

**A constant potential for leadership?  
Management and leadership acts from frontline  
managers in publicwelfare knowledge work**

**Chris Rønningstad**

OsloMet Avhandling 2019 nr 28

**OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**  
STORBYUNIVERSITETET





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**OSLO  
MET**

Dissertation for the degree of philosophiae doctor (PhD)  
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Autumn 2019

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OsloMet Avhandling 2019 nr 28

ISSN 2535-471X (trykt)

ISSN 2535-5414 (online)

ISBN 978-82-8364-199-8 (trykt)

ISBN 978-82-8364-216-2 (online)

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet

Universitetsbiblioteket

Skriftserien

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0130 Oslo,

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Postboks 4, St. Olavs plass

0130 Oslo

Trykket hos Byråservice

Trykket på Scandia 2000 white, 80 gram på materiesider/200 gram på coveret

## Forord

Denne avhandlingen er resultatet av tre utfordrende og utrolig morsomme år. Selv om det har vært gøy er det også deilig å være ferdig, et menneske kan bare fokusere på ett tema så lenge. Nå gleder jeg meg til å tenke på andre ting!

Jeg skylder mange en takk. Var for å glemme noen vil jeg først takke informantene på de ulike Nav-kontorene for at de tok godt imot meg. Uten deres vilje til å dele av tid og erfaringer ville det vært umulig å gjennomføre denne avhandlingen. I denne sammenheng fortjener Niels Wulfsberg ved Nav FoU en spesiell takk som en metaforisk og faktisk veiviser til Nav-systemet og deres uoversiktlige kontorer.

Jeg må takke veileder Aagoth Storvik og bi-veileder Monica Kjørstad. Stor takk sendes i retning av gode kolleger og ledere som har bidratt med faglig og sosial støtte. Mange fortjener en takk, men spesielt vil jeg nevne POL-gruppa og Øyunn.

Takk til venner og familie for at dere er der. Setter mer pris på det enn jeg kan uttrykke.

Størst vil jeg takke min briljante samboer Palma. En varm, støttende person som leser korrektur og er full av nyttige innspill. Et unikum!

Chris

## Sammendrag

Avhandlingen undersøker hvordan sjefer for kunnskapsarbeidere i offentlig velferdsarbeid utøver styring og ledelse. Den fyller et behov for empirisk forskning på disse handlingene fra et ansattperspektiv. Studien bidrar teoretisk ved å beskrive hvordan styring støtter ledelse, hvordan ansatte opplever dette gjennom handlinger, og hvilke mekanismer som støtter denne opplevelsen. Styring og ledelse brukes som et teoretisk rammeverk. I mangel på et godt norsk ord for “management,” bruker jeg styring. På norsk kan dette forveksles med “governance” om måter å instruere og styre en organisasjon på. Jeg bruker det i tråd med “management” om styring og administrasjon utført av en sjef.

En litteraturgjennomgang, 11 tekster fra sjefer og 41 intervjuer med ansatte og sjefer utgjør avhandlingens sentrale datagrunnlag. Det viktigste metodologiske bidraget er at jeg inkluderer opplevelser fra både sjefer og ansatte. Dette gjøres blant annet gjennom en fenomenologisk beskrivelse av ansattes opplevelse av ledelse fra sjefsrollen. Dette forhindrer et ensidig fokus på sjefens egen forståelse av sin situasjon, og tillater meg å knytte opplevelsen av styring og ledelse til sjefens handlinger.

Artikkel I analyserer relevant litteratur og identifiserer hva sjefer gjør og hvordan dette påvirkes av konteksten. Artikkel II bruker skriftlige arbeid fra sjefer for å beskrive handlinger og utfordringer med å utøve styring og ledelse. Artikkel III og IV trekker på 41 intervjuer med sjefer og ansatte for å beskrive opplevelser av styring og ledelse.

Avhandlingen viser hvordan disse to kan kombineres, og forklarer dette med en kontekst der uklare oppgaver og et behov for kontroll møter ansattes behov for å bli sett og anerkjent. Ved å se på trekk ved konteksten, finner jeg at ansattes behov for støtte, og organisasjonens krav om kontroll er mekanismer som påvirker muligheten for å utøve disse handlingene. Ved å sammenligne ulike typer arbeid beskriver jeg hvordan standardisering av arbeidet påvirker opplevelsen av ledelse og styring.

I så måte identifiserer avhandlingen at sjefer kan bruke styringsoppgaver til å drive ledelse gjennom veiledning og kvalitetskontroll. Funnene har implikasjoner for styring og ledelse i denne typen velferdsarbeid. Avhandlingen svarer praksisfeltets behov for kunnskap om hvordan avdelingsledere i slike organisasjoner kan utøve bedre ledelse og kombinere behovet for styring med å støtte de ansatte.

## Summary

The dissertation explores how frontline managers in public welfare knowledge work perform management and leadership acts. It contributes to a lack of empirical studies on how managers in the setting perform these acts and how employees experience them. The findings contribute theoretically to our understanding of management tasks as supporting leadership, describing how employees experience them in acts, and our understanding of the mechanisms enabling these experiences.

The data consists of a literature review, 11 written responses from managers and 41 interviews with employees and managers. The most important methodological contribution is the inclusion of both manager and employee perspectives through phenomenological descriptions of management and leadership acts. This allows me to describe acts from the frontline manager position and account for how employees experience them as influential.

The body of the dissertation consists of four articles. Article I reviews relevant literature to identify management and leadership acts as well as contextual influences. Article II draws on written responses from managers to identify acts challenges with performing them in the setting. Articles III and IV use 41 interviews with managers and employees to describe management and leadership acts.

The dissertation shows that management can support leadership acts in public welfare knowledge works. Additionally, it suggests that ambiguous tasks and demands for control act as mechanisms aiding this combination. The findings speak to a practice field calling for knowledge on how these frontline managers can be better leaders. Among other things, they identify that managers can use their position to perform leadership through acts such as supervision and quality control. Comparing two groups of employees allowed for considering how standardization of work-tasks affected these experiences.





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## Articles

Article I: Rønningstad, C. (2018). Leading for better outcomes: Social work as knowledge work. *Nordic Social Work Research*. 8(1): 75–87.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2017.1422138>

Article II: Rønningstad, C. (2018). Us and them – First-line management and change resistance. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*. 8(2): 5–22.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v8i2.106152>

Article III: Rønningstad, C. (2019). How unstandardized work tasks create arenas for leadership. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*. 43(2): 111–124.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2019.1610130>

Article IV: Rønningstad, C. (2019). Knowledge and position: How to manage ambiguous public welfare work. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*. 9(2): 5–24.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v9i2.114798>

# 1. Introduction

I am free to—close my door, sit and work with staff-matters, compile statistics and lead from that—but then I remove myself from reality, from what happens in the reception-area, from the employees, and I do not want that. I am free to conduct leadership by closing my door, but I am not the kind of person who wants that.

This frontline manager identifies an exemplary duality of management and leadership within public welfare knowledge work. Showing how new public management reforms (NPM) require managers to perform an increased amount of management—controlling numbers and reporting on production—while also expecting them to demonstrate leadership in interactions with their employees.

Leadership is a contentious topic, and some even question whether it exists, or are just words to label practices we *consider* leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003b; S. Kelly, 2008). I contend that management and leadership manifest themselves through acts leaders perform in relation to followers<sup>1</sup>. Inspired by Alvesson, Blom, and Sveningsson (2016), I define leadership as interpersonal acts experienced as defining meaning or reality for others who are inclined to on a largely voluntary basis accept such influence. In contrast, management concern acts managers perform from their formal position, such as exercising control and enforcing rules and regulations.

The main difference between them is that followers do not experience management acts as influencing their meaning making and reality. This understanding means that identical acts can be experienced as management and leadership, depending on how the follower interprets it as influential<sup>2</sup>. This dissertation explores these acts and the experienced influence from the manager and employee perspectives. I return to a necessary discussion on their theoretical and operational differences in chapter three.

Influencing reality-definition and meaning making does not require the influence to change the follower in a lasting or substantial way. While it can achieve these things, I also consider it to include a wide variety of influence such as how they view their contributions to the organization, or their belonging to a group. It can also be simple things, such as

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<sup>1</sup> In line with leader-follower theory (Cogliser, Schriesheim, Scandura, & Gardner, 2009), I refer to managers and their employees as leaders and followers when engaging in a leadership process. Individually, they are referred to according to their positions—managers, counselors, or caseworkers—when relevant.

<sup>2</sup> This because acts can simultaneously have their own substantive value while also influencing employees as a ceremonious component (Goffman, 1966). This however depends on the interpretation of the act. For example, when an employee perceives a management act such as distributing tasks, as an acknowledgement of their skills.

acknowledging a job well done or employees feeling well about them self and the work they perform. I return to a discussion on this in the theoretical framework.

The first aim of the dissertation is to describe how managers of public welfare knowledge work perform management and leadership acts. This type of work is characterized by an ambiguous setting demanding employees to perform discretionary tasks. This aim speaks to previous research and reports on the challenges of conducting leadership in the public welfare knowledge work setting (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2015, 2016; Sagatun & Smith, 2012; Shanks, 2016). By considering this, I contribute with needed qualitative research on how managers in this subset of welfare work perform management and leadership acts.

The second aim of the dissertation is to contribute to an identified lack of such research from the employee perspective. Thirdly, I describe how the settings' work-tasks and demands for managers to control and support employees influence experiences of management and leadership acts. I further argue the necessity of these contributions in the literature review in chapter two. I fulfil the stated aims by answering the following research question:

How do frontline managers in public welfare knowledge work perform management and leadership acts?

In identifying management tasks as supporting leadership acts, the findings contest theories on management and leadership as mutually exclusive (Zaleznik, 1977). My findings contribute to a theoretical stream seeing them as compatible and co-occurring. Within this stream, my findings nuance the notion that their co-occurrence is tension-filled or with management as a limiting contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010). Instead, they describe how management acts can support experiences of leadership by increasing opportunities for influential interactions. This happens when employees experience them as combined, such as when being given a new task change how they view their contributions to the organization.

The findings show that employees' need for support and the organization's demands for control are mechanisms that can increase interactions between managers and employees. As such, they provide managers with arenas where employees experienced them as leaders. This aids employees' experiences<sup>3</sup> of their manager as performing leadership. As mechanisms (Elster, 2015), they are not a contingency for combining the two, but rather contributing

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<sup>3</sup> For simplicity, I refer to them as experiences instead of "experiences of leadership and management drawn from perceptions of acts." I discuss this further in sections 3.5 and 4.3.5/4.3.6.

factors creating meetings between managers and employees. The findings answer a call for research on how contextual characteristics influence experiences of frontline managers as leaders (Oc, 2017, p. 222).

By identifying contextual influence, the findings challenge the notion that leaders change their surroundings rather than be a product of it (Foster, 1989, p. 40). Using the follower perspective, the dissertation informs the theoretical understanding of leadership as influential acts, different than organizational outcomes (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 4), abstract phenomenon (S. Kelly, 2014; Spicker, 2012), or a leader’s self-understanding (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, 2003b).

*Table 1. Articles and their findings as they relate to the dissertation.*

	<b>Article</b>	<b>Findings</b>
I.	Rønningstad, C. (2018). Leading for better outcomes: Social Work as knowledge work. <i>Nordic Social Work Research</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work.</li> <li>• Contextual factors posing limitations on management and leadership.</li> </ul>
II.	Rønningstad, C. (2018). Us and them – First-line management and change resistance. <i>Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers’ experiences of management and leadership acts.</li> <li>• Context as contributing and hindering the performance and possible combination of management and leadership.</li> </ul>
III.	Rønningstad, C. (2019). How unstandardized work tasks create arenas for leadership. <i>Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership &amp; Governance</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee/manager experiences of management and leadership acts.</li> <li>• Identifies employees’ ambiguous tasks as influencing needs for manager interactions.</li> <li>• Identifies management tasks as arenas for leadership experiences.</li> </ul>
IV.	Rønningstad, C. (2019). Knowledge and position: How to manage ambiguous public welfare work. <i>Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee/manager experiences of management and leadership acts.</li> <li>• Combination supported by managers’ knowledge.</li> <li>• Describes ambiguous tasks, need for support, and demands for control as influencing needs for manager interactions and leadership experiences.</li> </ul>

I draw on four articles to answer the research question. Table 1 summarizes the findings. The articles consist of a literature review, written statements, and interviews with managers and employees. The interviews asked open-ended questions about acts, including descriptions of how informants experienced them as influential. This phenomenological approach allowed me to understand the influential outcomes of the management and leadership process. Thematic

analyses of their answers allowed me to categorize acts and sort them as management and leadership according to informant's experiences of influence. Meaning making and reality definition are open categories. In line with the strengths of the phenomenological interview, this allows employees' experiences to be essential in categorizing acts according to the theoretical framework (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Frontline managers in the study are responsible for economics, performance, and personnel in their departments. I include managers from the Norwegian Work and Labour Administration (Nav) and other public welfare knowledge work organizations. Employees in this study are counselors and caseworkers working at the frontline of Nav. They work with following up clients and making assessments about benefits. I elaborate on comparisons of their different work-tasks in chapters two and four.

The dissertation concerns important meta-aspects of how the Norwegian welfare state delivers social policy. This makes it a good fit for the doctoral program in social work and social policy at Oslo Metropolitan University. Previous projects in the doctoral-program have contributed by studying meetings between public welfare employees and their clients. I emphasize interactions between employees and their managers. This study is relevant as improving management and leadership practices is a concern of governing actors (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2015, 2016). Including pertinent perspectives for social workers, the dissertation is also relevant for this part of the program. The nature of the work presented in the literature review in chapter two suggests that the findings can be applicable to a wider subset of organizations performing knowledge work in ambiguous and bureaucratic organizations.

The two first articles emphasize the performance of acts from the manager perspective and describe the setting's influence. The literature review in article I identifies prevalent management and leadership acts and reviews the contextual influence. For the purpose of the dissertation's research question, I only include results relevant for public welfare work. Article II draws on written responses from managers in public welfare knowledge work. I find that managers try to combine the two, but face limitations from the organization and governance from above, as well as their employees.

The third and fourth article describe how management acts support experiences of leadership. It draws on 41 interviews with managers, counselors, and caseworkers in Nav. They describe acts where managers influence employees' understanding such as their place in the

organization and contributions. In doing this, the articles identify how managers use management tasks to support leadership acts. They identify how employees needing interactions provide managers with opportunities for performing leadership. Managers influencing when performing quality controls, suggests that organizational demands for accountability can create demands for interactions. Together, the articles complement the findings of article I and II in describing how management can support leadership acts and how the context influences this.

The literature review in chapter two identifies the specific public welfare knowledge work setting by drawing on a variety of relevant research traditions. It suggests that managers perform management and leadership to control and support employees. Despite of this, I identify a lack of context relevant research on how they perform these acts. By the sheer lack of relevant results, the literature review also identifies missing accounts of these acts from the employee perspective. This inspired the dissertation's research aims.

The theoretical framework in chapter three establishes management and leadership as theoretical constructs, presents an operationalization of their acts, and identifies a lacking understanding of how they combine. It further argues the necessity and contribution of accounting for employees' experiences of influence, and discusses how contextual factors affect them. This identifies areas where the dissertation contributes theoretically. A section on the science of knowledge argues why phenomenological interviews are the right epistemological approach for informing the research question.

Chapter four further examines my methodological approach and argues the soundness of phenomenological interviews to answer the research question. Chapter five summarizes the empirical findings from the four research papers as they relate to the dissertation. I discuss the findings, limitations, and conclusions in chapter six.

### 1.1. The case of Nav

Nav is my main case for public welfare knowledge work. It is useful for informing my research aims as an organization where need for control and accountability clash with employees' use of discretion and lack of standardized education.

Nav provides public welfare services in Norway through local-offices located in all 422 municipalities. It aims to serve clients in need of the welfare state. In doing so, Nav offers one-stop access to public welfare services, binding together the old state welfare



(Trydgetaten), municipal welfare (Sosialtjenesten), and employment services (Aetat) in one organization and one office (Andreassen & Aars, 2015). State and municipality govern Nav offices as co-partners. As a result, a limited amount of offices are led by two managers, one for each owner (Andreassen & Aars, 2015). Specific issues with this governance model have been researched (Fossestøl, Breit, Andreassen, & Klemsdal, 2015). I visited departments with one manager, leaving this outside the dissertation's scope.

The Nav reform in the mid-2000s merged the three public welfare services and their 16 000 employees (Andreassen & Aars, 2015). The integration of these services might be relevant for my findings, especially so because it merged three sets of organizations, employees, tasks, and practices (Andreassen & Aars, 2015). Instead of contributing another evaluation of the details and logic of the Nav reform of the mid 2000s, my dissertation uses Nav as a case for understanding management and leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work. It is thus worth considering that caseworker and counselor departments might be different due to their history and affiliation. This could potentially explain differences between the departments.

Counseling departments are located in 422 municipal offices spread through Norway. I visited departments organized in cross-professional teams. They worked with following up clients outside the labor-market. I consider them ideal examples of post-reform Nav, employing counselors in teams performing the tasks of all three previous services (Andreassen & Aars, 2015, p. 93). Municipal and state employees worked in the same teams. Informants did not indicate that being employed by state or municipality influenced their experiences of management and leadership. This is not surprising considering that they answered to the same manager regardless of which budget paid their salary. These departments fit the knowledge work designation by recruiting a mix of professionally educated and non-professional employees to perform similar discretionary tasks. The organizing of counselor-teams would have been difficult before the reform and are attributable to the ideals of the Nav reform. This makes it difficult to identify significant consequences on management and leadership from history in these departments.

Caseworker-departments are located in 21 different offices throughout Norway. They have a more obvious connection to their pre-reform days. Differing from counselors, they are largely shielded from direct client contact to emphasize efficient casework (Andreassen & Aars, 2015). They mainly consist of teams with a mix of jurists and non-professionally educated employees performing similar discretionary tasks. As such, they are similar to counselors in performing knowledge work rather than a specified profession. This is in accordance with the

generalist ideals of the Nav-reform. Located away from local offices, they mirror their predecessor, state welfare-services, in assessing eligibility for public welfare benefits. Considering the similarities to their pre-reform days and their shielded position away from clients, it is possible that their history affects experiences of management and leadership. I comment on this in the findings. The potential differences between counseling and casework departments provided opportunities for comparing how different work-tasks influenced experiences of management and leadership. I elaborate on this in chapter four.

## 2. Literature review

This section presents relevant literature on management and leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work. The term “knowledge workers” describes employees using discretion to solve tasks without a standardized education. Their main contribution is their use of knowledge<sup>4</sup>, which the organization utilize in service delivery (P. H. Sullivan, 1999). They are similar to professional welfare workers in making discretionary<sup>5</sup> decisions to solve ambiguous tasks (Blom, Nygren, Nyman, & Scheid, 2007; Dore, 2018; Øverbye, 2013). They are different in that they lack a standardized professional education helping them make these decisions.

