



LUND UNIVERSITY

Breaking Boundaries

An Ethnographic Study of Women in Management

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Abstract

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Women have succeeded in management positions for over a generation. These positions have conventionally been understood as male and thus difficult for women to be in. On the basis of a qualitative study this thesis investigates the everyday practices and positions of women in management. Material has been collected from ethnographic methods primarily based on participant observations and interviews. Drawing on findings with a cultural analysis perspective and using feminist Bourdieuan concepts of field and gender capital I examine how these women do management and whether they wield gender capital to maintain their careers. An intersectional perspective is also applied to understand how these women experience and do management. I argue gender capital may be a resource by which women develop and maintain their careers with, whilst also recognising the problem of gender labelling management. Thus in understanding these practices and positionings, the convention of understanding management, as male, does not account for the complexity and variation seen in this study. This study suggests that it is necessary to appreciate these complexities and variation in management, and gender capital offers an explanatory means for furthering understandings of management practices. This study also suggests femininity is gaining currency in the field of management. Further, actionable insights are provided into how these understandings of the women in management practices can be beneficial to gender and organisational change.

Keywords: management; women; doing gender; male norm; Bourdieu; field; gender capital; cultural analysis; ethnography.

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Malmö, 2013-05-21

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: An Introduction to Gender in Management.....	1
1.1 Background Research, Research Questions and Aim.....	1
1.2 Theoretical Perspective.....	3
1.3 Presenting the Fieldwork and Limitations.....	5
1.4 Methods.....	7
1.4.1 Participant Observation: Shadowing.....	8
1.4.2 Interviews.....	10
1.4.3 Additional Methods.....	12
1.5 Ethical Considerations.....	12
1.6 Introducing the Participants.....	13
1.7 Chapter Synopsis.....	14
Chapter Two: Mapping the Landscape.....	16
2.1 Applying Bourdieu's Concepts.....	16
2.1.1 The Field.....	16
2.1.2 Gender Capital.....	17
2.2 Modern Labour: The Swedish Context.....	20
2.2.1 Organisational Logic.....	22
2.2.2 Gender-Neutral University.....	25
2.3 Summary.....	26
Chapter Three: Doing and Being a Manager.....	28
3.1 Three (Ideal) Groups and their Experiences.....	28
3.2 Gender, Age and the Body.....	30
3.3 Language and Communication.....	35
3.4 Summary.....	38
Chapter Four: Management and Gender Capital.....	39
4.1 Equal Opportunities.....	39
4.2 Feminine Skills.....	42
4.3 The Role of Gender Capital in the Management Field.....	46
4.4 Summary.....	48
Chapter Five: Conclusion.....	49
5.1 Looking Forward: Applicability of the Research.....	49
5.2 Concluding Thoughts.....	50
References.....	52

Chapter One: An Introduction to Gender in Management

I sat there in a coffee shop near the train station of Lund, Sweden after a day in the field of my internship project, shadowing Josefin, a PhD student at Lund University. The purpose of this shadowing, and therefore study, was to explore Lund University's policy for gender equality, equal treatment and diversity and how these policies play out in the everyday. I intended to write up my daily notes but I could not quite get my focus. Josefin and I had had a day of meetings, classes, fika (Swedish afternoon tea), sitting by the computer and sitting in and celebrating Josefin's colleague in his PhD dissertation defence. There was much to cover! But all I could do was stare at the empty page and ponder, where were all the women today? Why are all the top positions filled by men? (Josefin, Fieldnotes, October 2012).

Reflecting back on this day these coffee shop thoughts and questions are the basis for the main focus of this thesis – women and management.

1.1 Background Research, Research Questions and Aim

Management in organisations is a contested idea. What is it? Who does it? Does it even exist? The idea of it alone is seductive. There is the belief that with good leaders in management there is a safe working environment. Management and leadership is then comforting. These terms, management and leadership, are two concepts that are intimately intertwined where leadership is “a process for influencing decisions and guiding people, whereas management involves the implementation and administration of institutional decisions and policies” (Bagihole & White, 2011, p. 7). Each depends on the other and those individuals engaged must have skills necessary to implement these roles. From an organisations point of view the biological sex of an individual in this role is of no significance. Although, the problem is the good manager within the workplace is often explained in organisational research by reference to some masculine norm. Management positions in many organisations and countries have regularly been viewed in masculine terms with the dominance of men in these positions; hence management becomes loosely tied to the male (Collinson & Hearn, 1996).

Even as women comprise large proportions of the current workforce, there still remains – as I had observed on my fieldwork day – a proportionally higher level of men in managerial positions than women. Within the European Union's largest publicly listed companies in 2012 women occupied on average 13.7 percent of all the board seats, and occupied only 3.2 percent of all CEO's and top executive level positions (European Commission, 2012). The current increase rate of women into these top positions is 1.9

percent per year. At this rate of increasing women to the top positions (and in taking these statistics at their face value) it is estimated that it will take 136 years to reach equality in these positions. This underrepresentation of women in management has been of long interest to gender and organisational scholars (Acker, 2006; Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Everett, 2002). Specifically, gender in management tends to be located in fields such as organisational research and human resource management. In these fields, managerial positions have been understood as male. The early dominance of men was expected to set the norm for the traits, characteristics and/or attributes expected in a management position (Acker, 1990). This means, their behaviours and life experiences set standards of how to behave and how (much) to work. Historically it has made sense to explain managerial positions in relation to some male norm as this was when men were expected to be the breadwinner and when organisations functioned on the basis of men being able to spend most of their time in the organisation whilst they had a supportive wife at home. The concept of some male norm continues to be used to explain women's difficulties and such reasoning leads to identity partitioning in which boundaries are set and women become 'others' (this can be seen in for example Ford & Harding, 2010; Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010). This theme of both women as others and of getting women into management positions has also been a trend in popular writing as reflected in book titles for a number of years. For example: *Breakthrough: Women into Management* (Loring and Wells, 1972), *Women Managers: Travellers in a Male World* (Marshall, 1984) and *The Female Advantage* (Helgesen, 1990). These books mainly assert female values as different. Within these popular writings and organisational research there is the idea that women and men are robust categories. This leads to a reduced complexity of women's and men's identities and lives and ultimately reproduces the differences between the sexes (Billing, 2011).

With a plethora of organisational research documenting the difficulties and barriers women face in the advancement of their career there has been less empirical material that concentrates on those women who have successfully maintained a career in management. Indeed, a generation of women have sustained a career in management and are now reaching retirement. Little research has focused on these women who are in management positions who are 'doing' management and what resources they draw upon to make sense of their daily experiences. This thesis therefore will focus exactly upon these cultural practices.

From this background research, the aim of this research is to study the cultural practices of women in management positions, at Lund University, and how they reflect and contextualise their position. Being situated within ethnology, I have studied these practices

from the perspectives of the women. This allows the insight into which values and meanings they attribute to their practices and can shed light on why women may continue to be disadvantaged in these positions.

In this thesis I want to reflect on the everyday work life of women in management and, in particular, their experiences of becoming and being a manager. In doing so, I want to reverse the questions, instead of asking what are the barriers blocking women from making it to the top positions, I want to ask:

1. How do these women 'do' management and what resources do they draw upon to maintain their careers?
2. Question how and if women use gender as a resource in their management careers? and
3. How does gender power operate in the management field?

The construction of the manager is constantly created and negotiated between the interactions of people at the workplace. It is through these experiences and processes that managers construct their subjectivities or their identities. I therefore will consider the intersections of gender, age, class, and ethnicity in being a manager.

1.2 Theoretical Perspective

In this section I will introduce the theoretical framework that underpins the following analysis. As part of my research focuses on the practice of women in management and their perceived reflections of their management, I am interested in the collective role of habits, understandings, and actions that shape dispositions, worldviews, and identities (Shove, Watson, Hand & Ingram, 2007; Frykman & Gilje, 2003). When researching the experiences and practices of people, phenomenology is connected to the idea of the researcher 'being there'. Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences through the perspective of the participant. By making practice a starting point in this thesis, it offers a holistic approach and a theoretical perspective that "concentrates on how experiences are set out in action" (Frykman & Gilje, 2003, p. 15). This approach can account for the complex relationships that are constantly negotiated in being a manager. This is a cultural perspective in that culture, defined as the patterns of everyday interactions, and systems of meaning-making that guides action and social relations, aims to understand how people structure and deal with their world.

