A Filter in the Chain of Command?
A quantitative study on the extent to which officials in the Swedish Government Offices perceive that they are governed by the political elite and ministerial advisers
Abstract
The aim of this thesis is to investigate to what extent the officials within the Swedish Government Offices consider themselves to be governed by the political elite (ministers and state secretaries) and the ministerial advisers (chief of staffs, planning directors, political advisers and press secretaries). In an ideal chain of command, the political elite governs the officials, since the ministers are appointed by the Prime Minister to govern the Government Office’s different policy areas. During recent years, political scientists have started to chart a phenomenon of an increasing number of ministerial advisers within the public administration. The Swedish Parliament has no formal capability to review or dismiss these ministerial advisers. Which is considered to be problematic in terms of democratic legitimacy, since the ministerial advisers are neither recruited through a transparent recruitment process based on their merits, nor are they politically appointed based on election results. Hence, the link between election results and who is given the mandate to take part in the policy process within the Swedish Government Offices can be seen as tenuous. The officials are at the government’s disposal to prepare and implement policies, and to contribute with their expertise in different policy areas, regardless of which political party or political coalition that is governing at the time. Thus, the purpose of this thesis has been to study the government officials’ perspective, and to what extent they consider themselves to be governed by the political elite and ministerial advisers. 91 government officials have answered a survey regarding to what extent they perceive that they are governed by the different roles in the political staff, and to what extent they consider having contact with the different roles in the political staff. The collected material has made it possible to merge the officials’ perspective on the different roles within the political staff into the categories the political elite and the ministerial advisers. This has been done in order to calculate a confidence interval to estimate officials’ perspective on the two categories within the Government Offices as a whole. The main findings of the study are that officials within the Government Offices consider themselves to be governed to a greater extent by the political elite, compared to the ministerial advisers. Although the officials consider that they are governed by the political elite, they have more contact with the ministerial advisers compared to the political elite. This could indicate that ministerial advisers are to a great extent mediating the contact between the political elite and the officials within the Swedish Government Offices.

Key words
Officials, The Swedish Government Offices, Political staff, Public administration, Political elite, Ministerial advisers.

Ämnesord
Tjänstemän, Regeringskansliet, Den politiska staben, Offentlig förvaltning, Den politiska ledningen, Politiska tjänstemän.
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Introduction

There are those that claim that a new category of public servants has emerged within the Swedish Government Offices. Ministerial advisers that have influence over the process of shaping public policy but neither are recruited based on their merits, nor are they politically appointed based on election results. This new category within the administration is by some depicted as political careerists nobled by the political elite (Isaksson, 2006). A problem that occurs when such discussions arise is that there are few systematic empirical studies on ministerial advisers within the public administration (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Hence, the absence of these ministerial advisers in contemporary political science research indicates a clear lack of understanding of how Swedish democracy actually is structured (Garsten, Rothstein & Svallfors, 2015).

The Government Offices is the governments tool in order to implement public policy. Thus, the officials within the administration are at the governments disposal in order to carry out political descisions and contribute with their expertise in the different policy areas. There are many reasons to research the Government Offices. The decisions made there affects all Swedish citizens, and in a political science perspective the Government Offices is the threshold between the politics and the administration, where the will of the people is refined into public policy (SOU 1997:15). Therefore, there is an incentive to thoroughly study the relationship between officials and politicians within the Government Offices.

Today there are about 4 800 employees in the Swedish Government Offices, and approximately 200 of those are working in the political staff (The Swedish Government Offices, 2018a). Of these 200 politically appointed employees only the ministers are accountable to the Swedish Parliament (Ullström, 2011). The Swedish parliament has no formal capability to review or dismiss the residual ministerial advisers in the political staff (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Hence, it is of relevance to investigate to what extent these non-elected ministerial advisers are a part of the chain of command within the Swedish Government Offices; and the extent to which officials considers to be governed by them.
Aim and research question

The aim of this thesis is to investigate officials’ perspective on the political elite and ministerial advisers, in order to see if ministerial advisers are a part of the chain of command within the Government Offices. Previous research has mainly focused on ministerial advisers’ role within the administration, and if they consider themselves to have influence over the policy process. No previous research project has turned to the officials (which are the vast majority of employees in the Government Offices) in order to investigate to what extent they perceive that they are governed by the political elite and ministerial advisers. This leads us to the main research question:

*To what extent do officials within the Swedish Government Offices perceive that they are governed by the political elite and ministerial advisers, respectively?*

Furthermore, the aim has been to answer additional questions regarding to what extent government officials perceive that they have contact with the political elite and ministerial advisers. Since officials are at the governments disposal to prepare and implement public policy it is of interest to investigate contact between the administration and the political staff. Thus, contact between officials and politicians is a crucial aspect of governing within the Swedish Government Offices. In an ideal chain of command, it is the government that inform and interact with the officials in order to control the administration, not the ministerial advisers. In addition, the aim has also been to investigate officials’ perception on work structure between them and the political staff, in order to examine if the structures for governing and contact were set or unclear.

The intention of this thesis is to be a pilot study with a purpose to provide a foundation for future researchers to start from that want to further investigate the threshold between politics and administration within the Government Offices. Since previous research on ministerial advisers has not covered government officials’ perspective, a first step has been to investigate if government officials perceive that the ministerial advisers are a part of the chain of command or not. Thus, the objective of this research project is to examine if government officials to some extent perceive that they are governed by ministerial advisers; and to examine to what extent they have contact with the political elite and ministerial advisers within the Government Offices.
Previous Research and the Problem in Theoretical Terms

Contributions of previous research on ministerial advisers within public administration are scarce. This becomes even more evident when it comes to studying ministerial advisers in relation to traditional officials within the Swedish Government Offices. Thus, the theoretical framework for this study is largely based on literature that has charted the phenomenon of increasing numbers of ministerial advisers within public administration, and to the extent that literature covers ministerial advisers’ interactions with government officials in Sweden. Previous research has contributed with insights on these advisers, what their motives are and to what extent they experience that they have influence over the policy process (Garsten et al., 2015). Others have looked into the organisation of the political staff and studied the work processes, internal roles and hierarchies (Ullström, 2011).

During recent years only one research project has examined the relationship between the politicians and the officials within the Swedish Government Offices; namely, Niemann’s doctoral dissertation Villkorat förtydande, which is probably the most similar research project to this thesis. Niemann studies the two groups’ expectations of themselves, of each other and their roles within the Swedish Government Offices (Niemann, 2013). The dissertation focuses on role expectations between ministers, state secretaries and ministries’ top officials, and does not cover the dynamics between ground level officials (the majority of the officials) and the ministerial advisers (the majority of the political staff).

This dissertation is a study of the interactions between top officials and the political elite (not the political staff), and not a study in a more general sense that focuses on the politicians and the officials within the Swedish Government Offices (Niemann, 2013, p. 42).

A discovery by Niemann was that there has been a shift in who the government officials expected to be governed by: from the minister to the state secretary. Thus, the state secretaries had become a key figure within the Government Offices with the main task of conveying the ministers’ intentions to government officials. Niemann describes that this discovery may also imply that ministerial advisers to a great extent conveys the minister’s intentions to the officials (Niemann, 2013).

