have studied knowledge integration in technology-based firms, where the outcome of knowledge integration is a material resource. However, there is a lack of earlier research when the outcome of knowledge integration is an immaterial resource, such as a service or a solution, which the outcome of management consultants’ knowledge integration is. How management consultants integrate knowledge in projects and how informal communication influence management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects is lacking research. This theoretical model shows the connection between the different fields, although it is not certain how the connections look in practice since there is lacking research about the connection between the above-mentioned fields. Primary data was therefore needed in order to research the field further. Theories in this chapter and the theoretical model that shows the connections between the theories were used to develop the interview guide, see appendix 1 and 2. The collection and analysis of primary data is discussed in the following chapter.
3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology starts with framing the thesis problem and discussing the theoretical search strategy. Afterwards there is a description of how the research in the thesis was conducted, based on a qualitative cross-sectional approach. Qualitative primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with management consultants. The collected data was then analyzed through a thematical analysis. A description of what scientific research perspective that has been used in the thesis then follows. The methodology ends with a discussion about method critique and how the ethical aspects were fulfilled.

3.1 Framing the thesis problem

Problem framing in a study explains what the study aims to research, who or what it is about, where it will be examined and how it will be examined. The aim of the problem is hence important in order to layout a proper design and structure for the study (Larsen, 2009). The following part therefore explains how the problem of the thesis was dealt with and how it was examined in order to reach a result. Framing a problem in a research could be more or less open or closed. Due to factors such as time, problems that are closed and framed more specifically are preferred (ibid). Due to limitations in time the problem of the thesis has therefore been specific to research a specified phenomenon. The context the problem consists from, has been widely researched but the different parts of the problems has not yet been connected. As previously argued, the relevance of the problem is high due to the nature of modern organizations.

3.2 Theoretical search strategy

An extensive search strategy has been used and revised appropriately for the collection of theory used in the thesis. The following electronic databases have been used: UniSearch and EBSCOhost, for the time period 1945-2019, using mostly English text but a few with Swedish text as well. The articles and journals used from the following databases have been peer-reviewed. Due to the lack of academic articles that combine all perspectives of the chosen research area, a wider search strategy was undertaken, which used more general terms. Several different key words were hence used to collect relevant articles, the most common used key words were: Projects, Project-based
organizations, Management consultants, Communication, Informal communication, Knowledge integration.

The articles were then reduced based on year, language, being peer-reviewed or not and relevance for the thesis. The articles that were relevant for this thesis were both general articles about communication, consultants and knowledge integration, but also more specific articles about management consultants, informal communication and how communication influence knowledge integration. Journals that have been used publish articles within management, communication, technology, project management, economics and business administration. The studies conducted in the chosen articles have been mainly qualitative with an empirical, explorative and describing approach. The articles were chosen due to the similarity of the methods of the thesis and hence proven to be relevant and useful. Articles that were left out did not fulfill the search criteria of the thesis regarding the relevance of the chosen research topic.

Relevant academic books, organizational publications and other grey literature have also been used in the collection of theory. These have also been sorted out regarding year, language and being relevant or not. The same main themes to find appropriate articles have also been used to find relevant academic books and other literature, such as literature about projects, management consultants, communication and knowledge integration.

Based on this theoretical search we were able to create a theoretical model, figure 2, that was shown in the previous chapter. The theoretical model shows how the different theories in the theoretical framework are connected. However, it is not certain how the connection look in practice since there is a lack of earlier research about the connection between the different theories. Collecting empirical data was therefore necessary. This theoretical model was later revised based on the empirical data, see revised theoretical model, figure 4, in the following chapter, revised theoretical model. The empirical data was collected based on primary data and the primary data was afterwards analyzed, which further will be discussed.
3.3 Research strategy and research design

Making sure that we chose the right research strategy before collecting data was important since the use of a certain strategy leads to certain data. We knew we needed data that focused on feelings, thoughts and opinions since the aim of the thesis was to research feelings about a certain phenomenon. A qualitative strategy is favored when researching behaviors and feelings that cannot be measured numerically. The qualitative strategy focuses on different factors of a person, such as the experiences and feelings a person has about a certain phenomenon and develops them further in a descriptive way (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Larsen, 2009). A qualitative strategy is hence interested in receiving experiences and interactions in their natural context (Kvale, 2007). A research can also be quantitative where numbers and statistics have a greater focus than feelings and opinions of different individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Larsen, 2009). A qualitative strategy was hence seen as a better option for this thesis, since it is hard to measure feelings and opinions in numbers. A qualitative strategy that focuses on words and goes in depth was seen as appropriate, since it matches the problem of the study.

The advantages with a qualitative strategy are many. Interviews are often conducted in a qualitative strategy and the benefits with interviews are face-to-face conversations and answers that are more open and developed than a survey would be able to provide (Larsen, 2009). Conducting interviews in order to collect primary data was favored since the research question of the thesis can be explained with words through face-to-face conversations. During the interviews we were able to ask follow-up questions and have an open conversation in order to get a good understanding of the subject, which we believed was necessary in order to produce trustworthy results. In order to answer our research question accordingly, we chose to interview management consultants and therefore have their perspective on the matter.

Since interviews were conducted, this research was based on a qualitative cross-sectional design (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Data was collected from interviews with several management consultants in order to get a general view of how they use informal communication to integrate knowledge in projects. These interviews were related to a specific period in time (ibid), where the management consultants were asked questions about projects that they worked in currently or have worked in
previously. Qualitative interviews at a single point in time made it able for us to identify relations and patterns that were used to reach a general answer of the thesis’ research question.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Primary data

The data researchers collect themselves is named primary data (Larsen, 2009) and what we refer to when using the term primary data. In the thesis, we chose to collect data by conducting a qualitative research. Since we strived to describe informal communication and how it affects knowledge integration in projects, we believed many opinions, feelings and thoughts needed to be heard and collected in order to reach an objective solution. Feelings and thoughts about a certain matter are hard to describe numerically, choosing to collect data via interviews was therefore a logical reason. According to Bryman & Bell (2013), qualitative research puts a greater focus on words when collecting data and disregards numbers. A qualitative research could be said to be an observing method where interviews are often used (Bryman, 2011). We chose to work with interviews as our main form of primary data collection in this thesis, since we wanted to highlight different opinions, feelings and thoughts that individuals might have about our chosen topic. Since interviews are open in this way and let the interviewees interpret the material in their own way, we therefore decided interviews would be a good way to give us wide material to work with in the thesis.

When collecting primary data in qualitative studies it is also vital to process previous literature in order to guide the research in accordance to the chosen problem and topic, the data therefore needs to be prepared early since it is often time consuming (Larsen, 2009). We therefore chose to go through existing theory in the field before conducting the interviews. In that way we were able to see main themes and findings described in the existing theory and work out an appropriate way to approach the topic in practice. Since the theory around knowledge integration and communication in general is wide, it was important to find themes we wanted to explore further in practice before designing the interview questions and conducting interviews. Interviews as a way of collecting primary data will be explained further.
3.4.2 The Interview process

An interview does formally mean that one or several individuals ask questions to another person or a group, an interview can therefore be seen as a process of communication between two or more people (Kylén, 2004). This is a brief explanation of what an interview is and how we have viewed an interview throughout our data collection. In our case, the interview has been a process between us two authors of the thesis and an interviewee.

As mentioned previously, we chose to conduct a qualitative research since interviews were seen as an appropriate way to describe the thesis problem through words and feelings. A qualitative interview can be specified as a process that seeks qualitative knowledge and explores different aspects of the interviewee’s life (Kvale, 2007). A qualitative interview can therefore be seen as appropriate for our thesis since we wanted to explore the chosen topic from an individual's perspectives with many different feelings and opinions involved. According to Larsen (2009), this is just what a qualitative interview is about, to gain insight into a person’s experiences, opinions and feelings.

In order for us to get closer to the topic and open to the interviewee's feelings and opinions, we chose to be very open to new impressions and answers throughout the interview. According to Kvale (2007), this is seen as necessary in the qualitative interview process since new perspectives are brought up during the interview, a strict interview guide is therefore not favored even though some formality is vital in order for the interview to stick to the research topic. Since we wanted to be open in a way that favors a qualitative research, but yet sticking to the subject, we decided a semi-structured interview would favor the thesis. By having clear roles, between us and the interviewees and using a semi-structured interview guide, we managed to get a balance between being open and sticking to the chosen subject throughout the interview process. When interviewing the management consultants, both of us asked questions simultaneously and held the same responsibilities and roles throughout.
3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The decision to conduct semi-structured questions in our thesis was thus selected because it is an appropriate way to keep the answers open and flexible and to also avoid misunderstandings that can arise if follow-up questions are not allowed. Since the chosen research area contains many personal stories with feelings and opinions, we decided a semi-structured interview guide would be suitable in order for us to be able to adapt to the answers received during the interviews. In semi-structured interviews a general interview guide is used in order for the questions to have the same theme throughout all the interviews. By conducting an interview with semi-structured questions, it is possible to remain open and flexible and for example change the order of the questions and adapt them to the situation, depending on what answers the interviewee reveals. The process also means flexibility for the interviewer since follow-up questions can be asked based on the answers that are received during the interview. Being open during the interview and not having any preconceived feelings and opinions will here become crucial in order to not affect the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

Conducting semi-structured interviews was therefore a clear decision in order to reach open answers and still strive towards the aim of the thesis. It is thus hard to not be subjective when the interview questions are set according to previous research which is combined in the theoretical model, figure 2. Since previous research is very theoretical and uses words and terms that are not used in real life, it was hence interesting to see the differences between theory and practice when conducting the interviews. In order to overcome the subjectivity with a set semi-structured interview, we asked questions that were open and did not use theoretical terms. The answers that we received therefore differed from theory in many ways and several different fields without previous extensive research was brought up. By using the theory from the theoretical framework and the theoretical model, figure 2, to formulate the semi-structured questions and by using real life terms, many new different fields were explored throughout the interviews which gave the thesis a new unexplored side. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Swedish, since all of the interviewees were from Sweden. This made the interviewees feel more comfortable, open and able to develop their thoughts.
3.4.4 The interview guide

In order to give the same impression to all interviewee’s we chose to construct a semi-structured interview guide with a set theme. All the interviewee’s received the same questions throughout the interview but by keeping an open and flexible approach all interviewees were able to discuss or develop areas of interests further. This is seen as a good way to conduct interviews since the interview becomes open and flexible and can hence focus on areas of interest and thereby develop new perspectives, having an interview that is too strict will not give the same amount of flexibility to an interview (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Kylén, 2004; Lind, 2014; Trost, 2010). During a qualitative interview it is important that answers can be developed and that the interviewees can develop their feelings and thoughts (Trost, 2010). A solution to a good interview is flexibility and not standardization (Eriksson-Zetterqvist & Ahrne, 2015), the selection of a semi-structured interview guide was hence seen as an approach in favor of our research design.

