TRUST ISSUES

WELFARE WORKERS' RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR ORGANISATION

Jonas Welander

2017

School of Health, Care and Social Welfare
TRUST ISSUES
WELFARE WORKERS’ RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR ORGANISATION

Jonas Welander

Akademisk avhandling

som för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i arbetslivsvetenskap vid Akademin för hälsa, vård och välfärd kommer att offentligen försvaras tisdagen den 20 juni 2017, 13.00 i Beta, Mälardalens högskola, Västerås.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Lotta Dellve, Göteborgs universitet
Abstract
In the past decades, the public sector has undergone important organisational policy changes, referred to as New Public Management. These management strategies focus on continuous cost improvements and rationalisation of operations. In the aftermath of these policy changes, we have seen reports of increased work demands and less professional autonomy amongst welfare workers. Against this background, the thesis sets out to explore welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation. This was done by investigating how psychosocial and organisational factors related to a number of outcomes assumed to be indicators of the quality of the relationship. Theoretically, the thesis was inspired by psychological contract theory, but also relates to other concepts and theories found in organisational research. The thesis is based on four empirical studies, all of which relate to how welfare workers have perceived their relationship to their organisation.

Study I aimed to qualitatively investigate how turnover processes evolved amongst statutory social workers who voluntarily had resigned from their jobs. The results showed that dismissive/admonishing organisational responses to the social workers’ perceived work-related dissatisfactions reinforced their beliefs in psychological contract violation, which led to resignation.

Study II and III employed national web-based questionnaire data collected from employees and managers in the social services. The results of Studies II-III showed that if organisations want welfare workers to stop considering exit, want to counteract silence, want to reduce stress-related ill health and want to improve organisational commitment and job satisfaction, management strategies need to be developed that lead to fewer conflicting demands, a reasonable workload and a greater professional autonomy. The results also showed that the organisation’s open climate and attitude towards employees was of great importance for the studied outcome variables.

Study IV was based on questionnaire data from different occupational groups in two municipal organisations. The results showed that organisational resources explained additional variance in organisational identification and organisational pride, beyond the contributions of workgroup resources.

From the findings of this thesis, it can be concluded that the psychosocial demands need to be balanced with organisational resources in order to (re)build a trustworthy employee-organisation relationship. Further, organisations need to reconsider their human resource management strategies and practices, e.g., by enabling a continuous and open dialogue between the strategic and operational levels. Such changes may lead to balanced psychological contracts between welfare workers and the organisation that can improve the organisation’s stability, continuity and, ultimately, the quality of the welfare services.
Abstract

In the past decades, the public sector has undergone important organisational policy changes, referred to as New Public Management. These management strategies focus on continuous cost improvements and rationalisation of operations. In the aftermath of these policy changes, we have seen reports of increased work demands and less professional autonomy amongst welfare workers. Against this background, the thesis sets out to explore welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation. This was done by investigating how psychosocial and organisational factors related to a number of outcomes assumed to be indicators of the quality of the relationship. Theoretically, the thesis was inspired by psychological contract theory, but also relates to other concepts and theories found in organisational research. The thesis is based on four empirical studies, all of which relate to how welfare workers have perceived their relationship to their organisation.

Study I aimed to qualitatively investigate how turnover processes evolved amongst statutory social workers who voluntarily had resigned from their jobs. The results showed that dismissive/admonishing organisational responses to the social workers’ perceived work-related dissatisfactions reinforced their beliefs in psychological contract violation, which led to resignation.

Study II and III employed national web-based questionnaire data collected from employees and managers in the social services. The results showed that if organisations want welfare workers to stop considering exit, want to counteract silence, want to reduce stress-related ill health and want to improve organisational commitment and job satisfaction, management strategies need to be developed that lead to fewer conflicting demands, a reasonable workload and a greater professional autonomy. The results also showed that the organisation’s open climate and attitude towards employees was of great importance for the studied outcome variables.

Study IV was based on questionnaire data from different occupational groups in two municipal organisations. The results showed that organisational resources explained additional variance in organisational
identification and organisational pride, beyond the contributions of workgroup resources.

From the findings of this thesis, it can be concluded that the psychosocial demands need to be balanced with organisational resources in order to (re)build a trustworthy employee-organisation relationship. Further, organisations need to reconsider their human resource management strategies and practices, e.g., by enabling a continuous and open dialogue between the strategic and operational levels. Such changes may lead to balanced psychological contracts between welfare workers and the organisation that can improve the organisation’s stability, continuity and, ultimately, the quality of the welfare services.

**Key words:** Employee-organisation relationship, new public management, psychological contracts, job demands, job resources, organisational factors, trust
To my family

I know it’s already been sung. Can’t be said enough. Love is all you need. All you need is love.

E. Vedder
List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


II Welander, J., Astvik, W., & Isaksson, K. (manuscript). Exit, silence and loyalty among social workers and managers in the Swedish social services.


Reprints were made with the permission of the respective publishers.
### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>List of Papers</strong></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abbreviations</strong></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research problem and rationale for the thesis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of the thesis</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim of the thesis</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall aim</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific aims</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual framework and previous research</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emerging welfare state and NPM in Sweden</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of NPM from an employee perspective</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical perspectives on the employee-organisation relationship</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The employment relationship</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial working conditions in the welfare sector</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes as indicators of the quality of the employee-organisation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empirical studies</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and procedure</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical considerations</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analyses</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of studies</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study I: Corrosion of trust: Violation of psychological contracts as a</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason for turnover amongst social workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study II: Exit, silence and loyalty among social workers and managers</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the Swedish social services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study III: Stressrelaterad ohälsa och arbetstrivsel hos medarbetare och</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chefer i socialtjänsten [Stress-related ill health and job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among staff and managers in the social services]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study IV: Job resources to promote feelings of pride in the</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation: The role of social identification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

ERI Effort Reward Imbalance
EVL Exit Voice Loyalty
CFA Confirmatory Factor Analysis
HR Human Resources
HSO Human Service Organisation
JDC Job Demand Control
JDCS Job demand Control Support
JD-R Job Demands-Resources
NPM New Public Management
SD Standard Deviation
SIT Social Identity Theory
SOS Stress-as-Offense-to-Self
Introduction

This thesis is based on four empirical studies, all of which in some respect investigate welfare workers’ relationship to their employing organisation. The first three studies make use of data collected from statutory social workers in the Swedish social services: an occupational area that stands out as particularly problematic, exhibits difficult work conditions and has high sick-leave rates, an extensive staff turnover and recruitment difficulties. The following fourth study is based on data collected from different occupational groups (education, elderly care, social services, administration and technical services) in two middle-sized municipal organisations.

The research problem and rationale for the thesis

The local government sector, which includes many of the welfare services, is an important part of Swedish society. This sector is significant both as the provider of important welfare services and employment. Over the past decades, the situation at many workplaces, especially in the public sector have undergone important organisational policy changes that have led to increased work demands and less professional control (Burström et al., 2012; Hood; 1991; Höckertin & Härenstam, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). This policy reform is referred to as New Public Management (NPM) - a comprehensive concept that includes new management strategies which during the 1990s were adopted throughout the western world (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). It is apparent that policy reforms in welfare states are products of international trends, where a number of countries pursue similar policy reforms at the same time or independently of each other. In Sweden, despite the deep-rooted connections with a Scandinavian social democratic welfare model based on universal values and substantial state involvement and responsibilities (Burström et al., 2010; Esping-Andersen, 1996, Hort, 2014a), the introduction of NPM inspired strategies and practices has been clearly evident.
The notable policy changes in the public sector with regard to occupational exposures indicate that welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation have been well tested. For example, not only is there a high prevalence of work-related stress amongst welfare workers (European Agency, 2009), but also serious staff shortages in the public sector, which are causing immediate problems in Sweden and in other countries. In addition, the high turnover rate of professional welfare workers presents a major challenge to the public organisations. High employee turnover rates have serious implications for the continuity, quality and stability of services provided to citizens and could damage organisational performance in any context (Park & Shaw, 2013). A number of Swedish studies have shown that the possibility of expressing views and criticism has diminished in public organisations (Aronsson & Bejerot, 2014; Aronsson & Gustafsson, 1999; Hedin, Månsson & Tikkanen, 2008; Lundquist, 2001). Being able to influence matters and engage in democratic processes are important principles of work-related justice and are central to the relationships between the various parties in the Swedish model. Furthermore, the public sector employment that was framed and modelled in accordance with NPM in the 1990s has, according to previous research, not been effective in increasing employee loyalty towards the organisation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Hasselbladh, Bejerot & Gustafsson, 2008).

In recent years in Sweden, social workers have become more involved in an interest organisation with the expressive name, ‘Let’s break the silence’. Participation is focused on applying voice strategies outside the workplace and as a group, with the purpose of drawing politicians’ and other influential individuals’ attention to the problematic working conditions in the social services and the resulting poorer quality service for clients. Criticism of the working conditions in the public sector constitutes one form of resistance. In order to understand why welfare workers’ relationship to their organisations appear to be strained, revised knowledge is needed that can help politicians and other stakeholders to take informed and coherent decisions. As one of the rationales of scientific work is to describe, analyse and unmask prevailing understandings, the thesis’s main ambition is to present an updated picture of welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation and how this relationship affect their attitudes, emotions, behaviour, health and well-being.

It is the welfare workers’ perceptions of psychosocial and organisational factors and their implications for various outcomes that primarily
sets the frame for this thesis. Psychosocial factors concern the individual’s perceptions of the work situation, especially with respect to demands and resources at work, whereas organisational factors concern the individual’s perceptions of how organisational practices and procedures affect or influence the individual (i.e., the psychological climate). The main outcome variables of interest in this thesis that are assumed to indicate the quality of the employee-organisation relationship are various aspects of exit, silence and loyalty, organisational pride, stress-related ill health and job satisfaction. If public organisations want to reinforce and (re)build trust with their employees in the future, these outcomes need to be taken into account and addressed.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of four studies accompanied by this ‘kappa’ text, which summarises and connects the said studies. The kappa is in five sections. The first section introduces and presents the background of the research problem. The second section presents both the overall and specific aims of the thesis. The third section presents the theoretical and empirical background in order to provide insights into the current relevant research in the field. The fourth section gives an overview of the design, setting, methods, participants, procedures and measures used and describe the relevant ethical considerations for the studies and statistical analyses. The fourth section also consists of extended summaries of the four studies, including aims, hypotheses, questions and major findings. In the fifth and final section, these findings are discussed in relation to previous research and their implications for theory and practice. In addition, the strengths and limitations of the research design and methods are discussed. The thesis ends with some concluding remarks.
Aim of the thesis

Overall aim

The overall aim of the thesis is to explore Swedish welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation. This is done by investigating how psychosocial and organisational factors relate to a number of outcomes assumed to be indicators of the quality of the relationship.

Specific aims

Aims of the included papers:

I. Inspired by psychological contract theory, the aim of Study I was to investigate and describe how turnover processes evolves among statutory social workers who voluntarily had resigned from their jobs.

II. The aim of Study II was to investigate the relative impact of job demands, job resources and openness for social workers’ and managers’ intentions to exit (i.e., exit), silence and organisational commitment (i.e., loyalty).

III. The aim of Study III was to investigate the importance of job demands, job resources and organisational factors for stress-related illness and job satisfaction amongst statutory social workers, case officers in disability and elderly care and managers in the social services.

IV. The aim of Study IV was to investigate the relationship between job resources at two organisational levels and their relationships to social identification and group-based pride in terms of emotions about the workgroup and about the organisation of municipal employees.
The emerging welfare state and NPM in Sweden

Prior to the introduction of NPM, the welfare state could be viewed as ‘...a state which assumes responsibility for citizens in the context of a market economy and plural polity...’ (Hort, 2014a, p. 13). The welfare state started to seriously evolve in many developed countries in the early-to-mid 20th century. In Sweden, the welfare state was founded in the 1930s, when a programme to combat unemployment was introduced together with the implementation of universal security benefits and pensions (Hort, 2014a). After the Second World War, public administration started to expand more significantly: a process that has been called the public revolution (Hort, 2014a). In Sweden, a social democratic approach to policy and practice was significant throughout much of the post-war period, and is reflected in Esping-Anderson’s (1996) characterisation of welfare regimes. Ultimately, Sweden became a comprehensive welfare state that wanted to reduce inequalities and increase autonomy amongst its citizens.

By the end of the 1980s, an overheated economy corresponded with a fall in support for the public sector, and by 1990 the number of those who wished to reduce the public sector, rather than maintain its current size, had tripled (Nilsson, 1989). The greatest shift in opinion took place on the left, amongst Social Democrats and supporters of the Communist Party (Hort, 2014b; Nilsson, 1989). However, the change did not just reflect a legitimacy crisis in the welfare state at large, but also extensive discontent with the availability and quality of the services provided by the public sector. This sense of discontent was captured by an important public inquiry in 1989, which described a general feeling of powerlessness amongst Swedish citizens (Petersson, Westholm & Blomberg, 1989), who expressed frustration about their lack of influence on and participation in the decision-making of different public services such as health care and education (Petersson, Westholm & Blomberg, 1989). It should be noted that Hasselbladh, Bejerot and Gustafsson (2008) argued that the public discontent in the late 1980s was constructed by those in power in order to implement NPM. There were a number of major international influences at that time, especially from the USA and...
UK, where challenging of socialism was on most policymakers’ agendas (Hort, 2014b; Manning, 2000). In Swedish politics, this interest was strongly influenced by the policy school known as NPM.

During the 1990s, the economic crisis in Sweden resulted in an increase in unemployment from 1.7 percent to 8.3 percent, which meant that more than half a million people were unemployed (Burström et al., 2012). This period also symbolised the start of the decline in Swedish union density and influence, especially when the traditional collectivist approach took a turn towards individual services (Bruhn, 1999). From 1993 and up to 2007, the changed composition of labour led to a gradual decline in the unions (Kjellberg, 2011). Particularly amongst younger workers, a more critical attitude towards union membership had a similar effect (Bruhn, 1999; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). The public sector’s decreasing share of total employment and the increasing proportion of private sector services also played a prominent role in explaining long-term union decline (Kjellberg, 2011). Women were particularly affected by the reduction of public sector jobs, especially as their employment during the 1990s was (and still is) highly concentrated in the public sector (Burström et al., 2012). Palme et al. (2003) showed that the loss of women’s jobs was almost entirely in the public sector. In turn, research indicated that unemployment increased the risk of economic difficulty, social isolation and ill health (Burström et al., 2012), which during the 1990s contributed to even greater health inequalities than before.

Since the 1990s, NPM in Sweden has meant the removal of market principles and business management techniques from the private to the public sector with the purpose of reducing costs and improving efficiency (Hood, 2011). It should be clarified that NPM has also been implemented in other countries at all levels of economic development (see Borins, 1998). The debate about whether NPM is a globally uniform phenomenon, or whether it represents a more heterogeneous set of reforms that varies between countries and sectors, is still ongoing (Osborne & McLaughlin, 2002). Nevertheless, the managerialist approach to public sector management, with its emphasis on cost-containment, performance improvement and external accountability, is now recognised as a common worldwide approach to managing public sector agencies (Dawson & Dargie, 2002; Pollitt, 2002). In Sweden, the welfare services are mostly funded by taxes, regardless of whether the welfare services are provided by the public sector at all levels of government or by private organisations, which differentiates Sweden from
most other countries. About a fifth of all employees in the Swedish welfare sector are employed privately (Hartman, 2011).

Generally, and according to a neoliberal understanding of society and economics, the logic of NPM is to slim the state, the municipalities and the county councils and to introduce market discipline into their remaining functions. However, it should be stated that NPM is not about the appliance of neo-liberalism, even though it was inspired by this ideology. This could also explain the privatisation in the public sector made possible mainly by the right-wing parties in Sweden (Hasselbladh, Bejerot & Gustafsson, 2008). What is important to emphasise is that NPM was not originally seen as a theory of privatisation but remained relatively neutral on the question of the ideal scope of the state’s role. Instead, it mainly focused on how to make public administration more efficient and, consequently, aimed at increasing internal productivity in the public sector (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Economic incentives were introduced to achieve this aim. For this to work, administrative units first had to be held accountable and responsible for their results: not only for their costs but also their incomes (Höjer & Forkby, 2011). The NPM reform was about price-setting, buyer-seller relations between internal and external units and management by objectives and results. These economic incentives were implemented at an individual employee level, where the system of a fixed and uniformed pay was replaced by a system of individual and variable pay (Hasselbladh, Bejerot & Gustafsson, 2008). The idea behind the economic incentives at the individual employee level was basically to improve the employees’ performances (Thomas & Davies, 2005). However, the logic of NPM’s intended economic incentives influence on individual motivation and performance has been problematic, mainly because the individual and variable public sector pay has remained low since the 1990’s compared to that of other sectors.

Implications of NPM from an employee perspective

At a general level, scholars have argued that most of the traditional values and intangible assets shared by employees in the public sector are not captured by NPM’s performance radar (Diefenbach, 2009). Examples of these values and assets are argued to include many aspects of human, social and organisational capital (i.e., skills and knowledge, forms of co-operation, knowledge sharing and development), fairness, equality, justice, security, participation, commitment, trust and creativity, to name but a few (Wilenski, 1988; Pollitt, 1990; Diefenbach, 2004; Kirkpatrick, Ackroyd & Walker, 2005). According to Pollitt (2002), all these, and similar aspects and values are seriously threatened by NPM
and may have already been severely damaged by it. They are argued to have been devalued and discredited, are portrayed as unimportant or ignored, or treated as constraints and obstacles that organisations have to conquer (Diefenbach, 2009).