Like many political scientists before me I am curious to find out what happens with allocated power from the people given to the political elite. How is it used and who are invited to take part in the policy process? The first chapter in the Instrument of Government gives us a brief declaration on the Government Office’s purpose. The Instrument of Government declares that “The Government governs the Realm. It is accountable to the Riksdag.” (The Instrument of Government, 2016, chapter 1:6§). Furthermore, in order to assist the government to carry out this task the government has its own office, the Swedish Government Offices. “The Government Offices shall exist for the preparation of Government business and to assist the Government and ministers in their other duties.” (The Instrument of Government, 2016, chapter 7:1§). As the government desires to control the state and its authorities, it must also

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1 Translated from Swedish to English.
be able to control its own office and the government officials working there. Thus, the governing should be carried out through the Government Offices, but how it ought to be done is not further explained in the Swedish constitution. To comprehend how this is executed is an important piece of the puzzle in understanding how the Swedish democracy is structured, and it is also our next step in the search for the power allocated by the people.

The fundamental idea of our representative democracy is that power is given by the people to the representatives in the Swedish Parliament, who then have the mandate to elect the Prime Minister, who in turn selects the ministers who collaboratively govern through the Government Offices. The last link is based on a hierarchical principle, that the public administration is at the government’s disposal to prepare and implement policies; thus, the public administration is obligated to serve the government (Bergström, 1987). Hence, according to the Instrument of Government, in an ideal democratic chain of command officials are governed by the government and not by or through ministerial advisers (Ullström, 2011).

Even the democratic theoretician Robert A. Dahl mentions the phenomenon of the increasing number of ministerial advisers in his concluding thoughts on what challenges modern democracies face in his well-known classic Democracy and Its Critics. Dahl describes that one of the major threats that modern societies face is the emergence of a certain group of political intellectuals in the public administration (Dahl, 1991). According to Dahl the emergence of these political intellectuals can be seen as a response to an increasingly complex public administration. The main issue he emphasises is that the people have no capability to dismiss these political intellectuals that administer public decisions. Thus, there is a risk that democracies end up in a kind of pseudo guardianship, and according to Dahl, many modern societies already have (Ibid).

Research on the Swedish Government Offices

Before the 1980s research on the Swedish Government Offices were almost non-existent, but during the decade several pioneer studies (Linde 1982; Jacobsson, 1984; Larsson, 1986; Bergström, 1987) paved the way and contributed with insight and understanding of the public administration surrounding the government in the Klara area of Stockholm. The explorative research projects on the Government Offices during this time have been describes as “the black box opened to a significant extent” (Premfors et al., 2007, p. 9).\(^2\) Researched on the Government Offices prospered during the 1980s but were to a large extent absent during the 1990s and even during the early 21\(^{st}\) century (Niemann, 2013). Although, a number of reports from the Swedish Government Official Report-series\(^3\) have been produced about, and by, the Swedish Government Offices (Ibid).

\(^2\) Translated from Swedish to English.
\(^3\) The SOU-series.
The organisation of the officials

The definition of officials in this thesis is the merit recruited public servants within the Swedish Government Offices contracted as desk officers, senior advisers, head of divisions, deputy directors or clerical officers. The desk officers are responsible for a certain policy area and have the function as rapporteurs for that certain policy area to the minister (Janusson, 2004). A step above in hierarchy are the deputy directors and the senior advisers. Deputy directors are often handling personnel matters and works as the head of a unit, unlike senior advisers that are ordinarily specialists within a certain policy area (Ibid). The civil servants titled as head of divisions are the head of a department within a ministry, and they usually have a clerical officer working for them to unburden them of the administrative work (The Swedish Government Offices, 2018b). The major difference between officials and ministerial advisers within the Government Offices is the way they are recruited. When recruiting officials within the public administration in Sweden the fundamental idea is to select the candidate that is most suitable for the job based on education, previous experience and expertise (a recruitment based on objective criteria). The idea is that a transparent merit-based recruitment process ensures that the position gets the best suited candidate in a fair way (Wockelberg, 2003).

The emergence of ministerial advisers

Politically employed officials working for the ministers are a relative new phenomenon in the Swedish public administration. The first advisers were recruited during the 1970s (Ullström, 2011). The main difference between traditional officials and ministerial advisers is the contract which they are employed by. The politician contract was established in 1979 in order to regulate the growing number of ministerial advisers working for the ministers (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Thus, two categories emerged, the political and the unpolitical officials within the Swedish Government Offices. To maintain stringency throughout this thesis these two categories are referred to as ministerial advisers and officials.

The politician contract has a lower degree of employment security compared to the contract of the traditionally merit recruited officials. It is linked to the minister the ministerial adviser is currently working for, and if the minister is forced to resign all of the ministerial advisers that work for that minister are also forced to resign (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Thus, the job as a ministerial adviser can be seen as an extension of the minister, a job defined by the risk that it can end at any given time (Ibid). A problem, in terms of legitimacy, is that there is little to none insight in the process of appointing these ministerial advisers. The Swedish parliament has no formal capability to review or dismiss ministerial advisers. Hence, the link between election results and who is given mandate to take part in the process of shaping public policy within the Swedish Government Offices is tenuous (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Although ministerial advisers have increased notably in number during the latest decades, they are still in the vast minority compared to the officials.

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4 See the original titles in Swedish in the Appendices, under the heading Appendix B: Dictionary of Swedish titles and technical terms used in the thesis on page 31.

5 Ministerial advisers are also the most common used term for politically appointed officials within the public administration in an international research context.
working within the Swedish Government Offices. Of the almost 4 800 employees in the offices, approximately 200 are politically appointed (The Swedish Government Offices, 2018a). The work dynamic between these two groups is occasionally depicted as a classical drama between on the one hand, the few, temporary and unprofessional and on the other hand, the many, permanent, and competent (Jacobsson, 2009).

The organisation of the political staff

The political staff forms a small group of people working closely together. The minister is the head of the staff, and closest to the minister are the state secretaries that controls the ministerial advisers (Ullström, 2011). Below is a brief description of the roles, and how tasks are divided within the political staff in the Government Offices.

The political elite

Ministers are appointed by the prime minister to govern the different ministries within the Government Offices. They are responsible for both the ministries’ different policy areas and the internal organisation. The state secretary is the immediate subordinate of the minister with a function to unburden the minister of the internal duties, internal decision making, and staff matters (Ullström, 2011). Although the ministers are the head of the ministries, they mainly focus on the external matters of the ministry, and the state secretaries have the role as the head in command of the ministry’s internal matters. Thus, the ministers and the state secretaries can be considered the political elite. State secretaries are appointed by the minister and are considered as chief officials within a ministry. Compared to the ministerial advisers, the state secretaries’ contract slightly differs in its enunciation (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Hence, the state secretaries can be seen as a hybrid between officials and politicians (Wallin, 1999). This dual role as both a chief official and a politician allows the state secretary, unlike the ministerial advisers, to be seen as a part of the chain of command. Thus, it is legitimate (in a democratic perspective) that they in their role as chief officials control the government officials within the ministry. It is also this dual role that make the state secretary a key role within in the Swedish Government Offices (Ullström, 2011).

The ministers are accountable to the Swedish Parliament. Which means that if a minister makes a grave mistake, they can always be held accountable by a motion of no-confidence by the parliament. This is declared in the sixth chapter in the Instrument of Government: “If the Riksdag declares that the Prime Minister, or a member of his or her Government, no longer has its confidence, the Speaker shall discharge the minister concerned.” (The Instrument of Government, 2016, chapter 6:7§). In addition, ministers are constantly audited by the media and the slightest mistake may force the minister to resign. The same democratic defence mechanisms do not apply to ministerial advisers.⁶ Ministerial advisers are shrouded by the public unawareness of who they are, and to what extent they are a part of the policy process (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007).