There is a lack of research on management and leadership acts of such work within the public welfare setting. So, to establish the research front, I draw on contributions from similar and relevant literature. Based on this, I expect management and leadership acts to be necessary for controlling<sup>6</sup> and enabling<sup>7</sup> employees’ use of discretion. The review identifies few contributions concerned with describing these acts within the given context. Filling this gap, the review establishes three aims of contribution. The first is to describe how frontline managers of public welfare knowledge workers perform management and leadership acts. The second is to provide necessary research from the employee perspective. The third is to identify how characteristics of the setting influence these experiences.

### 2.1. The literature searches

Including research from multiple traditions is necessary due to a lack of specific interest in management and leadership acts in this type of public welfare work. Sorting the literature, I

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<sup>4</sup> Knowledge is a broad term describing knowledge about the work, organization or practices that can originate in multiple sources such as practice or education (Gherardi, 2001). I see the main difference between knowledge workers and professionals that the latter have an education as a clear source for their knowledge. This does not preclude that professionals also draw on other sources, but that their education is an important standardizing force separating them from knowledge workers (Molander & Terum, 2008). Hence, professionals are knowledge workers, not all knowledge workers are professionals.

<sup>5</sup> Discretion describes an individual’s capacity and ability to evaluate a situation and devise a fitting solution (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). It relies on various sources of knowledge such as education or personal experience. Limitations on its use include factors such as individual competence, or lacking enablement and empowerment.

<sup>6</sup> I use control to describe managers using their rational-legal authority to structure the work or to ensure that employees complete tasks with appropriate quality and tempo. This understanding corresponds with management tasks in public welfare organizations.

<sup>7</sup> I consider managers as enabling and not empowering as employees’ discretionary power originate in the Social Services Law (2009). It demands them to make individual assessments. While empowered from the law, managers can draw upon leadership behaviors to enable welfare workers to use this discretion.

made sure to include only research with the relevant characteristics to inform the scope of the dissertation. The presented literature stems from three rounds of structured searches. The first presented in research article I, reviewed social work literature. I describe it in detail there.

From that search, I have included contributions relevant for the discussion on management and leadership that fit the scope of the dissertation. The exclusion criteria being whether they concerned a setting similar to public welfare knowledge work as described in this chapter.

Additional contributions come from a second search of literature with the keywords “management” and “leadership” + “Nav”, as well as a third search for literature with keywords “management” and “leadership” + “public welfare work” in Web of Science (TS) and Google Scholar. I identified further works from a snowball-effect of works in my capacity as a vigilant reader and reviewer of scientific journals and books. Searching in the selected databases with the given keywords, I draw on a diverse set of research traditions including public administration, professional work, and social work.

Discussing the relevant contributions, this chapter presents traits of the setting and connects them to behaviors of managers. Using such an approach was necessary as public welfare work incorporate multiple and often competing logics (Evetts, 2011). Deeming this a development towards a “new professionalism” (Evetts, 2011), its novelty could explain the lack of specific management and leadership research.

This makes it necessary to include bits and parts of different tradition to inform the literature. I partly draw on professional literature such as social work. This tradition has value for informing the setting. Mostly because they share experiences of ambiguity and competing logics of discretion and control within the public welfare setting. This is a specificity general leadership research tends to lack.

In addition, they are concerned with frontline-level research on management and leadership acts that often lack in public administration research concerned with overreaching governance perspectives. A possible downside of this approach is that I could ignore context-independent research. To compensate for this, the theoretical-framework chapter presents a broader general theoretical discussion on management and leadership tying into topics raised here.

Establishing the setting, I present research on leading and managing knowledge workers in public welfare organizations (2.2). I then present how the setting can create demands (2.3) and needs (2.4) for management and leadership. I finish with identifying my contributions from filling gaps of six relevant research streams (2.5).

## 2.2. Knowledge workers in the public welfare setting

Studying this type of public welfare work is particularly relevant to inform consequences of organizational ambiguity in European welfare services. Most notably seen in how professional logics<sup>8</sup> based on education clash with organizational or managerial logics (Denis, Ferlie, & Van Gestel, 2015; Noordegraaf, 2007; Olakivi & Niska, 2017; Reay & Hinings, 2009).

Particular for Norway, speaking of knowledge workers rather than professionals is relevant as the Nav-reform aimed to create generalist services and integrated teams across backgrounds and professions (Andreassen & Aars, 2015, p. 93–94). Unlike traditional professional organizations who recruit professionally educated workers and trusts them to make these decisions (Molander & Terum, 2008), public welfare knowledge work like Nav recruit a blend of generalists and professionally educated.

This makes them different from other professions in the public welfare setting, such as medical doctors. The difference is apparent as managers in Nav might lack a professional degree and professionally educated social workers do the same job as colleagues without such a degree. It makes this subset of public welfare work different from other organizations employing professional educated personnel to fill a specific position. It would for example be unthinkable that a hospital hired a sociologist to perform surgery.

To handle the lack of standardization, these organizations train employees internally and control on performance. Both professionally educated and “generalists” employees in Nav experience that their education fails to standardize their work (Gjersøe, 2016a, 2016b; Øvrelid, 2018). This comes in addition to experiences of professional knowledge being undervalued in Nav (Røysum, 2010). This indicates that also professionally educated employees in these organizations lack a relevant standardizing background for performing their work. Because of this, I consider employees performing such work with and without a professional education to be knowledge-workers.

Nonetheless, I include literature on welfare professionals such as social workers. I do this because they share a similar ambiguous work setting and perform similar discretionary evaluations for the good of the public (Molander & Terum, 2008, p. 18). Despite lacking a professional education, I consider that knowledge workers use discretion like professionals,

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<sup>8</sup> Such institutional logics, whether concerning an organization, profession, or individuals, describe institutional influence on how members think and act (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

but without the standardized background. From this, I contend that they are partially applicable to research on management and leadership of professionals. This is applicable with seeing professions as a continuum rather than clear categories (Molander & Terum, 2008, p. 20).

The ambiguity of the context and lacking standardization from a relevant education could demand that employees in this type of work need managers to intervene. Either to make decisions as formally responsible for the departments, or to help employees standardize tasks. Informing this uncertainty, the dissertation fills a need for research on management and leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work.

### 2.3. Demands for management

This section identifies the setting as characterized by managers controlling and reporting on their own and employees' performance. Nav shows this characteristic by making performance-management important governance-tools (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2011), and using project management tools to monitor performance through volume rather than quality of the activities (Roaldsnes, 2018).

This development is attributed to NPM-reforms (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2011). While the Nav reform was intended as a post-NPM reform based on integrated services, it included NPM-characteristics such as an emphasis on performance management (Andreassen & Aars, 2015; Fossetøl et al., 2015). The conflicting elements of NPM-reforms deserves its own dissertation. To address my research question, I am concerned with a specific aspect of NPM directly related to the manager position: managerialism<sup>9</sup>.

While management describes what managers do, managerialism defines “an ideology prescribing that organizations ought to be coordinated, controlled, and developed through corporate management knowledge and practices” (Hvenmark, 2016, p. 2849). The ideology<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Managerialism is not to be confused with management. Management denotes behaviors managers perform to control and administer an organization; managerialism is an ideology for how organizations should be governed (Hvenmark, 2016). Although managerialism demands certain management behaviors, management occurs without managerialism; however, managerialism is unlikely to occur without management because control and administration are essential to the ideology.

<sup>10</sup> The rise of managerialism and performance management are closely related to the marketization of public services and NPM-ideologies aimed at improving service production (Forsell & Norén, 2013; Harris, 1998). However, they are not the same. Managerialism concerns the supply side of services and efficient services, while marketization concerns how services meet clients' needs (Lawler & Bilson, 2009, p. 13).

has well-documented consequences for employees and managers as there is a connection between it and demands for management tasks (Evetts, 2011, p. 416).

Control and reporting-regimes create additional work for managers and employees in Nav and Swedish social services (Fossestøl, Breit, & Borg, 2016a; Gjersøe, 2016a; Røysum, 2010; Sagatun & Smith, 2012; Shanks, 2016; Øvrelid, 2018). However, the increased managerial powers and discretionary room can also support managers' ability to navigate the grey areas of organizational matters (Berg, Barry, & Chandler, 2008; Evans, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Shanks, Lundström, & Wiklund, 2014).

Nonetheless, the literature indicates that managerialism represents a shift from valuing employees' knowledge and trusting their judgment, to managers holding employees accountable for their performance and choices through control (Evetts, 2011, p. 408; Øverbye, 2013). These changes can limit employees' professional discretion (Eliot Freidson, 2001; Harris, 1998; Hasenfeld, 2015; Healy & Meagher, 2004).

Such a development could be a trait of new-professional organizations: Shifting from professionals controlling themselves as a collegium, to controlled by an organizations' formal standards, guidelines, and quality systems (Agevall & Jonnergård, 2007). This development is a general trend in welfare services where skepticism towards the "nobility of professionals" lead to demands for accountability (Øverbye, 2013), and cost concerns (Hood & Dixon, 2015). Despite changing how managers act, others have found that control, production demands, and standardization do not necessarily affect employees' use of professional discretion (Evans & Harris, 2004; Heggdalsvik, Rød, & Heggen, 2018; Rønningstad, 2017).

In addition to demanding more management tasks from managers, control and accountability shift the manager position (Kärreman, Sveningsson, & Alvesson, 2002). Traditionally, managers of professionals were seen as facilitators and administrators without much emphasis on control (Mintzberg, 1979). The work was essentially about supporting employees to make their own decisions (p. 363), and dealing with ambiguities through administering and creating order when necessary (Abma & Noordegraaf, 2003). Changing this, Munro (2016) suggests that managerialism increasingly tasks managers with reporting and controlling input, output, and outcomes to ensure equal rights and services to clients. This development demands more management interventions as they aim to keep employees accountable in their use of discretion (Molander, 2013), and ensure that employees work in accordance with organizational rules and instructions (Evetts, 2011, p. 416).

The sum of interruptions and demands created by managerialism could lead to managers lacking time for performing leadership. Research article I presents this as a trend among social work managers. For example, Swedish social work managers experienced limitations from an increased focus on cost effectiveness and downsizing of support functions, finding that they created limitations on their ability to work strategically and exercise leadership (Shanks, 2016). Specific to Nav, “structural contingencies,” such as standardization, unclear delegation between local departments, control measures, and IT systems contribute to an added workload<sup>11</sup> (Fossestøl, Breit, & Borg, 2016b, p. 10–12).

The literature presented here suggest that managerialism demands these managers to perform controlling and reporting acts. The potential limitations from this is consistent with theories seeing management as a contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010). I further discuss the theoretical understanding of management as limiting leadership in chapter three.

#### 2.4. Needs for leadership

The setting’s potential limitations on leadership is problematic. Especially so because leadership can support employees in performing complicated and non-standardized tasks commanded by uncertainty, confusion, and doubt (Lawler & Bilson, 2009). Governmental bodies believes in this to the degree that they see better leadership as means to unlock capacities and create efficient organizations (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2016; O’Reilly & Reed, 2011).

An important part of the positive impact of leadership comes from managers using their knowledge to influence employees. This because they draw on it for their authority, to consider employees’ autonomy, and influence rather than over-instruct (Empson & Langley, 2015). Knowledge can also be symbolic as a manager’s professional background can ensure employees’ position and prioritization in the organization (Fossestøl et al., 2016a).

Supervision is another important influence in this setting. Defining it as overseeing the work (Magnussen, 2015), a literature review found that such acts could support, teach and control employees (p. 25). For my study, it is important to note that others besides managers can perform these supervisory functions. For example, my informants had experienced colleagues as their supervisors. Despite of this, informants sought out the manager for support in cases where they were uncertain about what to do. Consequently, managers in my study were not

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<sup>11</sup> Although suggested organizational changes may lighten the burden and create more flexible services in Nav (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2016), the outcomes of these changes are not yet known.



necessarily supervisors for the employees, but at times performed supervisory tasks. Leaning on the literature on supervision, it suggests that supervisory tasks can create opportunities for managers to interact with employees. From this, managers can perform management and leadership acts such as controlling the work or providing help (p. 25). I return to a theoretical discussion on how such tasks can support leadership in chapter three. The literature on supervision does not specify the potential influence of performing the acts from the manager position, my dissertation contributes with these descriptions.

The presented literature establishes knowledge work in the public welfare setting. It describes an ambiguous setting where employees make discretionary decisions without a standardized education. It finds an increasing emphasis on management tasks realized in demands of control and accountability. This development can limit managers' ability to deliver leadership. This can limit managers in providing supportive leadership to employees performing discretionary work. Based on this, I suggest that the literature identify a need and demand for these managers to do both management and leadership. Despite of this, the next section shows that we lack research considering these as acts, and descriptions of how employees experience them.

## 2.5. Gaps concerning management and leadership acts

To establish my contributions to the literature, I identify six relevant research streams for the setting. I find no one matching the dissertation's aims of describing management and leadership acts from the employee perspective.

The first stream describes managers handling competing logics. It finds that managers in public welfare services struggle with competing demands between managerial logics of control, and professional logics of discretion and a desire to make a difference for clients. It shows managerialism logics increasing on behalf of professional logics in conjunction with NPM-reforms in the United Kingdom and Australia (Evans, 2009; Healy, 2002; Lawler & Bilson, 2009). Studies on Nav reflect this, finding that managers adopt their role to incorporate both professional and organizational values (Breit, Fossetøl, & Andreassen, 2017). In being concerned with managers' experiences of competing logics, this stream identifies potential challenges of management and leadership, but fails to describe these in acts and incorporate the employee perspective.

The second stream is concerned with separating leadership of social work from general theories on leadership. These efforts mostly borrow from the general leadership literature in

describing it as a process of influence, with some additions highlighting its special characteristics (see Peters, 2017, 2018; Rank & Hutchison, 2000). This stream considers distinct leadership-theories necessary because general theories are based on business organizations. This makes them supposedly incompatible with public welfare work values of collaboration and well-being (see Lawler & Bilson, 2009; Peters, 2017, 2018).

I content that such skepticism is an issue as public welfare organizations adopt market measures through NPM-reforms and managerialism. Rather than viewing them as inherently different, my dissertation emphasizes management and leadership acts and attribute them to a setting characterized by performance management and controls. Another difference is that while the second stream considers values as a defining quality of leadership, my research question emphasizes acts. This is a conscious choice as values are troublesome definitions of leadership. It is too difficult to distinguish from values the difference between welfare work and very different organizations such as Walmart<sup>12</sup>. In describing employees' experiences of acts, I can provide a more context sensitive and specific description of management and leadership.

The third-stream concerns literature reviews and meta-studies identifying leadership in social work. An essential finding here is the importance of "interpersonal leadership"<sup>13</sup> (Hafford-Letchfield, Lambley, Spolander, & Cocker, 2014; Holosko, 2009; Peters, 2018). This direction finds managers enabling employees by influencing them. It identifies effective leadership in acts such as adopting to context and individuals, reflecting and discussing emotions; sharing, supporting, and engaging in open discussions; supporting peer-evaluation, and clinical supervision (Peters, 2018, p. 37). Other behaviors include portraying common goals and visions, focusing on mission, sharing power, and collective ownership (p. 37). As well as solving problems, creating positive change (Holosko, 2009), supervision, and variety of work (D. B. Smith & Shields, 2013). Despite identifying the importance of interpersonal leadership behaviors, these efforts lack a concern for how they might co-occur with management, the specificity of the public welfare context, and the employee point of view.

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<sup>12</sup> Walmart for example, lists its values as: "Service to the customer, respect for the individual, strive for excellence and act with integrity" (Walmart, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Interpersonal leadership includes multiple aspects of personal interactions. It is used interchangeably with "relational leadership" and "social support" in describing behaviors that influence employees by providing information leading them to believe that they are cared for, loved, esteemed, and valued as members of a network of communication and mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976, p. 300).

The fourth stream is concerned with measuring the “effects of leadership.” Dominated by qualitative research, this direction identifies a positive relationship between indicators of interpersonal leadership and performance. Examples include the relationship between transformational leadership, motivation, and job satisfaction in welfare work organizations (Fisher, 2009; Gellis, 2001; Mary, 2005; Tafvelin, Hyvönen, & Westerberg, 2014). While these quantitative efforts describe interpersonal leadership behaviors as efficient, they lack a consideration for how managers perform these acts and how employees experience them.

The fifth stream concerns research connecting managers’ qualifications with their acts. These efforts often relate to the discussed literature on how managers use their knowledge to influence employees. Other examples include identifying the need for skills to facilitate knowledge transfer in the organization (L. Kelly, 2017), and suggesting that leaders should motivate employees to serve clients and meet organizational objectives (P. Sullivan, 2016). Contributions in this stream have in common that they fail to describe managers’ qualifications as realized in acts, or connect it to a context demanding both management and leadership.

The sixth stream concerns how management and leadership co-occur. It describes how managers in public welfare work handle difficult prioritizations in the face of budget cuts, controls, and demands for efficiency. Exemplary research includes a book on education seeing leadership and management as necessary in UK social work (Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2014), a dissertation on managers in Swedish public sector social work (Shanks, 2016), theoretical writings defining planning as part of leadership in social work (Rank & Hutchison, 2000), and acknowledging the need for training leaders to cope with the structural realities of budgets, organizational goals, and measurements of outputs and outcomes (P. Sullivan, 2016, p. S58). Most similar to my ambitions, Ellingsen, Eriksson, and Røn (2018) found that performance-management tools provided Nav-managers with opportunities for approaching their employees about their work.

My contributions are similar to this stream in acknowledging that public welfare services depend on both management and leadership. My research adds to it by describing acts. Additionally, it builds on Shanks (2016) by presenting this from the employee perspective. It builds on Ellingsen et al. (2018) by including management and leadership acts beyond the control-situation, and providing the employee perspective. I do this by interviewing 41 managers and employees compared to their 16 interviews with managers.

Borrowing from similar literature on professional work and public welfare work, I identify how the setting might necessitate management and leadership from the frontline manager. They are necessary due to ambiguous tasks, controls, and needs for enablement. Despite of this, I identified a lack of research on how frontline managers in public welfare knowledge work perform management and leadership acts.

Based on this literature review, I identify three research aims: describing how frontline managers perform management and leadership acts, describing them from the employee perspective, and attributing them to the setting. The dissertations' introduction and four articles answer the first research aim by providing descriptions of management and leadership acts. They answer the second research aim by including the employee perspective in these descriptions. Together, they answer the third aim of describing how the setting influence these experiences. The theoretical framework chapter further discuss the theoretical framework and contributions of the dissertation.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The literature review identified a lack of context-relevant research on management and leadership acts from the employee perspective. Building on this, the theoretical framework argues why this is necessary. In so doing, it identifies my theoretical contributions in the following areas:

1. Describing how management acts might support leadership experiences.
2. Describing management and leadership from the follower<sup>14</sup> perspective.
3. Considering contextual influence on experiences of management and leadership.

First, I establish the theoretical and operational difference between management and leadership acts (3.1). The most controversial being that I see them as differing according to how employees experience them as influential. I then account for theories on how management and leadership co-occur (3.2). Here, I identify the potential theoretical contribution of describing management tasks as supporting leadership. The next section argues the theoretical merits and contributions of applying the follower perspective to management and leadership (3.3). This discussion is necessary to argue the methodological soundness and contributions of utilizing employees' experiences in my analysis. I then identify the theoretical contribution of describing context-specific experiences of management and leadership (3.4). I close with discussing the philosophy of knowledge behind my methodological approach (3.5).

