The Mediating Role of Psychological Contracts on the Relationship Between Organizational Culture and Affective Commitment

A multi-level analysis

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The mediating role of psychological contracts on the relationship between organizational culture and affective commitment. A multi-level analysis.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of psychological contracts as a mediator in the relationship between organizational cultures and affective commitment. Two culture dimensions from the competing values framework were chosen, adhocracy cultures and clan cultures. Questionnaires were used to gather information, with 105 organizations and 948 employees taking part in the study. Data were collected both from the employees and from representative of the organization, with different questionnaires for the two different levels. A multi-level analysis was utilized in analyzing the data. The analysis revealed three significant findings. (1) Adhocracy cultures have a significant relationship with relational psychological contracts, (2) relational psychological contracts have a significant relationship with affective commitment, and (3) relational psychological contracts mediate the relationship between adhocracy cultures and affective commitment. This suggests that certain cultures will have an effect on the employee's psychological contracts with the employers, and that these psychological contracts in turn will determine the level of affective commitment the employees will have towards the organization.

Key words: Multi-level analysis, clan culture, adhocracy culture, relational psychological contracts, affective commitment.
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Introduction

In recent times there has been an increased focus on relationships in the workplace. Industrial relations have gradually been replaced by employment relations over the last few decades (Guest, 1998). As we spend a large amount of our lives at work, it is easy to see the importance of positive relations, and research has found several positive consequences of these relations, like increased productivity, lower stress and reduced absenteeism (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). As a consequence of the importance of positive relations, there has been an increase in research on psychological contracts in the last decades, relational psychological contracts in particular. In their recently conducted meta-analysis, Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski & Bravo (2007) found a strong relationship between psychological contracts and employee behavior and attitudes.

In Guest's (1998) article about psychological contracts, he mentions possible antecedents and consequences, among these organizational culture as an antecedent and organizational commitment as a consequence. Previous studies found reason to believe that there is a relationship between these (Guest & Conway, 1997). Guest also states in his article that further research on the subject is needed. An important finding regarding the psychological contract is that it seems to be altered dependent on the culture of the organization (Richard, McMillan-Capehart, Bhuian & Taylor, 2009). Culture is interesting in this context because every organization has got a culture in some shape or form, strong or weak.

Organizational culture have been said to provide members of an organization norms for what is acceptable behavior, and it has a powerful impact on how they act (Schein, 2010). It is affecting the employees beliefs, their values and their assumptions (Hartnell, Ou & Kinicki, 2011). The present study will use the Competing Values Framework (CVF) by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), with a particular focus on the culture types adhocracy and clan cultures. The CVF was chosen because it is a framework that is commonly used when needing to operationalize culture (Hartnell et al., 2011; Van Vuuren, Veldkamp, de Jong & Seydel, 2007).

Affective commitment is considered to be an employee’s emotional attachment to their organization, and the employees with high affective commitment have a genuine interest in staying in their organization because they want to be there. It is connected to reduced turnover (Zhao et al., 2007), and employees with longer tenure have increased task performance and citizenship performance (Ng & Feldman, 2010). Moreover, variations in the state of the psychological contract have been found to alter the level of affective organizational commitment (Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefooghe, 2005; Zhao et al., 2007).
Today there are still large gaps in the research on psychological contracts (Li & Dai, 2015). The present study will contribute to research and literature in the following ways. First, it will explore the relationship between organizational culture and relational psychological contracts. This is a somewhat untouched area of research, especially when focusing on the CVF. Second, it will expand on the existing knowledge on the relationship between relational psychological contracts and affective commitment. Third, it will look at the possible mediating role of relational psychological contracts on the relationship between culture and affective commitment. The study will use a multi-level approach. With this, it is possible to study the interactions between variables on an employee level and on an organizational level. This will also reduce bias in the data.

**Theory**

**Organizational culture**

Culture has often been compared to small societies, and organizations as such will all have different cultures and processes that affect them (Allaire & Firsorotu, 1984). Schein (1990, p.111) has proposed a definition of organizational culture as a “pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it is learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.” However, it is important to mention that there is no agreement on the exact definition on what culture is and how it should be studied (Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2013).

An organizational culture can be both strong and weak, depending on the agreement of these basic assumptions within the organization. Although culture might seem like something that is quite intangible, it serves several important purposes within an organization. It has been shown to provide a sense of identity for the employees, it generates commitment to what the organization is trying to achieve, and it sets and reinforces standards for behavior (Schein, 2010). There are several approaches on how to identify the various elements of organizational culture. As organizational culture can be difficult to operationalize (Van Vuuren et al., 2007), the Competing Values Framework is a useful taxonomy. It is an instrument for analyzing an organizations particular culture orientation, and to identify which qualities the organization needs to emphasize to be effective (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

**The competing values framework.** This framework was originally introduced by Quinn and Rohrbaugh in 1983, and is today one of the more commonly referred to models of organizational
culture (Hartnell et al., 2011). The model is divided into four quadrants, and there are two dimensions that divide it, *focus* and *structure*. *Focus* ranges from internal to external, where with an internal focus the organization will have an emphasis on the well-being and the development of the employees, while with an external focus the emphasis will be on the organization itself. *Structure* ranges from emphasis on control, to an emphasis on flexibility. On one hand there is authority, structure and coordination, while on the other hand it is diversity, organizational adaptability and individual initiatives (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

![Figure 1. The competing values model (adapted from Figure 3.1 in Cameron & Quinn, 2006, p. 35).](image)

