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CAN HR BE TRUSTED?

A qualitative study about how police officers express trust in HR within the Police Authority of Sweden

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Abstract

A qualitative study has been made within the Police Authority of Sweden with the focus on how police officers express trust in HR. 29 interviews have been held where 20 of them were police officers on different levels in the hierarchy and 9 of them were HR employees. The findings show that the hierarchal position is a factor in the level of trust in HR expressed among the police officers. The hierarchal position has an impact on: The insight in HR, the size of collision between expectations on HR and the mission of HR and also the amount of interaction with HR. Good insight, small collision and continuous interaction are associated with more trust in HR among the police officers. The study provides possible improvements that could be taken in consideration for the organization and the study also furnishes suggestions for what further research opportunities that would be interesting to explore in the field.

Thank you!

I would like to send my kindest regards to all the respondents who have participated in this study. Without you, this study would not have been made. I am so thankful for the time you have spent on answering my questions and how flexible you have been when arranging the meetings with me. All of you have provided me with interesting thoughts and reflections which have given this study so much more than I could have expected. I really hope you enjoy the reading of this research and hopefully it will give you more understanding about your own workplace.

I also want to thank my supervisor Bertil Rolandsson who has given me thorough feedback during the process of this thesis. I value the straight feedback which he has given to me and for that I am very grateful. With his experience of both the academic world and his insight in the study of public organization, he has been able to shed light onto interesting angles and theories to consider to understand the Police Authority better.

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1. Introduction

Human Resources, HR, is a function with a mission to implement policies and practices in line with the organization by handling a broad range of activities such as recruitment, selection, training, updating of skills and development. The function also plays a key role in processes such as information sharing, negotiating and consulting in partnership with line managers, trade unions, governments and other external partners (Kramar & Steane 2012; Boxall & Purcell 2011). HR could be argued to be the function which connects the questions of economy and the personnel, but is also an actor who should work strategically and proactively (Berglund 2002). HR has in many cases transitioned from a basic administrative function towards a more strategic player on decision level (Ferris et al. 2007; Beer 1997). HR must see to what Meisinger (2005) refers to as the most important asset for the organizational growth; the employees. Those organizations who make sure to develop the assets of knowledge and skills will gain success as an attractive employer (Berglund 2002; Meisinger 2005; Ferris et al. 2007). Nevertheless, the very *importance* of HR has gone through a transition where HR actions previously had small consequences in the organizations and they are now viewed as crucial for the organizations' competitiveness which implicates that the influence of HR activities has increased (Ferris et al. 2007). Boglind, Hällsten and Thilander (2013) are describing this HR transformation as a process where shared service-centers were created in order to increase the efficiency. The centralization of functions within public organizations, such as HR, is a strategy when resources are reduced which leads to devolving some of the HR work to line management (Kulik & Perry 2008; Hällsten & Thilander 2013; Whittaker & Marchington 2003).

Looking at a specific HR department, the mission of HR within the Police Authority of Sweden is to elucidate and develop a focused employer policy which supports the short- and long-term goals. The department is providing the strategic support and is also responsible for providing a comprehensive HR-support for the entire organization. The focus is directed towards change and development where the need for change management competence is substantial. Within the HR department at the Police Authority there are 700 employees who work with the traditional HR questions and within education, training and development. The goal is to create a professional working climate, to be available for the entire organization and to make sure that everyone is working through the politics of the authority (Advertisement on Arbetsförmedlingen).

In 2015, a reorganization of the Police Authority was carried out with the watchword of "uniformity" (Björk 2016) where all of the previous 21 authorities in the country became reformed into one single authority (Polissamordningen). The HR-function played a vital role in executing the changes and was responsible for the entire recruitment of new managers that followed. Since there were newly recruited positions, new relationships between the HR employees and the police officers were established. Some of the newly employed managers had never heard of HR before and were now expected to work with the directives of the new authority that was transmitted through HR. The HR within the Police Authority went through a rather extensive reform itself, at the same time as the entire reorganization was executed, which affected their work. Since the HR had a key role in implementing the new structure, the recognition and trust towards their own profession became a complicated matter. In combination with the HR-transformation, as mentioned above, HR got a lot of attention within the Police Authority where many employees expressed confusion and anger towards the management processes, such as the work of HR, in the organization. (Dagens Nyheter 2016). HR is a support function, providing managers with tools, knowledge and suggestions in order to make great decisions for the organizations. Managers must therefore trust the competence of HR and the support that is given, even though there can be suggestions that are not appreciated from the managers' side. It is important for the authority to have an HR function that is trusted to do the best in terms of following the law, regulations and guidelines of the authority. If the function is perceived as an obstacle rather than a support, among managers and employees, it might evocate frustration and misunderstandings which would eventually spread outside the organization in the notions of dissatisfaction about the workplace and hence, the employer branding is at stake. Therefore, it is of interest to study how this trust in HR is expressed among police officers (both managers and employees) and how it could be increased in the authority, especially since the reorganization of the Police Authority shed much light over the HR.

1.1 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the police officers' expressed trust in HR within the Police Authority of Sweden and how this trust in HR can be improved. Police managers on different levels have been interviewed and police employees without vicarious liability have also participated to create a broader picture of the trust within the authority and to see if the hierarchical order has any involvement in the aspect of trust towards HR. In previous research, there is extensive research regarding organizational trust, but there are few studies

made about the trust towards a *specific* function – creating a gap which this research is aimed to fill. Kramer's Bases of Trust (Kramer 1999) and The Integrative model of Organizational Trust (Mayer et al 1995) are used as theories to describe and explain this phenomenon and to provide an understanding of the problem. They are relevant theories due to their simplicity of understanding how and why trust is built and due to their structure of being combined in the analysis. Several studies have been made where the focus is on trust and employees' trust towards the organization and the managerial context and these studies will also provide an understanding of this study's result. The research question is:

How do police officers express trust in HR within the Police Authority of Sweden?

1.2 Disposition

The thesis will start with a background section where a structure of the Police Authority and the HR-department will be provided. The next section will provide the reader with research made about trust and trust within organizations. This is followed by a description of the theories of organizational trust that will be used in the analysis of the empirical findings. The method is the next section where the research design is explained, how the study was made in detail and also a description of its trustworthiness and limitations. The collected data through the described method will be presented as a summary of all the interviews in the empirical findings. Themes and patterns will be pointed out and this is followed up with a section of analysis where previous research and chosen theories are linked with the empirical findings in order to create an understanding of the research question. The thesis will end up with a conclusion and suggestions for further research in the subject.

2. Background

This section will provide a deeper understanding of the structure of Swedish Police Authority and the HR-Department which are divided in two subtitles.

2.1 The Police Authority of Sweden

The Police Authority in Sweden is an organization of 29500 employees (Polisens årsredovisning 2016). The national police commissioner is selected by the Swedish government and is responsible for the entire organization. Crime prevention is an important aspect and the aim for the Swedish Police Authority is to reduce crime and increase public safety (Polisens Faktablad 2017). The Police Authority is divided into seven police regions, 27 police districts and 99 local police district. NOA is the National Operations Department

(Nationella Operativa Avdelningen) which is responsible for resources on national and international level. Five national departments: HR, IT, Economy, Communication and the Legal Department who are responsible for providing expert support for the entire organization. There are also the Office of the National Police Commissioner, the Internal Revision Unit, Special Investigations and the National Forensic Center (Ibid). The reform of the Police Authority, as mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, was executed to create uniformity (Björk 2016). The previously, ambiguous organization with *local* authorities has been criticized (Wennström 2014) and was reformed into one single authority with a more clear structure of management (see figure 1) with distinct directives in how the region must work. This was done through centralization with the focus on devolving managerial responsibilities down through the hierarchy which created more managerial positions, especially "Head of Unit" which is the lowest position on managerial level (Polissamordningen; Björk 2016)

Figure 1: The structure of the police force (Polissamordningen)

2.2 The HR function of the Police Authority in Sweden

In addition to the structure of the police force it is also interesting to look specifically on the HR-Department within the Police Authority to understand how the function is constructed. The HR-Director is at top of the hierarchy and beneath are the HR managers for each of the seven regions. On the same level, there is also HR-Direct, Competence/Education, Management/Empowerment, Employer policies/agreements and work environment (See figure 2). HR-Direct is a broad, professional and available support for all of the managers and

employees and is a service reachable through intranet, phone calls, emails and physical meetings. HR-Direct is the way into the HR department and the idea is that the managers will search for answers at HR-Direct before contacting the local HR-partners. The local HR-partners exist in every region and work close with the managers on indirect level (Head of section) and upwards. Their function is to strengthen the managers' leadership by being a support in recruitment, staffing, rehabilitation, negotiations, salary formation and other qualified aspects. The HR-Department is seeking to analyze the organization from the perspective of managers and employees and to combine that view with the perspective of HR. The transformation into the new authority will take time and HR is aware of that slow progress which means that it is important to set the directives and positions as fast as possible. The HR-Department is working towards the Police Authority's long-term goals to be closer to the citizens by being an attractive employer, providing managers with qualifications to master their role as leaders and to clarify the focus on diversity through the applications for the police education and increase the number of women in leading positions (Intranet Police Authority).
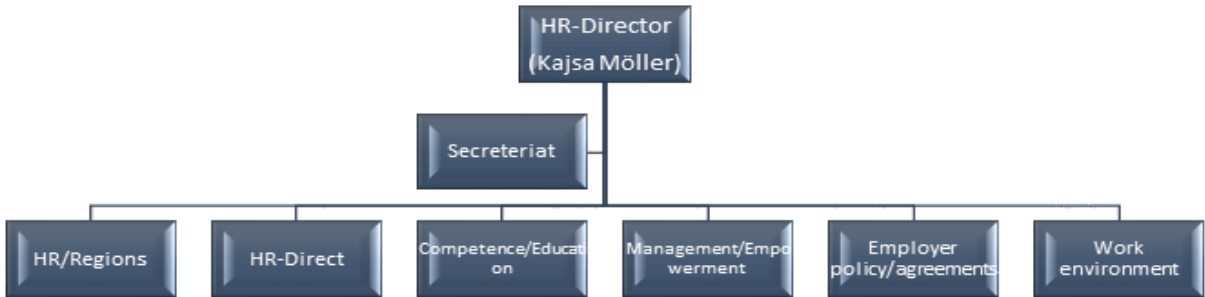
Figure 2: The HR-department (Intranet)

3. Previous research

This section is aiming to provide an understanding a variety of research and how the concept of trust is discussed and argued within that research field. Four themes have been created to divide different angles and to generate a clear structure when using them in the analysis: Benefits of trust in organizations, Initial trust and interaction in organizations, Challenges of trust within organizations and Challenges for HR to be trustworthy within organizations.

