

# The Transformational Leadership Process

Antecedents, Mechanisms, and Outcomes in the Social Services

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*If you limit leadership of a follower to rewards with carrots for complicity or punishment with a stick for failure, the follower will continue to feel like a jackass.*

*Harry Levinson*



# Abstract

Social service organizations have changed dramatically during the last decade in an effort to increase effectiveness and control. This has placed new demands on those in leadership roles, and the need for knowledge of how to lead these transformed organizations has increased. Transformational leadership is a leadership model based on vision and empowerment, one suggested to increase both employee effectiveness and well-being, but the usefulness of this model in the public sector has been questioned. The general aim of this thesis is therefore to increase our understanding of the transformational leadership process in the context of social service organizations by investigating factors that explain when and why transformational leadership emerges and is effective. Questionnaire data from social service employees as well as interview data from managers were used in three empirical studies. Results from Studies 1 & 2 show that transformational leadership is positively associated with employee outcomes including commitment, role clarity, and well-being. Factors that might influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership were addressed in Study 1. It was found that leader continuity enhanced the effect of transformational leadership on role clarity and commitment, indicating that it takes time before transformational leaders actually have an effect on employees. Furthermore, co-worker support enhanced the effect on commitment, reflecting the role of followers in the transformational leadership process. The way in which transformational leaders influence employees was examined in Study 2, and climate for innovation mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and well-being both cross-sectionally and one year later. Finally, organizational factors that may hinder the emergence of transformational leadership were addressed in Study 3, and newly recruited managers were interviewed during their first year of leadership. Eight hindering factors in the organization to exhibit transformational leadership were identified, including the organizational structure, ongoing change, and the leaders' working conditions. In all, this thesis has demonstrated the usefulness of transformational leadership in social services in terms of being associated with employee positive attitudes and well-being, and has also identified factors that may both help and hinder the transformational leadership process in this context.

**Keywords:** transformational leadership, social services, well-being, climate for innovation, leader continuity, co-worker support, mediation, boundary conditions, antecedents

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*“Once upon a time there was a young psychologist who had a hard time in her job as a human resource consultant. She was ready to jump at almost any other job opportunity given to her, and the only job available was a doctoral position at the local university. She took this opportunity without high expectations or much thought; she just hoped for the best. As it turned out, this was the best career change she could have made. A new world opened up to her, giving her the opportunity to combine her interest in people with her ease with numbers, and she enjoyed her new world. Even though she was confronted with many difficult life events during her PhD years, she always felt that the work itself brought her a sense of excitement and expectation.”*

Well, so far this fairytale has not gone bad, and I hope that the future will be just as exciting for me. Before closing this chapter of my working life, to start a new one, I would like to take the opportunity to thank those who have helped me through these years. To start with, I am grateful to my main supervisor Kristina Westerberg for her support and patience during my PhD years. Despite everything that has happened, and my absence because of that, you have remained understanding and positive. A warm thank you goes to my co-supervisors, Kerstin Armelius and Kerstin Isaksson, for your helpful and insightful comments on my manuscripts.

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*Susanne Tafvelin*  
*Umeå, August 2013*

# List of Studies

This thesis is based on the following studies:

1. Tafvelin, S., Hyvönen, U., & Westerberg, K. (2012). Transformational leadership in the social work context: The importance of leader continuity and co-worker support. *British Journal of Social Work*. Advance online publication.
2. Tafvelin, S., Armelius, K., & Westerberg, K. (2011). Toward understanding the direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 18(4), 480–492.
3. Tafvelin, S., Isaksson, K., & Westerberg, K. (2013). The first year of service: A longitudinal study of organizational antecedents of transformational leadership in the public sector. Manuscript in preparation.

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# Introduction

During the last few decades, social service organizations have changed dramatically with the introduction of flat organizations and new public management which incorporate the idea of a buy-and-sell organization (Lambers, 2002; Walter, Nutley, Percy-Smith, McNeish, & Frost, 2004; Wolmesjö, 2005). New public management, or managerialism, is part of a wave of new ideologies that found its way into the public sector. The idea was to import business models into the public sector in order to make them more market-oriented, with the goal being increased effectiveness and control (Edwards, 1998). A new market orientation was introduced into Sweden's social services as a way of managing cutbacks to their budgets. Parallel to these organizational changes, job satisfaction among employees was decreasing and the demands of user participation increasing (Wolmesjö, 2005). In the aftermath of these changes, new demands are now placed on those in leadership roles, and the need for knowledge as to how to lead these transformed organizations has increased. With even more upheaval in the future anticipated as the result of changing legal, social, technological, and competitive circumstances, good leadership is seen as being the key to retaining employees and managing the rapid pace of change in today's social service organizations (Lawler, 2007).

One leadership model that seems promising in terms of managing the ongoing changes in social service organizations is transformational leadership. It is a leadership model based on visions and empowerment that has demonstrated a positive effect on both organizational outcomes, such as performance, and employee attitudes and health (Judge, Woolf, Hurst, & Livingston, 2006; Skakon, Nielsen, Borg, & Guzman, 2010). However, the usefulness of transformational leadership in the public context is widely debated, and many public sector scholars argue that the organizational context in public organizations in terms of size and structure, for example, makes transformational leadership difficult or even unethical to pursue (e.g., Alvesson, 2001; Currie & Lockett, 2007).

Although transformational leadership has been the dominant focus of contemporary leadership research, and although positive effects of transformational leadership have been established, surprisingly little is known of the transformational leadership process, such as the way in which its emergence and effectiveness is influenced by context. Accordingly, several scholars have called for additional research on the mechanisms of transformational leadership (e.g., Jugde et al., 2006; Yukl, 2010). Knowledge of the underlying psychological processes, mechanisms, and conditions through which transformational leaders influence their followers' attitudes and behaviours is important, as it contributes to a better understanding of

why transformational leadership is effective and a greater ability to predict and account for those times when transformational leadership behaviours emerge and are effective (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). In all, this calls for further investigation of the transformational leadership process in general and in the public context such as the social services in particular.

## **Leadership in the Social Service Context**

- *A Case of Caveat Emptor?*

*John Lawler*

In Sweden, social services include social welfare, elderly care, and the care of the disabled and are organized under the municipalities. The estimated annual cost for the Swedish social services is €20 billion (SEK 175 billion), and it has over 250 000 employees (Socialstyrelsen, 2010; Statistics Sweden, 2013). The largest group of employees are care assistants in elderly care with typically no higher education, in contrast to social welfare where 80% of employees hold a university degree (Norrman, 2003). In this context, studies of leadership are uncommon, and this lack of knowledge of social service leadership has been considered problematic (Johansson 2003; Varg, 2003). Turning to the research literature, it becomes evident that the need for studies in social service leadership is emerging in countries such as the US, the UK and Germany as well (Lambers, 2002; Rank & Hutchison, 2000; Walter et al., 2004). The discussion of leadership in social services began more or less with Brilliant's (1986) analysis of the resistance on the part of social workers to take on leadership roles. She emphasized that leadership is an important aspect of the professional role of social workers, but suggested that they were passionate about the direct practice with clients, not with assuming leadership roles. She also proposed that ideological constraints, a sense of powerlessness and a general lack of status in society acted as barriers for social workers in becoming leaders, and concluded that schools of social work should take on responsibility for developing the leadership potential of social workers.

Since then, there have been major changes within social service organizations with consequences for the leadership role as the wave of new ideologies referred to as new public management or managerialism swept into the public sector. The idea was to modernize the public sector in terms of making these organizations accountable, flexible, and transparent. However, the usefulness of business models in social service organizations has been questioned, and many scholars argue that public sector organizations differ too much from their private counterparts to make the continuing import of models worthwhile (Langan, 2000; Persson & Westrup,

2009). In the case of leaders, the shift to managerialism led to increased responsibility in general and to taking responsibility for the achievement of goals in particular (Lawler, 2007). A Swedish study of managers in elderly care revealed that with increased responsibility for budget and staff the leadership role took an administrative turn with an increased sense of loyalty to those higher up in the organization (Karlsson, 2006).

Others have investigated the preferences of different stakeholders regarding leadership in the social services. Wolmesjö (2005) compared politicians' expectations of leaders with employees' expectations, and found that politicians expected leaders to be managers, in that they believed leaders should focus on the administrative tasks. Employees, on the other hand, asked for a leadership role with focus on the relational aspects, which is more in line with what is traditionally meant by leadership. Rank and Hutchison (2000) interviewed leaders themselves, and asked what kind of leadership they thought was suitable in social service organizations. The answers painted a picture of leadership based on having a vision, promoting the values of the profession, motivating and stimulating employees, and on the leader being able to facilitate change, which is in fact very similar to a transformational leadership. These studies have doubtlessly advanced our understanding of social service leadership. However, they do not seem to offer information on what kind of leadership would be effective, or foster positive employee attitudes or health, and consequently knowledge of effective leadership in these organizations is still scarce. One approach to accomplish this, used by a small body of recent studies of social service leadership, is to apply transformational leadership theory.

### **The Transformational Leadership Process: Mechanisms and Antecedents**

James MacGregor Burns' seminal book *Leadership*, published in 1978, marks the beginning of the work on transformational leadership. He introduced the concept of transformational leadership, describing it not as a set of specific behaviours but rather a process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978, p. 20). Since then, over 1,500 articles have been written on the subject, and transformational leadership theory has attracted more research attention than all other leadership theories combined (Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2011). These empirical studies have provided support for the importance of transformational leadership for organizational level outcomes such as performance as well as for employee attitudes and health (Jugde et al., 2006; Skakon et al., 2010).

Transformational leadership theory has developed over time, and the present version of the theory, referred to as the Full Range of Leadership model (Avolio & Bass, 1991), includes three different forms of leadership.

Firstly, transformational leadership is described as superior leadership performance seen when leaders encourage employees to broaden and arouse their level of interest and generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group. Further, transformational leaders encourage employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group (Bass, 1990). Secondly, transactional leadership concentrates on the notion of transactions between leader and employee, whereby the leader upholds compliance by way of both reward and punishment, thus incorporating both positive (i.e., contingent reward) and negative (i.e., management-by-exception) notions. Finally, laissez-faire leadership is described as non-leadership characterized by the absence of transactions (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

So far, meta-analyses have demonstrated positive consequences of transformational leadership on employee attitude and performance (e.g., Judge & Piccolo, 2004) and a recent review also confirms positive relationships with employee health (Skakon et al., 2010). These positive effects have yet to be confirmed in the social service context because, in the public sector in general and social services in particular, far less empirical work has been conducted on transformational leadership. Most research has focused on a small set of outcomes such as job and leader satisfaction, and more studies are needed on a broader set of outcomes to examine the usefulness of transformational leadership in this context. Public sector scholars who are still very doubtful about the effectiveness of transformational leadership in this setting generally argue that the structure and conditions in public organizations would hinder transformational leadership from having any positive effects, and could even prevent the emergence of transformational leadership altogether (e.g., Currie & Lockett, 2007; Dobell, 1989). In other words, they are concerned about the premises for the transformational leadership process. Recent studies show that the transformational leadership process, including the characteristics of the leader, the followers and the situation, influences the opportunities for leaders to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours (antecedents) as well as increasing, decreasing (moderators) or indirectly transferring (mediators) the effect of transformational leadership on outcomes. However, due to the lack of research in this area, this process has been referred to as the “black box” of transformational leadership, and more research has been called for to further our understanding of how and why transformational leadership works (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 1999).

One aspect of the transformational leadership process involves mechanisms between transformational leadership and outcomes. These mechanisms can exert two different kinds of influence: they either mediate or moderate the relationship. Mediation is the process through which transformational leaders influence outcomes, and this is examined by

investigating intervening variables or mediators that serve as a connection between transformational leadership and outcomes. The mediating variable can explain why and how transformational leaders influence organizations and employees in the way they do. This underlying process of transformational leadership has not attracted research attention until recently, and further studies are needed to shed light on how transformational leaders affect outcomes (Avolio, et al., 2009).

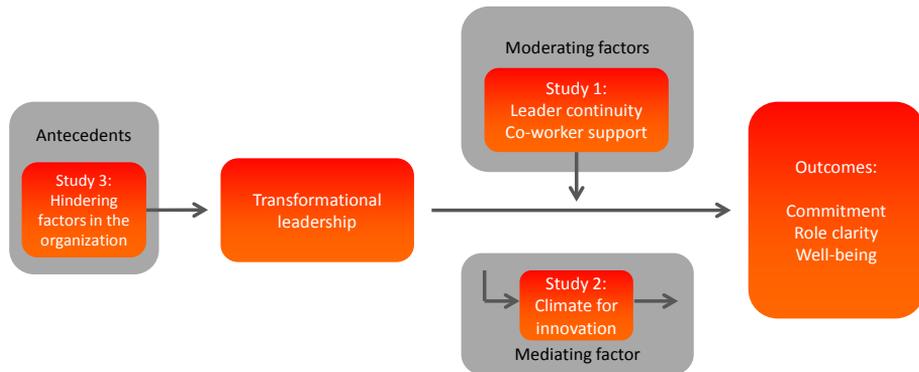
The other mechanism between transformational leadership and outcomes is moderators that either increase or decrease the impact that transformational leadership has on outcomes. These are also called boundary conditions and can provide information on how, for example, situational or contextual characteristics may influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Since transformational leadership has been considered effective regardless of context, culture, or country (Bass, 1997), boundary conditions have been largely ignored in the past. Recently, however, researchers have begun to question this assumption and argue for the importance of investigating boundary conditions of transformational leadership (Avolio et al., 2009).

The final aspect of the transformational leadership process involves antecedents that may facilitate or hinder the emergence of transformational leadership behaviour. Few studies have investigated transformational leadership antecedents (Peterson, Walumbwa, Byron, & Myrowitz, 2008; Lim & Ployhart, 2004), and in particular very little is known about the organizational conditions that serve as facilitators or inhibitors of transformational leadership behaviour (Wright & Pandey, 2009). Efforts to determine antecedents are essential to advance the transformational leadership field and for enhancing our understanding of how transformational leadership behaviour is manifested within organizations (Barabuto & Burbach, 2006), and whether certain contexts are more receptive to transformational leadership emergence than others.

### **The Present Thesis**

The overall aim of this thesis is to increase our understanding of the transformational leadership process in the context of social service organizations. More specifically, three aims have been formulated. The first research aim is to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on employee attitudes and well-being in social services. The second research aim concerns the mechanisms involved in the transformational leadership process, by focusing on those factors that may explain why transformational leadership is associated with outcomes and those factors that may increase or decrease the effect of transformational leadership on outcomes. The third research aim is to study antecedents of transformational leadership in social service organizations by focusing on those factors in an organization that

may hinder leaders from exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours. A conceptual model of the thesis is presented in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual model of this thesis.

*Study 1* addresses the first and second aims by investigating the relationship between transformational leadership and two employee outcomes, commitment and role clarity, in a social service setting. The influence of two moderators, leader continuity and co-worker support, that may increase the effect of transformational leadership on outcomes is also investigated to further our understanding of contextual influences on transformational leadership in social service organizations.

In a similar manner, *Study 2* investigates the first and second aims by examining the influence of transformational leadership on the well-being of social service employees both cross-sectionally and over time. Because little is known of the mediating mechanisms between transformational leadership and well-being, the mediating effect is explored by testing if climate for innovation can account for the way in which transformational leadership influences employee well-being.

*Study 3* sheds light over the third aim by identifying organizational factors that may hinder newly recruited managers in a social service organization from exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours. Organizational antecedents of transformational leadership have not been widely studied, and this study uses a qualitative design to identify a broad range of organizational hindering factors. By repeatedly conducting interviews with managers during their first year of leadership, leadership ideals were identified, as were hindering factors in the organization preventing these ideals from being realized in their day-to-day activities.