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⁶ Although the ministerial advisers can be seen as an extension of the minister, they are still individuals with influence over the policy shaping process.
Ministerial advisers

The politician contract includes the roles as chief of staff, planning director, political adviser and press secretary. These roles together with the minister and the state secretary create the political staff (Westerberg & Niemann, 2007). Thus, the political staff can be divided into the political elite and the ministerial advisers. A rule of thumb is that each minister has about one or two state secretaries in the political staff, the rest of the staff are contracted as ministerial advisers. Whilst the state secretary is expected to lead, plan and coordinate the work within the ministry (the unpoltical administrative duties), ministerial advisers devote their activities to the political work of formulating arguments, preparing the minister’s media appearances and setting policy agendas (Ullström, 2011).

One of the most extensive studies that has been made on ministerial advisers is Makt utan mandat by Garsten, Rothstein and Svallfors (2015). They depict ministerial advisers as neither politicians or civil servants, but a new addition within the public administration with unclear responsibilities and mandate to take part in the policy process (Garsten et al., 2015). The authors even argue that a possible consequence could be that officials to a lesser extent can have direct contact with the minister. Which may lead to the dilemma that vital information between the administration and the political elite is filtered and rephrased through the ministerial advisers (Ibid). Others describe ministerial advisers as a direct link from the Government Offices to the politician’s own party, and that ministerial advisers can be seen as party workers within the Government Offices (Ullström, 2011).

A shift in the threshold between politics and administration

The Swedish administrative model has a tradition of having a distinct organisational boundary between politics and administration (Jacobsson & Sundström, 2006). The threshold has traditionally been drawn between ministries and public authorities, and the Government Offices has been seen as a politically governed organisation (Ullström, 2011). This rule of thought can be derived to the instruction given by the Instrument of Government mentioned previously in this chapter “The Government Offices shall exist for the preparation of Government business and to assist the Government and ministers in their other duties.” (The Instrument of Government, 2016, chapter 7:1§). Thus, the Government Offices are at the government’s disposal to aid the government in its task to control the public authorities under it. But due to changing structures within the Government Offices the threshold between politics and the administration has transferred into the Government Offices.

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7 A classification based on the contract they are employed by.
8 Thus, the ministerial advisers are the vast majority of the political staff.
9 The idea of a politically governed organisation is that the government sets goals and a direction and the officials execute the policy in practice.
The expansion of both the political staff, with additional ministerial advisers, and the increased number of officials working within the Government Offices, the organisational internal structure tends to resemble the relation between ministries and public authorities. Thus, the border between politics and administration is transferred into the ministries, including the frictions between these two spheres (SOU 1997:15, p. 196).  

It is this border between politics and administration, between the officials and the political staff, that is of high importance to examine for one who is interested in how the will of the people is refined into public policy. If the threshold between politics and the administration has transferred into the Government Offices, the case could be that established structures on how governing ought to be executed have been reformulated in the process.

Officials and the political staff in an international perspective

In an international context some political scientists argue that the increased number of ministerial advisers within government offices act as a firewall around the minister. Safeguarding the minister from both internal criticism from officials within the ministry, as well as external criticism from media and other political parties (Kimber, 2004). Others argue that the new category of ministerial advisers give the officials a well needed competition, and that ministerial advisers provide officials with incentives to lift their performance (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2007). A report by the OECD that examined dynamics between officials and ministerial advisers within some of the member states came up with interesting results regarding the different motives of the two groups. The report draws attention to the problems that may arise between the on the one hand merit recruited officials and on the other hand politically appointed ministerial advisers (OECD, 2007).

Political advisors are usually more interested in short-term results, civil servants in long-term consequences. Political advisors are in a hurry; civil servants can afford to give more time to thought. Political advisors have an eye on the electoral dimension, civil servants much less so. Political advisors are apt to be more innovative; civil servants are more cautious, partly by nature, partly because they have to live with the consequences. In addition, beyond question, the introduction of political advisors into a system of decision-making complicates the already complex process of getting a decision out of the government machine. (OECD, 2007, p. 14).

One of the reports main findings is that the relationship between ministerial advisers and officials tend to be problematic in most of the examined member states. Especially in ministries where ministerial advisers are new and officials are seniors in their positions (OECD, 2007). Since the OECD-report did not study the dynamics between officials and ministerial advisers in the Sweden it is not possible to know if the same frictions occur between the two groups in the Swedish Government Offices. Nevertheless, it is of interest for this thesis to consider that officials and ministerial advisers can have different motives, and that the differences can cause frictions between the two groups.

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10 Translated from Swedish to English.
11 The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.
12 The research project investigated the member states Denmark, Poland, Portugal, Spain and The United Kingdom.
13 Note here that ministerial advisers are referred to as political advisers, and officials are referred to as civil servants. The terms tend to differ between reports, but the meaning is similar.
Definition of governing

Within the field of political science there are different ideas regarding what governing is, and how it ought to be carried out, that vary to a great extent. There are different aspects of governing, both in theory (ideals of governing) and different ideas on how it should be executed through different forms of governing (Premfors, 2009). Frequently governing is described in a meta perspective. Political governance is often portrayed as the state governs the society through laws, public authorities and policies (Ullström, 2011). A key aspect to the definition is to understand how politicians turn ideas, ideology and will into practice. In order to govern the society, the government’s most important instrument is the public administration (Lundquist, 1992). The governing of the administration can take different forms, be precise or vague, formal or informal. Distinctions which in turn affect the range of action of the administration (Wockelberg, 2003). Thus, it is possible to either use a wide definition of governing, or to choose a narrow definition of the term. The definition of governing in this thesis is similar to Ullströms’ definition of the term in her doctoral dissertation Styrning bakom kulisserna (2011), in order to maintain stringency in the field of research. The theoretical definition of governing in this thesis could thus be defined as the measures taken by the political staff to influence the Government Office’s officials to work in the way the political staff wishes.
Research Design

This research project is an exploratory study with the intention to describe and analyse collected surveys from government officials. Therefore, the thesis will not make any claims to interpret the cause, or what affects the thesis’ findings. Pure descriptive studies may seem to be of lower rank within the research community (unlike explanatory research that can make attempts to explain the cause and effect of different variables) but are an important starting point in order to further investigate the causality of a phenomenon (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). Thus, the aim of this thesis is to lay a foundation for future researchers with the intent to further explore the threshold between politics and the administration within the Swedish Government Offices. This thesis contribution to the field of research is to describe the officials’ perspective on who governs the administration, if it is the political elite or the ministerial advisers. The intent has also been to examine to what extent officials perceive that they have contact with the political elite and ministerial advisers. Since contact between politicians and officials is a crucial aspect of controlling the administration, it is of interest to find out whether the ministerial advisers act as a minor or major part in the chain of command within the Government Offices.

A quantitative approach to the problem

In order to investigate the extent to which government officials within the Swedish Government Offices perceive that they are governed by the ministerial advisers and the political elite respectively, one must decide how to approach a possible answer to the research question. The method used in this thesis has been quite forward, by asking them. The answers from the officials (who further in this chapter will be referred to as respondents) were collected through a survey with 20 questions. An important distinction in this study is that the government officials are considered as respondents and not as informants. Thus, it is the officials’ own thoughts and perceptions that are analysed. Compared to informants that contribute with knowledge and information on a phenomenon (Esaiasson et al., 2017).

The survey collected answers on five different types of information from the officials: the official’s title; their perspective on the organisational structure between the political staff and the officials; to what extent the official perceived that they were governed by the different roles in the political staff; to what extent the different roles in the political staff contacted them with work related issues, and who the officials turned to in order to reach the political elite. The different questions in survey will further in this chapter be referred to as variables, and what the respondents chose to answer in each question will be referred to as variable values.