Further, scholars have studied the shift from central regulation to decentralisation, market solutions and controls within the NPM reform package. Power (1999) claims that we are facing an ‘audit society’ due to the increased demand for the oversight and inspection of the public sector. In line with Power (1999), audit activities are argued to have undesirable consequences for welfare workers (Lonsdale, Wilkins & Ling, 2011; Pollitt et al., 1999). In the UK, The Audit Commission’s (2002) study of why staff leave concludes that this is due to ‘push’ factors. The Commission’s analysis identifies six main factors that affect the decision to leave, all of which can to some degree be linked to the audit changes of recent years: the sense of being overwhelmed by bureaucracy, paperwork and targets, insufficient resources leading to unmanageable workloads, a lack of autonomy, feeling undervalued by government, managers and the public, unfair pay and a changed agenda that feels imposed and irrelevant (Audit Commission, 2002). Munro (2004) argues that the audit system is not a cause, but a symptom of what is essentially a social attitudinal change. When the government and the public trust professionals to perform well, they are given autonomy. Auditing is introduced when that trust is lost and professionals are asked to make their practice transparent and accountable (Munro, 2004). According to Power (2003), another consequence of audit governance via documentation, measurements and constant benchmarking is that organisations become more focused on their reputation and image and take fewer operational risks. Munro (2004) claims that the audit process is in danger of creating an increasingly defensive and closed system, where employees’ energies are directed towards meeting official targets that are limited and only marginally related to the quality of outcomes for users.

However, not all scholarly contributions have a negative view of auditing and few have actually conducted empirical studies to demonstrate the impact of audit activities on public sector outcomes (Cabral & Lazzarini, 2015; Reichborn-Kjennerud & Johnsen, 2015; Walker, Boyne & Brewer, 2010). A different conclusion on auditing is reached by Gustavson and Sandström (2016), who empirically show that having authorities of national auditing that are organised according to good auditing practices (characterised by independence from the auditee, professionalism in the exercise of the audit practice and recognising the people as the principal) is associated with low degrees of public sector corruption.
It is furthermore suggested that the logic of NPM has had a destructive effect on welfare workers’ ethical work (Healy, 2009). According to Hasenfeld (1983), human service organisations (HSOs), like public organisations, are characterised by their mandate to protect and promote people’s welfare. Most of the work in HSOs involves relations between workers and clients, in that the work is undertaken in direct contact with the people who are being protected or helped. HSO theory stresses that the moral foundation of work is rooted in an ideology that reflects the value of human welfare (Hasenfeld, 1983). From this perspective, NPM’s dominating economic base is seen as challenging, and even subordinating professionals’ ethical commitment to values such as respect for, and trust in, citizens’ self-determination and equality of opportunity. The increased emphasis on organisational professionalism at the expense of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2003) means that the objectives, tasks, norms, values and quality are defined and controlled by the organisation, rather than by the profession. Several studies have shown that the tension between organisational and occupational professionalism can create difficult ethical conflicts in the everyday work situation and result in moral stress (Astvik et al., 2014; Blomberg & Dunér, 2015; Burton & van den Broek, 2009). A recent empirical Finnish study (Mänttäri-van der Kuipa, 2014) confirms that the perception of doing ethically responsible social work is a predictor of work-related well-being. The study shows that reduced opportunities predict a deterioration in work-related well-being, and that increased economic pressures are responsible for these eroded opportunities (Mänttäri-van der Kuipa, 2014).

In Sweden, NPM has not resulted in the greater quality and efficiency gains that were desired or expected (Hartman, 2011). Several studies show that working conditions within the public sector have deteriorated since the 1990s (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2016; Bejerot, Forsberg Kankkunen & Hasselbladh, 2015; Härenstam et al., 2004; Härenstam & MOA Research Group, 2005). Concerning managers, the reduced resources and downsizing as a result of NPM have led to a wider span of control (Harde, et al., 2000). This means that a larger number of subordinates per manager (i.e., span of control) has resulted in higher job demands compared to managers working in the private sector (Höckertin, 2007). A large managerial span of control could be argued to negatively affect the welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation, in that it degrades the quality of exchange between managers and subordinates (Brazier, 2005, Lucas et al., 2008), reduces employee commitment (Cathcart et al., 2004) and increases employee turnover and intention to exit (McCutcheon, 2004). Wallin, Pousette and Dellve (2014)
suggest that a reasonable span of control for managers in Swedish public organisations could benefit managers and the management teams, as well as subordinates and the organisation as a whole.

Lastly, in a gender context, the professions in the public organisations have increasingly been segregated by gender. Men still dominate in positions of power and women remain in subordinate positions in public organisations, not only in Sweden but throughout the world (Acker, 2006). As leadership is strongly male gendered (Ahl, 2007), it is hardly surprising that people in positions of power, such as managers, are men. The advent of NPM resulted in the creation of high pressure managerial jobs. These positions were and still are linked to a greater individualism and long working hours. It could be argued that the competition to reach and keep such a position in the public organisations promotes a strong image of masculinity. A study of municipal management in Sweden reveals that women managers in the social services have to work harder than managers in the male dominated technical services (Björk, Forsberg Kankkunen & Bejerot, 2011). According to Björk, Forsberg Kankkunen and Bejerot (2011), the reasons for these differences are that men have more negotiating power and are therefore more able to defy the NPM discourse and maintain bureaucracy.

Another reason, suggested by Forsberg Kankkunen (2014), is that the managers’ access to hierarchical networks of communication differs between feminised and masculinised services in public organisations. Forsberg Kankkunen's (2014) research shows that hierarchical networks of communication between organisational levels are usual in the male-dominated technical services, whereas such networks are practically non-existent in female-dominated services. The lack of networks of communication between organisational levels in female dominated-services has negative consequences for those involved. For example, middle managers in the female dominated-services have fewer opportunities to participate and have less access to information, support, acknowledgement and control than middle managers in the technical services (Forsberg Kankkunen, 2014). An important conclusion that can be drawn from Forsberg Kankkunen’s (2014) research is that the absence of hierarchical networks of communication can result in silently created male-defined norms and inequalities between services and occupations in public organisations due to the absence of network-generated support and influence.
Theoretical perspectives on the employee-organisation relationship

The employment relationship

Central to this thesis is the growing body of knowledge describing how social exchange relationships are being nurtured. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) has become a dominant theoretical underpinning in this paradigm. The norm of reciprocity, obligating the reciprocation of favourable treatment, serves as a start mechanism for interpersonal relationships (Gouldner, 1960). To the extent that both partners have and are willing to provide the desirable resources, the reciprocation of increasingly valued resources strengthens the exchange relationship over time (Sparrow & Cooper, 2003). The resources exchanged between partners may be impersonal, i.e., the benefits of which do not depend on the identity of the sender, such as the provision of money or information (Foa & Foa, 1974). Resources can also be socio-emotional, e.g., the communication of caring or respect.

Essential to the theories of social exchange is the emerging presence of trust (Sparrow & Cooper, 2003). As social exchange relationships involve unspecified obligations, trust plays an important role in the process of exchange. Both Blau (1964) and Holmes (1981) identify trust as an outcome of favourable social exchanges. Trust in this context can be defined as ‘a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another’ (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). Trust appears to relate to honesty, integrity and concern in communication and affirms positive relationships between communicating parties (Mayer et al., 1995). Bradach and Eccles (1989) argue that the amount of trust in employees is reflected in the way that new organisational forms are realised. Higher levels of trust are associated with lower levels of control (Bradach & Eccles, 1989). In other words, the ways in which organisational incentives are used to direct employees’ behaviour could symbolise the extent to which they are trusted. Human resource practices and levels of procedural and distributive justice are two examples that have been linked to subsequent assessments of trustworthiness in an organisation (Pearce et al., 1994). In turn, studies confirm that a range of significant relationships exist between trust and outcomes, such as job satisfaction,
organisational commitment and intention to leave the organisation (Ayee et al., 2002). Thus, the ongoing exchanges within an organisation could in themselves reinforce and build trust that leads to positive outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and commitment). However, they could equally well weaken and destroy trust and lead to negative organisational outcomes (e.g., turnover or intention to exit).

Although social exchange theory’s explanatory value has been recognised in diverse areas, such as social power (Molm, Peterson, & Takahashi, 1999), networks (Brass et al., 2004), organisational justice (Konovsky, 2000) and leader-member exchange (Setton et al., 1996), this thesis is mainly inspired by one major contemporary social exchange theory, namely psychological contract theory. Psychological contract theory is used as a main theoretical tool to explain and discuss the employee-organisation relationship. Psychological contracts have been shown to be of great relevance in an employment context, because they help the employees to frame their relationship with the organisation, which in turn guides their behaviour (Rousseau, 1995). Compared to organisational support theory, which argues that employees base their reciprocation on the perceived level of organisational support, psychological contract theory predicts that it is not the treatment per se, but the discrepancy between what is promised and what is fulfilled that provide the basis upon which employees reciprocate (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). Although reciprocity is rarely tested empirically, the existing empirical evidence supports the reasoning that employees respond to perceived organisational support and psychological contract fulfilment with enhanced attitudes and behaviour (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro & Tetrick, 2012).

A psychological contract is a mutual exchange of promises between an employer and an employee and leads to a perception of entitlement and obligation (Conway & Briner, 2006; Guest, Isaksson & de Witte, 2010; Rousseau, 1995). These promises, which often develop during recruitment and the socialisation and interaction with co-workers and supervisors, are inherently subjective (Rousseau, 2001) and therefore difficult for organisations to understand and fulfil (Rousseau, 1995). This means that the content of psychological contracts varies between individuals depending on their age, power and position in the organisation and their specific job demands.

Rousseau (1995) suggests that employees derive the terms of their psychological contract in three main ways. First, individuals may receive persuasive communications from others. During recruitment, pro-
spective employees may receive implicit or explicit promises from recruiters or interviewers. Once hired, co-workers and supervisors may describe their views of the obligations that exist between employees and the employer. Second, employees’ observations about how their co-workers and supervisors behave and are treated by the organisation act as social cues that inform employees of their contractual obligations. Third, the organisation provides structural signals, such as formal compensation systems and benefits, performance reviews and missions statements, all of which play a role in the creation of the employees’ psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995).

Previous research also distinguishes between two dimensions of the psychological contracts: relational and transactional obligations (Rousseau, 1995). According to Restubog et al. (2008), relational contracts represent socio-emotional goods, whereas transactional contracts represent employees’ material interests. This means that the relational contract is dynamic and specifies that organisations provide things like training, professional development, fair treatment and job security in exchange for employees’ commitment and willingness to perform tasks that fall outside of their job descriptions (Restubog et al., 2008). The transactional dimension of the psychological contract, on the other hand, is characterised by economic, short-term and specific exchanges, such as pay and performance (Isaksson et al., 2010). However, most researchers suggest that the transactional content is conditional to the relational content, which means that they cannot be seen as mutually exclusive types (Millward & Brewerton, 2001). Isaksson et al. (2010) show that the psychological contract develops from a set of transactional entitlements, but that relational entitlements are added to show the organisation’s intention to establish a different kind of employment relationship with a wider content. Thus, the different types of psychological contract can be viewed as layered. Another important distinction is made between psychological contracts and normative contracts. The normative contract emerges ‘when several people agree on terms in their individual psychological contracts’ (Rousseau, 1995, p. 46). In other words, normative contracts can be viewed as psychological contracts that are shared by members of a social unit, such as the workgroup.

Two important constructs in psychological contract theory (which are discussed in detail in Study I) are breach of contract and violation of contract. They basically determine whether the psychological contract affects both the employment relationship and employee behaviour. A breach of contract is the perception that the organisation has failed to
fulfil one or more of its obligations or promises comprising one’s psychological contract (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The cognitive perception of a breach can be relatively short-term; a breach can persist and if breaches are repeated they can develop into strong emotional reactions called violation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Pate, Martin & McGoldrick, 2003). Psychological contract violation is often a strong affective response to severe breaches of contracts, and can include feelings of betrayal, injustice and deeper psychological distress, whereby the victim experiences anger, a sense of wrongful harm and resentment (Rousseau, 1995). It is therefore not surprising that trust is seen as critical to the maintenance of the psychological contract (Conway & Briner, 2006).

Another important issue when studying the employee-organisation relationship is who represents the organisation in the relationship. Although an organisation provides the context in which welfare workers operate, it is an abstraction in itself (especially a large complex public organisation). In line with Ashforth & Rogers (2012), employees are therefore assumed to look to human agents to formulate an understanding of the organisation. The employees’ understanding of an organisation as an entity is then translated into personal and relational terms (Asforth & Rogers, 2012), which can be reflected in psychological contracts. Even though there has been little empirical exploration and theoretical development in understanding who actually represents the organisation, several authors have argued that the supervisor is an organisational agent who creates employees’ perceptions of this relationship (Schminke, 2012; van Knippenberg, 2012; Shore & Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). Bartol and Dong (2012) further argue that the perceptions of the relationship with the organisation are only created when the employee views the supervisor as acting together with higher organisational systems. Takeuchi (2012) suggests that when focusing on multiple relationships within the organisation (e.g., with senior managers, first-line supervisors and even co-workers), some relationships have greater influence than others in an employee’s formulation of the understanding of the organisation.

The possibility of establishing multiple relationships in municipal organisations, which can shape the employees’ understanding of the organisation, is theoretically excessive due to the number of agents operating at different organisational levels. In municipal organisations, the different welfare services are governed by service-specific political boards and committees and administered by service departments. These service departments are often directed by a head of department who is responsible for the specific delivery of a service or product, and each
department includes a team of senior administrative officers with expertise in HR, IT and finance (Szücs & Strömberg, 2009). In turn, each welfare service area is managed by an operations manager (a middle manager) and unit managers (first-line managers). Even though the focus of this thesis is not to explore who represents the organisation from the employees’ perspective, the ‘organisation’ is primarily assumed to be represented by various human agents and not solely the first-line manager (which is reflected in Study I). This standpoint is in line with previous research, which underlines the importance of human agents as individuals or groups for influencing employees’ perceptions of their relationship with the organisation (Shore & Coyle-Shapiro, 2012).

A theoretical model has been constructed (see Figure 1) in an attempt to synthesise the principal theoretical assumptions in the thesis. This model facilitates a theoretical description of how welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation may be understood. The model is essentially inspired by the framework of psychological contract theory and will be developed further in the discussion section in relation to the empirical results of the included studies (see Figure 2).

![Figure 1. A theoretical model of the welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation based on the thesis’s theoretical framework](image-url)

Employees’ contributions and organisational inducements are highlighted at the centre of the model and symbolise the broad content of the welfare workers’ psychological contracts. Even though empirical research has not yet resulted in a comprehensive list of psychological
contract content items that together reflect the core issues of today’s working life (De Vos, 2002), the notion of balance is central to this theoretical model. Ideas relating to reciprocal and balanced exchange have also been elaborated on in studies of balanced psychological contracts. For example, Shore and Barksdale (1998) find that most psychological contracts are balanced with regard to obligations and entitlements. It is thus suggested in the model that the general content of the welfare workers’ psychological contracts lies in the perceived promises of a balance between their contributions and organisational inducements. As stated earlier, the specific content will vary between individuals and most likely include transactional and relational elements. If the employees’ contributions and organisational inducements are balanced, it is further suggested that the psychological contract will be fulfilled and lead to an employee-organisation relationship characterised by trust. This would naturally enhance employees’ positive attitudes and behaviour towards the organisation. Empirical evidence seems to support the idea of matching in exchange relationships, where high mutual obligations (Shore & Barksdale, 1998) or high mutual investments (Tsui et al., 1997) via psychological contract fulfilment have the most positive outcomes and can be seen as indicators of the quality of the employment-organisation relationship (e.g., trust, job satisfaction, organisational commitment).

On the other hand, a perceived psychological breach of contract (see the right-hand side in Figure 1) is more likely to result if the welfare workers perceive that they have contributed as promised but that these contributions have not been adequately reciprocated (i.e., an imbalanced exchange). It is further assumed, in line with earlier research (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), that psychological contract violation follows from the strong belief that the organisation has failed to adequately maintain the psychological contract. A reached conclusion of violation can, at least theoretically, arise from an interpretation process through which the employee takes outcome issues and why and how the breach occurred into account (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Thus, whether or not a perceived breach of contract leads to violation essentially depends on the meaning that the employee attaches to the breach. Researchers have further found that violation reduces employees’ trust in their employing organisation, job and organisation satisfaction, perceived obligation to their organisations and their intentions to remain (Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). This part of the model is portrayed in the square on the far right-hand side that are labelled ‘mistrust’, which includes negative attitudes and behaviour towards the
organisation as the possible consequences of a perceived contract violation.

To conclude this section, the notion of a balance between employees’ contributions and organisational inducements are important elements in existing social exchange theories, as well as in Figure 1. In this thesis, employees’ contributions are represented by the managing of job demands and the organisational inducements are represented by job resources and organisational factors. It is mainly the balance or imbalance between these concepts that is assumed to lead to positive or negative outcomes. Next, the studied job demands and job resources, that together reflect the psychosocial working conditions are highlighted. After this, the studied organisational factors are emphasised.

Psychosocial working conditions in the welfare sector

Even though the concept of psychosocial working conditions is difficult to define, mainly due to the vast amount of research that has been conducted, it is often assessed and discussed in terms of balance, where job demands should be in balance with the resources that are available to the employee (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Siegrist, 1996). The job demand-control (JDC) model (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990) and the effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model (Siegrist, 1996) are two work stress balance models that have been widely acknowledged in the research field of psychosocial working conditions.