The semi-structured interview was set up with questions related to our chosen topic that would help us answer the research question of the thesis. The research question of the thesis strived to answer how informal communication affect management consultants´ knowledge integration in projects. Questions were therefore designed based on existing theory from the previous chapter in the field of informal communication and knowledge integration and the theoretical model that shows the connections between the theories. The interview guide was divided into two parts with one part covering informal communication and the other part covering knowledge integration, see appendix 1 and 2. Appendix 2 is the translated interview guide from Swedish to English. The questions about informal communication were generally perceived better by the interviewees than the questions about knowledge integration. We believe this is due to the fact that knowledge integration is a very theoretical field that is hard to describe with words and hence difficult to define in practice. In order to deal with this, we always tried to explain the questions and our intentions with them by being as open as possible. If the interviewees did not understand a certain question, they were open and honest about it and asked for an explanation. It was in other words, a process that was understood by both parties which strived to be as mutual as possible.
3.4.5 Sample

The research was based on a targeted sample, where management consultants who were relevant for the research were interviewed (Bryman, 2011). The selection was based on five defined criteria's in order to achieve the purpose of the research. The first criteria were to only interview people with the title management consultant since we wanted to narrow down the focus of our study to the perspective of a management consultant. The second criteria were that the management consultant either work in a project now or have worked in a project previously. The third criteria were that the management consultant needed to use informal communication with their clients, this in order for them to be able to give information and comment on how they use informal communication to integrate knowledge. The fourth criteria were that the different management consultants were undependable from each other, in the sense that they did not work in the same project. The last criteria were that the chosen management consultants had to be geographically close to us in Linköping in Sweden, since we had a limited time to conduct the interviews due to the short completion time of our thesis. Based on those five criteria's, we interviewed twelve management consultants from nine different companies in Sweden. The interviews were approximately 45 minutes long, which lead to rich information. The information from these twelve management consultants lead to empirical saturation.

3.5 Data analysis

A data analysis in a qualitative research can be challenging and an overwhelming process since it generates a large amount of data, such as interview transcripts, documents and field notes (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Creswell, 2013). A qualitative data analysis can be divided into the following three steps; data reduction, data display and conclusions: drawings or verifying (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The first step is when the collected data is arranged roughly and can be called coding (Hjerm et al., 2014). Afterwards the data is arranged more carefully, which can be called thematization and the last step is when the data work as a starting point for analysis and conclusions (ibid). Figure 3 is an example of how a qualitative analysis process can look like, according to Miles and Huberman (1984).
A thematical analysis is one of the most common data analyses in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A theme can be described as an identified category based on data. It should also be related to the research, based on identified codes in transcripts and provide the basis for a theoretical understanding of the data (ibid). Since we needed to identify patterns and relations between different keywords from the empirical data, in order to answer the research question, a thematical analysis was favored. A thematical analysis gave us the opportunity to find new perspectives of the chosen topic and to be open to these new perspectives instead of not being open and not be able to see these new perspectives. When choosing to thematically examine the data there is some components that should be included in the analysis (Rowley, 2012). The main components, according to Rowley (2012), is to firstly organize the data, secondly get acquainted with the data, thirdly classify, code and interpret the data and lastly present the findings. In our data analysis we used Rowley´s (2013) components and Miler and Huberman´s (1984) qualitative analyze process in figure 3, which further will be discussed.

3.5.1 Organizing the data

During two weeks we interviewed all the management consultants that participated in our study and simultaneously transcribed the interviews. Transcription can be said to be one step of
analyzing the data since the oral form of communication is converted to a written form, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2008). Conducting twelve interviews led to a large amount of interview transcripts and therefore it was necessary to organize the data. We created a word file and arranged the text so that all the text related to the answers of a specific question was in one place. This was made in order to easier find key words in the interview transcripts, so called codes (Hjerm et al., 2014). These interviewee codes were an important initial device to reduce the complexity of the data (Hjerm et al., 2014; Rowley, 2012). After organizing the data, we got acquainted with the data.

3.5.2 Get acquainted with the data

To get acquainted with this large amount of data, we conducted a structured reading. While reading the transcripts, we searched for the interviewee's thoughts, feelings and opinions about how informal communication influence their knowledge integration in projects. This was made in order to clearly define what we searched for in order to answer the research question of the thesis. While reading, we also started to think about key themes, which was the first step in the data display. Since we used semi-structured interviews, the interview questions were used as the bases for the first key themes. Afterwards, we classified, coded and interpret the data based on these key themes.

3.5.3 Classify, code and interpret the data

The arranged interviews in the word file were used for coding the data, which involved creating a new word file where identifying patterns and keywords were noted under each of the key themes that was developed in the previous step, see table 2. This was made in order to reduce the large amount of data (Hjerm et al., 2014; Rowley, 2012). The coding was done in Swedish since the interviews were conducted in Swedish. The coding process lead to a rather big amount of codes and the thematization was therefore valuable in order to arrange these codes. The coding was based on the text from the interview transcripts, while the thematization could be described as coding of the codes, according to Hjerm et al. (2014). After coding the data, we started to identify relations and patterns between these codes in order to develop themes, which also was made in Swedish in order to decrease confusions, see table 3. The aim of thematization was to categorize the existing codes by grouping them around patterns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>De första teman baserat på intervjufrågorna</th>
<th>Nyckelord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mekanismer för korrekt uppfattad kunskap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statusmall/rapport/möten</td>
<td>• Statusmall/rapport/möten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regelbundna möten/avstämningsar</td>
<td>• Regelbundna möten/avstämningsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mejlutskick - bekräfta mail leverans</td>
<td>• Mejlutskick - bekräfta mail leverans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modeller &amp; teorier</td>
<td>• Modeller &amp; teorier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informell uppföljning (frågor)</td>
<td>• Informell uppföljning (frågor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Följfrågor</td>
<td>• Följfrågor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motfrågor</td>
<td>• Motfrågor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kontrollerade frågor</td>
<td>• Kontrollerade frågor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uppföljningsfrågor</td>
<td>• Uppföljningsfrågor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Övning efter workshop</td>
<td>• Övning efter workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dialog – budskap</td>
<td>• Dialog – budskap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Förstå bakgrundskunskap</td>
<td>• Förstå bakgrundskunskap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ansiktsuttryck/kroppsspråk</td>
<td>• Ansiktsuttryck/kroppsspråk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2, Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Huvud teman</th>
<th>Under teman</th>
<th>Nyckelord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informell kommunikation</td>
<td>Relationer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bygger relationer</td>
<td>• Bygger relationer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tillit &amp; förtroende</td>
<td>• Tillit &amp; förtroende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Psykiska faktorer: känner dig sedd, någon bryr sig, hjälper, känslor/tankar - ökar effektiviteten</td>
<td>• Psykiska faktorer: känner dig sedd, någon bryr sig, hjälper, känslor/tankar - ökar effektiviteten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bygger förståelse för varann</td>
<td>• Bygger förståelse för varann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Blir roligare att jobba &amp; trevligare</td>
<td>• Blir roligare att jobba &amp; trevligare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Viktigt för gruppdynamiken</td>
<td>• Viktigt för gruppdynamiken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lär känna varandra</td>
<td>• Lär känna varandra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personberoende/personlighetstyp</td>
<td>• Personberoende/personlighetstyp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– funkar bättre med andra, man får en relation men den skiljer sig åt mellan olika människor</td>
<td>– funkar bättre med andra, man får en relation men den skiljer sig åt mellan olika människor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personkemi förbättras</td>
<td>• Personkemi förbättras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3, Thematization
There are some criterions that should be met when developing themes, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990). The theme should be central, occur frequently in the interview transcript, be rather abstract so that it can be used in other studies, no emergency solutions that explains the theme, be able to lead to a deeper understanding, be able to explain the variation and not only the main points and alternative interpretations should be explained in relation to the theme. These criterions were therefore used when developing themes. The coding was very valuable for us since it gave an understanding of what the interviewees said about the themes. This thematical analysis of the empirical data helped us to find new perspective of the topic and find relations in our data, which was useful when interpreting the data.

### 3.5.4 Presenting the findings

After coding and thematization, we then presented our findings in the following chapter, the presentation of the thematical analysis. We presented our findings under headings that reflected the main themes that was identified through the thematical analysis. The main themes that were identified was informal communication and knowledge integration. These main themes were also aligned with the research question, which is very important, according to Rowley (2012). Under each main theme, key sub-themes were also identified based on the thematical analysis and used to present our findings. The identified key sub-themes under informal communication were trust, relations, autonomy and time and the key sub-themes under knowledge integration were knowledge integration mechanisms, open environment, understanding and uncontrolled knowledge. Those key sub-themes are similar to some of the sub-headlines in the theoretical framework since the interview-guide was developed based on the theory. The key sub-themes were in other words developed based on the thematical analysis of the primary data and not on the theoretical framework, but some of them are similar. The key sub-themes under informal communication is the same as the ones under informal communication in the theoretical framework, which was expected. The information under informal communication in the theoretical framework will therefore be confirmed and explained based on the empirical data in the following chapter. However, we found new perspectives of knowledge integration that we would not have found without this thematical analysis. Most of the key sub-themes under knowledge integration is different from the ones under knowledge integration in the theoretical framework. These new perspectives of knowledge integration will be discussed in the following chapters.
Statements from the interviewees were also identified in the transcripts and used when presenting the findings in order to support what the participants said about a theme. All the statements in the following chapter, the presentation of thematical analysis, have been translated from Swedish to English. After presenting the findings in the presentation of the thematical analysis we revised the theoretical model, figure 2, based on the empirical data in the chapter revised theoretical model. This led to a revised theoretical model, figure 4, which was presented, discussed and compared with the theoretical model, figure 2, in the chapter revised theoretical model.

3.6 Scientific research perspective

The ontological and epistemological perspectives influence how we have seen the world in this thesis. Our ontological and epistemological assumptions will therefore be discussed based on the claims that we have made in this chapter. Ontology refers to philosophical study of the reality and epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Ontology and epistemology can be seen as either objective or subjective (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Viewing ontology as objective means that social and natural reality have an independent existence compared to human cognition, according to Johnson and Duberley (2000). In contrast, viewing ontology as subjective means that the reality is an output of human cognitive processes (ibid). We have hence understood the social and natural reality as objective since there is a real world out there, but our attempts to understand it have been limited.