A variable that were not included in the survey, but still was collected information on is which ministry the officials were working at the time they answered the survey. Since 1997 the Swedish Government Offices is one authority as a whole, and

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14 See the full survey on page 30, under the heading Appendices.
15 Excluding additional questions with the purpose to give the respondents a possibility to clarify something in their answer.
the ministries within the Government Offices can be seen as different branches, with responsibility over the government’s different policy areas (Storgärds, 2018). Although, the Government Offices today is one authority, it is still of interest to know which ministry the respondent worked at when he or she filled in the survey. This is especially relevant in two aspects in relation to this study. Firstly, work atmosphere and culture may vary between different ministries. Secondly, since ministries may differ between each other, variation between ministries could affect the thesis’s results since the respondents were neither evenly distributed between the ten ministries, nor were all ten ministries represented in the sample of officials that answered the survey. This limitation will be further discussed under the heading Possible limitations in the end of this chapter.

The intention with this thesis is to describe government officials’ perspective on the political elite and ministerial advisers within the Government Offices, and not just to examine the sample of respondents that filled in the survey. Hence, the approach to the problem has been to use a quantitative method in order to be able to use the statistical tools necessary to make a generalisation within a certain confidence interval. The idea behind statistical assumptions is that it is never possible to know anything with certainty, it is only possible to know something within a certain level of uncertainty (Esaiasson et al., 2017).

In the process of constructing a survey it is important that the questions are formulated as accurate as possible, and in such a way that the respondents cannot misinterpret the questions (in order to maintain good validity and reliability). All the respondents in this survey have been asked the same predetermined questions. Additional blank textboxes were added if the respondents wanted to clarify something in their answer. When formulating questions, it is important that the questions should not be influenced by the researcher’s own preconceived ideas of the problem, which could reflect the researcher’s perspective rather than the respondents’ own perspective (Thurén, 2007). In the process of formulating the survey’s questions feedback has been given from an official working at the Human Resources department in the Government Offices. The feedback was helpful in order to include all the different titles of the officials and all different roles within the political staff in the Government Offices. It was also helpful in order to know if the questions were based upon a reasonable interpretation of the organisational structure within the Government Offices.

There are two distinct advantages of using surveys as a method to collect information from respondents. Firstly, the questions are formulated exactly the same for all of the respondents. Secondly, the process of coding the variables is more reliable compared to, for example, a qualitative approach where the researchers own skill to interpret the result is of importance. As the political science professors Teorell and Svensson puts it: “the eye is more reliable than the ear” (Teorell & Svensson, 2007, p. 91). Thus, by using a quantitative method the process of analysing the

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16 See the respondents’ distribution between ministries on page 24, in the next chapter.
17 The officials are categorised by the title in the contract which they are employed by. The titles could be described as internal role hierarchies between officials within the Government Offices. An important distinction here is that titles are not the same thing as roles. Officials with the same title can have different job descriptions, and different duties.
18 Translated from Swedish to English.
variable values in a survey is less dependent on the researchers own ability to interpret the results, and more dependent on that the questions are asked in a correct manner. A quantitative approach has many advantages to this kind of research project, but it is unable to further investigate opinions and to provide a deeper understanding of the relation between officials and the political staff within the Government Offices (Esaiasson et al., 2017). Although, this has not been this thesis’ objective, it would be an interesting approach for future researchers with the intent to further analyse the relation between officials and the political staff.

The variables

This section will first give a brief description on why the different variables were added in the survey, and then proceed to explain why the variables were formulated in three different types of scales. By examining government officials’ perception on the different variables in the survey, it has possible to approach a possible answer to the research question.

The variable which examined governing has been crucial to answer the research question, since it measures to what extent officials perceive that they are governed by the different roles in the political staff. In addition, the variables which examined contact have also been important since the aim was to chart to what extent officials perceive that they have contact with the different roles in the political staff. The reason to collect information on the respondents’ titles were twofold; it was of interest to know what kind of officials that answered the survey, and it was important to know if the sample was similarly distributed in titles as the distribution of officials in the Government Offices as a whole. Information on the respondents’ perspective on work structure was collected in order to investigate if there were clear and evident boundaries in how work between the political staff and the officials were distributed, or if work structure between the two was unclear or flexible.

Information on these different variables were collected through three different kinds of measurement scales, a nominal, an ordinal and an interval scale. Measurement scales are used to categorise different types of variables, and different variables require different types of measurement (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). The different scales in the survey are designed in order to fulfil two purposes, to efficiently collect the information needed to answer the research question and to collect information in a way that it was possible to present a result using statistical calculations. The first variable in the survey is a nominal scale that collected information on the respondents’ title. Nominal scales are useful in order to label variable values into categories (such as titles) but cannot be used to measure the distance between variable values (Neuendorf, 2017). The second variable is constructed as an ordinal scale and measures the respondents’ perspective on the organisational structures between the officials and the political staff. This question was designed as an ordinal scale in order to be able present a result such as x percent of the respondents considered the organisational structure to be..., and not an interval scale since the intention was not to make statistical calculations from the collected information. The two first variables are designed in such a way that the collected variable values could be presented in a relative frequency table, since it facilitates the readability of the results (Teorell & Svensson, 2007).
The key variables that collected the necessary information in order to answer the research question were formulated in the question number three and four in the survey. The officials’ perception on governing and contact were measured in an interval scale that ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (always). A benefit of having a scale that range from 1 – 7 is that the respondents had the possibility to answer a variable value in the middle of the scale, 4, which indicated sometimes. Thus, the respondents were not forced to put in either a high value or a low value. A scale with fewer variable values tend to make uncertain assumptions. A scale with more variable values estimates a more accurate result, but only up to a certain degree (Teorell & Svensson, 2007).

A few words on the use of interval scales within the field of political science. It is common to use an interval scale to measure subjective variables, an example is this thesis that measures governing and contact in a scale that ranges from 1 – 7. These variables are not strictly meant to be measured in an interval scale since the variables lack a unit of measurement (unlike mathematics or economics that can measure a physical number of objects, or x amount of money). Thus, the subjective variables were given a value. The reason to do this is that it allows us to make a statistical calculation on variables that otherwise only could be measured in an ordinal scale (Teorell & Svensson, 2007).

Analyzing the variables

This section will present the statistical formulas which have been used in the process of analysing the collected material together with a brief explanation on why these are useful tools in order to approach the collected material. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the different roles within the political staff can be divided into two different subcategories based on their contract, the political elite and the ministerial advisers. To calculate the differences in the officials’ perspective on these two categories the political staff has been merged into these two categories. The political elite consists of the ministers and the state secretaries, and the ministerial advisers consists of the chief of staffs, the planning directors, the political advisers and the press secretaries.

To measure the average answered value in the officials’ perception on the political elite and the ministerial advisers the mean\(^{20}\) value ($\bar{x}$) have been calculated for both categories. The mean value is a measurement of centrality that shows the average answered value of all respondents that have answered the survey. The mean indicates the average value of the sample ($n$), but not the average value of the whole population (thus the mean is only a point estimate of the population mean). It is an effective indicator to see the distribution of variable values between the two categories, and a necessary measurement for further calculations. Another useful tool in order to examine the answers in the collected surveys have been to calculate the standard deviation of the sample. The standard deviation ($s$) shows the degree of

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\(^{19}\) For the categorisation, see page number 6–7, under the headings The political elite and Ministerial advisers.

\(^{20}\) The mean is the average value that the respondents have answered for each category in the survey. It is calculated by first appraising the mean for each category in each survey, and then divide the sum by the count (since it is grouped data).
heterogeneity in the respondents’ answers (how much the officials’ answers differ between each other). The standard deviation is a measurement of the uncertainty associated with the sample and can be represented by the following equation:

\[ s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}} \]

The standard deviation is a measurement of spread that gives information on how much the officials’ answers vary between the collected surveys, it is also a required calculation in order to estimate if the collected answers in the sample can say something about the population as a whole (all officials within the Swedish Government Offices). In order to increase readability and to make it easier to compare the spread in the different variables the standard deviation is changed to the relative standard deviation (the coefficient of variation) in the next chapter, when presenting the thesis’ results.