The JDC model is based on two dimensions: job demands and decision latitude. In the JDC model, demands are defined as psychological stressors (i.e., workload) present in the work situation and control as employees’ opportunities of the employee to use and develop their skills and authority over decisions (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). According to this model, the healthiest jobs are those in which decision latitude is high. In order to take social relationships at work into account, the model is further complemented with social support as an altering factor. This extended model is referred to as the job demand-control-support (JDCS) model (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

The ERI model suggests that stress results from imbalances in social exchange and reciprocity in the workplace (Siegrist, 2002). Failed reciprocity is defined as occurring when the individual expends high efforts that are insufficiently matched by rewards from the organisation (Siegrist, 1996). This imbalance (too much effort in relation to too few rewards) is thought to trigger negative emotions and physiological
stress responses. Positive emotions caused by a balanced social exchange, are further theorised to promote general growth and well-being (Siegrist, 1996).

However, the JDC(S) model and the ERI model have been criticised for their broad and general operationalisations (de Jonge & Dormann, 2003; Oxenstierna et al., 2008). According to scholars, the main problem is that the models’ instruments were developed several decades ago and have not been updated and adapted to today’s working life. When it comes to capturing the complex psychosocial working environment in the public sector, these two models have fallen short due to their ambition to explain the relationship between job characteristics and employee health/well-being for all kinds of contexts in all types of professions (Söderfeldt et al., 1996; van Vegchel et al., 2004), including specific job positions, such as management (Kristensen, 1995). Further, the empirical longitudinal findings of the effects of job demands, control and support have not been convincing (de Jonge & Kompier, 1997; Häusser et al., 2010). In an attempt to extend and adapt these balance models, Demerouti and colleagues (2001) developed the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, which facilitates an autonomous specification of job demands and job resources measures relevant for the context of each individual study.

The job demands-resources model
In the thesis, the JD-R model provides a useful theoretical framework, mainly for categorising and defining the studied psychosocial working conditions. Compared to the other established balance models (discussed above), the JD-R model is based on measures and instruments that should be adapted and tailored to the occupational context being studied (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The flexibility of the JD-R model has resulted in robustness, in that it can be applied in different countries and in private and public contexts using a range of methods and measurements (Llorens et al., 2006).

According to the logic of the JD-R model, job demands and job resources are, regardless of the occupation involved, assumed to cause two separate psychological processes. The first process, categorised as the health impairment process, means that job demands can result in health problems. The second process, categorised as the motivational process, means that job resources facilitate the achievement of objectives and thereby increase commitment and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). If the job demands need effort and consume buffering resources, job resources are suggested to fulfil basic psychological
needs, such as the need for autonomy, the need to belonging and the need for competence (Bakker, 2011).

Traditionally, the JD-R model includes a wide span of work aspects, job demands and job resources related to employees’ well-being (Van den Broeck et al., 2008). However, the research that uses job demands and job resources as predictors of outcomes other than well-being is growing. For example, the JD-R model has been used to predict aspects such as organisational commitment (Bakker et al., 2010), absenteeism (Bakker et al., 2003) and turnover (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). However, as specific job demands and job resources interact depending on the context (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), there is still a need to focus on specific contexts, professions and various outcomes. In this thesis, the studied job demands and job resources have been chosen according to theoretical and methodological considerations and to empirically identified problematic psychosocial working conditions in the studied occupational groups.

**Job demands**

In the JD-R model, job demands are defined as ‘those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs’ (Bakker et al., 2007, p. 312). Generally, organisations in the public sector have been found to be both similar and different to private organisations when it comes to job demands (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). As the work conditions in the public sector are characterised by economic constraints, political influence and decisions and organisational changes, certain job demands are more apparent than others (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). The welfare workers’ special relations with their recipients also indicate that their experienced job demands may be wider ranging than those experienced by private sector employees outside the field of human services (Hasenfeld, 1983). If human relations are considered as the work object in public organisations, this has implications for many aspects of work, particularly for psychosocial working conditions (Bejerot, 1998). For example, job demands in HSOs do not only include workload and intensity, but also emotional aspects. As HSO work is characterised by unclear and ambiguous goals, job demands can easily be very high (Hasenfeld, 1983). The job demands presented below are those that are central to this thesis.

Pressure of work, the workload in the public sector and the prevalence of work load or quantitative demands seem to have increased in
the last decades (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2016; Bejerot, Forsberg Kank- kunen & Hasselbladh, 2015; Höckertin & Härenstam, 2006), especially in the female-dominated human services (i.e., care and education) (Harder et al., 2000). Quantitative demands refer to the feeling of having too much to do and too little time in which to do it (Walsh, Taber & Beehr, 1980). Several Swedish studies have pointed to the deterioration in the psychosocial working environment in HSOs, predominantly in the local government sector, where many unskilled workers have been dismissed and the working pace has accelerated (Hetzler et al., 2005; Härenstam & the MOA Research Group, 2005).

Another job demand that has been emphasised for a long time in the literature is that of role conflicts, which can occur when the behaviour expected of an individual is inconsistent, resulting in stress, dissatisfaction and a less effective performance than if the expectations imposed on the individual did not conflict (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). In the human services within the public sector, role conflicts can occur when there is a tension between organisational and occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2003; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). This often affects individual professionals facing difficult ethical conflicts in their daily work (Gallina & Collage, 2010). In the Swedish context, deregulation and decentralisation have led to a diversity of organisational experiments in the municipal sector, including profit centres, management by objectives, benchmarking and the dispersal of new methods, regulators and standards (Brunsson & Jacobsson, 1998; Montin, 2000). These frequently changing trends in the organisation of public service provision have led to rapidly changing organisations, where strategic top-down decisions are not always grounded at the operational level, thereby paving the way for role conflicts amongst employees working operationally (Maddock, 2002; McAdam, Walker & Hazlett, 2011).

The job demand illegitimate tasks refers to work tasks that are not associated with the core of the occupation or professional identity (Jacobshagen, 2006). Illegitimate tasks represent a task-level stressor derived from role and justice theories in the framework of ’Stress-as-Offense-to-Self’ (SOS) (Semmer et al., 2007). According to the founders of SOS, the organisation of work should be regarded as contributing to illegitimate tasks (Jacobshagen, 2006; Semmer et al., 2010). The basic definition of illegitimate tasks resides in the name: task assignments are illegitimate if they violate rules or norms associated with the core role requirements of the profession (Jacobshagen, 2006; Semmer et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that a particular work task may
be considered legitimate to one role occupant but not to another. Therefore, the individuals’ perceptions of their tasks are in focus, and not the perception of someone giving the orders for the tasks to be done (Björk et al., 2013). Research has shown that the perceived illegitimacy of a task can be understood as an active breach and violation of the psychological contract between an employee and an employer, and that such tasks are associated with stress (Jacobshagen, 2006; Semmer et al., 2007) and counterproductive work behaviour (Semmer et al., 2010). Illegitimate tasks is a two-faceted concept with two dimensions of illegitimacy. The first dimension, unnecessary tasks, has to do with the lack of legitimacy of the task per se and refers to an individual’s uncertainty about whether a task really needs to be done at all, whether it is meaningful or makes sense, and whether it could be avoided by a different way of organising (Semmer et al., 2010). The second dimension, unreasonable tasks, are inappropriate if they do not relate to an individual’s occupational status or work (Björk et al., 2013). For example, such a task may put an employee into an awkward position, or be perceived as unfair. What distinguishes unnecessary and unreasonable tasks from other concepts in the domain of role stress is their subjectively perceived lack of legitimacy (Semmer et al., 2010).

Several Swedish studies indicate that illegitimate tasks may be commonplace in public organisations due to the uncertainty of operations, management realities and the increased governmental agency control (Arman et al., 2012; Montin, 2000). Björk et al. (2013) argue that public sector managers do not have enough influence over their organisations and find it difficult to delegate what they consider as necessary and reasonable tasks to their employees. Since work organisation and resource distribution are mainly decided by politicians and strategic-level managers, frontline and middle managers often have limited work discretion (Björk et al., 2013). It is further argued that an extended job discretion for managers would increase the possibility to delegate reasonable tasks to the employees, which in turn would reduce the prevalence of illegitimate tasks (Björk et al., 2013).

**Job resources**

Resources are defined as ‘anything perceived by the individual to help attain his or her goals’ (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 6). The concept of resources has become increasingly popular in organisational research based on the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1988) from an individual perspective. According to the JD-R model, job resources seem to mainly affect performance, motivation and commitment,
whereas job demands seem to be a predictor of health in a wider sense (Llorens et al., 2006). Although the JD-R model acknowledges that job resources can be found structurally in the organisation, as well as at the interpersonal and individual level (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the fact that resources are not clearly identified by their specific sources, has been both discussed and criticised (Halbesleben et al., 2014). In line with Nielsen et al. (2017), job resources can be operationalised at numerous organisational levels (i.e., the individual, group, leader and organisational levels) to improve employees’ well-being and promote performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In relation to job demands, research on the particular importance of job resources in the public sector is not as specific (Dollard et al., 2003). The job resources presented below are central to this thesis and the choice is mainly based on what previous research has emphasised as important in relation to the studied outcomes.

**Social support** has long been defined as ‘the interpersonal transfer of instrumental or emotional resources’ (House, 1981, p. 26) and has mainly been identified as an important resource in work stress research (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). House (1981) emphasises the emotional dimension of social support because it is present in and related to the other two major social support dimensions (i.e., instrumental and informational support), which makes untangling them difficult. Wah Chay (1993) further suggests that although the amount of social support an individual receives depends on what is provided by the environment, it more importantly depends on the way in which the individual understands the given social support. In recent decades, scholars have often examined the concept by the source of support, such as perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support or perceived support from co-workers. In this thesis, two sources of social support are investigated: co-worker support and supervisor support.

At the workgroup level, social support among co-workers has previously been identified as a workgroup level resource that fosters the exchange of high quality interactions between individuals (Nielsen et al., 2017). **Co-worker support** (defined as the interpersonal transfer of instrumental or emotional resources between/among co-workers) is regarded as more informal and genuine than other types of support, due to the general absence of unequal authoritative relationships among colleagues (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Moreover, as there is more frequent interaction amongst co-workers than employees and their supervisors,
co-workers could be more helpful for coping with work-related problems (Ashforth & Rogers, 2012). Empirically, co-worker support has been found to be more valued and consistent over time than supervisor support (Ng & Sorensen, 2008).

At the organisational level, there is empirical evidence to show that *supervisor support* (defined as the interpersonal transfer of instrumental or emotional resources from the supervisor to the employee) strengthens employees’ emotional attachments to their employing organisation (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). From the employees’ perspective, supervisors are the organisation’s representatives (Sluss et al., 2012) who are expected to play a key role in promoting the employees’ positive feelings towards the organisation. Ng and Sorensen (2008) find that employees react differently to different sources and forms of social support. Compared to perceived co-worker support, perceived supervisor support is regarded as being more strongly related to job satisfaction and reduced turnover. Rousseau and Aubé (2010) find that social support from co-workers on the one hand, and social support from the immediate supervisor on the other, have different associations with an employee’s affective commitment to the organisation. Compared to social support from co-workers, social support from the supervisor is more strongly related to organisational commitment (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). These results show that different sources of social support within an organisation can have different consequences for the employees’ attitudes, behaviour and emotions. It can also be argued that supervisors are key agents who in certain aspects monitor employees’ relationship to their organisation - especially in HSOs where supportive supervisor feedback is argued to be a more important job resource for employees than job control (Büssing & Höge, 2004).

In the Swedish context, a study of HSOs (Pousette et al., 2003) has demonstrated the importance of supportive feedback for employees’ job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation. However, it should be noted that public sector supervisors’ prerequisites for *conducting* a supportive leadership have deteriorated in recent decades. Research concludes that managers in the public sector have successively received less support from their superiors and other support functions than previously (Höckertin, 2007). A recent study (Shanks, Lundström & Wiklund, 2015) of managers in the social services shows that managers experience increased administrative tasks, increased financial responsibility and less administrative support as a result of conducting leadership in accordance with the logic of NPM. The study further shows that the managers’ increased number of administrative tasks results in less
strategic planning of activities together with the employees (Shanks, Lundström & Wiklund, 2015). A similar conclusion is reached by Dellve & Wikström (2006), who stress that the strategic work of public sector managers in Sweden suffers due to deficient IT and administrative support. As mentioned earlier, the increasing span of control amongst managers can also explain the deteriorating quality of exchange between the supervisory and subordinate levels (Brazier, 2005). There is evidence to show that increased workloads and tightened resource allocations (particularly human resources) in the public sector have reduced the capacity of potential support providers to meet the needs of colleagues and subordinates (Noblet, Rodwell & McWilliams, 2006). Adequate levels of advice, feedback and assistance cannot be provided if significant others do not have the time or availability to provide this support (Noblet & Rodwell, 2008). Based on the research outlined above, it is evident that the overall organisational support structure will determine how and to what extent public sector supervisors can receive and, ultimately, provide social support to their employees. In line with Kanter’s (1977) theory of structural empowerment, it is apparent that it is the organisation that determines the quality of the structural empowerment experienced by employees (including supervisors) by influencing access to resources, information, guidance and support. This thereby determines how much power a member of an organisation has.

Another organisational-level job resource that is central to this thesis is job autonomy. Job autonomy has been given considerable attention in the organisational literature (Nielsen et al., 2017) and is defined as ‘the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out’ (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 395). Job autonomy is seen as a specialised form of the more general concept of control (Spector, 1986). In a recent meta-analysis (Nielsen et al., 2017), job autonomy is conceptualised as an organisational level resource because it is directly related to the design of the job. In other words, it is the organisational effort that provides employees with autonomy. Greater job autonomy not only reduces uncertainty at work (Idaszak & Drasgow, 1987), but also enables employees to cope more effectively with stressful situations (Bakker et al., 2005; Bakker, van Veldhoven & Xanthis, 2010). Furthermore, job autonomy is associated with more opportunities for employees to influence their environment and to withdraw from undesirable circumstances (Naus, van Iterson & Roe, 2007), although how and to what extent is ultimately
decided on by the organisation. It could be argued that NPM reforms will increase employees’ autonomy and control at work (particularly through reforms such as decentralisation). However, these changes may simply increase the individual’s span of responsibility and not their level of autonomy or decision-making authority (Dixon, Kouzmin & Korac-Kakabadse, 1998). In addition, efforts to decentralise decision-making authority to the local levels have been hampered by the desires to increase external control (particularly over budgets and core agency functions) and enhance governance (Hood, 1991).

Organisational factors: Openness and human resource orientation

In this thesis, the assumption is that an employment relationship of trust and quality does not just depend on a balance between job demands and job resources, but also includes how the welfare workers perceive that they are treated by the organisation and its system through the various agents in the organisation. In other words, it is assumed that the employee-organisation relationship is also influenced by the way in which the organisation treats its members, which then enables them to use this assessment to evaluate the quality of the employment relationship as a whole. In relation to Figure 1, this type of perceived organisational treatment or practice is viewed as an organisational inducement that also needs to be balanced in relation to the employees’ contributions in order to establish a trustworthy employee-organisation relationship.

The two factors that are highlighted in this thesis and used to capture the welfare workers’ perceptions of organisational practices and procedures and how they affect the individual are openness and human resource orientation. These two organisational factors represent dimensions of the psychological climate. Psychological climate is conceptualised and studied at the individual level. In psychological climate theory and research there has been a shift towards specifying specific dimensions of climate. The notion of multidimensionality is reflected in most of the recently published definitions of psychological climate (Baltes et al., 2009). In the literature, psychological climate is defined as individual perceptions of organisational practices and procedures that relate to organisational influences on individual performance, satisfaction and motivation (Baltes, 2001). In a meta-analytical study, psychological climate is defined as ‘a molar construct comprising an individual’s psychologically meaningful representations of proximal organisational structures, processes and events’ (Parker et al., 2003, p. 390). If the psychological climate reflects an individual’s perceptions of the psychological impact of the work environment, organisational
climate represents unit employees’ shared perceptions of their working environment (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). When the perceptions of a work unit’s employees are aggregated, they reflect organisational climate. Even though the origins of organisational climate lie in individual perceptions, it nevertheless remains the property of the unit.

Several factors, such as social interactions, social cues and messages, can influence employees’ formations of psychological climate (Kickul & Liao-Troth, 2003; Schneider & Reichers, 1983). In turn, many research studies have supported the influence of psychological climate perceptions on work outcomes, such as job satisfaction and performance (e.g., Baltes et al., 2003; Brown & Leigh, 1996; Carr et al., 2003; Parker et al., 2003). However, Baltes and colleagues (2003) argue that a distinction should be made between psychological climate measured with an individual (i.e., ‘self’) referent and psychological climate measured with an organisational (i.e., ‘other’) referent, because they have unique relationships with various outcomes. Altmann et al. (1998) also show that psychological climate with an individual referent is more predictive of individual level outcomes (e.g., job motivation and job involvement), whereas psychological climate with an organisational referent is more predictive of organisational level outcomes (e.g., organisational commitment, intention to leave and organisational citizenship behaviour). In this thesis, the two dimensions of the psychological climate - openness (see Studies II and III) and human resource orientation (see Studies I and III) - have a clear organisational referent.

*Openness* has been defined as an organisational norm that promotes the free disclosure of information (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987) and is related to an organisational environment in which opinions and ideas can be discussed and evaluated rather than dismissed out of hand (Luijters, Van der Zee & Otten, 2008; Patterson et al., 2005). Openness also appears to encompass the possibility to use different communication styles and channels, depending on the situation, thereby increasing the degree of flexibility in interpersonal communication that is considered appropriate in the workplace (Rogers, 1987). It can be argued that there is a lack of openness in the Swedish public sector, despite the fact that there is strong legal protection in Swedish public organisations for freedom of expression. This suggestion is based on Lundquist’s (2001; 2013) argumentation that one possible consequence of NPM, is that fundamental democratic values are displaced in public management in favour of economic values, which creates a climate that is not conducive to an open dialogue between the organisation’s strategic and oper-
ational levels. In an attempt to stay close to the context of Swedish public organisations as described by Lundquist (2001; 2013), the construct of openness included in this thesis is used to capture the welfare workers’ perceived possibilities to express their opinions about service quality and working conditions deficiencies and also to discern whether or not their criticism has been heard or addressed.