3.1 Benefits of trust in organizations

A broad range of studies indicate the benefits of trust within organizations such as cooperative behavior (Zalabak et al 2000), organizational citizenship behavior (Van et al 2000), employee loyalty (Costigan et al 1998) and organizational commitment (Aryee et al 2002). Leaders in organizations express the importance of relationships and what impact culture, history and change could have when building trust. The more trust for an organization, the more effective the organization is perceived and the employees feel more satisfied with their job. Trust levels towards the organization will differ depending on how the employees perceive the organization's ability to uphold the psychological contract; the organization's ability to make sure the employees stay satisfied (Braun 1997; Morreale & Shockley-Zalabak 2014). Interpersonal trust stands as the foundation for facilitating effective coordinated actions in organizations (McAllister 1995). When executing a reorganization, it is particular important that there is a trust in the management and studies have shown that those who are benefited from the change programs and perceive the management as trustworthy, are more attached to the organization than those who received a degradation due to the change (Nikandrou et al 2000; Spreitzer & Mishra 2002). Kramer and Lewicki (2009) examined the deficits of trust within organizations, how to repair the trust after internal or external events that have caused a low trust level or damaged it totally and also the most common ways trust is broken. It is important to make trust sustainable and secure which means that it is not enough with a quick fix without any planning on how to make the repaired trust stable. Kramer and Lewicki (2009) refers to a study from "Center for Public Leadership" from 2009 where many organizations struggle with damaged trust and how to regain it after massive financial scandals and questionable decision making was brought to daylight.

3.2 Initial trust and interaction in organizations

Organizational trust is assumed as a result of interactions and interrelations among employees in an organization or members of a given society or profession (Pucetaite & Lamsa 2008). In previous research it is explained that in today's working life, it is normal to meet new colleges or managers and such interaction leads to initial trust since both parties have no experienced history of each other (McKnight et al 1998). New interaction today could also be due to reorganization where new teams are built up, consultants enter and new functions become established. The constantly new formations of collaborations add a large focus on the initial trust between parties and this becomes fragile when there is an elevated level of perceived risk (Ibid). People will interpret suggestive or uncertain information in line with their already existing beliefs (Kahneman & Tversky 1973) and if anything lands outside the trusting

behavior it could be rejected as a mistake or a one-time violation of the trust and should not have an impact on the trust level. Physical interaction will increase the positive beliefs about the other person (Good 1988) and hence the level of trust. Mutual understanding is easier when face-to-face conversations decrease the chances of misunderstandings and it also creates a willingness for deeper understanding of the other person. A person's or a group's reputation spreads gradually through social interaction and it is shown that people like to confirm their own beliefs and by that, communicate those beliefs to others. Despite technological capabilities for reaching out to collaboration teams or other departments, employees have expressed the need for face-to-face interaction due to the desire of emotional connection and immediacy (Holton 2001; Good 1988).

3.3 Challenges of trust within organizations

Trust has been shown in previous research to be important for organizations (Zalabak et al 2000; Van et al 2000; Costigan et al 1998; Aryee et al 2002). However, in organizations it is not something that can be taken for granted. It needs to be developed and nurtured which means that trust is a constant process because it can increase or decrease depending on how actors behave towards each other or due to other circumstances in the organization (Kramer 2009). In order to ensure that trust is built up from the start to a deeper commitment between different actors, groups or units, it is essential to send out a clear and consistent information of everyone. Research has shown that both managers and subordinates overestimate how much people from other units trust them. The perception of being clear and informative creates a discrepancy to reality because of a large amount of people underinvests in communicating their trustworthiness and take for granted that other people will understand the qualities of the actions made (Kramer 2009). Interdepartmental collaboration has shown in previous research to have an impact on the productivity because organizational results improve and the employees felt more confident and competent (Tjosvold 1988). Companies must make sure to maintain good collaboration between different units in order to stay efficient in their business (Ibid). The ability to work collaboratively is viewed as the core competency of a learning organization (Holton 2001) where trust is the main factor for the collaborative dynamic. As mentioned before, trust develops through interaction which is frequent and meaningful where the members can feel relaxed and comfortable enough to share insights, opinions and concerns. This will create an understanding of others, hence, trust other departments or units. Collaboration is the basis for effective organizations and requires familiarity, structure and trust to create respect and understanding (Holton 2001; Comstock & Fox 1995). Interaction face-to-face is not always possible, especially in large organizations where departments or

units might be located in different addresses, the importance of building trust is then fundamental (Handy 1995a; Handy 1995b). How to manage trust building in such cases is a challenge that an increasing number of organizational leaders will face. Dialogue and communication which are essential components when building trust, must be seen as a process rather than a one-time solution, it will thus require everyone to adapt to the new situation and structure (Holton 2001).

3.4 Challenges for HR to be trustworthy within organizations

Trust between employees and management has been shown to be of great importance for organizations' productivity and a factor which is hard for competitors to imitate (Mishra & Mishra 1994). Since HR is the function which operates among the employees within the organization, they must embrace a high level of trust due to their position in management. They must make sure to keep employees satisfied, challenged and developed in order to not lose them to competitors on the labour market (Barney & Wright 1997). Challenges for HR employees today are to be *competent, curious, courageous and caring* about people (Meisinger 2005). *Competent*, not only in their own field but also in the business on a strategic level which means that for them to have a seat at the decision table, which seat needs to be earned. To earn that seat as competent, HR employees need to make strategic contributions where they identify problems and implement changes and systems of resolving those. They must possess business knowledge to show their understanding of the organization and what actions need to be done (Meisinger 2005; Ferris et al. 2007). *Curiosity* is essential among the professionals to gain further knowledge of the organization and the market they work in. The curiosity makes the drive after knowledge more intense and provides them with fruitful insight of attitudes, understandings and perceptions from other departments and units within the same organization but also trends and directions in the world. HR need to hold the ability of being *Courageous* (Meisinger 2005) due to a vast pressure from employees and the organization which might lead to situations where HR must oppose themselves if policies or strategies are being ignored. To possess courage, it might be of importance to be certain of what role HR has and what is expected of it from the organization. Thus, the employees of HR need to be well integrated in their role within the organization and the design and the performance of that certain role becomes the integral components of the *role efficacy* (Priyadarshini 2009). *Caring* about people is the ability of combining the effect decisions have on the employees with the best practice for the organization. The employees are an essential asset and are therefore important to take good care of in order not to lose them to another employer. The aim for many companies and organizations is to increase the retention

of employees which adds pressure on the HR department's ability to care about them by building a culture where the employees feel satisfied. The function is currently expected to fulfill various needs and demands from stakeholders and the objective is to primarily build the competence of the organization through the competences of the individuals (Priyadarshini 2009; Gould-Williams 2003; Meisinger 2005). HR and line-managers are in many aspects collaborative within an organization where the line-managers need HR for support and HR need the appreciation from line-managers in order to gain any kind of influence over decision making. The centralization of HR's shared service-center and the decentralization of administrative work to line-managers can be interpreted as effective on paper (Kulik & Perry 2008) but there is no significant difference compared to prior to the HR transformation. Line-managers feel more comfortable in contacting the HR employees in the way they are used to and still desire support of the form filling (Hällsten & Thilander 2013; Beer 1997).

4. Theory

Trust is of relevance for this study because of its significant impact on the human behavior and it is an important aspect of the social context within a workplace. The work of HR is inherent with the collaboration with other actors in the organization and trust is therefore a crucial element for creating a good teamwork (Gould-William 2003; Mayer et.al. 1995). The ability to trust or not, starts with the socialization in childhood and continues throughout the entire life as a process of creating defined expectations of different roles that persons are given due to their social position or profession (Pucetaite & Lamsa, 2008). It is in our nature to trust, an instinct of survival. Roderick M. Kramer (2009) explains how humans are taught to trust in our childhood. Humans are programmed to create social contact with others. We are more likely to trust people who are similar to us in certain aspects and we are more inclined to trust others who are members of the same social group as us than those who are strangers or outsiders. We see what we want to see and psychologists call this *"confirmation bias"*, we pay more attention to things that supports our hypothesis and we ignore those parts which show evidence of another view (Nickerson 1998; Kramer 2009). We are influenced by the *social stereotypes* which might reflect false beliefs of how certain people will act or think and in a combination with that individuals tend to think that their own judgement is better than average, it could lead to a complete distortion of reality (Ibid).