Calculating a confidence interval

This survey collected information from 91 officials working within the Government Offices, but is there a possibility that the results indicates something about the Government Offices as a whole? In order to find out, the approach has been to look into the logic behind statistical inference. As mentioned earlier, the idea behind statistical assumptions is that it is never possible to know anything with certainty, it is only possible to know something within a certain interval of uncertainty. The sample in this study is the collected answers from the officials that filled in the survey. Thus, the sample size (n) is 91 out of approximately 4,600 officials working within the Government. With this sample size it has been possible to calculate significant confidence intervals from the collected material. Fortunately, it is not necessary to make an estimate about the total number of officials working within the Government Offices since we can consider all officials within the Government Offices as an infinite population. The method that has been used in order to estimate the mean value of all officials within the Government Offices has been to calculate a confidence interval. First a confidence interval for the mean value of each category has

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21 The standard deviation of the mean (\(\bar{x}\)) is calculated by subtracting each given variable value \(x_1, x_2, x_3 \ldots\) and so on, up to \(x_{91}\), in order to analyse all respondents’ answers in the survey) by the mean. The deviations were then squared and added together in order to get one sum. The new value was then divided by the sample size minus one (\(n-1\), in this case \(91-1 = 90\)). The square root of the new value is the standard deviation (\(s\)) of the sample.

22 The standard deviation indicates the spread from the mean value and is measured in the same scale as the variable. A value of zero indicates that there is no spread in the sample (all the respondents have answered exactly the same on all the questions), a larger the number indicates that there is more spread in the variable values.

23 The standard deviation measured in percentage.

24 The number of employees within the Government Offices (approximately 4,800) minus the number of political employees (approximately 200). See page 5–6, under the heading The emergence of ministerial advisers.
been calculated (officials’ average answered value on the political elite and the political advisers). Then a confidence interval for the difference of the two means has been calculated, the mean value of the officials’ perception of the political elite and the ministerial advisers. The confidence interval will show, within a certain interval, the mean value of all officials in the Government Offices at a certain level of security. The confidence interval for the difference of the two categories’ mean values can simply be represented by the following equation:

\[ \bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 \mp t_{kv} \times \sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}} \]

Figure 1.2: Confidence interval for the difference between two means.

In this thesis all confidence intervals have been calculated with a security level set to 95% (with a critical \( t_{kv} \) value of 1.96). This means that in 19 out of 20 samples taken from the whole population (all officials within the Government Offices) the true value of government officials’ perception will be found within a certain interval, thus the confidence interval (Lewis-Beck & Lewis-Beck, 2016). A larger sample size of the whole population narrows down the interval, which facilitates the process of making estimates on a whole population, or if it is even possible at all (Teorell & Svensson, 2007).

Hence, the sample size (\( n \)), when calculation a confidence interval is crucial. However, it is important to keep in mind that the precision of the estimate does not increase proportionally to the sample size, the sample needs to be quadrupled in order to double the precision of the estimate (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). In the next section a brief explanation on the logic behind this will be presented. In order to know if the confidence interval can tell if there is a difference between the two variable values (officials’ perception of the political elite and the ministerial advisers) the interval must not include zero. This means that if the interval ranges from a negative value to a positive value (or vice versa) it is not possible to know whether there is a difference in the officials’ perception between the two categories or not (Lewis-Beck & Lewis-Beck, 2016). This is commonly described as testing the null hypothesis, which means that if the interval includes the value zero no significance exists within the collected material, the difference is thus only due to chance (Thulin, 2014).

The central limit theorem

In the following section there will be a brief explanation of the central limit theorem, which is used to understand if the sample, the collected surveys from the officials, can be seen as a representation of the population, all officials within the Government Offices. If the number of collected surveys from the officials (\( n \)) is large enough, it is possible to assume that the mean value (\( \bar{x} \)) of the collected surveys

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25 The equation in figure 1.2 consists of the mean value of the ministerial advisers and the political elite (\( \bar{x}_i \)), the squared standard deviation of the ministerial advisers and the political elite (\( s^2 \)) and the sample size of the two categories (\( n_i \)). The critical value (\( t_{kv} \)) depends on what level of security the interval should be calculated.
will be approximately equal to the mean value of all officials within the Government Offices (Lewis-Beck & Lewis-Beck, 2016). This is the central limit theorem, which describes that representative samples follows the normal distribution of the population. The central limit theorem is regarded as one of the most powerful insights of statistics since it applies regardless of the distribution in the population (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). However, there is a problem. In order to be able to know the normal distribution one must know the standard deviation of the population (which is impossible to know without collecting surveys from all officials within the Government Offices). Therefore, the standard deviation from the sample is used in order to create a t-distribution. Thus, by using the central limit theorem it is possible to approximate the standard deviation of the population by using the standard deviation (s) and the sample size (n) in order to calculate the standard error. Dependent on that the sample size is large enough, regardless of the underlying distribution in the population, it is possible to calculate the likelihood that the sample resembles the Government Offices as a whole.

The officials that participated in the survey

To reach officials within the Government Offices one must dial the telephone number 08-405 10 00, the number to the telephone exchange (The Swedish Government Offices, 2018c). It is the bottleneck from which all contact to the Government Offices goes through. I cannot remember how many times I dialled that number, but I do know that after a couple of months of researching the Government Offices it is a clever idea to make a list of names of the people you have been in contact with. The officials that participated in the survey worked at six different ministries: The Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health and Social Affairs; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Education and Research; Ministry of the Environment and Energy, and the Ministry of Culture. The approach in order to collect the surveys has been to ask an official at each ministry to be a contact person for the research project and then make a visit in order for the officials to fill in the survey (one does not simply walk into the government buildings in the Klara area of Stockholm). For some of the contact persons this have been a possible approach, but four of the contact persons insisted to collect the answers themselves from their colleagues. The survey has been randomly distributed to officials at his or her desk, and even those officials who insisted to collect answers themselves were given the instruction to give out the survey at random.

Since the respondents for this study are not the easiest persons to reach (government officials have no obligation to answer surveys from students, there have been a few polite thank you, but no thank you conversations) the approach has been to collect all answers possible in order to get a sample size worthy a statistical estimate. Thus, the approach has been to use a stratified convenience sample and not a stratified sample, which would have been an ideal approach. This will be further discussed under the heading Possible Limitations. Perhaps the officials who answered this survey were more interested in the purpose of the study than others. The

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26 The t-distribution is based on the sample and follows the normal distribution of the population. A larger number of surveys collected increases the similarity to the normal distribution of the population.

27 The standard error is a measurement of the uncertainty in a point estimate, it consists of the standard deviation of the means in each survey.
respondents may also be those with less workload, and therefore had the time to fill in a survey (during the time the surveys were collected Sweden was in an interim period without government, which affected some officials’ workload more than others).

**My contact with the Government Offices**

One of the main reasons I chose to research the Government Offices is that I was curious to see to what extent government officials were governed by ministerial advisers. I have previously worked as a desk officer at the Ministry of Finances, which has facilitated the research project to a great extent (it takes a while to understand the internal structure of the Government Offices, a complex web of internal bureaucracy). Without this experience it is unlikely that I would have undertaken the task, due to the limited scope of study. That being said, it has not been an easy research project to carry through all along (I think all researchers more or less experience a few setbacks during the work process). As mentioned in the first chapter the ministerial advisers within the Government Offices are not a well-documented phenomenon²⁸, and especially not in what extent they interact with officials within the ministries. From my previous experiences my point of view was that officials and ministerial advisers interacted to a great extent, something that previous literature on the subject has not covered. Thus, the main focus of the research project was to investigate to what extent that it was the case or not.