Viewing epistemology as objective means that it is possible to access the external world objectively (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). A subjective view of epistemology, on the other hand, means that it is not possible to presuppose a theory-natural observational language (ibid). The knowledge that we generated is how informal communication affect management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects. We used an objective perspective for this research since we strived to provide a general understanding of the phenomena. Subjective thoughts and ideas were not used to present information.
3.7 Method critique

In order to fulfill the aim of our research, we chose to use a qualitative research strategy. Reliability and validity are two important criteria for establishing quality of the research in a qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Silverman, 2006). To achieve validity, the interviews needs to achieve credibility and transferability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Our study is in line with the rules and the concerned members are able to read the findings of our study, which leads to that creditability is fulfilled. We also received feedback from our advisor and fellow students in order to increase the credibility. To achieve transferability, the findings should be generalized to other social situations (ibid). However, qualitative findings are usually unique and significant of the aspect of the social world being studied. Our study on the other hand can be transferred to similar situations in society, for example to other consultants who use informal communication to integrate knowledge in projects or to other situations when the outcome of the knowledge integration is an immaterial resource.

To achieve reliability, the study needs to achieve dependability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In order to achieve dependability, complete records should be kept of all phases of the research process in an accessible way (ibid). Therefore, only management consultants that use informal communication with their clients were interviewed since they can relate to informal communication with their clients. The interviews were also recorded and carefully transcribed, which increases the reliability, according to Silverman (2006).

One of the weaknesses with qualitative methods are the issues in generalizing the material numerically. It is also more demanding to cope with the data since there are no direct answers, a demanding work to analyze the material is hence crucial (Larsen, 2009). We therefore chose to organize the data and then code it into different themes in order to get a good base and structure to build the remainder of the thesis. Another weakness could be that the interviewees do not trust the person who is conducting the interview and therefore do not open up truly about their feelings and opinions, being observed by a stranger could in other words affect the behavior of the person being interviewed (Larsen, 2009). We remained neutral throughout the interviews and always explained the aim of the thesis and made sure they understood the questions thoroughly.
Since our qualitative research was based on text and writing, from transcripts, issues in transforming social situations into texts could be a concern. The answers from the interview could be interpreted in many ways and this process could be subjective (Kvale, 2007). However, as mentioned previously, in our study we used an objective perspective, since we strived to provide a general understanding of the phenomena.

3.8 Ethical aspects

In scientific research it is important that the researchers consider the ethical aspects (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Silverman, 2006). The ethical aspects are about respecting participants before, during and after interviewing them. The following four ethical principles exists, according to Bryman & Bell (2015), whether there is harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and whether deception is involved. In order to not harm the participants, researchers should maintain the confidentiality of records and anonymity of accounts. Personal data was therefore processed through the highest possible confidentiality and all the participants were anonymous. We also chose to not disclose the organizations where the participants worked at to increase the anonymity of the participants. This was not relevant for our study and did not influence the result of the study.

The principle of informed means that the participants should be fully informed about the research process and that they agree to it (Bryman & Bell, 2015). We therefore described what the process would look like, how we informed the participants and whether they were consent or not during the interviews. We informed that the collected data would only be used for research purposes. We also chose to not reveal too much of our study to the participants, since that may influence the answers. However, we told the participants about the aim of the research and how we handled their confidentiality regarding their participation. The third ethical principle, invasion of privacy is linked to the notion of informed consent (ibid). The participants themselves had to decide whether they wanted to participate in this research or not. The participants that agreed to be interviewed were also able to refuse to answer certain questions. The last ethical principle is deception, which can occur when the researchers represent their research as something other than what it is (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Silverman, 2006). Therefore, we chose to provide participants with enough information about what our research was about, such as the aim of the thesis and the main topic.
4 PRESENTATION OF THE THEMATICAL ANALYSIS

The presentation of the thematical analysis is displayed in this section. Through the interviews, empirical data was collected and analyzed. During the analysis the material was categorized into two main themes with several sub key-themes. The themes are similar to previous research but new perspectives that have not been previously mentioned also came up during the process. These themes are hereby explained and discussed in the following chapter.

4.1 Introducing the thematical analysis

The management consultants that were interviewed had different experiences from working in projects since they had worked as a management consultant between 1 to 25 years. The projects that they were part of usually consisted of project members from different parts of the organization. According to the management consultants that were interviewed, there was always a project manager who was responsible for the whole project. However, if it was a rather large project there were also project managers for different parts within the project. Other roles that project members usually had were the clients that ordered the project, developer, analysts, change manager, a management board and IT workers, for example IT architect. There were also different project members with various expertise in projects, for example project members with an expertise in human resources or business. However, sometimes organizations did not have the knowledge needed within the organization and needed external knowledge. The management consultants described that they were usually seen as an external resource with external knowledge in the projects they were a part of.

All the management consultants agreed that they had different roles and responsibilities in projects, however, their main responsibility was to help their clients. There were three different roles that management consultants had in projects and these roles differed from project to project. These three different roles were project managers, change managers and project members with an expertise, and all these different roles included various responsibilities. In other words, sometimes a management consultant was the project manager in a project, but in another project the same management consultant was a project member with some expertise. It was therefore hard for the management consultants to only define their role since they had these different roles depending on
the project. However, the management consultants agreed that all these different roles lead to varied knowledge, which had to be adapted to the project. All the different projects were unique and therefore a normal working day usually looked different for the management consultants. Sometimes the day started with a meeting and continued with a workshop, while other days started with a coffee and continued with analysis or computer work. The length of the projects that the management consultants participated in also differed from project to project.

What sort of knowledge the management consultants provided was another thing that differed widely. Management consultants’ knowledge can therefore be said to be rather subjective since it shifted from person to person and depended on in what field they worked and for what company. However, the management consultants described several types of knowledge that they provided and worked with on a daily basis. Many of them explained that they worked with change management that often included behavioral changes in a group or other individual changes. Agile project work was also mentioned as a knowledge that was provided to a group of project members from the management consultant. The main goal for most of them was to work towards a goal and to lead the project with their specialized knowledge. The management consultants had knowledge in different fields, but the most usual ones were knowledge in IT, social competences such as behavioral factors and knowledge in how to lead a project, such as a project leader. A vital task was to combine and transfer knowledge, both between the project members but also to other external stakeholders, such as a management board.

In order for the management consultants to integrate their knowledge in a project, they needed to communicate accordingly. The consultants all agreed that communication was vital in order for their knowledge integration to be effective and hence get a good result of the project. Interviewee 4 stated that: *in projects that really have been a disaster there have been basically no communication and therefore it does not work.* Since communication can be seen as the cornerstone of an effective project and is driven by individuals with different needs and preferences, communication therefore needs to be clear for everyone in order for a project to be successful. According to the management consultants, several communication tools were used in order to communicate their knowledge to the project members. Verbal communication tools that the management consultants mentioned were different sorts of meetings, such as staff-, board-, development-, project-, technology-, status-, and employment meetings. Written communication
was also largely used and mainly consisted of different sorts of notes, documents, project
descriptions, communication plans and status reports. Electronical communication tools that were
used were often Google chat, Slack, Skype for Business, Facebook, texts and e-mails.

These different communication tools were either informal or formal, although this thesis focus on
informal communication. Informal communication was highlighted by all the management
consultants as a vital factor for a project success. Informal communication was also significant for
knowledge integration, described the management consultants. Informal communication and
knowledge integration will therefore be discussed further.

4.2 Informal communication

Informal communication could have several meanings for different individuals. The management
consultants were therefore asked to specify what informal communication means for them and
what they usually do when they communicate informally. It was thus vital to explain the distinction
between formal and informal communication before hearing their explanation in order to avoid
any misunderstandings. Interviewee 4 said: *it depends on what sort of project it is, what
communication channels you have and how involved you are in the venture.*

For most management consultants, informal communication was seen as something casual and as
a chance to socialize through coffee breaks and lunches but also through small-talking in between
meetings, chatting online and talking and texting on the phone. The informal communication was
described by the management consultants as something that is included on a daily basis in a relaxed
environment, where people are open, curious and where there are no formal rules or talk about
work. *Informal communication is everything in between the formal, it could be chats online, lunches, coffee breaks together or taking a walk,* said interviewee 10.

Informal communication is in other words, according to the management consultants something
that lets them, and others get to know each other and bond without any formal requirements. The
bonds created in the process were described by the management consultants, as contributing
factors to that project members would start liking each other due to talking more, and then trust
and respect for all project members involved typically would develop. *There are no formal rules about what you can talk about on a lunch or during an afterwork for example,* said interviewee 2.

All management consultants agreed on informal communication being essential in a project since all of them used it daily. Daily activities such as coffee breaks and lunches and small talk in between formal activities were all something that the management consultants participated in several times in one day. *It is very important that you participate in what is happening at the work place, that you go and have a coffee even if you do not have time, even if it is just for a short time. The importance with the informal communication is not what is being exchanged but what you can build in terms of what you can find out from someone,* said interviewee 5.

Since informal communication is present daily it is also continuous and necessary to use throughout the project described the management consultants, it makes work a bit less complex, more spontaneous and creates important chances to get to know the other project members. It also gives them a chance to receive valuable information from others within the project. Informal communication can therefore be said to be vital for management consultants in their daily work and a chance to establish trust that creates relationships and important bonds that make the environment in a project more open and easygoing. Trust will therefore be discussed further, which leads into the next parts about relations, autonomy and how to cope with time.

### 4.2.1 Trust

During the interviews, most management consultants mentioned trust as an important outcome of informal communication. Interviewee 12 said: *since trust within the project is so important the communication is also important. It is hard to build trust in any other ways than talking to each other.* Although some management consultants believed that informal communication had to be accompanied with structure and some sort of formal settings in order for the informal communication to be able to build trust. It can therefore be understood that it is important to let a project team build trust by informal communication, while striving towards a goal together so the project moves forward and trust can develop.

As mentioned above, the word trust was a word persistently mentioned by the management consultants. By the majority, trust was described as a necessary factor in order to build relations
within the project and something that made people like being at work by being open and relaxed with each other. Informal communication was seen as important throughout a project but especially vital in the beginning of a project phase, since project members got to know each other and could hence build trust for the upcoming work. Interviewee 3 even said: trust, if you do not have trust within a team, you can not get a good team. In order to get trust you need to open up yourself according to interviewee 3: You will receive trust by showing that you are vulnerable. Partly, when you can tell someone about your life, when you can go as far as possible.

Trust was seen as something that builds a relation between different individuals by establishing a contact between the project members, which they can then communicate within. Since the management consultants used informal communication every day, often as a means of establishing trust, it was really important that the informal communication was evident and functioning within the project. If you do not trust each other, you do not know each other's feelings and facial expressions, if you trust each other you will know each other better, stated interviewee 3.