# The Study of Leadership

*Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on Earth.*

*James MacGregor Burns*

Leadership is one of those issues in which interest never wanes; not surprisingly, as the action of leaders ultimately has the potential to change the course of our history. Despite the high stakes and the importance of leaders' decisions, effective leadership still seems to be very much in the eye of the beholder. Often effective leadership is judged by results or outcomes that in many cases are beyond a leader's control. This makes the study of leadership difficult. It is an important concept, but applying that concept is problematic: What defines great leadership? Are great leaders always good? Is great leadership the same as effective leadership? Effective according to whom, and over which period of time? In the light of these questions, leadership seems just as much an aesthetic as a scientific phenomenon (Jugde et al., 2006). With these thoughts in mind, the following section sets out first to define leadership and then tries to give an historical overview of leadership research up until the emergence of transformational leadership theory.

## **Leadership Defined**

In the early days of study in the field of leadership, focus was placed on the individual leader, who was most likely an American male working in a large private sector organization. Today, the focus in the field of leadership has shifted from considering the leader alone to incorporating followers, peers, context and culture, representing a much wider array of individuals from public, private and not-for-profit organizations in nations around the globe. Accordingly, leadership is no longer merely described and defined as an individual characteristic but is also described in various models as being dyadic, shared, relational, strategic, global, and a complex social dynamic (Avolio, 2007; Yukl, 2010).

Proposing a definition of leadership that would be recognized by most researchers is difficult since there are so many different approaches to understanding and studying leadership. A simple definition may be that leadership is the directing of the activities of a group towards a shared goal.

Such a definition, however, overlooks the many nuances of leadership. Although Burns (1978) estimated the number of definitions of leadership to exceed 130, Yukl (2010, p. 21) concludes that most definitions of leadership see it as “...a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization”. Consequently, leadership can be understood as both a specialized role held by an individual and an influence process (Woods & West, 2010).

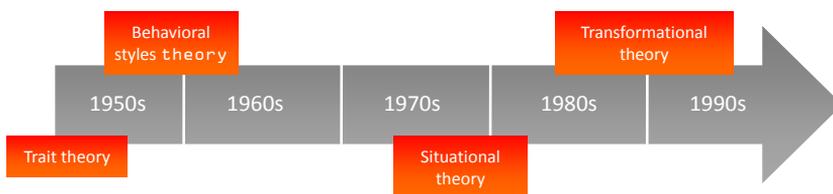
The leadership process can be envisioned as a complex exchange, involving the interaction of the leader, the follower and the context. It is both interactive and dynamic because leaders influence followers, followers influence leaders, and all parties are influenced by the context in which the exchange takes place (Pierce & Newstrom, 2011).

### **Leadership Research: A Brief Historical Review**

*Never have so many laboured  
so long to say so little.*

*Warren Bennis*

Leadership research can be traced back to the early twentieth century; however, an organized scientific approach to the study of leadership did not fully emerge until the early 1930s (House & Aditya, 1997). Although it is difficult to divide the literature on leadership into narrow timeframes with clear-cut boundaries, it is quite possible to grasp a number of central themes for the purpose of providing an overview (see Figure 2). This brief review does not, however, do justice to the wealth of perspectives on specific leadership topics, since space and purpose preclude a more in-depth treatment.



*Figure 2.* Historic overview of leadership research.

The earliest work reflected the then popular assumption in society of there being a “great man”, the thesis that great men move history forward because of their exceptional characteristics as leaders. The theory suggests that over the course of history a few men (women were completely overlooked) will move history forward substantially because of their greatness, especially in times of crisis or great social need. Although “hero worship” is still alive and well in popular culture and biographies, and this line of thinking has more sophisticated echoes later on in the trait and situational leadership periods, the great man theory is indisputable and therefore unusable as a scientific theory (Van Wart, 2003). Leadership research in the early twentieth century, however, was very much focused on leader traits and characteristics in an effort to identify successful leaders. Researchers developed personality tests and compared the results against those perceived to be leaders. The studies investigated individual traits such as intelligence, birth order, socioeconomic status, and child-rearing practices (Bird, 1940; Stogdill, 1948), and by the 1940s empirical studies had accumulated in very long lists of desirable traits (Bird 1940; Jenkins 1947). This approach was, however, problematic because the lists only became longer and longer and identified traits were not powerful predictors across situations. Leaders must, for instance, be decisive but also flexible and inclusive. As Van Waart concluded (2003, p. 216): “Without situational specificity, the endless list of traits offers little prescriptive assistance and descriptively becomes little more than a laundry list”. After Stogdill’s (1948) devastating critique of pure trait theory in 1948, it fell into disfavour as being too one-dimensional to account for the complexity of leadership.

The next wave of leadership studies came to focus on leadership behaviour and leadership style, which was a popular approach from the late 1940s to late 1960s. One early example was the Ohio State Leadership Studies, which started by collecting over 1,800 statements related to leadership behaviour. After continually distilling the behaviours, researchers arrived at two underlying factors: initiation of structure and consideration. Initiation of structure describes the concern with organizational tasks and includes activities such as organizing, planning and defining the tasks and work of employees. Consideration describes the concern with individuals and interpersonal relationships and includes behaviours related to employees’ social and emotional needs as well as their development. Empirical research sought to determine which kind of behaviour was preferable, but in the end could not arrive at any certain conclusions (Hughes, Ginnet, & Curphy, 2006; Van Waart, 2003).

As a reaction to the inconclusive results regarding effective leadership behaviour and style, researchers came to focus in the late 1960s on the influence of the situation and the context in which leadership takes place.

Effective leaders were now suggested to be those who were able to adapt their leadership style to the requirements of their followers and the situation. A number of different theories evolved, such as Blake and Mouton's (1969) leadership grid and Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership model. Other examples included Vroom and Yetton's (1973) normative decision model, Fiedler's (1964) contingency theory and House's (1971) path-goal theory. Contingency theories of leadership turned out to be very popular, for several reasons. To begin with, they were useful as an answer to the overly authoritarian styles that had developed with the rise of large organizations. Second, they were useful as teaching tools for managers, who appreciated the elegant constructs even though they were descriptively simplistic. As a class, however, these theories generally failed to meet scientific standards, probably because they tried to explain too much with too few variables (Hughes et al., 2006).

By the early 1980s there was considerable disillusionment with leadership theory and research, attributed to the fact that most models of leadership accounted for a relatively small percentage of variance in performance-related outcomes (Bryman, 1992). Out of this pessimism a new wave of alternative approaches emerged. Unlike the traditional leadership models with a focus on rational processes and leader behaviours such as leader-follower exchange relationships, the new leadership models emphasized emotions, values, and symbolic leader behaviour. Emerging from these early works were charismatic and transformational leadership theories that have become the most frequently researched of their kind over the past 20 years (Avolio et al., 2009).

# **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory is founded on studies of charismatic leadership, which was studied by Weber, who argued that the authority of charismatic leaders depended on their being seen to possess exceptional qualities which made them stand out from others. These leaders often emerge in times of crises and persuade others to follow them, examples of such leaders being Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King — and also Hitler (Hughes et al., 2006).

James MacGregor Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership. He studied political leaders in the United States, and suggested that leadership could be expressed in two different forms, transformational or transactional leadership, which in his opinion were the opposites of each other. Transactional leaders have an exchange relationship with their followers. This exchange can be financial, psychological or political, and money can be exchanged for productivity, praise for loyalty, or promises for votes, but regardless of the exchange the relationship between leader and follower lasts no longer than does the exchange. It does not form any deeper relationship between leader and follower. To accomplish change, Burns argued, another form of leadership is required: transformational leadership. The transformational leader speaks to the follower's values and need to be part of a group which has a higher purpose. By pointing out the problems with the current situation or status quo and painting a compelling vision for the future that reflects the values of their followers, transformational leaders help their followers to perform beyond expectations in an effort to make their vision come true (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Hughes et a., 2006).

Since Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership, a number of theories have evolved in his wake, and versions of transformational leadership have been proposed by several theorists including Bass (1985), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Sashkin (1988), and Tichy and Devanna (1986). The most prominent of these, and the one used most often, is Bass' theory of transformational and transactional leadership (Yukl, 1999). Bass' theory differs from Burns' in the sense that transactional and transformational leadership are seen not as being at opposite sides on a continuum but as two different dimensions where a leader can be both transactional and transformational at the same time but to different degrees. Also, in opposition to Burns, who argued that leaders should strive for a transformational leadership only, Bass argued that leaders can and should be both transactional and transformational and that a combination of these two is the most successful kind. In addition, Bass argued in favour of an augmentation relationship between transformational and transactional

leadership, where transformational leadership should and does account for unique variance in performance ratings (or other outcomes) over and above the variance accounted for by active transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders display four types of behaviours that enable followers to transcend self-interest and perform beyond expectations: *idealized influence* is exerted when the leader acts as a role model and gains the trust and respect of his or her followers. *Inspirational motivation* includes articulating a compelling vision of the future, and having high expectations that followers will achieve more than they thought possible and ultimately realize that vision. *Intellectual stimulation* involves encouraging followers to challenge assumptions, reframe problems and take risks, to find new ways of working and to be creative. Finally, the *individually considerate* leader spends time coaching and giving his or her personal attention to each follower's needs and development. Furthermore, Bass together with Avolio (Avolio & Bass, 1991) developed the Full Range of Leadership model that also differentiates between two transactional leadership behaviours (contingent reward and management-by-exception) and includes laissez faire or non-leadership, see Figure 3. They also developed a test, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), to measure the different dimensions in their model, which today is the most commonly used measure of transformational leadership and also the scale used in this thesis.

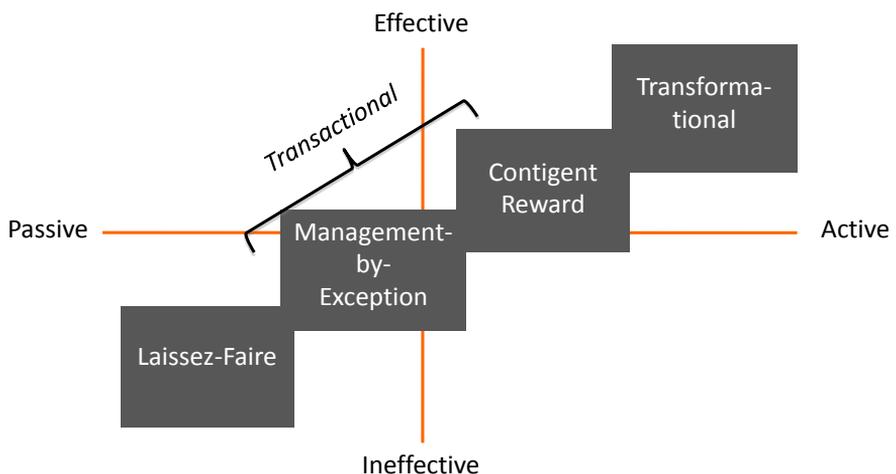


Figure 3. The Full Range of Leadership model (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Comparing charismatic to transformational leadership, researchers representing the transformational camp commonly suggest that charisma is but one part, not all, of what constitutes transformational leadership, and often idealized influence and inspirational motivation are combined into one subscale representing charisma (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006). Some also argue that transformational leadership is more of an ethical or moral leadership, since the vision of transformational leaders should always build on the needs of their followers, whereas the vision of charismatic leaders is just as likely to be only in the leaders' own best interest (Hughes et al., 2006). Researchers representing the charismatic camp are more inclined to suggest that the theories are similar, and since Weber introduced his rather narrow conceptualization of charisma, more modern versions of charismatic leadership (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House & Shamir, 1993) have taken a much broader perspective which have more in common with transformational leadership.

### **Outcomes of Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership has attracted a vast amount of empirical research attention, and since 1990 more studies have been devoted to this leadership style than to all other major theories of leadership combined (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). These studies suggest that transformational leadership has an important effect on those criteria of interest. In the first meta-analysis of 39 studies using the MLQ, Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) found that transformational leadership was positively correlated with subordinate effectiveness. Contingent reward correlated positively with the criteria as well, but the results were weaker and less consistent.

Five subsequent meta-analyses replicated these results, essentially, although with variations. Fuller, Patterson, Hester and Stringer's (1996) meta-analysis found similar relationships, while focusing only on the charisma (idealized influence) subscale of the MLQ. DeGroot, Kiker, and Cross (2000) also replicated Lowe et al.'s (1996) findings, and examined additional outcomes including effort, job satisfaction, and commitment. They also reported that the relationship to performance varied when leadership and performance were examined at individual versus group level, concluding that the "results show an effect size at the group level of analysis that is double in magnitude relative to the effect size at the individual level" (DeGroot et al., 2000, p. 363). Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio (2002) updated and extended Lowe et al.'s (1996) meta-analysis by including both leader and job satisfaction, and confirmed previous findings. Judge and Piccolo's (2004) meta-analysis also replicated previous findings. They tried in addition to add clarity to the long-running debate regarding the difference between charismatic and transformational leadership, and found no

significant difference in the overall validities of charismatic versus transformational leadership. They found, too, that the differences in validities between transformational leadership and contingent-reward leadership were fairly small and that the contingent-reward even displayed somewhat higher correlations in business settings and in relation to follower job satisfaction, follower motivation, and leader job performance. However, the validities of transformational leadership were stronger under better research designs and were more consistent across study settings. In the most recent meta-analysis, Wang, Oh, Courtright and Colberg (2011) found that transformational leadership predicted performance at all the individual, group and organizational levels of analysis, and that the effect of transformational leadership was stronger on contextual (extra role) performance than on task (in role) performance. A comparison of these meta-analytic findings suggests that the effect sizes on performance is generally smaller than that on follower attitudinal and motivational outcomes; that is, transformational leadership seems to have a stronger effect on employee attitudes and motivation than on employee performance.

Besides these meta-analyses, recent research has tried to link transformational leadership to other outcomes of interest. A number of studies have investigated the effect of transformational leadership on employee attitudes and psychological states, and have consistently demonstrated a positive relationship with factors such as commitment (e.g., Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Korek, Felfe, & Zaepernick-Rothe, 2010), empowerment (e.g., Barroso Castro, Villegas Perinan, & Casillas Bueno, 2008; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009) self-efficacy (e.g., Salanova, Lorente, Chambel, & Martinez, 2011; Walumbwa, Avolio, & Zhu, 2008) and identification (e.g., Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Wang & Howell, 2012). Transformational leadership has also been associated with employee well-being. In a recent review, Skakon et al. (2010) found that, out of the 13 identified studies, 12 reported a significant relationship between transformational leadership and increased affective well-being, job satisfaction, and reduced stress and burnout among employees. Only one study found no relationship between transformational leadership and burnout (Stordeur, D'hoore, & Vandenberghe, 2001).

Studies carried out have also investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee behaviour, and these showed decreased frequencies of job withdrawal behaviours (e.g., Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003) and workplace aggression (e.g., Hepworth & Towler, 2004). Numerous experiments have been conducted to study the effect of transformational leadership on creativity, and the majority of these studies support the idea of a positive impact of transformational leadership on creative performance (e.g., Hoyt & Blascovich, 2003; Jung, 2001). There have also been several experimental studies investigating the impact of

transformational leadership on group processes suggesting that transformational leaders enhance group potency (e.g., Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Lester, Meglino, & Korsgaard, 2002), group cohesiveness (e.g., Bass et al., 2003; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2003), and collective efficacy (Kark et al., 2003). Although these findings present convincing arguments for the effectiveness of transformational leadership, there are still important shortcomings in the transformational literature that need to be addressed.

### **Critique of Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory has been subject to criticism, and its potential weaknesses have been identified over the years (e.g., van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999). One criticism is that transformational leadership is elitist and antidemocratic, and that too much emphasis is placed on the 'heroic' aspects of leadership (Northouse, 2007). Because transformational leaders create and communicate a vision in an effort to achieve change, it may seem as though they are acting independently of their followers. This criticism has been opposed by others including Bass and Riggio (2006), who argue that transformational leaders can be either directive or participative, and either authoritarian or democratic. Further, advocates of transformational leadership point out that both the MLQ and the Full Range of Leadership model are, if anything, an attempt to move beyond the charismatic 'great man' scenario by placing just as much emphasis on follower behaviour. Also, as Bass argues, charisma is only one part of the transformational leadership concept (Northouse, 2007).