**Possible limitations**

When using a statistical method to come to conclusions about a whole population it is important that the sample is representative in order to truthfully reflect the average of the population. Using such a method means that the only source of error could be the randomisation of the sample. The survey has been dealt out to 91 officials in order to gather enough information to answer the research question. Although, the survey has not been evenly distributed between ministries.²⁹ An ideal approach would have been to use a *stratified sample*. Which means that the surveys would have been strategically dealt out to officials in order to increase the chance of the sample to reflect the Government Offices as a whole (selecting \(x\) numbers of officials with a certain title, \(x\) numbers of officials from a certain ministry and so on, to get a variety of respondents that represented the population of all government officials). A stratified sample has not been a possible approach due to the limited scope of the study. Thus, the method to approach the problem has been to use a *stratified convenience sample*. The aim has been to collect answers to the survey from as many ministries as possible, since the ministries can be considered as different strata within the Government Offices. However, since some officials were keener to take part in the research project than others some ministries are represented to a greater extent in the sample, and some ministries are not included in the sample. Nevertheless, if the 91 officials that filled in the survey does not differ to a great extent from other officials at the ministries that did not fill in the survey it is still possible to claim that the sample can represent the Government Offices as a

²⁸ See page 3, under the heading *Previous Research & the Problem in Theoretical Terms*.
²⁹ For the distribution of officials that answered the survey see page 24, under the heading *The officials*.
whole. And since the Government Offices is one organisation as a whole, it is likely that the officials that filled in the survey have a similar perspective on the political elite and the ministerial advisers as other officials in the Government Offices.

Another limitation when using surveys as a method to collect information is the response rate. If the officials that chose to not participate in the survey differ from those participating, there is a risk that the estimates based on the sample could be skewed. Presumably, the officials that chose to not participate in this survey did not differ from the ones that participated to a large extent, but since it is not possible to know it is still a limitation to the study. Another important aspect of the study that is important to clarify is that survey does not measure actual interaction between the political staff and the officials within the Government Offices but measure officials’ perceptions on who they interact with in the political staff.

A few words on the validity and reliability of the study. The question number four and five in the survey\textsuperscript{30} measures officials’ perception in a scale from 1 to 7. Different respondents may interpret the numbers differently, which could affect the results. In order to improve the reliability of the scale three indicators were added to the scale: never, sometimes and always. This has been done in order for the respondents to get a sense on what the numbers indicate. Question number four in the survey asks officials who they contact in in order to reach the political elite (not political staff), this choice has been made since the ministerial advisers are not traditionally in the chain of command. Hence a possibility that the question only measures contact with political elite and not contact with the political staff as a whole, a validity problem. However, this may only suppress a result that shows that ministerial advisers are the ones that officials contacted the most.

\textsuperscript{30} See the full survey on page 30, under the heading Appendices.
Results and Analysis

In this chapter the surveys’ results will be presented and analysed. As described in the previous chapter, the officials’ perspective on the different roles in the political staff has been divided into two categories, the political elite and ministerial advisers. With these two categories it has been possible to calculate the difference in officials’ perception on the two groups. Thus, it has been feasible to calculate the mean value of the political elite and the ministerial advisers in order to estimate a confidence interval to examine if the collected sample can be generalised to all officials within the Government Offices as a whole. Besides providing a significance test, the confidence interval presents an interval where the population’s mean value is within. This makes it possible to assert to what extent there is a difference in the officials’ perspective between the two categories. First in this chapter, the average and the spread within the sample for each role in the political staff will be presented and analysed in a histogram. Further, the confidence interval for each mean value of the two categories will be presented together with the confidence interval for the difference between the two categories’ means. And last, the respondents’ perspective on work structure, their distribution in titles and between ministries will be presented in three separate frequency tables.

The average and the spread in the sample

The histogram on the next page show officials’ perception on different roles within the political staff. The three different bars in the histogram measures officials’ perception on governing, contact from the political staff to officials, and officials’ contact to different roles in the political staff. The y-axis shows the interval scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always), with a middle value of 4 (sometimes). The mean value for the different roles is labelled over each bar. Under the mean is the coefficient of variation (in italics) for each role, which measures the spread of the sample. The black bars indicate to what extent officials considered themselves to be governed by different roles within the political staff. The grey and the light grey bars indicate to what extent officials considered themselves to have contact with different roles within the political staff. A quick reminder from the previous chapter, the different roles in the political staff is the minister and state secretary which are categorised as the political elite; and the chief of staff, planning director, political adviser and press secretary, which are categorised as ministerial advisers.
Figure 2.1: The average and the spread in the officials’ perception of the different roles in the political staff.

The histogram overall shows that the officials in the sample to a greater extent considers themselves to be governed by the political elite. The black bars are clearly higher for the ministers and the state secretaries than for the rest of the of the roles within the political staff. It also indicates that the officials in the sample to a greater extent considers themselves to have more contact with the ministerial advisers, since both of the grey bars are clearly higher for the planning directors, political advisers and the press secretaries compared to the political elite (with one exception, the chief of staffs, which neither scores a high value in governing nor in contact with the officials).

It is also noteworthy to mention that many of the categories lies around or below the value four (which indicated sometimes in the survey). This means that the majority of the officials that answered the survey did not considered themselves to interact with the political staff to great extent. These findings can be interpreted as that the officials either only sometimes or less interact with the different categories within the political staff (which could indicate that the officials have a high degree of autonomy). Or, that information from the government to the administration goes through certain officials (head of divisions or deputy directors) and then reach the officials at ground level. Note here, that these are my speculations based on analysing the collected material. But this could be an interesting discovery for future research to further investigate.

The spread in the sample varies to some extent between the different roles. The most evident spread is the officials’ contact with the ministers, both the grey and the light grey bar ranges around 50 percent. A reasonable interpretation for this spread is that the contact with the ministers differs to a great extend depending on the officials position within the ministry (top officials may have more contact with the ministers than ground level officials). The most heterogenous categories (where the officials’ answers did not differ much between each other) are the state
secretaries and political advisers\textsuperscript{31}, which ranges around 20 – 30 percent. This indicates that the officials agree to a great extent regardless of their position or what ministry they were positioned at.

With the OECD-report from the first chapter in mind, it is interesting to see that the officials which answered the survey to a great extent considered themselves to have contact with ministerial advisers within the Swedish Government Offices. The report showed that officials and ministerial advisers may have different motives regarding the process of shaping public policy. Ministerial advisers were motivated by the electoral dimension, compared to officials, which focused on long-term consequences (OECD, 2007). However, with the collected material it is not possible to investigate the dynamics between officials and ministerial advisers any further. It is only possible to assert that the officials in the sample to a great extent interact with ministerial advisers.

The political elite governs the officials

In this section the results from three different confidence intervals that measured governing will be presented. First, two confidence intervals for each of the two categories’ mean values will be presented and analysed (officials’ perception on the political elite and ministerial advisers). Then a confidence interval for the difference of the two categories’ mean values will be presented along with a discussion.

The confidence interval that measured the officials’ perception on governing by the political elite shows that it is possible to assert, within a 95% security level that officials within the Government Offices considers themselves to be governed somewhere between 4.5 – 4.9 by the political elite (on the scale from 1 to 7). Thus, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that government officials perceive that they to great extent are governed by the political elite. The confidence interval is symmetrical, which mean that it is the same probability for the mean value of the population to be in both ends of the interval (4.5 and 4.9). Although, the most probable estimate is that the mean value of all government officials is in the middle of the interval, which is the value 4.7. In conclusion, government officials perceive that they are governed 4.7 by the political elite, on a scale ranging from 1 to 7.