In organisations there are norms and rules of behaviour, which are gendered (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). In the everyday work life the doing of gender cannot be avoided

(West & Zimmerman, 1987), where sometimes gender can be done and at other times it can be undone (Butler, 2004). That is, the doing or undoing of gender occurs when people conform or break away sex stereotypes. It is through the daily practices of doing management that managers navigate around the local gender norms and constraints. When referring to gender I understand it as “inherently ambiguous, contradictory and unstable” (Skeggs, 1997, p. 24) and the “patterned, socially produced, distinctions between female and male, feminine and masculine” (Acker, 1992, p. 250). I therefore conceive gender as the active doing of people in organisations, where women and men are being formed through cultural processes. When discussing the concepts of femininity and masculinity I interpret them as vague concepts, although, they can be loosely defined as values, meanings, or experiences that are culturally interpreted. Femininity, for example, can be ascribed to or typically feel ‘natural’ to women more so than men in a particular context (masculinity is then defined in the reverse). I caution with imposing a definition, as there is great variation between social groups – of class, occupation, nationality or work sector (private or business) – and how people negotiate the terms of masculinity and femininity. That is what is feminine for one group may not be for another. When using these concepts, I aim to write them with reflexivity, being aware of my own interpretations and of alternative ways. Nevertheless, these are valuable concepts and in discussing these terms I seek for a balance between the empirical descriptions from the participants and analytical definitions.

In order to understand gender in organisations scholars have chosen different ways to better see and describe the world they see around them (Everett, 2002). Often these scholars rely on the works of ‘modernist’ and Marxist-inspired theorists and ‘post theorists’ such as Foucault for they help the researcher focus on marginalised voices and allow them as the researcher to be reflexive (Everett, 2002). Very few organisational scholars, however, use the work of well-known sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a way to better view organisations. Yet, as Everett (2002) suggests, Bourdieu has a lot to offer these studies, in that in one dimension he provides a capacity that links “an analysis of the humdrum details of ordinary organisational existence with both an analysis of language and a more general social analysis” (p. 57). Bourdieu’s concepts allow for a combination of identity and the everyday practices. Individuals in their everyday practice have their own set of dispositions (attitudes, choices, and lifestyles) that are developed and learnt during upbringing and in response to objective conditions or “structuring structures”, which Bourdieu (1977, p. 72) defines as the habitus. Everett’s (2002, p. 57) also suggests organisations have the means to be seen as “embedded in a field of relations”, where actors “struggle to accumulate capital, that fleeting

form of power whose value is always and only ever field specific". It is in this thesis that I seek to understand how women in management navigate the boundaries of the management field (to be further discussed below). I therefore draw upon the concept of field and contemporary feminist interpretations of Bourdieu's concepts of capital and in particular rely on Beverly Skeggs's work (Lovell, 2000; McCall, 1992; Skeggs, 1997). Feminist theorists such as Skeggs have demonstrated the value of Bourdieu's concepts and ideas, which have moved away from ideas of female subordination and patriarchy and towards theories of agency and gender identity (Adkins, 2004).

In Beverly Skeggs's (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender*, she employs Bourdieu's theory of class in order to understand class experiences of British working-class women. Skeggs found her participants made investments in femininity and in their responses to negative judgements of the working class they became committed to the achievement of respectability. The women in Skeggs's (1997, p. 161) study were perusing capital, but by not having the right capital they were "halting losses rather than trading-up and accruing extra value" at a local level. Skeggs overall found that her participants possess their own feminine forms of capital. I therefore seek to build on her feminist Bourdieuan framework, along with others (concepts of field and gender capital to be discussed in the following chapter), to see how the women in this study use and draw upon gender as a resource or form of capital in their careers and contribute to a more complete understanding of the contemporary field of management.

In the following the focus is not only on the women's practices but on how the women of this study talk about themselves, their experiences as managers, and how they construct gender when describing themselves as managers. These perspectives of themselves as managers and of their practices may be selective but they provide insights into their present identities and reflections of their practices. I will therefore engage with the practices and experiences and the participants perspectives of their everyday life.

1.3 Presenting the Fieldwork and Limitations

Initially, as I introduced above I took an internship at Lund University researching the organisational culture of Lund University. A recurring theme during this fieldwork was the conflict between the employees' beliefs between an equal workplace and the observation of how few women, and people of other nationalities and minorities, were in the top leadership positions.

As an Australian living and studying in Sweden I had always held an image of Sweden as a gender egalitarian nation, however, this was at odds with what I was observing. This contrast combined with my initial naivety on gender relations left me feeling slightly nervous for I was left thinking if I wish to pursue a career in Sweden would it be possible to make it to a top position in Sweden, if I am both a female and a foreigner? I found this contrast between an image held by many of the employees at Lund University (and initially myself) of gender equality and the actual lived experiences interesting given the scope and progression of the gender equality discussion within Sweden.

During the internship, women who were in management positions within Lund University and their experiences of doing and being a manager became part of my focus. For the purpose of this study, individuals were designated as managers if they attained a position recognised as doing a form of management. These women's experiences and stories gave insight into how they do management and the environment in which identities function. As I was interested in women in management I recognised there were many organisations I could approach to conduct further research. Given, however, the diversity between private and public institutions I felt it necessary to narrow my field and I became interested in the University. This is also where I am most familiar. In Sweden, management positions in the private sphere remain especially male dominated as equality changes remain slower than that of the public sphere, but Universities are heavily institutionalised and built upon old structures (over 300 years), that have long been dominated by men. Further, Universities in Sweden hold a unique position within the society where they are cast as the leaders in innovation and knowledge producers (Swedish Institute, 2013). Given this innovative and leading position, I therefore, found it interesting that a wide gap between men and women in management at the Universities continues to exist. Being fortunate to be undertaking an internship at Lund University, an organisation that I found welcoming to new collaborations and one that encourages diversity in research, together with the above reasons were the motivating factors to focus on management at Lund University.

Given the variety of professions at Lund University the question arose early in the research of how would it be possible to know the respondents will be representative of the whole organisation? I therefore decided to reach out far and cast a wide net with respondents. This was conducted by obtaining material from many different respondents from as many faculties as possible. Once I had focused the thesis topic, three of those whom I had been in contact with during the internship fieldwork became participants again. To supplement this I found women in management from the Lund University website and

contacted several of these women via email at random. This resulted in five participants for this study. Participants also referred on contact details of people they thought also may be interested in this research, known as the snowball effect, and this resulted in an additional two participants. Overall this study included a total of ten participants.

Even though the material collected from a number of the informants from the internship fieldwork is not included in this thesis (they were not female managers) it still, however, adds to the analysis of this project. Participants from the internship fieldwork were recruited with a similar method as I explained above. In contrast, however, I focused on four to five departments and sought approval from the Heads of Departments before contacting employees within their departments. This resulted in a total of 16 participants. In addition, I had hoped to reach all employees of Lund University including those not in core professional careers, for example managers from service, building maintenance, cleaning, and media. The aim of this was to provide a complete picture of diversity within University management. However, this proved unsuccessful, with emails sent unreturned. It remains unclear as to why but it may partly be due to a language barrier (my lack of Swedish). As Davies (2008) reminds, selecting participants is not a one-way procedure as researchers are often selected by their informants as the reverse. This therefore makes it necessary to be reflexive on the relationship developed with the informants. During the period of research this was something I continually bore in mind and will further elaborate in the following sections. Overall the fieldwork was conducted between August 2012 to November 2012 and January 2013 to February 2013. This resulted in a total of six months of fieldwork.

1.4 Methods

To understand how these participants were doing management – how they were organising their worlds and their views of it – it was necessary to employ the methods of ethnography to fully understand the everyday work life of these women. Whilst it may be possible to talk with participants about gender in the workplace and their everyday routines, often these practices are taken for granted and can be very subtle (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). As people we are often unaware of these practices and it can be difficult to reflect meaningfully on what we are actually doing. A useful illustration of this is through the example of the hammer, as described by the philosopher Martin Heidegger. He said we do not think or reflect on the hammer, we just use it (Heidegger, 1996). That is until it breaks. In a similar manner, to have people reflect on how they experience the world provokes a turning away.

The challenge for this study was to find the appropriate methods to fully understand the everyday life of these women managers.