Informal communication was said to build trust by giving a better understanding of one another, which creates a natural bond between different human beings. It is really important that you build trust, that you build these daily situations and not just come in from the outside and talk about the project. The social parts are extremely important. To show people that you like them and respect their knowledge is very vital and that you ask and are curious about their jobs and ask them to explain again, said interviewee 5. By being personal and not afraid to reveal too much about yourself, you would also get a wider sense of someone else’s thoughts and feelings, which would create enhanced understandings of different perspectives. Informal communication therefore leads to a better fellowship within the project described the management consultants.

Many of the management consultants even said that if you trust and know each other better, you then understand each other on the same level, which can have an effect on the outcome of a project. The informal communication builds relations and builds the team and that also build the success for the whole project, said interviewee 4. If you feel better at the workplace, you basically get a feeling of belonging and contribute to the project in different ways, stated the management consultants. Better cooperation was also seen by many of the management consultants as something steaming from trust built by informal communication. If the cooperation was enhanced
within the project, many also believed the outcome of the project in the end was better compared to projects that had worse cooperation. *When you do not know each other you do not know how to act and then it is hard to share things. When you start getting to know each other and know how the other person works, then you start sharing knowledge*, interviewee 5 said.

Less informal communication was seen as something that could create risks in a project, due to trust not being present. Without trust, participating in a project would be harder many agreed. *I would say that the levels of risks increase if the informal communication does not work well*, said interviewee 12. Only using formal communication would not be personal enough and not let the project members communicate in ways they would have wished for, which many believed would have affected the project itself since the project members would then not have trusted each other enough. Having trust in a project is therefore seen as a factor that may contribute to a positive outcome for a project and the organization, which the project is part of.

Other than a project producing good results, many management consultants also discussed other factors that trust can lead to. Creating a fun and welcoming workplace leading to personal wellbeing was mentioned. If project members feel they have fun at work, they also work harder to strive towards personal goals and accepts challenges better. If you trust each other, you are also certain that the peer workers do what they are supposed to do, which could lead to less stress and less fear that something will go wrong, according to the management consultants. Interviewee 9 said: *it is more fun to work if you trust the people that you work with, most people want to do a good job and achieve their goals and you want to have fun while working*.

In order for the following factors to be present, it is thus important that the management consultants work on spot and are present in the projects, working from their home offices usually means more formal communication via phone and email. Informal communication can in other words be more easily used if the management consultants are present in the projects and thereby talk and create relations with the project members by being more informal. *You use more informal communication on spot since you meet the project members more on a regular basis, while you on distance do not use it in the same way*, said interviewee 1. Interviewee 2 agreed and even said: *on a distance the communication naturally turns formal. You usually write an e-mail or use other formal channels*. Being able to talk face to face is therefore seen by most management consultants as something that
enhances the opportunities of informal communication and the benefits it brings. Through this it can be seen that building relations is important and therefore it will be discussed further.

4.2.2 Relations

Relations was another word continuously mentioned by the management consultants, together with trust, when speaking about the contributions of informal communication in projects. *It is extremely essential for the relations in a team that the informal communication is continuous, it has to be and it should be. It is only good,* said interviewee 4. By having informal communication and an open environment in a project, trust could then be formed and then relations between the different project members. Interviewee 8 explained how the informal communication affects relations and said: *I personally believe it is very important. I think the informal communication, both when you discuss the project but also other things, is important for the group.*

Management consultants work closely with other individuals, which means that the workstyle of a management consultant needs to be collaborative and many different relationships are needed. Interviewee 8 said: *The informal communication is often a way to build stronger relations on. If you can only talk about something at a certain occasion, it decreases the flexibility and in our roles as management consultants we have to be very flexible.* Relations between the management consultants and project members are therefore seen as essential for management consultants in order for them to be able to provide their services and knowledge. It can also be understood that communication is hence essential for management consultants in order to build relations since they provide their services and knowledge in an interaction process. Interviewee 2 said: *The chances of getting a new project with the same client increases if we have good terms with each other. The informal communication is very important to maintain a client between different projects.*

Informal communication was, according to the majority of the management consultants themselves, seen as relationship building. The management consultants also believed that project members feel that someone cares and that their peer workers see them and that they can then be open with their thoughts and feelings when good relations are formed in the workplace. *If you feel that someone is seeing you, cares about you and how everything is going and if you want help, that increases the power and efficiency,* interviewee 3 said.
When establishing an open climate from trust and relations, the management consultants also believed they could get a larger understanding of one another and really get to know everyone more. Some of the management consultants stated that the personal chemistry in a team was very important in order for the group dynamics to be good and functioning. It will not just create an open and relaxed environment at the workplace, but also become more fun to work since everyone would perceive their peer workers as nicer and more understanding. Interviewee 5 said: *With better relations in a project, it is more fun to work and you are more happy in the workplace. So it affects the whole business in that sense.*

Just as trust is believed to affect the outcome of a project, stronger relations were also believed to increase the efficiency in a project due to everyone knowing each other and thereby looking out for one another. Stronger relations would then create more effective teams since people in general feel a belonging to their peer workers and to their job described the management consultants. It can therefore be understood that both trust and relations are connected to an effective communication, which makes communication, especially informal, according to the management consultants, vital in order to build trust and relations. The factors are hence connected to each other by informal communication in a project.

### 4.2.3 Autonomy

As mentioned above, the management consultants believed that trust and relations steaming from informal communication, would lead to project members knowing and trusting each other better. By having trust for one another and strong relations, the projects could also develop more effectively. Many management consultants believed that trust and strong relations also lead to projects becoming more autonomous. Interviewee 10 said: *yes the teams will get more autonomous if I show them trust, then it will be both easier to see them and hear them and their needs.* Interviewee 11 also agreed and said: *More trust means less follow-up and control. [...] Trust is the base in a lot of things.* If the project members know each other and their needs, they also know their roles and what they were supposed to do. Interviewee 12 said: *if everyone understands where we are going and why, then I think it works really well to use less control, it has been a long time since I had a project that was all about command.*
By trusting one another, project members thereby feel they could take more own initiatives and not feel they are doing something wrong, according to the management consultants. By creating trust and strong relations in a team, the management consultants generally felt that project members were prone to feel safer in the project in the sense of feeling more relaxed and then wanting to take own initiatives. This generally makes projects more autonomous as a whole since they become more effective if everyone knows and trust each other and respect their own roles and responsibilities. Interviewee 7 mentioned: *if I have a lot of trust to someone, then I feel I do not need to check up on that person that often because I know what that person is doing.*

If the project members feel safer, more secure and trusting one another, the management consultants therefore also believe the project as a whole will benefit from trust and strong relations by becoming more autonomous and effective. This can of course have a positive impact on the outcome of the project, not less when dealing with stressful deadlines and short project executions. Interviewee 5 said: *People get less scared and easier to lead if there is trust, the hardest thing to do is to lead scared people. People that feel safer are easier to lead.* Deadlines have a big impact on projects and time will therefore be discussed further.

### 4.2.4 Time

Since time is often limited in a project, it is necessary that projects and their members work effectively to reach a positive outcome, managing time in a project therefore becomes vital. Interviewee 11 states: *The informal communication increases as the project wraps up. The closer to deadline, the more communication is needed.* As previously mentioned, informal communication is seen as something that leads to more trust and stronger relations and thereby creates stronger and more autonomous teams, which is essential when dealing with short deadlines in projects. Interviewee 2 mentioned: *the informal communication is about building a relation and trust and that takes time.* Having this in mind, it becomes important to make sure there is still sufficient time left for informal communication after discussing the parts above.

The majority of the management consultants believed that time was an important factor in regard to working with projects. Time was not just seen as all bad though. As previously mentioned, informal communication was seen as important in order to build trust and relations and create
understanding for one another and also stronger roles. By having a clear understanding and stronger roles with clear responsibilities, the management consultants believed working with tight deadlines could become more beneficial. They believed that the increased stress that tight deadlines usually bring, could be combatted with safer and more secure project members that thereby know how to communicate by the trust and relations they have built together. Interviewee 9 even said: *If you imagine you have a tight deadline, then you just want to figure something out as fast as possible so you can do something about. Then it is really important that there is trust so people dare to do things they want and do not hold back information and try to do things on their own, they must feel that this is a project that we do together.*

Informal communication is in regard to time, seen by some of the management consultants as crucial since tight deadlines sometimes mean spontaneous and fast decisions. Interviewee 7 mentioned: *If you have tight deadlines, then you have a greater demand that things have to move fast. Then it is easier to just talk about it face-to-face rather than sitting and formulating a perfect e-mail.* In order to adapt to changing situations, informal communication with its trust and relationship building, hence need to be present. Sometimes, you do not have the time to communicate though, neither formally nor informally. Building a good communication process in the beginning of the process with a structure and set roles thereby need to be implemented in order for the project to work effectively when dealing with tight deadlines. Some management consultants therefore believed more formal communication was needed in the beginning to start the process in a good manner and then build on the informal communication, in order to build trust and relations while working towards a goal under a tight deadline. Tight deadlines also affect the knowledge integration since integrating knowledge takes time, described the management consultants’.

Management consultants’ knowledge integration will be discussed in the following part.

### 4.3 Knowledge integration

Informal communication was seen as vital for knowledge integration, agreed all the management consultants, since it creates trust and good relations. Management consultants are external experts that usually do not have any earlier relation with the project members and therefore it is important to communicate informally. These management consultants that have to integrate expert
knowledge in projects needs to create trust with the project members. The management consultants described that having trust and good relations between project members increases the knowledge dispersion. \textit{You do not get any knowledge dispersion unless you trust each other}, interviewee 4 said.

Project members that trust each other are more willing to share, transfer and combine knowledge with each other, described the management consultants. Management consultants have specialized knowledge that needs to be combined with the other project members knowledge, although, some of the knowledge needs to be transferred and shared. This in order to create a common knowledge within the project. The specialized knowledge that the management consultants hold is complicated and therefore questions from other project members usually arise. This is due to the need of getting some basic knowledge about their specialized knowledge. Interviewee 12 said: \textit{Having a common learning process is extremely important when working with change, because in the beginning everyone understands small fragments and different pieces, which leads to a common knowledge.} The management consultants described that trust is an important factor in order to be able to build a common knowledge in projects. Trust and good relations between project members also lead to that project members dare to ask questions and ask for clarifications if it is something unclear. Trusting each other in a project also leads to that project members are better at listening to each other, which is essential when integrating knowledge. Based on this it can be seen that informal communication has many advantages for knowledge integration. However, how these management consultants integrate knowledge in projects will be discussed further.