In comparison, the confidence interval which measured the extent government officials consider themselves to be governed by the ministerial advisers ranges between 2.60 – 2.84 (within a 95% security level, based on the same scale). Thus, it is also possible in this case to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that government officials to some extent (with an average value of 2.7, on a scale from 1 to 7) consider themselves to be governed by ministerial advisers.

The confidence interval of the difference in the officials’ perception on governing by the political elite and ministerial advisers ranges between 1.06 and 1.52, within a 95% security level. The confidence interval for the intercept does not range between a negative value and a positive value. Thus, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis and declare that difference in the officials’ perception on the political

\textsuperscript{31} Analysing the coefficient of variation for all three different bars of the state secretaries and political advisers.
elite and the ministerial advisers is significant. Hence, it is possible to assert that government officials consider themselves to be governed to a greater extent by the political elite than the ministerial advisers. By converting the interval scale to relative numbers\textsuperscript{32}, it is possible to conclude that government officials consider themselves to be governed somewhere between 17.7% – 25.4% more by the political elite than by ministerial advisers.

Even though officials consider themselves to a greater extent to be governed by the political elite, the interval ranges only between 17.7% to 25.4% more than the ministerial advisers. Presumably there is no doubt that officials know that the government is in control of each ministry, but a possible explanation could be that ministerial advisers are seen as an extension of the political elite. Since the political staff forms a small group of people working closely together, it is likely that both the political elite and ministerial advisers interact with the officials within the ministry. Even if ministerial advisers are seen as an extension of the political elite, and even if they act in the ministers will, they are still to some extent a part of the chain of command within the Government Offices. Thus, there is still a problem in terms of democratic legitimacy since the ministerial advisers are neither recruited based on their merits, nor are they politically appointed based on election results. Note that these are speculations based on analysing the results above. Thus, the democratic theoretician Robert A. Dahl was partially right regarding his speculations in 1991 on the ministerial advisers within the public administration (Dahl, 1991). Government officials consider that ministerial advisers to some degree take part in the governing of the administration, and the case could very well be that it is due to an increasingly complex public administration.

**Officials have more contact with ministerial advisers**

This section has a similar disposition as the section above. Three different confidence intervals will be presented and analysed together with a brief discussion. Although, these intervals measure government officials’ perception of contact\textsuperscript{33} with the political elite and ministerial advisers.

The confidence interval which measured officials’ perception of contact with the political elite ranged between 2.39 – 2.61 on a scale from 1 to 7. The average value of officials’ contact with the political elite is thus 2.5, which indicates that officials perceive that they rarely have contact with the political elite. On the other hand, the confidence interval that measured the officials’ perception on contact with the ministerial advisers ranged between 3.65 – 3.94, with an average value of 3.8. Both confidence intervals on the officials’ perception on contact with the political elite and ministerial advisers were significant when calculated with a security level of 95%. In conclusion, the results indicate that government officials rarely have contact with the political elite, compared to ministerial advisers who officials sometimes have contact with.

\textsuperscript{32} By dividing the value by six it is possible to calculate the difference in percentage, since there are six steps on the interval scale (1 to 7).

\textsuperscript{33} The confidence intervals which measure contact are measuring both the officials’ contact to the political staff initiated by the officials, and the contact to the officials that is initiated by the political staff.
The confidence interval that measured the difference in officials’ contact with the political elite and ministerial advisers ranges between 1.11 – 1.47, based on the scale from 1 to 7 (calculated a security level of 95%). This indicates that the difference is significant and that government officials consider themselves to have more contact with the ministerial advisers than the political elite. In relative numbers this means that the average official within the Government Offices perceive that they have 18.5 – 24.5% more contact with ministerial advisers than the political elite.

As mentioned earlier, the ministerial advisers are the vast majority of the political staff. Hence, it is also probable that they have more contact with the government officials within the Government Offices. The interval measures work related contact between the officials and the political staff. Thus, the interval indicates that the ministerial advisers to a great extent are mediating the contact between the politicians and the officials within the Government Offices. Since the ministerial advisers are controlled by the state secretary and the minister, a probable explanation could be that ministerial advisers are acting as an extension of the political elite in order to interact with the officials. Considering that the work within the Government Offices is about creating public policy, and that officials are at the governments disposal to execute political decisions, the contact between the two is crucial. The results support previous researchers’ claims that an increase of ministerial advisers within the public administration may lead to the dilemma that officials to a lesser extent can have direct contact with the minister (Garsten et al., 2015). If the contact goes through the ministerial advisers in order to reach the government officials, the case could be that vital information between the government and the administration is filtered through the ministerial advisers.

**Work structure partly exists**

The frequency table below show the officials’ perspective on work structure between the officials and the political staff. The majority of the officials perceived that work structure partly existed, and about a third of the officials perceived that work structure clearly existed between them and the political staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolute</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exists</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly exists</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not exist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2 indicates that work structure between the officials and the political staff exists to a great extent. Hence, it possible to assume that the officials and the political staff have relatively distinct roles in how the work is distributed between the two. If the collected surveys would have presented a material that showed that work structure did not exist between the two groups, the case could have been that there was an ambiguity in areas of responsibility between the officials and the political staff.
The officials

In this section the officials’ distribution within the sample will be presented and analysed. The measured distribution is the officials’ different titles and their distribution between ministries. The results will be presented together with a brief analysis and a discussion.

Figure 2.3: The distribution between titles in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Absolute</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desk officer</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior adviser</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy director</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of division</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the officials that filled in the survey worked as desk officers (62.6%), about one fifth of the officials were senior advisers and about one tenth worked as deputy directors. Only a few officials with the title as head of division or clerical officer filled in the survey. This can be interpreted as a fairly even distribution of the officials within the Government Offices, since most officials are ground level officials. Hence, it is not possible to compare the different titles’ perspective on the variables asked in the survey (since the distribution between titles are too uneven in the sample). The distribution between officials may explain some of the findings in figure 2.1 in the previous section. It is possible that ground level officials to a lesser extent interact with the political staff compared to top officials (speculations based on the gathered material).

Figure 2.4: The officials’ distribution between ministries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Absolute</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Culture</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education and Research</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Employment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Affairs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of the Environment and Energy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sample used in this research project is a **stratified convenience sample** and not a **stratified sample**. Although an ideal approach would have been to collect the same amount of surveys from each ministry
it was not possible within the scope of the study. Since three out of ten ministries lack representation in the sample there could be a risk that the results were skewed to some extent. With this said, the Government Offices is still one authority as a whole and the sample collects information from the majority of the ministries.

Additional information from the officials

In the survey empty textboxes were added in order if the officials wanted to clarify something in their answer. Although, these additional questions were not filled in to a great extent they still provided feedback on the survey’s validity. However, the additional questions collected some interesting feedback from the officials. In the question about work structure one respondent filled in “I have worked for two different governments and I can say that the structure differs between governments”. Another official clarified their answers regarding who governs the officials “Formally the government always govern, we have set structures for reporting about policy areas to the government”. These few additional answers in the survey gives us a hint that there is still interesting information to be found for researchers that want to further investigate the relation between officials and the political staff with a qualitative approach.