Related to this criticism is the idea that transformational leadership has the potential to be abused. Transformational leaders change employees' values and provide a new vision of the future. Who decides if the new vision is better than the old one? Who determines whether the new direction taken is a good one? History provides us with examples of leaders who have exploited their followers and where their vision has eventually led to the death of their followers. This is problematic, and is an issue that transformational leadership researchers have tried to address in a number of ways. Bass originally argued that transformational leadership was not necessarily beneficial leadership (Bass, 1985), but later modified his view that transformational leadership is moral leadership serving the good of the group, organization or country and should never harm followers (Bass, 1997; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The term 'pseudotransformational' has been proposed to incorporate leaders who exhibit transformational behaviours but cater to their own self-interest (Bass & Riggio, 2006). However, partly as a reaction to the issue of charisma contained in transformational leadership, Avolio and Gardner (2005) developed the concept of authentic leadership, sometimes described as transformational leadership without charisma. It includes aspects such as leader self-awareness, relational transparency, an

internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing and has been positively associated with, for example, organizational citizenship behavior, commitment, and performance (Avolio, et al., 2009).

Another concern is that transformational leadership may be a personality trait or personal predisposition which might be difficult to change, rather than a behaviour that can be trained and developed (Bryman, 1992). Although many scholars such as Weber, House, and Bass emphasize that transformational leadership is concerned with leader behaviour, empirical studies have demonstrated relationships between personality and transformational leadership. Bono and Judge (2004) found in their meta-analysis that extraversion was the strongest predictor of transformational leadership, although all of the Big Five traits, except for conscientiousness, were significantly related to transformational leadership. They concluded that even though their findings provided some support for the dispositional basis of transformational leadership, especially regarding the charisma dimension, the generally weak associations suggest that non-dispositional predictors of transformational leadership play an important role. Moreover, studies of transformational leadership interventions have revealed that transformational leadership can be learned, and that transformational leadership training can result not only in increased transformational behaviours but also in increased employee commitment and performance (e.g., Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996).

Further, the lack of conceptual clarity regarding the different dimensions of transformational leadership has been criticized (Tracey & Hinkin, 1998). More specifically, the four transformational dimensions identified by the MLQ (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) have shown substantial overlap, which suggests that these dimensions are not clearly defined. Also, these four factors are often highly correlated in the MLQ, which indicates that they are not distinct factors (Tejeda, Scandura, & Pillai, 2001). Further, it is unclear what unites the four dimensions of transformational leadership compared to other leadership behaviour (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). This raises concerns about the validity of transformational leadership theory and the MLQ. The factor structure of the MLQ has been extensively tested and validated (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2003), but some researchers have been unable to replicate the nine-factor structure of the Full Range of Leadership model (e.g., Tejeda et al., 2001) and have typically found fewer than the nine factors proposed. Antonakis et al. (2003) suggest that these inconsistent findings may be due to the clearly heterogeneous samples of leaders from different cultures, organizations and organizational levels. In addition, Bass and Riggio (2006) argue that it is important to distinguish which are the theorized subcomponents of transformational leaders and the Full Range of Leadership model for the purposes of conceptual clarity and for leadership

development. However, it has also recently been suggested that it may be more fruitful to investigate the sub-dimensions of transformational leadership independently without using the higher-order label of transformational leadership (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

A final criticism revolves around the lack of specification as to how transformational leaders influence their followers and under which conditions transformational leadership emerges and is effective. Yukl (1999) argues that it is a major conceptual weakness of transformational leadership theory not to identify the essential influence process. Bryman (2004) joins this line of thinking, and adds that if the mechanism of the way in which leaders are supposed to influence their followers is poorly understood, charismatic leadership theories are likely to be a short-lived phenomenon. Pawar (2003) suggests that addressing the issue of context in transformational leadership research is essential to be able to predict and explain transformational leadership effectiveness. Altogether, the lack of knowledge of the transformational leadership process is a major concern within transformational leadership theory (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) and the purpose of this thesis is to address this issue.

# **The Transformational Leadership Process**

An important next step in the study of transformational leadership is to learn more about its processes, such as why it evokes desirable outcomes and under which conditions transformational leadership emerges and is effective (Avolio et al., 2009). These issues are examined in the section below, beginning with the influence process and moving to boundary conditions and antecedents of transformational leadership.

## **The Influence Process: Mediation**

Despite the enormous interest in transformational leadership theory and the vast amount of studies conducted on the subject, the underlying influence process of transformational leadership is still not well understood (Avolio et al., 2009, van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Understanding how transformational leaders influence followers' attitudes, motivation, and behaviour is important for explaining why transformational leaders have a positive effect on employees. Knowledge of the influence process, in terms of identifying how transformational leadership behaviour affects different types of mediating variables and outcomes, would also strengthen transformational leadership theory (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999). In 1999, Bass concluded that much more examination of the transformational leadership process was needed (Bass, 1999). Since then, and especially over the past decade, there has been an explosion of studies exploring mediators of transformational leadership. However, as pointed out by Judge et al. (2006, p. 210), the focus has been placed on mediators in "such a rush that it is difficult to integrate and make sense of the efforts", and these authors call for "more focus on integrative efforts and relatively less focus on the continued generation of individual mediator variables". In an effort to integrate two theoretical models, transformational leadership and work climate, the present thesis is responding to this call.

In an attempt to assess the current state of the art of mediators of transformational leadership, a literature review of empirical studies published in international peer-reviewed outlets was conducted. These studies were assessed by way of an electronic data base search that included databases such as PsychInfo, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. In order to limit the number of studies so as to be better able to acquire an overview, experimental studies and studies of charismatic leadership were excluded. While the aim of this review was to cover as much of the relevant research as possible, it has no claim of being exhaustive; it is rather an attempt to acquire an overview of previous research. Among the (127) identified mediational studies, the five most common outcomes studied were

performance (34 studies), satisfaction (14 studies), commitment (14 studies), OCB (14 studies) and creativity/innovation (14 studies). Previous studies of transformational mediators can be divided into four lines of research, with the focus on: (1) followers' self-perceptions, emotions, and attitudes, (2) followers' perceptions of their team, (3) followers' perceptions of their leader, and (4) followers' perceptions of their job and working conditions, see Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Overview of the most frequently investigated mediators of transformational leadership*

Follower- related	Team-related	Leader-related	Working conditions
Affect	Cohesion	Leader support	Climate
Basic needs	Collective efficacy	LMX	Dev. Opportunities
Empowerment	Communication	Trust	Goal clarity
Engagement	Team collaboration		Involvement
Identification	Team empowerment		Meaningful work
Intrinsic motivation	Team learning		Org. justice
Job satisfaction	Team potency		Org. support
Self-efficacy	Team processes		Participation
Self-concordant goals	Trust in the team		Role clarity/conflict
			Social support

Studies of *followers' self-perceptions, emotions, and attitudes* have centred on the mediating effect of constructs such as self-efficacy, empowerment, and identification, but other constructs such as motivation, basic needs, self-concordant goals, engagement, positive and negative affect and job satisfaction have also been examined (e.g., Bono & Judge, 2003; Charbonneau, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001; Chuang, Judge, & Liaw, 2012; Frooman, Mendelson, & Murphy, 2012; Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, Quaquebeke, & Van Dick, 2012; Salanova et al., 2011; Stenling & Tafvelin, 2013). The mediating effect of empowerment has been investigated in six studies and empowerment mediates the effect of transformational leadership on a wide variety of outcomes including: commitment, job satisfaction, creativity, in-role performance, intention to quit, team effectiveness, meaning in life, and well-being (Avey, Hughes, Norman, & Luthans, 2008; Avolio et al., 2004; Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Castro et al., 2008; Gumusloughlu & Ilsev, 2009; Krishnan, 2012; Özaralli, 2003), but not on cynicism (Avey et al., 2008) or leader satisfaction (Bartram & Casimir,

2007). Self-efficacy has been examined in at least nine studies and proven to mediate the effect of transformational leadership on performance, creativity, and well-being (Cho, Park, & Michel, 2011; Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Liao & Chuang, 2007; Liu, Siu, & Shi, 2010; Nielsen & Munir, 2009; Nielsen, Yarker, Randall, & Munir, 2009; Pillai & Williams, 2004; Salanova et al., 2011), but not on sleep quality (Munir & Nielsen, 2009) or job satisfaction (Nielsen et al., 2009). Followers' identification with the leader has been found to mediate the effect on job satisfaction, self-efficacy, empowerment, job performance, followers' dependency on their leader, and voice behaviour directed at the supervisor (Hobman, Jackson, Jimmieson, & Martin, 2011; Kark et al., 2003; Liu, Zhu, & Yang 2010; Walumbwa & Hartnell, 2011; Wang & Howell, 2012). Followers' identification with their team or work unit has demonstrated mediating effect on collectivist attitudes, collective efficacy, empowerment, and voice behaviours directed at co-workers (Cregan, Bartram, & Stanton, 2009; Kark et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2010; Wang & Howell, 2012), but not on job satisfaction or job performance (Hobman et al., 2011).

Other studies have examined the mediating potential of intrinsic motivation, and Kim and Lee (2011) found, for example, that this mediated the effect of transformational leadership on creative behaviour in a Korean sample. Frustration and optimism have also been examined and found, for example, to mediate the effect of transformational leadership on performance in a pharmaceutical firm in Australia (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). Within this line of research, theories such as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986), self-concept-based theories of leadership (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory have been applied in order to understand the influence process of transformational leaders.

The majority of studies with a focus on *team-related mediators* have investigated the mediating effect of collective efficacy, and team potency, cohesion, team empowerment, team learning, team processes, collaboration, trust in the team and team communication have also been investigated (e.g., Boies & Howell, 2009; Chi, Chung, & Tsai, 2011; Cole, Bedeian, & Bruch, 2011; Gundersen, Hellesoy, & Raeder, 2012; Sanders & Shipton, 2012). Collective efficacy mediates the effect of transformational leadership on commitment, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, well-being, job withdrawal, and group creativity (Kurt, Duyar, & Calik, 2012; Nielsen et al., 2009; Ross & Gray, 2006; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, & Shi, 2004; Zhang, Tsui, & Wang, 2011). Furthermore, Shaubroeck, Lam, and Cha (2007) have found mediating effects of team potency on performance in a sample of financial service teams in Hong Kong and the United States. In a study of mental healthcare workers in the Netherlands, cohesion partially mediated the effect on innovative behaviour (Sanders & Shipton, 2012),

while team communication mediated the effect of transformational leadership on project performance of R&D workers in the Taiwanese computer server industry (Yang, Wu, Wang, & Chin, 2010). Theoretical frameworks used in these studies came mainly from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) but some studies also used social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

The studies of *followers' attitudes towards their leader* as a mediator of transformational leadership have focused mainly on the influence of trust and leader-member exchange (LMX). The importance of trust in the leader has been demonstrated in at least ten studies, and trust mediates the effect of transformational leadership on a wide range of outcomes including performance, satisfaction, psychological well-being, OCB, voting behaviour, employee moral judgment, motivation and team potency (Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Casimir, Waldman, Bartram, & Yang, 2006; Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012; Liu et al., 2010; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Rich, 2001; Pillai, Williams, Lowe, & Jung, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter 1990; Schwepker & Good, 2010; Shaubroeck, Lam, & Peng 2011; Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011). Three studies have investigated the mediating effect of leader-member exchange and found support for full mediation on turnover intention and job search behaviour (Hughes, Avey, & Nixon, 2010) and partial mediation on commitment (Lee, 2005), but no mediation on OCB (Asgari, Silong, Ahmad, & Sama, 2008). One study also found that leader support mediated the effect of transformational leadership on employee customer orientation (Liaw, Chi, & Chuang, 2010). The theories applied in this line of research were mainly LMX theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), although Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) perspective on trust was also applied.

Finally, *followers' perceptions of their job and working conditions* as a mediator of transformational leadership have been scrutinized, such as justice perceptions, meaningfulness, work characteristics and work climate. Studies of justice perceptions have demonstrated that the way in which employees experience interpersonal, procedural and interpersonal justice mediates the effect of transformational leaders on OCB, trust and cynicism regarding organizational change (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen, & Lowe, 2009; Tremblay, 2010; Wu, Neubert, & Yi, 2007; Zeinabadi & Rastegarpour, 2010). The experience of having a meaningful job mediates the effect of transformational leadership on psychological well-being, work engagement, and affective commitment (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007; Aryee, Walumbwa, Zhou, & Hartnell, 2012; Korek et al., 2010). Various work characteristics such as goal clarity, role clarity, role conflict, work-life conflict, opportunity for development, social and organizational support, participation, and involvement have been

found to mediate the effect of transformational leadership on employee well-being, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, motivation and performance (e.g., Cho et al., 2011; Moynihan, Pandey, & Wright, 2012; Munir, Nielsen, Garde, Albertsen, & Carneiro, 2012; Nielsen, Randall, Yarker, & Brenner, 2008; Nielsen, Yarker, Brenner, Randall, & Borg, 2008; Nielsen & Daniels, 2012; Thoonen et al., 2011). The theories applied in these studies included the self-concept theory of leadership (e.g., Shamir et al., 1993), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and Festinger's (1950) theory of social influence.

Another aspect of the working environment that may mediate the effect of transformational leadership, and one which just has started to attract research attention, is the psychological or organizational climate in the organization. Although this review has shown that many mediators have been investigated as explanations for the transformational leadership influence process, theoretical integration of these findings and theoretical models to understand this process is still limited. In this thesis it is suggested that theories of psychological and organizational climate may be useful in this respect.

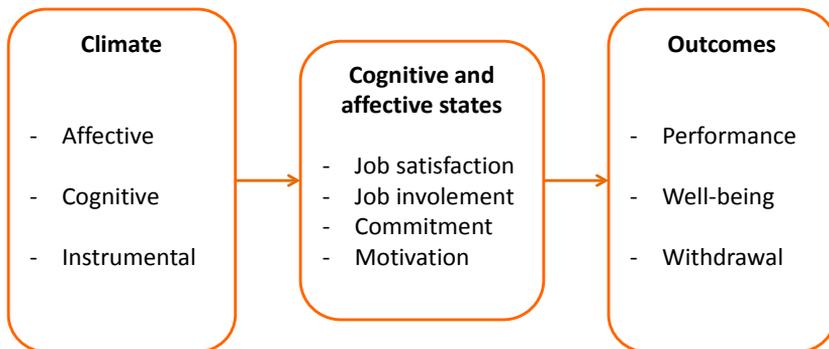
### ***Climate as a mediator of transformational leadership***

During the past decade there has been increased interest in organizational climates as meaningful contextual elements of organizational systems. Psychological climates have been described as including perceptually based descriptions of relevant organizational features, events, practices and processes (Jones & James, 1979). An organizational climate can be created when members of an organization share the same perceptions of these characteristics (Joyce & Slocum, 1984). Climate constitutes the tone and atmosphere in which the employees work, and may be understood as an intervening variable between the organizational context and the behaviour of its members (Patterson et al., 2005). While a number of studies examine global or general climate, recent climate research tends to focus on specific climates according to a particular area of interest (Carr, Schmidt, Ford, & DeShon, 2003; James et al., 2008).

Since employees' climate perceptions are suggested to be shaped by their immediate organizational context (Schneider, 1983), leadership on the part of the immediate supervisor may serve as "a key filter in the interpretations that provide the basis for subordinates' climate perceptions" (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989, p. 547). Supervisors hold a position between the strategic top-management and the operational base and serve as interpretive filters, since they are the ones who implement organizational goals and policies and communicate which part of the work processes to focus on the most. Accordingly, supervisors influence employee attitudes and behaviours both through the leader-subordinate relationship and because they put

organizational strategy into practice (Pereira & Gomes, 2012). Transformational leaders, more specifically, may be powerful agents in transforming employees' perception of climate at work. By articulating a compelling vision of the work task, inspiring enthusiasm and optimism about the work ahead, serving as role models at work and encouraging new ways of thinking and solving problems while recognizing each employee's needs and contributions, transformational leaders may clearly communicate the organizational policies, practices and procedures at work and thereby foster and form the perception of climate at work (Liao & Chuang, 2007). This supports the suggestion that climate may serve as an important mechanism through which transformational leaders influence employees.