This chapter builds an argument from selected theories on management and leadership. It includes theories I identify as relevant for my research question. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research, my framework is pragmatic in seeking understanding from multiple sources. Discussing management and leadership as acts and managers and leaders as positions could be confusing. Especially in Norwegian where the word "leader" (leder) often describes a formal manager. I assume that formal managers in this study are always in a manager position, from which they perform management and leadership when they act accordingly.

Management and leadership are two ways of organizing behaviors. Other alternatives include groups and networks (Alvesson et al., 2016). I emphasize management and leadership for

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<sup>14</sup> In contrast to Bresnen (1995), I vehemently reject the notion that using words such as follower and leader leaves followers "helpless and dependent on the leader" (p. 502). Rather, these terms make visible an imbalance of power. This imbalance does not suggest that followers lack agency or discretion, but is a necessary acknowledgement of the formal position's power.

three reasons: First, they describe essential needs organizations have for creating meaning and instituting control through formalized structures and interpersonal interactions (Yukl, 1989). Second, they correspond with the duality of control and enablement in the setting. Third, while (almost) everyone has a manager expected to perform both, managers' ability to combine them is an under-researched topic (Yukl, 2010, p. 26).

In considering management and leadership from the frontline manager position, I am sympathetic to critical management studies (Grint, 2005; Hanlon, 2015). By critically examining the idea of leadership, the work is in the tradition of Mats Alvesson. Mary Parker Follet's writings inspire the emphasis on interpersonal leadership. Although different in including both the manager and employee perspective, Henry Mintzberg inspires my interest in management and leadership behaviors.

### 3.1. Theoretical difference between management and leadership

I define management and leadership as different, but relatable concepts. Simplified, one can say that management concerns administration, order, and organization, while leadership influence hearts and minds. I understand management as acts "planning, coordinating and controlling organizational activities" (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 95), whereas leadership acts define meaning/reality for others who are inclined to (on a largely voluntary basis) accept such meaning-making and reality-defining influencing acts (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 8).

Going into the specifics to separate the two is important because they tend to be treated as synonyms (Spicker, 2012). Despite of this, they are considered theoretically different in that management concerns organizing by bringing order and consistency (Kotter, 1999), and making things work by administering the work remotely through planning and monitoring (Hales, 2005). Table 2 summarizes the differences between management and leadership. The top two squares show definitions and corresponding acts. The bottom two squares show the operational understanding and how it is different from the theoretical.

In the following sections, I compare their likeness in being interpersonal (3.1.1) and difference in how they influence (3.1.2). This lays the basis for operationalizing management and leadership as unlike in how employees experience them as influential (3.1.3).

Table 2. Theoretical and practical operationalization of management and leadership

	<b>Management</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
Theoretical definition – “What managers do”	Give orders and administering the work through planning, coordinating and control. (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 95)	Define meaning/reality for others who are inclined to (on a largely voluntary basis) accept such meaning-making and reality-defining influencing acts. (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 8)
Theoretical acts	Controlling Monitoring Ordering Planning Coordinating Delegating	Being compassionate Supporting Sharing Acknowledging Engaging Motivating
Operationalization – “How employees experience managers”	Acts not influencing meaning and reality perceptions.	Acts influencing meaning and reality perceptions.
Connections between theoretical and operational definitions	<b>Management experienced as Management:</b> Coordinating tasks without motivating employees. <b>Management experienced as Leadership:</b> Motivating by delegating challenging tasks.	<b>Leadership experienced as Leadership:</b> Supporting the employee emotionally through a tough time. <b>Leadership experienced as Management:</b> Trying but failing to engage employees, such as in a meeting.

Table 2: Management and leadership as discussed in the dissertation. Theoretical acts concern what a manager does, operationalization how employees experience them. The last row exemplifies how followers can experience acts differently from their theoretical definition.

### 3.1.1. Interpersonal

*Interpersonal* means that management and leadership occur through interactions. In my case between frontline managers and employees. This understanding excludes various forms of “self-leadership” by demanding some kind of interaction between people (McKitterick, 2015). As such, interpersonal is different from being remote (Hales, 2005). That said, interpersonal interactions must not be face-to-face. I consider communication such as email and other interactions to be interpersonal when occurring between people regardless of physical proximity.

An interpersonal understanding of these acts is necessary when studying frontline managers. In charge of small units, they constantly interact with employees in one way or another. Responsible for their units within a hierarchical system, these managers enforce control through centralized power to regulate and monitor the work (Mintzberg, 1979). Hence, managers are the human element handling issues that arise in the organization (p. 8). Interpersonal management and leadership actions are thus necessary tools for making organizations efficient (Alvesson et al., 2016), and to induce employees to reach organizational goals (Hanlon, 2015, p. 7).

This comes with a critical note to those viewing leadership as a potential liberating force in public welfare organizations (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2015, 2016). Regardless of whether managers influence through control or visions, their power and principal loyalty lies with the organization and not the individual followers. Therefore, I consider neither management nor leadership as more liberating than the other. As a critical management researcher, I treat them as different means to achieve organizational goals.

In addition to being relevant for the frontline position, management and leadership as interpersonal behaviors are pertinent to public welfare knowledge work setting. The literature review supports this through the identified prevalence and effect of these behaviors. Interpersonal acts from the frontline manager differs from other levels and types of management and leadership such as the strategic management of an organization (Arnulf, 2018), distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002), leading clients (King Keenan, Sandoval, & Limone, 2018), or leadership as a governance tool (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011).

Before continuing with the discussion on management and leadership as influential acts, it is necessary with a brief consideration about the voluntary aspect of the manager-employee relationship. As defined, leadership demands someone who are *inclined to accept influence on a largely voluntary basis*. This definition means that on some level followers must want or need the influence. Despite power differences, I view informants in this study as voluntary and mutual beneficiary participants in a leader-follower relationship. I base this on their willingness to work in the organization and with the manager.

Some scholars would probably dispute such a use of voluntary and instead see managers as tools enforcing underlying power-structures. Examples include Hanlon (2015) who sees managers as responsible for upholding neoliberal ideals of competition, active intervention, and the necessity for elite leadership of employees through social control. As well as Graeber (2018) who view the manager as essential to ensure employees work the time they are paid (p.



88–89). Despite the popularity of such perspectives in critical management studies, I consider that employees voluntarily accept these interpersonal interactions.

I am mainly concerned with how the frontline position provides managers with opportunities for performing leadership. I return to this in the discussion on management and leadership as co-occurring. Describing leadership from the position is not to say that formal power is a necessity for leadership. The voluntary acceptance of leadership does not require the formal, rational power base of a manager. As such, I view managers as both the medium and the outcome of their social system, with an emphasis on describing them as mediums through their acts (Giddens, 1987; Hales, 1999; Willmott, 2005).

### 3.1.2. Influencing acts

Defining leadership as *meaning-making and reality-defining acts* means that it happens through verbal and non-verbal actions followers experience as influential. Therefore, I consider leadership as acts managers perform that influence meaning making or reality, whereas management acts do not. In line with this interpretation, I consider influential acts leadership regardless of whether the interaction occurs through behaviors traditionally considered as management, such as delegating tasks, or leadership, such as presenting visions. The defining quality is how employees experience an act, not the action itself.

Leadership as a process of influence is a common definition (Yukl, 1989, 2010). As an example, Mary Parker Follett, a pioneer of leadership-research in social work, saw leadership as influencing through interpersonal interactions showing “love, pity, care, compassion, and sensitiveness to suffering” (Follett, 1918/1998, p. 83). In the literature review, I identified that leadership in the setting included such interpersonal behaviors.

In specifying leadership from interpersonal influence, I avoid the causal uncertainty of defining it in organizational outcomes, change, or transformations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Collinson, Smolović Jones, & Grint, 2018; S. Kelly, 2014, p. 910). When rooted in employees’ specific experiences of influential acts, it becomes more than an explanation for “everything good” in an organization (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 4), an abstract phenomenon we attribute blame or credit to (S. Kelly, 2014; Spicker, 2012), or the result of the leader’s perception of themselves (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, 2003b). The definition’s flexibility means that interpersonal influence can reinforce existing perceptions, or even fail to provide better organizational performance. Hence, it allows me to view leadership not vaguely as any good organizational outcome, but as influence realized in interpersonal acts.

To describe this among my informants, I account for their experiences of acts as influential. Meaning that I although I see leadership as a process, I find it methodologically necessary to evaluate the process from its influential outcome. This demand that I use the employee viewpoint to understand how managers influence through acts. To avoid limiting the potential range of such acts, I allowed informants to freely describe them from their own experiences. Influence was thus felt in a variety of areas such as identity (“I contribute”), relation (“I like my manager”), or tasks (“I do important work”).

Showing the potential width of influencing acts, informants described everything from an emotional talk increasing their connection to the organization, to a pat on the back making them see themselves as valued members of the team. I expect from quantitative studies that in some way or another, employees experience motivational behaviors as influential (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017). My qualitative approach can provide a deeper description of how and why acts influence employees in this way.

That said, not all forms of influence are leadership. It is limited to the voluntary acceptance of interpersonal acts that the follower experience as influencing meaning-making and reality definition—a broad, but limited category. It does not include emotional influence employees do not voluntarily accept, such as manipulation or bullying. In the literature, there is a tendency to view leadership as a force of good. However, influencing acts can be negative as well. This include employees feeling alienated. As an example, one informant experienced insecurity when the manager controlled her work. As a result, I do not see leadership as inherently good. Such relativity is beneficial as it allows me to separate between the normative goals of leadership and the acts achieving them.

By considering the influence of acts, rather than underlying goals, traits, or attempts from the leader, my framework can unify disparate concepts of leadership. This provides a framework capable of integrating different leadership-styles. It can achieve this by treating each as an example of influential behaviors rather than as individual, unintegrated models. Consequently, I avoid ambiguous, hard-to-prove “natural leadership” traits and characteristics romanticizing leadership such as charisma (Castelnovo, Popper, & Koren, 2017; Collinson et al., 2018), or being a “servant” (Neubert, Hunter, & Tolentino, 2016). Concerning interpersonal influence, my definition states that traits, such as having charisma or serving others, only become leadership acts when they enable leaders to influence followers’ meaning making or experience of reality.

Emphasizing acts does not mean that I refute the existence of leadership traits and characteristics. On the contrary, I see traits and characteristics as integral resources for performing leadership (Offermann & Coats, 2017). For example, possessing certain traits could explain why followers consider someone a leader (Antonakis, 2011). That being said, it is important to consider that the managers' personal characteristics might also limit their capability to act as leaders (Alvesson & Blom, 2019). I explore this in article IV by describing how frontline managers in the public welfare setting depend on their knowledge when performing management and leadership acts.

### 3.1.3. Operationalization

Based on this discussion, I contend that management and leadership do not differ in the aims or types of acts managers perform. Rather, it depends on employees' experiences of acts as influential. Whereas leadership influences meaning making or reality definition, management is a residual-category of manager acts that do not influence meaning or reality. Because of this, it makes no sense to separate between them based on the acts alone. To understand them, it is necessary to consider employees' experiences.

This makes experienced influence essential in separating between management and leadership in the analysis. It means that as long as employees experience an act as influencing meaning making or reality definition, I consider it leadership. This regardless of whether they fit a traditional description of what a leadership or management act looks like as presented in table 2.

I can exemplify this with the following situation from my data. It shows an employee experiencing a status-report, a reporting task that theoretically fit with management, as motivational leadership. This management task influences the employee by acknowledging her contributions to the organizations' achievements:

We are very concerned with achieving things together, and ensuring that achievements are acknowledged and praised, made visible. Often, [the manager] sends out a mail to the entire office, informing that 'this week we achieved this, and this, and that'. That way we are lifted up, showing that we succeed, that we actually achieve something. So, feeling that kind of backing when we succeed is motivating.

Another example includes an informant who described that feedback from quality-control interactions helped her experience the work as meaningful:

I often feel that if I do a very good job, it will make a difference in the numbers somehow. And, it is important to praise that, but also to somehow see what lays behind those numbers, behind the job you do. I

find that important for motivation. Because those numbers may change from month to month. It is the job you do every single day that motivates you through getting good feedback.

By considering how both types of acts can influence, the analysis identifies how employees experience behaviors we define as management, for example administrating work-tasks, as influential. In the analysis, this allows me to describe how employees might experience that management and influential leadership combine and potentially support each other.

### 3.2. Management and leadership as co-occurring

Public welfare organizations emphasize accountability and expect managers to control employees. The literature review showed it as a time-consuming part of being a manager. Therefore, I consider management as necessary part of performing leadership at the frontline level. In addition to taking up managers' time, it provides essential stability for organizations. Especially so for public services that are "agencies where the objective is not to innovate, but to provide a consistent, reliable service" (Spicker, 2012, p. 39). As a result, I reject the limited understanding of management as something that is "merely carried out" (Yukl, 1989, p. 253). Instead, I consider it as co-occurring with leadership. Previous research provides wide support for considering managers as doing both types of acts (Hempill & Coons, 1950; Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010; Stogdill & Coons, 1957). For example, Drucker (1954/2008) described managers performing management tasks (setting objectives, organizing, and measuring) as well as leadership tasks (motivation, communication, and development). He saw managers as "agents of transformation" (p. 25) and noted that leadership is "given by managers" (p. 29). Mintzberg (1994) saw the "leader" as one of ten overlapping manager-roles. Hales (2005) found that managers adapted to changing environments by using leadership and management skills, such as facilitating, coordinating, monitoring, allocating resources, maintaining production, planning, and controlling. Roberts and Hacker (2003) found them to be different but overlapping and complementary (p. 45).

Herzberg (1987/1968) described employee's self-motivation from management acts such as the assignment of tasks (p. 59). Efficient managers provide leadership by making employees' contributions visible, provide security, respect (Sayles, 1989), and care (Arman, Wikström, & Dellve, 2013). Seeing them as co-occurring in this way is different from treating them as mutually exclusive. Zaleznik (1977) for example saw management as tied to needs for control, leadership as a toleration for chaos. Others have suggested that the processes and roles are different in that management concerns order, while leadership chaos (Kotter, 1999),

and that leadership and manager-authority do not belong together (Dansereau Jr, Graen, & Haga, 1975).

Concerned with how frontline managers perform management and leadership, my research relates to a research tradition concerned with how managers provide leadership from their position (Alvesson & Blom, 2019; Alvesson et al., 2016; Grint, 2005, 2008; Vie, 2009; Yukl, 1989). Examples here include descriptions of the position as providing opportunities to exercise leadership qualities (Spicker, 2012, p. 35), and institutional definition powers (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 259). Weber (2012/1922) identified the position as providing opportunities to use authority, while Vie (2009) found it as an opportunity for influencing through emotional caring behaviors (p. 58).

Despite these descriptions, there is curiously little theory on the co-occurrence of management and leadership acts and what drives it (Yukl, 2010, p. 26). Suggested factors include characteristics of the manager, contextual influence, and schedule (Mintzberg, 1994), or organizational complexity from size, technology, and geography (Kotter, 1990). Although research describes managers as performing both kind of acts, theories provide little explanation for how they co-occur. This is a weakness of our understanding of them as combining.

One promising theoretical conceptualization of how management and leadership co-occur comes from Vabo and Ladegård (2010). Considering it from the superior governance perspective, they see management as a result of requirements from above. This can for example happen when an increased emphasis on control limits managers' ability to perform leadership.

Describing their co-occurrence, they present management as a substitute, competitor, or contingency for leadership. Substitute means that the two can replace each other (p. 26). Competition means there is a tension between them as managers try to handle competing demands (p. 27). Contingency rests on the assumption that organizational demands for management determines managers' capability to conduct leadership and vice-versa (p. 27–28). Through my empirical findings, I aim to add to these theories by considering how management may support leadership. This is a necessary contribution because despite descriptions of managers doing both, we lack conceptualizations of how they might merge in acts. This includes a lacking understanding of how employees might experience acts we consider management as influential leadership.

Consequently, my contributions can build on Vabo and Ladegård (2010) by identifying how management backs the performance of leadership. As a potential addition to their framework, leadership may occur when managers influence employees as they perform acts traditionally understood as management. In these instances, I consider them combined in the whole, rather than as individual parts. Consequently, I see this as a way to conceptualize how managers might use management tasks to perform leadership rather than as a limiting factor. This represents a potential addition to the established concepts of management and leadership as competitors, substitutes, or contingencies (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010).

In being concerned with how employees experience these acts from frontline managers, the dissertation also contributes by providing follower perspectives on their co-occurrence. This could be different from viewing it from managers themselves or from the governance level. These findings can close the gap between behaviors *theoretically* seen as management and leadership, and *experiences of* influence. This is a natural step when making the jump from defining leadership as managers' attempts to influence, to followers' experience of them as influential. In the next section, I contend that to do this, it is necessary to understand how employees experience acts as influential.

### 3.3. Followers' experiences

My operationalization of management and leadership makes it necessary to gain information about how individuals experience the outcomes of the influence-process. Observing a process of influence from the outside is challenging. However, leaning on implicit leadership- and followership -theories, I argue for asking employees about the performance of management and leadership through their experiences of acts as influential.

Implicit leadership theory analyzes leadership from followers' experiences of their leaders' behaviors. It assumes that followers interpret managers' actions when they experience leadership. This interpretative understanding contends that followers experience acts as leadership when they match their perceptions of it (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Zaccaro, Green, Dubrow, & Kolze, 2018).

This lays the theoretical basis for considering experiences of acts as necessary to understand leadership. Followership theories make a similar argument. As an early example, Max Weber (2012/1922) argued that charismatic authority depends on being acknowledged (p. 91). Later research establishes the followers as essential co-creators of leadership (Gibb, 1947; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hollander & Julian, 1969; Meindl, 1995).

Quantitative studies have corroborated the use of implicit leadership- and follower- theory to explore leadership. They show the relationship between leaders and followers influencing feelings of control and work satisfaction (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005), and leaders and followers assessing similar situations differently (Cogliser et al., 2009). In contributing qualitative descriptions of acts and their influence, the dissertation complements these quantitatively generated assumptions about leadership.

This approach is beneficial because it avoids leader-centrism. Contrary to framing leadership as acts managers perform into action, it suggests that followers partake in the creation by evaluating these acts. The only way to know about the process is then to ask potential followers about the outcome of acts: if and how a potential leader influence them. This makes employees' descriptions of their experiences of acts not only interesting as an underused perspective, but a theoretical necessity. Asking only the managers would ignore this perspective. By including the follower perspective on acts, I contribute to the theoretical understanding of management and leadership as experienced rather than performed.

By presenting these acts through qualitative studies from the follower perspective, my findings contribute to research unsure about managers' abilities to act as leaders (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, 2003b). Rather than emphasizing leadership through organizational results (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 4), or as abstract phenomenon (S. Kelly, 2014; Spicker, 2012), my findings may provide descriptions of how employees experience managers' acts as influential. In the literature review, I identified no studies on management and leadership acts considering the employee perspective. This makes my findings novel in contributing a necessary point of view on management and leadership acts

### 3.4. Contextual descriptions

The literature review already discussed management and leadership within the context. This section establishes my research interest in how the context influences experiences of management and leadership. I consider it theoretical relevant as subjective understandings of leadership are affected by factors such as the type of work, the location, and who performs it (Oc, 2017; Offermann & Coats, 2017).