However, trust in organizations is described as the mechanism of the interaction between organizational actors that creates effectiveness, job satisfaction, commitment and strengthen

the psychological contract towards the organization. Mistrust might lead to decreased motivation and engagement which is something that will affect the organizational performance (Mayer et.al. 1995; Gould-Williams 2003; Kramer 1999). To provide the analysis of the empirical findings of this thesis with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, two theories that are focusing on trust within *organizations* will be presented: *The theory of organizational trust* (Kramer 1999) and *The integrative model of organizational trust* (Mayer et al 1995).

4.1 Kramer's Bases of trust

Trust is a state where the trustor entails a perception of vulnerability and risk towards the trustee's motives and intentions (Kramer 1999). There is no state of trust if there is no uncertainty of what will transpire out of a course of action. Kramer (1999) presents researchers' different definitions of trust where it could be seen as an expectation of others to behave dutifully and competently, beliefs of the likelihood that another's actions will be beneficial for the own sake, or trust as a socially learned expectation of that people within the same contexts will follow a certain social and moral order (Ibid). Kramer (1999) describes how different researchers are understanding trust in the aspects of the psychological state, the social state and the organizational state and how these factors influence the individuals' trustworthiness in interaction with others.

Dispositional Trust is a way for individuals to generalize from their previous experiences when trusting others. The expectations of others to be trustworthy or not are becoming extrapolated due to preceding outcomes which means that it is hard for the individual to change those expectations. *History-Based trust*, could by the title be understood as the same thing as dispositional trust. However, the history-based trust is between two or more interdependent actors where the trust thickens or thins as their interaction is proceeding. Decision makers will be provided with information of how to behave or handle different tasks due to the growing knowledge about the others and therefore create a base for the trustworthiness of this interaction. *Third Parties as Conduits of Trust* is understood as a way for trustworthiness, towards an actor, a group, department or an organization, to be spread out via gossip. Through the source of second-hand knowledge being broadcasted, it creates an opportunity of gather information or create desired behavior. However, it could also mean that the trustworthiness towards a certain aspect could be detached with negativity which would cause less trust than necessary. The third party might also make a partial disclosure about the others and communicate what they think the receiver might want to hear. *Category-*

Based Trust refers to trust regarding a trustee's membership in a social or organizational category. The information of knowing what kind of category a person belongs to, influences the judgement about that person's trustworthiness. This leads to a depersonalized trust towards a person due to the shared category membership. *Role-Based Trust* could be understood in the same way as category-based trust with the difference that the trust is predicated on the knowledge that a person occupies a specific role within the organization. Therefore the trust is not built upon the person's knowledge, intentions, motives or capabilities, it is inherent with the role. *Rule-Based Trust* is a shared understandings that people within the same organization will act similar regarding the system of rules and appropriate behavior. Rules could be seen as norms, interactional routines and practices which creates an important foundation for everyone to behave in a trustworthy fashion even if they are not familiar with each other (Kramer 1999).

4.2 The integrative model of organizational trust

To accomplish organizational goals, people from different units must learn to trust each other in various ways. Interdependence is the outcome of working together and the theory of organizational trust (Mayer et al 1995) is built upon a model that focus on two actors: a trusting party (trustor) and a party to be trusted (trustee). The authors of this theory describe trust as "*The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other actor will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party*" (Mayer et al 1995:712). If there is no risk for the trustor in the actions of the trustee, no trust can be existing due to the very reason for trusting someone is that the outcome might lead to something not desirable, it is a *willingness* to take a risk.

Some people are more likely to trust than others. *Propensity to trust* has the influence over how much trust one party might have for another and experiences, culture and background can shape that propensity. If a person, group, function, company or organization should be trusted or not depends on the characteristics and actions of that party and the theory of organizational trust distinguish three different variables that help build the foundation for the development of trust (Meyer et al 1995): *Ability* shows that trust is domain specific, meaning that a person might have the ability to perform a task in a certain area but not in another. The trust is then based on the execution of tasks within the area of where the ability can create superior performance. *Benevolence* is the factor of to which extent the trustee is thought of as

beneficial for the trustor, it answers for how the trustee acts upon the interest of the trustor aside from its own interests. *Integrity* is the third variable to trust and provides an understanding of the trustors acceptance towards the principles of the trustee. If the set of principles of the trustee is not appreciated, the trustor cannot consider the trustee to have the integrity needed for the purpose. Also, a party's actions that are inconsistent with earlier decisions may cause a different perception regarding the level of integrity.

What is interesting with these three variables is that they are separable but still affect each other. A person with high *integrity* who inhabits a great thinking and has earlier shown to follow his or her principles might have an elevated level of trustworthiness. But that is not enough if the *ability* to handle a specific task is lacking and even if the ability to manage the action in a correct manner is obvious, the trustworthiness of that person can still be low if he or she is less *benevolent* to the trustor. It could easily be understood as trustworthiness of a person will be total if all three of these variables are perceived as high, but even so, trust might not occur. If a manager shows high integrity, high ability and high benevolence towards one employee but not towards the others, the manager will not completely be trusted by others. This is when the *propensity of trust* of the employee becomes a factor in whether the manager should be trusted. This model explains trust before a physical interaction between two parties has happened due to possible data collection through third-party sources and observation. Benevolence can be hard to obtain from these kinds of sources and that is why the authors describe integrity as important to the formation of trust early in the relationship but when a relationship starts to grow, the trustee's benevolence will eventually have an impact on that relationship. The model in this theory is considering the characteristics of both the trustee and the trustor, but also the context of which the trustworthiness takes place. The context can steer the trustworthiness towards a higher or lower level. A strong organizational control system could depress the level of trust if the trustee's actions might be rendered as organizational power instead of trustworthiness (Mayer et al 1995).

5. Methodology

This section will describe the method used to fulfill the study. It will commence by examine what kind of research design that was applied, the empirical data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and lastly limitations of the study.

5.1 Research design

The purpose of this thesis is to study how police officers express trust in HR in the Swedish Police Authority. To answer this research question, a qualitative and interpretative approach was taken where semi structured interviews were conducted which provides an understanding and an interpretation of the phenomenon in its social reality (Bryman 2011). The focus has been directed towards the individuals' perceptions, views, feelings, interpretations, attitudes and beliefs. It is a way of understanding the context of the individuals' answers and to form an analysis through the thoughts and feelings that are expressed (Hakim 2000; Bryman 2011). The interview guide was structured to enable the employees to steer the conversation but still provided the researcher with the opportunity to guide and follow the selected topic (Bryman 2011). The great aspect of qualitative research is its validity; the interview session face-to-face creates small room for misunderstandings of questions when they can be rephrased or explained if necessary. Some of the interviews were held through phone calls which still provided the possibility to ask follow-up questions even though it was not a face-to-face conversation. Since the research partly was conducted through documents from the Police Authority's intranet, which could be seen as secondary data, the study could be named as a *case study* (Hakim 2000). Case studies based on two or more methods for the data collection are flexible and is a suitable research design when it comes to studying communities, social groups, organizations, events, life histories, families, work teams, roles or relationships. It is a powerful research design in terms of its ability to provide more rounded and complete accounts of social processes and issues (Hakim 2000; Yin 2003).

5.2 Empirical data collection

The data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (see appendix) (Bryman 2011) with employees from HR and the police force during the spring of 2017. The guide for interviewing them was slightly different depending on what occupation that was targeted but the main themes were: Background, personal view of HR, general view of HR and common opinions. 29 interviews were held among both police managers, police employees and HR employees within the Police Authority of Sweden. When possible, interviews face-to-face were prioritized but since the respondents are positioned in different regions of Sweden, eight interviews were held over phone. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Five of the interviews made through phone calls could not be recorded due to the phone numbers registration under the authority and were thus blocked from recording in terms of confidentiality. In those cases, the interviews have been transcribed directly and there was also an understanding from the respondents' side to decrease their speed in the talk.

The start off point for gaining access to the HR-Department was executed through a gatekeeper who could provide a phone number to a HR-manager, which lead to a collection of respondents through the snowball effect (Bryman 2011) where more number and email addresses were contacted. In the case of gaining access among the managers within the police force, the same gatekeeper sent out an invitation by email, explaining the purpose of the study and where to sign up if interested in participating. The same invitation was also posted in the police force community on the internet where there are 10'000 members. This collecting of interested respondents provided the possibility of reaching out to police officers in the different regions of Sweden, which gives the study the broad picture of the Police Authority. It could be argued that only police officers who really had something to say about HR would respond to the request of an interview which would become a concern for the thesis. However, the responses among the police officers varied in knowledge and attitudes towards HR and did not only come from respondents who had something negative to say.