**Human resource orientation**, i.e., the extent to which employees are rewarded for a job well done, feel cared for and whether management is interested in their health and well-being (see Lindström et al. 2000) has been associated with a lower intention to leave (Tham, 2007). The concept is similar to perceived organisational support (POS), which was developed to capture individuals’ perceptions of the degree to which an organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In the social work context, organisational commitment has been shown to be higher amongst social workers with a positive view of the way they have been treated by the employer, where feeling valued at work is one important aspect (Huxley et al., 2005). The importance of human resource orientation has also been highlighted in several qualitative studies of social workers (Gibbs, 2001; Rycraft, 1994) and is a significant factor in social workers’ decision to stay with or leave their organisation (Audit Commission, 2002).

**Outcomes as indicators of the quality of the employee-organisation relationship**

Regarding outcomes as indicators of the quality of the employee-organisation relationship, this thesis is partly inspired by the typology found in Hirschman’s (1970) exit, voice and loyalty (EVL) theory, which connects most of the included studies’ results in different ways. In general, a typology serves to simplify and order various empirical data on a particular phenomenon so that the data can then be compared (McKinney, 1966). The typology can then be used to generate hypotheses about relationships between antecedent conditions and resulting outcomes. In this thesis, the EVL typology is used to order the various ways in which employees react to different circumstances at work. The original EVL theory by Hirschman (1970) delineates three potential responses or action strategies for employees who are dissatisfied with their work situation. There can be different reasons for these responses, such as individual, social, economic and organisational factors (Selden & Moynihan, 2000). In this thesis, the concept of voice is measured by
silence. A reminiscence of its concerns can be found in earlier research on Hirschman’s (1970) voice concept, which is described in more detail below.

**Exit**

The *exit* alternative primarily refers to employees’ choosing to leave or exit their employment (see Study I). It also includes employees’ intentions to exit (see Study II), which Rusbult and colleagues (1988) summarise as a psychological distancing from one’s work. Although an intention to exit may not always lead to the actual act, the psychological distancing has a negative impact on both performance and commitment (Taylor, Audia & Gupta, 1996; Zhao et al., 2007). The term turnover is used more frequently than exit in research because it includes external mobility (i.e., change of workplace or retirement) and internal mobility (i.e., change of position within the organisation) (Liljegren & Ekberg, 2008).

The most common predictors of exit in the general turnover literature are demographic factors such as age, education, job level, gender and organisational tenure (Blankertz & Robinson, 1997). Young, highly educated employees are more likely to exit than the opposite demographic group (Manlove & Guzell, 1997). Further, employees who differ in ethnicity, sex or age are more likely to exit than many of their co-workers (Koeske & Kirk, 1995). Regarding tenure with the organisation, there is evidence to show that turnover rates are significantly higher amongst employees with a shorter span of service than those who have been employed longer (Somers, 1996). Concerning professional perceptions, individuals who experience a conflict between their professional values and those of the organisation are more likely to exit (Manlove & Guzell, 1997). Regarding work conditions, several studies have found that employees experiencing high levels of job-related stress are more likely to exit (Todd & Deery-Schmitt, 1996). Stress-related work characteristics that have been associated with turnover include role overload and lack of clarity about the job description (Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). Such factors can lead to burnout and low job satisfaction, both of which are major contributors to turnover (Manlove & Guzell, 1997). Work group cohesion, low autonomy, non-supportive leadership and employees’ perceptions of procedural and distributive injustice in organisational policies are also related to turnover (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

The majority of studies on exit or turnover have investigated turnover intentions, rather than actual turnover (e.g., Hayes et al., 2006; Mor
When it comes to actual turnover, the strongest single predictor is intention to leave (see for example Liljegren & Ekberg, 2008; Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001) followed by organisational commitment, employment alternatives, job satisfaction and burnout (Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993). In the context of HSOs, social workers who lack professional and organisational commitment and experience excessive burnout and stress with low social support are likely to contemplate leaving their organisations (Kim & Kao, 2014). However, when it comes to actual turnover, social workers who did leave their jobs either contemplated doing this beforehand, were discontented with management practices or had alternative employment options (DePanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008; Webb & Carpenter 2012). Thus, interpersonal relations within the organisation, together with different work characteristics, seem to be important antecedents to turnover.

In general, previous empirical research on the reasons for turnover and turnover intentions have largely focused on the private sector (e.g., Lee & Whitford, 2008; Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008). Even though employees’ turnover processes may be similar in different sectors, Griffeth et al. (2000) recommend not making generalisations across populations regarding turnover. This means that research focusing on turnover in the public sector is needed. Further, research on turnover and exit has mainly focused on why workers leave and, to a much lesser extent, described the process; the ‘how-question’. However, development in the area has moved towards an integration of these lines of research (see e.g., Maertz & Campion, 2004). In order to further understand and explain turnover processes amongst welfare workers with a focus on the relationship between the employee and the organisation, psychological contract theory is used as a theoretical tool (see Study I).

Employee turnover can result when organisations fail to fulfil their promises (i.e., a psychological contract breach). A perceived contract breach can result in employees reducing their contributions and fostering negative attitudes towards the organisation (e.g., Conway & Briner, 2006; Zhao et al., 2007). Overall, research confirms that breach is negatively related to in-role and extra-role performances and positively associated with negative attitudes, increased mistrust and withdrawal behaviour (Zhao et al., 2007). The majority of research is quantitative and reports factors that are related to negative outcomes, although as yet the process involved has not been fully investigated or understood. A classical model by Morrison and Robinson (1997) suggests that the cognitive perception of a breach should be differentiated from the strong
emotional reactions involved in a violation. Furthermore, the cognitive evaluation often, but not always, precedes emotional reactions (e.g., disappointment, frustration and mistrust). The distinction between breach and violation has been confirmed by several authors (e.g., Zhao et al., 2007). Psychological contract violations are likely to serve as specific events that cause employees to re-evaluate their relationship to their organisation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). When the violation is perceived to be strong, employees may respond to their organisations’ failures to fulfil their obligations by voluntarily ending the employment relationship (Guzzo, Noonan & Elron, 1994; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Thus, the notion of psychological contracts in general, and psychological contract violations in particular, are important when understanding employees’ attempts to find alternative employment.

Silence
Employee silence is a relatively new phenomenon. In relation to Hirschman’s (1970) EVL framework, dissatisfied individuals could choose silence as an action strategy when neither voice nor exit apply. When the EVL literature was adapted to employment relations, it was suggested that employee dissatisfaction could result in a withdrawal from committed organisational participation and more silent employee positionings (Naus, Van Iterson & Roe, 2007; Rusbult, Zembrodt & Gunn, 1982). Silence has been conceptualised as information that is consciously held back by employees, rather than an unintentional failure to communicate or simply having nothing to say (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). In a similar way, Morrison (2014) conceptualises silence as when employees choosing not to voice their concerns and critique. This focus on the communicative choice and the intentional withholding of ideas, opinions and information that may help to improve both the work and the organisation (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

An additional perspective on silence is that it can be influenced by top management. Morrison and Milliken (2000) suggest that top management reinforces certain norms that can explain why silence is systematic in many workplaces. In other words, Morrison and Milliken (2000) steer away from the literature that describes employees’ silence as a freely undertaken choice. A similar conclusion is reached by Pinder and Harlos (2001), who state that a climate of silence amongst employees is more likely where voicing is perceived to be pointless or dangerous. Nord & Jamier (1994) further argue that when employees who voice their concerns are likely to face sanctions or reprisals, silence is a likely option before exit. Thus, as Edmondson (2003) points out, it
seems to be important for organisations to create an open voice climate where employees feel encouraged to raise problems.

Swedish research has shown that the possibility of expressing views and criticism has diminished in the welfare sector (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 1999). Although research on the antecedents and the effects of silence is limited (Morrison, 2014), the potential for decreased motivation or exit could be considerable and have negative effect on organisations, for example, in the form of lost competences. A Danish study of efficiency measures in the public sector shows that many employees find it difficult to convey their critical opinions upwards in the organisation (Krause-Jensen, 2011). In their study, Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin (2003) mention silence as a product of employees’ resignations, due to a perception that their voices fall on ‘deaf ears’ (see also Piderit & Ashford, 2003; Van Dyne et al., 2003). This type of silence, according to Holte (2010), reduces innovation, knowledge development, safety, democracy and autonomy in working life. Holte’s (2010) study shows that people do not choose silence because they fear resistance or reprisals, but demonstrates that there is a direct link between workplaces characterised by silence and a lack of development opportunities and quality.

To conclude, much of the literature on silence seems to overlook the institutional opportunities that employees have to articulate voice (Donaghey et al., 2011; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). By focusing on organisational silence as a communicative choice undertaken by employees, Donaghey et al. (2011) suggest that the focus should instead be on how management can promote a climate of openness through the design of organisational arrangements (e.g., forums for dialogue and cooperation). Even though the presence of various organisational arrangements cannot guarantee voice, Harlos (2001) concludes that the absence of such arrangements is more likely to result in employee silence. How psychological climate and the role of management influences silence is a research area that merits further work.

**Loyalty**

According to Hirschman (1970), loyalty is the product of various factors that bind the individual to the organisation, thereby making exit costly and voice troublesome. In Hirshman’s (1970) original conceptualisation, loyalty can be described as a more passive response to unsatisfactory conditions in a variety of institutional settings. Most of the organisational literature agrees that loyalty implies some sort of positive affective attachment that binds participants to an organisation.
Sometimes loyalty is defined as a possible action similar to agreement or compliance, while others define it as a contingency that shapes outcomes, rather than an outcome in itself (see Dowding et al., 2000 for an overview). This thesis embraces both perspectives in that it views loyalty as a possible outcome (see Study II) and as a contingency or an intervening variable that can shape outcomes (see Study IV). Another further positioning in this thesis is that loyalty to an organisation is not seen as a passive or obedient standpoint, but rather as a conscious employee standpoint that results from a fulfilled psychological contract, as suggested in Figure 1. This standpoint may also change, depending on whether an employee’s contributions are adequately reciprocated by the organisation or not.

In working life research, two concepts that are often used to capture aspects of loyalty are organisational identification and organisational commitment. These two constructs represent loyalty in this thesis. Despite their many similarities, Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggest that organisational identification is always organisation-specific, whereas organisational commitment is not. Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) further argue that identification relies on self-definition, but commitment does not. However, a similarity between the two constructs is the consensus that both identification and commitment have cognitive and affective components (Edwards & Peccei, 2007; Harris & Cameron, 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1991; van Dick et al, 2004). This standpoint is adopted in this thesis (and explicitly discussed in Study IV). Although the affective component of commitment has been extensively examined, very little research has been conducted on the affective component of identification.

Organisational commitment refers to the individual’s psychological attachment to the organisation (see Meyer et al., 2002). Role conflicts (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011), perceptions of organisational politics (Bedi & Schat, 2013) and psychological contract breach (Zhao et al., 2007) are all associated with lower organisational commitment, while job satisfaction and perceived organisational support are associated with higher organisational commitment (Bailey et al., 2015). A study specifically focusing on the social service sector shows that the main factors predicting organisational commitment are job autonomy, distributive justice and career opportunities (Giffords, 2009). Prior studies have also shown that a high degree of organisational commitment is linked to lower turnover intention and better professional performance (Cooper-Hakim & Visweswaran, 2005; Meyer et al., 2002).
The most acknowledged theoretical lens for studying organisational identification is social identity theory (SIT). According to SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986; Miscenko & Day, 2016), social identity is defined as ‘the part of an individual’s self-concept that arises from the individual’s knowledge of himself as a member of a group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership’ (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Thus, since its initial conceptualisation, SIT has included affective dimensions such as the emotional significance and feelings of affinity that an individual attaches to membership (Tajfel, 1972, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Albert et al., 1998).

In a work setting, social identification develops from a sense of psychological attachment to, for example, the workgroup or organisation. In order to experience a feeling of affinity or togetherness in an organisational group, employees need to emotionally engage in the group in question and consider it important to their self-definition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). On joining a group or an organisation, the employees may be driven by individualistic motives and their own self-interests (i.e., having a low degree of social identification with the group or organisation; Tyler & Blader, 2001). However, if employees begin to identify with a group or an organisation and start to perceive themselves as members of it, they assimilate important group values and attitudes into their concept of self (Turner et al., 1987). This results in employees beginning to act on behalf of the collective motives that enhance the group’s combined interests (e.g., Brewer & Pickett, 1999; Smith & Henry, 1996).

The view of organisational identification as an one-dimensional concept is reflected in the study of antecedents of organisational identification, where antecedents have mainly been studied at one general level. Perceived organisational support and job involvement are two of the more frequently studied antecedents of organisational identification (e.g., Gibney et al., 2011; Hunt, 2012). However, there is evidence to suggest that employees in complex organisations, such as public organisations, can have multiple identification targets (e.g., Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Ashforth, Spencer & Corley, 2008; Lavelle, Rupp & Bockner, 2007; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; van Knippenberg & Van Shie, 2000). Viewing organisational identification as a one-dimensional concept hinders the possibility of differing identification processes at different organisational levels. Ashforth and Johnson’s (2001) partitioning to lower-order and higher-order identities raises the question of whether the antecedents of organisational identification (considered as a one-
dimensional concept) are applicable at all organisational levels, or whether lower-order and higher-order organisational identities have completely or partly different antecedents. For example, one possible reason why employees generally experience a stronger identification with their workgroup than the overall organisation (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Shie, 2000) could be because different job resources have different impacts on lower-order and higher-order organisational identities. However, the literature on how different antecedents influence different identification processes within organisations is scarce, especially with regard to public organisations.

Among the frequently studied outcomes, organisational identification negatively predicts intention to exit (Kumar Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010) and positively predicts job performance (Liu, Loi & Lam, 2011). In line with Ashforth and Johnson’s (2001) reasoning on multiple identification targets and according to the identity matching principle (Ullrich et al., 2004), social identification with a particular focus or foci should correlate more strongly with outcomes with a similar focus or foci. The identity matching principle is also assumed to be applied to the antecedents of social identification, which means that antecedents associated with a given level should relate to social identification and its outcomes at the same level (Ellermers & Rink, 2005).

In line with Tetrick (2012), emotions play an essential role in translating employees’ reactions to their treatment by the organisation by forming the glue that binds the employee to the organisation in the case of positive emotions (or scatters the relationship in the case of negative emotions). A particular outcome of social identification in the public organisations highlighted in this thesis is group-based pride, which is seen as an emotional consequence of people’s positive evaluations of shared experiences, interactions and events that are believed to influence their group membership. According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and intergroup emotions theory (Mackie et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2007), the strength of an individual’s social identification has a pronounced and central effect on group-based emotions such as pride (e.g., Arnett et al., 2002). Given the fact that group-based emotions depend on an individual’s group identification levels, in the sense that those who strongly identify with the group report more positive and less negative group-based emotions (Smith et al., 2007), these studies suggest that social identification can be viewed as an intervening variable between different types of antecedents and positive employee outcomes. Social identification with a group can also lead to emotional reactions to situations and events that can influence
in-group membership even when individuals are not directly or personally involved in a given situation (Mackie et al., 2000). Lastly, it should be pointed out that some aspects of group-based pride are related to social identification, such as the employees’ emotional attachments to and involvement in organisational groups. However, the major distinction between social identification and group-based pride is that social identification consists of both cognitive and emotional elements related to belonging (Dimmock et al., 2005; Stoner et al., 2011), whereas group-based pride is an emotion that is primarily evoked by the shared experiences and interactions of group members (Arnett et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2007).

Health and well-being
Employees’ health and well-being at work have become increasing concerns for employees and management, in that they influence employees’ attitudes, behaviour and performance (Lu et al., 2009; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Burström and colleagues (2012) note that there was a deterioration in the psychosocial working conditions during the 1990s in Sweden due to reduced investments in the work environment and that work-related problems like stress, exhaustion and fatigue increased after the mid-1990s. Downsizing and structural changes within public organisations have been shown to increase employees’ stress levels and reduce job satisfaction (Härenstam & MOA Research Group, 2005). An occupational group that stands out as particularly problematic in this regard (and that is highly represented in this thesis) is that of statutory social workers in Swedish municipalities, who report a higher than average annual number of sickness benefit days per person (Försäkringskassan, 2015).

In organisational research, health and well-being have been defined and measured in several ways. Health can be viewed as a sub-component of well-being and includes the combination of mental/psychological indicators (e.g., affect, frustration and anxiety) and physical/physiological indicators (e.g., blood pressure and heart condition) (Warr, 1990). Well-being can be seen to consist of the various life/non-work satisfactions enjoyed by individuals (e.g., satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with social life and family life), work/job-related satisfactions (e.g., satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with pay and the job itself) and general health (Danna & Griffin, 1999). The exact meanings of these two concepts are typically implied by the operational definitions used in every empirical investigation (see Danna & Griffin, 1999 for an overview).

In this thesis, the studied health and well-being related outcomes are aspects of employees’ stress-related ill health (stress-related symptoms
and poor recovery) and job satisfaction (representing well-being). These outcomes are viewed as dimensions of subjective health and well-being. Both aspects of stress-related ill health and job satisfaction (i.e., the feelings that people have about themselves in relation to their job) are frequently considered as important dimensions of an individual’s overall health and well-being at work (Warr, 1990). In this thesis, stress-related ill health and job satisfaction are (just like exit, silence, loyalty and organisational pride) regarded as outcomes as indicators of the quality of the employee-organisation relationship.