\subsection{Knowledge integration mechanisms}

The management consultants described that it can be hard to integrate knowledge in projects, but it is possible. Different mechanisms were used by the management consultants to integrate knowledge in projects that they were a part of. Some of the management consultants used models, methods, theories, statistical results, workshops and buzzwords in power points or excel as mechanisms to integrate knowledge. Interviewee 3 said: \textit{I usually use models and theories [...]}, while interviewee 6 said: \textit{I usually use methods that have been used before in other projects and workshops}. These ways were usually formal ways of integrating knowledge. However, some other management consultants used informal mechanisms of integrating knowledge such as personal
experiences. Interviewee 5 even said: *I am always informal, I was born informal.* Informal communication can be used to get deeper knowledge, for example during a coffee break where project member usually asks follow-up questions about a model. Informal and formal ways of integrating knowledge can also be combined, for example when combining theory with personal experiences. This is usually the most efficient way to integrate knowledge in projects, according to some of the management consultants. Interviewee 4 said: *informal communication is incredibly important, but communication also needs to be formalized and structured, these two build on each other.*

The management consultants argued that communication is an essential mechanism when integrating knowledge through models, methods, theories, buzzwords and personal experiences. Models, methods and theories were usually communicated in verbal forms in meetings, workshops, educations or lectures or in written forms in excel or other documents such as specifications. *Agile is not only a tool, agile is one way of thinking [...] I have been involved in many projects where the plan is to work agile, but they did not know how to work agile. Then I had to have a lecture about it and transfer the knowledge about agile to them,* interviewee 4 said. Interviewee 10 gave another example and said: *Integrating knowledge is sometimes done through educations or collaborations. Often it is about helping others to use a different perspective of a problem and maybe clarify how something works that is not clear. So often it is about having a conversation and combine the knowledge in order to move forward with the problem. In a pure educational situation on the other hand it is more about knowledge transfer. It is more about me talking and sharing how I think about something in order for the other members to think in the same way.*

However, personal experiences were used during lunches or coffee breaks with the other project members. Interviewee 12 combined models with personal experiences and said: *We use a lot of power point and excel, since it is necessary to see the models on the computer in order to show something concrete. It is very difficult to talk about it if you do not have it in front of you. So in order to inform and communicate the models are needed, but then you talk around those things during for example a coffee break.* Informal communication at lunches or coffee breaks also helped the management consultants to get to know their project members, which was necessary in order for them to create a common language. *When project members start to work in a new project, they*
might have different views of the world and speak different languages. Different things might mean the same things but the names of it might differ. Communication is therefore very important in order to create a common language, claimed interviewee 12. Using a common language in projects is important in order for the project members to understand the integrated knowledge correctly.

Making sure that the project members understood the knowledge that the management consultants integrated in the projects was seen as important, but it was hard, described the management consultants. The management consultants agreed that following-up and follow-up questions were important mechanisms to use to make sure that the project members understood the knowledge correctly. However, management consultants followed it up in different ways. Some management consultants had meetings and others had exercises after workshops. After workshops you might have an exercise where you can see if someone has not really understood everything, so you have to go through it again. Sometimes you need to book a new workshop if you notice that we are not really getting there, and we need to work on it more, interviewee 5 said. Having templates and reports where project members reported this or confirmations by email were also used for follow-ups. Management consultants also used facial expression and body language in order to see if the project members understood the knowledge correctly. If you are in the same room, you try to look for facial expressions and see if someone looks skeptical or if it looks like someone does not understand it in order to know if I have to go deeper in explaining this, said interviewee 9.

However, communicating informally to build a relation with the project members was necessary in order to understand these facial expressions. It is therefore especially important to try to get to know the project members and to build relations with them in order to understand the other project members facial expressions. Interviewee 12 said: we try to create a culture in every project since a lot depends on the culture that you create. This culture and environment will further be discussed in the next part.

4.3.2 Open environment

Creating an open culture and an open environment in the project was seen as vital for knowledge integration, described the management consultants. Informal communication has a significant influence when creating an open environment. The informal communication is rich and interviewee 5 said: informal communication creates trust and trust in me, as a person. Interviewee
10 agreed and claimed: *informal communication is about making people feel comfortable and feeling that this is fun, doing things exciting and attractive plays a significant role for knowledge integration.* Using informal communication to build relations and create an open environment was therefore seen as very important for integrating knowledge in projects.

Almost all management consultants felt that informal communication was significant for knowledge integration in projects. Interviewee 2 said: *informal communication affects the integration of knowledge and the dispersion of knowledge.* Interviewee 11 agreed and claimed: *A good relationship, which you get from informal communication, leads to more communication and when the project members feel more comfortable, I think they are more open to integrate knowledge compared to when it is a tense relationship, then it might be a bit more difficult to sit there and talk about some project you did 3 years ago and to integrate knowledge.* Only two of the management consultants claimed that informal communication was not crucial for knowledge integration, but that it had advantages. Interviewee 4 said: *informal communication is incredibly important in order to continue building on what has been decided formally.* By this the management consultant meant that project members need to use both informal and formal communication in order to integrate knowledge. However, interviewee 2 claimed: *the informal communication captures details that are not evident in the formal communication.* Interviewee 12 agreed and said: *the formal communication is too strict, poor and narrow.*

Informal communication also leads to valuable insight and knowledge in projects, described the management consultants. Interviewee 2 said: *informal communication is very important since it captures nuances and details that are hard to capture in formal communication.* Interviewee 1 on the other hand claimed: *informal communication is not crucial, but it is definitely an advantage.* The management consultants described that informal communication gives a valuable understanding of the client and valuable knowledge about the company, which are necessary in order to understand the clients culture and environment. Understanding the client's culture and environment makes it easier for management consultants to adapt to a similar culture and environment within the project.

Informal communication also increases spontaneity, which is important in projects. Having an open environment that allows fast decisions and innovation is important in projects, described the
management consultants. Project members needs to be able to take own initiatives in order for a project to deliver fast, taking own initiatives also leads to a more efficient and autonomous project team. Interviewee 4 said that: 

*I think that if you are going to succeed in projects, you need to share knowledge spontaneous [...] we cannot wait, if people are involved now and want to know something now, they must be able to get the information now.* When projects are spontaneous, project members usually get new ideas and inspirations, which increases creativity, according to the management consultants. It was also described by the management consultants that through informal communication, project members feel that they belong to the project and its members, which is important for creating trust. *If you do not trust each other, you are not willing to share knowledge with the other members*, said interviewee 3.

Communicating informally in projects also shows who all the project members really are and therefore increases the personal chemistry, believed the management consultants. This also increases project members well-being and good mood at work. Interviewee 9 said: 

*I think that everyone would feel that it is very boring to work in a project where you only use formal communication.* The other management consultants agreed that having fun and enjoying the time at work leads to an open environment and project members are more willing to integrate knowledge in projects that have an open environment. However, informal communication can influence the integration of knowledge in both positive and negative ways. These positive and negative aspects will therefore be discussed in the next two parts.

### 4.3.3 Understanding

Informal communication has several advantages for knowledge integration, where understanding was a continuously mentioned word by the management consultants. They argued that informal communication leads to an increased understanding of the integrated knowledge. Interviewee 11 said: 

*I believe that informal communication leads to more knowledge integration.* However, project members usually work under time pressure and some of the management consultants argued that informal communication decreases due to time limitations, while others argued that informal communication increases due to tight deadlines since you really have to talk to each other when you do not have time to plan formal meetings. Interviewee 7 said: 

*the tighter the deadlines are, the more informal communication is used, because in some way it all comes down to basic.*
Interviewee 2 on the other hand said: *The tighter the deadlines are, the more formal communication is used. For me the informal communication is about building relationships and trust and that takes time. The formal is more about delivering the right things at the appointed time.*

Using informal communication to create trust is especially important for management consultants since they usually do not have any previous relations with the project members, claimed the management consultants. Interviewee 4 said: *You do not get any dispersion of knowledge unless you do not have full confidence and trust each other in a project. Sharing knowledge and combining expertise is based on that you trust the other project members. Otherwise, you prefer to keep the knowledge by yourself. We live in a country where everything has to be equal, which means that many people find it very difficult to share things that they are very good at.* The management consultants also described that building relations with project members leads to a deeper understanding of each project member, which is important for knowledge integration. Through informal communication, management consultants get to know the project members on an individual level. Getting a deeper understanding of each project members leads to that you easier understand facial expressions and special behaviors that are important in order to see if someone needs help. Interviewee 10 said: *informal communication is more about who I am as a human being.* Interviewee 10 also gave an example where the interviewee started the meeting by doing something fun, in an informal way, in order to get the project members to laugh. Through this the project members already got some kind of relation with the management consultant and the interviewee claimed that this led to increased knowledge integration.

According to the management consultants, informal communication also leads to a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge. Interviewee 5 even said: *I do not know how it would work to get a deep understanding of the integrated knowledge without the informal actually, I cannot see how that would work. Imagine that I want to know something from someone that I do not have any relation with, why would they share their knowledge with me.* The management consultants said that good relations and trust between project members also increases willingness to ask follow-up questions during informal conversations, which can lead to deeper understanding. Interviewee 8 said: *I am always on the run, but when I am at the client's office, we use more*
informal communication channels, which leads to that we can exchange more thoughts and the project members asks more follow-up questions.

The management consultants also agreed that informal communication leads to that project members get a deeper understanding of why certain decisions are made and its purpose. All the underlying causes for the decision may not be documented in an email or at a formal meeting. During small talks this information usually occurs, and this knowledge might lead to a deeper understanding that is necessary in order to understand the underlying reasons for the decision. The more dynamic and the deeper the communication is, the more value is created, said interviewee 7. What interviewee 7 meant by this was that informal face-to-face communication enables project members to ask questions and get a deeper understanding compared to communication via emails where the communication usually is not that dynamic.

In projects where project members have different background and cultures the communication process and the interpretation of knowledge is even harder. Interviewee 12 gave an example where there were 15 people in a project from four different groups and all of them had different backgrounds and were unknown to each other. These 15 project members were a bit suspicious to each other and did not know all the project members background in the beginning. However, when they started to communicate informally, they understood enough about each other and were able to create a common knowledge. This led to that the project members saw advantages in each other and were more willing to integrate knowledge with each other. Interviewee 12 said: this process was based on informal communication, which increases the willingness of knowledge integration.