While acts occur regardless of individual interpretations, preconceived notions influence whether employees interpret these acts as influential or not. Therefore, I consider informants "situated agents" influenced by their context. To some degree a product of structural

characteristics, yet, “capable of independent actions through their skills, experience and expertise” (H. Sullivan, Williams, & Jeffares, 2012, p. 58).

The concern with context comes from expecting that it influences subjective experiences of management and leadership. This comes from viewing the setting as a “life condition” stimulating employees’ experiences of their “lifeworld” (Kraus, 2015). Traditionally, the assumption has been that leaders change their contexts rather than it changing the leaders (Foster, 1989, p. 40). Different from this, my work is part of a growing path emphasizing the influential aspects of context on leadership (Kempster & Parry, 2011).

Reviews of the contextual influence on experiences of leadership showed a considerable amount of quantitatively efforts describing these influences (Oc, 2017; Offermann & Coats, 2017). My qualitative approach emphasizing follower experiences allows me to complement these by describing how the context influences performance of acts. Thus, the dissertation provides a context-conscious understanding of how frontline managers perform management and leadership acts. This allows me to identify mechanisms supporting interactions between managers and employees.

Such an approach is relevant to inform a call for specific research on how context influence followers’ experiences of leadership from their manager (Oc, 2017, p. 222). My research concerns the public welfare context by describing how work tasks and managerialism influence experiences of leadership. This is an under-researched area of study (p. 5), but a common topic of interest (p. 9). Meaning that I look into a classic topic: interest in how tasks influence leadership as discussed in the literature review, but using an uncommon method in including employees’ experiences. Applying a qualitative perspective, my findings contributes by identifying how differences in experiences of management and leadership depend on the tasks they perform.

Accounting for context is necessary as employees’ needs for management depend on the tasks they perform (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 357). First, my findings can add to this by describing how more or less ambiguous tasks influence employee experiences of leadership. Second, being concerned with the contextual influence of managerialism, my findings can describe how managers perform management and leadership acts in the setting. In so doing, my findings can add to the understanding of how managerialism influence experiences of leadership.



### 3.5. Capturing experiences

By considering followers' experiences, I account for leadership as a social dynamic within a social setting (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2016, p. 141). This is rooted in the assumption that leadership happens through everyday practices and interactions (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010). Methodologically, I describe experiences followers have of influential acts after-the-fact.

This approach is especially appropriate for my study as it allows me to describe acts through informants' experiences of being influenced. While leadership is a process, I ask informants how they interpret acts through outcomes. This is a methodological necessity when seeing leadership as emerging from followers' experiences and expectations of the potential leader (Sidani & Rowe, 2018). Within the frames of my dissertation, experiences after the fact to measure leadership have advantages over other metrics. Organizational outcomes for example, are not necessarily causally related to the process of leadership. This makes determining causality difficult and observe and distinguish leadership from other ways of organizing (Alvesson et al., 2016, p. 41; S. Kelly, 2014).

While interviews are not a way of uncovering causality, they can describe informants' experiences of management and leadership acts. My study is not an investigation into the co-production process of leadership as "when a leader meets a follower." Rather, I provide descriptions of how individuals experience acts as influential. I consider acts happening as part of a wider relationship between manager and employee. Hence, while they occur act to act, I suppose that followers' relationship with their leader influence their experiences.

In drawing knowledge from experiences of acts, the dissertation presupposes that leadership exists as an underlying reality realized in practice (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). This makes informants' experiences of these practices the unit of my analysis. This is fitting, as according to my operationalization, experiences are key to understanding behaviors as leadership. To complete the discussion on my theoretical framework, I argue the merits of the phenomenological interview by discussing the concept of underlying reality and subjective understandings as they relate to my project.

#### 3.5.1. Underlying reality

I assume that informants' language represents their subjective understanding of reality. It is underlying because I do not observe acts directly, but as described from informants'

experiences of them as influential. Consequently, I am interested in understanding informants' interpretations of their experiences (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2011, p. 1870). As I gain knowledge from followers' subjective understandings after-the-fact, I assume that they reveal this underlying reality. Such an approach is necessary to locate management and leadership in the outcome of interpersonal interactions.

A critical question is the degree to which we can uncover underlying realities through asking about informants' experiences. I rely on Mads Alvesson (2011, p. 39) in pointing out that interviews provide essential information about informants' interior understandings of social practices. Seeking these understandings, I asked informants about how they interacted with their managers, and how they experienced these interactions. If not discussed directly, I then followed up by asking how these acts influenced them. I comment further on this process in chapter four.

The setting's aim of providing care may shape employees' experiences of leadership. The prevalence of interpersonal leadership behaviors identified in the literature review supports this. Such an influence could come in addition other influential systemic factors (Habermas, 1985), such as perceptions of gender (Kanter, 1977/2008; Lewis, 2000; Storvik, 2002) or ethnicity (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Although I do not reject additional unconscious systemic influences, I have chosen to focus my dissertation on informants' conscious experiences. Failing to appear in my data, I do not explore race and gender as a source of influence further in this dissertation.

### 3.5.2. Subjectivity

I draw on a constructivist approach to explore informants' experiences of their underlying reality. My constructionist leanings are a response to criticisms against positivism in management studies (Fournier & Grey, 2000, p. 13). It enables me to describe acts rooted in the setting. In addition, it allows me to describe emerging influential acts identified by informants. Being aware of the co-created, contextual, and relational aspects of interview-data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 76–77), I do not view interviews as an illusory positivist “real truth”. Rather, I see informants' experiences of acts and their influence as an essential source of knowledge.

My findings are intersubjective in describing social products of shared experiences (Schutz, 1962, p. 7). This happens as actors have common subjective understandings of acts. These understandings do not have the universality of “general laws” (Hempel, 1942). Instead, they

allow individuals to share understandings of leadership while at the same time opening up for individual differences (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 56). This can explain similarities and differences between informants. These experiences are their own “province of meaning,” meaning that they could differ from other experiences, such as how they see friends or neighbors (Ayaß, 2017; Schutz, 1962).

Drawing on subjective interpretations to generate knowledge makes me a constructionist. Critics of this approach are often quick to condemn such research as reification: “I believe; therefore, it exists.” In this case, such criticism misses the point. These interpersonal processes are not a figment of individual imagination. Management and leadership acts demand a sender and an interpreter. By including the interpretations of these acts, I avoid reification by connecting acts and influence.

## 4. Data and methods

This chapter describes my methods for answering the research question, examines limitations and consequences of my methodological choices, and discusses ethical considerations. The literature review identified the life conditions of public welfare knowledge work by describing the context. The empirical contributions revealed experiences of management and leadership acts, and thus, the informants' lifeworlds. As a methodological pragmatist (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), I chose methods according to their qualities. In the following sub-sections, I discuss the data from the individual articles: the literature review (4.1), written responses (4.2), and interviews (4.3). Next, I discuss the dissertation as a whole: issues and limitations of the articles (4.4), ethical considerations (4.5), and my empirical claims (4.6).

### 4.1. Article I, literature review

While not explicitly so identified, research article I is a structured scoping study on management and leadership research about knowledge workers within the welfare setting. This type of study describes the current state of knowledge and understanding within a certain context (Anderson, Allen, Peckham, & Goodwin, 2008). I sorted the findings against the theoretical framework of complexity leadership. Compatible with my dissertation's research aim, this framework conceptualizes current research on management, leadership, and their co-occurrence through theoretical concepts of adaptive, enabling, and administrative leadership. Originally, the framework imagines these roles as distributed in the organization, but as I argued in the article, it is compatible with my interest in individual management and leadership practices. Worth noting is that while the dissertation applies a specified definition and level of leadership, the article includes different settings, levels and types of leadership from the frontline to upper management. With this approach I was able to explore a broad base of research and establish a research frontier. This allowed me to account for different contexts and to identify where my dissertation could contribute to the research front. To answer the dissertation's research question, I only included results relevant for the public welfare setting

There is a lack of a clear definition of the outer limits of a scoping review. In the article, I followed five steps for such studies recommended by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010). (1) I identified a broad research question combined with a clearly defined scope: management

and leadership acts in social work. (2) I identified relevant studies. (3) I selected the studies to include. Writing on my own, lacking the recommended additional researcher, I created and applied strict exclusion criteria to avoid bias in this process. (4) I charted the included studies according to country of origin, the context, and whether the research was a descriptive, theoretical, or an effect-study. (5) I sorted the practices according to the analytical framework, summarized, and reported the results. The exploratory and flexible approach of scoping studies has the disadvantage of introducing potential researcher bias; however, the applied exclusion criteria, search plan, and peer-review process minimized the risk.

#### 4.2. Article II, written responses

For research article II, I recruited informants from a continuing education class on leadership in the public welfare sector. A majority were managers working in Nav, but informants also came from other public welfare organizations performing knowledge work. Informants' answers were similar across organizations, suggesting that the managers had common experiences. Informants, provided anonymity, gave their written consent for me to use their obligatory class work as research data. The pros and cons of this data source are discussed in the article and not repeated here; however, provided a new opportunity, I would consider including additional questions to get richer descriptions.

The article uses the term "first-line" management which mostly corresponds to the frontline manager term used in the dissertation. Frontline better captures their position in their organization as closest to clients, whereas first-line might come with connotations of a type of work sorting inquiries. Using students' obligatory class work provided a fruitful opportunity for generating data from managers. This was important as they find themselves in a busy setting and might lack time to keep journals or provide written answers. The utility of this approach is contingent on researchers' awareness of possible limitations of using class-work as research data. For example, I was vigilant in my analysis to account for informants' desire to "please" the instructor or any tendency to repeat the syllabus. As a result, I used the data as illustrative stories rather than indications of prevalence.

The narrow scope of the data gave a constricted set of examples on challenges with performing management and leadership acts. This is consistent with using narrow qualitative data to explore ideas and illustrate challenges rather than to make generalizations (Alvesson 2011, p. 146). To increase the trustworthiness of the narrow data, I present theories and previous research that collaborate the validity of my findings. For the dissertation, it means

that the findings make theoretical generalizations about management and leadership in the in the public welfare setting.

As is the case of any qualitative research, one could deride this study as lacking informants and controls for background variables, which are important when generalizing results to the wider population. However, the goal of the study was to provide more “meat on the bone” concerning aspects that managers found challenging. Although the data are not exhaustive, they illustrate the contemporary experiences of change agents in Norwegian public welfare services. The data are robust for my dissertation’s research question. They enrich our understanding of how managers conduct management and leadership acts in the setting. For example, by describing how managers struggle with influencing employees resisting influence, and the frontline manager position lacking decision-making powers to be influential.

#### 4.3. Articles III and IV, interviews

For research articles III and IV, I used data from interviews and observations of employees and managers in seven Nav departments. In this section, I discuss the data, elaborate on the necessary simplifications and compromises in the analysis, and their potential consequences (Alvesson, 2011, p. 152). In article III, published in a human service organization journal, I described Nav as a public human service organization. I used such a categorization knowing well that that some see the term as confusing and indicative to a wide set of services with different degrees of marketization (Stein, 1981). Despite the controversy surrounding the term, I stand by the choice. This is supported by the literature review identifying managerialism and discretion as relevant for the setting.

##### 4.3.1. Recruitment

In winter 2016, I began recruitment by contacting Nav’s research and development department for a letter of support for my project. The process included meetings at the director level of Nav to present the project. I gave Nav the opportunity for input to make my research relevant for the practice field. They did not make any specific suggestions. The Nav central governance divisions provided a list of departments with the time and resources to participate. This support was necessary because these departments are sought-after and hard-to-reach research objects.

Participation takes considerable time, and a letter recommending that departments cooperate was necessary for recruitment (Appendix E). This avoided inefficient “cold-calling.” There were no strings attached to the letter of support. I contacted departments on the list, applying the following criteria:

- Type of departments. I sought two types of departments, counseling and casework, to compare different work tasks and how they influenced management and leadership experiences.
- Size. Departments had to be somewhat comparable in size, between 10–20 employees, to avoid the influence of very small or large departments.
- Type of work. I sought departments that performed similar types of work within each type. Meaning that counselors performed similar work as other counselors, and caseworkers as other caseworkers. Choosing similar types of work in each category limited potential bias of working with radically different clients.

I spoke directly with frontline managers to inform them about the project, what I needed, and to schedule suitable dates. Departments were spread geographically and organizationally as illustrated in Table 3. Comparisons across geographical or organizational locations of departments did not show any influence on responses. To find informants within these departments, I asked every manager to email their employees and have willing participants register. Such mass recruitment ensured that informants were not hand-picked to reflect managers’ views, or that those disagreeing with a manager were intentionally excluded. I exceeded my minimum of five interviews at all departments. In addition, I recruited informants without scheduled interviews at multiple departments, including informants who were leaving for other jobs. A cross-check of data from these informants with the scheduled interviews and my inquiries about each informant’s voluntary participation, made me confident that informants were not hand-picked.

*Table 3. Participating departments*

<b>Department</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Caseworker 1	Central	Casework Central
Caseworker 2	East	Casework East
Caseworker 3	North	Casework East
Counseling 1	South-West	Counseling South-West
Counseling 2	South-West	Counseling South-West
Counseling 3	East	Counseling East
Counseling 4	East	Counseling East

*Table 3. All names anonymized.*

All informants signed a form stating their informed consent and willing participation, permission to tape interviews, and acknowledgment that they could withdraw at any time (Appendix D). None withdrew. The interviews were performed in meeting rooms or the informants' offices according to their wishes. The aim was to make them feel comfortable. This setting avoided disturbance and allowed informants to speak freely without others listening. Before beginning the interviews, I asked if they were there voluntarily and emphasized that I was there to learn from them. I asked that they described their experiences acts and their influence in as much detail as possible and to allow me to take the conversation in another direction if necessary. In addition, I spent three days in the offices making observations of the work environment and participating in office meetings. I systematized my observations in a notebook and used the notations in my analysis to complement the interview data.

#### 4.3.2. Profile of informants

*Table 4. Characteristics of informants*

	<b>Counselor</b>	<b>Caseworker</b>
Type of work	Direct counseling with clients	Assessing eligibility to services
Owner	Municipality	State
No. of departments visited	4	3
No. of managers	5	4
Social work educated / Other	1 / 4	0
Jurist educated / Other	0	2 / 2
Average age	45	47.5
Self-identifying females	4	2
Average years of experience	15	13.75
No. of employees	17	15
Social work educated / Other	8 / 9	0
Jurist educated / Other	0	9 / 6
Average age	36.1	40.1
Self-identifying females	16	10
Average years of experience	4.3	10.8

I consider informants to be “expert knowers” or “skilled practitioners,” best suited to speak about their own experiences (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 36). This view fit my epistemological



approach concerned with gaining knowledge through informants' experiences. Among the employees, caseworkers had a higher average age and more job experience in Nav (see Table 4). Their knowledge worker designation was confirmed by both categories having a significant amount of non-professionally educated employees in addition to professionally educated social workers and jurists. Their backgrounds varied from education in marine biology and sociology to experience as a train-conductor. Managers were similar in age, and most had some level of management training or education. Counselor managers had more experience, fewer were professionally trained, and more identified as female. As discussed in the articles, patterns of demographic factors such as gender or age were not prevalent in the informants' answers. This does not preclude that a combination of these factors could have contributed to the findings on an unconscious level.

### *Counselors and caseworkers*

Counselors and caseworkers perform different functions and tasks within Nav. Leaning on Mintzberg (1979), Breit et al. (2017) described counselor-departments in Nav as a "professional bureaucracy" with considerable amounts of discretion, and caseworkers as "machine bureaucracy" with a high degree of standardized work. This designation supports my decisions to contrast them based on performing different work tasks.

Despite of this, I do not consider neither as fully professional. They are similar to professionals in making discretionary decisions within a bureaucratic system, but without a standardizing degree, I consider both to be knowledge-workers performing different tasks in public welfare organizations.

Counselors followed up clients under the age of 30 outside of the job-market. They talked with clients face-to-face and followed up on their progress, status, and compliance within Nav programs such as work assessment allowance (AAP) and social security. Their job included considerable paperwork, but also substantial personal interaction with clients. Each had a list of clients they followed up. The size of these lists varied between offices and individuals. Some were in charge of 50 while others had double that amount. There is no norm for this, so the number varies between and within offices. I found no differences between counselors from the amounts of clients. This could mean that independent of the number, they experienced similar levels of workload.

The ambiguity of their job was visible as counselors stated that there was always something new or unexpected, no boring days. One example from my observations was a counselor

stressed from not knowing how many clients who would show up to a job-application class she was teaching later that day. Each counselor was responsible for following up all aspects of the clients' job search and livelihood, including applying for welfare benefits and state-programs for work-support. Counselors' paperwork included writing reports assessing their client's compliance with their obligations, such as whether they showed up to appointments with external job-training companies or applied for jobs.

Counselors assessed and reported on how their clients complied with requirements of the welfare programs, while external actors often delivered courses and prepared clients for applying for jobs. As each office decide themselves how to organize this training, some counselors also held training sessions in topics such as writing job-applications. Ambiguity is shown when counselors are expected to counsel and help clients, but also report and sanction them if they fail to fulfill their objectives. An example being that Nav-counselors have to report failures to show up, which could potentially lead to clients losing their benefits and livelihood.

As such, counselors to a large degree faced clients and situations that could not be standardized. For example, part of counseling work was to write assessments for their clients' application for welfare benefits. These applications include describing their ability to work and assessing their eligibility for programs such as AAP. While rules guide these evaluations, counselors still experience ambiguity. This includes what decisions to make, but also from having to balance helping the client support their livelihood, while enforcing rules governing these benefits.

Counseling work also included other tasks, such as meeting clients for a wide variety of reasons. It could be going home to clients who refused to show up for appointments, calling and giving them a pep talk before work, or helping them prepare for job-interviews. These meetings occurred both outside of the office to follow-up on clients' progress, but also as formal meetings in the offices. Adding to the ad-hoc aspect of counseling work, part of the job was to go off-site and observe clients in various training courses, visit them at work, or contact and recruit potential sites for work-placements. In performing these tasks on the go, counselors were guided by best practices and suggestions for conducting meetings, but the work was unstandardized by its nature.

In contrast, caseworkers performed tasks that were easier to standardize such as assessing eligibility for benefits. The work consisted of evaluating information, deciding each applicant's eligibility, and issue a written decision letter following a schematic form. They

chose which applications to work with from a list of tasks the department or team had, reviewed the information, and made a decision. The work included reading statements from the client, their counselor, medical personnel, and others such as job-training services. The caseworkers then had to evaluate the information against the qualifications of the benefit as described by laws and regulations. This was necessary to assess whether clients were eligible for benefits or not.

In making the assessment they were like the counselors supported by computer software where they assessed each criterion individually. For each criterion they provided an evaluation supported by their assessment of the client. Writing the decision-letter, caseworkers were helped by standard-text inserted based on whether clients qualified or not. Often caseworkers had to modify this text to make it accurate for the specific case at hand. If they lacked information, they had to ask for more from relevant sources. This could include sending a letter or making a phone call. When a decision was made, they mailed it and began on a new task. Very rarely did caseworkers interact directly with clients.