In two meta-analyses, models of how climate is related to employee outcomes have been specified and tested. Carr et al. (2003) specified a model built on the theoretical work of a number of scholars. Firstly, in order to organize and synthesize the climate literature, they used the climate taxonomy developed by Ostroff (1993) which consists of three higher order facets: affective, cognitive and instrumental climate perceptions. Secondly, in order to understand how climate perceptions impact on important individual and organizational-level outcomes, they tested a model outlined by Kopelman, Brief and Guzzo (1990), who had refined earlier models by James and Jones (1974) and proposed that the impact of climate perceptions on outcomes such as performance, withdrawal and well-being occurs through its effect on employee cognitive and affective states. Examples of these states are job satisfaction, job involvement, commitment, and work motivation (see Figure 4).



*Figure 4.* Carr et al.'s (2003) conceptual model of climate perceptions.

The idea that climate perceptions are mediated by cognitive and affective states in its effect on outcomes finds support in Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of planned behaviour, which suggests that cognitive and affective

states result from perceptions of the work environment which, combined with opportunities to act and associated beliefs, become the immediate antecedent of behaviour. It is also consistent with Bandura's social cognitive theory of motivation (e.g., Wood & Bandura, 1989), which suggests that performance is determined by the cognitive-affective states of sustained interest and positive affective reactions. In their meta-analysis, Carr and colleagues (2003) tested to see whether job satisfaction and commitment, as examples of cognitive and affective states, mediated the effect of climate perceptions on job performance, psychological well-being and withdrawal, and found support for their model.

In the other meta-analysis, Parker et al. (2003) specified a similar model where climate perceptions were related to work attitudes (including job satisfaction, job involvement and commitment) and work motivation, which in turn were related to performance. They found support for their model and demonstrated that the effect of work attitudes on performance was partially mediated by work motivation. These two meta-analyses demonstrate the potential of climate to predict important employee outcomes, as well as offering a theoretical model not only to understand and integrate the findings in the climate literature but also, as proposed in this thesis, the influence process of transformational leadership.

Empirical studies of climate as a mediator between transformational leadership and outcomes have investigated the mediating effect of different types of climates such as a trusting climate, service climate, positive affective climate, climate for involvement, safety climate, and climate for innovation. A trusting climate partially mediated the effect of transformational leadership on knowledge-exchange behaviours among Taiwanese R&D workers (Shih, Chiang, & Chen, 2012). Further, service climate partially mediated the effect on service performance among hairstylists in Taiwan (Liao & Chuang, 2007), and a positive affective climate mediated the effect on performance-related outcomes under conditions of high trust in a diverse sample of German industries (Menges, Walter, Vogel, & Bruch, 2011). Richardson and Vanderberg (2005) found that climate for involvement fully mediated the effect of transformational leadership on work-unit absenteeism and partially mediated that on OCB, but did not mediate the effect on turnover. Zohar (2002) demonstrated that the effect of transformational leadership on minor injuries was fully mediated by a positive safety climate.

Climate for innovation is another specific climate that has attracted increasing research attention. It is defined as the extent to which values and norms of an organization emphasize innovation (West & Anderson, 1996; West & Wallace, 1991) and includes the support and encouragement provided by an organization to its employees to take the initiative and explore innovative approaches (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). Ekvall (1996) stressed the importance of open and straightforward communication

in the organization to achieve a positive climate for innovation. So far, empirical studies have shown that climate for innovation mediates the effect of transformational leadership on innovation (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003; Jung, Wu, & Chow, 2008; Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg, & Boerner, 2008). However, in line with previous models of climate at work, it would be of interest to examine whether climate for innovation also mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and other climate-related outcomes such as well-being. To conclude, climate perceptions provide a theoretical framework for understanding the influence process through which transformational leadership influences employee outcomes; however, more studies are needed to explore further this potential and to integrate transformational leadership theory with theories of climate at work.

### **Boundary Conditions: Moderation**

Another way to study further the transformational leadership process is to examine the boundary conditions under which transformational leadership is more (or less) effective in predicting follower attitudes and behaviours (Avolio et al., 2009). Identifying the boundary conditions of transformational leadership is important because this facilitates efforts to explore those situations when leadership works best (Chuang et al., 2012). However, so far there has been little focus on whether the effects of transformational leadership are bounded. One reason for this lack of moderator or boundary-conditions exploration may be the assumption that these variables are irrelevant. Bass and Riggio (2006), for example, argued that transformational leadership theory is not a contingency model of leadership and that transformational leadership works equally well regardless of context, country, or culture. This is a bold claim, since cultural values, and therefore implicit assumptions about leadership, presumably differ between cultures and countries. Some empirical evidence, particularly from the GLOBE studies, supports the universality of transformational leadership (e.g., Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman, 1999), while other studies suggest, for example, that cultural aspects such as collectivism influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership on outcomes and thereby challenge the universality of transformational leadership (e.g., Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Nevertheless, well-established theoretical models should include specifications not only among constructs, but also the boundaries or domains within which the theory is expected to unfold (Dubin, 1976). Some of the early work of transformational leadership stressed the importance of such moderation effects (e.g., Lowe et al., 1996; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996b); however, it has not been until recently that researchers have devoted more attention to this aspect of the transformational leadership process. Judge et al. (2006) reviewed empirical studies investigating moderators of transformational leadership, and found

that the five outcomes most investigated were effectiveness, performance, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment. Studies investigating moderating effects or boundary conditions may be divided into three categories: follower-individual differences, leader-related moderators, and finally contextual moderators.

*Individual differences* variables reflect characteristics of the follower or the employee that influence the effects of transformational leadership. So far, research has demonstrated that variables such as goal setting (Whittington, Goodwin, & Murray, 2004), growth need strength, need for autonomy (Wofford, Whittington, & Goodwin, 2001), values (Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005), cultural orientation (e.g., Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003) employee affectivity (Chuang et al., 2012; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Jung, Yammarino, & Lee, 2009) and efficacy (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2008) are moderators of transformational leadership.

For example, goal-setting moderated the effects of transformational leadership on both affective commitment and performance in a way that enhanced the strength of the relationships (Whittington et al., 2004). Wofford and colleagues (2001) demonstrated that growth need strength and need for autonomy also enhanced the effect of transformational leadership; such as when need for autonomy and growth need strength of employees were high, transformational leadership led to higher group effectiveness. They also found that growth need strength strengthened the relationships between transformational leadership and satisfaction with the leader. De Cremer (2002) conducted an experiment that showed that transformational leaders who were perceived as more charismatic and more willing to make self-sacrifices were leaders who facilitated cooperation between team members, although only in the case of students with a pro-self orientation and not those with a pro-social orientation. Furthermore, Epitropaki and Martin (2005) found that the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational identification was stronger for employees of low positive affectivity as well as employees of high negative affectivity. Spreitzer et al. (2005) found that valuing traditionality, in terms of emphasizing respect for hierarchy, weakened the relationship between transformational leadership and superior-rated effectiveness such that, according to studies done in both Taiwan and the United States, transformational leaders were perceived as effective when the superior was a traditionalist.

*Leader-related moderators* have also been investigated, such as the influence of the level of the leader. The meta-analysis by Fuller et al. (1996) showed that that the relationship between charismatic leadership and performance was stronger for upper-level leaders. Judge and Piccolo (2004), on the other hand, found that transformational leadership had a stronger impact on performance in the case of leaders at the supervisory level than in

the case of those in middle or upper management. Also investigating the moderating effects of leader level, Avolio et al. (2004) demonstrated that the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment is more positive when the supervision is indirect (i.e., leader-follower structural distance is high). Other leader-related moderators were followers' attitudes or emotions towards their leader such as trust and loyalty, as well as followers' perception of social and physical distance (Cole, Bruch, & Shamir, 2009; Howell, Neufeld, & Avolio, 2005; Jung et al., 2009).

*Contextual variables* have also been found to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and outcomes (e.g., Keller, 2006; Walumbwa, Lawler, & Avolio, 2007). Interestingly, the effect of transformational leadership seems to vary by organizational sector. In Lowe et al.'s (1996) meta-analysis, the relationships between transformational leadership behaviours and effectiveness were significantly higher in public compared to private organizations. Fuller et al. (1996) found that the relationship between transformational leadership and perceived effectiveness was stronger in military than in civilian samples, and the effect of transformational leadership on performance was stronger in student and military samples than in civilian samples. Similarly, Judge and Piccolo (2004) found that the effect of transformational leadership on outcomes was stronger in military settings.

Another aspect of the organizational context that moderates the effect of transformational leadership is the organizational climate. Felfe and Schyns (2002) found that the relationship between transformational leadership and self-efficacy was positive when the climate was good, and negative when it was bad. Also, aspects of the external context seem to moderate the effect of transformational leadership. De Hoogh et al. (2004) found that high levels of environmental uncertainty strengthen the relationship between CEOs' charismatic leadership and subordinates' perception of their performance. They also found that the relationship between charismatic leadership and firm profitability was stronger when the CEO was a firm owner rather than a managing director.

Job characteristics also seem to influence the effects of transformational leadership. Felfe and Schyns (2002) found that high task demands neutralized the effect of transformational leadership on self-efficacy, such that the relationship was negative when task demands were low and insignificant when task demands were high. Further, job enrichment substituted the effect of transformational leadership on commitment, and the relationship was stronger when the supervisor was indirect and structural distance therefore higher (Whittington et al., 2004). In sum, these findings have greatly contributed both theoretically and empirically to the understanding of transformational leadership. Nevertheless, more research on boundary conditions is needed (Avolio et al., 2009). In this thesis, two

aspects that have been overlooked by previous research are investigated regarding their potential to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and outcomes: the role of co-workers and need for time.

### ***Co-worker support***

The role of co-workers in the transformational leadership process has not received much research attention. However, there are some indications of the significance of team members to the effect of transformational leadership. For example, Curphy (1991) found that it was easier to be perceived as a charismatic leader in teams that worked closely together and had high levels of interdependence. Another aspect of the influence of co-workers is the perceived amount of support from colleagues experienced by an individual. Co-worker support has been defined as the extent to which employees can count on their colleagues to help and support them when needed (Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004). It includes caring, tangible aid and information (Ducharme & Martin, 2000; Parris, 2003), and it may increase employees' comfort within the organization by fulfilling the need for esteem, approval and affiliation (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). This in turn may enhance employee attitudes such as commitment. By helping to make employees' work experience emotionally satisfying this can translate over time into an emotional attachment on the part of employees to their employer organization (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010).

Empirical studies have found a positive relationship between co-worker support and employee attitudes such as commitment (Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). It has also been suggested that support from co-workers protects the individual from the worst aspects of role ambiguity (Cobb, 1976). This means that spending time with co-workers may help employees to better understand their role in the organization, and therefore enhance their role clarity, for example. Further, meta-analytic evidence indicates that satisfaction with co-workers decreases negative attitudes such as role ambiguity (Fischer & Gitelson, 1983). On these grounds, it is expected that co-worker support will strengthen the relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcomes.

### ***Leader continuity***

Another aspect that has been greatly overlooked in previous research is the potential moderating effect of time (Shamir, 2011). Hughes et al. (2006) go so far as to argue that time is the most overlooked variable in transformational leadership research. The rationale for this statement is that leadership does not happen overnight, and that it takes some time to build up trusting relationships with employees and to actually influence employees. Transformational leaders need time to develop and articulate

their vision and enhance their followers' emotional levels. They need time to empower employees so that they can fulfil the vision the leader articulated. Even though time seems to be a central aspect in the transformational leadership process, few studies have adopted a time perspective or investigated the moderating effect of time. One exception is a study done by Ling, Simsek, Lubatkin, and Veiga (2008), who found that CEO tenure moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance, showing that the longer the transformational CEO had worked in the organization, the stronger was the effect on firm performance. Also, this being an aspect of time, leader continuity in terms of employees' tenure with their leader reflects the amount of time that the leader has had to build close and trusting relationships as a means of influencing employees. This may also influence the effect the transformational leader has on employees. On these grounds, it is assumed that leader continuity will moderate the effect of transformational leadership such that the effect will be stronger the longer the employee is exposed to a transformational leader.

To conclude, it can be assumed that co-worker support and leader continuity are two factors that can influence the relationship between transformational leadership and outcomes. Since more research on boundary conditions of transformational leadership is needed, co-worker support and leader continuity form the subject of investigation in this thesis.

### **Antecedents of Transformational Leadership**

Over the past decade, a number of influences on transformational leadership have been identified. The antecedents studied can be divided into three different lines of research: those related to the leader, the follower, or the situation. The majority of studies has focused on the influence of the personal characteristics of the leader on transformational leadership (e.g. Peterson et al., 2008; Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010), and two large-scale meta-analyses examining dispositional and demographic antecedents have been conducted. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) summarized the influence of gender on transformational leadership ratings, and found that women are more likely to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours than men, although the average difference is quite small (being only one-tenth of a standard deviation). Bono and Judge (2004) summarized the influence of personality and found extraversion to be the strongest predictor of transformational leadership, although all of the Big Five traits, except for conscientiousness, were significantly related to transformational leadership.

Other individual differences variables that have been found to have a positive influence on transformational leadership are early childhood experiences in terms of a secure attachment style (Popper, Mayseless, & Castelnovo, 2000), internal locus of control (Howell & Avolio, 1993),

emotional intelligence (Barabuto & Burbach, 2006) and impression management (Sosik, Avolio, & Jung, 2002). Further, cynicism (Bommer, Rubin & Baldwin, 2004), motivation (Barabuto, 2005) and positive mood (Chi et al., 2011) are also related to ratings of transformational leadership behaviours.

Studies that focus on the followers' impact on their leaders' ability to exhibit transformational leadership have demonstrated that followers' well-being (Nielsen, Randall, et al., 2008), personality (Bono, Hooper & Yoon, 2012; Hetland, Sandal & Johnsen, 2007) and self-development needs (Dvir & Shamir, 2003) influence the leader's display of transformational leadership behaviours. However, one limitation regarding each of these lines of study where the focus is on either the leader or the follower is that they capture individual traits or attitudes which represent factors that may be difficult to change (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011).

The third line of research, one that focuses on situational or contextual influences on transformational leadership, has been a neglected area of study in leadership research (Avolio & Bass, 1995). The importance of context has been theorized for some time, proposing that the structure of the organization ought to play a role in the emergence of transformational leadership (Pawar & Eastman, 1997). One of the first empirical investigations showed that hierarchical decision-making and communication adversely affected transformational leadership ratings (Wright & Pandy, 2010). Further, Walter and Bruch (2010) revealed that centralization, in terms of concentration of decision-making power, and the size of the organizations were negatively related to transformational leadership climate. Formalization, however, in terms of written rules, procedures and instructions positively predicted a transformational leadership climate. A study carried out by Nielsen and Cleal (2011) demonstrated that both the situation and the leader's own work environment enabled the display of transformational leadership behaviours. Situations where leaders felt they were in control and those that were cognitively challenging were positively related to self-ratings of transformational leadership and also working conditions characterized by feelings of meaningfulness and high cognitive demands. These studies show that organizational context in terms of structure, situation, and work environment influences the emergence of transformational leadership, but it is clear that more studies are needed to increase our understanding of contextual influences on transformational leadership. Therefore, hindering factors in exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours in social service organizations are investigated in this thesis.

# **The Transformational Leadership Process in Social Service Organizations**

Whereas meta-analyses consistently demonstrate that transformational leadership is just as common in the public sector as in the private one (Dumdum et al., 2002; Lowe et al., 1996), many public sector scholars are still very hesitant about the usefulness of transformational leadership in the public sector (Wright & Pandey, 2010). Instead, they argue that transformational leadership is both less common and less effective in public-sector organizations. One argument is that these rely heavily on bureaucratic control mechanisms such as centralization, formalization and routinization (Bass & Riggio, 2006, Pawar & Eastman, 1997), which provide institutional substitutes for leadership (Lowe et al., 1996). In other words, the many formal guidelines and rules of a bureaucratic organization may neutralize or replace the positive effects of a transformational leader. Another argument is that leaders in the public sector are too burdened with administrative tasks to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours (Alvesson, 2001).