1.4.1 Participant Observation: Shadowing

Participant observation is a useful method to employ as it allows the opportunity to observe people in their everyday experiencing the hammer rather than making them step out and reflect on the hammer. It provides the vantage point of being able to see gaps between what people say and what they actually do (Frykman & Gilje, 2003). In this research design I employed the method of participant observation in the form similar to what Czarniawska (2007) describes as shadowing. She described shadowing as “fieldwork on the move, a way of doing research that mirrors the mobility of contemporary life” and a way of making visible those practices that are outside the participants awareness (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 58). As a method it provides the opportunity to learn what is going on, rather than what should be going on (Czarniawska, 2007). Kusenbach (2003) also argues for a similar method to shadowing called the go-along, which involves a combination of interviewing and observations whilst on the go. Kusenbach describes that the go-along allows the researcher to accompany participants in their natural environments and observe their spatial practices but at the same time interview them and gain access to their experiences and interpretations. It was in this form that I shadowed my participants. Over the course of my fieldwork I shadowed three people separately, for a total of seven full workdays. Of these three participants, only one was a woman in management. Nevertheless, as Davies (2008) says, participant observation involves interacting with many different individuals, even if two of these were not key informants for this study, in my shadowing I sat in on meetings and interacted with women in management which has contributed to my ethnographic data and therefore is included in the overall material. I would follow my participants through their everyday work life, we would meet early in the morning when they would first arrive at their office and continue late into the day when it was time to leave the workplace. I would spend the day sitting on a couch in their office when they were working at the desk, usually doing my own work, I would sit in on meetings, pass by the fika room to take a coffee with them, eat lunch together, and sit in on some classes that they taught. Often we would talk about my observations as we were pacing down a corridor of offices and I attempted in everyway to answer some very curious questions.

Even with these advantages of shadowing it did come along with some challenges. Czarniawska (2007) acknowledges at times during shadowing there are some difficult and

uncomfortable situations where you do not blend in. During my shadowing, these moments of awkwardness and discomfort were experienced when joining a participant in a meeting. Often the participant did not know what to do with me. On one occasion the participant counted the number of chairs around the meeting table and when noticing there was not a chair for me they suggested I sit on the spare chair in the far corner. This resulted in feeling like a “fly on the wall” and it felt uncomfortable to watch over my participants meeting. At this moment, it also felt as if my younger age appeared to be inappropriate rather than my gender. Being 25 years old and closer in age to a student (which I am) than to a manager or professor within Lund University was noticeable in this management meeting. It did not seem normal to have a student sit in on management meetings. Reflecting on these age differences, it became noticeable that I was situated in a rather different life cycle to many of my participants. Thus, it was limiting in that I was unable to gain insights by comparing my own similar behaviour with my participants (Czarniawska, 2007). Also, as in this meeting incident above, it became noticeable that when in a group meeting/situation it was difficult to talk with my participants and ask about the situation but it became possible to address these questions in an arranged follow up interview. Further, it became noticeable that when first arriving at a workplace I often did not, at least initially blend in, I was the new person and created some distraction and discomfort. One participant called me “their spy” to their colleagues and at one stage after being introduced to a participants colleague he laughed and said “now both of you walk, I want to see you walk in her shadow” (Josefin, Fieldnotes, October 2012).

The limits of shadowing were also experienced during the recruitment of participants. It was difficult to recruit and find women in management who would be willing to be shadowed. Responses – if at times were received – often included an apology explaining they were too busy. In this field I was ‘studying up’ a concept first introduced by anthropologist Laura Nader (1974). She introduced this concept to argue for the need of more research studying the middle class and upper classes, to study the culture of power and not only the powerless. This was in order to better understand the dialogical relations across a field. This concept is particularly helpful for my research for ‘studying up’ also points out the status differences between my participants and myself. These women held high status positions and were highly knowledgeable, often this status was used to deny participation in the research. When conducting fieldwork with these women in top positions this status difference was often felt when interviews were cancelled at last minute or when I was left waiting outside office doors for up to 30 minutes for an interview time that was agreed to in advance, and

most noticeable during the interview phones would be ringing, the constant sound of a new email was heard and often these women would be checking the time on their watches. As Czarniawska (2007) notes, this may not be a methodological issue more than an inconvenience. Although, in contrast Davies (2008) argues that it is necessary to be sensitive to these power relations, that they are a methodological issue, as they will effect the interaction and context of the fieldwork, especially in the case of interviewing. I agree with Davies, and maintaining this awareness was of central importance in my fieldwork, especially in the interviews that I will discuss below. This studying up highlighted the need for flexibility in methods and for me to consider some other useful cultural analysis tools. Thus even though shadowing had limitations – being time demanding for this busy group of participants, moments of not being able to ask questions, and some awkward and discomfort moments – it did allow the benefit of participant observation of the everyday experiences.

1.4.2 Interviews

In order to address the above limitations and understand more on the everyday of doing management and their experiences with gender I decided to conducted semi-structured interviews. These interviews have been the main method in this study due to not only the above difficulties in recruiting participants for shadowing but for the numerous insights they provide. As Seal (1999) says, interviews are beneficial for participants can “act as the eyes and the ears of researchers; interviews can recall and summarize a wide range of observations in seconds, which would take weeks and months of observational work to achieve. They can also speak about things that cannot be observed” (p. 59). Part of understanding my participants practices was to understand their habitus and how this plays a role in their everyday, and as Seal notes, this is an aspect that is difficult to observe. As Everett’s (2002) suggests the habitus should be seen as composed of narratives, or stories, as they are things of culture and can be insightful for understanding the habitus. I therefore aimed to understand the structures and their impact on the everyday practices through semi-structured interviews to consider the questions for example of how has the habitus impacted upon these women’s everyday practices? And what counts as feminine and masculine in this context? In semi-structured interviews I attempted to understand this impact.

It is important to note that interviews also provide insights in to the ‘doing’ of management. Even though phenomenology preposes ‘being there’ I consider that interviews can be used as a methodology for articulating and re-representing practice. In an interview a description of practice is realistic if it “reproduces a speech act or a discourse gender of real-

world communication” (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 116). Scholar Davide Nicolini (2009) describes the ‘interview to the double’ technique as a method to discuss practice. This method requires participants to imagine they have a double who will replace them at their job and to ensure the double is not unmasked they need to provide a narrative of their daily work. It was in a similar form that I asked participants to describe their daily activities, minus the double, and as a result they were able to observe themselves as agents. Nicolini argues this provides a multifaceted representation of practice and brings to the fore normative, moral, and discursive surroundings within which practice occurs. It further provides insights into justifications and a high level of accountability from participants. I therefore employed semi-interviews to also capture the practice of women in management.

Davies (2008) understands semi-structured interviews to be a flexible form of interviewing involving a set of open-ended questions, or an informal list with the opportunity to explore certain themes in-depth with informants. Thus, approaching an interview in this way allows for an understanding of revelations to topics of interest and representations of knowledge (Davies, 2008). I therefore approached my interviews in this way and discussed themes relating to their work responsibilities, work background, personal background, work environment, gender practices, and management practices. During the interviews I was aiming for an interactive style, a sort of conversation so I was not always listening and also to mitigate the power relations I introduced above. Whilst these power relations did not always disrupt interaction – for some participants found the interviews were reflectively enlightening as said by some when we were bidding farewell – there were other occasions where the power differences were a barrier for communication. On one occasion communication difficulties arose when a participant filled the interview time telling how to best research this topic. Thus, by adopting a conversational nature I was able to balance the power relations by sharing my own knowledge and develop the interview further. Semi-structured interviews were less time intensive in comparison to shadowing and it allowed me to be successful in recruiting more participants. I interviewed ten women for this study (including the one woman who was shadowed) and three of these women I interviewed twice, with a four month period in between. These double interviews enabled the possibility to deepen and develop the views of the participant that might have changed.

A minor drawback to these interviews was due to my limited fluency in Swedish, therefore, the interviews were held in English. As Davies (2008) argues in attempt to understand a social world, “the process of learning the language in which that world is lived out is fundamentally insightful” (p. 87). It links the researcher and participant in a set of

shared cultural memories. Even with my participants high level of English there were organisational terms and other words that did not come naturally or were not easily translated into English. At these times, however, not knowing the language became an advantage because we both made greater effort to discuss these words and misinterpretations. In the following excerpts that I use from these interviews, I have edited the imperfect language for ease of reading, however, I have ensured in doing so that the significance of the content has not been distorted.