The four quadrants have been categorized into four different types of cultures as seen in Figure 1. *Market cultures* value stability and control, and have an external focus. These organizations are primarily result-oriented, and are concerned with results, profit and winning (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). *Hierarchy cultures* are high on control with an internal focus, which makes for an organization with a lot of formalization, rules and structure. Efficiency is a goal here, by having a stable and predictable environment (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

The two remaining quadrants of organizational culture are what the present study will focus on, so they will receive the most attention. *Clan cultures* have a strong internal focus and a high degree of flexibility. They have goals that are shared by the employees in the organization, and they have a high level of cohesiveness. These organizations feel like extended families by the people who work there,
and the corporate nature is a very friendly one. Central characteristics are teamwork, involved employees, trust, and corporate commitment to the employees (Quinn & Kimberly, 1984; Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Due to this, this is the type of culture that most people report that they prefer (Berrio, 2003). Adhocracy cultures also have a flexible structure, but as opposed to clan cultures, they have an external focus. The result of this will be an organization that will look to solve problems and get results (Waterman, 1993). This type of organization tend to be highly innovative, and will allow itself to change based on what is required by the external environment. Employees are encouraged to take the initiative and be autonomous, mistakes are tolerated, and the criticism is constructive (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Quinn & Kimberly, 1984; Denison & Spreitzer, 1991). An organization with an adhocracy culture is an organic organization. It thrives with personalities and relationships, has a free and informal work environment, the organization is constantly changing and adapting, which makes it a creative and diverse place to work. It requires co-operation and communication (Mintzberg, 1989).

One of the reasons adhocracy and clan cultures were chosen to be the subjects of this study is because of their shared flexibility dimension. A large study of hospitals in the Netherlands suggested a clear link between the flexibility dimension in the CVF and affective commitment. Control, on one side, were stronger linked with normative commitment, while flexibility were stronger linked with affective commitment (Van Vuuren et al., 2007). In addition to this, Gustavsen (2007) have argued that Scandinavian organizations have a history of valuing trust and autonomy in the relationship between employer and employee. These characteristics are most prevalent in clan and adhocracy cultures, respectively. For this reason, these two culture types are thought to be the most common ones in Norway.

As the present study is a multi-level analysis, it is important to remember that even though the behavior of the employees displays the culture, it is a part of the organization, not the employees (Hofstede, 1998). Different organizational culture types will however affect the employees in different ways. Relationships between the people within the organization will vary as a result of this (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), and as a result, it is reasonable to assume that the relational psychological contracts might vary as well. Psychological contracts are at the center of an individual’s perceptions of the employer-employee relationship (McInnis, Meyer & Feldman, 2008), and the relational contracts focus on the socio-emotional aspects. The psychological contracts provide us with a means of investigating this relationship between the organizations and employees (Maguire, 2002). In the next paragraphs, psychological contracts and their relationship with organizational culture will be discussed.
Psychological contracts

There are several papers that mention the relationship between organizational culture and psychological contracts (Maguire, 2002; Guest, 1998; Richards et al, 2009). Psychological contracts can be defined as “a set of reciprocal obligations or promises related to the employment relationship between an organization and an individual” (Richards et al., 2009, p.819). Schein (1980) argues that a psychological contract, in spite of being an unwritten agreement, can have a relation to the behavior in organizations. The psychological contract is an individual perception of the relationship, it is subjective, and the primary focus is the relationship at individual level between the employer and the employee (Guest & Conway, 2002). Reciprocity is another central term. Whenever an employee invest time or effort in the organization, they expect a return on this investment. The same thing goes for when the organization invests in an employee. An example of this can be organizational actions such as HRM-practices or trust in a particular individual to carry out more important tasks, and the employee feels obligated to respond with loyalty, flexibility and effort (Rousseau, 1990).

Psychological contracts are often divided into two categories, transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1990). The transactional psychological contract focuses on the particular economic exchanges between the employer and the employee, and is usually quite narrow in scope and in their definition. Because of the Norwegian work life model and the regulations that focuses on the employees’ rights to contact and communication, information sharing and inclusion of employees in decision making (Arbeidsmiljøloven, 2006), the focus of this thesis will be primarily on the relational psychological contract. They are based on the socio-emotional exchanges within an organization and often include beliefs such as trust, respect and loyalty. The employees tend to have a shared set of ideas and values. In this type of contract, the employees will identify with the organization through socialization, promotion from within and mentoring (Rousseau, 1995). They might change over time, and they have a broader scope and a broader definition. Contrary to what many believe, relational contracts can also include economic exchanges, but are not defined by it, like transactional contracts (Rousseau, 1990). Lastly, relational contracts tend to have an open ended time frame, and have been found to correlate highly with employees’ length of stay in an organization (Lund, 2003).

There is no clear view on what is good or bad when it comes to psychological contracts. However, it has been shown that relational psychological contracts are linked to positive outcomes, both for the employees and for the organization (Uen, Chien & Yen, 2009).
The relationship between organizational culture and the relational psychological contract

Rousseau (1989) describes psychological contracts as an individual’s belief regarding a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the organization. Social exchange theory states that the perception of the psychological contract can be dependent on the actions of another person, or in this case the organization (Blau, 1964). This also implies that the organization through its culture can affect the perception an employee has of the psychological contract. This is in line with Guests (1998) suggestions of possible antecedents to the psychological contract.