However, some of the management consultants argued that informal communication should be complemented with structured formal communication in order to achieve an efficient knowledge integration. Interviewee 4 said: Informal communication is incredibly important, but communication must also be formalized and structured in order to integrate knowledge, these two builds on each other. Informal communication is incredibly important for building on what has been decided formally. Some of the management consultants also argued that informal communication is only an advantage for knowledge integration if there is good informal communication. Informal communication can also lead to disadvantages for knowledge integration, which will further be discussed.
4.3.4 Uncontrolled knowledge

Informal communication can influence knowledge integration in negative ways, according to the management consultants, where uncontrolled knowledge was seen as the biggest reason for that. Informal communication can for example lead to too much small talks and gossips, which can result in a negative climate within the project team that can threaten knowledge integration. The management consultants described that they need to avoid too much small talks and gossips. Interviewee 4 said: *I think informal communication channels are good, they are good for the project and for the change that you will make in the project, as long as there a formal channel. If there is not a formal channel about what the project is about and how it concerns the overall business, then a lot of informal channels will arise where everyone talks crap. They will talk about the wrong things, about the things we do not want people to talk about.*

Sharing information and knowledge through informal communication during small talks increases the risk that not all the project members receive the information or knowledge, since they were not a part of the small talk and that results in uncontrolled knowledge. The management consultants believed that some information and knowledge is important for all project members and are therefore more suitable to share during formal meetings than small talks in corridors. Integrating knowledge during informal conversations can also lead to misunderstandings, agreed the management consultants. Interviewee 6 gave an example of this type of misunderstanding and said: *This person thought that he or she was supposed to do one thing and I thought it was another thing that he or she was supposed to do, but we never checked this, we only discussed it shortly during a coffee break. I think that informal communication can increase the risk of misunderstandings.* Interviewee 11 agreed that misunderstandings can arise due to informal communication and said: *the biggest disadvantage with the informal is that you do not sit down and write down exactly what it should contain.* This shows that project members that use informal communication to share information can lead to misunderstandings and own interpretations of assignments that can result in uncontrolled knowledge and a disaster. Interviewee 3 agreed and gave another example: *Informal communication is really good, but there is also a thin line. There is a lot of responsibility, if I have information that I want someone to have and I know only the two of us knows it, then I will not bring it up when we have a monthly meeting. But if there are someone else that might actually need this information, it could go wrong. So, there is a very thin line there.*
Interviewee 10 agrees and says that different languages in projects challenges knowledge integration even more: *adding a cultural filter, for example if you work with people who have a different cultural background and speak another language so that you need to speak a third language together, is a challenge.* People with various backgrounds use informal communication differently and to open up personally can take time for some people or go fast for others, described the management consultants.

The management consultants also claimed that using informal communication to share knowledge makes it harder to backtrack, which also makes the knowledge uncontrolled. Interviewee 12 gave an example where only informal communication was used to answer a question. Three years later, the same question was brought up, but it was not documented, which made it impossible to backtrack the discussion and the answer to the question and the knowledge was lost. Using formal communication makes it easier to backtrack certain knowledge that might be used in the future, since it is usually documented, described the management consultants. Interviewee 11 also gave an example on the following: *It could also be knowledge within GDPR and that you know how that works, so you discuss it over a coffee instead of writing your knowledge down in a document. The benefits of having it written on paper is that you can always look back on it.* Interviewee 7 also had an example around unstructured communication: *When I visited Malmö, things were not as they usually are. Then I experienced that the communication was a bit unstructured, so what happened then was that people went behind each other backs and started talking about what to do in order to find things out.*

Lastly, bad informal communication can lead to decreased trust between project members, argued the management consultants. *There is something that is called false trust, it is when people say they like each other but they still talk negatively about each other behind one’s back,* interviewee 3 said. Decreased trust could according to the management consultants lead to that project members do not dare to ask follow-up questions to the same extent as when it is a high level of trust between the project members. This influences knowledge integration in a negative way. If project members do not dare to ask follow-up questions during small talks it is harder to get a deeper understanding and it might lead to own interpretations of the integrated knowledge, which threatens a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge.
With the following, it can be concluded that knowledge can be affected by informal communication in different ways, which can lead to several factors, both positive and negative. If the informal communication is done in an appropriate way it can lead to for example stronger relations and better trust within the project, while informal communication that is less controlled may lead to the loss of knowledge and less trust in a project.
5 REVISED THEORETICAL MODEL

Based on the thematical analysis a revised theoretical model was developed and is in the following chapter presented. The revised theoretical model, figure 4, is described and compared with the theoretical model, figure 2. The following text looks at their differences and similarities and explores a new perspective that has previously not been researched extensively.

The theoretical model, figure 2, presented the connection between the different theories that was used in the theoretical framework. The model showed that informal communication between the management consultant and other project members in a project creates trust. This trust leads to autonomous teams, stronger relations and empowerment, which affects the knowledge integration between the management consultant and the other project members. Time was also seen as a factor that affects the informal communication and knowledge integration. This model served as a foundation to examine the topic further by the help of interviews with management consultants. The empirical data confirmed some parts in the theoretical model, figure 2, but also contributed with new perspectives. This will be further discussed and explained in the following text and result in a revised theoretical model, figure 4. The text serves as an understanding of the revised theoretical model and looks at the differences between the theoretical model, figure 2, and the revised theoretical model, figure 4.

Based on the empirical data it can be concluded that informal communication can look different in various situations, but it is necessary in order for a project to function and for project members to integrate knowledge. Informal communication was used by all the management consultants throughout the projects and a way to get to know the other project members. It was used in order for trust to be established and thereby also create stronger relations in the workplace. Trust was seen as something that established a contact between project members. If trust and stronger relations were built, project members easier understood each other on the same level. Strong relations also lead to that the everyone know each other better and thereby looked out for one another, which increases a project’s efficiency. Feeling that you belong to the project team creates an efficient project team. This confirms that informal communication leads to trust and relations in practice, which the theoretical model, figure 2, also shows.
The management consultants also described that projects become more autonomous when project members trust each other, since the project members feel more secure taking own initiatives, which also confirms the theoretical model, figure 2. Projects being autonomous can have a positive outcome of the project and especially when there is a limited amount of time and tight deadlines, according to the management consultants. Tight deadlines sometimes mean spontaneous and fast decisions, which can result in a disaster, but can also result in a more efficient project team. The benefits that steamed from informal communication in a project led to better time management since the project members had a better understanding for one another and communicated more effectively. The project was hereby seen as strengthened by the management consultants by the help of informal communication that let them build trust, relations, create autonomous and strong projects and a better use of time, which confirms the theoretical model, figure 2. This part om the model is therefore not changed in the revised theoretical model, figure 4.

However, according to the theoretical model, figure 2, trust also lead to empowerment. The management consultants did not say something about that trust can lead to empowerment and empowerment was therefore deleted in the revised theoretical model, figure 4. Previous research has studied empowerment in a team and has looked at the importance of informal communication within a team. Empowerment is then used as a positive outcome of informal communication within a team and something that affects the whole team. The context is very similar to what is studied in the thesis but was still not mentioned during the conducted interviews. The importance of empowerment perhaps seems greater in theory or is simply hard to describe with words and was therefore not mentioned during the interviews.

Another part that was developed in the revised theoretical model, figure 4, compared to the theoretical model, figure 2, was that trust, relations and autonomy leads to a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge and an open climate, which enhances the knowledge integration. The management consultants argued that trust, good relations and autonomous teams increases the knowledge dispersion and project members that trust each other are more willing to share, transfer and combine knowledge with each other. It occurs since trust enables management consultants to understand the project members on a more individual level and all the project members also feels more comfortable when trust is established. Feeling more comfortable and feeling that it is fun leads to an increased willingness to integrate knowledge in projects. Project members are more
willing to ask follow-up questions and ask for clarifications, which leads to a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge. This also leads to a more open environment, since people feel comfortable and are willing to integrate more knowledge, which enhances the knowledge integration and it is easier to reach a successful outcome of the knowledge integration. The factors that informal communication lead to helps the knowledge integrations in projects, since people then feel they trust each other more and have an open climate to share thoughts and ideas, which may lead to the creation of new knowledge.

Since informal communication also leads to a better understanding of each other, it is easier to create a common language and common knowledge, which is important for an efficient knowledge integration. Having a relationship with the project members gives a valuable understanding of the client and valuable knowledge about the company, which is vital in order to understand the client's culture, described the management consultants. Management consultants therefore found it easier to adapt to a similar culture in the project if they had a relation to the project members. Understanding enough about each project member also helped the project members to create a common knowledge and to see advantages in each other, which lead to increased willingness to integrate knowledge. Being able to combine knowledge without transferring and sharing the knowledge is important, since people might not want to share and transfer the knowledge that they are really good at if they do not understand each other.

During informal conversations, information and knowledge that was seen as unnecessary to discuss during formal conversations usually occurred, which led to a deeper understanding, described the management consultants. This occurred since it showed underlying reasons and background information about for example a decision. Informal communication does in other words, affect management consultants’ knowledge integrations in projects in several different ways and on different levels. The experience and knowledge the management consultants have and in what sort of project they work with and with whom, will all affect the knowledge integration. Informal communication is vital for the knowledge integration in projects but needs to be adapted to the project and to the situation. Since project members might come from different backgrounds and have various knowledge, an understanding for one another was essential and that is why informal communication is extra beneficial in projects. If trust, relations and autonomy is
built within the project it is easier to establish an understanding and common knowledge, which will lead to an efficient knowledge integration.

However, if there is unfavorable informal communication such as too much small talks and gossips it can lead to uncontrolled knowledge and without any structured communication it can create a negative climate and threaten knowledge integration in projects. The theoretical model, figure 2, did not show that informal communication can lead to uncontrolled knowledge and affect the knowledge integration in negative way. However, the management consultants discussed this perspective of informal communication and therefore it was added in the revised theoretical model, figure 4. Unfavorable unstructured communication can lead to several factors that result in an uncontrolled knowledge, which can threaten the knowledge integration. Firstly, too much unstructured communication without any structured communication can easily lead to misunderstandings and own interpretations of the knowledge. This can happen since project members sometimes do not sit down and discuss things formally, which can result in an unsuccessful knowledge integration and the outcome can result in a disaster. It is especially important to avoid too much unstructured communication in projects were project members have various backgrounds since the risk for interpreting things differently increases.

Too much unstructured communication without some formal communication also makes it harder to backtrack the knowledge, which can lead to uncontrolled knowledge that affects the knowledge integration in a negative way. Integrating knowledge during formal conversations usually means that some things are written down, while integrating knowledge more informally usually leads to that it is not written down and it is therefore easier that knowledge gets lost. Using unfavorable unstructured communication can also decrease the trust between the project members, which can create bad relations and decrease autonomy in project teams, which will create a negative climate. If project members do not trust each other it is harder to ask follow-up questions and to be willing to integrate knowledge. Achieving a deep understanding of the integrated knowledge will then be harder. Therefore, some sort of structure and formalized communication must be present for the informal communication to become effective for the knowledge integration in a project. Without a clear structure, informal communication cannot be used effectively regarding knowledge integration.
The theoretical model, figure 2, showed how informal communication affects knowledge integration in positive ways, however the revised theoretical model, figure 4, also shows how it can have a negative influence on knowledge integration. The revised theoretical model, figure 4, shows in other words that informal communication, between the management consultant and the other project members, can build trust, good relations and autonomous teams, which can lead to an open environment that enhances knowledge integration and a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge. However, informal communication can also lead to unfavorable unstructured communication that leads to uncontrolled knowledge, which can threaten the knowledge integration since knowledge easier get lost and misunderstandings easier arise. Unfavorable unstructured communication can result in decreased trust, weaker relations and decreased autonomous teams. This can affect the knowledge integration in a negative way since a negative climate can be created and project members get a decreased willingness to integrate knowledge. Informal communication needs therefore to be combined with structured communication in order for a project to achieve an efficient knowledge integration. The management consultant and other project members will afterwards store the integrated knowledge, especially the transferred and shared knowledge, and use it in future projects.
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The last chapter begins with a discussion that opens up the topic and discusses the topic through a wider perspective. The discussion leads into the conclusion that presents the main findings of the thesis and answers the research question, how informal communication affect management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects. A discussion about the theoretical contributions and the limitations of the thesis then follows. The limitations were chosen to be in the conclusion since it presents the limitations of the whole study and is therefore presented in the end. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research based on what is studied in the thesis.