Currie and Lockett (2007) criticize transformational leadership theory for not taking context into consideration, and suggest that given all the constraints and the high complexity of public-sector organizations, transformational leadership would be difficult to implement. They are also hesitant about the import of private-sector models into the public sector, such as new public management, and suggest that transformational leadership will be the next private-sector import that fails to prosper in the public sector. Furthermore, they have ethical concerns and question whether professional morale and values will be forgotten, and fear that hero worship with its focus on the individual leader will be encouraged if transformational leadership is introduced in the public sector. These thoughts are in line with Dunoon (2002), who suggests that transformational leadership may lead to a narrow focus on the individual leader, and questions how one can tell whether the vision promoted by the leader would primarily serve him or herself, and wonders what to do if this vision did not follow the guidelines and policies laid down by senior management. Yet another argument against successful implementation of transformational leadership is that public-sector leaders are punished for failure (in terms of public criticism) but not rewarded for success. This may prevent leaders from adopting the risk-taking, personal sacrifice and role-modelling behaviours associated with transformational leadership (Dobell, 1989).

Those more in favour of the implementation of transformational leadership in the public sector argue that even though visionary leadership might be difficult there, transformational leadership could be just what is needed given the changing circumstances that public-sector organizations

are facing. Shrinking revenues, public criticism and increased global competition are forcing public-sector leaders to focus more on output and performance and to be more responsive to clients' needs and expectations. These challenges provide fertile ground for transformational leadership within the public sector (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). Van Wart (2003) analyzes the reason why transformational leadership has not been integrated into the public sector literature and criticizes the latter for being stuck in normative debates on the proper role of an administrator in a democratic system. Nevertheless, regardless of which side is taken, all scholars argue in favour of further empirical investigation of transformational leadership in the public sector in order to understand how this context might interfere with the transformational leadership process. Also, even though Lowe et al.'s (1996) meta-analysis showed that transformational leadership was more common in the public sector, the sample provided from this sector covered naval fleet officers and departmental chairs at state-funded universities, and cannot be regarded as being representative of public-sector leaders. Hence, more research is needed.

Examining the empirical studies conducted in the public sector so far shows there is mixed support for the possibilities and usefulness of transformational leadership in the public sector. As mentioned earlier, one meta-analysis has indicated that women are somewhat more often perceived as being transformational leaders than are men (Eagly et al., 2003). This may speak in favour of the public-sector organization, which often has a larger proportion of female managers than does the private sector (Statistics Sweden, 2012). On the other hand, however, large size (Lowe et al., 1996) and hierarchical decision-making and communication (Wright & Pandey, 2009) have proven to have an adverse effect on transformational leadership ratings. This may argue against the case for the public sector which is associated with large, bureaucratic organizations. Nevertheless, a number of recent studies have indicated that the public sector is not as bureaucratic as has previously been assumed (Boyne, 2002; Pandey & Wright, 2006; Wright, 2004), and that bureaucratic control mechanisms per se may not adversely affect transformational leadership (Wright & Pandey, 2009). Most empirical work in the public-sector context has been conducted in school settings. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) reviewed this literature and found that transformational leadership had positive but mostly indirect effects on student achievement and engagement. In the Swedish context, most studies of transformational leadership originate from the Swedish Armed Forces, where the implementation of transformational leadership training and evaluation (or developmental leadership, as their refined model is called) has resulted in a number of studies (e.g., Larson et al., 2003; Larson, 2006).

Empirical studies applying transformational leadership theory in social service settings specifically are on the increase, but these are still scarce and

scattered and rarely make reference to each other. Most of the studies originate from the US and Canada, and these have examined the influence of transformational leadership on job and leader satisfaction and demonstrated positive relationships (Elpers & Westhuis, 2008; Gellis, 2001; Mary, 2005). Other studies have investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and effectiveness. Yoo and Brooks (2005) found that service effectiveness, in terms of the number of out-of-home placements of children, was predicted by a transformational leader together with support and good work routines. An Israeli study found weak but positive correlations between transformational leadership and service effectiveness, which were measured in terms of plan implementation, goal attainment and client empowerment (Boehm & Yoels, 2009). European studies of transformational leadership in social service organizations are less common. One exception is a series of studies in Danish elderly care that demonstrated a positive influence of transformational leadership on work characteristics and employee well-being (e.g., Nielsen, Randall, et al., 2008; Nielsen, Yarker, et al., 2008). In sum, empirical studies of transformational leadership in social service organizations indicate that transformational leadership is associated with positive employee outcomes such as satisfaction and effectiveness. However, more studies are needed on a wider range of employee outcomes, as well as studies on how the factors that characterize this context may hinder or help the transformational leadership process.

# Method

This thesis is based on three studies conducted in a Swedish social service organization. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The first and second studies are based on a longitudinal survey study done on social service employees, while the third study is an interview study on managers in the same organization. I describe first the quantitative data, including information about the sample, measures and statistical analysis, and then the qualitative data, including information about the participants and procedures for both conducting and analysing the interviews.

## The Survey Study

### *Sample*

The samples included in Studies 1 and 2 were drawn from a social service organization with 2,700 employees in a large Swedish municipality. The data collection was carried out in two waves with a twelve-month interval, and will be referred to as Time 1 and Time 2. At Time 1, a stratified random sample of employees was selected from staff records and invited to participate in the study. The questionnaire was sent to each employee's home address by post along with a letter explaining the purpose of the investigation. The letter assured confidentiality and the fact that participation was voluntary. A postage-paid return envelope was included to facilitate answering the questionnaire. After two reminders, 158 out of the 342 invited participants answered the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 48%. The sample at Time 1 was used in Study 1. More detailed information on the sample characteristics can be obtained from Table 2.

Table 2

*Description of samples in Studies 1 & 2*

	<b>Time 1 (Study 1)</b>	<b>Time 2 (Study 2)</b>
Sample size	158	101
Response rate	48%	30%
Women (Men)	79% (22%)	81% (19%)
Age	43	45
University education	50%	46%
Tenure	12 years	13 years

At Time 2, those who had answered the questionnaire at Time 1 were invited to participate in a second one. Some respondents at Time 1 had left the organization or were unable to participate because of sick leave or maternity leave, but out of the remaining 136 respondents, 101 returned the second questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 74% at Time 2 and an overall response rate of 30%. The sample at Time 2 was used in Study 2. For further sample characteristics, see Table 2.

To investigate if the samples in Studies 1 and 2 were representative of the social service organizations a number of analyses were conducted. These showed that the sample in Study 1 was representative of the population in terms of age, gender and employment terms. The average age was forty-three years compared to forty-one years in the organization as a whole, 79% were women compared to 80% in the whole organization, and 91% held a permanent position compared to 90% in rest of the organization. At the second wave of data collection a non-response analysis, comparing those answering on both measurement times to the non-respondents at Time 2, was conducted and found no differences regarding age, gender, tenure, educational level, and employment terms (permanent or temporary). Also, the final sample at the second measurement occasion was representative of the sample in the baseline data.

Table 3  
*Overview of variables used in the present thesis*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Scale range</b>	<b>Source of scale</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
Transformational leadership	20	0-4	MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1995)	$\alpha = .94 (.96)$
Co-Worker support	3	1-5	LCS (Westerberg & Hauer, 2009)	$\alpha = .78$
Leader continuity	1	years	-	-
Role clarity	3	1-5	QPS Nordic (Dallner et al., 2000)	$\alpha = .74$
Commitment	3	1-5	QPS Nordic	$\alpha = .85$
Climate for innovation	3	1-5	QPS Nordic	$\alpha = .80 (.77)$
Well-Being	8	1-4	PSQ (Levenstein et al., 1993)	$\alpha = .85 (.86)$

## ***Measures***

The measures used to investigate transformational leadership and its potential outcomes, as well as possible underlying mechanisms thought to explain the relation of transformational leadership and its outcomes, are summarized in Table 3. Variables included in this thesis are based as far as possible on established scales. Reliabilities (coefficient alpha) were generally high at above .70, and therefore considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

## ***Data analyses***

To test the proposed hypotheses in Studies 1 & 2, different statistical analyses were applied to test main effects, mediating effects, and moderating effects.

### ***Main effects***

Main effects were analyzed in two different ways in this thesis. Study 1, the cross-sectional study, used regression analysis in SPSS, while Study 2, the longitudinal study, used structural equation modelling in AMOS.

Regression analysis belongs to the first generation of multivariate methods that can be applied to predict variance in a continuous dependent variable. Independent variables can be added in stages to investigate the specific amount of variance that is explained by each variable, a technique called hierarchical multiple regression. Main effects are analyzed by inspecting the change in explained variance in the dependent variable by adding independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In Study 1, the main effect of transformational leadership, co-worker support and leader continuity on the dependent variables role clarity and commitment was investigated.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) belongs to the second generation of multivariate methods. Compared to the first generation of multivariate methods, SEM allows for more complex analyses with multiple dependent variables, while also taking into account measurement error that eliminates bias and estimates relationships with greater accuracy (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In Study 2, a longitudinal autoregressive model was chosen whereby all variables were measured at both Time 1 and Time 2 to control for baseline levels of the dependent variable while also taking the stability of measures into account (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). The direct effect of transformational leadership on well-being was examined both cross-sectionally and over time.

### ***Mediation***

Mediation analysis allows researchers to investigate the process or mechanism by which one variable affects another, and a mediator represents a variable that transmits the effect of the independent variable on to the

dependent variable (MacKinnon et al., 2007). Mediators explain *how* or *why* certain effects will occur, compared to moderators that stipulate *when* such effects will hold (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

In Study 2, the mediating effect of climate for innovation on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being was investigated using structural equation modelling with the longitudinal data set. A procedure earlier outlined by Nielsen and Munir (2009) was applied in order to investigate mediation. Four different mediational models were compared on the basis of the autoregressive model described earlier: a fully mediated model (M1) and three partially mediated models (M2, M3, and M4). Finally, a non-mediated, direct-effect model was also estimated (M5).

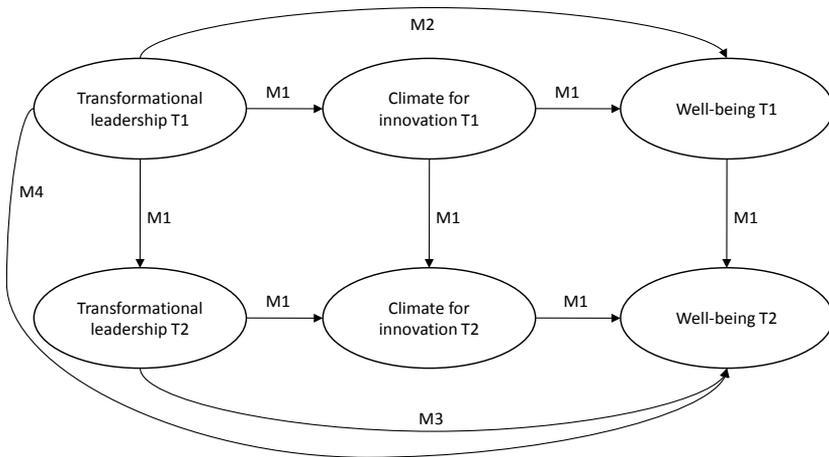


Figure 5. Overview of mediational models.

The idea behind these models is that mediation can be either full or partial and that it can be synchronous (within Time 1 and Time 2) or temporal (between Time 1 and Time 2). In the fully mediated model (M1), there was no direct relationship between transformational leadership and well-being, as it was fully mediated by climate for innovation. In the second model (M2), a direct path between transformational leadership at Time 1 and well-being at Time 1 was added, indicating partial mediation. In similar fashion, the third model (M3) included a direct path from transformational leadership at Time 2 to well-being at Time 2, also indicating partial mediation. The fourth model (M4) included partial mediation between Time 1 and Time 2 by adding a direct path from transformational leadership at Time 1 to well-being at Time 2. For an overview of these models, see Figure 5. The fully mediated model (M1) served as a baseline model against which the other

mediational models were compared. Differences between the models were assessed through the chi-square difference test. The last model (M5) tested a direct relationship between transformational leadership and well-being, with climate for innovation being excluded from the model.

As it is now recommended to estimate the magnitude and significance of indirect effects in mediational models (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011), this was estimated for this summary (but not in the already published version of Study 2) using bootstrapping procedures to assess a 95 % bias corrected (BC) confidence intervals (CI) of the indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Rucker et al., 2011).

### *Moderation*

Moderation analysis provides us with information if the relationship between two variables depends on the value of a third variable (Aguinis & Gottfredson, 2010). A moderator is a variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relationship between an independent and a dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Statistically, moderating effects are tested by creating an interaction term after multiplying the independent and the moderating variables. As is recommended by Aiken and West (1991), the independent and moderator variables were centred before calculating cross-products in order to improve interpretability and to reduce multicollinearity. Furthermore, significant interaction effects can be plotted at one standard deviation above and below the mean in order to facilitate interpretation.

Study 1 investigated whether the relationship between transformational leadership and the two employee attitudes of role clarity and commitment changed depending on the level of co-worker support and leader continuity. After the variables testing the main effects were entered in the multiple regression analysis, the final step of the analysis included the interaction terms of the centred transformational leadership variable being multiplied by either co-worker support or leader continuity. Four separate regressions were run to examine the effect of transformational leadership, co-worker support and leader continuity on the outcomes of role clarity and commitment. Significant interaction effects were plotted to make possible a more simple interpretation.

## **The Interview Study**

### ***Sample and procedure***

Newly recruited first-line managers from the same social service organization addressed by the survey study were invited to participate in an interview study. Three interviews were scheduled with each participant: a start-up interview during the first month and two follow-up interviews after

six and twelve months respectively. Participants were recruited with the help of the personnel department, and all new recruits during the spring of 2006 and 2008 were contacted by e-mail or telephone and informed of the research project. No potential informant contacted refused to participate in the study, but two participants were excluded as it turned out that they had had previous managerial experience in social services. The remaining sample included eight first-line managers, all women, with an average age of 41 years (sd=12.1). They all held university degrees, five of them in social work, two in human resource management and one in nursing. Their previous work experience included a wide range of areas such as psychiatric care, school counselling, elderly care, and administrative work in the private sector. Five of the interviewees had no previous leadership experience, while three of them had worked as managers in other organizations such as hospitals or the private-sector. The participants worked in different parts of the social service organizations, including social welfare (n=3), elderly care (n=2) and care of the disabled (n=3). Five managers stayed at their posts the whole year and were therefore interviewed on all three occasions. Out of the three remaining managers, two were interviewed twice and one only once as they had chosen to leave the organization by the time of the follow-up interviews.

### ***The interviews***

The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions intended to both frame the interview and permit probing for additional information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interviews were conducted in person in a location chosen by the respondent, and lasted for 45-75 minutes. The first interview focused on the managers' expectations of the first year of leadership and their leadership ideals ("What kind of leadership are you striving for?", "Do you have any leadership ideal?"). The second interview concentrated on leadership ideals, and also on hindering factors in the organization ("What kind of leadership do you think is appropriate at this juncture?", "What do you think that leadership in this organization should be like?" "Have you experienced any hindering factors in the organization as regards exercising this kind of leadership?"). The last interview followed up on their initial leadership ideal while also exploring whether new ideals had been developed. Hindering factors in the organization were addressed as well ("This was your leadership ideal a year ago; does it still apply?", "Have any new ideals emerged during this year?", "Are there any obstacles in the organization to exercising leadership in this way?"). The interview questions were formulated to activate in a non-suggestive way the manager's personal ideas and experiences concerning leadership ideals and hindering factors in the organization. The interviewer verbally paraphrased the statements of the interview and asked for more detailed explanations when needed to make

sure that a common understanding was reached. All interviews were conducted by the PhD student, except for two that were conducted by a research assistant. Interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees and later transcribed by a third clerical party to ensure complete and unbiased recording of interview data (Waldman, et al., 1998).