With the reciprocity of psychological contracts in mind, it is reasonable to believe that organizations with a culture that focuses on the well-being of their employees will have a higher degree of relational psychological contracts.

Maguire (2002) found that organizational culture is a strong element when it comes to developing the psychological contracts, relational in particular. She states that employees will contribute a continued membership and commitment to the job, as well as loyalty and trust in the management. The management will in return provide the opportunity for input into decision making, a work culture that provides a sense of belonging, and competent management. Richards et al. (2009) found support for this relationship, and states that organizational culture has a particularly important role in the development of the psychological contract and the determination of the contract type. Their research also showed that hierarchical cultures negatively impacted the relational psychological contract, while clan cultures had a positive impact.

As previously stated clan cultures have a strong focus on a cohesive and supportive work environment. The trust, loyalty and respect that is intrinsic to the relational psychological contract seems to fit well with what we view as a clan culture. Also, both are thought to generate commitment in employees (Quinn & Kimberly, 1984; Hartnell et al., 2011). With established theories and current research in mind, the first hypothesis in the present study is the following:

Hypothesis 1a: There is a positive relationship between clan cultures and relational psychological contracts.

In a study about organizational culture and the CVF by Hartnell et al. (2011), they state that central characteristics of adhocracy cultures are creativity, adaptability and autonomy. Autonomy in particular is an important characteristic. It can be argued that autonomy implies trust in the employees to do their job well without supervision and control. Trust is one of the central components of the
relational psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). Creativity might be important as well. In a creative environment, one might imagine that there is a higher acceptance for errors and new ideas, and that employees are free to come up with new solutions. This sounds like an environment that would foster the development of relational psychological contracts.

Adhocracy cultures often include constructive criticism, and it is a type of culture dependent on relationships between employees (Mintzberg, 1989). The employees often work in teams that are changed around depending on the task at hand and what kind of skills or specialization that is needed. This paints a picture of a workplace culture high in relational contracts. The horizontal structure in this type of organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2006) might emphasize the shared sets of ideas and values among the employees that is a characteristic of relational contracts.

Hypothesis 1b: There is a positive relationship between adhocracy cultures and relational psychological contracts.

The current thesis has hypothesized that there is a relationship between two organizational culture types and relational psychological contracts. Relational contracts have also been linked to various employee outcomes (Zhao et al., 2007), and a breach of these contracts have been directly connected to lower levels of commitment (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood & Bolino, 2002). The type of psychological contract have been said to determine the level of commitment to the organization, with relational contracts particularly closely related to affective commitment (Millward & Hopkins, 1998). In a modern labor marked where organizations often are subject to frequent changes, both internal and external, commitment is particularly interesting to investigate. It's been said to be a stabilizing force that helps direct behavior and binds employees to certain courses of action (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In the next paragraphs, commitment will be examined more closely.

**Affective commitment**

Meyer and Allen (1987) divided commitment into three different categories. 'Continuance', 'normative', and 'affective' commitment. Employees with continuance commitment are thought to stay in the organization because they need to, employees with normative commitment stay with the organization because they ought to, and employees with affective commitment stay with the organization because they want to (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The focus in this thesis will be on affective commitment.
Affective commitment is a reflection of an employee’s emotional attachment towards their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this respect it has a lot in common with relational psychological contracts. People will do a good job for the organization because of their positive feelings and their positive attitudes towards it. This attitude of being supportive of the organization is important when cooperation and individual initiative are required (LePine, Erez & Johnson, 2002). However, affective commitment is not thought to be limited only to the organization. It can be towards the organization as a whole, the supervisor, or the work group (Vandenberghe, Bentein & Stinglhamber, 2004).

There has been quite a lot of attention to affective commitment in organizations. It has been found to reduce turnover (Zhao et al., 2007), increase the organizational effectiveness (Allen and Meyer, 1990) and internalize company values (Millward & Hopkins, 1998). Several papers have found a relationship between affective commitment and organizational culture (Lok & Crawford, 2001; Goodman, Zamuto & Gifford, 2001; Richards et al., 2009), as well as affective commitment and relational psychological contracts (Millward & Hopkins, 1998; Richards et al., 2009).

The antecedents of affective organizational commitment have been divided into three categories, personal characteristics, work experiences, and organizational structure (Meyer & Allen, 1990). The characteristics of these categories will be important in linking affective commitment to relational psychological contracts. Personal characteristics refer to the traits a person have that affects their propensity for affective commitment. Demographic variables have been found to be inconsistent and fairly weak predictors of affective commitment (Angle & Perry, 1981), but personal dispositions such as need for autonomy (Morris & Snyder, 1979), work ethic (Kidron, 1978), and locus of control (Pierce & Dunham, 1987) have been found to correlate with commitment. Work Experiences are the subjective experiences employees get from their work, as well as the actual characteristics of the work. This has been researched quite thoroughly, but in a less then systematic fashion. Meyer & Allen (1990) divides these into two categories, the need to feel comfortable in an organization, and the need to feel competent in the work role. They mention factors such as organizational support, role clarity and supervisor consideration in the first category, and autonomy, job challenge, opportunity for self-expression and job scope in the second category. Organizational structure, the third antecedent of affective commitment is less researched, there are however some evidence that affective commitment is related to the decentralization of decision making and a formalization of policy and procedure (Brooke, Russell & Price, 1988; Podsakoff, Williams & Todor, 1986).
Relational psychological contracts and affective commitment