5.3 Respondents

It was of interest to gain access to HR and police officers to understand the relationship between them and to see how they experience and understand each other's work. 29 interviews were conducted where 9 of them were held with employees within the HR-Department such as HR-partners, HR-consultants and HR-managers. 20 of the interviews were conducted with police officers where 10 of them were police managers on division, section and unit level and the other 10 were held with police employees with positions like police assistants, commanding officers and investigators. The focus has been directed towards police officers, both managers and employees, to understand how they express their trust in HR, which is why they are a majority among the respondents. The purpose for interviewing HR employees is to create an understanding of their work and how they look upon the police officers' perception of HR and the relationship between them. Due to the fact that the Police Authority in Sweden have 43 % women among the employees in total (Polisens årsredovisning 2016) it could be expected to be mirrored within the gender distribution of the police respondents in the interviews, but since the focus has also been on the managerial level within the police force, where men are a clear majority, such number was not reached in this research. Among the respondents within HR, women and men are almost equal in the distribution of gender with one more woman than the number of men. Among the police officers, most of them have been employed within the Police Authority for more than 10 years and have thus experienced the changes within the organization. Below, a table is shown to

display a picture of the respondents that participated. They are not mentioned by region or position to eliminate the risk of revealing who they are but they are from six regions of the total of seven regions in Sweden.

Police officers	Gender	Age	Tenure	Manager
1	M	55	34	No
2	M	47	27	Yes
3	F	52	25	Yes
4	F	33	12	No
5	M	45	7	No
6	M	53	25	Yes
7	F	61	38	Yes
8	M	44	17	Yes
9	M	55	35	Yes
10	M	56	35	Yes
11	M	27	2	No
12	M	60	35	Yes
13	M	52	28	Yes
14	F	47	27	No
15	M	26	1	No
16	M	35	8	No
17	M	35	10	No
18	M	44	14	No
19	M	57	36	No
20	M	36	10	Yes
HR employees	**Gender**	**Age**	**Tenure**	**Manager**
21	M	32	2	No
22	F	34	9	No
23	M	38	9	No
24	F	33	5	No
25	F	36	4	No
26	M	53	8	Yes
27	F	41	4	Yes

| 28 | M | 47 | 4 | No |
| 29 | F | 50 | 2 | Yes |

5.4 Data analysis

The learning about the understanding and the ability to explain human behavior is the concept of *hermeneutic* (Allwood & Eriksson 1999). The aim of the study is to focus on the subjective thoughts and opinions of the respondents, but since they are subjective experiences there are no definitive truth to analyze. Instead, the answers will create a foundation for a broader analysis of the subject to increase the understanding and perhaps apply to the same context in another organization. Through a qualitative method with semi structured interviews, the opportunity of collecting and creating new information and insight about their opinions, thoughts and attitudes become possible (Allwood & Eriksson 1999).

The duration of the interviews was 45 minutes on average and they were all recorded and later on transcribed in order to analyze the responses, so called *coding*. The reason for coding is to find patterns between different interviews through reducing substantial amounts of transcribed data into themes, keywords, topics, ideas etc. The coding makes it easier to define happenings and understandings in the collected material (Charmaz 2006). The patterns consist of similar words or opinions that have been expressed among the respondents. The codes and patterns are categorized and made into themes and are analyzed by chosen theories and previous research.

5.5 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is in some cases, argued as a method which cannot reach complete trustworthiness. However, there are aspects for the researcher to fulfill in order to stay trustworthy in the aspect of the data analysis (Shenton 2004). In a qualitative approach, such as this one, it is important as a researcher to ask open questions when interviewing to avoid leading the respondents into a desired direction (Bryman 2011; Hakim 2000) and to state the *credibility*, that the findings reflect the reality (Shenton 2004). It is necessary to steer the conversation to not completely lose essentiality and open questions develop a broader thinking for the respondents which will lead to more honesty in the answers (Ibid). When performing qualitative interviews, the researcher also has the opportunity to put in additional questions if the need for clarification is desired which decreases the possibility for misunderstandings. What could be of relevance to discuss in terms of trustworthiness is the

presence of the researcher during the interview. Since it was clear to all the respondents that the study was performed by an HR-student, it could be argued to have an impact on the answers when questions about personal attitude towards HR were asked. However, the study was presented in a way to improve HR's role within the Police Authority which makes it clear that even the police managers have something to gain by speaking the truth. If they can improve HR work, it will be easier for themselves to perform better. If an additional study was made in the same kind of context and presented the same results, *dependability* of this study could be shown. It is argued that an exact copy of a study made somewhere else is not possible in qualitative research since the context studied is static and frozen (Shenton 2004). However, it is still important for the researcher to provide the reader with details of how the study was done for the possibility of recreating it.

5.6 Ethical considerations

All the respondents were promised anonymity which is the reason to not further explain the difference between them and where they are positioned to avoid the risk of describing too much. Everyone have participated on voluntarily grounds which could be shown when sending out the invitation for the interviews and those who found the research interesting wrote back to sign themselves up. To keep the anonymity to an even larger extent it could be argued that there is no need to mention which authority in Sweden the study is about. On the other hand, this organization is well spoken of in society which contributes enormously to the interest when reading the thesis and that the reorganization was recently made, gives the subject of this research an up-to-date status, especially within the HR-field. In addition to these two arguments for mentioning the Police Authority as the research area, is the fact that the police force could be argued for belonging to a completely different craft in comparison with the HR employees, which makes the necessary collaboration between police officers and HR much more intriguing to understand. The reputation of the authority cannot be harmed of this study since it only focuses to explore how trust in HR is expressed among the police officers. It could rather benefit the organization by becoming aware of how the police officers talk about HR and what kind suggestions of improvements they could implement (Vetenskapsrådet 2002)

5.7 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of a qualitative study could be argued to be the objectiveness. Since previous understandings and attitudes towards different aspects can be hard to erase completely, those will affect the way the study is analyzed. What becomes relevant and

significant for a study, is established through the interest of the researcher which is why it is of importance to not put anything else than raw data in the empirical findings. However, the patterns and the codes which are in the empirical findings are, to some extent, based upon the researcher's subjectivism. It does not mean that this research is of less importance, it is a study which, with support from previous research and theories, shows a way of understanding the phenomenon. Another limitation for the study could be that some of the interviews were held face-to-face and some of them were held over the phone. It could be argued that a phone call would create room for more misunderstandings when the possibility of seeing each other is not there. However, those interviews that had to be held over phone were scheduled in the end of all interviews to make it easier to clarify typical questions that have been shown in previous interviews to be hard to understand.

The interviews were held in Swedish which made the respondents comfortable in how to express themselves. But since the study is in English, answers, codes, themes and quotations had to be translated which could argued as another limitation of the study. Expressions in one language could be hard to formulate when translating it into another language and therefore the focus on correct formulations of the quotations has been major.

6. Empirical findings

This section will present the data collected from interviews with police officers and HR employees. The empirical findings have been divided into themes from the coded interviews and will thus be presented one by one to make a clear structure of the different angles of the research question. After the presentation of the different themes within the empirical findings, the discussion will provide the study with a deeper understanding with chosen theories and previous research. The study makes difference between the police officers by mentioning the "managers" which is meant by all levels of managers with a vicarious liability and the "employees" which are those police officers without that responsibility.

6.1 The varying insight in HR depending on hierarchical position

Most employees among the police officers do not know exactly what HR's mission within the Police Authority is. Most of those respondents have replied "recruitment" when asked what HR is doing and some of them are not even sure what the letters H and R stand for. There is a pattern of more insight in HR the higher up in the hierarchy of positions the question is asked, but even at levels of high positions among the police managers, there are varying opinions about and attitudes towards HR's work.

6.1.1 The idea of HR as a decision maker

There are different insights in HR within the hierarchy of positions among the police officers. HR themselves are not surprised over this fact. The higher up in the hierarchy a police officer is positioned, the more use of HR he or she has which leads to more insight in HR. However, since the police force of the entire Police Authority consists of a majority of employees with no vicarious liability which thus, do not have the same direct collaboration with HR as the managers have, the *general* insight in HR among the police officers is low which also has an impact of how they understand HR.

"On my level, as new, the general picture of HR is bad. Managers are more positive since HR is helping them, but we never see them (HR)." Police employee

"Since I became 'Head of Unit' (first level of managers) I have changed my opinion about HR. I have realized that they are of significant importance and support. But that is how it is, the higher you climb in position the more need for HR there is and then you realize what you can expect of them. Maybe it supposed to be like this, that HR does not have to explain themselves and their mission for the employees as long as the managers are aware of it." Police manager

The police officers' picture of HR as a decision maker or not, are well known among HR employees and is something that HR tries to eliminate since that is an incorrect fact. HR desires the understanding of that they do not make the decisions in the final stage, they are only providing the managers with material that will support the right kind of decision, in line with the organization's directives. However, many of the police respondents still view this supporting function as a power function even though HR respondents deny it. In the interview guide, there was a question: "Do you see HR as a decision maker in this organization" and there was a large part of the police officers who said yes. But there was also a pattern of hierarchy in the answers; the higher up in the pyramid of positions the question was asked, the more respondents answered no. In some cases, on managerial level, the answer was both yes and no because managers find themselves bound or forced to decide in a certain direction due to the suggestions and material that HR put on the table.