1.4.3 Additional Methods

In addition to the above methods, I complemented them with document analysis in order to understand the self preferred image of the organisation. This was useful to discover what was thought of as problematic for the organisation. Included in this document analysis were both current and old documents attained during the internship, including the Lund University strategic plan and the policy for gender equality, equal treatment and diversity. The analysis consisted of, for example considering what was said and also what was not said, its production, and how employees perceive it. Further, I implemented a field diary to write notes of spontaneous observations or conversations as well as transcribing the above interviews. This has been a sought of 'bricolage approach' where thinking, writing and multiple methods have been mixed and combined whilst also maintaining a constant and critical reflexivity about my position (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010). This provided for a deeper understanding of the research topic and phenomenological practice. This practice of ethnography has implied a large amount of time in the field, relating to people in their professional surroundings and a constant engagement between an observation and analytical perspective. As Czarniawska (2007) writes "one has to step back in order to observe and, paradoxically, this step backward means stepping forward into the field" (p. 9). In doing cultural analysis, I feel it has involved not only the engagement of stepping into and stepping out of the field but has also called for a sense of openness, allowing people to show through their own worlds what is important for them in their lives but also exploring the things that are forgotten or unconscious.

1.5 Ethical Considerations

In collaborating with various people throughout the research, the research process is as Davies wrote (2008) affected by all those involved. Pink (2007) also speaks of ethnography as a collaboration and a negotiation between people, extending to say that along with this

comes an awareness of ethical questions. In these various collaborations with the participants of this research questions quickly arose in regards to confidentiality.

Ethical considerations first arose when initially contacting participants. When first contacting participants it was necessary to inform them why I was conducting the fieldwork, give a brief overview of what the research was concerned with, its importance, and assure them that as participants they will remain anonymous. This was to ensure they had enough information to assess the likely effects of the research on them and enough information for them to make a decision if they wished to participate or not (Davies, 2008). When first meeting with participants I endeavoured to answer any questions they had in relation to the research topic or methods and again informed them of their anonymity. In regards to shadowing, I scheduled a short meeting first to discuss the above logistics and answer any questions.

Given there are few women in management at Lund University anonymity of the participants has been a major ethical consideration. I have therefore chosen pseudonyms for all participants and have not specified their department or faculty in which they work. Given the reflexive nature of these interviews on the participants department this was also favoured by the participants. Furthermore, as some participants are not Swedish nationals, and given this further minority status, I have decided not to provide details regarding their nationality and rather refer to them from coming from abroad to maintain anonymity.

As for the organisation Lund University, where I conducted my fieldwork, I decided to keep this name. Lund University is a public institution and a main University in Sweden and it would be difficult to apply anonymity (Davies, 2008). Having conducted fieldwork for Lund University during my internship I ensured to seek consent to use the research collected during this period and discussed the use of the name, which was approved.

1.6 Introducing the Participants

Inga is in her 60's and moved to the south of Sweden to work as a Head of Department at Lund University. *Inga* has been working in this position for a short time but prior to this role she worked for many years as second in charge for a large company. She was sought out for this current position. She feels her work is a big part of her life.

Katarina works within management at the central administration of Lund University. She is in her early 50's and was headhunted to this current position. In her former positions she was also working as a manager in administration.

Hanna is in her late 30's and works in middle-management in the central administration of Lund University. She started working at Lund University whilst studying and gained full employment in the early 2000's. She was approached by higher managers to take this position and has recently been chosen to attend a leadership course provided by Lund University.

Frida is in her late 50's and she recently moved out of her Head of Department position but continues to teach and research at the University. She has been working at the University since the late 1970's.

Eva is in her 50's, and recently began working as Head of Department and feels she is well suited for her job. She has worked within the department for 14 years and has always been in a strategic and managing position.

Lou has recently finished her post as a Head of Department and is now working as a professor. She is in her 60's and has worked at Lund University for many years. She is from abroad and moved to Sweden in the 1990's. She enjoys the challenges of her work.

Anna is in her 40's and recently became a professor at her department. She has been working at Lund University since the early 2000's and has been working in a senior position. She said at times she feels she has far too much work to do but enjoys 99 percent of it.

Isabel is in her early 40's and works in a senior position at Lund University at her department and comes from abroad. Since arriving at Lund University several years ago, she has been apart of the executive board and has held other senior positions. She became a Professor at the age of 40 and loves what she does and has a lot of fun.

Anja is currently a high level manager for her faculty at Lund University. She is in her early 50's and comes from abroad but has lived in Sweden for many years. She likes her position immensely.

Annett is in her 60's and is a Dean at Lund University. She has been in a managing position for a number of years.

1.7 Chapter Synopsis

Having outlined the approach of this study and those involved I will move on to address in Chapter Two: Mapping the Landscape, the environment in which the participants of this study are based. I will begin by providing an overview and engage with the various ways in which Bourdieu's concepts of the field and capital have been developed upon by feminist theorist and introduce how I will apply them throughout this thesis. I will then move on to discuss the Swedish labour context in which the field is based by drawing on examples from

the fieldwork. I wish to convey the initial responses of resistance to gender in the organisation and the organisational structures and how this can present a challenge to current research in organisations.

Following this, Chapter Three: *Doing and Being a Manager*, explores the differences of these women experiences in being a manager to illustrate what it means to be a women in management and what practices are expected of them differs. To summarise these experiences it is possible to discuss three different ideal type groups. After introducing these three groups this is followed by a discussion of how class, age, the body, and gender intersect and, I argue, that this creates challenges in the women's doing of management and influences how they draw upon resources to maintain their careers. I will further present examples of how women negotiate around the field through their use of language and communication.

In Chapter Four: *Management and Gender Capital*, I further explore these complexities but I start with an analysis to examine if female and feminine forms of capital are drawn upon and enacted in these women's working lives. In doing so, I consider the contemporary management field and how it is no longer possible to use gender binaries to explain difficulties in getting women to enter top positions.

Lastly, Chapter Five: *Conclusion*, I will provide a brief summary of the main arguments and findings and provide recommendations as to how this research can be applied in organisations.

Chapter Two: Mapping the Landscape

At first glance it appeared that my participants had very little in common. Katarina had been working in management for over 20 years and liked having an impact on people's lives. She felt her femaleness had never had any major impact on her work life although it had affected her pay at times. Lou is nearing the end of her working career and claimed her femaleness had brought her to the table but now she was feeling like a 'little old lady' (Lou, Interview, 2013). Hanna was recently new in management and felt gender had absolutely no impact in her work life. For these women it seemed they had only a few things in common, one being that they all worked in management at Lund University.

In the following chapter, I will focus on these women in management and examine what role gender plays in their everyday working life. The empirical findings are complex and ambiguous, raising signs of change and resistance. The main focus of this chapter is to, therefore, map out the landscape in which these women are located and to discuss the impact the local and Swedish context has on their practices and perspectives in their field of management. I argue these resistances provide challenges for gender equality research and I also wish to give an overview of being there, to understand what these women share in common. Firstly, I will introduce and define the concepts of capital and the way Bourdieu's concepts have been built upon by feminists.

2.1 Applying Bourdieu's Concepts

2.1.1 The Field

For Bourdieu, fields are "networks of social relations, structured systems of social positions within which struggles or maneuvers take place over resources, stakes and access" (as cited in Oakes, Townly & Cooper, 1998, p. 260). The field, as a network of social relations, was thought of by Bourdieu as a game where there are rules and regulations which are not always exactly explicit. The field is occupied by players who are engaged in the game and have stakes and investments within it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Players hold tokens (thought of as types of capital) that they use in competition with others and these tokens determine each player's moves and positions they take up, each trying to establish the type of power effective in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Yet, fields are also dynamic and relational. They are ever changing. The players renegotiate the rules, sometimes subtly, sometimes explicitly.

In the article *Is the Glass Ceiling Unbreakable? Habitus, Fields, and the Stalling of Women and Minorities in Management*, organisational scholars Corsun and Costen (2001) draw on Bourdieu's concepts to analyse women in management. They argue that white men usually possess the capital that enables the chances of success and movement into and within it; theirs is the legitimate capital in this field. They continue to state, "to be successful in business, women and minorities must play by the rules and within the boundaries established by White men" (Corsun & Costen, 2001, p.18). This means generally men maintain the power over the management field. Similarly, Witz and Savage (1992) state that organisations privilege both masculinities and the male work-life arrangements. Thus, for these authors masculine dispositions are of advantage in organisations, whilst female and feminine dispositions are not. The authors state that men are better positioned in management than women.