It is more likely that employees who are affectively committed to the organization will be committed to the goals and values of the organization, and that they will behave as organizational citizens in comparison to those with a transactional contract. An organizational citizen is willing to go the extra mile, they behave cooperatively, they pursue corporate interests, and they generally contribute to organizational effectiveness (Rousseau, 1995; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Millward and Hopkins (1998) found in their studies that the relational orientation had a tendency to be a contract based on affective commitment, among other things. The employees with a higher relational orientation would have higher self-reported organizational commitment. Rousseau (1995) has proposed that under the relational psychological contract, the employees will identify with the organization through promotion from within, mentoring, and socialization. The individuals will internalize company values, and see their place in the organization as a part of their identities (Millward & Hopkins, 1998). These are central traits of affective commitment. Furthermore, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) proposed that any situational or personal variable that contributes to an individual's involvement in a certain course of action, recognition of the value in associating with an organization, or identification with this organization, will contribute to affective commitment. This is very similar to Rousseau's (1995) findings that in a relational contract the employees will identify with the organization through socialization, mentoring and promotions from within. A strong positive relationship between relational psychological contracts and affective commitment has also been established in a large study by Raja, Johns, and Ntalianis (2004), and again by Richard et al. (2009). Based on these previous findings, the hypothesis is as follows.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a positive relationship between relational psychological contracts and affective commitment.

Relational psychological contracts as a mediator

A lot of previous research has focused on how organizational culture relates to various employee attitudes, and among these, affective commitment. Ingersoll, Kirsh, Merk and Lightfoot (2000) found that organizations with environments where employees feel empowered to influence the work of the group will increase the employee commitment to the organization. Lok and Crawford (2001) found in a study of hospital nurses that organizational culture could be used to predict commitment. Goodman, Zamuto and Gifford (2001) did another study in hospitals, where they used the
competing values framework. They found a strong relationship between clan cultures and commitment. Clan cultures have been linked to commitment on several other occasions as well (Richards et al., 2009; Lund, 2003). Additionally, organizational cultures that are strong in respect, team orientation, autonomy and innovation have all been found to relate to organizational commitment (Richards et al., 2009; Littman-Ovadia, Oren & Lavy, 2013). Team orientation, innovation and autonomy are traits that are central to adhocracy cultures. Both clan cultures and adhocracy cultures have been found to correlate highly with job satisfaction (Lund, 2003; Aldhuwaihi, Shee & Stanton, 2012). There has been found a large correlation between affective commitment and job satisfaction (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

In the previous paragraph, literature on the relationship between affective commitment and organizational culture is mentioned. Based on the hypothesized relationships between cultures and psychological contracts, and between psychological contracts and affective commitment, this thesis want to find whether the relationship between cultures and affective commitment can be explained by an indirect effect of relational psychological contracts. Guest (1998) suggests that culture is a possible antecedent to the psychological contract, and that commitment is a consequence. Based on his model, the culture type will play a part in determining the type of psychological contract in an organization, and the psychological contract will in turn help with determining the level of affective commitment. There is not a lot of research on this possible mediation, however Richards et al. (2009) did find that relational psychological contracts mediated the relationship between clan cultures and affective commitment.

According to Phillip & Lopez (2013) autonomy and challenging tasks can be used by managers to activate the exchange relationship inherent to relational psychological contracts, and get back commitment, job satisfaction and effort. Autonomy and challenging tasks are often inherent to adhocracy cultures. Some research suggests that while there is reason to expect that adhocracy cultures will have a positive relationship with employee outcomes, there is actually no direct effect. The relationship is mediated or moderated by various other psychological states (Hartnell et al., 2011). The following can be hypothesized based on the theory mentioned above:

*Hypothesis 3a: Relational psychological contracts mediate the relationship between clan cultures and affective commitment.*

*Hypothesis 3b: Relational psychological contracts mediate the relationship between adhocracy cultures and affective commitment.*
Figure 2. This model illustrates the hypothesized relationship between clan- and adhocracy-oriented cultures and relational psychological contracts (H1a and H1b). It also illustrates the hypothesized relationship between relational psychological contracts and affective commitment (H2). The dotted line illustrates the distinction between organizational (level 2) and individual (level 1) level. The mediating effects of relational psychological contracts, H3a and H3b, are not listed specifically in the model.

Method

Procedure

The data used in this study were from an ongoing research project titled “Organizational antecedents of psychological contracts and work-related outcomes” by Sabine Raeder from UiO and José María Peiró, University of Valencia, Spain. The data were collected by former master students and three current master students writing independent theses with this data as a sample.

The survey used two different online questionnaires. One for the employer level, to be filled out by a representative of the organization, and one for the employees, where 10 to 50 employees were asked to fill out the employee questionnaire. The questionnaires were estimated to take around 15 minutes to complete. The data were collected through e-mail and telephone contact with various organizations, and requesting their participation. Both large and small companies from both public and private sector were asked to participate in the study. They received an information letter where the background and purpose of the study were explained, and information regarding anonymity, confidentiality and their right to withdraw their participation at any time. The companies and the individual participants could not be recognized in the final reports or papers. For participating in the
survey, the companies were offered copies of the final theses, and a summative report where the research findings were explained.

Sample
326 organizations have been contacted in total, and 105 agreed to participate. Of these, 87 ended up completing the questionnaire. This makes for a response rate of 26.7%. A total of 948 employees completed the employee questionnaire. Of these, 48% were male and 52% were female. The age of the respondents ranged from 17 years to 72 years old.