6.1 Discussion

The aim of the thesis has been to enlighten how informal communication affects the integration of management consultants’ knowledge in projects. The topic was explored by examining several different factors steaming from informal communication, such as better trust, stronger relations and more autonomous teams, that could have an effect on management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects. Interviews with management consultants in different projects and companies were hence conducted in order to collect empirical data. It was seen that a lot of the factors coming from informal communication, that have previously been mentioned as influential, had an impact on the management consultants’ knowledge integration. Although they did not mention all of the factors and they also brought up new perspectives of possible outcomes of informal communication and its impact on knowledge integration, see the revised theoretical model, figure 4, in the previous chapter. It is hence important to note that the empirical data only describes the information from the interviewed management consultants’ point of view, they do not view management consultants elsewhere. The empirical data used might therefore be rather subjective but general theories from previous research still makes the findings of the research reliable.

Previous research within the field have been rather positive and mostly focused on better trust, stronger relations, empowerment and more autonomous teams as outcomes of informal communication. This can be drawn to knowledge integration positively since the management consultants believed that stronger trust, better relations and more autonomous project members led
to more knowledge integration in projects. According to previous research, informal communication can lead to several different factors, most positive. Trust, stronger relations, empowerment and autonomous teams was seen as important outcomes of informal communication, which also had an impact on knowledge integration in a project. These factors were basically confirmed by the management consultants when describing the informal communication in projects they participate in. One of the factors mentioned by previous research, empowerment, was thus not mentioned extensively by the management consultants. Research regarding this might not match the overall reality well or might only be present in certain projects, which of course depends on the context the projects function in such as the overall aim or the general culture within the project or the company. Other than that, all other factors were seen as important outcomes of informal communication since they were mentioned, discussed and explained throughout the interviews.

It was thus dependent upon the person itself and previous experience, such as how long the management consultants had worked and how they normally communicated with their project members. This would hence also have an outcome on how the knowledge integration was affected. Personal traits are not brought up extensively in previous research and gives the topic an interesting edge. How a person acts and behaves can therefore be understood to affect the informal communication in a project and thereby affect the knowledge integration. A management consultant that has worked longer in the field and have experience from many different projects, might for example communicate differently, which might either have a positive or negative outcome on the factors established out of informal communication and hence affect the knowledge integration in varied ways. A management consultant that knows how to communicate on an informal basis due to an extensive previous experience, might create trust and build stronger relations quicker. Seen on the contrary, previous experience could also lead to that the management consultant do things in the same old ways and do not stay open to new influences and ways of doing things. This can then of course affect the informal communication and its impact on knowledge integration negatively, by being closeminded, new knowledge might be looked down on as not good enough. How this impacts the knowledge integration and what outcomes it is likely to have, is of course hard to speculate in but it will probably lead to less trust and weaker relations if new thoughts and ideas are not allowed to flourish.
Since previous research has, as earlier mentioned, focused mainly on positive outcomes of informal communication it was interesting that the outcomes of informal communication that were mentioned were not just positive. Several factors that were often referred to as uncontrolled were mentioned by the management consultants throughout the interviews. This perspective is something that previous research has not focused on that much. This new perspective of the topic adds a different and a new side to explore.

The uncontrolled perspective brings new outcomes of informal communication that hence affects the knowledge integration in projects. The new findings confirm that the field is not yet fully explored and that there are still many outcomes to be discussed. Some factors that were considered as outcomes of an uncontrolled knowledge were unfavorable unstructured communication such as too much small talks and negative gossip. Since knowledge integration is believed to require good communication, this unfavorable unstructured communication could hence affect the knowledge integration badly. It is thus very natural that something formal may need elements of something informal in order for them to balance each other out. Issues, as the management consultants describe, could therefore arise if the formal and informal sides do not match and one side is more dominant than the other. If unfavorable unstructured communication such as too much informal communication occurs without structured elements, it will not just lead to uncontrolled knowledge but can in the longer run lead to the loss of knowledge. Saving knowledge on formal terms is important for a project in order for everyone involved to stay on the same terms.

If only informal communication occurs and no or little knowledge hence is not saved, it will probably affect the project negatively. The outcomes of the project will thereby look very different if one side is more present than another compared to a project that has two sides that balance. As one might imagine, finding a good balance between the two sides, is probably harder in practice than one might think. All project members think differently due to coming from various backgrounds with different knowledge bases. One project member might perceive the balance as well while another project member might feel the others are spending too much time small talking or gossiping about ridiculous things. The balance between the two sides, is hence seen as something subjective that the project itself can only determine. It can therefore be said, it is up to the project members themselves to, based on general project aims, to find a good balance.
Many management consultants also believed a balance was important and that both sides needed to be present in order for the communication to be good and efficient and hence, get a good knowledge integration. If there were both formal and informal communication and the project members found a good balance to use them both, stronger relations and trust within the team was thereby formed, which lead to better knowledge integration. Without the balance, it was easy for the informal communication to lash out into something uncontrolled, which would lead to outcomes as negative talk behind one’s back, misunderstandings and an overall negative climate within the project. This would obviously affect the knowledge integration negatively, since a common ground and belief were said to be very important to fulfill the general aim of the project.

Another outcome that came up on the agenda during the interviews, was the perspective with project members originating from various cultures and backgrounds. Although the management consultants that participated in the study where located in the same geographical area, in Sweden, many of them mentioned working with international colleagues. Working with project members from another background regarding culture and language often comes with issues due to not viewing the world in similar ways. This was mentioned briefly during the interviews and another interesting perspective to consider as a possible outcome of informal communication. If the informal communication is not seen in the same way, it will probably affect the overall communication within the project and thereby how knowledge is integrated. Speaking different languages or coming from various cultures could possibly lead to misunderstandings, which might affect how knowledge is integrated. If the misunderstandings are not dealt with by the management consultants and the other project members, these will probably have a negative impact on the knowledge integration. Some knowledge might not be seen as relevant for some, not good enough or might not even be brought up due to several misunderstandings that could arise. Returning to a balance between formal and informal communication, then becomes extra vital. A structure and a common ground can here hopefully serve as a way to make several sides within the project understood without hindering the knowledge integration too much.

All outcomes of the negative perspective with informal communication can of course affect the management consultants’ knowledge integration. They might lead to decreased trust in a team or weaker relations. It is natural to think that if the people in a project do not communicate on the same terms and do not have a common understanding for the aim of the project, misunderstandings
will arise, which will affect the project climate negatively. The management consultants’ informal communication with the project members can hence affect the knowledge integration negatively. In a project that has a common aim and is dependent upon good communication due to time limits, it could be seen as alarming if the informal communication is not used in a good manner and the knowledge integration thereby gets affected. It is hence essential to pinpoint the importance of this perspective in order for projects to run smoothly.

This negative perspective of the outcomes of informal communication has contributed to the field in several ways. It not only shows that informal communication is good but that it needs to be accompanied with other factors in order to be efficient and have a good outcome of knowledge integration. As previously mentioned, personal traits and experiences of the management consultants will affect what sort of informal communication they use and hence what sort of outcomes it will get; these outcomes may affect knowledge integration differently, some more beneficial than others. In order for the informal communication to work effectively, it was also believed by the management consultants that a structure that balances both formal and informal communication was needed in order for the informal communication to reach its full potential. If a balance between them is not made, it is easy for the informal communication to turn into something uncontrolled where the outcomes are uncertain. The management consultant might thereby get issues in integrating their knowledge if the communication is not working well. A balance can thus be hard to find since it depends on the overall aims of the project and the people in it. Different backgrounds and cultures of project members can cause misunderstandings and to a common ground not being developed, if the management consultant feel that everyone in the project does not have a common ground, the integration of knowledge might not have the same outcomes as planned. The outcomes of an unfavorable unstructured communication thereby contribute with a start to a field that has not yet been extensively explored. More research in the area is hence needed in order for the contribution to reach objectivity.

6.2 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis has been to enlighten how informal communication affects the integration of management consultants’ knowledge in projects. The topic has been explored by using both relevant theory and collecting empirical data through interviews with management consultants.
After analyzing the empirical data and revising the theoretical model, it can be concluded that informal communication affects management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects in several ways. The effects of informal communication firstly depend on what professional background the management consultant has and how communication is viewed. What sort of projects the management consultants work in also has an influence on what types of informal communication is used, and how it affects the knowledge integration.

To reach a general conclusion of the material it is necessary to understand that all the interviewed management consultants in the thesis view the topic differently and have expressed several opinions. There are several outcomes that arise from informal communication that has an effect of a management consultants knowledge integration in projects. One of the most important outcomes was trust. The management consultants believed trust that origins from informal communication influence how knowledge is integrated and used within a project. It is believed that trust ease the knowledge integration since it helps the management consultant communicate with the project members better. From trust, stronger relations in a project is also an outcome of the informal communication. If the relations in a project are strong, the management consultants claimed it was easier to integrate knowledge since the bond between them and the project members was clear and secure. Other than trust and stronger relations, informal communication also leads to autonomous project teams. Having trust, relations and autonomy in projects leads to an open environment. The management consultants were certain that project members feel better about integrating knowledge in a project that is open and welcoming than in projects that are not. Trust, relations and autonomy in projects also leads to a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge since project members are more prone to ask follow-up questions and discuss feelings of uncertainness and thereby more willing to reach a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge. If trust and relations are established and the environment in the project is open, they then feel better about providing their knowledge and also understands if someone in the project does not follow, which increases a deeper understanding of the integrated knowledge.

Although, informal communication needs to be used in the right way in order to achieve an efficient knowledge integration. Unfavorable unstructured communication can easily lead to uncontrolled knowledge that affects the knowledge integration negatively. If the informal communication is not used in the right way it can bring various outcomes that might have
devastating effects on the final project. Outcomes such as misunderstandings and too much talking behind someone’s back may create a negative climate, which will affect the outcome of the project. If a negative climate is created, project members are not prone to integrate as much knowledge with each other as they would have otherwise. There should in other words, not be too much informal communication or too little in a project, a balance must be made between them and formal matters are important in the informal. Informal communication therefore needs to be used in combination with formal communication in order to be as effective as possible for knowledge integration in the project.

