



**Roskilde
University**

Introduction

Hvid, Helge Søndergaard

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Introduction

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In this issue, four articles are published.

Corin and Björk present a study of the psychosocial work environment among managers in public schools and in public elder care in Sweden. The study provides new insight into the working conditions of managers in the public sector, and at the same time, the study contributes to the development of research methods in the field. The study is based on Demerouti and Bakkers' Job Demand-Resource model, which summarizes several well-known models for the studying of psychosocial work environment, primarily the Demand Control model of Karasek and Theorell and the Effort Reward model of Siegrist. The Job Demand-Resource model is most often used in survey studies, where employees assess their working conditions in a questionnaire. Corin and Björk, meanwhile, use the model as a basis for a qualitative study, which forms an external assessment of job demands and job resources. They use the ARIA method, based on the German 'activity theory'. The study suggests that there is a strong imbalance between demands and resources in managers' work and the study illustrates how surveys and qualitative studies could be combined in a fruitful way.

Anwing and Eldén has studied the work of au pairs in Sweden. For many years, it has been considered that paid domestic work was a profession that would slowly disappear. However, since the mid-1990s paid domestic work has grown and it is now a sector where women with immigrant background find employment. Au pairs form a significant part of this new group of domestic workers. Au pairs are in a particularly vulnerable position because they both are considered as young people on 'cultural exchange' and as paid workers in the home. Part of the 'cultural exchange' takes place in the family where the au pairs become part of the family. This makes it very difficult to set limits on their work. The boundary between care work as a paid work for family and caring work, where family members take care of each other, becomes blurred and can lead to working hours far beyond the 25 hours per week, laid down in contract. In the article, it is shown that there is a significant difference in terms of au pairs who come from European Union countries, and au pairs who come from outside the European Union. To a certain extent, the au pairs from outside EU have a better position than those coming from EU countries.

Koikkalainen, Linnakangas, and Suikkanen investigate with Finnish data whether migration improves or degrades status at the labor market for those who for a period of time are abroad. Does international migration pay off? In the 1960s and 1970s, there were a large migration from Finland, especially to Sweden. Back then, it was mainly low-skilled workers with a problematic position in the Finnish labor market that left the country for a period. The majority returned to Finland after some years. Here, they remained at a relative poor position in the labor market. Today, it is different. Those who emigrate have a better educational background, and they migrate to a greater variety of countries. When they come back to Finland, their labor market position will after



a short period of time be better than comparable groups who have not migrated. Where migration earlier seemed to weaken the position at the Finnish labor market, migration today seems to strengthen labor market position.

Recruitment of staff in the Nordic countries seems not only to be based on meritocratic principles. Thus, relatively many employees have family members in the company where they are employed. In Sweden, there are approximately 4.3 million employed. Of these, 620,000 have family members in their workplace. *Haugen and Westin* have studied the consequences of family ties within the company for day-to-day operations, the social work environment, and consequences at the individual level. Forty human resource managers in Swedish companies were interviewed. Haugen and Westin find that there may be many immediate benefits of having family ties in the company. However, often the benefits could turn around to become serious problems. Family ties can make the social environment open and informal, but it can also turn out to be quite introvert. Recruitment of staff members with high loyalty goes easily through family ties, but perhaps it would be beneficial for both the family member and the company with other kinds of recruitment procedures. Family ties become especially problematic if there are asymmetrical (vertical) power relations between members of the same family.

Helge Hvid