Measures
All the measures that are used in this study have been applied in previous research. At the employee level, affective commitment and relational psychological contracts were measured, while the organizational culture variables were measured at the unit-level. All the scales were translated using an external translator, and then later back-translated to secure a high-quality process.

Organizational culture. To assess organizational culture, The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) was used. This was developed by Cameron & Quinn (2006). After making necessary changes to adapt it to the Norwegian language, a translated version of the OCAI was used (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In the OCAI there are six dimensions with four items each, one for each of the culture dimensions in the competitive values framework. The six dimensions are labelled Dominant Characteristics, Organizational Leadership, Management of Employees, Organizational Glue, Strategic Emphases, and Criteria of Success. For each of the six dimensions, the respondents were asked to judge how well their organization matched with the four available items. To do this, they were asked to divide 100 points among the four items, depending on how representative the item was for their organization. The option that is most familiar will be given most points, while the least representative one will be given the least amount.

The OCAI includes one scale for measuring clan culture (e.g. “The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves”), one for adhocracy culture (e.g. “The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovation, or risk taking”), one for market culture (e.g. The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement”), and one for hierarchy culture (e.g. “The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important”).

The cronbachs alpha for the scale which measured clan culture was .86, while the reliability of the
scale that measured adhocracy culture were .79.

**Relational psychological contracts.** This was measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 9 items (Raja, Johns, & Ntalianis, 2004). An example of an item from this scale is “I expect to grow in this organization”. This scale had a Cronbachs alpha of .89.

**Affective commitment.** This was measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The Affective Commitment Scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) consists of 8 items which all relates to the employees connection to the organization. Example items from this scale are “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization” and “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me”. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .83.

**Control Variables.** For this study, the control variables gender and position were chosen. They are both measured at the employee level. Position may influence the relationship with the employer because of opportunism. This can potentially affect the employees perception of the employers fulfillment of their obligations (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000).

**Data analysis**

SPSS 21 was used to analyze the data. For each variable means, standard deviations, frequencies and reliability were calculated. To proceed with the survey, participants had to fill out each page of the questionnaire. Some decided to drop out during the survey, but this data could still be used in the analysis because the data was stored from the pages that were filled out before they quit. However, this led to missing values in the relational psychological contract variable since this variable was in the final part of the survey. For this reason, relational psychological contract initially had 773 respondents, affective commitment had 937, while organizational culture and control variables had 948 respondents. When the missing data is fairly high, like in this study, the method chosen to replace this data can affect the final results (Schafer & Graham, 2002). The method that is perhaps the easiest for removing missing cases is listwise deletion of the cases with missing values. According to Schafer and Graham (2002), this can have negative consequences on descriptive statistics and on the results. For this reason, this study has chosen to use the Expectation-Maximization method to replace the missing values. This method uses the variance of the existing data to calculate which values are most likely to occur, and inserts these in place of the existing data. This is considered to be preferable to listwise deletion, and is considered to be the best among data replacement methods (Schafer & Graham, 2002).

This study uses two levels of data. Employees are represented in the first level (Level 1), and here affective commitment is measured as an outcome variable, and relational psychological contracts
as a mediator. The culture types adhocracy culture and clan culture were representing the predictor level (Level 2). A multi-level analysis puts the data samples into clusters, which allows us to examine the relationship between each of these clusters, as well as the relationship within each cluster. The process where data is collected from both employees and employers will reduce common method bias in a sample (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

Results

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics, correlations and the internal consistencies for this study are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The means (M) and the standard deviations (SD) are presented for all variables in this study. Correlations, means and standard deviations are presented for each level separately, to avoid the aggregation of the employee data and the disaggregation of the organizational data (Hox, 2002). We can tell by the table that most of the respondents have some sort of advanced position in the organization. Both Relational Psychological Contracts (measured on a 5-point Likert-scale) and Affective Commitment (measured on a 7-point Likert scale) have a mean that is a bit above what is average for the scale.

In Table 1 the strongest correlation is between Relational Psychological Contracts (RPCs) and Affective Commitment (r=.63, p<0.01). This indicates that when there is an increase in the affective commitment of an employee, there will also be an increase in their sense of relational psychological contracts and vice versa. There is also a significant negative relationship between Position and Relational Psychological Contracts (r=-.197, p<0.01), which may indicate that when a person has got a higher position in the organization, there will be less relational psychological contracts compared to when the person had a lower position. Finally, there is a large correlation between position and affective commitment (r=-.14, p<0.01). This suggests that the affective commitment will decrease as a result of a person getting a higher position in the organization.
Table 1.
Descriptive statistics, correlations and internal consistencies for variables at level 1.

<table>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>2</th>
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<td>1. Gender, female=1</td>
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<td>2. Position</td>
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<td>.374</td>
<td>-.09**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1 (employee variables)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. RPC</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Affective Commitment</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N=948; Cronbach’s alpha is reported along the diagonal. RPC=Relational Psychological Contracts.
**.p<0.01 (2-tailed)

In Table 2, we see the data for the organizational level. The means are quite a bit higher for the clan culture than for the adhocracy culture. These findings imply that the organizations that take part in this study generally view themselves as organizations with more of a clan culture than an adhocracy culture.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics, correlations and internal consistencies for variables at Level 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2 (Organizational variable)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Clan Culture</td>
<td>34.52</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adhocracy Culture</td>
<td>18.57</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>-.147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N=87; Cronbach’s alpha is reported along the diagonal.