Health and well-being are affected by a number of antecedent factors. As mentioned earlier, the JD-R model divides the work characteristics of the work environment into two categories: job demands and job resources. If the job demands exceed the employees’ capacities they can easily turn into job stressors and lead to health impairment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Stressors can be defined as ‘job related factors thought to cause negative psychological reactions like tension, anxiety and fatigue’ (Bakker et al., 2003, p. 342-343). They can also cause stress, disease and reduce well-being, all of which directly affect the individual and, indirectly, the organisation in terms of staff absences and health care costs (Harris & Kacmar, 2005).

According to Cotton and Hart (2003), organisational experiences (e.g., leadership behaviour, appraisal and recognition processes, the clarity of roles, decision-making styles) that are common to all workplaces are usually more stressful for employees than specific operational experiences (e.g., stressors). Interventions to reduce employees’ withdrawal behaviour and workplace stressors are likely to be much less effective than organisational level interventions focusing on improving the quality of leadership and HR management practices (i.e., the perceived climate in the organisation from the employees’ perspectives). Thus, it would seem to be more important to develop a support-ive climate that helps employees to manage their work more effectively, than to change employees’ operational work demands (Cotton & Hart, 2003).

Next (and based on the theoretical assumptions outlined in Figure 1), the empirical relations of the above mentioned psychosocial and organisational factors, assumed to be indicators of the quality of the employee-organisation relationship, will now be highlighted.
Empirical studies

This thesis includes four empirical studies (see Table 1). The first three studies explicitly focus on the social services in municipal organisations. The results of Study I, a qualitative interview study, encouraged further investigations of the employee-organisation relationship in public organisations. Study II and Study III are similar in procedure and design and have an employee and a manager perspective, even though the thesis’s focus is on the employees’ perceptions. Study IV incorporates employees working in the social services and other services within two public organisations. The common feature for all studies is that all the participants were or had been employed in municipal organisations at the time of the studies.
Table 1. Overview of the studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Participants and settings</th>
<th>Data analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study I</strong></td>
<td>Interview study</td>
<td>Qualitative design Social workers ($n = 31$) from two municipal organisations</td>
<td>Qualitative content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study II</strong></td>
<td>Web-based questionnaire study</td>
<td>Cross-sectional Social workers and social service managers ($n = 4500$) from municipal organisations</td>
<td>Pearson correlation Hierarchical multiple linear regression Conditional process modelling Bootstrapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study III</strong></td>
<td>Web-based questionnaire study</td>
<td>Cross-sectional Social workers and case officers in the disability and elderly care and social service managers ($n = 4857$) from municipal organisations</td>
<td>Pearson correlation One way ANOVAs Hierarchical multiple linear regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study IV</strong></td>
<td>Questionnaire study</td>
<td>Cross-sectional Employees ($n = 436$) from two municipal organisations</td>
<td>Pearson correlation Confirmatory factor analysis Hierarchical multiple linear regression Conditional process modelling Bootstrapping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods
Participants and procedure

Study I
The sample for Study I consisted of 31 statutory social workers who had voluntarily resigned as a result of work-related dissatisfactions. All the participants were women from six different work units and two municipal organisations in Sweden. The participants mean age was 41.8 years (SD = 10.8), their mean years of occupation experience 10.2 (SD = 7.4), the mean years in the organisation 6.1 (SD = 5.0) and their mean years in a work unit 3.1 (SD = 1.4).

For participant recruitment, two middle-sized municipal organisations reporting high turnover rates in their statutory social services agreed to provide contact information for all the statutory social workers who had voluntarily resigned during the year of 2014, resulting in a total of 101 potential participants. Telephone pre-screening was used to determine eligibility for the study. Of the 101 eligible social workers, 70 were contacted (69.3% response rate) and agreed to participate, whereas 31 could not be contacted due to inaccurate contact information. Of these, 57 of the 70 (81.4%) reported that their reason for leaving was dissatisfaction with the working conditions. The remaining 13 gave other (non work-related) reasons. The empirical material was finally based on semi-structured individual interviews with 31 of the 57 statutory social workers who had voluntarily resigned due to work-related dissatisfactions.

Studies II and III
The samples for Study II and Study III were based on a population study using web-based questionnaires of members of two participating trade unions in the two occupational groups of statutory social workers and managers within the social services in Sweden. The two unions together represent around 85 percent of social workers in Sweden as well as 70 percent of social service managers. Of the 18,570 members of the unions, 3,085 individuals were missing or had incorrect/out-of-date email addresses on file. This resulted in 15,486 individuals receiving the questionnaire. Of these, 7,613 responses were registered, giving a total response rate of 49 percent. Amongst those participating, 17 percent had missing responses for some of the questionnaire items. A total of 4,857 completed questionnaires were received and analysed, representing 32
percent of all contacted individuals. Drop-out analyses revealed no systematic differences between those who completed the questionnaire and those who did not with regard to type of municipality, age, union affiliation and gender.

For Studies II and III, a web-based questionnaire included statements and questions about role conflicts, illegitimate tasks, quantitative demands, job autonomy, co-worker support, human resource orientation, openness, exit (i.e., intention to exit), silence, loyalty (i.e., organizational commitment), stress-related symptoms, poor recovery and job satisfaction. The criterion for inclusion was that all the participants had filled in all of the included scale items. The reported occupational groups that were used in Study III were social workers, case officers in disability and elderly care, social service managers and ‘others’. The latter group consisted of those reporting an occupational title that differed from their union’s registration. This resulted in a total of 4,857 participants. The social workers consisted of 3,203 individuals (88.3% women). The social workers mean age was 42 years (SD = 11.69) and their mean years of occupation experience 11.1 (SD = 9.58). The case officers consisted of 865 individuals (94.7% women). The case officers mean age was 44.2 years (SD = 11.71) and their mean years of occupation experience 12.7 (SD = 10.11). The social service managers consisted of 432 individuals (85.2% women). The managers mean age was 50.2 years (SD = 9.03) and their mean years of occupation experience 19.9 (SD = 9.48). Finally, the last occupational group classified as ‘others’ consisted of 357 individuals (87.1% women). The group ‘others’ mean age was 49.2 years (SD = 9.64) and the group’s mean years of occupation experience 16.79 (SD = 9.84).

In Study II, the social workers and the case officers were categorised as one group: ‘social workers’. The group of social workers consisted of 4,068 individuals (89.7% women). The social workers in Study II differed from Study III with regard to means and standard deviations. In Study II, the social workers mean age was 42.5 years (SD = 11.73) and their mean years of occupation experience 11.4 (SD = 9.72). The number of managers were the same as in Study III (see above for means and standard deviations). The group classified as ‘others’ (see above) was not included in the analyses in Study II. This resulted in a total of 4,500 participants.
Study IV
The sample for Study IV consisted of 436 employees from two middle-sized municipal organisations. The data was collected by questionnaires administered in person at team meetings. The questionnaire consisted of statements and questions measuring perceived co-worker support, perceived supervisor support, satisfaction with work conditions, job autonomy, workgroup identification, organisational identification, workgroup pride and organisational pride. Altogether, 450 municipal employees completed and submitted the questionnaire. However, questionnaires with missing data in more than one relevant item were dropped from the analysis (14 cases), yielding a final sample of 436 respondents. On average, the respondents were 46.1 years of age (SD = 10.92) and 72 percent were women. About one-third of worked with education (34%), 27 percent with care, and 25 percent in the social services. Only 8 percent of the respondents worked in administration and 4 percent in technical services. The remaining 2 percent of the sample did not fit into any of the constructed categories, although these respondents were included in the analysis. Most of the sample (90.1%) was employed full time. For participant recruitment, 42 supervisors in different public sector divisions in the two municipalities were contacted via e-mail. Twenty-two of them responded to say that their employees would participate (a supervisor response rate of 52%).

Measures

Study I
The study was based on a qualitative design. The aim of the study was to describe the process leading to the social workers’ decision to voluntarily leave their organisations in 2014. Qualitative interviews were conducted to ascertain the exchange relationship between social workers and the organisation, how social workers perceived this interaction, their perceived dissatisfactions, their reactions to these dissatisfactions, the organisation’s response and the social workers’ perceptions and reactions to this response. The ambition was to investigate how the turnover process evolved and why, i.e., the reasons the social workers reported in retrospect.

Purposeful sampling was employed, which meant that the social workers were selected to represent different types of departements and different types of experiences in the social services (cf. maximal varia-
tion, Patton, 2002). The participants represented six different social service departments, e.g., the child and youth department, the care and rehabilitation department and the department for adults and economy.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted individually using an interview guide with open-ended questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002). The interview guide included questions about the reasons for the participants’ dissatisfaction with their work, the participants’ perceptions and interpretations of the organisation’s response and the interactions in their turnover process that finally made them decide to leave. The specific questions were individually adjusted to the respondents’ own narratives. During the interviews, probing and follow-up questions were also asked to encourage the participants to elaborate on their answers and give examples. The interviews were conducted at an university, lasted between 36-92 minutes (on average 58 minutes), were audio-recorded and fully transcribed (371 pages in total).

Studies II-IV

As no measures existed that expressly measured the two types of group-based pride analysed in Study IV, two scales were developed. In order to enhance the content validity, and ultimately the validity of the research findings, the preliminary instrument development began with a qualitative phase and included four explorative focus group interviews (2 groups from each participating organisation and 6 employees in each focus group), as recommended by Nassar-McMillan et al. (2010) and Vogt, King and King (2004). The interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, included open questions about the employees’ perceptions of pride at work. The open questions ensured that the group discussion guided the development of the instrument, not vice versa (see Rowan & Wulff, 2007). All the interviews were transcribed and the interview content was initially used to form categories. The analysis of the focus group interviews resulted in three separate categorisations: personal pride, workgroup pride and organisational pride. These results helped the researchers to construct two separate lists of items to measure workgroup pride and organisational pride. As recommended by Lynn (1986), all the items were then sent to content-validity experts and members of the target population, who were asked to individually review them for their clarity and relevance to the target constructs (see Study IV for detailed information about further construct analysis). Table 2 presents a list of the major measures in Studies II-IV. Underneath
Table 2, the scales and measures used are described in more detail, with number of items, response format and reliability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Study II</th>
<th>Study III</th>
<th>Study IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychosocial factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative demands</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflicts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreasonable tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job autonomy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-worker support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with work conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervening variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workgroup identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to exit</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational commitment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress-related symptoms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor recovery</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workgroup pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unless otherwise indicated, the responses to all the measures below were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

Quantitative demands
For Studies II and III, quantitative demands were measured with a mean value of three items (Walsh, Taber & Beehr, 1980) to capture the feeling of having too much to do and too little time to do it in. One of the questions was: ‘Do you have so many work tasks that it negatively affects your possibilities of working effectively?’ The questions were rated on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). Cronbach’s alpha was .85.

Role conflicts
For Study II and Study III, role conflicts were measured with a mean value of four items from the General Nordic Questionnaire for Psychological and Social Factors at Work (QPS Nordic) (Lindström et al., 2000). An example item was: ‘My work requires that I do things that I feel should be done differently.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Illegitimate tasks
For Study III, two dimensions of illegitimate tasks were adopted and translated from the Bern Illegitimate Task Scale (BITS, Semmer et al., 2007).

Unnecessary tasks were measured with a mean value of four items and started with the introduction ‘Do you have work tasks to take care of that make you wonder if…….’ followed by a statement like ‘they have to be done at all?’ The questions were rated on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). Cronbach’s alpha varied between .81 to .87.

Unreasonable tasks were also measured with a mean value of four items and started with the introduction ‘Do you have work tasks to take care of that you believe ….’ followed by a statement like ‘are going too far, which should not be expected from you?’ The questions were rated on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). Cronbach’s alpha varied between .76 to .80.

Co-worker support
For Studies II-IV, co-worker support was measured with a mean value of three items (Studies II-III) and five items (Study IV) from the Swedish Job Demands, Social Support, Control and Competence Scale
(ASK) by Hovmark & Thomsson (1995). An example item used in all the studies was: ‘If needed, I receive support and help with my work from my co-workers.’ Cronbach’s alpha in Study II-III was .85. Cronbach’s alpha in Study IV was .86.

**Supervisor support**
For Study IV, supervisor support was measured with a mean value of six items from the Swedish Job Demands, Social Support, Control and Competence Scale (ASK) by Hovmark and Thomsson (1995). An example item was: ‘When struggling with practical difficulties at work, I rely on my immediate supervisor to help me.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .86.

**Satisfaction with work conditions**
For Study IV, satisfaction with work conditions was measured with a mean value of four slightly modified items from the General Nordic Questionnaire for Psychological and Social Factors at Work (QPS Nordic) (Lindström et al., 2000). An example item was: ‘I am satisfied with my employment security.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .74.

**Openness**
For Studies II-III, openness was measured with a mean value of four statements to capture the degree of openness in the organisation (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 1999; Aronsson & Bejerot, 2014). An example item was: ‘In my organisation we can openly discuss service quality deficiencies.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .84.

**Human resource orientation**
For Study III, human resource orientation was measured by an extended scale from QPS Nordic (Lindström et al., 2000), measured with a mean value of five items. An example item was: ‘The management are concerned about the staff’s health and well-being.’ Cronbach’s alpha varied between .91 to .92.

**Intention to exit**
For Study II, intention to exit was measured with a mean value of three items to capture individuals’ desires to willingly leave the organisation (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). An example item was: ‘I feel like leaving my current job.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .94.
**Silence**
For Study II, silence was measured with a mean value of three items from other investigations (Aronsson & Bejerot, 2014; Aronsson & Gustafsson, 1999). An example item was: ‘I am reluctant to express critical opinions at workplace meetings and the like.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

**Organisational commitment**
For Study II, organisational commitment was measured with a mean value of three items developed to capture Allen and Meyer’s (1990) affective component of organisational commitment and a general sense of psychological identification with the organisation (see Lindström et al., 2000). An example item was: ‘I tell my friends that my organisation is a very good place to work at.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .84.

**Stress-related symptoms**
For Study III, stress-related symptoms were measured with a mean value of nine items from the Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health (SLOSH) (see also Kinsten et al., 2006). The scale measured perceived symptoms like anxiety, irritability and sleeping difficulties in the past three months. Each stress-related symptom was rated on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Every day*). Cronbach’s alpha varied between .92 to .93.

**Poor recovery**
For Study III, poor recovery was measured with a mean value of nine items developed by Aronsson, Svensson and Gustafsson (2003) and Gustafsson et al. (2006). The scale measured tiredness and recovery before, during and after the working day and work-related thoughts during leisure time. Each item was rated on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Every day*). Cronbach’s alpha varied between .89 to .90.

**Job satisfaction**
For Study III, job satisfaction was measured with a mean value of three items developed by Hellgren, Sverke and Isaksson (1999) to capture a general affective dimension of job satisfaction instead of specific aspects of work. An example item was: ‘I feel satisfied with my work.’ Cronbach’s alpha varied between .93 to .94.
**Workgroup identification**
For Study IV, workgroup identification was measured with a mean value of three slightly modified and translated items from the Multi Identification Scale (MDIS) by Stoner, Perrewé and Hofhacker (2011). An example item was: ‘If asked if I belong to this workgroup, I would say ‘Yes’.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .78.

**Organisational identification**
For Study IV, organisational identification was measured with a mean value of three slightly modified and translated items from the Multi Identification Scale (MDIS) by Stoner, Perrewé and Hofhacker (2011). An example item was: ‘I consider myself a member of this organisation.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .75.

**Workgroup pride**
As there were no measures for measuring workgroup pride analysed in Study IV, a four-item scale was created and measured with a mean value of four items (see Appendix A). An example item regarding workgroup pride was: When my workgroup is successful I feel pride.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .87.

**Organisational pride**
As there were no measures for measuring organisational pride analysed in Study IV, a four-item scale was created and measured with a mean value of the four items (see Appendix A). An example item was: ‘I feel proud when telling others about my organisation.’ Cronbach’s alpha was .90.
Ethical considerations

The four studies were conducted in accordance with good research practice, which means that fundamental principles of information about the research, informed consent and confidentiality were taken into account (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). For Studies I-III, ethical approval applications to the Regional Ethical Review Board (EPN) in Uppsala (Study I) and Stockholm (Studies II-III), Sweden, resulted in an advisory statement, supported by the §4a regulation (2003:615) concerning ethical applications for research on human beings, that there were no obstacles to the carrying out of the planned research. In all the studies the participants were recruited out of convenience, were guaranteed confidentiality and volunteered to participate without compensation. All the participants received written information (and oral information in Studies I and IV) about the aim and design of the research. They were assured that all the material received by the research group received would be treated confidentially and protected from unauthorised access. The participants in all the studies were given the opportunity to decide whether or not to participate, were offered the opportunity to be informed about the results and were asked to contact the research group if they had any questions.

Data analyses

Study I

All the 31 interviews were transcribed and prepared for analysis. The interview content was initially grouped into categories, such as dissatisfactions with work, organisational responses and the participants’ perceptions and interpretations of the organisation’s responses and interactions in their turnover process. After 25 of the interviews had been completed and transcribed, new categories, themes and explanations stopped emerging. Six more interviews were conducted to ensure saturation (Marshall, 1996). The thematic vertical analysis was complemented with a narrative analysis of each individual interview (see Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). A contextual summary was written for each individual on type of dissatisfaction, organisational response and their perceptions and emotional reactions to this response. After further groupings in each category, four distinct themes emerged. Basically, these themes related to the organisation failing to keep its promises about the employment relationship, thereby leading to perceived breaches of psy-
chological contracts and, ultimately, the decision to leave. The identified four themes in the turnover processes stemmed from perceptions of the organisation’s failure to fulfil its promises about the provision of: a balance between demands and resources at work, a balance between efforts and rewards, organisational professional ethics and responsible human resource practices. In order to increase validity, two (or occasionally three) people, independently and in dialogue, did the groupings and categorisations. This way of establishing validity is frequently recommended in qualitative research and is described by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) in terms of dialogical intersubjectivity, which refers to a reciprocal negotiation and interpretation of meaning in all the study’s phases.