Women, however, have entered the field of management and succeeded within it. Corsun & Costen (2001) argue that when women succeed in the management field it is because they have taken on masculine values and norms (masculine forms of capital) in the game of the management field. Yet, as Billing (2011) stated, this approach of considering women in management reduces women to the victim of the male norm phantom, which I would agree with. Not only does it reduce women to the victim but their approach is problematic as it homogenizes male and female characteristics as innate. Their static definitions of gender does not account for variation nor do they ask questions that are locally oriented. As some researchers have also found, the value of femininity is increasing in the labor market (Billing, 2011; Lovell, 2000). It may also be that the value of femininity is increasing in the management fields. I therefore, will explore in later chapters the complexities of gender identities and whether women in this local context draw upon female and feminine resources in the fields of management to sustain their careers. Therefore, in this study I examine the participants as situated in a particular field – the field of management within Lund University. Within this field these women are located in different departments, and hold both research and teaching positions. Each of these could constitute as a field, however, even though these could count as different fields I understand them to overlap in the women's everyday work and are difficult to differentiate.

2.1.2 Gender Capital

The concept of capital is central for Bourdieu in making sense of the structure and distribution of advantage and disadvantage of social space. The structure of social space is

given by the distribution of various forms of capital, by the accumulation (or lack of) of their properties. Those in hold of them are capable of conferring power and strength and as a result they profit their holder (Skeggs, 1997). The accumulation of capital is an important element of social distribution in that “the distributions of agents in social space are dependent upon the volume and structure of capital they possess” (Bourdieu, 1989, p.17). The concept of capital encompasses both monetary and symbolic resources and according to Bourdieu four forms of capital exist – economic, cultural, social and symbolic.

Generally, Bourdieu did not address the idea of gender capital. For Bourdieu gender is not a capital as such but rather provides the relations in which capitals become valued and organized (McCall, 1992). Bourdieu only intended to use capital to examine class distinction. Capital may, however, be a useful tool to examine gender distinction and gender advantage as some feminist scholars have done. In McCall’s (1992) article she extends upon Bourdieu’s analysis and argues that in his formulation of capital and habitus, there is the possibility for gender capital to exist. She points out that for Bourdieu capital initially appears gender neutral, acting as a distribution factor within the social group “defined by the volume and composition of the initial capital” (McCall, 1992, p. 842). Gender is shaped in the “reconversion process by ‘dispositions associated with gender’ resulting in a gendered form of cultural capital, but still essentially defined by the associated field of occupation” (McCall, 1992, p. 842). Although, Bourdieu saw gender as a secondary social form that gains specificity from class position, McCall points out that not only did he term gender secondary because of its significance in stratification, it is also termed secondary because it is hidden. It is hidden because it appears universal and natural (McCall, 1992). She proposes through her analysis that “embodied cultural capital actually manifests itself in dispositions, or put another way, certain types of dispositions are themselves forms of capital” (McCall, 1992, p. 843). This means, embodied dispositions may operate as hidden gendered cultural capital or gender capital. Hence, gender is potentially a significant form of capital (McCall, 1992). Skeggs (1997) further elaborated on this to argue that gender can be a form of capital only if it is symbolically legitimated. Skeggs (2004), in her later work, points out that for Bourdieu capital is associated with high cultural practices. She, however, suggests that capital may be more useful if it were extended beyond high culture so other cultural practices can also be seen as a resource or use-value that can be exchanged across fields.

Bourdieu, nonetheless, saw women as having a limited relation with capital, however, a number of feminist authors have taken issue with women’s relations to capital (for example see Skeggs, 1997; Lovell, 2000; Moi, 1991). These authors claim, that women not only

accumulate capital but also possess their own feminine forms of capital. For example, Skeggs (1997) wrote:

Femininity, for instance, can be seen as a form of cultural capital. It is the discursive position available through gender relations that women are encouraged to inhabit and use. Its use will be informed by the network of social positions of class, gender, sexuality, region, age and race which ensure that it will be taken up (and resisted) in different ways (p. 10).

Therefore, femininity is something that is culturally learnt and may function as a form of capital. In Skeggs's view, capital provides an explanation of the intersections of gender and class. In the following, I wish to follow and take up this feminist Bourdieuan concept of gender capital in the form of feminine capital in discussing how these women negotiate and experience the field of management. In taking this approach it allows for the opportunity to understand gender processes along with other processes and it also situates gender central in social space.

For, whilst I wish to study femininity as a capital, I want to make a distinction between the concepts of femininity and femaleness, so that femininity is not specified as a female condition. Hence, femaleness (female capital) is the gender advantage derived from being perceived to have a female body (but not necessarily feminine); whereas femininity (feminine capital) is derived from a skill set or dispositions that is recognised as being feminine. Feminine capital may also be used by men and masculine capital also be used by women. Skeggs (1997) proposes that what it means to be feminine or what is masculine differs according to the class a person is positioned in. It is therefore important to note that the participants of this study can be defined as middle class because of their employment. Managerial positions and middle class can appear to be connected given the high-status (as already discussed), income and associated lifestyle of this occupation. When exploring the participants' habitus and the practices that inform their capital we discussed their histories and background. This provided some indication to their attitudes and experiences to class membership, whereby many defined themselves as middle class. Many participants also informed that their parents had been to University and of these some had been professors. Further, my own concepts of class are based on my own Australian background making it necessary to discuss these ideas with participants. Given that many of my participants and myself come from abroad differing class backgrounds are more difficult to conceptualise. Therefore, in addition to my participant's thoughts on class membership, I also conceive this class membership for many have held their positions in higher education for a number of years and learnt the doings of middle class. This is important for their class positioning

influences their practices and what it means to be feminine. In the following I peruse the idea that femaleness and femininity can be forms of capital in this thesis.

2.2 Modern Labour: The Swedish Context

Donna: Why did you return back to work after having children?

Anna: I do not think it is an option here really. I do not know anyone who didn't. I wouldn't even think of not doing it. (Anna, Interview, February 2013)

This text above comes from a conversation between Anna and I about her working life at Lund University, which led us to talking about her being a working mother. That was when I asked why she returned back to work. Her response, as seen above, came without pause or hesitation. It was 'normal' if not expected for her to return. Other younger mothers that I interviewed also shared this view. Anna's response is an example of what is considered normal for her in her local work context.

In this following section, I therefore wish to introduce the Swedish and then Lund University context in which these participants are situated. It is necessary to understand this local context and work environment as it impacts upon the values attached to work practices and can highlight challenges that exist to improving gender equality in the workplace.

For decades gender equality has been on the political agenda and has had an impact on the Swedish working life (Wahl, 2010). Not only has it influenced political decisions and policy formation, it has influenced the everyday life and practice within organisations. Today, women make up 46.2 percent of the Swedish workforce and the education level of women in Sweden is even higher than that of the men in Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2013). In Sweden, it is very common to have dual-breadwinners, as two incomes are needed to meet a reasonable standard of living. The professional, modern, career-oriented woman is even considered a social norm (Billing, 2011), which was highlighted above by the example from Anna. In Sweden, along with the neighboring Nordic countries, childcare facilities are more generous than in comparison to many other countries. Further, many men from these Nordic countries take on care and responsibilities for young children more so than a couple of decades ago (Billing, 2011). For example, when I met with Hanna (mid-manager) we sat in her office and above her computer were four individual frames, each with a picture of one of her young children. Before I had the opportunity to ask if they were her own children she spoke of them during the conversation when talking about how she got her current management position. She informed me that her current workplace called her whilst she was on maternity leave with her last child (at the same time she was pointing at the fourth picture)

informing her of this available position if she wished to take it. She took the position and soon returned to work. She reflected that this was easily made possible as her and her husband evenly shared the parental leave, something that they had done for all their children (Hanna, Interview, October 2012). During the fieldwork I often heard about such sharing of parental leave. When I would meet with employees who were new parents they spoke about both themselves and their partner each taking nine months leave. In Sweden, with the sharing of parental leave and with mothers returning back to work, this highlights a societal norm where, I would interpret, one learnt way for mothers to behave in this context is to return back to work. In comparison, this is not something done in Australia as there is no lawful right for fathers to take parental leave and there is little government childcare support. In Australia it is, therefore, an option for women to stay at home with their children. This understanding I hold is notable in the above question that I asked Anna “Why did you return back to work after having children?” It highlights my own prior idea and another way to regard a female manager role. Thus, in this context children should not be seen as a (big) hindrance if a woman or man should therefore wish to pursue a career (Billing, 2011). There are now a number of factors that can influence the time that can be devoted to a career for both men and women.