6.3 Theoretical contribution

The aim with this research was to enlighten how informal communication affects management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects. Knowledge integration is a theoretical field with a rather high amount of earlier research. However, almost all previous research in the field have focused on knowledge integration in technology-based firms and when the outcome of knowledge integration is a material resource. Few researchers have focused on when the outcome of knowledge integration is an immaterial resource, such as a solution or service. Management consultants provide a service and a solution to their clients and the demand for management consultants has been growing. Researching about management consultants’ knowledge integration contributes with one part when the outcome of the knowledge integration is seen an immaterial resource.

Communication is seen as vital for knowledge integration according to earlier research. However, communication is a large theoretical field and narrowing it down was therefore necessary. Informal communication leads to factors such as trust and relations that are important in projects and for knowledge integration, especially if one of the project members work outside the organization and have no previous relation with the other project members. Researching how management consultants use informal communication when integrating knowledge contributes to the field of knowledge integration since communication is such an extensive part of it.

This study contributes to a wider understanding of how management consultants use informal communication to achieve an efficient knowledge integration in projects. Researchers in
knowledge integration gets a wider understanding about how informal communication affects the knowledge integration when the outcome of it is an immaterial resource, through this study. Researchers in communication also get a wider understanding about how informal communication can affect knowledge integration in negative ways, which has previously not been researched extensively. Management consultants also get an opportunity to analyze how they use informal communication to integrate knowledge, which might help them to improve how they integrate knowledge in projects.

6.4 Limitations

The thesis has been written during a short time period, which has created several limits. First of all, the primary data has only been collected through one source; interviews. It would have been wise to use other sources of primary data that are part of qualitative research, such as observations. However, due to time limitations, other methods have not been available to conduct and go through with. The interviews have also been held in the local region due to the same issue such as with the collection of primary data, which is time. The interviews have been conducted with interviewees in the local region and they might therefore have slightly similar perspectives of the discussed topic. Other interviewees in other geographical areas or with other cultural backgrounds might have provided different answers due to other outlooks of the chosen thesis topic. With this said, the thesis has still strived to be as objective as possible throughout the interviews in order to collect empirical data that is not subjective. It is of course not possible to be fully objective since the thesis is written from a specific perspective and therefore needed to be adjusted accordingly. The quality of the empirical data from the interviews are thus seen as good and trustworthy due to the number of interviews conducted and the ability to openly discuss and answer the questions received during the interviews. The downside with interviews could of course be that the answers received could be subjective and that the interviewees might for some reason choose to not tell the whole truth in order to please the interviewer. The data have therefore been analyzed with a critical manner in order to reach a general conclusion.
6.5 Suggestions for future research

The thesis has examined how informal communication affects management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects and the suggestions for future research are as follows. Firstly, since there are few previous studies of when the outcome of knowledge integration is an immaterial resource, it would be interesting to investigate other similar situations. Researching how other consultants that provide a service or a solution, for example consultants that are specialists in HR, integrate knowledge is a field that needs more research. Secondly, this research was based on qualitative primary data from interviews with management consultants, however, collecting data based on observations might lead to other findings. Thirdly, management consultants might use informal communication differently due to various backgrounds and cultures. The informal communication might differ in Sweden compared to other countries. Using a comparative case study design and researching how management consultants use informal communication to integrate knowledge in different countries will extend the research within the field even more. Fourthly, this research focused on informal communication, however, other aspects of communication, for example different communication tools or written and verbal communication that management consultants use to integrate knowledge would lead to a deeper understanding of how management consultants communicate when integrating knowledge in projects. Lastly, this research concludes that informal communication can affect knowledge integration in negative ways, however, this has not been research extensively and more research about it is therefore needed.
7 REFERENCE LIST


8 APPENDIX

8.1 Appendix 1 – Intervju guide

Intervjun kommer att genomföras anonymt, ditt namn och företagsnamnet kommer inte att presenteras då det inte är relevant för studien. Det som är relevant för studien är dina tankar, känslor och åsikter om ämnet.

Syftet med intervjun är att samla in information som kommer att svara på följande forskningsfråga:

- Hur påverkar informell kommunikation managementkonsulters kunskapsintegration i projekt?

Innan vi börjar intervjun vill vi informera dig om de två huvudtyperna av kommunikation; formell och informell. Formell kommunikation är strukturerad och styrs av regler och riktlinjer och kan till exempel vara affärsmöten och affärsprocesser. Medan informell kommunikation är ostrukturerad och inte drivs av några regler eller riktlinjer och kan till exempel vara småprat, fika, AW, Lunch, Skype eller samtal med medarbetare baserat på relationer som har skapats i icke officiella sammanhang. I denna undersökning kommer vi att fokusera på vikten av informell kommunikation mellan dig och dina projektmedlemmar.

- Är det okej att vi spelar in intervju? Sedan transkriberar vi den och sedan raderar den.
- Först och främst har du några frågor om intervjun eller syftet av studien innan vi börjar?

Introduktion

- Vad har du för roll och ansvar som managementkonsult i ett projekt?
  - Hur länge har du arbetat som managementkonsult?
- Vilka olika roller finns det i projekt som du normalt deltar i?
- Hur kommunikerar du med projektmedlemmarna? Vilka kommunikationsverktyg använder du?
Del 1 – Informell kommunikation

- Kan du beskriva hur informell kommunikation brukar se ut i projekt du deltar i?  
  - Hur ofta använder du dig av informell kommunikation med de andra projektmedlemmarna?
- Är det skillnad på den informella kommunikationen beroende på om du jobbar på plats med klienten eller på distans? Hur skiljer det sig?
- När använder du informell kommunikation i projekt och när anser du att den är viktigast? (Exempelvis i början, mitten eller slutet av ett projekt)
- I projekt där den informella kommunikationen fungerat bra, har slutresultatet för projektet sett annorlunda ut jämfört med projekt där informell kommunikation inte varit särskilt närvarande?
- Hur påverkar tighta deadlines den informella kommunikationen i projekt?
- Hur brukar informell kommunikation påverka relationen med projektmedlemmar?
- Anser du att informell kommunikation skapar tillit och goda relationer med projektmedlemmarna i projekt?
  - Hur skapar informell kommunikation tillit och goda relationer?
  - Tycker du att tillit och goda relationer i övrigt leder till något annat i projekt?
  - Upplever du att projekt med goda relationer också blir mer självgående?
  - Hur tycker du att tillit och goda relationer påverkar förmedlingen av kunskap i projekt?

Del 2 – Kunskaps integrering

- Vilken typ av kunskap förmedlar du till projekt?
- Hur förmedlar du din kunskap till de andra projektmedlemmarna?
  - Hur ser du till att de andra projektmedlemmarna förstår kunskapen korrekt?
    - Använder du exempelvis några speciella teorier, modeller eller begrepp?
- Är formella sätt att förmedla kunskap via t.ex. modeller/statistik/begrepp vanligare än informella sätt som t.ex. personliga erfarenheter? Eller använder du båda sätten?
  - När/Hur?
• Anser du att informell kommunikation är betydande för att du ska kunna förmedla kunskap till dina projektmedlemmar?
• På vilka sätt tror du att informell kommunikation ger värdefulla insikter och kunskap i projekt?
• Upplever du att informell kommunikation är en fördel eller nackdel när det kommer till hur kunskap förmedlas i projekt? Varför och hur?
• Kan du ge ett exempel på när den informella kommunikationen har fungerat bra när det kommer till kunskapsförmedling i projekt?
• Kan du ge ett exempel på när den informella kommunikationen inte har fungerat bra när det kommer till kunskapsförmedling i projekt?

Slutligen, är det något du skulle vilja tilläga om något ämne eller något som du känner att vi har missat i våra frågor och som du tycker är relevant för vår studie?

8.2 Appendix 2 – Translated interview guide

The interview will be conducted anonymously, your name and your companies name will not be present since it is not seen as relevant for the study. The thing that is seen as relevant is your thoughts, feelings and opinions about the following matter.

The purpose with the interview is to collect empirical data that will answer the thesis research question:

• How does informal communication affect management consultants’ knowledge integration in projects?

First, before we start the interview, we would like to inform you about the two main types of communication; formal and informal. Formal communication is structured and driven by rules and standards and could for example be formal business meetings and business processes. While informal communication is unstructured and not driven by any rules or standards and could for example be small talks, coffee breaks, AW, lunch, Skype or talks with co-workers based on the relations that you have created with them in in-official settings. In this study we will focus on the importance of informal communication between you and your project members.
Is it okay if we record the interview? Afterwards, we will transcript it and then delete it.
First of all, do you have any questions about the interview or the purpose before we start?

**Introduction**

- What is your role and responsibility as a management consultant in a project?
  - For how long have you worked as a management consultant?
- What different roles exist in a project you normally take part in?
- How do you communicate with your project members? Do you use some special communication tools?

**Part 1 - Informal communication**

- How would you describe the informal communication in a project you normally take part in?
  - How often do you use informal communication with your project members?
- Does the informal communication differ if you work on or off the spot? If so, how does it differ?
- When do you think the informal communication is most important in projects? (for example, in the beginning, middle or in the end of a project)
- How do you think informal communication influences the outcome of a project?
- How do you think tight deadlines in projects affect informal communication?
- How has informal communication influenced your relations with other project members?
- Would you say that informal communication creates trust and good relations between the project members?
  - How does informal communication create trust and good relations in projects?
  - Is it something else that you think that trust and good relations leads to in projects?
  - Do you think that projects with good relations also become more autonomous?
  - How do trust and good relations affect knowledge mediation in projects?
Part 2 - Knowledge integration

• What type of knowledge do you bring into projects?

• How do you mediate this knowledge to project members?
  o How do you make sure that the project members interpret the information correctly? (for example, by using models, theories or concepts)

• Are formal ways of mediating knowledge (e.g. models, theories or concepts) more common than informal ways (e.g. personal experiences)? Or do you use both ways? When / How?

• Would you say that informal communication is significant when you mediate knowledge to your project members?

• In what ways do you think informal communication gives you valuable insights and knowledge in a project?

• Do you think informal communication is an advantage or disadvantage when it comes to how knowledge is mediated in a project? Why & How?

• Can you give an example where you thought the informal communication worked really well when mediating knowledge in projects?

• Can you give an example where you thought the informal communication did not work that well when mediating knowledge in projects?

Lastly, is there anything you would like to add about any topic or something you felt that we missed in our questions and that you see as relevant for our study?