Study II
Pearson correlation analyses were carried out to reveal the relationships between the variables. Common method bias was examined using Harman’s single factor test (CMV, Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003). Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the effects of demographic factors, demands, resources and openness for each of the dependent variables. Multicollinearity and tolerance levels were analysed to ensure that the basic assumptions for multiple regression analysis were met (Berntson et al., 2016). Control variables used were gender, age and years of service in the social services. To conduct mediation analyses, Hayes’ (2012) conditional process model using PROCESS was used which is a computational procedure that implements mediation analysis. In this approach, mediation is tested by assessing the size of the indirect effect and its confidence intervals (Hayes, 2012). The significance of a path coefficient or indirect effect is indicated by the bootstrap confidence interval. If the confidence interval does not include zero, mediation can be inferred. Bootstrapping involves the drawing of a large number of subsamples from the original sample, which are then analysed. The number of subsamples was set to $N = 5000$ in the study, as suggested by Hayes (2009).

Study III
Pearson correlation analyses were carried out to reveal the relationships between the variables. Common method bias was examined using Harman’s single factor test (CMV, Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003). One-way ANOVAs were performed to compare the differences in background characteristics, demands, resources and organisational factors as well as the outcome variables between the occupational
groups. F-tests and Sheffé post hoc tests were used to compare the differences between the groups for all of the variables except gender, which was tested for differences using \( \chi^2 \). Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the effects of demographic factors, demands and resources as well as the organisational factors for each of the dependent variables. Multicollinearity and tolerance levels were analysed to ensure that the basic assumptions for multiple regression analysis were met. The control variables used were gender, age and years of service in the in social services.

**Study IV**

Multicollinearity and tolerance levels were analysed to ensure that the basic assumptions for multiple regression analysis were met (Berntson et al., 2016). The factorial validity of the constructs was investigated with CFA, following the strategy outlined by Arbuckle (2011). Harman’s single factor test (CMV, Podsakoff et al., 2003) was used to assess common method variance. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to investigate whether job resources and identification at a particular organisational level could explain additional variance in group-based pride at the same organisational level over and above the effects of job resources and identification at another organisational level. The control variables were age, gender, number of years in the organisation and number of years in the workgroup. Hayes’ (2012) conditional process approach (PROCESS) in combination with bootstrapping, a statistical re-sampling method, was used to conduct the mediation analyses. A number of subsamples were set to \( N = 5000 \), as suggested by Hayes (2009).
Summary of studies

Study I: Corrosion of trust: Violation of psychological contracts as a reason for turnover amongst social workers

Aim
Inspired by psychological contract theory, the aim of Study I was to investigate and describe how turnover processes evolved among statutory social workers who had voluntarily resigned from their jobs. More specifically, the focus was on the exchange relationship between social workers and the organisation, how social workers perceived this interaction, the dissatisfactions they perceived and reacted to, the response from the organisation, and finally, the social workers’ perceptions and reactions to this response.

Major findings
The analysis identified four themes in the turnover processes relating to perceptions of the organisation’s failure to fulfil promises to ensure: (1) a balance between demands and resources at work, (2) a balance between efforts and rewards, (3) organisational professional ethics and (4) responsible human resource practices. The identified processes demonstrated the existence of different types of psychological contracts that were perceived as having been violated in different ways, resulting in overlapping but still slightly different emotional reactions. The results also highlighted how various organisational responses to work-related dissatisfactions experienced by the social workers seemed to enhance the social workers’ convictions of psychological contract breaches and perceptions of contract violations, which resulted in turnover. The social workers’ descriptions of the various organisational responses indicated that the organisation had not attempted to restore the psychological contracts. The most common organisational responses reported on were neglect, demands of obedience, imposition of individual guilt and normalisation. From the results, it was evident that the social workers’ experiences of psychological contract violations, including strong negative emotional reactions, were severe due to the predominant relational employment relationship. The violations that can be derived from the social workers’ reactions before exit included negative emotions such as anger, indignation, self-doubt and sadness. Some of the social workers also reported stress-related symptoms, such as exhaustion and sleeping problems resulting from these negative emotions. However, from
the social workers’ descriptions, the strongest emotional reactions were a corrosion of trust in the organisation’s overall HR practices. An important conclusion reached in Study I was that public sector employers need to reconsider their personnel strategies and practices in order to start rebuilding trust and thereby create a more positive work climate.
Study II: Exit, silence and loyalty among social workers and managers in the Swedish social services

Aims
The aim of Study II was to investigate the predictors of intention to exit, silence and loyalty (i.e., organisational commitment) amongst social workers and managers. Factors investigated included job demands (quantitative demands and role conflicts), job resources (job autonomy and co-worker support) and psychological climate in terms of perceived openness in the organisation. An additional research question explored whether openness potentially mediated the relationship between role conflicts and the dependent variables amongst social workers and amongst managers.

Major findings
The results in Study II revealed that job demands, and especially role conflicts, were associated with all of the outcome variables amongst social workers. For the managers, role conflicts were found to be significantly related to intention to exit and loyalty. With regard to the study’s psychological climate factor, openness was found to have a remarkably high explanatory value for all the outcome variables in both occupational groups. Among the resource variables, job autonomy was the only one that affected silence and loyalty in both occupational groups. Job autonomy was also associated with intention to exit amongst social workers. A result that was common to all of the analyses was the effect of co-worker support, which became negligible when openness was introduced, thus suggesting that an open climate was of greater importance. Furthermore, the results showed that the impact of role conflicts on all of the dependent variables were potentially and partially mediated by openness (except for managers’ role conflicts as a predictor of silence where openness fully mediated the relationship). This indicated that when experiencing role conflicts, open communication lowers the social workers’ and managers’ intentions to exit, contributes to the reduction of silence and enhances loyalty with the organisation.
Study III: Stressrelaterad ohälsa och arbetstrivsel hos medarbetare och chefer i socialtjänsten [Stress-related ill health and job satisfaction among staff and managers in the social services]

Aims
The first aim of Study III was to investigate the differences and similarities in the demands, resources, openness, human resource orientation, stress-related symptoms, poor recovery and job satisfaction in the occupational groups of statutory social workers, case officers in disability and elderly care and managers in the Swedish social services. The second aim was to investigate the predictors of stress-related symptoms, poor recovery and job satisfaction in the occupational groups. Factors investigated included job demands (quantitative demands and illegitimate tasks), job resources (job autonomy and co-worker support) and the organisational factors of openness in the organisation and human resource orientation.

Major findings
The results in Study III revealed that social workers and case officers in the disability and elderly care sector showed great similarities in how they rated the studied variables. These two occupational groups reported significantly higher levels of role conflicts and quantitative demands than the managers and the comparison group ‘others’. Furthermore, the social workers and the case officers reported lower levels of job autonomy and higher levels of co-worker support than the other two occupational groups. Notable amongst the managers was their significantly higher level of openness and human resource orientation compared to the other groups. Despite reporting higher levels of co-worker support, the social workers and the case officers reported significantly higher levels of stress-related symptoms, poorer recovery and lower levels of job satisfaction.

Concerning the importance of job demands, quantitative demands were especially associated with stress-related symptoms and poor recovery in all the occupational groups. Unreasonable tasks for social workers and case officers were also significantly related to these two health-related outcome variables. Job autonomy and co-worker support were significantly associated with all of the studied outcome variables. In the case of the managers, co-worker support was related to all of the
outcome variables, although job autonomy was only related to job satisfaction. A result that was common to all the analyses was the effect of openness, which was significantly related to all the outcome variables across the occupational groups, notably concerning job satisfaction.
Study IV: Job resources to promote feelings of pride in the organisation: The role of social identification

Aim
Study IV aimed to investigate the relationships between workgroup job resources and organisational job resources and the extent to which and how they affected workgroup pride and organisational pride. Social identification was expected to play a part in this process as an intervening factor and to contribute to the explanation of how pride varies in the workgroup and the organisation.

Hypotheses
• Hypothesis 1: Workgroup identification and workgroup pride are distinct but correlated constructs.
• Hypothesis 2: Organisational identification and organisational pride are distinct but correlated constructs.
• Hypothesis 3: Perceived co-worker support can explain additional variance in workgroup-based pride over and above the effects of the organisational resources.
• Hypothesis 4: Perceived supervisor support, job autonomy and satisfaction with work conditions can explain additional variance in organisational pride over and above the effects of the workgroup job resource.
• Hypothesis 5: Workgroup identification partially mediates the relationship between perceived co-worker support and workgroup pride.
• Hypothesis 6: Organisational identification partially mediates the relationship between perceived supervisor support, job autonomy, satisfaction with work conditions and organisational pride.

Major findings
The findings in Study IV were that workgroup identification and workgroup pride were two separate yet correlated constructs and that organisational identification and organisational pride also were two separate yet correlated constructs. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. In line with Hypothesis 3, the results showed that the workgroup resource perceived co-worker support explained additional variance in workgroup pride, beyond the contributions of the resources at the organisational level. Hypothesis 4 was also supported, since the three organisational level resources (perceived supervisor support, job autonomy and satisfaction with work conditions) explained additional variance in organisational pride beyond the contributions of the
workgroup resource. Lastly, the results showed that the effect of perceived co-worker support on workgroup pride was potentially and partially mediated by workgroup identification, which supported Hypothesis 5. Regarding the organisational foci, the results showed that the effects of perceived supervisor support, job autonomy and satisfaction with work conditions on organisational pride were all potentially and partially mediated by organisational identification, thus confirming Hypothesis 6.
Discussion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to explore Swedish welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation. This was done by investigating how psychosocial and organisational factors related to a number of outcomes assumed to be indicators of the quality of this relationship. As the public sector is facing a number of organisational, economic and social challenges in the near future (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2009), the general objectives of the thesis are to contribute to a deeper understanding of how public organisations can retain a committed and healthy staff by means of a trustworthy employee-organisation relationship. Welfare workers’ turnover, intentions to exit, silence, loyalty, organisational pride, health and well-being constitute important attitudes, emotions and behaviour, all of which appear to affect the public organisation’s stability, continuity, efficiency and quality. From the results of the empirical studies, it is suggested that public sector employers need to meet the challenge of trust issues by e.g., reconsidering their personnel strategies and practices to create a more considerate climate that will benefit the organisations, the welfare workers and, ultimately, the citizens at the receiving end of the welfare. Next, the main findings of the four empirical studies are discussed in relation to previous research and the conceptual literature. The discussion ends with a descriptive model of the welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation with regard to the empirical studies and the thesis’s theoretical framework, a consideration of some limitations and methodological issues, suggestions for future research and practical implications. These are followed by some concluding remarks.

Main findings

Exit

In Sweden, statutory social workers are now drawing attention to the difficult work conditions and an extensive staff turnover (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2016). The intention of
Study I has therefore been to investigate and describe how turnover processes evolves and why statutory social workers voluntarily resign from their jobs. This approach is somewhat different from previous studies of turnover, because the focus is on the exchange relationship between social workers and the organisation, how the social workers perceive this interaction, the dissatisfactions they perceive and react to, the responses from the organisation and their perceptions and reactions to the organisation’s responses. This qualitative approach captures the dynamics in a turnover process that quantitative approaches miss.

The perceived dissatisfactions described by the social workers in Study I, and interpreted as psychological contract breaches, can partly be related to poor psychosocial working conditions and a perceived negative psychological climate. In line with the terminology in the JD-R model, an interpretation of the interviews is that the imbalance between job demands and job resources results in a breach of contract. Specifically, the heavy caseloads and the time-consuming demands in terms of extensive documentation are not in balance with the resources available to meet these demands and for the delivery of quality work, which the social workers perceive as organisational obligations.

Another identified imbalance leading to a perceived contract breach is between efforts and rewards, for example when the social workers are not praised by organisational agents for their efforts. In line with the norm of reciprocity, a perceived contract breach occurs when the social workers’ extraordinary efforts to deal with the chaotic work situations do not match the managers’ and the organisation’s appreciation of these efforts. These results are in line with previous research, which concludes that high job demands and lack of resources play important roles in social workers’ decisions to exit (Astvik et al., 2014; Schwartz, 2007), and that employees’ perceptions of an imbalance between efforts made and rewards not only influences their intentions to leave, but also actual turnover (Derycke et al., 2012; Hasselhorn, Tackenberg & Peter, 2004).

The third dissatisfaction revolves around the organisation breaking its promise to value professional ethics by providing genuine intentions and goals concerning quality and to defend professional autonomy and standards. A psychological contract breach occurs when the social workers are subjected to organisational control and de-professionalisation processes that prevent them from achieving long-term goals in a high-quality manner. The tangible sense of increased bureaucracy and the organisational governance forces the social workers to adopt a more mechanistic approach to their delivery of social services, in terms of...
increased documentation and more concern for budgets. This way of working, which essentially devalues the professionals’ ethics and assessments, leads to a psychological contract breach. These results are also consistent with previous research (Mänttäri-van der Kuip, 2014), which argues that reduced opportunities to carry out ethically responsible and qualitative social work due to organisational demands for efficiency and budget constraints influences social workers’ decisions to leave.

The fourth dissatisfaction can be linked to the psychological climate and the organisation’s broken promise of organisational concern for the employee collective. The witnessing of organisational neglect of matters such as sick leave, staff turnover and stress-related illnesses, which ultimately affect the collective, tells social workers that the perceived promise of organisational concern for sound and sustainable working conditions has been breached. This finding is in line with that of Tham (2007), who found an organisation’s deficient human resource orientation to be a key predictor of social workers’ intentions to leave.

However, one important contribution of Study I is the described interaction between the social workers and the organisation regarding the perceived dissatisfactions leading to psychological contract breaches. The interpretation process between contract breach and violation involves an evaluation of outcomes, attributions for why the breach of contract occurred and judgements about how fairly someone was treated (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). In this interpretation process, the organisation has the ability to redress the psychological contract by actively managing the perceived breach. In Study I, the various organisational responses (i.e., neglect, demands of obedience, imposition of individual guilt and normalisation) clearly indicated that organisational efforts were unable to restore the breached psychological contracts when the social workers expressed their dissatisfactions. On the contrary, these organisational responses enhanced the social workers’ convictions that the psychological contracts had been breached in their interpretation processes, thereby leading to contract violations. Another conclusion that can be drawn from Study I is, from the social workers’ perspectives, that it was not primarily the first-line managers who seemed to represent the organisation, but other agents, such as senior managers and politicians. It could therefore be assumed that there is a possible variation in which organisational agent(s), at least in large public organisations, who influence an individual employee’s perception of the organisation.
When experiencing violations of the psychological contracts, the social workers’ reactions in Study I include strong negative emotions and attitudes such as mistrust towards the organisation, anger, indignation, self-doubt and sadness. Before exit, the social workers also reported stress-related symptoms such as exhaustion and sleeping problems. Thus, stress-related symptoms could be viewed as a consequence of the emotional reactions to perceived psychological contract violations preceding the exit alternative. However, it could also be a consequence of the social workers’ experiences of the demanding working conditions and their psychological sense-making processes prior to the violation of the psychological contract. In Study III, it is evident from the results that the social workers and the case officers reported higher levels of stress-related symptoms, poorer recovery and lower levels of job satisfaction than the managers. Even though quantitative demands and unreasonable tasks are explicitly associated with stress-related symptoms and poor recovery in the occupational groups at the employee level, based on the findings in Study I it could be argued that the organisational efforts to mitigate these job demands have failed. The psychological climate factor of openness in Study III is also related to all the outcome variables across all the occupational groups, thus suggesting that the possibility to ventilate and conduct a constructive dialogue about expected reasonable psychosocial working conditions is very limited.

Concerning intention to exit, highlighted in Study II, role conflicts, and particularly openness, have a remarkably high explanatory value for both the social workers and managers. One interpretation of this finding could be that openness is a fundamental value in public organisations and that when it is perceived to be disrupted, the relationship between the employee and the organisation can be negatively affected. Furthermore, the results show that the impact of role conflicts on intention to exit is potentially and partially mediated by openness. In the social work context, previous empirical studies have shown that role conflicts often lead to burnout, poor performance, job stress and, ultimately, exit (Guterman & Jayaratne, 1994; Jaskyte, 2005; Jones, 1993; Mikkelsen et al., 2000). Study II increases the current knowledge by revealing that in role conflicts, the possibility for open communication could potentially lower the social workers’ intentions to exit.

To sum up, it is evident that the psychological climate indeed is important to address when trying to understand why employees think about leaving or actually leave their employment. How an organisation treats and values its employees and how it promotes an openness that increases employees’ possibilities of ventilating divergent views can,
arguably, prevent psychological contract breaches, stress-related ill health and reduce employees’ intentions to exit. It is possible that managers in the social services with many subordinate social workers have less time for individual social workers and, thus, less opportunity to be involved in their work, listen to criticism and redress breached psychological contracts. In line with Allvin et al. (2011), the dismissive and admonishing organisational responses identified in Study 1 can also be seen as an expression of the new working life that is ultimately based on flexibility and individual responsibility.

Silence

Concerning silence, which is explicitly highlighted in Study II as one of the outcome variables, role conflicts have a significant positive effect amongst the social workers, thus suggesting that they are related to a higher degree of silence. Furthermore, job autonomy is seen to have a significant negative effect on silence, thereby indicating that less job autonomy is related to a higher degree of silence. Finally, a lower degree of openness is highly related to silence amongst both social workers and managers. Moreover, the results show that for social workers the impact of role conflicts on silence is potentially and partially mediated by openness, which suggests that open communication contributes to the reduction of silence in the presence of role conflicts. From the results it is also evident that role conflicts are an inevitable aspect of social work and can possibly be enhanced by contradictory logics of professionalism. Social workers often work in multidisciplinary settings and face different kinds of clinical, professional and bureaucratic challenges. When social workers have to deal with duties that are inconsistent or in conflict with their self-perception of their roles, it is important to discuss and problematise these perceived conflicts at management level.