### ***Data analyses***

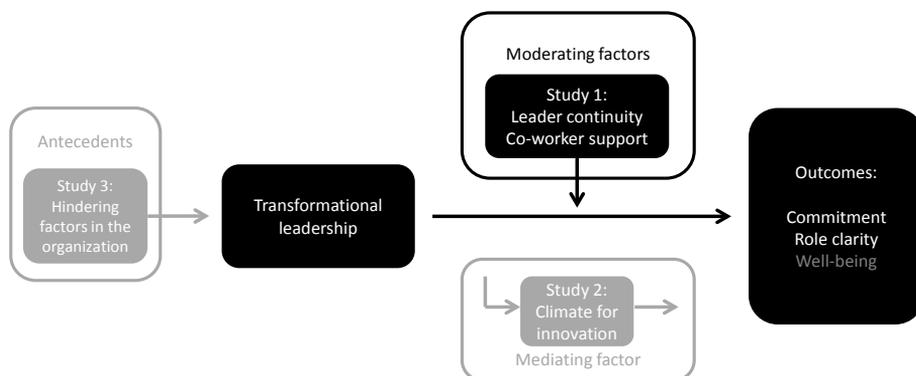
Given the large field of qualitative methods that exists, it is important to choose a suitable approach to address the research question. In this thesis, qualitative content analysis was chosen to analyse the interview data. Content analysis is a methodologically controlled approach to analyse texts by following content analytic rules and step-by-step models (Mayring, 2000). It combines the strengths of grounded theory in discovering natural categories (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with the strategies and standards (transparency, objectivity, reliability) of traditional content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980). In addition, qualitative content analysis views qualitative and quantitative methods as being not opposing but complementary approaches (Van Maanen, 1979).

The analytical procedure involved seven steps, already outlined by Schilling (2006; 2007): (1) Transcription of the tapes and anonymization of the resulting texts. (2) Reducing the material while preserving the essential content by condensing the text to convey only those dimensions of interest. (3) Structuring the material in different dimensions. (4) Step-by-step formulation of inductive categories. This included the basic processes of naming and comparing the data fragments to develop categories for multiple statements and - if necessary - subsuming old or formulating new categories. (5) Revising the categories after 10 to 50 per cent of the material had been coded. (6) Checking the category codes. About two-thirds of the way through the material, the developing category system was checked to prevent any drifting into an idiosyncratic sense of what the codes mean. (7) Final revision of the material. The data set was re-examined to make sure that the categories were described in full.

To check the appropriateness of the data reduction and coding, random samples of the material were controlled by a second researcher. Where there was disagreement or doubt, this was discussed within the research team (Schilling, 2006). As pointed out by Maxwell (1998), qualitative research is not limited to inductive category development, but should also use categories taken from theory as the starting point for analysis. In Study 3, the development of categories of hindering factors and their consequences was inductive, while the coding of leadership ideals started with a system of categories based on transformational leadership theory.

# Summary of Studies

## Study 1- Transformational Leadership in the Social Work Context: The Importance of Leader Continuity and Co-Worker Support



### ***Background and aim***

Social service organizations have changed in a variety of ways during the last decade, and the need for knowledge of effective leadership in these organizations is clear (Lawler, 2007). A small set of studies has explored the effect of transformational leadership on employee outcomes with promising results. The aim of this study was to further the investigation of transformational leadership in social service organizations by examining the relationship between transformational leadership and employee role clarity and commitment. In order to examine the influence of the ongoing changes in today's social service organizations on the effectiveness of transformational leadership in this context, the moderating effects of leader continuity and co-worker support were investigated.

### ***Method***

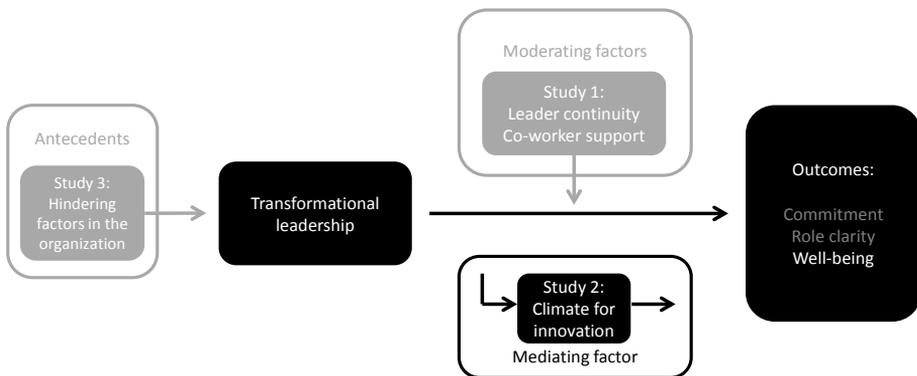
A random sample of social service employees in a large Swedish municipality was invited to participate in the study by filling out a questionnaire. The sample (n=158) was representative of the population in terms of age, gender and employment terms. Hierarchical moderated regression analyses were applied to estimate the main and moderating effects. Each moderator (leader

continuity and co-worker support) was tested on each outcome (role clarity and commitment), which meant that four separate regressions were run.

### ***Findings and conclusions***

Transformational leadership was positively related to both role clarity and commitment of social service employees. Leader continuity moderated the effect of transformational leadership on role clarity as well as commitment. The longer the employee had reported to a leader they perceived as transformational, the greater the effect on commitment and role clarity. Co-worker support moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and commitment, but not role clarity. This implies that if employees experience that they receive social support from co-workers, the effect of transformational leadership on commitment increases. The moderating effect of leader continuity points towards the importance of keeping leaders in the same position and with the same work group for a longer period of time in order to achieve the best possible effects on commitment and role clarity. The moderating effect of co-worker support demonstrates the role of followers in enhancing the effect of transformational leadership.

## **Study 2- Towards Understanding the Direct and Indirect Effects of Transformational Leadership on Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study**



### ***Background and aim***

There has been growing interest in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee health and well-being (Skakon et al., 2010). The majority of previous studies, however, employed cross-sectional designs, and little is known of the possible effects of transformational leadership on well-being over a long period of time. Furthermore, greater attention is now paid to the processes that may explain why transformational leaders influence employee outcomes such as well-being (e.g., Avolio et al., 2009). Therefore, the aim of the second study was to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being in a social service context over time by both testing the possibility of a direct effect and investigating possible mediating mechanisms in terms of climate for innovation.

### ***Method***

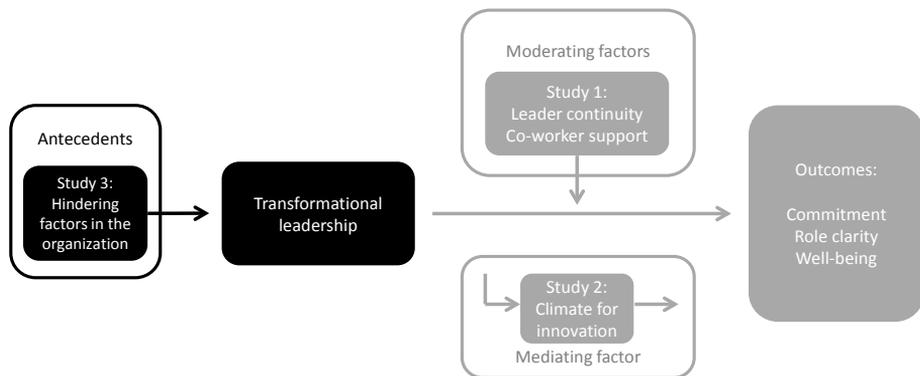
A second wave of data was collected using the sample from Study 1. All those participants who had responded the first time (n= 158) were invited to participate in a second survey one year later. The final sample consisted of 101 participants with two data measurements that was representative of the sample in the baseline data. Structural equation modelling with Amos was used to analyse the data. A series of nested models was tested to assess discriminant validity. To test for mediation, a sequence of model tests was performed. Following the structure outlined in previous research (Nielsen & Munir, 2009), four different mediational models were estimated: a fully mediated model and three partially mediated models. Finally, a direct-effect model was also estimated. The fully mediated model served as a baseline model against which the other mediational models were compared and differences between these models were assessed by using the chi-square difference test.

### ***Findings and conclusions***

The testing of the four mediational models suggested that the fully mediated model provided the best fit for the data. In line with the hypothesis, transformational leadership at both Time 1 and Time 2 was mediated by climate for innovation in its influence on well-being, supporting synchronous mediation. The influence of transformational leadership on well-being over time was mediated by climate for innovation by way of what previous research has termed a two-step mechanism (Nielsen, Randall, et al., 2008). Well-being at Time 2 was predicted by climate for innovation at Time 2, which in turn was predicted by climate for innovation at Time 1, which in its turn was predicted by transformational leadership at Time 1. Also, the standardized indirect effect of transformational leadership at Time 1 on well-

being at Time 2 was significant  $ab = .25$  (95 % BC CI [.06, .48],  $p = .009$ . This supports the hypothesis of the mediation of climate for innovation over time. The testing of the direct-effect model found, contrary to the hypothesis, no direct effect of transformational leadership on well-being over time, and support for a direct effect was only found cross-sectionally. This casts doubt on whether transformational leaders can influence employee well-being over a longer period of time. Instead, the findings suggest that transformational leaders impact employee well-being by contributing to a climate that is characterized by encouraging improvements to be made and providing both the opportunity to show initiative and enough communication. This supports the suggestion by Bono, Foldes, Vinson, and Muros (2007) that climate is the process by which transformational leaders influence employee well-being over time.

### **Study 3- The First Year of Service: A Longitudinal Study of Organizational Antecedents of Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector**



#### ***Background and aim***

Although the positive consequences of transformational leadership on employee performance and well-being have been established in many contexts, less is known of its antecedents (Peterson et al., 2008). In particular, organizational and contextual factors that can increase or decrease the possibilities for leaders to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours have not been addressed in much detail by previous research (Wright & Pandey, 2010). This knowledge is of particular interest in the public sector, which is a context where the usefulness and possibilities of

transformational leadership have been much disputed. The aim of this longitudinal interview study was to identify organizational factors that may inhibit first-line managers in the public sector from displaying transformational leadership behaviours.

### ***Method***

Interviews with eight newly recruited first-line managers in a social service organization were used to identify organizational factors that inhibited them from making known their leadership ideal during their first year of leadership. The first interview centred around what kind of leadership ideal the leaders had, in order to find out whether or not they were striving for transformational leadership. The second interview focused on organizational factors hindering them from acting out their leadership ideal. The third and final interview followed up on the leadership ideal identified in the first interview, explored whether any new ideal had emerged, and also asked about hindering factors in the organization. Qualitative content analyses were used to analyse the interviews using a procedure already described by Schilling (2006; 2007).

### ***Findings and conclusions***

The analysis showed that the managers aspired to and retained their ideal of transformational leadership during their first year of leadership, even though a number of contingent reward ideals were also considered. They experienced a number of hindering factors in the organization that inhibited them from exercising leadership in the way they had intended. Eight categories of hindering factors were identified, reflecting both organizational and working conditions. The category of *'top-down management'* included statements that described a hierarchical organization with centralized power. *'Continuous change'* addressed issues relating to an organization in constant change. *'Financial strain'* focused on problems arising from an organization facing constant financial crises, involving budget cuts and conflict between employee and financial interests. *'Administrative tasks'* focused on obstacles involving spending valuable time on work tasks, such as recruiting, paying salaries and reporting back to the organization via different computer programmes. Similarly, *'distance to employees'* described difficulties in exercising leadership due to the fact that the manager's office was not situated close by the employees, or that the employees themselves were scattered. *'Limited influence'* included statements describing a leadership role with an unclear mandate, whereby managers did not know what kind of authority they had to make decisions. *'High work load'* included reports of having too much to do and carrying out tasks of very different kinds while having responsibility for too many clients. Finally, the category *'no support'* described difficulties in exercising leadership where there was a lack of

support from senior management, colleagues and support functions in the organization.

Some of the hindering factors were linked to specific transformational leadership behaviour. *Idealized influence* was, according to the managers in this study, difficult to pursue in a structure of hierarchical decision-making, because promises to employees were hard to keep in an organization which needed a large amount of time to make decisions. *Inspirational motivation* was hampered by performance not being rewarded within the organization. The managers found it difficult to promote a particular vision when they knew that living up to it would not make any difference and that high employee performance would not be rewarded by the organization. *Intellectual stimulation* was hindered by too many administrative tasks and a lack of influence. In the light of all these administrative tasks, the managers were struggling to find time for development activities. When they experienced their having no influence of their own in the organization, they found it harder to empower and stimulate employees. *Individualized consideration* was difficult to show in the case of distance to employees, meaning that as a result of meeting their employees only occasionally they had no chance of knowing what was going on or whether there were problems in their work groups.

Furthermore, the managers experienced that these hindering factors had consequences both for themselves in terms of poor health resulting in sick leave, immoral behaviour forced upon them and the rate of turnover, and also for their employees in terms of their leader being an absent and passive one.

To conclude, this study identified a number of organizational and working conditions that may hinder the emergence of transformational leadership in public organizations such as social services. The findings seem promising in opening up new directions for future research on organizational antecedents of transformational leadership. They also make social service organizations aware of those factors that could hinder their managers from displaying transformational leadership behaviours.

# Discussion

This thesis was aimed at increasing our knowledge of the transformational leadership process in the social service context by addressing several research gaps. The first research aim investigated the usefulness of transformational leadership in a social service setting by examining outcomes of transformational leadership on employee attitudes and well-being, including commitment, role clarity, and well-being. The second research aim focused on the mechanisms of transformational leadership by studying why and when transformational leadership impacts on employee attitudes and well-being. The influence process in terms of mediation was examined using climate for innovation as a mediator. Boundary conditions in terms of the moderating effect of co-worker support and leader continuity on the effectiveness of transformational leadership were also studied. The third research aim addressed antecedents, with the focus on organizational factors that may hinder first-line managers from exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours.

## **Outcomes of the Transformational Leadership Process**

Given the limited application of transformational leadership in the public sector in general and in social services in particular (Elpers & Westhuis, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2010), the first aim of this thesis concerned the impact of transformational leadership on social service employee attitudes and well-being. The relationship between transformational leadership and employee attitudes in terms of commitment and role clarity was investigated in Study 1, and the relationship with employee well-being in Study 2. The findings of Study 1 demonstrated that transformational leadership was positively related to both role clarity and commitment. The results of Study 2 showed that there was a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being cross-sectionally, but contrary to the hypothesis no direct effect on employee well-being was found over time.

The positive relationships to role clarity, commitment and well-being suggest that transformational leadership can have a positive influence on employee attitudes and health in a social service context. This represents a contribution to the literature on leadership in the public sector, where the application of transformational leadership theory is still rare and called into question, and the results also contribute to the external validity of transformational leadership theory by demonstrating positive relationships within the public sector context as well.

The findings demonstrate the benefits of transformational leadership in keeping employees committed and clear as regards their assignments, something found to be important employee attitudes in times of

organizational change (Begley & Czajka, 1993; Mukherjee & Malhotra, 2006). Because social service organizations have undergone dramatic changes and, given the considerable amount of future change anticipated (Lawler, 2007), leaders with the ability to increase both commitment and role clarity will be crucial to have, and transformational leadership is one leadership style that could help them achieve that.

The relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being was only established cross-sectionally, while no direct effect was found over time. On the one hand, the cross-sectional findings supports the idea that transformational leadership may enhance the well-being of employees in social services, which is important as this context has given rise to reports of high levels of employee ill-health (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002; Westerberg & Armelius, 2000). On the other hand, the absence of a direct effect over time means that directionality of the relationship between transformational leadership and well-being remains inconclusive, and it also casts doubt on whether transformational leaders can influence employee well-being over a long period of time. One possible explanation for the absence of a direct effect of transformational leadership on employee well-being over time could be that the influence of transformational leaders is indirect, and that other mediating variables are responsible for the relationship between transformational leadership and well-being.

### **The Influence Process**

Even though transformational leadership theory has received a lot of research attention, the influence process through which it affects employees is still not adequately understood (Judge et al., 2006; Yukl, 2010). In order to address the second research aim and this gap in research, the potential mediating effect of climate at work was investigated. More specifically, climate for innovation was tested as a potential mediating variable between transformational leadership and employee well-being.