Caseworkers followed instructions and guidelines on how to interpret Nav rules and regulations in making their evaluation. Despite performing more schematic tasks, caseworkers were not devoid of discretion; they were certainly expected to evaluate, interpret, and make decisions within the prescribed forms. Counselors and caseworkers were similar in performing knowledge work within the public welfare setting. The main difference being that caseworkers' decisions followed a more schematic evaluation. This came from being guided by standardizing rules and regulation more so than the ad-hoc tasks of counselors.

I base my analysis on comparisons; between counselors and caseworkers, between managers and employees, between the literature and my own findings. This approach helped me identify differences and explain them (Kjeldstadli, 1988). By comparing different objects in similar situations, I explain contradictory findings by recognizing experiences carried by one group and not the other. A prerequisite for such a design is that the groups are somewhat similar in some regards; work in public welfare knowledge work, and different in others; perform tasks with different degrees of standardization.

Visiting two different types of departments was beneficial for comparing counselors and caseworkers. The former working closely with clients, the latter with application assessments. This made my informants' experiences the study-object to describe management and leadership within the setting. To explain how work tasks influence experiences of management and leadership, I consider counselors and caseworkers as two different cases

varying on the key-dimension of work task. This is supported by my descriptions of their work and presentations of previous research.

The findings from such a case study are not statistically generalizable to a wider population (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). However, by accounting for the context as I do in chapter two, and contrasting the findings to previously developed theories, there is a potential for identifying mechanisms and making theoretical generalizations to similar organizations and work as discussed closer in chapter six.

#### 4.3.3. Questions and analysis

In the year before the interviews, I prepared interview guides (Appendices A and B). I designed these to answer my research question and ensure that I collected responses concerning management and leadership acts and influence. Questions for employees and managers differed slightly, but they provided comparable answers. The guides included probing questions, follow-up topics, and questions to expand the interviews when necessary. This was essential to get descriptions of acts and their influence if respondents did not initially provide this.

I performed and analyzed the interviews in Norwegian, and translated the quotes. Norwegian has no tradition for separating between management and leadership as concepts in everyday speech, but in work-settings we separate between a neutral word for “leader” (leder) and the more hierarchical loaded word “boss” (sjef). I asked about their experiences with their leader. I perceive this approach a strength for the study as their answers provided information on their experiences, allowing me to analyze and categorize them as management or leadership acts according to my operationalization of theories.

I reached a saturation point where additional interviews failed to reveal new information or themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) around interview 30. To balance the number of informants and to finish on my appointments, I finished the scheduled 41 interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, beginning with an invitation for the informants to describe themselves and their job. I then followed with other questions according to the guide or topics the informants brought up. Most interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. I had the flexibility to ask probing questions as topics arose or to pursue other interesting topics that emerged. Thus, I could discover and respond to informants’ experiences of management and leadership rather than base the interview strictly on my preparations.

I did not introduce specific concepts of leadership such as “professional knowledge” or the combination of management and leadership during the interviews. Rather, I asked general questions, such as: “What support do you need?” and “How does your manager support you in your work?” I followed up with asking about the influence of these behaviors if informants did not discuss them directly. During the interviews, I listened, took notes, and prepared follow-up questions. After turning off the recorder, I asked informants if they had anything more to add. In these situations, I noted their answers to indicate that I was still collecting information for analysis. These unrecorded talks elaborated on topics already covered and did not contradict statements made during the recorded interviews.

After the interviews, I transcribed and coded the data in Nvivo Pro 11 for Windows. I analyzed the answers thematically as described in the research articles. With this analysis, I could identify managers’ and employees’ experiences of influential acts. The presented theoretical framework was “sensitizing concepts,” guiding me where to look and what to look for to identify management and leadership acts and their influence (Bowen, 2006).

Letting informants describe acts and their influence, made my operationalized definitions sensitizing rather than definitive concepts. From this, I could analyze and categorize the findings through the lens of management and leadership as theoretical concepts without limiting myself to specific “definitive concepts” prescribing what findings must look like (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). This open, but guided approach, allowed me to identify emerging concepts such as ways management supported experiences of leadership. This approach was different from grounded theory in not aiming for theory development through an alternative inductive/deductive analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I coded all answers and analyzed acts employees and managers described as influential. The analysis was not quantitative or mechanical—such as a count of the number of instances in which certain keywords occurred—but rather involved a close reading of the identified sections where informants described management and leadership directly or indirectly. To get the required exhaustive knowledge of the data, it was necessary that I performed the interviews and transcriptions myself. The presented quotes exemplify prevalent patterns of the interviews as identified in the analysis. This is in line with the hermeneutical principle of using parts of interviews to inform the whole (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 216).

I analyzed the informants’ answers based on the operationalized differences between management and leadership. Informants were not necessarily explicit on these differences, nor did they inevitably use the terms according to the theoretical definitions. I categorized their

responses according to the operationalized understanding of management and leadership presented in the theoretical framework, rather than the labels they used. For example, I sorted influential behaviors as leadership, although informants may have called them management.

#### 4.3.4. Trustworthiness and source critique

Schaefer and Alvesson (2017) argued for “source critique” in interview studies, noting that few scholars reflect on the trustworthiness of their own interview material. Accordingly, I employed what they call a proactive design. This included interactions, observations, and discussions with as many people as possible to get a big picture view. In addition, I was a critical interviewer, applying “intra-source” and “extra-source” critique (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2017).

Employing intra-source critique, I assessed the interviews for signs of bias, such as political correctness, norms of corporate ideology, use of “management lingo,” or the desire to please the researcher (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2017, p. 8). In my analysis, I did not copy informants’ words, but interacted with them to understand their experiences within my theoretical framework (p. 3). I minimized the risk of these educated informants’ using words smarter than their practices (Alvesson, 2011, p. 31). I did this by probing for specific practices or examples of acts and their influence. As another critical measure, I asked informants about topics such as control, support, and creativity at multiple times and with different phrases to test if they presented consistent experiences (p. 8). This ensured that descriptions of control were consistent with how they later described limitations of their work.

To prepare for the interviews, I read up on the setting and relevant theories on management and leadership as discussed in chapter two and three. In addition, I relied on my three-month experience as a caseworker in a non-related Nav department. These preparations gave me a basis on which to continuously assess the interview material and enabled me to handle ambiguous and contradictory statements. I did this through efforts such as asking for clarification, rephrasing of statements, or acting as a “devil’s advocate.” This allowed me to expose any contradictions directly or indirectly through follow-up questions. In addition, I acted as a critical interviewer by asking informants to be specific about how they experienced these behaviors and their influence.

Applying extra-source critique, I cross-checked information with other knowledgeable stakeholders (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2017, p. 9), asking both managers and employees about their experiences. This limited possible social desirability bias where informants underreport

undesirable behaviors (Edwards, 1957). I also engaged with counter-biased sources to avoid issues with trustworthiness from informants who lacked knowledge, were unwilling to share, or had difficulty communicating (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2017, p. 7). My counter-biased sources included two employees who had resigned their positions for jobs outside Nav. Their corroboration of what others reported strengthened the trustworthiness of my findings. As an example of consistency, leadership behaviors that some perceived as supportive were identified as desirable by others. The inclusion of both managers and employees in the interviews also served as counter-biased sources.

My observations supplemented the interviews. I did not use them to describe the performance of management and leadership, I relied on the experiences of managers and employees for this. Instead, I used observations to complement information gained from the interviews. Their main function was to teach me about the work situation and give me an understanding of the context. Consequently, their primary contribution was to support the interviews with first-hand knowledge of the work, meetings, and employees' interactions with managers (i.e. Eisenhardt, 1989). This means that while the observations are not directly visible in the findings, they helped inform and improve the questions asked during interviews and the analysis. Therefore, they were useful as a source of knowledge and information.

#### 4.3.5. Coding influential acts

Articles have limited space and allow little room for connecting acts with their influence. As a result, they present acts as influencing meaning-making and reality-definition by way of feeling motivated, safe or trusted. Methodologically, this meant that I accounted for informants' experiences of acts as influential. Consistent with a phenomenological approach, I got these descriptions from asking broad and open-ended questions about the informants' experiences. I chose this approach because I wanted to build my findings on their descriptions of acts as influential or not.

Consequently, I left it to the informants to determine how acts influenced them. This was crucial to allow them the opportunity to describe experiences of managers as both influential and not. This is also why I did not start directly with asking questions about meaning making or reality-definition, but rather probed about it as a follow-up to the open-ended questions about their experiences of acts. Following-up in this way allowed me to probe in instances where informants did not speak on influence directly in their first response. The open

approach also allowed descriptions of influencing behaviors from managers experienced as controlling and hindering the employee.

I acted as a critical interviewer and asked informants to be specific in their descriptions of their experiences of acts as influential. A strength of semi-structured interviews is the flexibility provided to ask follow-up questions. I asked more questions than the broad ones about support and needs that I use as examples in the articles. An illustrative example of this is the follow up I had to questions about motivation. If informants described some kind of vague influence, I asked them to elaborate in the following way:

Can you talk more about this? How she creates trust and you feeling that you get confidence, can you describe the processes, what makes you feel like that? Is there something she does, something she says, is it implied?

This example of a follow-up resulted in the informant providing a detailed answer about how the act influenced meaning-making and reality-defining by feeling cared for and valued. I coded this sort of act as a leadership act from the manager-position.

#### 4.3.6. Merits of the phenomenological interview.

Phenomenological interviews have their strength in my specific use: Describing informants' experiences of their own life (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 45). I see my approach as phenomenological because I explored management and leadership as social phenomenon through the actors' experiences. As my analysis was concerned with the informants' experiences of management and leadership and how they were realized in influential acts, the project is phenomenological and not discursive. It treats the experiences of these acts as the objects of study, unlike a discourse analysis which treats the construction of the discourse in the interview as the research object (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 255).

For me, the interviews were not the object of study, but a way to access the underlying reality of informants' experiences of management and leadership acts. Drawing on theoretical concepts and words as analytical categories does not make a research approach a discourse analysis. Rather than seeking to understand how the informants drew on different discourses to "understand how people use language to create and enact identities and activities" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373), I described informants' lifeworlds through their experiences and rationalizations of influential behaviors reported in the interviews (p. 1373). My concern was to examine the *descriptions of* leadership and management as an influential phenomenon. This is an alternative to discourse-analysis' aim of informing *how the*



*informants created and told the story of their experiences. As such, I provide phenomenological descriptions of their “lived experiences” rather than descriptions of “language in use” (p. 1373).*

Phenomenological approaches have been critiqued for portraying knowledge, experiences, and stories as stable rather than unstable constructs. And as such, for being overly concerned with individual experiences over systemic or symbolic underlying influence (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 50). Tying experiences to needs in the moment, such as ambiguous work tasks, suggests these as rather unstable constructs.

By focusing on presenting the underlying reality as told through informant’s experiences, I had limited ability to understand the leader as a symbol or as created in the moment by underlying, unconscious ideology such as a class, ethnicity, or gender. The approach means that I might have lost something in regard to the ideological structures behind management and leadership (see Grint, 2008, or Krogstad and Storvik, 2012). However, by emphasizing experiences as a source of reality, I was able to describe how acts supported experiences of management and leadership, which may inform how substantial acts can be symbolic (Goffman, 1966).

#### 4.3.7. The influence of the interviewer

In critically analyzing and interpreting informants’ responses against the theoretical framework, I viewed informants as willing mediums who shared their knowledge, which I interpreted (Alvesson, 2011, p. 113–114). Therefore, the knowledge gained from interviews are my conceptualization of informants’ experiences and understandings of reality. My role as a researcher was to aid the extrapolation of knowledge. I did so by creating and asking questions that captured the informants’ experiences.

It is impossible to ask about management and leadership without invoking the terms, and in so doing, to plant these concepts in the informants to some degree. While I emphasized an approach with minimal interference, I at times introduced the words leadership (*ledelse*) and management (*styring*) in the interviews by asking about their experiences with them. However, while I in some instances introduced the concepts, I did not fill them with content. This was the informants’ job.

My involvement was necessary to lift the answers from individual experiences to general concepts. To achieve such a lift, I made a conscious effort to design the interview guide to gain information on contextual differences, such as work-type. This was necessary to generate

knowledge of the underlying reality beyond the specific interview situation. Thus, I treated the interviews not as a priori knowledge presented to me, but as a source of information interpreted and understood in light of the questions asked (Alvesson, 2011, p. 5).

I did not co-construct the interviews together with the informants as *equal* partners; however, no doubt a different interviewer would have conducted different interviews based on the language used and the theoretical frames of the questions. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) use the metaphor of a miner and traveler to describe how the interviewer either gathers or creates knowledge through interviews. In their image, I belong somewhere in the middle. As a miner, I prepared questions and the analytical framework for understanding the findings. Despite this, my role in co-constructing the interviews should not be overstated. Beyond preparing a framework, I asked open questions and refrained from infusing the discussion with my own ideas and notions. Through the interviews, I emphasized the importance of the informants' stories. As such, I consider myself a well-prepared traveler who brought a map and compass to avoid getting lost, but who allowed the informants to lead the way.

#### 4.4. Issues and limitations

The order of interviews could introduce bias as I potentially was better prepared for later sessions than earlier ones. Information gathered in later interviews also could be colored by an improved interview process or an unconscious shift of emphasis. Because of scheduling issues, I visited caseworker departments before counselor departments. This could potentially explain the differences between counselors and caseworkers. I minimized the risk of such bias with a consistent interview-guide and thorough analysis. However, next time I would strive to mix the order of the departments to allow for an approach going back and forth between different departments. I avoided group interviews with both counselors and caseworkers as I wanted to conduct the interviews in their environment and be close to their work situation.

My experience as a caseworker in Nav was not a source for bias. There was no conflict of interest. I worked at Nav for three months doing different casework than employees in the visited departments. I quit my job to write this dissertation. My knowledge from my brief but fruitful time as a caseworker has given me a broader view on the life conditions of working in Nav.

The recruitment approach provides some potential challenges to my results. First, Nav may have offered access to departments they knew were special in some regard, either as ideal examples or examples of offices with issues that could use a researcher's help. I was aware of

this potential problem, but I did not perceive anything to indicate that the offices were peculiar. None appeared to be an extreme example of issues related to management or leadership.

Another potential bias from the offices is that managers participating could have been more open to trying new things and wanted to showcase their offices or learn from research. From my experiences, I suspect that these managers may have been more willing to participate than the average manager. Therefore, the findings could come from more proactive environments than the norm. Albeit, previous studies have used similar approaches of volunteer participation, which would suggest comparable findings. Rather than being specific to this dissertation, these issues expose the universal challenge of self-recruitment and voluntary participation in interview studies.

Other possible influences could be that people who do not experience, or care for, leadership did not participate. As such the results could over-represent those experiencing or believing strongly in the utility of leadership. Non-responders are always ignored in such studies, and short of forcing people to speak, there is always the risk of some degree of selection bias.

The managers contributing written statements in article II partook in a continuing educational course. There is a risk that they enrolled in the course because they were seeking help to solve challenges. As a result, the sample could be biased toward those with a greater number of challenges, even “horror-stories.” In addition, the requirement to write about workplace challenges could have led some participants to construct or shape their stories to have sufficient material to share. The fit with theories from other sectors and consistent nature of the stories suggests that this was not the case.

The written stories could have been influenced by the course content. The risk may have been exaggerated by the timing of assignment, after an educational unit on organizational change. Therefore, article II should not be read as an argument for the relative importance of the change agent role (which others have posed in theoretical discussions), but rather as stories about how these managers experienced management and leadership in this role. I have no data on the actual number of changes, so my discussion of change fatigue is not an attempt to measure the effect of changes on managers. It is rather a description of how managers experienced the role in the setting and how it relates to theories on the subject. The narrowness of the data means that the results should be interpreted as illustrations of the challenges these particular managers experienced. The nature of their challenges however suggests that they could be valid for others.

I visited counselor departments that worked with clients under the age of 30, a Nav priority. This may have introduced bias. They could have recruited a different type of employees than other departments, or they may have been given additional resources or discretion. This could have increased the differences between counselors and caseworkers. These differences could be the basis for further studies into how resource allocation and employee profiles may influence experiences of management and leadership. I did not ignore gender and race as life conditions, but I did not emphasize them as a research question. The informants were treated based on the work they performed. However, as the sector employs mostly women, the participants' responses could be influenced by gender disparity among employees or managers, although the data and rationalizations did not portray such differences.

#### 4.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical behavior in research is defined as making generalizations for the good of others while protecting the participants (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001, p. 93). Ethical problems may stem from how researchers gain access, the effect they may have on participants, power differences between them and participants (p. 93), as well as the researchers' interpretations, and the study design (Ramos, 1989). Here, I discuss ethical considerations made in contacting informants and talking with managers and employees, as well as data security.

**Access.** Nav's research & development and respective governing departments provided a list of offices with the capacity to participate. I have no information suggesting that these informants were induced to give me access. Interviewed managers and employees provided their written and informed consent of participation. Informants providing written responses were asked if their course work could be used for research purposes with no consequences for those who refused. Some refused and were removed from the data-material.

Another potential issue was whether informants had knowledge of what they discussed or if they were willing to talk about what they knew (Alvesson, 2011, p. 30–31). I did not experience either issue in my data collection. I attribute the lack of power issues to me posing naïve questions designed to get informants to talk about their situation. I emphasized that I was there to learn, not to judge or comment on what was right or wrong. I experienced this approach as trust-building.

**Power.** Because a researcher should recognize the vulnerability of informants (Orb et al., 2001, p. 96), I entered the interviews aware that my position as a researcher could influence informants. I made sure to clearly communicate that I did not work for Nav, and that they

would not have access to my materials. During the interviews, I perceived no power difference between the informants and me. Of course, that statement may be expected of someone incredulous of power differences. Nonetheless, I contend that the interviews were not an abuse of power.

Talking to informants could have created some kind of inference. Several informants mentioned that it was nice to talk about these topics as there seldom was time for such discussions. This could have led to some changes in practices at these departments, I do not believe these changes negatively affected individuals or groups.

**Potential harm.** To anticipate potential benefit and harm from interviews, researchers must rely on informed consent and recognize participants' rights (Orb et al., 2001, p. 94). All participants signed a document stating the interview topic and that participants would be anonymous (Appendix D). As anticipated, informants did not express directly or indirectly that the topics were sensitive or problematic to discuss.

In two instances, I spoke with informants who wished to talk about difficult work environments. I thought the ethical choice was to listen as a fellow human being, without pushing the interview agenda. When I sensed that they were finished, I went back to asking my questions. The degree of difficulties expressed did not warrant seeking help on their behalf; rather, I judged that they needed to talk to someone. I filled that role in the moment.

**Data management.** Data security and the informants' anonymity were important to me. My project was formally approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) for interviewing and recording interviews with background information such as name, age, and education (Appendix C). Data and transcriptions were stored on a secure server. When printing was necessary, they were kept in a locked drawer in a locked office and shredded when no longer needed. A list of the informants' key information—age, office, type of education, and experience, but not names—was kept on a secure server apart from the interviews. Each interview had a code to identify it.

**Anonymity.** When discussing informants in the articles, I kept their ages, departments, genders, and names completely anonymous. Only differentiating the information as coming from manager or employee, or a caseworker or counselor. I also noted educational background when relevant.