In Sweden, the *Discrimination Act* includes inequality and discrimination related to age, ethnicity, sexuality and disability. Under this legislation every employer who employs ten or more people is required to prepare a plan for how they will work with equality. This plan must include for example an overview of the action to be taken and a survey of wage differentials and how the previous equality plan was implemented (Helmcke, 2013). Even with these legislation and policy measures in place, and where organisations are encouraged and supposed to increase diversity in higher level positions (and in the context of this thesis increase women) the changes remain slow. When searching Lund University’s staff webpage, it is possible to find the policy for gender equality, equal treatment and diversity. Each faculty is also required to adapt their own plan from this, which can be found on their individual homepage. This was sometimes found on a faculty’s homepage and for some I could not locate their policy and plan on their web page at all. The level of engagement with these policies differs and as Frida (a former Head of Department who had worked intensely on these issues through programs with her department in the past) reflected “you cannot ask staff to do the same course every year it has to have some evolution. It’s like breathing, sometimes we have to breathe in and sometimes we have to breathe out” (Frida, Interview, September 2012). It is a work in progress.

2.2.1 Organisational Logic

With policy implemented and in place, these changes remain slow as organisations have historically been constructed and developed according to the expectations of men (Billing, 2011). From a historical perspective the Swedish Higher Education system was for many years male dominated. At the time of fieldwork Lund University had over 6000 employees with 48 percent being female (Lund University, 2012). A relatively even gender balance exists between male and females up to the level of those with a post doc and then only 22 percent of women hold positions above that of a senior lecture (Lund University, 2012). The sex composition at the managerial level is still in favour of men and in organisational research it is believed to set the characteristics and attributes, the norm, of how a person should be a manager (Acker, 1990). Although, differing managerial characteristics may be required in different organisations. It is for this reason that in the following I will provide a brief overview of the organisational culture to better understand the situated work practices of these women. I will also highlight some of the challenges I faced when I first started this fieldwork.

In general, the objective of a University as an organisation is to provide and produce knowledge. In order to produce this knowledge in an effective and efficient manner the organisation is built around the independent individual and is structured with both formal and informal hierarchies. The formal hierarchy was one of the first structures that I encountered when organising my fieldwork and internship with Lund University. Organisational scholars Diefenbach & Sillince (2011) define a formal hierarchy as “an official system of unequal person-independent roles and positions which are linked via lines of top-down command-and-control” (p. 1517). It became noticeable that within Lund University, all official roles and positions were clearly defined and demarcated from each other. For example, when working in the organisation during my internship any questions I had for those I was working with, were firstly taken to their boss and their boss made all the final decisions. This demonstrated a vertical hierarchy wherein certain authority was assigned with each position (Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011).

Many of the participants I interviewed described their work with individual autonomy and in order to achieve their goals their working hours went beyond the standard working week. This view was also shared by the women participants of this study where being a manager involves a heavy workload. For example, when I met with Hanna (mid-manger) recently new in her management position she stated that officially she is suppose to work 40

hours but she works around 50 hours or more a week. She found with managing a group there was more responsibility and as such she now also works from home. Even with these longer working hours she stated that she enjoys her work and is happy to take on these extra hours. Other participants including, for example Eva, Anja, and Annett stated that they also work beyond 60 hours a week but as Anja (high level manager) reflected in regards to this work “it is a lot of fun, people who have fun with it don’t count working hours” (Anja, Interview, February 2013).

The participants also spoke of self-regulating groups. Self-regulating groups, such as professional associations or media for communicating a professions development were described as supporting the idea of autonomy (Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011). The concept of individual autonomy, however, seems to negate the idea of a formal hierarchy. It was through this fieldwork that I was able to observe the workings of informal ways to work past this formal hierarchy and allow employees to practice the individual autonomy. For example, in one meeting I sat in on during my shadowing a number of people were discussing a new undergraduate course that was to be implemented in the upcoming semester and they needed to discuss its content. At one stage there was a discussion between two professors where they each alternatively described their experiences and collaborations with two well-known American Universities to support their argument and make it more valid from the other. In these informal practices, Diefenbach & Sillince (2011) also suggest that the principle of seniority kicks in and transforms these informal relationships, into an informal hierarchy. As I reflect on my own positioning in the organisation I can start to see how an informal hierarchy was operating. Those I worked with during the internship often referred to their own networks and collaborations with professors working on gender. A hierarchical logic was further established through their seniority and numerous years of experience with this topic. Even though I was given the flexibility and individual autonomy to operate my own project, the informal hierarchy kicked in to further reinforce my positioning in the system. These structures in the organisational culture are ultimately in place, I interpret, to facilitate the functioning of the University to produce knowledge and facilitate the interactions between bureaucratic matters and professional autonomy.

I also found that the competent individual and formal hierarchy was further reflected in the physical space and buildings at Lund University. The physical space in research is often seen as a location where people do things (Pellow, 2001) and is rarely seen as a source of qualitative research data (Atkinson, 2005). As O’Toole and Were (2008, p.623) suggest,

places can reflect the “work habits and character” of a workplace which is notable in the following field note I jotted down after I had finished with an interview:

A maze of corridors, entering them was to walk into a quite hush. I did not see anyone until I entered F’s office. I waited five to ten minutes whilst she was in another meeting and I didn’t see anyone. Employees sat in their offices and often their office doors were shut or slightly ajar allowing the distant tap on the keyboard or a photocopier printing to be heard (a. Fieldnotes, October 2012).

At a broad level, the buildings and physical space signal cultural elements of the organisation. These include, objectivity, concentration, independent individual working, and hierarchy. I agree with O’Toole and Were that these spaces reflect the work habits and character of a workplace. These authors also claim that, authority, status, and structures relating to power will be reflected in places. This is seen in my observation field note:

Some of the offices were shared between colleagues. The more senior level persons occupied the larger offices, including larger meeting tables. At times, the corridors and waiting spaces were dotted with loaned art from the national Swedish gallery. A descriptive plaque was placed next to the paintings, often with a do not touch sign. Recreation spaces included a lunchroom or fika room (a. Fieldnotes, October 2012).

Thus, the hierarchy and status of an individual were further reflected in the physical spaces. I would argue that the physical space of these offices and corridors reinforces an organisational culture that values the competent individual. Further, from these arrangements little masculine or feminine meaning can be drawn (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Both men and women favoured upon these spaces. Although, there were signs of gender in these spaces. For example, meeting rooms were dotted with historical paintings or statues of previously notable people from Lund University, these often being male portraits. Mostly, there remained little masculinity signals in these arrangements contributing to a non-gendered work environment. Hence, the shared building space alone did not only indicate individualism but also towards gender-neutrality.

This concept of individual autonomy suggests that any differences in advantageousness or difference between individuals is on the basis of merit, where women can compete for promotions and jobs on the same basis as men. As Krefting (2003) made evident in her account of the employment of women in academia these formal and informal hierarchies and the formal procedures based in merit can hide differences in outcomes and cannot guarantee gender-based fairness. This may be similar to what Diedenbach & Sillince (2011) describe in their informal hierarchies as undermining formal hierarchies, whereas in this case formal procedures may be undermined by informal practices, thereby not guaranteeing gender-based fairness in for example promotion. This adherence to individual

autonomy and merit (to be discussed in more detail below) indicates that men and women should be treated the same and differences should be neutralised. An interesting contradiction, however, arose when speaking with some informants who reflected on their perceived femaleness and the advantages this posed to entering and moving within the field. This will be discussed in depth further below but with this discussion, I have aimed to highlight that the idea of individual autonomy influences the management field and can conceal the idea of gender.

2.2.2 Gender-Neutral University

The seductive viewpoint that organisations are gender-neutral is something that struck me when I first entered the field and there was a strong sense of equal opportunity in the management context. The absence of women up the top was hard to explain by the participants and many of those up the top described themselves as being aware of equality issues and its importance in the wider societal context.