### ***Climate for innovation as a mediator***

The results of Study 2 showed that perceptions of an innovative climate mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being. The findings contribute to our understanding of how transformational leadership influences employee well-being over time. The results suggests that the effect transformational leaders have on well-being, both over time and cross-sectionally, is partly a consequence of the impact these leaders have on the climate at work and that differences in social service employees' levels of well-being may be explained in part by the differences in how innovative is the climate created by their immediate manager. This indicates that one way that transformational leaders contribute to employee well-being is by creating a climate characterized by

encouragement to make improvements and by providing both the opportunities to show initiative and enough communication. The findings also confirm previous research showing that an innovative climate appears to increase employee well-being (Rasulzada & Dackert, 2009). Social service organizations have a history of high stress levels and burnout among employees (Lloyd et al., 2002; Westerberg & Armelius, 2000). This study suggest that transformational leadership has the potential to increase employee well-being which will be beneficial in this context, and implementing transformational leadership can be one approach among others for addressing this issue.

Interestingly, the pattern of relationships in the mediated model reflected a mediational process that has been called a two-step mechanism whereby transformational leadership at Time 1 was associated with climate for innovation at Time 1. Climate for innovation at Time 1 was then associated with climate for innovation at Time 2, which in turn was associated with increased employee well-being at Time 2. This rather complicated mediation process over time is similar to that found by Nielsen, Randall, et al. (2008) in their study of work characteristics as mediators between transformational leadership and well-being. The findings in Study 2 demonstrates the strengths of there being a longitudinal design, where temporal aspects of established relationships can be explored, and this longitudinal study generated a more complex picture of indirect effects that sheds lights on the process by which transformational leadership influences well-being. However, the repeated pattern of findings of insignificant cross-lagged effects in longitudinal mediational studies of transformational leadership, where for example transformational leadership at Time 1 fails to influence the mediator at Time 2, again raises the concern of the time frame within which transformational leadership can influence outcomes. This indicates that the process over time by which transformational leaders influence followers needs to be further elaborated both theoretically and empirically.

The findings also lend empirical support to Bono et al.'s (2007) suggestion that the long-lasting effect of transformational leaders on well-being lies in the impact leaders have on employees' perception of the climate in the organization. In general, models of work climate seem to be a promising avenue for understanding the influence transformational leaders exert on employees. Carr et al. (2003) found that climate influenced employee cognitive and affective states, which in turn predicted employee performance, well-being and withdrawal. This sits well with mediational studies of the transformational leadership process, which have confirmed the mediating effects of climate on performance (Liao & Chuang, 2007; Menges et al., 2011), injuries and absenteeism (Richardson & Vandenberg, 2005; Zohar, 2002) and now also, given the results from Study 2, on well-being. Even though no study so far has examined simultaneously the whole chain of

relationships (transformational leadership, climate, cognitive and affective states and outcomes), this would be interesting to examine in future studies.

### **Boundary Conditions**

In order to investigate further the second research aim, boundary conditions of transformational leadership in social service organizations were examined. Even though some researchers still argue for the effectiveness of transformational leadership regardless of context, culture, or country, an increasing number of studies have started to identify conditions under which transformational leadership is more or less effective (Chuang et al., 2012). Joining this line of research, this thesis investigated the moderating effect of two variables, co-worker support and leader continuity, on the relationship between transformational leadership and social service employees' levels of commitment and role clarity.

### ***Co-worker support***

The results of Study 1 showed that co-worker support moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and social service employees' commitment, but not role clarity. This means that when employees felt they had the support of co-workers, the effect of transformational leadership on commitment was stronger. The absence of an interaction effect on role clarity indicates that the effects of transformational leadership and co-worker support on role clarity are independent of each other.

The moderating effect of co-worker support on commitment highlights the role of co-workers in the transformational leadership process. Even though studies of how co-workers affect the transformational leadership process are rare, Pastor, Meindl and Mayo (2002) found in a related study that social networks and friendship among co-workers affected the attribution of charisma. These findings indicate that positive relationships between co-workers can have a positive effect on the emergence of transformational leadership, and the results of Study 1 demonstrate that co-workers also determine the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Pastor and colleagues (2002) suggested that one possible explanation for their findings was that attributions of charismatic leadership will spread more quickly among co-workers who interact and are part of well-established social networks. The same mechanism may be true for the effectiveness of transformational leaders. The interaction among co-workers may spread and increase the effect of the transformational leadership behaviours. The study thus points towards the importance of encouraging the feeling of support among co-workers, as this enhances the effect of transformational leadership.

### ***Leader continuity***

The other moderator investigated in Study 1 was leader continuity in terms of employees' ratings of years with their current supervisor. The results showed that leader continuity moderated the effect of transformational leadership on outcomes such that the longer employees had reported to a leader they perceived as transformational, the greater the effect on both role clarity and commitment. The results point towards the importance of time in the relationship between leader and followers.

Time is an emergent theme in transformational leadership research since less is known of how it influences the effect transformational leaders have on employees (Hughes et al., 2006). The findings in this thesis indicate that being exposed to a transformational leader for longer period of time (more than 1.5 years in the case of our study) could make a difference to commitment and role clarity. This demonstrates the importance of time for transformational leaders to have an effect on employees and the need for a degree of stability in an organization in order to get the most out of good leaders. The findings also indicate the importance of preventing a fast rate of turnover among leaders, since transformational leadership seems to take time before it actually has a positive effect in the organization.

In sum, our interaction effects indicate that stable relationships in the work place could be of the utmost importance. Both the interaction effects investigated in this thesis have relational and temporal elements. Co-worker support needs connectedness to develop (Langford, Bowsher, Maloney, & Lillis, 1997), which requires time. Leadership continuity also requires there being a relationship over time. Taken together, these indicate the need for stable relationships between co-workers and between leaders and their teams in order to facilitate the transformational leadership process and to achieve the best possible effect on employee outcomes, such as role clarity and commitment on the part of a transformational leader.

### ***Antecedents***

The third and final aim of this thesis was to investigate antecedents of transformational leadership. Previous research on antecedents has mainly focused on leader characteristics, such as the influence of personality on the degree of transformational leadership behaviour displayed by a leader (Wright & Pandey, 2009). Less is known of the organizational antecedents, such as factors in an organization that may hinder the emergence of transformational leadership, a subject investigated in this thesis.

### ***Hindering factors in the organization***

The findings in Study 3 showed that the social service leaders interviewed in this thesis sought to exercise transformational leadership but encountered several hindering factors associated with both the organization and their

own working environment. The hindering factors identified by the respondents were greatly varied and originated from different levels in the organization. Some of these factors confirmed findings in previous research, such as top-down management in terms of hierarchical decision-making (Wright & Pandey, 2010) and the need for influence or control (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). Others were in line with suggestions made in the literature, such as the burden of having too many administrative tasks (Alvesson, 2001). Two categories bear similarities with factors suggested as acting as substitutes for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), including 'distance to employees' which is similar to the substitute of *spatial distance*, and 'limited influence' which is similar to the substitute of *no control over awards*. Previous research has sought to establish substitutes for leadership in its role as moderator between transformational leadership and outcomes, but has more or less failed to do so (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & James, 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996a). The results from Study 3 suggest that substitutes for leadership may instead act as hindering antecedents, not through negating the positive effects of transformational leadership but rather through inhibiting its emergence.

The factors 'high work load', 'limited influence' and 'no support' are closely connected to the well-known demand-control-support model that represents what is known to be a healthy working environment (de Lange, Taris, Kompier, Houtman, & Bongers, 2003; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). This indicates that good working conditions may be important for engaging in transformational leadership behaviours. The importance of support structures to enable managers in the public sector to be effective have also been stressed in other studies (e.g., Berntson, Wallin, & Härenstam, 2012). Further, previous research suggest that organizational change affects employees' work climate, work attitudes and ill-health (Falkenberg, 2010). In line with these findings, the factor of 'continuous change' indicates that change may also have consequences for leadership behaviour, in the sense that transformational leadership behaviour could be hindered when the organization is in constant change. This may seem contradictory, because transformational leadership is suggested to be a suitable style of leadership for achieving organizational change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). However, one explanation for this finding could be that leaders are employees affected by organizational change themselves, and that they may be caught in the middle, trying both to implement the change as ordered by senior management and to ensure the well-being of their employees (DeWitt, Trevino, & Mollica, 2003). Furthermore, continuous change in an organization may also affect the trust employees have in their leaders, which makes role-modelling behaviour harder to adopt. Finally, the impact of a harsh economy and cutbacks has been connected in the past with experiences of increased work load and job insecurity (e.g., Hertting,

Nilsson, Theorell, & Larsson, 2005). The results in Study 3 show that 'financial strain' also may affect the extent to which leaders engage in transformational leadership behaviour. In all, the hindering factors identified by the respondents in this study offer a framework to use as a starting point in future research.

The leadership ideals described in the first interview were related to particular hindering factors in later interviews. This indicates that the leaders felt that specific transformational leadership behaviours were inhibited by specific hindering factors, which gives a unique insight into how sub-dimensions of transformational leadership were affected by hindering factors. For example, inspirational motivation was experienced as being hindered by performance not being rewarded, a code coming under 'limited influence' and in line with Wright and Pandey (2010), who found that performance measures in the public sector were positively correlated with transformational leadership. Due to problems with high correlations between the sub-dimensions of transformational leadership, this information is rarely seen in quantitative studies. However, in order to further develop transformational leadership theory, knowledge regarding the role of the different sub-dimensions is essential (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), and the results from this thesis suggest that qualitative studies may be one way to accomplish this.

In addition, the hindering factors were experienced as resulting in a passive leadership style, whereby the leaders tried to fight fires and solve problems as they occurred. This is similar to management by exception and laissez faire leadership, the two most ineffective leadership behaviours in the Full Range of Leadership model (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It is also in line with the suggestion made by Bass and Riggio (2006) that leaders with too many employees will end up exercising leadership in the form of management by exception. The hindering factors for exercising transformational leadership identified in this thesis led to, according to our respondents, passive and ineffective leadership, which means that even when organizations aspire to transformational leadership, organizational and working conditions may produce the opposite.

### **Methodological Considerations**

There are some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results from this thesis. The data collected and analyzed in Studies 1 and 2 was self-reported and collected using one method (i.e. questionnaires), and this is associated with potential problems. Self-reported data can never capture an objective reality very well (Spector, 1994), as it captures rather the individuals' subjective preferences, motives, and perceptions of a phenomenon (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). The first and second studies of this thesis focused on employees' subjective perceptions including employee

attitudes, well-being, and perception of their leader, and, given this aim, self-reported data can be a relevant source of information (Spector, 2006). To collect data using only one method can also be problematic because a certain proportion of the variance between constructs might be due to the method, known as the mono-method bias, and might exaggerate the strength of the association between variables (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). It has been suggested that one way to reduce this bias is to collect data using a multi-trait, multi-method approach (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). However, this may not always be possible because, to take one example, the interest in this thesis was to investigate how employees' perception of their leader influences attitudinal outcomes that only the employee can provide information about. When this is the case, different methods of separation can be used to reduce the risk of bias. Temporal separation, in terms of introducing a time lag between measurements, is one such method which was used in one of the studies in this thesis. Proximal separation was another method used here which included changing the response format in the questionnaire and having different sections dedicated to different constructs. Also, in the second study, a series of nested models was tested to make sure that the scales were distinctive (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 2001; Garson, 2009). Recent studies suggest, however, that the risk of this bias has been somewhat overestimated, and that fairly accurate estimations of the true-score relations can also be achieved with correlations based on the same method (Conway & Lance, 2010; Lance, Dawson, Birkelbach, & Hoffman, 2010).

A restriction that applies to the first study in this thesis concerns the cross-sectional design. Since cross-sectional data provides only a snapshot of the current situation, the assumed causal relationships between transformational leadership and employee attitudes cannot be tested. Instead, theory must be relied on for information regarding chronological order and causal inference. Cross-sectional studies, however, play an important role in identifying and comparing various relationships not previously tested (Spector, 2006), which is an important step to take before planning longitudinal studies to test associations more rigorously. Little is yet known of the transformational leadership process in public organizations such as social services, and the cross-sectional study identified important relationships that should be further tested. Also, the cross-sectional design in Study 1 cannot tell us if the leaders were in fact transformational during the whole time employees reported to them. The stability coefficient of transformational leadership in Study 2, however, indicates that the perception of transformational leadership in general was fairly stable.

Another question concerning causality is the importance in longitudinal studies of utilizing an appropriate time frame in order to be able to capture the effect of a predictor on outcomes (e.g., Ettl, 1977). The transformational influence process over time is still not understood, and it is

not clear how long it takes for a transformational leader to influence employee outcomes such as the perception of the climate in the organization or employee well-being. A time lag of one year is usually chosen in longitudinal studies to keep seasonal influences constant (Kenny, 1975). This was done in this thesis as well, and no direct effect of transformational leadership on well-being was detected, or any cross-lagged mediated effects. Other studies have used an eighteen-month interval between measurements and also failed to establish these effects (Nielsen & Munir, 2009; Nielsen, Randall, et al., 2008). If the time lag is too long or too short, the effects on outcomes may not be captured and false conclusions may be drawn (Mitchell & James, 2001; Taris & Kompier, 2003). Future research is needed to further our understanding of which time frame is the most appropriate for detecting the influence of transformational leaders on outcomes. A use of shorter time frames might be essential to capture the effect of transformational leadership on employee outcomes and to uncover direct effects in longitudinal studies. This is even more important when examining mediating effects, an approach which assumes a causal chain of relationships ideally measured with the predictor, mediator and outcome on separate occasions. Because there were only two data waves in Study 2, a modelling procedure outlined by Nielsen and Munir (2009) was applied. This made it possible to test mediation with two data waves, which is better than using only cross-sectional data.

Regarding the external validity of the first and second studies of this thesis, it should be remembered that the sample came from one social service organization in a large municipality in Sweden. Because social services in Sweden include many different kinds of services such as social welfare, elderly care, and care of the disabled, which are organized in different ways and involve many different occupations and employees from different backgrounds, the sample does include a degree of heterogeneity. Depending on the national context, social service organizations are organized in different ways, and future research is needed to investigate the generalizability of these findings in relation to other, similar public organizations both in Sweden and internationally. In the qualitative study, Study 3, the sample may have biased the results since the newly recruited leaders invited to participate in the study were all female. It remains unclear if men would place stress on different hindering factors and experience different consequences as a result of these.

Another limitation to consider in this third study is that the identified categories might be called into question since other solutions might have been possible. However, as was stressed by Locke (2002), a theoretical framework based on a qualitative study should be viewed as a starting point in the development of any thinking regarding a phenomenon. The usefulness of the categories elicited in this thesis should be evaluated on the basis of what such categories have to say about the research topic and whether they

can advance our understanding of the emergence of transformational leadership. Future studies may therefore use these categories as a starting point to further elaborate on which organizational factors could hinder leaders from exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours.

### **Implications**

So what can be learned from this thesis with respect to the transformational leadership process in public organizations such as social services? Well, as has been reviewed in the introduction, strong arguments have been presented from both those in favour and those hesitant about the usefulness of transformational leadership in this context. Empirical studies are greatly needed to shed light on this issue, and the aim of this thesis has been to contribute to this literature. Although the results of this thesis need to be confirmed in future research, there are a number of implications to be drawn from the empirical studies contained in it.

### ***Theoretical implications***

From a research perspective, this thesis demonstrates that transformational leadership is positively related to employee attitudes and well-being in public organizations such as social services. This implies that if employees perceive their closest supervisor as being transformational, a number of positive outcomes may be expected. This is in line with studies of transformational leadership in other settings such as the private sector (Judge et al., 2006). Furthermore, this thesis also identified a number of antecedents and moderator variables that might hinder or facilitate the emergence and effectiveness of transformational leadership in this context. One important issue is the ongoing change in these organizations, which was found both to hinder the emergence of transformational leadership in Study 3 and to influence its effectiveness in Study 1, where stability in terms of leadership continuity and co-worker support increased the effect of transformational leadership. The results indicate the need for stability for the transformational leadership process, which in this context seems to be difficult to achieve because, in the case of social service organizations, ongoing organizational change has been the *modus operandi* for many years (Lambers, 2002; Wolmesjö, 2005). One explanation for this ongoing change could be the financial situation in the public sector with its shrinking revenues and budget cuts, a situation identified as a hindering antecedent in Study 3. Javidan and Waldman (2003) argued that these changes speak in favour of implementing transformational leadership in the public sector, and this might be true, but the same changes also seem to make it difficult for transformational leadership both to emerge and to be effective.