It is impossible to identify individuals from my data and translated quotes. Because there were so few male manager informants, I took the extra step of using female pronouns for all

managers to avoid identification. Such an approach did not impact the findings because gender proved nonessential in the analysis. Despite my assurance of anonymity, some informants could have held back information because of uncertainty regarding who would know (Alvesson, 2011, p. 37), as far as I can tell, this was not the case.

#### 4.6. Empirical claims

Interviews give researchers a way to explore ideas, give clues about reality, and provide illustrations (Alvesson, 2011, p. 146). As I do, they also identify mechanisms that explain the reasoning behind observations (Ringdal, 2013, p. 104). To make the findings credible and “carry weight,” I strove to connect the interview data with previous research and a theoretical base allowing for theoretical generalizations.

According to the constructionist approach, informants created knowledge in a social reality influenced by their life conditions. Consequently, the findings identify mechanisms of the context that affect experiences of management and leadership, without determining them. The literature review, 11 written stories, and 41 interviews describe how managers of public welfare knowledge work perform management and leadership. While the findings will not be identical in all similar organizations, I consider them as potentially transferable to similar situations. This includes those sharing the work setting and work tasks. I return to this discussion in chapter six.

## 5. Summary of papers and empirical results

### 5.1. Leading for better outcomes: Social work as knowledge work

**Published January 2018, Nordic Social Work Research**

**DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2017.1422138>**

The study reviewed the literature on management and leadership of knowledge workers in the social work setting. I only included relevant results from the public welfare setting to answer the dissertation's research question. The articles' treatment of social work as knowledge work goes with the dissertations' scope and is argued in the article and the literature review in chapter two.

The findings identified how managers performed adaptive, enabling, and administrative acts. The study showed that these acts could aid performance. They did so by supporting the interaction and exchange of knowledge among employees (adaptive), managing the work (administrative), and combining the two (enabling). Administrative leadership acts correspond to what the dissertation calls management. Adaptive and enabling acts described management and leadership as well as combinations of the two. The study found the interpersonal enabling manager as having the greatest positive influence on employees.

Looking broadly at management and leadership within the setting allowed me to identify a research-gap concerning employee perspectives on management and leadership acts. This inspired the scope of the dissertation. Answering the research question, the study showed how managers of public welfare knowledge work performed management and leadership acts. Supporting the dissertation's theoretical contributions, it found these acts combining in enabling leadership.

Contributing to the dissertation's finding on contextual influence, the study showed that co-occurrence of management and leadership depended on characteristics of the setting. The most important factor being managers having organizational support and resources to perform them. The findings found increasing managerialism—administration and central control—as a threat to managers' self-experienced ability to perform leadership. This suggests that traits with the manager position, such as lacking power and opportunity to make decisions, could affect their ability to act as leaders.

Lacking resources could limit managers in their ability to perform leadership. As such, the study identifies challenges with delivering leadership in the setting. This supports the notion that governance-level instructions and managerialism could make management a limiting

contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010). Expanding our understanding of management, articles II, III and IV challenge this by identifying mechanisms where the setting aids the interaction between managers and employees. This finding challenges the understanding of management as a contingency by showing it as supporting experiences of leadership.

## 5.2. Us and them – First-line management and change resistance

**Published June 2018, Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies**

**DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v8i2.106152>**

This article described public welfare managers as change agents. While research articles III and IV represented both the manager and employee perspectives, articles I and II represented only the manager perspective. The study drew on 11 written responses from managers. All worked in Norwegian public welfare organizations performing knowledge work, six of them in Nav.

The study was necessary because while change agents are vital in enacting organizational change, we know little about the specific challenge they face in performing the role. The findings specified four challenges limiting their efficiency: (1) fallout from “change fatigue,” (2) individual resistance to change, (3) managers being caught between two worlds, and (4) a lack of managerial discretion. These findings answered the dissertation’s research question by identifying how managers in public welfare knowledge work performed management and leadership acts when facilitating change.

Parts of the findings supported article I by describing instances where management limited leadership, others added to it by showing ways in which management could present opportunities for leadership in the context. It did so by finding that manager’s ability to interact were supported by employees seeking them out. This demonstrated that managers experienced their position as an arena where they could perform leadership by influencing employees. I elaborate on how employees experience this in articles III and IV.

The study found that interactions with managers were limited when employees resisted. Managers experienced employees who did not seek these interactions as difficult to reach. Consequently, resistance effectively hindered management as a supporter of leadership by removing an opportunity for interaction between manager and employees. Such behavior rendered the manager position a failed arena for influence. Articles III and IV further explore experiences of successful arenas.



Supporting the notion of management as a contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010), the study found managers limited by contextual characteristics and their position. Hence, article II supported article I in identifying contextual factors that might hinder managers in combining management and leadership. One such example was managers experiencing employees' refusal to acknowledge them and their influence as limiting their ability to perform leadership. Another example was managers seeing governance from above as limiting their ability to act as leaders.

As such, if resistance from the individuals were too strong, or managers had to enact changes they or the employees deemed wrong, managers experienced difficulties with influencing employees to partake in the change process. Adding to the findings of article I, article II showed followers' acceptance and needs for interaction-arenas as important contextual characteristics for the performance of leadership. In doing so, the study suggested that the setting could regulate managers' ability to interact with employees. Article III and IV further develop this by identifying mechanisms allowing these interactions to occur, and describing how it allows managers to use management tasks to perform leadership.

5.3. How unstandardized work tasks create arenas for leadership  
**Published May 2019, Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2019.1610130>**

The study drew on 41 interviews with managers and knowledge workers in public welfare knowledge work. The findings showed how managers performed management and leadership acts in the setting. It found that they combined when employees experienced influential leadership from management tasks. Managers influenced employees' meaning making and reality-definition through acts such as recognizing their contributions, motivating through the distribution of work tasks, and providing developmental feedback.

Answering the dissertation's research question, the main finding was the identification that managers used management acts to support influential leadership. It signifies a theoretical contribution in identifying instances where management and leadership could combine. These instances included employees experiencing influence from the distribution of challenging tasks and getting feedback from controls of their work. These acts influenced how they viewed their role and contributions to the organizations. This challenges the theoretical understanding of management as either a substitute, competitor, or contingency to leadership by suggesting that it can also be a supporter (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010).

Article III adds to articles I and II by providing the employee perspective to the manager perspectives presented there. As such, I answered the research aims by contributing sough-after descriptions of how followers experienced management and leadership acts from their frontline manager (Oc, 2017, p. 222). The study also contributed by identifying ambiguous tasks and requirements of control as mechanisms creating interaction arenas. Adding to article I and II's descriptions of the context as a contingency, the study identified the setting as creating opportunities for manager-interactions.

This happened through needs and demands created by the context. Needs occurred when ambiguous tasks made it necessary for managers to supervise employees. This could influence employees by creating a feeling of working towards a common goal. Demands occurred when requirements of control implored managers to interact with employees. This provided managers arenas for motivational feedback. These mechanisms helped managers influence employees by allowing them to recognize their contributions to the organization's goals and cause.

Drawing data from counselors and caseworkers' responses, the study compared how different work-tasks influenced employee's leadership experiences. I argue the basis for comparing the two in the articles and the methods chapter of the dissertation. This approach provided information on how employees' work-tasks influenced needs for managers to standardize their work.

#### 5.4. Knowledge and position: How to manage ambiguous public welfare work

**Published June 2019, Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies**  
**DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v9i2.114798>**

This study described how managers drew on knowledge when managing knowledge workers in public welfare work. It draws on the same empirical interview data as article III, but provides additional insights answering the dissertation's research question. It did so by describing how frontline managers drew on different types of knowledge as they combined management and leadership acts.

In line with article III, the study showed that management supported leadership acts on the interpersonal level. For example, as managers combined control and motivation when giving feedback on tasks. These acts influenced employees by acknowledging their contributions or skills. The study explored three kinds of knowledge managers drew on to combine

management and leadership acts. Indicating that employees appreciated their manager possessing knowledge from a variation of sources. This helped managers to combine management and leadership through acts such as administrating, standardizing, and controlling the work.

Challenging article I and II who identified the setting as creating limitations for leadership, the study showed that demands for control and accountability could support leadership acts. It did so by demanding interactions between managers and employees. Congruent with article III, this finding challenges theories seeing management as a substitute, competitor, or contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010).

The study also contributes theoretically by showing knowledge as a catalyst for management tasks supporting leadership. Developing our understanding of them as combined, the findings suggested that managers relied on knowledge when using management to support leadership acts. The study showed that managers were especially needed for their knowledge when supervising and helping employees. By comparing work-task having different degrees of standardization, the findings suggested that ambiguous tasks influenced employees' needs for manager interactions, which again influenced their leadership experiences.

Hence, the findings identified managers' knowledge as an important leadership characteristic. I base this in findings showing employees seeking out knowledgeable managers for supervision of their work. Being knowledgeable aided managers' by allowing them to use management of the work in ways employees experienced as influential. One example was to combine controlling behaviors with motivational feedback. For an efficient combination, it was important that managers had enough knowledge to provide useful comments.

The need for knowledgeable managers may have been the result of employees performing discretionary tasks without a standardizing professional education. I use the term semi-professional organization in the article. It describes an organization performing discretionary work without a standardizing professional education to guide the work. This makes the designation pertinent to organizations employing public welfare knowledge workers.

Performing ambiguous tasks without a standardizing education could have made these employees unsure of what to do. This could have made it necessary for them to turn to their managers for clarifications. As such, the study suggested two strategies knowledge workers use to compensate for a lacking standardizing education. Caseworkers did so with more standardized work-tasks, counselors turned to the manager as a standardizing force.

The study identified characteristics that influenced management and leadership of knowledge workers. One being that they appreciated managers for their ability to standardize the work through sources of knowledge beyond a professional education. Another being that they needed their managers' supervision—by commenting, discussing, or being asked to clarify decisions. Contrary to traditional professionals who lean on their education to make decisions, the study identified that ambiguous knowledge workers demanded managers to intervene and supervise the work rather than oversee and administrate. In so doing, the findings provided sought-after descriptions of how managers of knowledge work perform management and leadership.

## 6. Discussion

The findings of the dissertation further our understanding of how managers perform management and leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work. Article I does so by identifying management and leadership acts as occasionally combining, but limited by the context. Article II identifies managers' experiences of challenges when performing the two. Article III demonstrates how the setting can help managers use management to perform leadership, while article IV describes how managers use their knowledge and position as a catalyst when management supports leadership acts. Based on the totality of these findings, I answer the research question as follows:

*Management can support frontline managers' performance of leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work.*

The findings showed that employees experienced influential leadership from management task such as *giving instructions, controlling the work, and distributing work-tasks*. These provided managers opportunities for influencing employees' meaning making and reality definition. For example, managers did this by affecting employees' *views on contributions to the organization and belonging to the group*. Based on the findings, I argue that performing management tasks supplied managers with interaction-arenas where they could conduct leadership. This finding contributes theoretically by describing management as a supporter of leadership (6.1).

The findings demonstrate that the setting provided managers with opportunities for combining management and leadership. It did so by identifying two mechanism behind this harmonious experience: (1) Ambiguous work-tasks creating a *need among employees for managers to supervise the work* (6.2.1). (2) Managerialism generating a *demand for managers to control employees' work* (6.2.2). These mechanisms provided interaction-arenas where managers could deliver leadership that would not necessarily occur otherwise.

These findings contribute theoretically by identifying how contextual factors provide frontline managers with opportunities for combining management and leadership. The findings identify knowledge as an important characteristic that enables managers to utilize management tasks in this way (6.3). Considering it from the employee perspective, the findings filled the dissertation's research gaps and added to our understanding of leadership as experienced influence (6.4).

To end the dissertation, I discuss the theoretical implications and contributions of these findings (6.1-6.4), present practical implications (6.5), limitations (6.6), and concluding comments (6.7).

### 6.1. How management supports leadership

The findings contribute theoretically by identifying management tasks as supporting employees' experiences of leadership. An example of this comes from article IV, finding that managers who distributed challenging tasks influenced employees' understanding of their position in the organization. This shows that management tasks can support leadership by providing managers opportunities to perform influential acts.

My findings showed that this happened as managers acknowledged employees' contributions or made them feel part of the group. Figure 1 exemplifies different management tasks that supported leadership. Above the line, the figure shows management tasks creating a need or demand for employees to interact with their manager. Below, it shows how these interactions influenced employees' meaning making or reality definition.

Figure 1. Leadership and management acts experienced by managers and employees

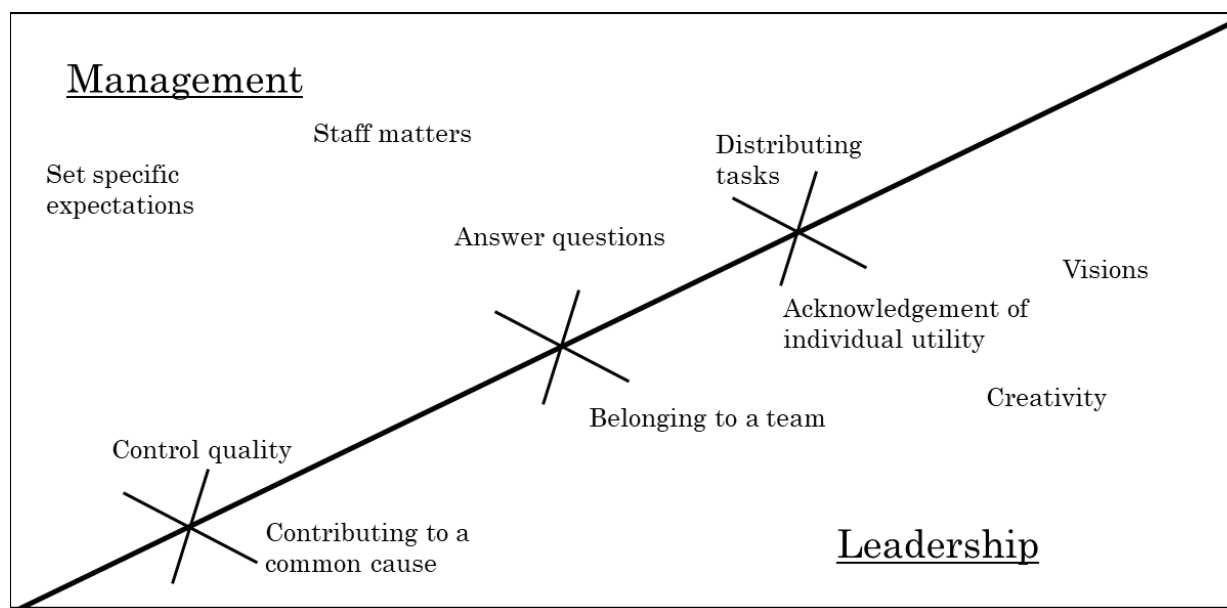


Figure 1. Examples of management tasks supporting leadership acts. The crosses show instances when managers interacted with employees. Acts outside of crosses are examples not described as combined in my data.

The first example shows the influence from managers providing feedback. As part of quality control, managers provided employees with specific comments on the quality and contents of

their work. Employees experienced these interactions as influencing their sense of contributing to a common cause. This happened as the feedback discerned their competence and work as important to the departments' achievements. Consequently, the findings suggest that performing management tasks such as quality control could support managers in delivering leadership by providing opportunities for influence.

The next example shows that employees experienced influence from meeting managers with questions about the work. In these situations, managers could fulfil employees' need for supervision by helping them with issues they had. In addition to experiencing this help as useful, they influenced employees by providing a sense of working on the same team as the manager and the rest of the office. Part of this stimulus also came from feedback assuring employees that they performed as expected, or challenging them to improve their performance for the team.

In the last example, the finding showed that efficient administration of tasks could influence employees. This happened for example when managers delegated tasks. Some employees saw getting challenging tasks as an acknowledgment of their skills. This could influence employees by recognizing their utility for the organization. As I discuss in section 6.3, this depended on managers knowing about the work. Lacking knowledge and giving too easy or demanding tasks, could make employees see it as a negative or non-influential act.

Based on these findings, I contend that management tasks in certain situations can function as a supporter of leadership. This is a theoretical contribution presenting management acts as something more than a competitor, substitute, or contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010). Management as a supporter is different from competition and substitution as it occurs simultaneously and in harmony. It is different from contingency in giving managers opportunities, rather than limiting requirements.

Adding to the framework of Vabo and Ladegård (2010), I thus see the supporter as a fourth way of management and leadership to co-occur. This is an essential distinction as it does not consider management a contextual cage for leadership. Instead, it suggests that management can provide managers with arenas for performing influencing acts. This is in line with seeing substantial acts as containing symbolic components (Goffman, 1966). My findings support this understanding by showing that employees experience management acts as supporting components of influential leadership. This challenges theories seeing management and leadership as mutually exclusive (Zaleznik, 1977), and is consistent with previous research

finding that managers perform both types of tasks (Drucker, 1954/2008; Hempill & Coons, 1950; Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010; Mintzberg, 1994; Stogdill & Coons, 1957; Yukl, 1989).

While management of the work can provide opportunities, it is important to note that I also identified instances where organizational demands were an obstacle to leadership. In these instances, the findings are congruent with theories on management as a limiting contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010). For example, Article I and II described instances where managers due to the demands of the position or resources lacked decision-making powers. This weakened their ability to respond to needs and provide leadership. Other obstacles included having to “sell” changes the managers did not decide, opposition from employees unwilling to change, or the lack of power to make necessary changes. By identifying situations where management failed as an arena for leadership, the findings suggest that the supporter belongs as an addition and not a replacement of Vabo and Ladegård’s (2010) theoretical framework. I elaborate on circumstances helping management as a supporter of leadership in the next section on contextual influence.

The finding challenges research suggesting that frontline managers perform little leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, 2003b), or that leadership is largely an empty term not found in behaviors (S. Kelly, 2014; Spicker, 2012). Contrary to this, the findings showed that employees experienced leadership in interactions with their managers. This even happened when managers performed management tasks such as controlling the work. One such description, not included in the articles due to space-constraints, was a manager providing small drops of feedback, influencing employees by acknowledging their contributions:

No, it’s not much more really, but, but such small drips of some kind of confirmation, it does not have to be like: “Oh, that was AWESOME [name], that’s great!” right? But more like: “eh— great that you got it done”, or “great, can you handle it?” It’s just— that little, tiny bit, just to get a confirmation that it was good, “I saw that you did it.”

While leadership can be distributed in the organization (McKitterick, 2015), my findings nuance these theories by indicating that some leadership acts are tightly aligned with the formal position and its management tasks. This challenges Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a, 2003b) who found that managers in charge of highly trained employees perform little leadership.

Compared to them, my research concerned informants who expressed a greater need for interacting with managers in their decision-making process. In these meetings, I found that



management could support experiences of leadership by creating opportunities for interactions. These interactions could contribute to employees experiencing managers as leaders. My findings could be different from Alvesson and Sveningsson's because of the follower-perspective, or from operationalizing management and leadership as experienced influence rather than managers' intent. I further argue the utility of applying the follower-perspective for studying how managers perform leadership in section 6.3.