"Technically, they do not make any decision, but practically, they do. When HR have the position they have in this organization and move between areas like recruitment, salaries, transfers and much more, they have more power than they say they have. Sure, they bring out the material for us managers to base our decisions on, but it is almost the same thing as telling us what to do." Police manager

The idea of HR is to educate the managers into being the best managers they can be, but they must make sure to follow the directives and rules of the organization. This has led to a shifting picture of HR among the police managers since some of them think that HR is telling

them what to do and some of them see HR as a tool for making the most correct decisions as a manager. The picture of HR as a deciding function is larger in the bottom of the pyramid which could be connected to the varying insight, since there are few employees in that section who have met or collaborated with HR. In the bottom section, HR is looked upon as something negative for the organization, a unit that has too much influence due to their non-existing ability to understand the daily work for the policemen and the tools HR is using in recruitment processes are ridiculous. HR has even been called out as "*Human Rats"* since they are making bad decisions and treat the employees as bricks instead of human beings when taking decisions over salaries, recruitment and transfers of employees. When asked how the general picture of HR looks like, a policeman with more than 10 years of employment within the Police Authority answered:

"CATASTROPHE, I mean, for real! There are few down here who speaks well of HR. They are a brake block who know little about the organization and they have too much power." Police employee

6.1.2   The Scapegoat

In a large organization, it is a challenge to understand everything about it and it is normal to not have the answer to everything but it is also normal to speculate and point out reasons, persons or functions for why certain things are handled in a specific way. The police employees were explaining different examples in the history that was the fault of HR and how things should have been handled differently. Many of them said they share their opinion with their manager who has expressed his or her opinion about HR. The rumor of HR as a deciding function is wide spread and the police officers' frustration leads to the blaming of HR for every dreadful thing that happens in the organization. HR is aware of mistakes that have been made but they are also aware of that they, as a function, is an easy target to blame for several mistakes that they did not have anything to do with. All the HR respondents are describing how they are the "scapegoat", "the one to blame when something goes wrong" but they are explaining this by the lack of insight in HR among the police officers. HR respondents are explaining that police managers have a significant role to play in terms improve the attitude towards HR within the police force.

"There are many managers who say that it is HR's fault, it is interesting to found out now that they are not a deciding function. My picture of HR's is strengthened when the managers, all managers, are saying that HR is in charge. They should feel that HR is working with them but that is not how it sounds." Police employee

Many of the respondents, both HR employees and police officers, describe that the accusations towards HR could many times be wrong but when there is no one who explains

the correct situation, the blame on HR as the scapegoat continues. HR are very much aware of it and one HR partner says:

"It is easier for a manager to blame HR for decisions made and also very tactic because no one else but them meet HR which means that no one can call the bluff." HR-partner

This shows the challenge in creating an improved picture of HR when managers use them as the scapegoat due to vagueness in who's responsibility there is over decisions made.

6.2 Collision between expectations of HR and mission of HR

The varying insight of HR has been shown in the previous theme which to vary depending on hierarchical position among the police officers. The level of insight in HR could be seen as the foundation of what kind of expectations that exist towards HR among the police officers. Their expectations of HR could also depend upon what kind of experience they have of HR in previous employments. HR are explaining their strategic role of supporting the managers in taking correct decisions. However, many of the managers also wants the administrative support and HR employees admit that they perform those tasks even though it is not their responsibility. This makes it into a paradox when HR is trying to delete the picture of HR as an administrative support but still perform administrative tasks to please the managers.

6.2.1   HR as administrative or strategic support

As described shortly in the introduction part, HR has gone through a transformation, from an administrative function to a strategic partner within the Police Authority. Many of the police officers have explained how HR is now much more on the radar and most of the employees have heard of the HR-Department even though they do not know much about it. The respondents describe how HR was not even spoken of before the reorganization and now HR is in constant spotlight.

"10-15 years ago there was no one who spoke about HR, HR were those who worked with personnel, but now the concept of HR gets larger and larger and I do not think that all of us have been alert to that shift." Police manager

The desire for HR is that the managers see HR as a sounding board where things to be handled can be discussed and the best solutions can be understood and executed. But HR employees describe how they often meet managers who see them as the administrative support who will help them in filling out forms and printing copies of protocols. An HR-partner says:

"There are managers who still see HR as administration support and that is very provocative. They belong to the old school where HR is the personnel department but I think that the view of HR starts to change and when fresh blood of police officers enters the organization, they will learn what HR is today and not what it used to be." HR-partner

The difference between the police officers' expectations on HR and the very mission of HR consists of the thought of HR as an administrative partner and not the strategic partner. The police officers are expecting HR to fill out forms and handle the assortment early in the recruitment process, but instead, they discover a much more offensive HR function which has influence in decision making and of resources, HR employees attend to board meetings and have a strong encouragement over processes and decisions in many aspects within the organization. This cause a collision between expectations on HR and the mission of HR which might lead to frustration and confusion. However, it is shown from the interviews that the higher up in the hierarchy of police officers, the smaller collision between the expectations and the mission of HR. It could be understood as the result of a broader insight of the HR function when being employed in a managerial position. The more insight in HR and what they can contribute with to the organization, the smaller collision between expectation and mission of HR. This could answer for why managers do not talk as vicious about HR as the employees do in the bottom of the pyramid because the managers do not experience the same size of collision as the employees.

6.2.2 To please or not to please the managers

The police officers' expectation of HR to handle administrative work is not a surprise for HR employees. They are fully aware of that most of the managers who turn to HR for support, are also expecting to get help with additional tasks that concern personnel. HR's desire to erase the view of HR as an administrative support and the desire to be helpful and service minded in order to create a good relationship become a paradox. At the same time as HR wants to get rid of the "supporting secretary" status, they want to show the managers the importance of HR for the organization by providing the managers with services that are not really their responsibility. One HR-consultant and one HR-partner explain:

"When HR has low status, we want to meet the desires as much as possible in order to increase that status. You do not want to be a pain in the ass and tell them do thing themselves, but on the other hand will this lead to the continuous rumor of HR as an administrative support." HR-consultant

"You do administrative tasks to help the managers and because you feel responsibility for the organization, you want things to be right. Many employees within HR are ambitious and work hard for everything to run smoothly, even though that means that you are doing things that you should not do." HR-partner

Employees of HR explain how they see a challenge of refusing the managers with administrative support when they ask for it. They want to be of service at the same time as they do not want to have the rumor of themselves as an administrative function. HR-Direct, which is the centralized service point for employees and managers to call or email, is supposed to be the first step of action when there is a need for help within the HR area and the idea with HR-Direct is to lead all the administrative questions there. But most of the managers have contact with their local HR-partners from before, regarding strategic plans, decisions etc., which makes it very comfortable and easy to put all the HR questions on the local HR-partner. At the same time as the managers turn to their local HR-partners with tasks they know should be directed to HR-Direct, they express disappointment in the slow HR processes. One HR-partner expresses the challenge of meeting the desires of the managers when the work-load gets too big:

"They do not want to hear that they should turn somewhere else for help. I usually help them even though it is not on my table, but those kinds of small tasks make me not being able to work with what I really should be working with." HR-partner

HR employees are aware of that they need to be firmer and improve their ability to say no when managers ask them to perform non-relevant working tasks. They express heavy work-load and the administrative tasks are hindering them to work with what they are set out to do. In order for HR to increase their status within the organization, they need to step up and be more determined and stop being the supporting secretary. They are explaining how they must justify their coaching role when they notice that the managers want to put additional tasks on the table for the HR-partners to handle. At the same time, they do not want the managers to look upon HR as an obstacle.

6.3 Being able to relate to HR

Low insight in HR's work leads to the individuals' or the group's understanding of what HR is. These understandings lead to expectations of how HR should work which might collide with the real mission of HR. In both previous themes, the hierarchical order has shown an impact on the correct picture of HR. Managers do not see HR as a deciding function to the same extent that the employees do and managers do not explain negative aspects in the organization as the fault of HR. Managers have smaller collision between expectations of HR and the mission of HR and this third theme will provide an understanding of why the hierarchical order has an impact on the police officers' ability to relate to HR.

6.3.1 Different relations: A matter of being close or far away

A large number of the respondents among the police officers did not know exactly what they could gain from HR and what more than recruitment, salaries and resources the function contributes with. The employees explained how they do not even know where HR is located and were surprised to know that the HR manager of that region was actually sitting on the floor above their heads. They seldom have contact with HR and they do not know who works with HR in their own region. However, the interviews have shown that the higher position, the more interaction between manager and HR there is, which could answer for why managers in higher positions have more insight in HR. The managers on "Head of section" level and the levels above them, explain they have some kind of interaction with HR 2-3 times a week. Some of them even have their offices very close to the local HR-partners and thus interact with them over lunch and coffee breaks.

"The local HR-partner are so close which makes it easy to meet them and talk with them. We can chat over a cup of coffee and it is because of that relationship I can trust them because then I get to learn who they are"
Police manager

This manager is not the only one who mentions trust towards the local HR-partner and also not the only manager who explains that it is easier to trust a person when interacting face-to-face than trusting someone on intranet or over the phone. There is a clear pattern of "trusting the local HR-partners but not the HR function". Managers explain they are aware of HR-Direct but since they trust their local HR-partner more than some "HR employee over the phone who they never have met", it feels more comfortable to contact the local HR-partner. HR respondents often hear that they are trusted as a local HR-partner but that the HR function is not to be trusted. Managers explain that the local HR-partners have more knowledge about the local area and will therefore be trusted to handle the matter much better than HR-Direct and the managers have a stronger relationship towards the local HR-partners due to previous collaborations and interactions.