34 If many officials would have used the extra textboxes instead of the predetermined questions it would have indicated that the survey structure had been poorly designed (since the alternative they wanted to fill in was not available).
35 Translated from Swedish to English.
36 Translated from Swedish to English.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has examined 91 surveys from government officials regarding the extent to which they consider themselves to be governed by, and to have contact with the political elite and the ministerial advisers within the Government Offices. With the collected material it has been feasible to calculate confidence intervals in order to see if the sample of officials’ that filled in the survey could be generalised to officials within the Government Offices as a whole. The results have been measured in a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always) and show that government officials on average consider themselves to be governed 4.7 by the political elite, and 2.7 by ministerial advisers. The confidence interval on governing indicates that government officials consider themselves to be governed somewhere between 17.7% – 25.4% more by the political elite than the ministerial advisers (within a 95% security level). On the other hand, government officials consider themselves to have more contact with the ministerial advisers compared to the political elite. The average official has a value of 2.5 in contact with the political elite, compared to officials’ average value of contact with ministerial advisers which is 3.8. The confidence interval on contact indicates that government officials consider themselves to have somewhere between 18.5% – 24.5% more contact with ministerial advisers than the political elite (within a 95% security level).

The collected material answers the research question, government officials consider themselves to be governed by the political elite. Although, officials perceive that they are governed to a greater extent by the political elite, the ministerial advisers play a major role in mediating the contact between the political staff and the administration. Since the officials are at the governments disposal to implement and form public policy, the contact between the politicians and the administration is crucial. Thus, if the contact to a great extent goes through the ministerial advisers the case could be that vital information is filtered in the chain of command within the Government Offices.

Future research

During the process of writing this thesis, several new questions have arisen. To what extent do officials perceive that ministerial advisers have influence over the public policy process? How does governance of the administration differ between governments? And lastly, what kind of relationship do officials have with ministerial advisers? A preferable approach would be to use a qualitative approach to further examine the relation between officials and the political staff within the Swedish Government Offices.
Bibliography

Literature


**Web Sources**


The Swedish Government Offices (2018c). *Contact information*. Available at: https://www.government.se/contact-information/ [Accessed 12/9/18].

Appendices

Appendix A: The survey given to the government officials.


Vilken tjänstebenämning har du på Regeringskansliet idag?
- Departementssekreterare
- Departementsråd
- Kansler
- Assistent
- Annars

Ta ställning till följande påstående. Det finns en tydlig struktur för hur arbetet är organisatoriskt mellan de politiska staberna och tjänstemännen på departementet jag arbetar på:
- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer inte alls
- Instämmer delvis
- Eget svar

I vilken utsträckning känns de olika befattningshavare i den politiska staben dig i ditt arbete, och vem är det som styr det arbete som du arbetar med? Ringa in den siffra som passar bäst till varje alternativ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stat under</th>
<th>Aldrig</th>
<th>Ibland</th>
<th>Alltid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansler</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styrelse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statsekreterare</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styrelse</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statsrevisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styrelse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statsminister</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styrelse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I de fall du behöver ta kontakt med den politiska ledningen i ditt arbete som tjänsteman vem vänder du dig till?

Starta från börda menar
Har du frågor om studien eller synpunkter? Skicka gärna ett e-post till njord.froland@gmail.com
Appendix B: Dictionary of Swedish titles and technical terms used in the thesis.

**The government officials**
- Official = Handläggare
- Clerical officer = Assistent
- Deputy director = Kansliråd
- Desk officer = Departementssekreterare
- Head of division = Departementsråd
- Senior adviser = Ämnesråd

**The political staff**
- The political staff = Den politiska staben
- Chief of staff = Stabschef
- Minister = Statsråd
- Planning director = Planeringschef
- Political adviser = Politiskt sakkunnig
- Press secretary = Pressesekreterare
- State secretary = Statssekreterare

**The organisation of the Government Offices**
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs = Utrikesdepartementet
- Ministry of Culture = Kulturdepartementet
- Ministry of Defence = Försvarsdepartementet
- Ministry of Education and Research = Utbildningsdepartementet
- Ministry of Employment = Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet
- Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation = Näringsdepartementet
- Ministry of Finance = Finansdepartementet
- Ministry of Health and Social Affairs = Socialdepartementet
- Ministry of Justice = Justitiedepartementet
- Ministry of the Environment and Energy = Miljö- och energidepartementet
- The Government Offices = Regeringskansliet
- Ministry = Departement
- Department = Avdelning
- Unit = Enhet

**Other**
- Chain Of Command = Styrningskedja
- Memorandum = Promemoria
- Motion of no-confidence = Misstroendevotum
- Politician contract = Politikeravtal
- Prime minister = Statsminister
- Public administration = Offentlig förvaltning
- Public authority = Statlig myndighet
- The Instrument of Government = Regeringsformen
- The Swedish Constitution = Sveriges grundlag
- The Swedish Government Official Report-series = Statens Offentliga Utredningar (SOU)
- The Swedish Parliament = Sveriges Riksdag

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37 The terms are translated based on the translations in *Utrikes namnbok* by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Utrikesdepartementet, 2015), the Government Offices website (The Swedish Government Offices, 2018d) and *The Swedish Parliaments multilingual dictionary* (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2015).
Appendix C: Calculations

- All values are measured in the interval scale ranging from 1 (never) – 7 (always).
- All intervals have been calculated with a 95% confidence interval.
- The mean value and the standard deviation have been calculated by taking the mean value and the standard deviation of the grouped data from each survey.
- The intervals measured in percent have been calculated by dividing the value with six, since there are six steps on the scale.

1.1: Confidence interval for the mean value of governing of the political elite.

\[ \bar{x} \pm t_{kv} \times \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}} \]

- CI \approx 4.50 – 4.90
- \( \bar{x} \) = 4.697802198
- \( t_{kv} \) = 1.96
- \( s \) = 0.974334875
- \( n \) = 91

1.2: Confidence interval for the mean value of governing of the ministerial advisers.

\[ \bar{x} \pm t_{kv} \times \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}} \]

- CI \approx 2.60 – 2.84
- \( \bar{x} \) = 2.722527473
- \( t_{kv} \) = 1.96
- \( s \) = 0.558334017
- \( n \) = 91

1.3: Confidence interval for the mean value of contact of the political elite.

\[ \bar{x} \pm t_{kv} \times \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}} \]

- CI \approx 2.39 – 2.61
- \( \bar{x} \) = 2.502747253
- \( t_{kv} \) = 1.96
- \( s \) = 0.530322891
- \( n \) = 91

1.4: Confidence interval for the mean value of contact of the ministerial advisers.

\[ \bar{x} \pm t_{kv} \times \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}} \]

- CI \approx 3.65 – 3.94
- \( \bar{x} \) = 3.796703297
- \( t_{kv} \) = 1.96
- \( s \) = 0.693633837
- \( n \) = 91

1.5: Confidence interval for the difference between the mean of the political elite (\( \bar{x}_1 \)) and the mean of the ministerial advisers (\( \bar{x}_2 \)) on governing.

\[ \bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 \pm t_{kv} \times \sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}} \]

- CI \approx 1.06 – 1.52 (17.7 – 25.4%)
- \( \bar{x}_1 \) = 4.697802198
- \( \bar{x}_2 \) = 2.722527473
- \( t_{kv} \) = 1.96
- \( s_1 \) = 0.974334875
- \( s_2 \) = 0.558334017
- \( n_1 \) = 91
- \( n_2 \) = 91

1.6: Confidence interval for the difference between the mean of the political elite (\( \bar{x}_1 \)) and the mean of the ministerial advisers (\( \bar{x}_2 \)) on contact.

\[ \bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 \pm t_{kv} \times \sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}} \]

- CI \approx 1.11 – 1.47 (18.5 – 24.5%)
- \( \bar{x}_1 \) = 2.502747253
- \( \bar{x}_2 \) = 3.796703297
- \( t_{kv} \) = 1.96
- \( s_1 \) = 0.530322891
- \( s_2 \) = 0.693633837
- \( n_1 \) = 91
- \( n_2 \) = 91