## 6.2. Contextual influence

This section expands on how management supported leadership by tying it to characteristics of the public welfare knowledge work setting. Based on the findings, I identify the following two mechanisms as aiding management as a supporter of leadership: (1) Ambiguous work-tasks creating needs for interacting with the manager (6.2.1), (2) Managerialism creating demands for interactions by requiring managers to control and report (6.2.2).

### 6.2.1. Ambiguous tasks create needs

The findings showed that managers relied on their knowledge and responsibilities of the formal position to influence employees. This happened in interactions when they helped employees with their tasks, such as giving advice on decisions. The finding adds theoretically to Oc (2017) by conceptualizing how employees' work-tasks influenced experiences of leadership. Additionally, the findings answered his call for research concerning employee perspectives on leadership (p. 222).

The findings did this by identifying that ambiguous work-task created needs among certain knowledge workers to interact with their managers. The need provided managers with opportunities for influencing employees meaning making or reality definition. Managers own experiences aligns with the employees. For example, article II found that when employees did not seek these interactions, managers experienced limited ability to provide leadership.

Counselors more so than caseworkers appreciated managers for acting as supervisors. Based on the findings, I attribute this to them performing tasks with fewer standardizing rules and regulations. This created more uncertainty and needs for the manager to act as a supervisor. Even veterans of the counselor departments experienced such uncertainty. This makes it unlikely that the caseworkers' extra years of experience explains the differences them and the counselors. While this does not mean that caseworkers failed to experience leadership in

supervisory interactions, it suggests that they appeared more often in counselor departments performing less standardized tasks.

Ambiguous tasks created needs for interactions between managers and employees, and as such acted as a mechanism contributing to experiences of leadership. The differences between caseworkers and counselors supports this by suggesting that standardized tasks could make the need for manager interactions less prominent. Consequently, the findings suggest that followers needing help supported experiences of influential leadership. In instances where employees lacked a need for interaction, managers lost an opportunity to perform leadership. The connection between employees' needs and leadership experiences aligns with situational leadership theory in ascribing leadership to specific situations (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009).

It adds to implicit leadership theory by showing that employee maturity depends on the nature of tasks they perform. This means that there could be some kind of “constant immaturity” created by performing ambiguous knowledge work without a standardizing education.

Supporting this, the literature describes such discretionary work as based on tacit and explicit knowledge and decision making that create uncertainty and ambiguity (Blom et al., 2007; Dore, 2018; IFSW, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2010; Øverbye, 2013). My findings contribute by describing how this setting influences experiences of management and leadership.

Managers supervising and standardizing the work to an “organizational habitus” could be necessary because employees lacked a professional habitus helping them handle ambiguity (E. Freidson, 1970; Witman, Smid, Meurs, & Willems, 2011). This could be a characteristic making public welfare knowledge work different from professional welfare work. This is supported by previous research on Nav suggesting that the lack of standardized options create doubts about the right course of action (Gjersøe, 2016a, 2016b), that Nav employees lack a common professional identity (Røysum, 2010), and findings showing that even employees with professional social work-degrees experience insecurity about how to balance competing demands within the Nav-system (Øvrelid, 2018). Consequently, my findings suggest that variations of tasks and professional educations within public welfare knowledge work influence experiences of management and leadership.

The need for managers to act as supervisors could alternatively be attributed to a history and culture for it in public welfare organizations (Magnussen, 2015). Considering that some employees were professionally trained social workers and jurists, it is possible that a culture for supervision or a familiarity with supervision from their training, contributed to employees seeking out their manager for supervision. However, both professionally educated and non-

educated counselors needed these interactions to help standardize the work. This suggests that these experiences are not necessarily tied to employees' background as much as the work they perform. Based on the findings, we should assume that employee' preferences, needs, and wants play important roles in how they experience management as a supporter of leadership. This challenges theories on leadership that emphasizes leader perspectives over followers (i.e Bennis, 1984).

### 6.2.2. Managerialism demands arenas

Adding to needs based in ambiguous tasks, the findings also described employees experiencing compulsory controlling as opportunities for managers to perform leadership. By describing organizational requirements of control and reporting as creating interactions, the findings contribute to Oc's (2017) framework by showing how managers' tasks influence experiences of management and leadership.

Rather than portraying managers as controlling "hawks" clawing at employee's discretion, they saw controls as an arena for receiving feedback. This experience was aided by managers using their knowledge about the work to make specific and relevant comments. Knowledge allowed managers to make controlling interactions into something more than the numbers. For example, when they explained how an employee's evaluations contributed to the organizations' goals and cause. I elaborate on knowledge as a leadership characteristic in the next section.

This finding suggests that managerialism might not limit managers' ability to deliver leadership. This goes against previous research seeing management as posing limitations for leadership in public welfare work (Breit et al., 2017; Fossetøl et al., 2015, p. 302–303; Fossetøl et al., 2016b; Shanks, 2016). My findings challenge this by suggesting that managerialism required interactions that allowed managers to provide leadership.

This is supported by previous research showing that formal managers are in a position of proximity and authority to perform leadership (Vie, 2009). The finding is supported by Ellingsen et al. (2018), who identified that managers used control-functions to facilitate meetings with employees. My study builds on theirs by describing how required controlling tasks created opportunities for interpersonal influence between managers and employees.

It suggests that governance instructions on control and reporting could create compulsory arenas for managers to perform leadership. Instead of seeing management as a limiting contingency (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010), the findings described it as a supporter of leadership.

This is based in managerialism demanding interaction between the two managers and employees. Consequently, I suggest that managerialism could be a mechanism contributing to the occurrence of leadership by creating interactions.

This goes beyond the manager-position providing opportunities for leadership (Vie, 2009). Rather, it suggests that the setting demands interactions that would be less prominent without managerialism. One can for example imagine a manager perceived as absent or uninvolved. Managerialism as a mechanism counters this by demanding managers to interact with employees. Rather than interactions depending on personal initiative of the manager, they are demanded by the context. As managers do less interpersonal management on upper levels, this mechanism could weaken. This would support the theoretical finding of management and leadership as closely aligned. It does this by acknowledging that as managers do tasks requiring interpersonal interactions with employees, they get more arenas for performing influential leadership.

### 6.3. Knowledge

The findings identified that being knowledgeable about the contents of the work helped managers as leaders. They did so by providing them with potent arenas for influence as employees sought them out, and by enabling managers to use management tasks to influence employees.

Consequently, the findings contribute to our understanding of leadership of knowledge work from the frontline manager position. It does so by suggesting that managers lean on many-faceted sources of knowledge including knowing about the work, the setting, and general management skills. This finding is supported by previous research on managers' knowledge as important for leading such employees (Empson & Langley, 2015).

Instead of saying that managers' ability to influence comes from being most knowledgeable, my findings add to Empson and Langley (2015) by showing that these employees appreciated managers for their ability to *combine* knowledge and position. As an example, article IV suggested that managers with extensive knowledge of the field were more capable of meeting employees' needs. Managers who lacked the necessary knowledge had fewer opportunities for performing leadership. Going beyond describing managers as using their position to influence through emotional care (Vie, 2009), my findings showed that managers use their position to influence with their knowledge. Considering the benefits of leadership from a

formal position, the findings suggest that frontline managers can play the role of knowledge facilitators in public welfare knowledge work (L. Kelly, 2017).

The role of knowledge in influencing employees shows leadership as supported by managers' characteristics and position. The findings identified that knowledge about the field allowed managers to influence by providing opportunities for performing leadership. In these situations, they influenced by making employees feel important or seen, for example by knowing enough to give them challenging tasks rather than ones that were too simple or difficult. This made knowledge important as lacking knowledge and giving them too easy or difficult tasks did not create the same experience of influence.

As such, the findings suggest that deficient knowledge do not necessarily hinder managers in distributing tasks, but limits the ability of these tasks to support leadership. The findings thus identified that managers drew on their knowledge to combine management and leadership acts. Managers' ability to lead from these interactions depended on them having the right characteristics (in this case, knowledge) to fulfill employees' need for support. The utility of multiple sources of knowledge in combination with a formal position, could be a trait of public welfare organization combining professional and organizational logics (Evetts, 2011).

#### 6.4. Followership

The follower perspective provided fruitful insights into how managers performed management and leadership acts. In so doing, it contributed to answering the research question and filling the research gap as identified in the literature review. The findings support the theoretical necessity of understanding management and leadership from the eyes of the followers. Consequently, the dissertation makes empirical and analytical contributions by describing the importance of seeing management and leadership as experienced rather than performed. By considering how employees experienced acts on an interpersonal level, I was able to complement previous research considering the co-occurrence of management and leadership from the overreaching governance level (Vabo & Ladegård, 2010).

The individual articles show management providing varying degrees of support for leadership. Managers in the first two articles experienced management as creating tensions and limitations to their leadership. These findings were important for describing mechanisms of the context as influencing experiences of management and leadership. Based on them, I identified challenges managers experienced in delivering leadership. This concurred with the theoretical understanding of management as a contingency for leadership (Vabo & Ladegård,

2010). However, when asking employees in articles III and IV, I found that certain mechanisms aided employees' experiences of managers as successful in delivering leadership. This internal difference is explainable by articles III and IV applying the follower perspective. The manager in article III who did not like wasting time with chatting, exemplifies the difference between the two perspectives. While the managers saw answering questions and interacting with the employee as a waste of time, the follower-perspective was necessary to assess that the employee found the very same interactions to be influential. Rather than a waste of time, it helped her feel a belonging to the organization. This shows that employees do not necessarily reflect managers' perceptions on leadership as they can have different views on acts and their influence. This suggests that the follower perspective is highly necessary for explaining how leadership can be experienced as challenging by managers and useful by employees. Applying this to article I and II would mean that if asked, employees there would provide comparable answers to those in article III and IV.

Management as a supporter of leadership suggests that theoretically separating according to acts or managers' intent are erroneous. Especially so because it fails to describe how informants experience management and leadership acts as influential. Consequently, by looking solely at the acts without considering their influence, we might underestimate the potential for leadership inherent in mundane management tasks.

Applying the follower perspective opens up for considering leadership as an unintended process. While experiences of leadership require a "sender," the findings show that it might not require an intended effort for the receiver to interpret acts as leadership. Hence, they challenge theories on leadership as mostly rooted in managers' efforts or traits (Hempill & Coons, 1950; Stogdill & Coons, 1957). Drawing on followers' experiences, the findings suggest that we do not find leadership in a single characteristic or trait. Leadership appears to be a process of interpreting acts. It is supported by key characteristics such as knowledge, as well as contextual mechanisms creating needs or demands for interactions.

## 6.5. Practical implications

The findings show that frontline managers in public welfare knowledge work are able to provide leadership. They also suggest that regardless of demands for management tasks, leadership should not occur through strategizing behind closed doors. Experiences of leadership appear to benefit from managers working with and alongside employees proving their worth. In a hectic workday, managers could benefit from being adaptable and flexible in

identifying and utilizing tasks that might support them in influencing employees.

Organizations should recognize that they must supplant frontline managers with resources enabling them to utilize these tasks.

A development where managers of public welfare work become necessary to standardize ambiguous knowledge work could result in inflexible, inefficient organizations. Although not observed in my data, this would be especially concerning if the need for standardizing managers reached a level where employees become unable to make independent decisions. Such extreme managerialism could help organizations ensure similar praxis. However, it could also be a curse actualizing a “dark-side” of management by limiting discretion.

While these organizations might benefit from holistic services performed by knowledge workers without a standardizing education, these employees appear to need managers who have the right characteristics to support them. This includes being capable of providing feedback and knowing how to administer the work.

The findings indicate that certain influential acts might be easier to perform for formal managers than for informal or distributed leaders. This does not deny that they can be complementary. Although there might be advantages with managers distributing management tasks to save time, the findings indicate that it comes with the risk of losing potential benefits of combining with leadership. This indicates that efforts to automatize tasks through artificial intelligence or machine learning could remove arenas for leadership.

These findings do not support a regime of one-sided performance management on quantity. It is rather a description of ways that managers may combine society’s demands for control with employees’ need for support. Employees experiencing managers as supportive does not refute managers as organizational tools for exploiting employees (Hanlon, 2015). However, the findings indicate that the right management and leadership acts can ease the burden of work on individuals.

The findings identify characteristics with the public welfare knowledge workers’ context influencing experiences of management and leadership. I consider these as mechanisms helping management support leadership by creating interaction-arenas. To make theoretical generalizations, I would expect these to be relevant both within and outside of the given context. This is provided that the setting shares the need for support and demands of managerialism. This does not preclude that other characteristics could act as similar mechanisms.

I consider the findings relevant for organizations also outside of the public welfare setting. It is not alone in combining ambiguous tasks with unstandardized educations. Other types of organizations, such as consultants and public servants, could have similar needs for interacting with frontline managers about decisions. Their managers could benefit as leaders by having knowledge about the work and the ability to support employees when needs arise. The need for management interventions appears to depend on whether work-tasks are standardized. This means that knowledge workers with less ambiguous tasks, either from standardized tasks or a professional education, could lack this need for interactions.

Leaning on peers and their professional education to solve problems, professional workers could have less needs for supervisory interactions with their managers. This could for example be medical doctors, or lawyers, turning towards the collegium rather than a manager to solve difficult cases (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). This could limit managers' ability to use supervisory acts as a potential leadership arena. Leadership in such organizations could potentially be more about using other arenas, such as meetings, to influence through creating common goals or communicating a shared cause.

Similarly, organizations with less demands on control and reporting from managerialism, such as scholars, would provide managers with fewer opportunities for interactions. In these situations, managers might have to create other arenas for interacting with employees. This could be a type of mentorship-program, or using special occasions and achievements as an opportunity to acknowledge the quality of employees' work. To use it as an opportunity for meaningful interactions, managers must to go beyond noting the achievement. Instead, they would need enough knowledge of the field to provide useful comments about the contents of the work behind the achievement.

This means that a wide range of organizations could experience managerialism as a mechanism requiring managers to interact with employees. This means that the findings could be relevant for other types of work where controls are pertinent. Based on the findings, managers here could benefit from working on communicating how employees' performance contributes to the organization's achievements and goals.

## 6.6. Limitations and future studies

The findings represent employees and managers' experiences of management and leadership. Managers answer to many additional stakeholders, including clients and owners. These could have different needs such as leniency rather than control. The dissertation identifies ways in



which managers can fulfill employees' needs within the setting. The findings do not suggest that this alone can alleviate issues or create better services. Other factors beyond the scope of this work are likely to be important, such as colleagues, psychological-, and physical-work environment.

The dissertation emphasizes what “works” in regards to influencing employees. Consequently, findings on interpersonal leadership prevails. The findings could therefore ignore non-influential acts that employees are not conscious about such as visions or strategies. With my methodology, it was impossible to account for the influence of possible subconscious understandings of leadership beyond the language informants chose to use. This means that informants' experiences could be rationalizations of subconscious influence, such as managers' being tall or a woman. I cannot avoid this risk completely, but I took methodical precautions to minimize it. I described these measures in the methods chapter.

I view the leadership process as co-constructed. Although my findings do not describe the co-construction process itself—“when leadership happens”—they describe the outcome of the process from the leader and follower perspectives. An interesting focus for additional research could be what occurs when management and leadership “happens.” Here it would be relevant to look to whether experiences of leadership influence hormone-levels or engage different areas of the brain. This would potentially allow the measurement of issues explored here.

It would be interesting with further studies on how, and when, experiences of management and leadership diverge between leaders and followers. This can identify underutilized and overused management tasks supporting leadership. Future studies should also explore how experiences of leadership change with the situation and over time in specific contexts. The possible negative effects of over-involved managers should be a topic of interest going forward.

My qualitative findings are not a verification of the prevalence of managerialism in public welfare work. However, they correspond with a vast literature describing the current situation in public welfare knowledge work nationally and globally. Although the particular national and cultural context might limit the theoretical generalizability of the findings, I contend that by thoroughly accounting for the characteristics of the context, I have enabled researchers and practitioners to infer the findings to other settings.

The findings do not refute the idea that prevalent welfare work values, like caring, influence employees' experiences of leadership. The “feminine leadership ideals” of interpersonal

leadership (Storvik, 2002), could have been influenced by the high number of women in the study and field. While my comparisons of men and women do not identify differences, comparative studies of gender could explore this. Additional research is necessary to explore leadership on other levels of these organizations. This should include exploring how to utilize values such as the “good of society” into leadership acts. Because of variations due to work-tasks, further research should not limit itself to seeing public welfare knowledge work as uniform.

I have not included any articles on the negative influence of combining management and leadership. This does not mean that informants failed to discuss them. An example came from article IV, showing that managers performing controlling behaviors without the necessary knowledge could influence employees negatively. While this supports my finding of management as an arena for leadership, I did not find place to develop it within the frames of the allotted article. It will be a topic for future studies.

My scope precluded exploring history as an underlying influence. It is therefore possible that the history and affiliation of caseworker departments as production units (Andreassen & Aars, 2015), contributed to experiences of management and leadership. Such a connection would not contradict my findings. I fully expect other organizational and contextual aspects beyond those considered here to be important.

## 6.7. Conclusions

The dissertation makes multiple empirical and theoretical contributions. Aided by the four articles, I have filled a research gap in describing management and leadership acts in public welfare knowledge work. I have also filled a research gap concerning how employees experience management and leadership, and attributed this to characteristics of the setting.

The dissertation contributes theoretically by identifying how management tasks can support leadership acts. This finding suggests that when viewed as an influential process on the interpersonal level, management can support leadership. It does so by providing interaction-arenas where employees experience manager acts as influential.

To assess acts as influential or not, the dissertation utilized different approaches, including phenomenological interviews accounting for the follower perspective. The findings showed contextual factors within the public welfare setting as influencing experiences of management and leadership. It did so by identifying how ambiguous work-tasks and managerialism worked as mechanisms creating needs and demands for manager interactions. This contributes to our

understanding of how managers can help employees deliver social policy within a public welfare setting.

The dissertation does not describe a naïve reality where organizations operate without demands of control and accountability, nor do I argue that complete trust is the only way to enable employees. Rather, I describe acts where managers use management of the work to support influential leadership acts. This could inspire managers in public welfare knowledge work to “do more with less” (P. Sullivan, 2016, p. S58). Hence, the dissertation expands our understanding and appreciation, but also our expectations, of what managers can achieve.

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## Appendix A – Interview guide employees

# Intervjuguide Saksbehandlere

Mål	Middel
<i>Biografi/Kontekst</i>	
	Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv? Alder? Hva studerte du? Hvor? Hvor lenge har du jobbet her? Tidligere?
Arbeid	Hvordan vil du beskrive jobben din? Kan du beskrive en vanlig arbeidsdag? (uke?) Hva går tiden til? Hva er det vanskeligste med jobben din? Opplever du tidspress? Annen type press?
<i>Konkrete ledererfaringer</i>	
Motiverende dag	Kan du fortell om en givende dag på jobben? Hva motiverer deg i arbeidet? Hva er lederens rolle i å motivere?
	Kan du beskrive så detaljert som mulig hva ledelse handler om for deg?  Hvilken del av dette oppfatter du som ledelse?  PROBE
Støtte	Hva slags støtte trenger du i arbeidet ditt? Hvor? Faglig veiledning? Hvordan støtter lederen din deg?
Kontroll	Hvordan kontrolleres du i arbeidet? (regler, rutiner, resultatmål) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Følger opp?</li> <li>- Frihet?</li> </ul> Mengde? Kvalitet?  Hva krever lederen din av deg? Produksjon? I hvilken grad opplever du at dere styres ovenfra? (Toppstyrt?). Opplever du en konflikt mellom hva du føler burde gjøres, og hva du blir bedt om å gjøre?
Ideal	Hva slags type «ledelse» trenger du for å gjøre jobben din best mulig?  kompetanse /egenskaper?