"You cannot trust someone who is far away. The more connection to the organization the more we know that they are good people. That is extremely important." Police manager

Even though it is shown that managers on diverse levels, tend to interact more often with HR and in general have more insight in HR than the employees, there are managers who desire more interaction with HR. Suggestions of meetings or visits from HR would create more opportunities for interaction and thus lead to more knowledge about what HR can do for the organization and why they are important. Even the police employees desire that kind of

interaction with HR. They explain that thoughts and attitudes towards HR would change if they could meet HR employees and be given the possibility of asking questions.

"HR need to be better in marketing themselves, why they exist and what they contribute with. They need to explain this so that everyone understand that their purpose is not to make it worse for us, but to ease the job for many of us. The rumors in the corridors are about that HR has too much power and that they do not know what they are doing. If we saw them more often, if they were more visible I think it will be easier to accept them." Police manager

"They should join us in the meetings before we start the shift, to show themselves and explain a little bit and to get insight of how we work. They could do this during one week and they would have covered most of us. They cannot send information over email or the intranet, it does not work that way, no one reads about stuff that you are not interested in." Police employee

There is a clear desire for more visibility of HR among the police officers, both from the mangers' and the employees' side. Many of the newly recruited managers since the reorganization express a desire to meet HR because they are starting to understand the need for the function.

6.3.2   Precision about what HR is all about

Many of the respondents have made it clear that HR is hard to understand, it is a challenge to recognize what they do for the organization. A majority of the respondents describe they wish for more clarity and precision about HR and express that it is hard to access a clear picture about HR from the intranet. Even HR respondents acknowledge this as problematic and some of the them express confusion for their own responsibilities. They describe that they understand that the police officers find it challenging to get a grip of HR when HR employees themselves sometimes feel the vagueness of structure. An HR-manager says:

"The largest challenge for us is to calibrate what we can offer, what we stand for and what need they have. They should have the same expectations as our mission is and that is to build trust and that is done by showing them that you are there for them, by being offensive instead of defensive." HR-manager

The respondents among the police officers explain that they want clear directives of who has the authority over which decisions because they feel like they have to take the responsibility over decision made by HR. HR on the other hand says that they want the managers to see that they, as managers, are the ones who take the decisions and therefore will be responsible for them.

"You cannot not both have the power and the luxury of not taking responsibility. But now we become the targets of decisions made from someone else." Police manager

The structure of HR has not yet been settled completely since to the reorganization and there exists some confusion among the HR employees. "Uniformity" as mentioned as the watchword for the reorganization, challenges the HR-Department with new guidelines and directives which take time to implement completely. The idea with uniformity is to create an organization that operates the same in all regions. This eliminates the possibility for HR to be flexible when handling different cases as an HR employee. Some of the police officers desire more flexibility in the work of HR because they look upon HR as a stiff function with an attitude of the employees as bricks instead of people. But there are also police officers who express the positive side of having a unified HR-Department in order to avoid injustices and discriminations. Some think that the new organization with uniformity in focus is encouraging because it provides the organization with a trustworthy approach when matters are handled in the same way

"It is important with uniformity in the organization, but then we also lose the flexibility that is essential when handling different areas and locations." Police manager

"We need to have the same processes so it becomes clear to the employees. Then everyone will understand how it works and trust the system more than if us managers run around with our own solutions." Police manager

When the structure of HR becomes clear, it is easier to understand what HR is doing and why certain things are handled in a specific way. When there is an understanding of the structure of HR work, the respect and acceptance for directives and decisions increase and thus leads to a higher trust for HR. To clarify what HR is about, HR must make an effort in calibrate their work and unify the roles and regions to make it easy to understand. But police managers must also make an effort in espouse information about HR, they cannot trust HR to explain everything for them. A police manager says:

"Some of the managers are sitting and calling out that HR has too much power, but that is just a simple way of understanding HR. As a manager, you have to make sure that you understand the whole picture of HR to handle the work." Police manager

It means that the responsibility of understanding HR is not entirely up to HR but also a responsibility on the managers' side.

6.4 Summary of Empirical Findings

What could be seen in the two first themes of the empirical findings is that the hierarchical positions of employments within the Police Authority have an impact on the level of insight in HR and the size of collision between expectations of HR and the mission of HR. The third theme showed how interaction with the local HR-partners makes it easier to trust them for

their input and support instead of calling or emailing HR-Direct which is centralized in a different department. It is also explained how precisions about HR is important to understand the structure and hence see the importance of HR from the correct angle.

The respondents were all asked: What is the most challenging aspect in the relationship between HR and police officers? The majority described that the biggest challenge was to make HR and police officers understand each other. HR desires managers that understand that HR is working with them and not against them. The working climate and the collaboration would improve if managers could accept the role of HR as the strategic partner in decisions. HR respondents explain that it is hard to improve their reputation among the employees if the managers speak negative about HR in front of them. However, HR must make sure that their role in the organization is understandable and that their purpose is correctly communicated to the police officers. HR-partners explain how they also must be stronger in their coaching role, to be more firm and direct and trust that the managers have understood the rules and will act upon them instead of performing tasks that the managers should be handling themselves.

"HR is very much about trust, if you do not have that from the managers, the rest of your efforts does not really matter. Surely, we are a support function, but we need to put our foot down and make a statement, claim our seat instead of doing the small tasks to serve the managers and cosset them. That is not the way of winning their trust and respect and to be an accepted profession." HR-partner

The respondents are aware of that the reorganization in 2015 created a lot of chaos and they explain that most of the dust of all confusion has finally started to settle.

"It was confusing in the beginning and us managers had little to say, but that has changed now. Maybe because we have learnt to use our local HR-partners more" Police manager

The empirical findings from the interviews show that trust in HR is increasing among the police officers in the hierarchy of the pyramid of positions. Managers express more trust in HR and they explain that by having more need for HR due to their position as managers and therefor increases the amount of daily interaction with HR employees. Managers express the benefit of having someone with another perspective than their own when looking at problems and solutions. Employees in the bottom of the pyramid have low insight of HR, have a larger collision between their expectations of HR and HR's mission in the organization and express low trust for HR as a function. They do not trust that HR understand the organization as they do and therefore HR is not looked upon as important. Among the employees at the bottom of the pyramid, there exists rumors about HR. It could be argued to not be of importance for HR, what the employees think of them since they are mainly supporting the managers. However,

this question was asked to all the respondents: "What does the Police Authority, as an entire organization, have to gain from increasing the trust in HR among the police officers?". The general answer was that uninformed and confused employees will start to look for their own answers and in combination with a manager who speaks out his or her disappointment over HR, a wrongly created picture of HR will emerge which could have a negative impact on the authority.

"The rumors about HR, ruins the organization due to more frustration which leads to a negative working environment. When people have negative opinions and such things, those kinds of things take up energy" Police employee

"All the turbulence is negative, bad schedules, late nights, low payment, unfair recruitments, those kinds of things have an impact of what you think about your work, and if you do not like your job, you will not perform well. This authority would gain so much in making sure that HR is compatible with the police officers". Police manager

When the employees' wrong picture of how HR is operating becomes their reality, it spreads outside the organization in the shape of depraved marketing for the organization as an employer.

7. Discussion

This section is where the empirical findings will be discussed from the chosen theories and previous research. Kramer's Bases of Trust (1999) together with The Integrative Model of Organizational Trust (Meyer et al 1995) will provide the study with a way of understanding the expressed trust among the police officers in HR at the Police Authority in Sweden. The three head themes which were presented in the empirical findings: "The varying insight in HR depending on hierarchical position", "Collision between expectations on HR and the mission of HR" and "Being able to relate to HR" will be presented separately to make it easier to follow the discussion.

7.1 Discussion: The varying insight in HR depending on hierarchal position

The level of insight in HR is varying depending on position in the hierarchal pyramid in the Police Authority. Managers tend to have a higher level of insight in HR than the employees. The level of insight in HR has been shown in this study to have an impact on the expressed trust in HR. Kramer (1999) explains that in order for trust to occur between actors or parties, the trustor needs to take the risk of being vulnerable to the actions of the trustee. In this case, the employees can be seen as the "trustor" and HR could be seen as the "trustee". The

employees have expressed low trust in HR due to rumor-based information about the function. They express understanding of the reorganization in 2015 as necessary to provide the organization with more resources. But they feel left behind because those additional resources have not been given to them and they are not noticing any improvements. This is shown in the theme of *benefits of trust* of previous research that the ones who do not benefit from an organizational change feel degraded and do not express strong attachment for the organization (Nikandrou et al 2000; Spreitzer & Mishra 2002). The employees do not trust the way HR is operating and they are not stating their facts based upon personal interactions with HR, they have simply made up their minds about HR based upon "what they have heard". Previous research has shown that people interpret information in line with their already existing beliefs (Kahneman & Tversky 1973) which could explain why the employees collect what they hear from others and create their own truth. False rumors or not, the employees express low trust in HR and are not willing to take a risk of being vulnerable (Kramer 1999) to the actions of HR. In some cases, the employees "must trust" HR because there is no other way to i.e. handling a process, but that cannot be countered as trust based upon Kramer's theory (1999) because the trustor need to be *willing* to take the risk. There is no risk *willingness to take a risk* if it is a forced action. The employees are not willing to take the risk and therefore cannot or will not trust HR, which also is established through Meyer's et al (1995) theory where trust is the willingness of being vulnerable to the actions of the trustee based on the expectation that the trustee will behave in a certain way that is important for the trustor. The employees feel like HR is working against the organization and thus, they expect HR to not perform in a way that would be of benefit for the them.