Another important issue is the impact of the organizational structure in the public sector. Previous studies have demonstrated that hierarchical

decision-making and communication have a negative influence on the emergence of transformational leadership (Wright & Pandey, 2009), and also that public sector organizations are less bureaucratic than has previously been assumed (e.g., Boyne, 2002). The results of this thesis show that top-down management in terms of hierarchical decision-making, short planning horizons, and also the lack of cooperation between work groups, were experienced as hindering factors. This confirms and extends previous research done on the adverse effects of a bureaucratic organization. Also, and in relation to the structure of an organization, wherever a leader was not in the same location as his or her employees and wherever employees were scattered at different locations, such situations were found to be hindering antecedents in this thesis. In the past, spatial distance between leaders and employees has been suggested to be a substitute for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Shamir and Howell (1999) suggested that antecedents and moderators of transformational leadership were the same mechanism. They argued that the same conditions which create a need for transformational leadership or which increase followers' receptivity to transformational leadership and therefore contribute to its possible emergence, also increase followers' receptivity to the influence of transformational leaders and thus the effectiveness of these leaders. This could explain the similarity of the substitutes for leadership factors with some of the antecedents identified in this thesis. Nevertheless, additional research is needed to bring clarity on this issue and also to explore further the impact of the organizational structure on transformational leadership in public organizations.

Alvesson's (2001) suggestion that public leaders are too burdened with administrative tasks to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours found support in this thesis, since the leaders interviewed in the third study found it difficult to engage in transformational leadership when much of their time was filled with staffing, recruiting, accounting and reporting. Furthermore, Dobell (1989) proposed that transformational leadership behaviour in terms of risk-taking, personal sacrifice and role modelling behaviour was inhibited by public-sector leaders not being rewarded for success. This is also partially supported by the findings in this thesis, which showed that inspirational motivation was hampered by the lack of reward from the organization for high performance. In addition, role-modelling behaviours were also inhibited by hierarchical decision-making, and intellectual stimulation by the leaders' own lack of influence. Furthermore, the leaders' own working environment was identified in this thesis as being a crucial ingredient in the transformational leadership process, because support, work load and degree of influence all impacted on the opportunities encountered by the respondents in this thesis for engaging in transformational leadership behaviours. In all, the findings in this thesis lend empirical support to some of the reasons previously suggested for the difficulties associated with the

transformational leadership process in the public sector, such as bureaucratic organization, administrative tasks and the lack of reward for high performance (Alvessons, 2001; Dobell, 1989; Wright & Pandey, 2009). The findings also highlight the influence of other factors of importance such as the ongoing organizational change, the financial situation in the public sector, the leader's own working environment and the benefits of stable relationships.

Regarding the influence process, the results of this thesis, together with previous research on climate as a mediator of transformational leadership, support its integration with models of climate at work to further our understanding of the transformational influence process. By combining the knowledge gained from well-established theories, including theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and Banduras' social cognitive theory (Wood & Bandura, 1989), a greater understanding of this process can be achieved. This integrated model, whereby transformational leadership influences the way employees perceive their working environment (i.e., the climate), which influences affective and cognitive states that in turn predict employee outcomes, also finds support in the review of empirical studies of mediators of transformational leadership presented in the introduction. Previous studies have confirmed the influence of transformational leadership on the way employees perceive aspects of their work (e.g., Arnold et al., 2007; Nielsen, Randall, et al., 2008) as well as confirming the association with cognitive and affective states such as commitment, job satisfaction and motivation (e.g., Charbonneau et al., 2001; Frooman et al., 2012; Michaelis, Stegmaier, & Sonntag, 2010) and outcomes such as performance, withdrawal and well-being (McKee, Driscoll, Kelloway, & Kelley, 2011; Zhu, Chew, & Spangler, 2005). This suggests that the integrated model is well grounded in psychological theories of human motivation and behaviour as well as being in line with empirical studies, and provides a promising framework that future studies can apply to further our understanding of the influence process of transformational leadership. Future studies may also explore further the suggestion of a differentiated mediational process, whereby different outcomes are mediated by different mediators (Kovjanic et al., 2012). For example, Carr et al. (2003) found that cognitive, affective and instrumental aspects of climate influenced cognitive and affective states in different ways, and Kopelman et al. (1990) suggested that some states are more relevant than others for different types of outcomes. It is also possible that the sub-dimensions of transformational leadership influence cognitive, affective and instrumental aspects of climate in different ways. This implies that parallel processes may be responsible for the impact of transformational leaders, and hopefully future studies can shed light on this issue.

### ***Practical implications***

From a practice standpoint, the findings in this thesis suggest that transformational leaders influence social service employee well-being by contributing to an innovative climate as well as increasing employee role clarity and commitment to the organization. This knowledge can be helpful in planning organizational development, since training leaders to exert specific transformational behaviours could be a cost-effective alternative to large-scale interventions in improving climate, attitudes, and well-being in an organization. However, leadership training should never be seen as a substitute for poor job design. Instead, transformational leadership should support the redesigning of jobs in promoting a healthy workplace (Podsakoff et al., 1996b). The few studies that exist on transformational leadership training indicate that transformational leadership behaviours can be trained and that such training has proven to affect employee outcomes such as commitment and performance (e.g., Barling et al., 1996).

Social service organizations that implement a transformational leadership policy or training should, however, consider the hindering factors identified in this thesis in order to avoid organizational and work environmental factors that prevent leaders from exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours or factors that prevent these behaviours from being effective. One issue is the adverse effect of too much organizational change. Organizations probably need to change in order to survive; however, a degree of organizational standstill could be beneficial to enable leaders to exert transformational leadership behaviours. This thesis also shows that it could be a good idea, even in times of change, to foster relationship continuity both between leaders and their teams and between co-workers, since this thesis has shown that this may increase the positive effects that transformational leaders have.

Another way to make possible transformational leadership emergence is to dismantle the hierarchy within social service organizations. This could, for example, include empowerment of first-line managers in terms of greater decision latitude and increased communication between units at the same level. It may also be worthwhile to reconsider the role of administrative leaders and all the administrative tasks undertaken by first-line leaders in these organizations. These tasks prevent leaders from interacting with employees, and valuable time and opportunities for influencing employees in a positive way are lost. Similarly, it may also be helpful to place leaders and employees in the same location so to increase the opportunities of communication instead of having all the leaders located together and apart from their employees.

A further issue is the reward structure or lack of it in public-sector organizations such as the social services. The leaders interviewed in this thesis struggled to realize their vision since they knew that, even if

employees worked hard and fulfilled this vision, it would not be rewarded by the organization. A positive financial result was of no benefit to the work group since other work groups showing a negative financial performance would be given the money to compensate for their loss. This kind of policy is useful on the one hand, but on the other it is also troublesome since it can inhibit leaders from motivating employees by way of having an attractive vision - a fundamental aspect of transformational leadership. Finding a way to reward employees, even if it is small or symbolic, can be important in making the transformational leadership process possible.

Finally, it is important to create a sustainable working environment for leaders in these organizations. High work load and a lack of support and influence may hinder the exhibiting of transformational leadership, and it might be constructive to consider first-line managers as being employees themselves who are in need of inspiration, role-modelling behaviours and support and coaching from their own leaders. The findings in this thesis also demonstrate that if leaders are left on their own to struggle with hindering factors in the organization, it may not matter in the end whether the leader seeks to exercise transformational leadership, since these hindering factors lead to passive and avoidant leadership. In that sense, the transformational leadership process should be viewed as an organizational responsibility and not the responsibility of the individual leader.

## **Conclusion**

Transformational leadership is a leadership model that has been found to increase both the productivity and well-being of employees, but the usefulness of this theory in the public sector has been questioned. The aim of this thesis was therefore to increase our understanding of the transformational leadership process in social service organizations by investigating factors that explain when and why transformational leadership emerges and is effective.

The results showed that transformational leadership is related to employee attitudes such as commitment and role clarity and to the well-being of social service employees. On investigating the influence of transformational leadership on well-being over time, it was found that it only influenced well-being cross-sectionally, and no relationship with well-being was found one year later. Further research is needed to investigate the time frame within which transformational leadership affects outcomes.

In order to understand when transformational leadership is effective, as well as identify intervening variables that link transformational leadership to its outcomes, co-worker support, leader continuity and climate for innovation were investigated to further our knowledge in this area. The results suggest that experiences of having co-worker support and having the same leader over a long period of time may increase the positive influence of

transformational leaders, which demonstrates the importance of relationship continuity in the workplace as well as the role of followers in the transformational leadership process. A climate in which employees are encouraged to make improvements and receive the opportunity to take the initiative as well as receive enough communication was also found to mediate the influence of transformational leadership on well-being, which suggests that models of climate could be used to increase our understanding of the transformational leadership process.

In order to understand contextual and situational influences on the emergence of transformational leadership, newly recruited leaders were followed and interviewed during their first year of leadership in a social service organization. A content analysis showed that organizational factors such as financial strain, continuous change and the organizational structure were experienced as inhibiting transformational leadership behaviour. Also, the leaders' own working environment in terms of work load, support, influence, and the number of administrative tasks played a central role. The hindering factors were experienced as having consequences in terms of ineffective leadership as well as withdrawal behaviours on the part of the leaders. The results would seem promising for opening up new directions for theory and research on organizational antecedents of transformational leadership as well as providing organizations with insights into which factors may hinder their leaders from exhibiting transformational leadership behaviour.

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated the usefulness of transformational leadership in social services in terms of being related with employees' positive attitudes and well-being as well as identified factors that could influence the success of the transformational leadership process in this context. Co-worker support and leader continuity may enhance the effect of transformational leaders, and an innovative climate links transformational leadership to outcomes. Furthermore, organizational and working conditions may inhibit leaders from engaging in transformational leadership behaviours as well as producing ineffective leadership. In all, these results indicate that there are important areas for future research to investigate, such as identifying antecedents and moderating variables in order to understand better the transformational leadership process in the public sector. This could help social service organizations create fertile ground for effective and healthy leadership in dealing with the many challenges of the future.

# Sammanfattning (in Swedish)

## Den transformella ledarskapsprocessen: förutsättningar, mekanismer och utfall i socialtjänsten

### Bakgrund och syfte

Socialtjänsten har under de senaste decennierna genomgått stora organisationsförändringar i syfte att öka effektiviteten och kontrollen i organisationen. Exempel på dessa förändringar är beställar-utförar modeller, resultatenheter, kundval, plattare organisation och större enheter. Detta har ställt nya krav på cheferna i organisationen och medfört ett ökat behov av kunskap om vilket ledarskap som är bäst lämpat att leda dessa förändrade organisationer. Transformellt ledarskap är en ledarskapsmodell som visat sig vara effektiv i många andra organisationer. Den bygger på att ledaren, genom att vara en förebild och visa vägen med hjälp av visioner, uppmuntrar anställda att ta ansvar för sin och organisationens utveckling med stöd av ledaren som coach och mentor. Detta har i sin tur visat sig leda till ökad effektivitet, men även trivsel och välmående hos personalen. Nyttan av ett transformellt ledarskap i offentliga organisationer är dock omdebatterad. Även om studier har visat att transformellt ledarskap är minst lika vanligt i offentliga som privata organisationer så finns det studier som pekar på svårigheter och hinder för ett transformellt ledarskap i den här kontexten, exempelvis en hierarkisk struktur, en administrativ ledarroll och stora arbetsgrupper. Kunskapen om faktorer som försvårar eller underlättar ett transformellt ledarskap i socialtjänsten är ännu i sin linda och ytterligare studier behövs som belyser ledarskapsprocessen och tillför ytterligare kunskap inom området.

Syftet med avhandlingen är att öka kunskapen om den transformella ledarskapsprocessen i socialtjänsten genom att undersöka faktorer som kan förklara när och varför transformellt ledarskap uppstår och är effektivt. Mer specifikt undersöker avhandlingen om (1) det finns ett samband mellan transformellt ledarskap och personalens upplevelse av engagemang, rolltydligt och välmående, (2) om den inverkan transformellt ledarskap har på personalen kan bero på ledarens inverkan på hur innovativt och utvecklande klimatet i organisationen uppfattas samt om tid med ledaren och socialt stöd av arbetskamrater kan öka effekten av ett transformellt ledarskap, och (3) slutligen undersöks vilka organisatoriska hinder chefer i socialtjänsten upplever i relation till att utöva ett transformellt ledarskap.

## **Metod och resultat**

För att besvara ovanstående syften samlades data in med hjälp av enkäter och intervjuer med personal och chefer i en socialtjänst i en större kommun i norra Sverige. Ett slumpmässigt urval personal fick besvara en enkät vid två tillfällen med frågor om hur de uppfattade sin närmaste chef, klimatet på arbetsplatsen och det kollegiala stödet, samt i vilken mån de upplevde engagemang, rolltydlighet och välmående. Ett mindre antal nyrekryterade chefer följdes under sitt första år i organisationen med hjälp av intervjuer för att fånga vilket ledarskapsideal de hade, samt vilka hinder de upplevde från organisationens sida vid utövandet av detta ledarskapsideal.

Resultaten visar att ett transformellt ledarskap har ett positivt samband med personalens skattningar av engagemang, rolltydlighet och välmående i socialtjänsten. Analyserna visar även att detta kan bero på att en transformell ledare påverkar klimatet på arbetsplatsen, då upplevelsen av ett innovativt och utvecklande klimat förklarade varför ett transformellt ledarskap gav högre skattningar av välmående. Vad gäller faktorer som kan öka effekten av ett transformellt ledarskap, visade analyserna att anställda som hade arbetat under en transformell ledare längre än ett och ett halvt år upplevde högre engagemang och rolltydlighet än anställda som haft en transformell ledare kortare tid eller haft en ledare som inte var transformell. Detta visar på vikten av tid och fördelen med att låta chefer leda samma personalgrupp under en längre tidsperiod. Analyserna visade även att personal som upplevde socialt stöd från kollegor i kombination med en transformell ledare var de med högst skattningar på engagemang. Detta visar på den viktiga roll personalen spelar i ledarskapsprocessen. Intervjustudien med nyrekryterade chefer visade att dessa chefer strävade efter ett transformellt ledarskap men att de upplevde att hinder både i organisationen och i den egna arbetsmiljön försvårade möjligheten att i praktiken utöva ett transformellt ledarskap. De upplevde att en hierarkisk organisation, en ansträngd ekonomi samt ständigt återkommande organisationsförändringar hindrade dem. De upplevde även att hög arbetsbelastning, en administrativ ledarroll, lågt inflytande, bristande stöd samt att inte ha sitt kontor nära personalen försvårade utövandet av ett transformellt ledarskap. Cheferna upplevde vidare att dessa hinder medförde att ledarskapet i stället blev passivt och att man fick ägna sig åt att släcka bränder i efterhand och lösa problem som redan uppstått istället för att arbeta på det sätt man önskat.

## **Slutsatser**

Avhandlingen visar att ett transformellt ledarskap har ett samband med positiva attityder och ökat välmående bland personalen i socialtjänsten och att detta till viss del kan förklaras av den positiva inverkan en transformell ledare har på klimatet i organisationen. Avhandlingen visar vidare att det

finns faktorer som kan underlätta och öka effekten av ett transformellt ledarskap, så som att ha samma chef under en längre tidsperiod och upplevelsen av socialt stöd från kollegor. Faktorer som kan hindra chefer från att utöva ett transformellt ledarskap identifierades också, i form av organisationsstrukturen, återkommande organisationsförändringar och chefernas egen arbetsmiljö. Dessa faktorer är viktiga att beakta för de organisationer som strävar efter ett transformellt ledarskap, eftersom avhandlingen pekar på att de kan ha ett avgörande inflytande över om chefer kommer lyckas bedriva ett transformellt ledarskap. Sammanfattningsvis har avhandlingen visat på nyttan av ett transformellt ledarskap i socialtjänsten, men samtidigt identifierat faktorer som både kan hjälpa och stjälpa den transformella ledarskapsprocessen i den här typen av offentliga organisationer.

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