Forskjell	Når gjør lederen en forskjell i arbeidet ditt? Hvor ofte treffer du lederen din?
Innovasjon	Oppfordres det til nytenkning? Barrierer?
	Noe mer? Hvordan synes du dette gikk?

## Appendix B – Interview guide managers



# Intervjuguide ledere

Mål	Middel
<i>Biografi/Kontekst</i>	
Utdanning	Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv? Alder? Hva studerte du? Hvor? Hvor lenge har du jobbet her? Tidligere? Har du lederutdanning/kurs? Hadde du ønsket mer lederkurs?
Arbeid	Kan du beskrive en vanlig arbeidsdag? Hva bruker du mest tid på? Hva er det viktigste du gjør som leder? Hva er det beste med å være leder her? Hva er det mest utfordrende? Opplever du tidspress? Annen type press?
<i>Ledelseserfaringer</i>	
Motivasjon	Kan du fortell om en givende dag på jobben?  Hva motiverer deg i arbeidet? Hvordan motiverer du dine medarbeidere?
	Kan du beskrive så detaljert som mulig en situasjon som handler om ledelse for deg?  Hvilket aspekt av denne situasjonen oppfattet du som ledelse?  PROBE
	Hvordan vil du beskrive din lederstil?
	Når opplever du at du utøver ledelse? Når føler du deg som en leder?  Kan du beskrive ledelse du har utøvd som har vært spesielt hjelpsomt eller ikke hjelpsomt for de du leder?  Når opplever du å gjøre en forskjell som leder? Hjelpsomt/lite hjelpsomt da? PROBE
Kontroll	Kan du si litt om hva det er som legger premisset for hvor du bruker tida og ressursene dine som leder? Hvordan kontrolleres dere i arbeidet?  Handlingsrommet, hvordan opplever du det? Hva kan du gjøre, hva kan du ikke gjøre?

	<p>Sentral Styring? Ukesmail, Styringsenhet, leder?</p> <p>Hvordan kontrollere du dine medarbeidere? Hva gjør du for å sørge for produktivitet? Hvordan opplever du mulighetene man har som leder i NAV ?</p> <p>Opplever du styringen som begrensende på hvordan du kan handle som leder?</p> <p>konflikt mellom hva du mener burde gjøres, og hva du blir bedt om å gjøre?</p> <p>Hvis du ikke har tid til alt, hva prioriteres?</p>
Mellom-menneskelig	<p>Hvordan går du frem for å «se alle»?</p> <p>Triks, grep?</p> <p>Beslutterrollen, hvordan utøver du den? Har denne dobbeltrollen noen fordeler/ulempesom leder?</p> <p>Er dette en vanlig dobbeltrolle for ledere i NAV?</p>
Ideal	<p>Hva slags type «ledelse» tror du denne type arbeid behøver for å gjøre jobben best mulig?</p> <p>kompetanse /egenskaper? Hvordan tror du andre oppfatter dette?</p>
Innovasjon	<p>I hvilken grad opplever du at dere må være innovative, eller finne nye løsninger på problemer? Møter dere barrierer? Fra hvem?</p> <p>Leder Coach? Lederteam, hvordan fungerer det?</p>
	<p>Noe mer? Hvordan synes du dette gikk?</p>

## Appendix C – Approval NSD



Chris Rønningstad  
Handelshøyskolen ved HiOA Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus  
Pilestredet 35  
0001 OSLO

Vår dato: 30.03.2017

Vår ref: 52835 / 3 / STM

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

## TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 07.02.2017. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>52835</i>	<i>Samtaler med ledere og ansatte i NAV</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Chris Rønningstad</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstillende kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, [http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvernombud/meld\\_prosjekt/meld\\_endringer.html](http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html). Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 07.12.2018, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Siri Tenden Myklebust

Kontaktperson: Siri Tenden Myklebust tlf: 55 58 22 68

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

# Personvernombudet for forskning



## Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

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Prosjektnr: 52835

Utvalget består av ansatte. Data samles inn ved intervjuer og gjennom observasjon. Det vil ikke gjøres observasjoner i kontorområder der brukere er til stede. Vi viser her til epost fra forsker, mottatt 29.03.2017.

Utvalget informeres skriftlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet.

Det behandles enkelte opplysninger om tredjeperson (leder). Det skal kun registreres opplysninger som er nødvendig for formålet med prosjektet. Opplysningene skal være av mindre omfang og ikke sensitive, og skal anonymiseres i publikasjon. Så fremt personvernulempen for tredjeperson reduseres på denne måten, kan forsker unntas fra informasjonsplikten overfor tredjeperson, fordi det anses uforholdsmessig vanskelig å informere.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet.

I meldeskjemaet er det krysset av for at det skal publiseres personopplysninger i oppgaven. Personvernombudet legger til grunn at dette er feil og har endret dette punktet. Vi gjør oppmerksom på at dersom personopplysninger skal publiseres må det innhentes et eksplisitt samtykke til dette. Det framgår ikke av informasjonsskrivet at personopplysninger skal publiseres.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 07.12.2018. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette digitale lydopptak

## Appendix D – Participation form

## **Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet**

### **«Samtaler med ledere og ansatte i NAV»**

#### **Bakgrunn og formål**

Målsettingen med doktorgradsprosjektet er å beskrive ledelse i NAV som relasjonen mellom nærmeste leder og den ansatte. Sentralt står spørsmålet om hvordan ledelse utøves og hvordan det har utviklet seg. Andre viktige områder er å undersøke hvilke lederbehov den ansatte har og hvilken støtte de mottar, og hvordan leder og ansatt forstår ledelsesfunksjonen. En interessant dimensjon i prosjektet er i hvilken grad ledere oppfatter å ha et handlingsrom og hvordan det kan benyttes best mulig.

Du blir spurt om å delta fordi enheten/kontoret ditt har blitt identifisert av NAV Arbeid og Ytelser som et med kapasitet til å ta imot besøk i forbindelse med dette prosjektet.

#### **Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?**

Deltagelse innebærer et intervju med Chris Rønningstad i 45 minutter der spørsmålene vil omhandle behov for, og forventninger til, ledelse i ditt arbeid, og vil registreres med notater og lydopptak. I tillegg vil Chris Rønningstad utføre deltagende observasjon av arbeidet på kontoret gjennom korte, løpende, samtaler. Disse samtaler vil handle om ledelse og behovet for dette i deres arbeidshverdag. Dette vil gi informasjon som utfyller og komplementerer intervjuene og gir en bedre beskrivelse av deres hverdag enn det som er mulig med kun intervjuer. Chris Rønningstad skal ikke føre en «logg» over hva som blir gjort eller hvordan, men bruke tiden på å sette seg inn i hva som skjer hos dere for å forstå arbeidssituasjonen best mulig. Chris Rønningstad vil ikke delta på møter med brukere, eller hente inn annen informasjon om deg enn den vi diskuterer.

#### **Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?**

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun Chris Rønningstad som har tilgang til personopplysninger som vil kunne dukke opp i samtalen. Informasjon om deltakere (kjønn, alder, utdanning) vil lagres adskilt fra informasjon om hvilket kontor deltakeren arbeider på.

Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon da verken navn eller arbeidssted vil identifiseres. Eksempel på identifikasjon i publisering vil være «kvinnelig sosionom, ansatt på et kontor utenfor Oslo peker på....»

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 07.12.2018. Etter denne datoen vil alle personopplysninger anonymiseres og lydopptak slettes.

#### **Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Chris Rønningstad 67 23 84 12.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

### **Samtykke til deltakelse i studien**

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## Appendix E – Letters of support





NAV Familie og pensjonsytelser Styringsenhet  
Postboks 6600 Etterstad  
0607 OSLO

Ved: Leder Jorun Kongerud

Deres ref:

Vår ref:  
16/6469

Vår dato:  
20.12.16

### **Forespørsel om bistand ved datainnsamling til doktorgradsprosjekt**

Chris Rønningstad er stipendiat ved Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus hvor han følger doktorgradsprogrammet Sosialt arbeid og sosialpolitikk. Doktorgradsarbeidet har tittelen «*Ledelse i NAV gjennom øynene til følgerne*».

Målsettingen med prosjektet er å beskrive ledelse i NAV som relasjonen mellom nærmeste leder og den ansatte. Sentralt står spørsmålet om hvordan ledelse utøves og hvordan det har utviklet seg. Andre viktige områder er å undersøke hvilke lederbehov den ansatte har og hvilken støtte de mottar, og hvordan leder og ansatt forstår ledelsesfunksjonen. En interessant dimensjon i prosjektet er i hvilken grad ledere oppfatter å ha et handlingsrom og hvordan det kan benyttes best mulig.

Vi har vært i kontakt med NAV Arbeid og Ytelser Styringsenhet og de vil stille aktuelle ressurser til disposisjon, og vi ber NAV Familie og pensjonsytelser Styringsenhet gjøre det samme. Det vil være hensiktsmessig at de ulike enhetene i NAV samarbeider om denne datainnsamlingen og dersom det er behov for støtte fra direktoratet, vil FoU-seksjonen bidra.

Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet v/ FoU-seksjonen anser at Rønningstads doktorgradsarbeid kan gi relevant og god kunnskap. Kunnskap om ledelse er nyttig på et generelt grunnlag, men blir særlig aktuelt når etaten prøver ut nye organiseringsformer med for eksempel å tilrettelegge for myndiggjøring av NAV-kontorene og robuste NAV-enheter.

Prosjektet vil gi økt forståelse for hvordan behovet for ledelse påvirkes av ulike organisasjonskontekst og dermed vil forskningsfunn fra denne undersøkelsen komme til nytte i flere deler av vår organisasjon. Vi understreker at dette ikke er en evaluering av ledere, men prosjektet skal beskrive hvordan ledelse skapes mellom leder og følger.

Rønningstad ønsker tilgang til åtte lokalkontor og åtte saksbehandlingsenheter. Det innebærer passiv observasjon av enheten med fokus på ledelse, antatt varighet er 3-5 dager per enhet. I tillegg er det ønskelig med intervjuer, nærmere bestemt av seks personer per enhet (30-60 minutter) og intervju av leder (60 minutter).

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#### **KUNNSKAPSAVDELINGEN // ARBEIDS- OG VELFERSDIREKTORATET**

Postadresse: Postboks 5, St. Olavs plass // 0130 OSLO

Besøksadresse: Økernveien 94 // 0579 Oslo  
Tel: 21071000 // Faks:

www.nav.no //

Intervjuobjektene vil være veiledere på lokalkontor og nærmeste leder, og saksbehandlere i NAV familie og pensjonsytelser samt nærmeste leder. Utvalget av de aktuelle enhetene må oppfylle visse kriterier som Rønningstad vil redegjøre nærmere for, men det er viktig at representativiteten blir så god som mulig. Når det gjelder intervjuobjektene er utvalgskriteriene knyttet til blant annet alder, kjønn, utdanning og arbeidserfaring.

Vi understreker at vår anbefaling om å legge til rette for dette forskningsarbeidet gjelder alle fylker og NAV Familie og pensjonsytelser. Rønningstad kan derfor bruke denne anbefalingen overfor fylker og enheter han mener er relevante for studien. Det er viktig for forskningskvaliteten at tilgangen omfatter både observasjons- og intervjudelen. Datainnsamlingen bør gjennomføres så raskt som mulig og senest før sommeren 2017.

Vi legger til grunn at NAV på fylkesnivå og NAV Familie og pensjonsytelser først må vurdere hvilke enheter som kan være aktuelle til datainnsamling og deretter informere lederne ved disse enhetene. Enhetslederen må i sin tur klarere dette med sine ansatte. Det er av stor betydning for forskningskvaliteten at dette er godt forankret i fylket og enheten. Vi gjør for øvrig oppmerksom på at enheter som ønsker å delta, vil motta et informasjonsbrev fra Rønningstad og få anledning til å diskutere forutsetningene for datainnsamlingen.

Full anonymitet er et krav for denne type datainnsamlinger. Enhet, leder og ansatte blir selvsagt anonymisert i undersøkelsen. Deltakelse i prosjektet får dermed ingen konsekvenser for verken enheten, lederen eller den ansatte.

Vi anbefaler sterkt at fylkesnivået og NAV Familie og pensjonsytelser oppfordrer flere enheter om å delta i undersøkelsen. Det handler ikke bare om forskningsarbeidets verdi for NAV, men også om at det kan bli krevende å rekruttere nok enheter til studien. Det vil uansett være hensiktsmessig å gå i dialog med Rønningstad for å undersøke om man kan legge til rette for et samarbeid. Etter vår vurdering kan doktorgradsarbeidet gi svært nyttig kunnskap til utviklingen av NAV både som organisasjon og tjenesteyter.

Doktorgradsstipendiat Chris Rønningstad kan kontaktes på mobil 915 45 756 eller e-post [Chris.Ronningstad@hioa.no](mailto:Chris.Ronningstad@hioa.no). FoU-seksjonen v/ Niels Wulfsberg kan også kontaktes.

Vennlig hilsen  
FoU-seksjonen



Kristel Skorge  
seksjonsleder



Niels Wulfsberg  
seniorrådgiver

Kopi: Chris Rønningstad, Stensgata 35 D, 0358 Oslo



NAV Arbeid og Ytelser Styringsenhet  
Postboks 6944, St Olavs plass  
0130 OSLO

Ved:

Deres ref:

Vår ref: 16/6469-1

Vår dato: 15.11.2016

## Forespørsel om bistand ved datainnsamling til doktorgradsprosjekt

Chris Rønningstad er stipendiat ved Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus hvor han følger doktorgradsprogrammet Sosialt arbeid og sosialpolitikk. Doktorgradsarbeidet har tittelen «Ledelse i NAV gjennom øynene til følgerne».

Målsettingen med prosjektet er å beskrive ledelse i NAV som relasjonen mellom nærmeste leder og den ansatte. Sentralt står spørsmålet om hvordan ledelse utøves og hvordan det har utviklet seg. Andre viktige områder er å undersøke hvilke lederbehov den ansatte har og hvilken støtte de mottar, og hvordan leder og ansatt forstår ledelsesfunksjonen. En interessant dimensjon i prosjektet er i hvilken grad ledere oppfatter å ha et handlingsrom og hvordan det kan benyttes best mulig.

Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet v/ FoU-seksjonen anser at Rønningstads doktorgradsarbeid kan gi relevant og god kunnskap. Kunnskap om ledelse er nyttig på et generelt grunnlag, men blir særlig aktuelt når vi skal tilrettelegge for myndiggjøring av NAV-kontorene. Prosjektet vil gi økt forståelse for hvordan behovet for ledelse påvirkes av ulike organisasjonskontekst og dermed vil forskningsfunn fra denne undersøkelsen komme til nytte i flere deler av vår organisasjon. Vi understreker at dette ikke er en evaluering av ledere, men prosjektet skal beskrive hvordan ledelse skapes mellom leder og følger.

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Intervjuobjektene vil være veiledere på lokalkontor og nærmeste leder, og saksbehandlere i NAV arbeid og ytelser samt nærmeste leder. Utvalget av de aktuelle enhetene må oppfylle visse kriterier som Rønningstad vil redegjøre nærmere for, men det er viktig at det blir god representativitet i valg av enheter. Når det gjelder intervjuobjektene er utvalgskriteriene knyttet til blant annet alder, kjønn, utdanning og arbeidserfaring.

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### KUNNSKAPSAVDELINGEN // ARBEIDS- OG VELFERDS DIREKTORATET

Postadresse: Postboks 5, St. Olavs plass // 0130 OSLO

Besøksadresse: Økernveien 94 // 0579 Oslo  
Tel: 21071000 // Faks:

Vi understreker at vår anbefaling om å legge til rette for dette forskningsarbeidet gjelder alle fylker og NAV Arbeid og ytelser. Rønningstad kan derfor bruke denne anbefalingen overfor fylker og enheter han mener er relevante for studien. Det er viktig for forskningskvaliteten at tilgangen omfatter både observasjons- og intervjudelen. Datainnsamlingen bør gjennomføres så raskt som mulig og senest før sommeren 2017.

Vi legger til grunn at NAV på fylkesnivå og NAV Arbeid og ytelser først må vurdere hvilke enheter som kan være aktuelle til datainnsamling og deretter informere lederne ved disse enhetene. Enhetslederen må i sin tur klarere dette med sine ansatte. Det er av stor betydning for forskningskvaliteten at dette er godt forankret i fylket og enheten. Vi gjør for øvrig oppmerksom på at enheter som ønsker å delta, vil motta et informasjonsbrev fra Rønningstad og få anledning til å diskutere forutsetningene for datainnsamlingen.

Full anonymitet er et krav for denne type datainnsamlinger. Enhet, leder og ansatte blir selvsagt anonymisert i undersøkelsen. Deltakelse i prosjektet får dermed ingen konsekvenser for verken enheten, lederen eller den ansatte.

Vi anbefaler sterkt at fylkesnivået og NAV Arbeid og ytelser oppfordrer flere enheter om å delta i undersøkelsen. Det handler ikke bare om forskningsarbeidets verdi for NAV, men også om at det kan bli krevende å rekruttere nok enheter til studien.

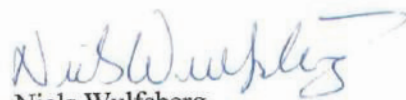
Det vil uansett være hensiktsmessig å gå i dialog med Rønningstad for å undersøke om man kan legge til rette for et samarbeid. Etter vår vurdering kan doktorgradsarbeidet gi svært nyttig kunnskap til utviklingen av NAV både som organisasjon og tjenesteyter.

Doktorgradsstipendiat Chris Rønningstad kan kontaktes på mobil 915 45 756 eller e-post [Chris.Ronningstad@hioa.no](mailto:Chris.Ronningstad@hioa.no). FoU-seksjonen v/ Niels Wulfsberg kan også kontaktes ved eventuelle spørsmål.

Vennlig hilsen  
FoU-seksjonen



Kristel Skorge  
seksjonsleder



Niels Wulfsberg  
seniorrådgiver

Kopi: Chris Rønningstad, Stensgata 35 D, 0358 Oslo

Rønningstad, C. (2018). Leading for better outcomes: Social work as knowledge work. *Nordic Social Work Research*. 8(1): 75–87.

Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2017.1422138>

**[Article not attached due to copyright]**

## Article II

Rønningstad, C. (2018). Us and them – First-line management and change resistance. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*. 8(2): 5–22.  
Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v8i2.106152>  
**[Article not attached due to copyright]**

## Article III

Rønningstad, C. (2019). How unstandardized work tasks create arenas for leadership. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*. 43(2): 1–14.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2019.1610130>

**[Article not attached due to copyright]**

## Article IV

Rønningstad, C. (2019). Knowledge and position: How to manage ambiguous public welfare work. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*. 9(2): 5–24.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v9i2.114798>

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