Gender scholar Anna Wahl (2010) found in her study on Swedish managers in the private sector that the impact of the gender equality discourse could be seen in the managers' everyday practice. This is comparable to some of the women I met during my fieldwork and those participants during the internship fieldwork period. The impact of the gender equality discourse became noticeable when speaking with Katarina (manager in administration). I met with Katarina on two occasions and during both she reflected that she did not think issues of gender were of any interest any more. She described this issue in our first interview with the Swedish expression, "mellan mjolk" (translation: skimmed milk) (Interview, October 2012). Being unaware of this Swedish expression I asked her if she could clarify this expression, to which she described that the issue of gender was "no longer sharp" and that:

[Gender] is taken away at least within the University world. It could be going on in the bank sector but where I am working we are colour blind. And that's for the colour of skin, gender, whatever [...] when I should hire some I always try to look at the males' application one more time. I can never take in a lesser skilled man than a female. We are not allowed (Katarina, Interview, October, 2012).

From the perspective Katarina provides on her everyday activities, I would interpret, gender or other factors do not appear to be obstacles in her everyday activities. For her, the process of moving within the management field and recruitment appear to be built on neutrality and meritocracy. Many others also shared this view when they said that the selection for positions or promotions was based on competence and merit and not on gender. Another example illustrating the impact of the gender equality discourse came from other participants, both

from those in the internship fieldwork and from the women in this study, when they stated that they did not think of people as either male or female but rather they thought of them as individuals. For them the title of a person was more important than their gender. In addition to a person's title, participants frequently mentioned their interaction with colleagues as affected not by gender but more by an individual's personality. Wahl (2010) further argues that the presence of gender equality discourse becomes noticeable when there is a downplaying of the importance of gender, which I agree, is evident in the above examples. Wahl continues to extend her analysis to state that such responses can be interpreted as a way to resist the impact of gender equality, meaning that gender equality results are seen as 'natural' rather than giving credit to gender equality work. As such it creates resistance against future gender equality work. Whilst this gender-neutral perspective in the everyday workplace may produce resistance, I would also interpret that these responses reflect the 'modern attitude'. That being, in the society there is the attitude that everyone should have a fair chance. This is supported by Alvesson and Billing (2009) who suggest that "modern societies praise themselves from being meritocratic and more (younger) people in Western societies probably claim to be in favour of an ideology that gives equal opportunities to both sexes" (pg. 8). Not only do these responses indicate a modern attitude but also they appear to be imbued within broader cultural assumptions of doing gender without perceiving it (West & Zimmerman, 1987). However, as already mentioned there were interesting contradictions when the women participants of this study began to reflect on their gender as an advantage, which will be discussed below in Chapter Four.

2.3 Summary

In this Chapter I have illustrated the organisational context in which these women are situated to suggest that the cultural context influences relations to gender, in that the cultural context produces a way of thinking and experiencing. For these women in the field of management they have entered senior positions but remain in the minority. They hold positions that they were recruited for, pressed to take on, or either applied for. Working full time (or more) is important for their lifestyle and who they are. They felt that staying at home with their family was not a personal option for them. Furthermore, they expressed great enthusiasm about their positions and their achievements. Their ability to perform well secures support for identification with a professional identity (Skeggs, 1997). Also shown was that conceptualisations of gender were considered solved, where the organisational system was fair through the notion of individual autonomy and meritocracy. Any differences, hence, were

described through individual deficiency rather than gender or other social positionings. This highlights that gender is contingent upon place and time. I argue these meanings in the everyday work life and attitudes are challenges for organisational change.

Despite these views of gender-neutrality, contradictions appeared when the women shared their experiences of doing management. Even though these women may share similarities these interactions make for diverse, contradictory and complex experiences. Whereby these similarities are experienced differently, they impact process of identification (subjective construction) and effect the deployment of different types of capital (Skeggs, 1997). These differences in experiences will serve as the focus in the next chapter.

In terms of implementing gender equality strategies in organisations, the applicability of these insights highlight that issues of resistance need to be addressed. Resistances become strong when targeting organisational norms and values as seen in my research, therefore, implementation of equality strategies can benefit from and be facilitated by small or incremental interventions, an evolutionary process rather than calling for changing everything, everywhere too soon.

Chapter Three: Doing and Being a Manager

This chapter will draw on the everyday complexities of those in management and will capture the dynamic nature of the intersection of gender, age, and class to build on more complex understandings of gender in management. The first impression I had of the fieldwork material was how the differences between these women's experiences of management, and how their differing identities, were shaped and brought to life. It became obvious as to how their dispositions/habitus altered their experiences of being a manager. To look at these complex differences I first wish to talk of these participants in three ideal-typical groups. I caution upon using categories and to placing people into groups, however, these groups have been formulated to summarise the experiences of the participants and highlight patterns and themes that emerged during the data analysis. With an applied cultural analysis perspective these groups are also useful to communicate results found in this analysis. After introducing these groups, I will then follow this by discussing how these women build capital and create value in the field of management and how their experiences are dependent on their gender, age, class, education, and backgrounds. As I have previously introduced, the dominance of men in management positions is said to set the norm. The increased presence of women in management positions, however, requires understandings beyond notions of patriarchy in order to build a more complete picture of management and equality in these positions. I therefore highlight these complexities and practices to illustrate that there are many different experiences that these women have as managers and I argue that it is far to simple to speak of gender binaries, or the male norm, in explaining women's difficulties.

3.1 Three (Ideal) Groups and their Experiences

Group A: These women tended to be the youngest of those interviewed; aged between 35 to 50 years. They all liked their workplace, and described it as a friendly atmosphere with good relations with their colleagues. Women with young children talked positively about the work environment and of the support they received from their colleagues that helped them to manage and balance between childcare and their work responsibilities. The women of this group were oriented towards providing support in the workplace and being a part of the development of their students. On occasion, a few of these women experienced unusual instances in international meetings where they were recognised as subordinate to the others present in the meeting, something I wish to discuss in more depth below. They never thought of themselves as crossing the traditional boundaries of women's

work. It appeared their professional identity was in the forefront and their gender identity in the background.

Group B: This group of women had mixed feelings about being a manager and accepting a management position. These women were mostly former researchers and by taking on a managerial position they found the added administration a nuisance. Many were worried of the minimal time they had for research during the working week. These problems left some to consider not taking on the position after the three-year tenure. Some found the position lonely, where it was not possible to talk about certain situations with colleagues of the department or their friends or partner outside, for they would not understand their workplace or the situation. These women mostly talked about gendering practices taking place in formal work situations. For example, some did talk of adjustments they needed to make to fit into the management culture, in terms of adapting to male language and communication in meetings, something I will discuss below. In addition, those who come from outside of Sweden described mixed feelings and adjustments.

Group C: This group comprises of a small group of older women, who have tried to reduce their differences to their male colleagues. They privileged some masculine characteristics such as the need to be tough and aggressive in the workplace. They privileged these characteristics because this was deemed important for completing their affairs. They were, however, at the same time critical of other male managers they had worked with (also to be discussed below). These women have felt they have challenged traditional work boundaries for women. Even though they felt they were well suited for the positions, they found that their colleagues or networks attempted to read them as more traditional women in the form of the little old lady syndrome and being seen as a mother.

The three ideal groups indicate that these women experience managerial jobs very differently. They all regarded their job as important to their lifestyle and identity, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but generational differences were noticed. The older women in their positions were perhaps reproducing the male norm, although they were also counteracting this norm by criticizing their male colleagues behaviour' whereas the younger workers felt they were equal to all workers and resisted gendering attempts. By highlighting these three groups, I have aimed to illustrate the complexity that exists between all these women and even within their own experiences of doing management. I argue that given this complexity and variation in their daily practices it is therefore too general to speak of the male norm in management. In the remainder of this chapter I will elaborate on these complexities and by doing so demonstrate the need for a more nuanced thinking in terms of

gender relations within the field of management, which can contribute to developing a better understanding for organisational processes and increasing equality within the field of management.

3.2 Gender, Age and the Body

The three groups outlined indicate these women experience their managerial jobs very differently, dependent on their background, different workplace, and noticeably their age. From these three groups of women it is possible to see how their age or life course impacts on how they do and are expected to do management and also how they are perceived in the workplace.