In the existing literature on silence, it is thought that management should be concerned about silence and should try to rectify it. Another view, presented by Donaghey et al. (2011), is that silence may be practical for management, because it maintains a form of status quo in the organisation. Morrison and Milliken (2003) further argue that silence can be functional for management, thus suggesting that unrestricted voice is sometimes dysfunctional (from a management perspective). What is notable in Study II is that the perception of the organisation’s openness is strongly related to silence in both occupational groups. Based on the results of Study II, and in line with Harlos (2001), it could be argued that there is lack of practical organisation-driven arrange-
ments in Swedish public organisations for voice strategies, despite union involvement. In line with Jaskyte (2005), it could also be argued that the tactics used by human service organisations to enable voice strategies are primarily individualised-informal, individual, random and variable. The low perceived openness, presented in Studies II and III, indicates that employees are not aware that there are ways for them to pursue issues that are of concern to them. Despite the strong legal protection in Swedish public organisations for freedom of expression, there thus appears to be a lack of openness, which can lead to a counterproductive and, from a democratic perspective, dangerous choice of silence.

Another assumption, based on previous literature (Donaghey et al., 2011), is that employees may actively take a rational, cost/benefit-based decision to remain silent or not due to the inherent power imbalance. Based on the findings of Study I, the dismissive and admonishing organisational responses to employees’ voice strategies may have influenced observing co-workers to actively choose a silent approach, even if the purpose is to deliver information that may actually improve organisational performance. The social workers’ attempts to protect their professionalism and service quality, which in turn were silenced by their organisation’s focus on efficiency and internal productivity, are an empirical example of a damaged employee-organisation relationship regarding the social exchange of ideas that is necessary to counteract silence.

Loyalty

When it comes to loyalty towards the organisation, trust appears to be a central feature of the exchange relationship between the employee and the organisation that precedes organisational loyalty. Zhao et al. (2007) found evidence to support the role of trust as a mediator between psychological contract breach and outcomes such as reduced organisational commitment and increased intention to exit. Also, the results in Study I confirm that an experienced corrosion of trust separates employees from the organisation and can lead to the opposite of loyalty: exit.

Besides the regular fulfilment of promises, trust could be maintained by demonstrating high levels of organisational support. A common finding in Studies II and IV, concerning loyalty towards the organisation (i.e., organisational commitment and organisational identification) is that job resources at the organisational level mainly relate to organisational outcomes (such as the two concepts of organisational loyalty). In Study II, the organisational level resource job autonomy significantly
relates to organisational commitment, whereas the workgroup resource co-worker support does not. Perceived openness is also strongly related to organisational loyalty in Study II, which is in line with Altmann et al. (1998), who show that psychological climate with an organisational referent is more predictive of organisational level outcomes (e.g., organisational commitment). In Study IV, the organisational job resources of perceived supervisor support, job autonomy and satisfaction with work conditions explains additional variance in organisational pride (above and beyond the contributions of the workgroup resource co-worker support). Further, organisational identification function as a potential mediator that in Study IV partially mediates the relationship between the organisational-specific job resources and organisational pride. Taken together, the similar findings in Studies II and IV showing that different levels of resources function by linking independent variables and dependent variables at the same level, offers a theoretical contribution to the JD-R model.

Study IV further supports the notion that employees identify with at least two organisational foci (workgroup and organisation), which is in line with earlier findings on multiple foci of identification (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005). Study IV shows that employees seem to identify less strongly with their organisation than with their workgroup, which supports previous findings that proximal targets are likely to achieve relatively more identification (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). This supports the idea that a sense of in-group membership can be more easily triggered by the supporting interaction within the immediate workgroup than with the more emotionally distant organisation (Ashforth & Rogers 2012; Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Shie, 2000).

The finding that the employees in Study IV identify less with the organisation than the workgroup is not a remarkable finding in itself. It could be a result of a healthy supportive climate at the workgroup level. In line with Evetts (2003), workgroup identification is associated with a sense of common experiences, understanding and expertise, as well as shared ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions. This form of social identification is produced and reproduced through occupational and professional socialisation by means of shared and common educational backgrounds, professional training and work-related experiences. At the interpersonal level, co-workers are often perceived as highly credible referents, because they tend to be valued, salient and accessible (Ashforth & Rogers, 2012). In lower-order organisational
groups, such as workgroups, shared goals and tasks give more opportunities for the exchange of social support over time (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). According to the results in Study IV, co-worker support is related to workgroup identification.

However, there is a risk that a strong workgroup identification will increase the strain on inter-professional cooperation (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). With too strong lower-order groups, achieving cooperation between different units and different categories of employees in public sector organisations could be challenging. An organisational structure made up of strong professional workgroups tends to create hidden walls and territorial thinking between the different groups of employees and, further, tends to influence employees’ perspectives on cooperation (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001), which could be detrimental to the overall organisation and, ultimately, to the recipients’ welfare (e.g., citizen, patient or student).

Some scholars suggest that organisations deliberately can build attachment to proxies, such as the workgroup, for employee performance (see Sparrow & Cooper, 2003). This suggests that employees are passive recipients of designated identities. Another, and in this thesis more aligned perspective is that employees are not reducible to passive consumers of organisationally and administratively designed and designated identification targets (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002). Based on the findings of Study II and primarily those of Study IV, it is suggested that the overall public organisation is not the most influential institution in employees’ identification processes. The organisational level resources and perceived climate that seem to increase loyalty towards the organisation are not balanced in relation to job demands. Thus, the public sector employment that has been framed and modelled in accordance with NPM has not been effective in increasing employee loyalty (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Hasselbladh, Bejerot & Gustafsson, 2008). Based on the interviewees’ reactions in Study I, it is further suggested that the social workers experience a sense of collegial belonging, or social identification with their fellow employees. If the social workers had not identified with their collective work units, they would probably not have reacted as strongly as they did to the organisational responses towards the collective. In terms of the employee-organisation relationship, it could thus be argued that one of the many influences of co-workers is to help individuals to socially construct their understanding of how to relate to the organisation and its agents. For example, Klein et al. (2001) indicate that the greater the social interaction among workgroup members, the less variability there is in their perceptions of
elements of the work environment. The same logic could be applied when it comes to the shaping of co-workers’ shared perceptions about the organisation. A conclusion based on these findings is that if the organisation wants to promote and maintain a positive relation with the individual employee and thereby increase organisational loyalty, it should also reconsider its personnel strategies and practices towards the collective that the employees identify with and are a part of.

Health and well-being

The final indicators of the quality of the welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation in this thesis are perceptions of health and well-being, explicitly investigated in Study III. The study reveals that social workers and case officers in disability and elderly care are two exposed occupational groups that report significantly higher levels of stress-related symptoms, poorer recovery and lower levels of job satisfaction than managers. Regarding the importance of job demands, quantitative demands are especially associated with stress-related symptoms and poor recovery in all the studied occupational groups. Also, unreasonable tasks for social workers and case officers is significantly related to these two health related outcome variables. Job autonomy and co-worker support are significantly associated with all of the studied outcome variables (i.e., stress-related symptoms, poor recovery and job satisfaction). Finally, the effect of openness is significantly related to all the outcome variables in all the occupational groups, particularly job satisfaction.

In line with previous research (Aronsson, Bejerot & Härenstam, 2012; Astvik & Melin, 2012; Kim & Stoner, 2008), the results show that quantitative and conflicting demands and unreasonable tasks combined with low job autonomy are associated with stress-related ill health and a low degree of job satisfaction. Thus, one way of reducing stress-related symptoms and improving the conditions for recovery and job satisfaction would be to identify and reduce specific quantitative demands and illegitimate tasks for all the groups in Study III. However, the results of Study III show that this is not sufficient if the importance of the studied organisational factors are also taken into account. A conclusion is therefore that the organisation needs to develop openness so that employees (and managers) are allowed and encouraged to make comments on and criticise the conditions that are regarded as detrimental to their health and well-being.
The low level of openness in the organisations experienced by the employees in Study III can be interpreted as an expression of an increased organisational control that has come to characterise NPM. In line with Lindgren (2015), a standardised structuring of the content of the professionals’ work hollows out the professional expertise and signals mistrust on the part of the organisation. The mean difference in perceived openness between the groups with and without managerial position (see Study III) can further be understood in accordance with Evetts’ (2011) concept of organisational professionalism. It could indicate that managers manage less on the basis of the professional’s ideals and more on the basis of the organisation’s ideals and control systems, which does not necessarily contribute to a bottom-up perspective (see Liljegren & Parding, 2010). However, the managers’ increased span of control and administrative and financial responsibilities appear to have reduced their ability to carry out dialogues with their employees and to provide support and feedback to their professionals (Harder et al., 2000; Shanks, Lindström & Wiklund, 2015). This could, of course, explain the employees’ low perception of openness. Further, it could be argued that managers in the public sector also experience a lack of dialogue and support from the higher levels of management. This could be regarded as a threat to openness at these higher organisational levels, which could also be reproduced lower down in the organisation. According to Aronsson and Gustafsson (1999), organisations that are characterised by silence are also a challenge to democracy. From a health and well-being perspective, silent organisations can make it more difficult for organisational members (regardless of position) to have a dialogue about problematic working conditions that both cause work-related ill health and affect well-being in the long-term.

A descriptive model of the welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation

A descriptive model of the welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation was created (Figure 2) to further develop Figure 1 and summarise the different empirical findings in the included studies, with a focus on the thesis’s aim and theoretical framework. This model does not claim to challenge existing models of the employment relationship (see e.g., Morrison & Robinson, 1997), but mainly aims to clarify how the findings in the four included studies relate to each other. Another ambition with the model is to generate future hypotheses that can be tested with longitudinal data.
Figure 2. A descriptive model of welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation with regard to the thesis’s empirical studies and theoretical framework

As stated earlier, psychological contract theory is used as a theoretical tool to explain and discuss welfare workers’ relationship to their organisation. The advantage of using psychological contract theory is its insistence on seeing employees as active agents, rather than passive recipients of management processes. The dotted lines and the dotted square in Figure 2 are potential paths and outcomes that have not been explicitly studied empirically in this thesis, but are discussed in brief in order to obtain a broader picture.

In the model it is assumed that in order for an organisation to establish a psychological contract *fulfilment* with the employees, there has to be a balance between organisational resources (which in the model are organisational factors and organisational level job resources combined) and job demands. If the employees’ inputs or contributions (e.g., the managing of work demands) to the relationship are on a par with or equivalent to the organisational inducements (e.g., the provision of resources, rewards, the support of professional ethics, openness and human resource orientation), the relationship is assumed to be one of quality. This leads to a perceived contract fulfilment or, in other words, to a balanced psychological contract. The perceived promises of a balance between various employees’ contributions and organisational inducements, constitutes the major content of the employees’ psychological contracts in Study I, thus supporting their validity of them as model
components. The importance of the relational dimension of psychological contracts is highlighted too. Even though the relational dimensions of the contract are understood to be layered on the transactional dimensions (Isaksson et al., 2010), it seems that meeting the relational expectations are the most critical from the organisation’s perspective. For instance, in Study I, the psychological contracts that are perceived to have been violated are primarily described as relational and concerned issues such as respect, promises of future rewards for hard work and opportunities for professional growth. Of course, the specific content of the employees’ psychological contracts will still vary depending on their age, power and position in the organisation and specific job demands (Rousseau, 1995).

As shown in Studies II-IV, various organisational resources are related to positive organisational outcomes, such as loyalty in terms of organisational commitment and identification, organisational pride and job satisfaction. These findings indicate that when these types of resources are present, tangible and balanced in relation to the existing job demands, they seem to promote a sense of psychological contract fulfilment that leads to a loyal mutual relationship characterised by trust. Psychological contract fulfilment could therefore be viewed as an intervening variable between the organisational resources, job demands and positive outcomes highlighted in Figure 2. Although contract fulfilment has not been explicitly studied in the included studies, there is empirical evidence to suggest the above reasoning. This indicates that contract fulfilment is positively associated with employees’ commitment to their organisation (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000) and organisational trust (Robinson, 1996), hence the double-headed arrow between psychological contract fulfilment and the positive outcomes in the model. Furthermore, organisations that keep their promises to employees signal that they are committed to their employees, value their contributions and intend to continue with the relationship (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005).

At the centre of Figure 2, psychological contract breach is assumed to be an outcome of an organisation’s failure to fulfil its promise of a balance between organisational resources and job demands. In the model, a perceived imbalance, arguably leading to a contract breach, is suggested to trigger one of two types of employee strategies: voice or silence. The voice strategy is investigated in Study I. However, before voicing, the interpretation process of how fairly someone is treated before and after the perception of contract breach is an important component. The interpretation process between contract breach and violation
involves an evaluation of outcomes, reasons for why the contract breach has occurred and judgements about how fairly a person has been treated (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Unfair treatment signals that an employee is not valued or respected in the relationship (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996).

As shown in Study I, the employees’ strong beliefs about the unfair interpersonal treatment they have received influences their voice behaviour, regardless of the actual institutional opportunities for articulating voice. In Figure 2, voice can be seen as a part of the interpretation process in which employees can gather information about the extent to which the organisation values their relationship. It is expected that psychological contract breach would signal that employees are not valued members of the organisation. As a result, employees would tend to identify with the organisation to a lesser degree and distance themselves from it more. This is a crucial moment, where the organisation has a real possibility to redress the psychological contract by actively managing the perceived breach. This part of the model symbolises a crossroads from the organisation’s perspective. If the organisation respects and values its employees and pays attention to the status of the relations, successful organisational efforts should restore the relationship by compensating for losses resulting from the breach. For example, this can be done by providing more of another inducement and by ensuring procedural justice (see Lambert et al., 2003; Robinson & Morrison, 2000).

Figure 2 suggests that if the broken promises are matched with appropriate types of justice or compensation of equivalent value to the removed contract inducement, a balanced work situation will emerge and lead to the studied positive organisational outcomes through psychological contract fulfilment. In the model, this potential process is indicated by dotted lines from ‘voice’ to ‘successful organisational efforts’ and from ‘successful organisational efforts’ to the broad arrow denoting ‘balance’. The lines are dotted because this particular process has not been empirically studied in the thesis.

Based on the findings of Study I, no organisational efforts were able to restore the psychological contracts, despite the employees’ voicing strategies. This in turn enhanced the employees’ convictions that the psychological contracts had been breached in their interpretation processes. The harsh types of organisational responses, or efforts, described in Study I (i.e., neglect, demands of obedience, imposition of individual guilt and normalisation) further indicate that the relationship between a psychological contract breach and violation is stronger when an employee also experience a low level of interactional fairness during
the interpretation process. Thus, according to the model, unsuccessful organisational efforts could precipitate the conviction of psychological contract violation.

The experiences of psychological contract violations before exit, captured in Study I and portrayed in the model, include strong negative emotions and attitudes as well as stress-related symptoms such as exhaustion and sleeping problems. This part of the model is characterised by a general mistrust, which is suggested to represent a clear expression of a violation of the fundamental shared beliefs and assumptions that essentially govern the relationship between the employees and the organisation, which could lead to exit. As shown in Studies II-III, various job demands are related to intentions to exit, stress-related symptoms and poor recovery. The organisational factor of openness relates negatively to these outcomes in both studies. The findings of Studies II-III do not show that the employees’ psychological contracts have been breached or violated. Nevertheless, the studies provide useful information to public organisations about which psychosocial and organisational factors that need to be addressed and balanced in order to avoid contract breach, contract violation and, in the worst case, exit.

Silence is depicted as another possible employee strategy to psychological contract breach, due to an imbalance between organisational resources and job demands. The findings of Study II on the outcome of silence, strengthen this assumption. Compared to voice, silence can be viewed as an employee strategy when voicing is perceived as pointless, or when there is a tangible risk of sanctions or reprisals. In other words, silence could occur when employees are consciously aware that their sphere of influence in voice regimes is encroached on by management. Under such circumstances, the model suggests that these perceptions, in line with Donaghey et al. (2011) and with the norm of reciprocity in the psychological contracts, could lead to employee disengagement, i.e., physical, cognitive and emotional withdrawal in work (Kahn, 1990). If they perceive their voices to be restricted, employees could also respond by refusing to participate meaningfully in management arrangements. Such behaviour is referred to as counterproductive workplace behaviour and includes refusal to cooperate and the withholding of effort (Spector & Fox, 2002). Engagement in counterproductive workplace behaviour can also be an attempt to restore balance in the breached psychological contract (Jensen et al., 2010). However, this part of the model was not investigated empirically in the included studies, although it is incorporated in the model to illustrate that employees can choose a silent strategy when management treats its workforce in
low-trust ways, which can subsequently generate low-trust responses from disapproving employees.

Finally, in the model, disengagement and counterproductive workplace behaviour are assumed to be possible outcomes of contract violation before exit, in line with previous research (Lemire & Rouillard; 2005; Rusbult et al., 1988; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Astvik et al. (2014) further suggest that those employees who do voice without being heard either withdraw in resignation (an expression for disengagement) or make a complete withdrawal by exit from work. A final assumption is thus that disengagement and counterproductive workplace behaviour (caused by silence) is related to the outcomes of psychological contract violation in the model and could lead to exit. However, these assumptions need to be tested empirically. It should also be stated that the exit alternative may not even be an employee option and would depend on the conduciveness of the job market and current job alternatives.

Limitations and methodological considerations

As all four studies were conducted using different methodological approaches, there are several methodological considerations. First, although the ambition with Study I was to describe an exit process, it should not be considered a ‘process study’ in the sense that it followed a process longitudinally with frequent field work (Langley et al., 2013). The interviews were conducted at one time and the social workers were asked to retrospectively describe their exit-processes.