Multilevel analysis
Different multilevel analyses were carried out to test the hypotheses. Table 3 is relevant to answering hypotheses 1a and b, Table 4 is used to help answer hypothesis 2, and figures from both of them will be used in testing hypothesis 3a and 3b. Both of them report the estimated fixed effects (Est.) and the standard error (SE). In addition to the relationship between relevant variables, the tables list the
unexplained variance between employees and the unexplained variance between organizations. Lastly, it reports the AIC (Akaike’s Information Criterion) which is an estimate of how well the different models (Steps) fit the data.

Table 3.  
Results of a multilevel analysis. Prediction of RPCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.32(.05)**</td>
<td>3.83(.15)**</td>
<td>3.60(.24)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.05(.05)</td>
<td>.04(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>-.31(.06)**</td>
<td>-.31(.00)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory var. (Level 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clan Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>.00(.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhocracy Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>.01(.01)†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Random Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance between emp.</td>
<td>.50(.02)**</td>
<td>.49(.02)**</td>
<td>.49(.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance between org.</td>
<td>.14(.03)**</td>
<td>.13(.03)**</td>
<td>.13(.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>2130</td>
<td>2110</td>
<td>2111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* AIC=Akaike’s information criterion. Step 3(St.)=Standardized version of the results in Step 3.  
**p<0.01  
† p<0.1

**Prediction of relational psychological contracts**

The first step was to calculate the intercept-only model for predicting psychological contracts. This helps us in finding the total unexplained variance on group level. The intraclass correlation (ICC) measure indicates that 21.8% of the unexplained variation can be found at the organizational level. In step 2, position and age are controlled for. There is a slight change in the AIC, which most likely can be explained by the correlation between position and relational psychological contracts. This step explains
7.3% of the variation at the group level. The final step, step 3, includes the explanatory variables clan culture and adhocracy culture. The explanation of the variance at group level increases to 13.3%, and there is a significant relationship between adhocracy cultures and RPC (p<0.1). However, there was no relationship between clan cultures and RPC. For these reasons, hypothesis 1b is supported by the data, hypothesis 1a however, is not.

Table 4.
Results of a multilevel analysis. Prediction of Affective Commitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.73(.65)**</td>
<td>5.39(.23)**</td>
<td>1.70(.23)**</td>
<td>1.62(.29)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.05(.08)</td>
<td>-.00(.06)</td>
<td>-.00(.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>-.39(.10)**</td>
<td>-.08(.08)</td>
<td>-.09(.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory var. (Level 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Psych. Contracts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.96(.04)**</td>
<td>.96(.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory var. (Level 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clan Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.00(.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhocracy Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.00(.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Random Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance between emp.</td>
<td>1.23(.06)**</td>
<td>1.22(.06)**</td>
<td>.74(.04)**</td>
<td>.74(.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance between org.</td>
<td>.16(.05)**</td>
<td>.15(.05)**</td>
<td>.08(.03)**</td>
<td>.09(.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>2953</td>
<td>2941</td>
<td>2476</td>
<td>2479</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AIC=Akaike’s information criterion. Step 4(St.)=Standardized version of the results in Step 4.

**p<0.01
Prediction of affective commitment

There is a significant effect both between and within organizations (Table 4, step 1). The ICC indicates that 11.5% of the unexplained variance in affective commitment is at the organizational level. The introduction of control variables (Table 4, step 2) causes a slight decrease in the AIC. This indicates a better fit of the model. This step explains 7.5% of the unexplained variance at the organizational level. In step 3 the explanatory variable RPC’s was added. The AIC decreases considerably, and the model is an even better fit. There is a strong significant relationship between affective commitment and RPC’s ($\beta=0.96, p<.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported (see Table 4, step 3). This step explains 43.6% of the unexplained variation at the organizational level.

The mediating role of relational psychological contracts

Hypotheses 3a and 3b are about how RPCs mediate the relationship between clan and adhocracy cultures and affective commitment. Path a in the mediation is found in table 3, step 3. There is no significant effect between clan culture and RPCs so this was not tested for any mediation. For adhocracy culture, however, there is a significant effect. Path b is in table 4, step 3, and as mentioned above, there is a strong relationship between RPCs and affective commitment. The Monte Carlo Bootstrap Web-tool (Selig & Preacher, 2008) was used to assess the mediation. Bootstrapping has been found to be “one of the more valid and powerful methods for testing intervening variable effects” (Hayes, 2009, p. 412). The significance interval was 5%. However, for the indirect effect between adhocracy culture to RPC’s and on to affective commitment, there is a confidence interval between 0.016 and 0.042. The interval does not go through zero, and thus confirms a mediation of the relationship between adhocracy cultures and affective commitment through RPCs.

Discussion

Several papers have argued that psychological contracts need to be examined further (Guest, 1998; Richard et al., 2009). The aim of this study was to address those concerns and look at two organizational cultures as antecedents and affective commitment as a consequence. In addition to this, the aim was to find out if there were any indirect effects through relational psychological contracts in the relationship between adhocracy and clan cultures and affective commitment. Online questionnaires were sent out to various organizations to collect data. The organizations were different in size and
structure, and they were both public and private. One questionnaire was answered by a leader within
the organization, and one was answered by employees. The participants in the study are thought to be a
diverse group that represents an average company's staff well.