The level of trust in HR is expressed to be higher in the managerial positions and could be argued to be the result of the managers' broader insight in HR when collaborating with them. Previous research show that such collaborations improve organizational results which has a positive impact on the confidence of the employees (Tjosvold 1988). Previous research also show that trust is the main factor of the collaborative dynamics (Holton 2001). The managers point out that they trust HR in the issues that concerns HR but they feel like HR should take a step back in the recruitment process. According to the managers, the HR tools for bringing out the best candidates have shown to generate the best candidates on paper but not the best candidates in practice which is a more important concern. However, the managers are more willing to take the risk of being vulnerable, than the employees, (Kramer 1999; Meyer et al

1995) to HR *in some aspects*. But when it concerns recruitment, their willingness is decreasing due to their suspiciousness towards the recruitment tools that are used by HR.

The employees explain their view of HR as a deciding function by pointing out their managers as the informants of that statement. This could be connected to *third parties as conduits of trust* (Kramer 1999) and is also discussed as a way for trust or distrust in *the Integrative Model of Organizational Trust* (Meyer et al 1995). After the reform, new managers were recruited and some of the employees in the bottom of the pyramid was promoted with a managerial position. This might have led to that they are talking about HR as a deciding function and as a manager, there are more people who listens. Employees have respect for their managers and hence, listen to what they have to say which could be viewed as the *role based trust* as Kramer (1999) distinguishes. It is also confirmed in previous research that people tend to listen in on the information that matches the already existing beliefs (Kahneman & Tversky 1973). Respondents explain that there is almost "a trend" to not like HR, which always makes HR the bad guy. Especially among employees who do not have much knowledge about HR and therefore copies the attitudes of their managers (role based trust) and put the blame on HR as the scapegoat. Since HR is another department, function or unit in the eyes of the employees, HR belongs to another category and as Kramer explains by *category-based trust* (1999) it is natural to trust the ones with the same membership of a group and to distrust those who are not included in the same category. But if this is correct, why are the managers expressing higher trust in HR than the employees if the managers still belong to the category of police officers? High insight of HR provides the managers with the ability to sort out the gossip that is circulating and they start to see the benefits of HR instead. *The Integrative Trust Model* (Meyer et al 1995) distinguishes three variables that help build the foundation for the development of trust for the trustee: *Ability, Benevolence and Integrity*. High insight in HR increases the trust for the function due to the managers' chance of noticing HR's *ability* to support them as managers, something that the employees never can experience. It is also a chance for HR to show their *competence* which has been shown in previous research to be important (Meisinger 2005). Insight in HR also provides the managers with awareness of principles the HR employees partake, their *integrity*. Soon enough the managers will also notice the HR function's *benevolence* (Meyer et al 1995) or *caring* Meisinger 2005), towards the managers. Managers are thus discovering, in contrast to the employees, that HR is not an obstacle but rather a benefit for doing a better job in the

organization as a manager. The insight in HR has therefore an impact on the level of trust in HR among the police officers.

7.2 Discussion: Collision between expectations of HR and the mission of HR

The insight about a person, field or as in this study; a function, can have an impact on the expectations of that function and what its mission is. The empirical findings show that the employees have a larger collision between their expectations of HR and the mission of HR, compared to the managers. What kind of expectations those are could be argued from Kramer's theory (1999) to influence the trust towards HR. *History-Based trust* is the level of trust that is perceived for another actor due to previous happenings in their history. The reorganization of the Police Authority was executed with HR as a key actor. The tremendous changes created confusion for many police officers and HR was targeted as responsible for a large part of it. It could therefore be understood as many police officers, due to this history with HR, do not express high level of trust due to *history-based trust* (Kramer 1999). Employees explain they collect their information about HR from each other, managers and media. It is seldom that they meet HR themselves and their expectations of HR is thus built upon other's statements or observations, which could be incorrect or misinterpreted. When expectations are built up from false information, the likelihood for a collision with reality is high. The larger collision between expectation of HR and the mission of HR, the lower trust police officers express in HR. Expectations which are built upon information from others will affect the trust and could be understood as *third parties as conduct of trust* (Kramer 1999) and of the data collection through *third-party sources and observation* (Meyer et al 1995). Expectations of HR that does not match the real mission, create a template for how HR *should* work according to the "rules" but *rule-based trust* (Kramer 1999) could not occur because HR is not following the rules that have been ascribed to them. Previous research show that for trust to occur, the *psychological contract* must not be broken (Braun 1997; Morreale & Shockley-Zalabak 2014) which could be seen as similar to rule-based trust.

The clearest expectation of HR among police officers is that HR is an administrative function which handles everything that concerns the personnel. This expectation of HR collides with the mission of HR because the mission is to act as a strategic partner for managers and not as an administrative secretary. HR respondents express how they are still explaining to managers why the managers must handle some of the administration themselves and they also explain how they observe the tensions when managers are denied help from HR. The police managers' *willingness to trust* (Kramer 1999; Mayer et al 1995) could be decreasing when

HR is pushing back the form-filling and other matters at the police managers. Previous research has shown that interpersonal trust is the foundation for effective team-work (McAllister 1995) but when HR is pushing back assignments that managers thought they could get support with, the collision between expectation and mission creates a tension between managers and HR which affects the trust.

Local HR-partners are explaining how they perform administrative work because they find it difficult to deny the managers' requests. Their low trust level among police officers, which could derive from *history-based trust and category-based trust* (Kramer 1999), makes them want to increase the trust by performing tasks the managers wish to escape. HR employees try to show the managers that they are a benefit and not an obstacle by showing their *benevolence* (Meyer et al 1995) and their *caring* (Meisinger 2005). But, when HR is accepting administrative tasks from managers they are contributing to the expectation of HR as an administrative support, which is a role they say they desire to erase. It becomes a paradox of the yearning of becoming recognized for their real mission and profession and at the same time providing administrative support. This is a challenge for HR, and previous research suggest that HR need to be courageous and well-integrated in their role (Priyadarshini 2009; Meisinger 2005). Another reason for not denying managers the administrative support could be argued to depend upon that the manager's position implies a role of authority. HR employees trust the managers' need for support through *role-based trust* (Kramer 1999). It could be argued that the role of being a manager provides the effects of being an authority and the HR employees experience that as dominant and must thus agree to the requests that are given to them.

7.3 Discussion: Being able to relate to HR

The higher up in the hierarchy of positions among the police officers, the more trust in HR have been expressed. Employees in the bottom of the pyramid do not express much trust in HR at all, they explain negative events within the organization by pointing at HR's lack of knowledge and ability to understand how the organization works. The HR *function* is a broad and large term and the employees describe HR as negative and do not agree to the principles of HR. HR's *integrity* (Meyer et al 1995) is questioned by the employees, which causes low trust in accordance with this theory. The *benevolence* of HR, which could be exposed through interaction is not the natural variable for increased trust since employees and HR seldom meet at all. What HR could strive for is that their *benevolence* and *ability* to take on their mission (Meyer et al 1995) is being informed to the employees through the managers.

From the second level of managers and upwards in the pyramid, the managers have close contact with the local HR-partners who often are positioned within the same region or district as themselves. They have weekly contact with local HR-partners and some of them even have their offices in the same building. Interesting in the findings of this study is that the managers trust their local HR-partner but not necessarily the HR *function*, which was also confirmed by HR respondents. Most of the managers know when they should call HR-Direct for support but they confess they are contacting their local HR-partners because they trust them more. It has been shown in previous research that when interaction face-to-face is not possible, which is the case in the Police Authority as a large organization, the importance of building trust is fundamental (Handy 1995a; Handy 1995b). It could therefore be discussed whether the Police Authority has made an effort in making it possible for managers to trust the centralized HR-Direct since they express low trust in that function. The idea of making the organization more effective by centralization, as i.e. HR-Direct, have shown in previous research to not be that effective in reality because managers are still contacting those people they are used to (Kulik & Perry 2008; Hällsten & Thilander 2013; Beer 1997).

The managers entail a bigger perception of *vulnerability and risk* towards the local HR-partner's motives and intentions (Kramer 1999) than towards HR-Direct. Trust in HR can be built upon *dispositional trust* (Kramer 1999) - the individual manager's generalization from previous experiences of trusting others or the manager's *propensity to trust* (Meyer et al 1995). However, since there are many managers who express more trust in HR than the employees do, the trust could be argued to be connected to the position in the hierarchy and not the individual's ability to trust. *History-based trust* (Kramer 1999) could also be discussed to have an impact on the trust in HR among the managers since it describes how trust thickens or thins as the interaction is proceeding. This makes it interesting to look into the *interaction* between managers and HR, because it seems that it is an important factor for trusting someone. Previous research has shown that trust in organizations is a result from interactions and interrelations (Pucetaite & Lamsa 2008) and that physical interaction will increase the positive beliefs about others (Good 1988). Managers are expressing their trust towards their local HR-partner because they meet them and therefore know them better than HR employees on HR-Direct. The local HR-partners can expose their *benevolence* (Meyer et al 1995) which thickens through interaction and this can overcome potential low trust that derives from *history-based trust* (Kramer 1999).