Studies II-IV, were further limited by their cross-sectional designs, which means that inferences about causal effects cannot be drawn from the found relationships. Using longitudinal data in the future would be valuable in order to come to a clearer understanding of the different phenomena studied. Concerning the mediation analyses in Study II and Study IV, longitudinal mediation models would permit the examination of several mediation questions that cannot be asked using the cross-sectional mediation model, such as whether a mediated effect is stable over time. Longitudinal models would shed further light on temporal-precedence or causal-ordering assumptions by quantifying the mediation relations among the variables over time.

Furthermore, as the data in Studies II-IV was collected using same source data, the relationships between the variables may be a result of common method bias. As the quantitative studies did not use any objective data, such as register data, this may have had an impact on the
measurement bias in terms of high dependency on cognitive and emotional processing. By not using any external assessments of studied factors there is always a risk of over-reporting unfavourable work characteristics (Waldenström et al., 2008). However, in all the quantitative studies, a Harman’s single factor test was performed to determine whether this influenced the results. The single factor tests indicated that common method variance was not a serious concern in Studies II-IV.

The dimensions included in each study were chosen according to theoretical and methodological concerns. However, and in line with Bakker and Demerouti (2007), it could be argued that Studies II-IV were restricted to a given and limited set of predictor variables that may not be relevant for all job positions in the public sector. The setting in Studies II-III was limited to the Swedish social services, which could mean that other welfare occupations may require other combinations of job demands and job resources to predict the chosen outcomes. Respondents with a more even demographical distribution and different professions could well be included in forthcoming research.

It should be noted that workgroup pride and organisational pride in Study IV may have had validity issues. As these scales were specifically developed for this study, they would need to be tested on other populations to establish different types of validity. Although focus groups were used to develop the two scales to enhance content validity, the content validity of a particular assessment device is always conditional (Haynes, Richard & Kubany, 1995).

Regarding the generalisability and transferability of the research findings, all the studies were conducted with public sector employees from Swedish municipal organisations. The findings of Study I could be transferable to other exit processes in departments with similar organisational conditions, such as the social services in local governmental organisations. However, discontentment with a previous employer may be more distinct and pronounced amongst individuals who have made the decision to leave the organisation (i.e., the participants in Study I) than to those who have chosen to remain. Furthermore, a larger sample could have contributed to further variations of turnover processes. The favourable job market conditions for social workers in Sweden and the perceived job options could also explain why the participants in Study I decided to engage in a turnover process that led to exit. Studies II and III were based on a large nationwide sample of statutory social workers and managers in the Swedish social services, which means that their findings could be relevant to other social services in municipal organisations in Sweden (at least at the time of the studies).
Study IV was conducted with employees from various sectors in two middle-sized municipalities. Although the size of the sectors in the sample reflected the proportions of the organisations’ sectors, inference to larger municipal organisations in Sweden should be avoided. This is because larger Swedish municipal organisations may differ in terms of their complexity and internally diversified structures compared to the studied organisations (Larsson, 2015).

**Future research**

This thesis makes the following contributions to future research. The combination of in-depth qualitative studies and quantitative studies could be used more extensively in future research on the employee-organisation relationship. Based on the studies in the thesis, a mixed-method approach could facilitate the understanding of underlying processes, which in turn may explain the quantitative results. Such a design could produce results that are both broader and have more significant impact than research using one method alone (Morse & Niehaus, 2016).

This thesis’s findings that different levels of resources in an organisation function by linking independent variables and dependent variables at each level offers a theoretical contribution to the JD-R model. Future research on job resources as predictor variables should identify them by their specific source and discuss how they relate to the foci of the chosen outcomes. Study II and Study IV verify that employees’ perceptions of their job resources at the organisational level are more strongly related to organisational-related outcomes (compared to the impact of the studied workgroup resource co-worker support).

Furthermore, a fruitful perspective could be to include various climate factors when studying the impact of more traditional psychosocial work conditions. It would have been interesting to include dimensions of the organisational climate (i.e., collective perceptions of the work environment) in the thesis, as a complement to the studied dimensions of the psychological climate. The choice of climate could influence empirical results. For example, Ostroff and Rothausen (1997) found different levels of person-environment fit when they examined individual perceptions versus aggregated perceptions of climate.

In an attempt to develop psychological contract theory further, future research could study the role of psychological contract fulfilment as a mediator between psychosocial/organisational factors and positive outcomes, as implied in Figure 2. This approach would also be useful when
investigating how organisationally directed HR initiatives and practices in public organisations influence employee outcomes.

The finding in Study IV that employees can have multiple social identities in the workplace suggests that future studies should longitudinally examine other group-specific job resources, antecedents of social identification in organisational contexts and emotional outcomes linked to these multiple identities. Existing multiple exchange relationships also imply that employees could establish psychological contracts with each of these exchange partners (see Rousseau, 1998). Future research could explore the structure and importance of these mutual exchange relationships and the multiple psychological contracts that result from them.

The role of emotions in the employee-organisation relationship literature has received limited attention. Group-based emotions in general warrant further investigation, particularly their link to other outcomes for the organisation. When investigating social identification in organisations, future research should consider it as a mediating factor rather than an outcome, in order to acquire a clearer understanding of the concept. Finally, the social identity dynamics could enrich the understanding of the employee-organisation relationship. From the social exchange perspective, the employee and the organisation are viewed as distinct partners, although from a social identity perspective this relationship is mainly understood in terms of self-concept formation in which the sense of self and organisation is merged. Future research could therefore focus on employees’ understanding of the entity with which they have a relationship as a complement to the current social exchange perspectives.

Practical implications

Several practical implications can be discussed in relation to the findings of the four studies. A general insight gained from the results is that public organisations need to pay attention to the development, clarification and management of the changing employee-organisation relationship in order to create a sustainable and healthy organisational climate. This is highly relevant in a Swedish context, because in order to improve the work environment in Swedish workplaces, the Swedish Government is now emphasising the importance of good psychosocial working conditions and a sustainable working life (Government offices of Sweden, 2016). The findings of primarily Studies II and IV, that employees’ perceptions of their job resources at the organisational level are more strongly associated with organisational-related outcomes,
could help organisations to decide where best to focus their intervention efforts (see Nielsen et al., 2017). The results of this thesis specifically imply that job resources in terms of job autonomy and supervisor support and the organisational factors of openness and human resource orientation are important prerequisites for employees’ positive attitudes, behaviour and emotions towards the organisation. These predictors also seem to be important for employees’ subjective health and well-being (Study III). It is thus suggested that the focus of future interventions should be on increasing certain organisational-level job resources and factors (as well as optimising the job demands), rather than a reliance on individual level-interventions, where the individuals are expected to adjust their ways of working within a fixed organisational frame. In line with Hasson (2005), organisationally directed interventions have also been argued to have more long-term effects than individual level interventions.

From the perspective of psychological contract theory, and based on the findings of Study I, it is clear that today’s public organisations need to carefully consider their expectations and promises in order to avoid ambiguity in the psychological contracts with their employees. First-line and middle managers (among others) seem to function as organisational agents who create employee perceptions of the employee-organisation relationship. With this in mind, it is suggested that their increased span of control and heavy administrative and financial responsibilities must be reviewed if they are to carry out dialogues with employees on a regular basis. These dialogues should focus on unravelling employees’ expectations and perceived organisational promise so that managers understand employees’ dynamic psychological contracts, and especially the relational dimension. Continuous dialogues like these could help the managers to prevent or redress potential psychological contract breaches with employees before violations occur.

In public organisations in Sweden, the role of HR has become less supportive and operative and more demanding (Corin & Björk, 2016). In practice, this has caused the managerial role to expand, mainly due to the increased demands for reports, follow-ups and the monitoring of a number of issues and the greater use of standardised tools for management control (Corin & Björk, 2016), all of which indirectly affect welfare workers. It is therefore suggested that political boards and committees and the higher strategic management in public organisations should consider whether NPM is beneficial in the long term, not only for the employee-organisation relationship, but also regarding the welfare workers’ professionalism and the service quality of services provided to citizens. An organisations’ HR practices should be designed and delivered with full consideration of fairness and consistency (see

...
Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). By ensuring that the organisation holds regular meetings to exchange ideas, express needs and debate goals, for example concerning service quality and professionalism, more homogeneous employee perceptions could be formed of the relationship with the organisation. If these perceptions vary too much, an organisation would be less likely to formulate and achieve strategic goals by actively managing its relationship with the employees. Essentially, and in line with Kuvaas (2008), it is assumed that the quality of the employee-organisation relationship can moderate the relationship between perceptions of HR practices and employee outcomes. In order to improve the quality, a discretionary space is required in which professionals can decide how to relate to the system and the organisation - together with organisational agents such as politicians and higher strategic management. Such arrangements could be seen as institutional opportunities for employees to actually articulate their voice and counteract silence. To summarise, a continuous and open dialogue between the political, strategic and operational levels of the organisation could prevent welfare workers from exiting, staying silent or being disloyal, and at the same time, promote their health and well-being. In other words, it could encourage a trustworthy employee-organisation relationship.

Concluding remarks

This thesis contributes to knowledge about how welfare workers experience the relationship to their organisation by investigating how psychosocial and organisational factors relate to a number of outcomes assumed to be indicators of the quality of this relationship. Based on the findings of the thesis as a whole, the quality of this relationship could be questioned. The findings reveal an imbalanced work situation for the welfare workers that is characterised by a lack of correspondence between job demands and job resources/organisational factors (Studies II-III). Psychosocial and organisational factors are found to have consequences for the welfare workers’ behaviour, attitudes and emotions towards the organisation in terms of intention to exit, silence, loyalty and organisational pride (Studies II and IV). In addition, Study I reveals that when voicing work-related dissatisfactions such as perceived imbalances between various psychosocial factors, the organisation’s responses signal mistrust of the employees, whose trust towards the organisation is corroded – in accordance with the principle of reciprocity. One overall conclusion is that relationships really do matter in the context of the employee-organisation relationship and that
positive relationships are characterised by the amount of support, level of investment, degree of balance and fulfilment of obligations.

Change and uncertainty seem to be common in public organisations. Reorganisations and rationalisations with a clear focus on cost-effectiveness and performance standards arguably threaten the quality of welfare workers’ actual work and, ultimately, the employee-organisation relationship. The public organisation’s workforce is supposed to be flexible and obedient: employees are recruited and retained for the immediate organisational needs, especially as organisations now focus less on the professionals’ expertise, concerns for service quality and long-term performance. The long-term horizon is essential for the development of trust and for a pattern of predictability between the giving and receiving of benefits between the exchange partners. Given that the primary goal of management is to enhance service delivery outcomes while reducing costs, the dissatisfaction and stress amongst welfare workers that can be linked to NPM represent a significant barrier to public organisations actually achieving their goals. It could thus be argued that new psychological contracts are developing between the public organisations and their members with a reduced organisational consideration of the relational dimensions of the employees’ psychological contracts. The basic employee-organisation relationship is in flux. This thesis hopefully makes some relevant contributions as to how to further understand, clarify and manage psychological contracts between welfare workers and their organisations.

Lastly, in order to neutralise troublesome differences in the employment relationship, the public organisations seem to go to great lengths to foster favourable work attitudes amongst their employees. To this day, an extensive range of employer initiatives directed towards employees as individuals and an organisational rhetoric that emphasises unity and congruence have been used to enhance organisational success through various employee engagement and motivation programmes (Alvesson, 2013). However, at the same time organisational strategies that affect service quality, professionalism and employee health negatively almost consistently work against employees’ interests. In line with Hodson and Roscigno (2004), this apparent divergence raises the crucial question: Are public organisational success and welfare workers’ well-being and professionalism complementary or contradictory? If the expectations and interests of organisations and welfare workers can be clearly communicated and aligned, the long-term effectiveness and well-being of both could be secured. Welfare workers may then be expected to develop favourable attitudes towards the organisation that...
can be seen as indicators of a strengthened employee-organisation relationship. However, if these interests turn out to be conflicting, hard times may lie ahead, both in terms of organisational success and employees’ behaviour, attitudes, emotions, health and well-being. There are trust issues that must be addressed.
Svensk sammanfattning


I den första studien genomfördes intervjuer med myndighetsutövande socialsekreterare som frivilligt slutat från sin arbetsplats där huvudsyftet var att utreda orsakerna till uppsägning. Resultaten från Studie I visade att organisationens avvisande och tillrättavisande respons på deltagarnas upplevda arbetsrelaterade missnöjen förstärkte övertygelsen om att psykologiska kontraktsbrott inträffat, vilket ledde till uppsägning.

För Studie II och III användes nationell enkätdata från medarbetare och chefer inom socialtjänstens myndighetsutövning. Resultaten från Studie II-III indikerade att om organisationerna vill påverka medarbetare att i mindre grad vilja lämna sitt arbete, motverka tystnad samt minska stressrelaterad ohälsa och samtidigt skapa förutsättningar för arbetstrivsel och organisationsengagemang behöver styrningen av verksamheterna leda mot färre motstridiga krav, rimligare arbetsbelastning och mer professionellt inflytande. Resultaten indikerade också att organisationens öppenhet gentemot de anställda hade stor betydelse för studiernas samtliga utfallsvariabler.
För studie IV användes enkätdata från olika välfärdsarbetare, verkssamma inom två kommunala organisationer. Resultaten visade att organisatoriska resurser förklarade mer varians i organisationsidentifikation och organisationstolthet, jämfört med arbetsgruppsresurser.

Viktiga slutsatser av avhandlingen är att de psykosociala kraven som ställs på välfärdsarbetarna behöver vara i balans med de organisatoriska resurserna för att skapa och upprätthålla en tillitsrelation välfärdsarbetare-organisation emellan. Vidare pekar resultaten på att organisationerna främst behöver utveckla och upprätthålla mer personalorienterade attityder och förhållningssätt gentemot anställda och säkerställa dialog samt öppenhet på alla organisatoriska nivåer. Sådana organisatoriska attityder och förhållningssätt antas leda till balanserade psykologiska kontrakt mellan anställda och organisation, som på sikt kan förbättra en organisations stabilitet, kontinuitet och ytterst kvaliteten för dem som verksamheten är till för.
Att skriva en avhandling kan liknas vid att springa ett långdistanslopp där man aldrig riktigt är säker på när (eller om) målgången kommer. Det krävs utåthållighet, hängivenhet, lite tur med omständigheter och en smula dårskap. En sådan prestation ingår dock alltid i ett större sammanhang. I mitt fall har jag haft förmånen att få råd och vägledning av fyra stycken handledare, som har haft olika uppgifter och roller under åren. Gemensamt för alla dessa, förutom deras gedigna besittande av kunskap, är att de tillåtit mig att få löpa fritt i mina tankar, tillåtit mig att springa fel och snett men aldrig övergivit mig. Det är något som jag är evigt tacksam för och som jag aldrig kommer att glömma.


Under min andra hälft som doktorand har jag haft den stora förmånen att få bli handledd av Wanja Astvik. Du, Wanja, har fått mig att våga inta en kritisk position och utmana olika uppfattningar om vad som kan känneteckna ett professionellt och hälsosamt arbetsliv i offentliga organisationer. Ditt inneboende patos och din obestridliga beslutsamhet i att vilja förbättra välfärdsprofessionellas arbetsvillkor genom empirisk forskning är genuint. Och således genuint inspirerande. Storsint har du möjliggjort min medverkan i dina stora forskningsprojekt, där jag fått
möjlighet att arbeta med ett fantastiskt rikt material. Du har alltid stöttat och motiverat mig i alla processer, stora som små. Bland annat genom otaliga telefonsamtal som jag verkligen uppskattat. Att ha fått vara en del i ditt lag har varit helt avgörande för att avhandlingen nu är färdig.


Under mina år på akademin för hälsa, vård och välfärd har många kollegor varit med om att bidra till stimulerande samtal, möten och fredsgästunder. Det gäller både mina kollegor på avdelningen för psykologi som annan undervisande, forskande, administrerande och ledande personal i andra delar av akademin. Jag vill rikta ett alldeles


Mina svärföräldrar Helena, Lars, Ove och Ewa samt min svåger Tobias och svägerska Camilla med familj är jag tacksam över att ha i mitt liv på många sätt. Ni har alltid funnits där för mig och min familj.
Jag vill hedersomnämna min farfar Lennart och min farmor Lisbeth, som båda gick bort under min tid som doktorand. Jag tänker på er ofta och saknar er oerhört mycket.

Min morfar Ingvar och min mormor Birgit vill jag även uppmärksamma å det största. Ni är båda förebilder för mig och jag är tacksam över all glädje vi har delat under årens lopp.

Jag vill tacka min bror Magnus som i vått och torrt peppat mig i mina vägval och som ständigt inspirerar mig med sina egna vägval. År även glad över att Andrea och lilla Lo har blivit en del av vår släkt. Alla släkter behöver minst en göteborgare, gärna fler.


Jag vill jag tacka min fina familj som under doktorandtiden utökats från tre familjemedlemmar till fem. Först och främst min hustru Nina, som borde ha en tapperhetsmedalj för att vara gift med mig, har varit min ständige påhejare och hjärtevän. Utan dig hade den här avhandlingen aldrig varit möjlig. Tack för att du stått ut, och för sättet du gjort det på.


Västerås, maj 2017
Jonas Welander
References

Aronsson, G., & Gustafsson, G. (1999). Kritik eller tystnad. En studie av arbetsmarknads- och anställningsförhållandens betydelse för arbetsmiljökritik. [Criticism or silence. A study of the importance of
the labour market and employment conditions for work-related criticism], Arbetsmarknad & Arbetsliv, 3(5), 189-206.

Aronsson, G., & Bejerot, E. (2014). Brist på kollegialt inflytande urholkar lojalitet med chef och organisation ….men inte med patienterna. [Lack of collegial influence hollows out the loyalty with the supervisor and the organisation…but not with the patients], Läkartidningen, 111, 1-5.