Previous research have hypothesized and found support for a positive relationship between clan
culture and RPCs (Richard et al., 2009; Maguire, 2002). Richard et al. (2009) also found a positive
relationship between RPCs and affective commitment as well as a significant mediation by RPCs on
the relationship between clan cultures and affective commitment.

This study contributes to the field of research by further adding support to a comprehensive
picture of the psychological contract model as suggested by Guest (1998). In-depth studies are
completed of the relationship between two culture dimensions from the competing values framework
and RPCs, RPCs and affective commitment, and subsequently how RPCs mediate the relationship
between the culture dimensions and affective commitment. There have been discussions about whether
or not psychological contracts are really relevant anymore (Maguire, 2002; Guest, 1998), and the
findings presented in this paper helps establish psychological contracts as a useful instrument of
research. Even the non-significant results have some value in that they question existing research and
help further the knowledge about the field.

The present study found some significant results. (1) There was a significant relationship
between adhocracy cultures and RPCs, (2) the study found a significant relationship between RPCs and
affective commitment, and (3) it found a significant mediation of RPC's on the relationship between
adhocracy cultures and affective commitment. This supports hypotheses 1a, 2 and 3a. However, the
present study did not find any significant relationship between clan cultures and RPCs, and no
mediating effect of RPCs on the relationship between clan cultures and affective commitment. The
following section will discuss the results for each of the hypotheses separately.

Organizational culture, relational psychological contracts and affective commitment

There is very little research investigating the relationship between organizational cultures and
RPCs, and the organizations role in creating and shaping the psychological contract has largely been
overlooked. Richard et al. (2009) found a positive relationship in the instance of clan cultures, but did
not investigate adhocracy cultures. Several other researchers have implied that there might be a
relationship, but have not completed any actual studies on it (Guest, 1998; Rousseau, 1989; Hartnell et
al., 2011; Maguire, 2002; Mishra & Gupta, 2014). The present study argued that there is a positive
relationship between clan and adhocracy cultures and RPCs. The research was completed as an answer
to Guest's (1998) request for more research about the antecedents of RPCs, and as an extension to the research of Richard et al. (2009).

The present study did not find a significant effect of clan cultures on RPCs. This is contrary to what has been assumed in this thesis, and to what other researchers (Richard et al., 2009) have found. It is especially surprising as it seemed that clan cultures and employees with RPCs shared a lot of characteristics (e.g., trust, loyalty, respect). The relationship was expected to be smaller than the findings of Richard et al. (2009), because of the present study's use of multilevel methods and the elimination of common method bias, but a relationship was still expected. There was, however, a significant relationship between adhocracy cultures and RPCs. This is a new contribution to the field of research. It is an interesting finding that adhocracy cultures are related to the RPC while clan cultures are not. This supports hypothesis 1b, but not hypothesis 1a, and also means that organizations that are high in the flexibility dimension (Cameron & Quinn, 2006) do not necessarily have a positive relationship with the psychological contract. Exploring what characteristics of the adhocracy culture are related to RPC would be interesting. Creativity, adaptability and autonomy can all be possible explanations. One might think that for it to be relational psychological contracts in place, it is important to be adaptable to changes to avoid a breach of the contract. Adaptability is considered by employers to be a very important trait for employees to have (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan & Plamondon, 2000). Another thing that is important to consider is that people are different. Some employees might thrive in creative environments and establish strong relational contracts there. 'The creative class' (Florida, 2001) is assumed to have been at 30-40% of the total jobs in western countries in 2001, and is assumed to have increased since then (Florida, 2001). This might support the assumption that creativity is an important part of working-life for many people in western countries. Autonomy were thought to be related to trust between the employer and employee, and it still might be, but if this is the reason for the significance of adhocracy cultures, then there is more to this than just trust, as trust is a large part of clan cultures (Rousseau, 1989).

Another possible explanation in addition to the one mentioned above, might be found in the competing values framework. Clan cultures have an internal focus, while adhocracy cultures have an external focus (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). It is possible that employees in Norway generally establish stronger RPCs with organizations who focus on expansion and competing with others outside of their own boundaries, versus organizations that focuses on having harmonious internal characteristics (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).
Hypothesis 2 is the one that has received the greatest amount of attention from researchers. There are several studies that examine the link between RPCs and affective commitment (Millward & Hopkins, 1998; Rousseau, 1995; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Raja et al., 2004; Richard et al., 2009). In the present study, a strong link between the two is found, thus confirming the hypothesis. This study has shown that when there is an increase in the employees relational psychological contracts with the organization, there will also be an increase in the employees affective commitment towards the organization. This may in turn result in increased cooperation and individual initiative (Lepine et al., 2002), a reduction in turnover (Zhao et al., 2007), and an increase in the organizational effectiveness (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

As Rousseau (1995) stated, employees with a strong RPC will have a strong identification with the organization. They will internalize company values (Millward & Hopkins, 1998) and behave more as organizational citizens (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These strong ties with the company will increase affective commitment (Millward & Hopkins, 1998). Employees with high affective commitment have high work ethic (Kidron, 1978) and locus of control (Pierce & Dunham, 1987). The RPC is a reciprocal relationship, and given that there is no breach, one would assume that high work ethic makes the RPC stronger as there are more exchanges of beneficial actions (ref. social exchange theory, Blau, 1964). As the present research found a positive relationship, these are all things that might help to explain why RPCs might have an effect on affective commitment and vice versa.