It could also depend upon the fact that the role of being the *local* HR-partner, implicates more knowledge about the local area where the managers are positioned. This means that the *role-based trust* (Kramer 1999) could affect the reason for contacting local HR-partners instead of HR-Direct because the managers trust the local HR-partners' local knowledge more than HR-Direct. But even though the local HR-partners are grateful for that kind of trust given to them, their work get over loaded with requests to accomplish due to the managers' choice of contacting them instead of HR-Direct. The managers find it challenging of knowing who to turn to for what and HR respondents explain that confusion with the lack of *structure* in HR. Previous research show that for trust to be built between actors, groups or units it is essential to provide the others with clear and consistent information to make everyone understand correctly (Kramer 2009). Even for HR themselves, the structure of HR can be unclear and they understand that the managers see a challenge in it. HR respondents say that managers can get different answers depending on which HR employee they are contacting. They are explaining it is because the HR work is about experience, judgement and interpretation which can of course differ depending on the individual who takes on the task. But they are also explaining that the structure of how to work in the new organization has not yet become natural for HR and some directives are still vague and it takes time for everyone to start to work in exact same ways.

At the same time as the managers wish for more clarity in HR structure to make it easier to relate to HR work, they wish for more flexibility in HR. Many of the police officers describe how HR is looking at the employees within the Police Authority as bricks instead of human beings which causes a lot of frustration and disappointments in HR. But HR, on the other side, explain that they are trying to look into each and every case but they must also make sure to follow the new rules which are set up in order to make all HR employees work in the same ways. They must follow their *integrity* to show that they stand by their principles and that they are united which could create trust for the profession when they are being more firm and direct. To avoid unfairness, they must follow the same rules for everyone. Police officers claim they would trust HR more if HR would be more flexible in each and every case but the Integrative Model of Organizational Trust implies otherwise. If an HR-partner shows high integrity, high ability and high benevolence (Meyer et al 1995) towards one police officer but not to another, it could have a negative impact on the general trust in HR among the rest of the police officers.

8. Conclusion

Trust has shown to be important for organizations in previous research where the benefits are cooperative behavior (Zalabak et al 2000), organizational citizenship behavior (Van et al 2000), employee loyalty (Costigan et al 1998) and organizational commitment (Aryee et al 2002). It might be easy to think that trust exists between actors due to expressions of confidence, cooperation and predictabilities, but according to The Integrative Model of Organizational Trust (Meyer et al 1995) those aspects cannot automatically be seen as trust. *Cooperation* might be a result of trust but does not mean that one of the parties is put in a necessarily risk. *Confidence* in that a person will act in a certain way does not make room for other alternatives in the outcome. Trust on the other hand, provides an analysis that the result might take another direction than expected. *Predictability* is not looked upon as trust either. It does not contain a willingness to take a risk with a trustee if that person is predictable and if the prediction of the outcome is negative for the trustor, the trustor will surely not trust the trustee (Ibid).

The study implies that the hierarchal position is of importance for higher trust in HR. Among the police officers, the managers express more trust towards HR than the employees. Why the hierarchical position has an impact on the level of trust towards HR has been explained by level of insight in HR, how large collision there is between expectations of HR and the mission of HR and lastly that interaction and structure affect the ability to relate to HR. The employees in the bottom of the pyramid talk negatively about HR and even mention HR as "Human Rats". The employees' opinions and attitudes are based upon rumors and gossip because they do not meet HR themselves. HR's mission in the Police Authority is to elucidate and develop the short- and long-term goals by being a strategic support for the managers. Since HR is mainly a managerial support it could be argued to not be of importance in how the employees, in the bottom of the pyramid, express trust in HR. The fact that police officers do not really have a broad employment market, since the only place to work as a police officer is within the Police Authority, could perhaps affect the organization to not be concerned about losing employees to another employer. However, there is no secret that organizations want to attract talented people and if the organization have employees who feel frustrated over their working situation and hence, blame a specific function or department, it might firstly affect the employees' working performance and secondly it could be spread

outside their workplace and thus shed negative light over the organization as a non-attractive employer.

Many organizations struggle with damaged trust where financial scandals and questionable decision making have been brought to daylight (Kramer & Lewicki 2009). Since previous research have been showing that trust is of enormous importance for organizations, it could be of value to look into possible improvements to increase the trust in HR within the Police Authority of Sweden. Even though many managers express high level of insight in HR, there are still those managers who must gain more insight in HR for the collision between expectations of HR and the mission of HR to decrease. This would lead to more trust in HR which hopefully would be spread down to the employees. The managers must be aware of what their words and actions can cause in the bottom of the pyramid and since the employees are a majority in number, their voices could affect the organization if most of them talk vicious about the organization. HR must be better in marketing themselves in order to clarify for police officers what HR is all about. The enforcement of this exposition of HR lays in the hands of those responsible for HR within the Police Authority. HR must establish their strategic partner role and being more direct and firm when managers ask too much of them. In the end, they will benefit from this when the managers eventually know exactly what tasks that are meant for their local HR-partners and what tasks are supposed to go to HR-Direct. This will also lead to an improved long-term relationship with the managers when their expectations are not colliding with HR's mission anymore. In addition, the local HR-partners will experience a lighter work load which could lead to the possibility of more time to interact with the managers and employees and thus establish trust. Since the reform of the Police Authority, different departments have been centralized which makes the distances between some of the actors big and the chance of interaction is small. If the authority wants to remain the organization centralized, it must understand the importance of establishing trust in those functions (Handy 1995s; Handy 1995b). If managers feel more trust in contacting local HR-partners instead of HR-Direct, the whole point with the effectiveness of a centralization could go to waste.

It has been shown in this study that the hierarchal position of employment has an impact on the level of insight in HR and the size of collision between expectations on HR and the real mission of HR which have an impact on trust. Interaction has also been pointed out as the main factor for trusting someone *more* than someone that cannot share the same interaction.

Interaction gives the opportunity for more insight which thus leads to reality-based expectations which lead to higher trust. For further research, it could be interesting to study if trust could be increased by forced interactions. Is trust based upon that the interaction is *needed/desired* from one of the actors or could trust be developed even though the parties do not want to collaborate or interact. Perhaps trust cannot be forced directly but if a forced collaboration leads to more interaction, it could be argued that trust indirectly could be created by purpose. There would also be significant to study the perspective of time in this, to see when that factor becomes important to trust.

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Polissamordningen:

Appendix

Interview guide Police Officers

Background

How old are you and for how long have you been employed within the Police Authority?

What is your position called and for how long have you had that position?

How would you describe your daily work, what are your responsibilities?

What do you think about your work and your employment within the Police Authority?

Individual attitude towards HR and its work?

How would you describe HR, what do they work with, which areas are theirs?

What are your expectations on HR and their work?

Do you know who works with HR within the Police Authority?

How often do you have contact with HR?

Are you familiar with HR Support/Direct?

How would you describe your relationship with HR?

In which aspects do you contact HR for?

In what ways do you think HR have an impact on the quality of your daily work?

Would you prefer HR employees with a police education?

The general view of HR among the police officers (managers and employees)

How would you describe the relationship between HR and police in general?

Would you say that there has been change in that relationship lately?

How do policemen/managers estimate the value of HR work?

When and how do policemen talk about HR and their work?

Do you think that most of the policemen / managers think that HR is competent to handle their work?

What does your manager think of HR? How is that expressed?

Common opinions

Is there any work you think HR should do, that they do not in their work today?

Is there any work you think HR should not do in their daily work?

Would you say that HR share the same view of the Police Authority's mission as police officers do?

Would you describe that HR has the ability of understand your needs and how you work?

If you could decide, how would HR work in the Police Authority?

Do you look upon HR as a deciding function?

What is the largest challenge in the relationship between HR and Police officers?

What would be your solution towards the problem?

Would you say that you trust HR within the Police Authority? In what ways?

Interview guide - HR employees

Background

How old are you and for how long have you been employed within the Police Authority?

What is your position called and for how long have you had that position?

How would you describe your daily work, what are your responsibilities?

What do you think about your work and your employment within the Police Authority?

Individual attitude towards HR and its work

How would you describe HRs role in the daily police work?

Would you say that you have the suitable education for your position?

What are your expectations on your contributions in the Police Authority?

How often do you have contact with police officers? (Managers and employees)

How would you describe that relationship?

In which ways would you say that HR has an impact on the police officers' work?

Do you see you colleagues as competent enough to handle the different matters in the police authority?

What is the largest challenge for HR? Why is that challenging?

Do you recognize any kinds of differences in the police officers' attitudes towards HR compared to earlier periods?

Does it happen that managers ask you for support that should be directed to someone else?

Would you say that most managers are aware of HR-Direct and when to contact it?

The general view of HR among the police officers (managers and employees)

How would you describe the relationship between HR and police in general?

Would you say that there has been change in that relationship lately?

How do police officers estimate the value of HR work?

How would you describe the police officers' expressed satisfaction of the work you do for them? In which ways is it expressed?

Common opinions

Is there any work you think HR *should do*, that you are not doing today?

Is there any work you think HR *should not do* in their daily work?

Is there anything that the police officers think you should or should not do?

Would you say that HR share the same view of the Police Authority's mission as police officers do?

Would you say that police officers understand the work of HR?

Would you say that HR understand the work of the police officers?

If not, how are you working to improve that understanding?

What would be the benefits of practicing the police work during a shorter period of time?

What would be the benefits for the Police Authority as an organization if police officers knew more about HR?

Would you say that the HR-function has high trustworthiness among police officers?

Why, why not?

What are your suggestions for an improvement in the relationship between HR and police officers?