It is worth noting that these findings may not be generalizable to other forms of commitment like continuance or normative commitment. Several studies have found that although RPCs have a relationship with commitment, this is mainly affective commitment (McInnis et al., 2008; Millward & Hopkins, 2008).

The main hypothesis in this study was whether the RPC mediated the relationship between clan and adhocracy cultures and affective commitment. There are few studies that have been done on this relationship, only one study was found that tested such a model (Richards et al., 2009). Seeing as there has been quite a lot of research on organizational cultures’ effect on commitment (Goodman et al., 2001; Lok & Crawford, 2001; Littman-Ovadia et al., 2013), it is surprising that there is not more research that examines possible mediating factors. Using the Monte Carlo Web Tool (Selig & Preacher, 2008), a significant mediation between adhocracy-oriented cultures and affective commitment was found, but no mediation between clan-oriented cultures and affective commitment. The lack of mediation of RPCs on the relationship between clan culture and affective commitment can be explained by the lack of a significant relationship between clan cultures and RPCs. Possible reasons for this are
mentioned above in relation to hypothesis 1a. When there is no relationship between the independent variable and the mediator, there cannot be a mediation.

The results in the present study support the hypothesis that RPCs explains some of the relationship between adhocracy cultures and affective commitment. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) might be useful in explaining the reason for the mediation. When employees feel like the organizations are allowing them the freedom to make own decisions and take initiative, and when inevitable mistakes are tolerated and responded to with constructive criticism, like in adhocracy cultures (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Quinn & Kimberly, 1984; Denison & Spreitzer, 1991), this might activate the exchange relationship that is inherent to RPCs. Employees may in turn respond with affective commitment to the organization.

Another interesting finding in this study, that is not a direct part of the hypotheses, are the significant negative relationship RPCs have with position. From the results of this research, it would seem that when an employee gets a higher position in the company, that person will have less RPCs.

**Limitations and suggestions for future research**

For the present study, limitations in the research method as well as the data set must be taken into consideration when reviewing the results. One of the benefits of multilevel methods is that it reduces common method bias by not relying entirely on self-report measures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Hypotheses one and three have two levels, and a lower likelihood of common method bias. The culture variables are measured on level 2, the organizational level, while RPCs are measured on level 1, the employee level. However, the variables in hypothesis two are only measured on the employee level. RPCs and affective commitment are measured entirely by self-report, and might be affected by common method bias. As a result of this, there is a chance the results have a lower level of validity and seem more powerful than they are. For future research, a solution might be to measure RPCs at the organizational level as well as the employee level.

There is another potential challenge with RPCs and affective commitment. There is a very large correlation of .63 (p<0.01) between them. This begs the question of whether or not they are too similar. With a correlation this high, it might be relevant for future studies to look into if these two scales are measuring two different things, or if they are too similar.

Another limitation of this study is the number of respondents in each company. According to Hox (2002), the average size of the number of employees in each organization should be approximately 20, and the number of companies should be above 50. While this study has more than 50 organizations,
the average number of employees within each organization is 13 (SD=30.98). However, Maas and Hox (2005) argue that the amount of organizations in the study is more important than the number of employees within each organization. Therefore, the most important thing for future studies will be to have a sample size for the variables at level two above 50, and then, if possible, to have around 20 participants within each group.

Related to this, the discrepancies between the sizes of the individual organizations might be a threat to the results. One organization has 227 respondents, while there are other with as few as one or two. As a result of this, the numbers on the individual level might be skewed towards the organization with most respondents. It is a recommendation for future studies to keep the respondent sizes as equal as possible.

**Conclusions and implications**

There are several findings in the present study that are important. First, it supports the assumption that some types of organizational cultures, in this case adhocracy cultures, does affect the relational psychological contracts that are established in the organization. This is important because of the effect RPCs have on loyalty, shared ideals, and socio-emotional values in general. These are all things that can be important to a successful organization (Raja et al., 2004; Rousseau, 1995).

The results also confirmed the strong relationship between RPCs and affective commitment. As affective commitment is linked with turnover reduction (Zhao et al., 2007) and increased organizational efficiency (Allen & Meyer, 1990) it is apparent that it is beneficial to an organization. According to what have been found in the present study, with a supportive and accepting environment in the workplace, and with positive relations, particularly between leaders and employees, there will be an increase in affective commitment. Understanding what makes employees committed to the organization will undoubtedly be of value to managers and leaders in organizations.

As for the mediation, it stresses the importance of the relational psychological contract and its antecedents and consequences. If there is no direct relationship between cultures and commitment, the psychological contract will be even more important, and this study recommends that organizations focus on maintaining relational psychological contracts in the workplace. The present study presents an improved understanding of psychological contracts, in order for organizations to be better equipped to prevent them from being violated. This should be central to leaders, managers and HR-managers.

This paper also presents several research implications for this subject. The disparity between the findings in this study and the study by Richard et al. (2007) is something that will need to be examined.
further. Culture seems to correlate better with RPCs when at level 1, than when culture is at level 2. This goes for both the culture-RPC link as well as the mediating role of RPCs. Multi-level analyses are recommended for testing this relationship. The effect of position on RPC is also something that the present study would suggest needed further research.

For a complete framework to be determined there are still some future research that needs to be done. How do the final two dimensions in the CVF impact psychological contracts? In Guests (1998) model, there are other antecedents and consequences as well. HRM-practices, job satisfaction and motivation are all factors that should be researched further.
References