When meeting with participants we often discussed their career developments and any challenges they may have experienced along the way. For the younger women the impact of age became apparent through the appearance of being a ‘young girl’. This became clear when I was speaking with Isabel, in her 40’s, who described such an incident during a meeting with other international professors and professionals using large body movements to illustrate her experience. In particular were the animations associated with that of the older people moving to sit at the meeting table (Isabel, Interview & Fieldnotes, February 2013). She also mimicked their table presence and depicted their deep voices when she stated:

Last year in Geneva there were the very old cows from the bank and you know typical guys. I was the only female around the table and I was by far the youngest. And then they really started treating me like I was a PhD student all the time... at one point I really put my foot down and started acting like them, and saying well [...] I’m a full professor, I’ve been working in this field for 15 years. And then he was suddenly reacting... (Isabel, Interview & Fieldnotes, February 2013).

As much as her reflection was lively with strong descriptions and actions, there was also a sense of unease and resentment to the situation, especially when she followed this with her thought that she was being “treated as a flower pot in the middle of the table” (Isabel, Interview, February 2013). Further, Anna, in her early 40’s, also captured this sense of unease in describing a similar experience when we were talking about her career progression to a high position by the age of 40. She described:

Things worked out [...] it doesn’t mean too much to me, of course it is good for your self confidence [...] I remember I was at this conference in France and there was this man who put his hand on my shoulder and treated me with the sort of little girl attitude (laughing) then it’s sort of nice to have a sign where it says professor (laughing). He thought I was the little lady... I’m not so used to this (Anna, Interview, February 2013).

In the situations described by Isabel and Anna, their body and body dispositions were what Skeggs (1997) calls markers of social location; meaning that the body is a physical site where the relations of class, gender, age, and race come together, intersect, and are practiced and embedded (Skeggs, 1997). In relations to Skeggs, it could be said Anna and Isabel's bodies were social markers of their age and femaleness in very subtle ways and, I would argue, that the intersection of their age and perceived femaleness did not form as capital. This can be seen through Isabel's comment that the men assumed she was a PhD student which demonstrated that for these men, femaleness was equated with traditional female roles, devalued and/or lesser than their own (in this instance judgement was taken by men but this is not to say that judgements emerge in actions only taken by men, as they may through female colleagues as well). Thus, their appearance was initially judged as lacking and their body was a site where distinctions could be made. In these initial instances these women's bodies, compounded with gender and age, positioned them to face an uneasy situation. This could otherwise mean they were standing under a sign to which they did not want to belong (Butler, 1992). That is, biological identity was taken as a given.

Sociologist Jacqueline Watts (2010) analyses the movement of women throughout their engineering careers and the way their minority status renders them highly visible. She states that it could be expected that the appearance of a woman engineer may have a negative impact on their positioning whereby their authority is ignored, which I would agree was also the case of the examples from Anna and Isabel. For these women, their age and femaleness in the form of body/physical appearance was limiting their capital in the field. Similar complexities of negotiating the position of age and gender were raised when I was talking with Lou, in her early 60's. Just before our interview, Lou had collected me from her department entrance and led me through a maze of silent corridors and stairs to her mid-sized office that on a clear day had a view of Malmö's famous Turning Torso building. We were sitting in her office that was piled with papers and books and the office door was shut. She sat in her office chair whilst I sat closely by in the plush armchair, aligned in the corner, balancing my notebook and phone recorder on my knees. We were talking about her future career and research when she raised concerns about her older age. She commented:

Lou: I think that with both older men and women the status of researcher drops off. It is more difficult for older researchers now to get money from research councils despite the fact those people may have built up research systems [...] you know it suddenly struck me that it's the little old lady syndrome that actually I think older women get even less respect than older men in the same system. Because, you know, [...] you don't take your aunty and your granny as seriously as you do as one of your aged colleagues [...]

Donna: Is that something you have experienced?

Lou: Yeah, to a certain extent yes. Um, yeah I think so. Maybe I don't want to go particularly into details about the exact situation but [...] when men get together and go and have a drink things come out that are really quite deeply buried. They just sling them out without exactly thinking about what they are saying... it just comes out in various behavioural incidents (laughing) (Lou, Interview, February 2013).

She continued by stating that is something younger women need to think about, where older women can support them but these younger women need to consider the situation of the older women more. Further, she described an example where in a meeting with her colleagues they were "being altruistic" in pushing money sideways to help a younger female at the start of her career in academia but this younger woman perceived her as an old lady (Lou, Interview, February 2013).

From Lou's perspective, it becomes noticeable how complex the role of management can be. It is not simply a gender issue. Firstly, as seen above, Lou wants to see herself as altruistic, by helping a younger researcher with money when she believed she did not need to. She also has a certain level of power in being able to push and shift money within her department. She is, however, confronted in which other people see her as an old lady. To take her term "old lady syndrome" it is possible to see how she perceives her situation as becoming limited. In relation to this limitation, as Kristofer Hansson (2007) shows with the help of philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, "the situation's limitations come not from who one is but from how one has been made" and those individuals "do not always have possibilities to determine, themselves, when they will avoid being objectified" (p. 166). Thus, even though Lou may have felt she was acting altruistic, at the same time she experienced other relations of being objectified and saw herself from the eyes of others (as an old woman), limiting her situation. Further, when speaking with Lou throughout the interview there was a lot of warmth and humour but there was also a sense of unease with the situation. This unease can be seen in the above excerpt after she stated "it just comes out in various behavioural incidents" this was followed with a somewhat short nervous laughter. It is possible to question was this laughter humour? It appeared, however, to cover unease with the situation. For, as shown in the above excerpt, just moments before this laughter there was not only a short pause in thought but also her desire not to discuss the whole situation. Hence the laughter, I interpret, came across as an unease and nervousness with the situation and a feeling of injustice towards the limitations of her bodily dispositions. As Hansson (2007, p. 159) notes with reference to Beauvoir, within this complex situation to be able to "free" herself from the perceived limitations of being an 'old woman', it would depend not only on herself "but on

the many relations” she has to the surrounding world. I would like to develop this further to argue that it was these many relations within the surrounding world that could allow Lou to capitalise on other relations and counteract the disvalue of being an old woman, something I wish to expand upon below.

Interestingly to note, these women did not power dress. From my own work experiences, I have often met and perceived female managers in a form of formal business attire, or power dress. When I would meet with the participants they would be in causal clothing, most clothes were either jeans with a jacket (or a sweater in some cases) or a dark-coloured dress with a hint of colour accompanied by a scarf and flat shoes. In some cases they could be considered to be “drab” dressers (b. Fieldnotes, February 2013). I conducted most of the fieldwork over the Swedish winter, which would account for the amounts of dark coloured clothing I observed, but I especially noticed that all my participants wore flat shoes. This particularly became apparent during the first interviews I conducted. During these I wore winter boots with a slight heel and when walking with my participants to their office down the quiet corridors it was hard not to notice the sounds and echoes of my shoes click clocking on either the concrete, wooden, or tiled floor disrupting the quiet hush of the corridor in contrast to my participants often silent walk. Therefore, to do feminine was not necessarily to power dress. By dressing alike, these women tend to bridge the gap between their ages. However, being a younger or older woman seems to carry additional markers that dressing alike cannot bridge.

For these participants, the intersections of their gender, age, body, and appearance in these above interview examples were judged as lacking. Although, like the economic metaphor where people accumulate money (through differing networks such as working or stock exchange) in order to purchase a valuable item, these women accumulated capital also through different means to build value and facilitate their movement in the management field game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Especially, they accumulated capital through different means when one disposition was no longer resourceful.

Lou, Isabel and Anna all provided concrete examples of various ways in which they attempted to gain capital to produce value and be respectable in situations where their age and gender was judged and devalued. For Isabel and Anna, their femaleness coupled with their age, was not desirable. They both in turn referred to their working titles – their capital of education and training – and identified with their professional identity to accumulate capital. Whereas Lou referred to her altruism (when describing how she was looking out for and being there for others) and her seniority in the hierarchy to gain capital. As another study has

noted, seniority and experience includes the benefits of recognition of self-worth and increased control (Jyrkinen & McKiethe, 2012). It can therefore be seen that when Lou referred to her experiences with others in the workplace, such as giving the younger woman money, she accumulated symbolic capital through her seniority and recognition of self-worth to counter the situation in the workplace where being an older woman was not valued. By illustrating that these women were referring to other means of capital – their education, training and seniority – to strengthen their position in the management field, they were being reflexive on their positioning by including how they relate to other people and through this experience identified with other subjectivities other than their age and gender in their practices.

In these examples, their identities could be seen as fluid, contradictory and always in the process of being formed. With this thinking it allows the possibility to see how identities are produced through social relations and practices. As Acker (1999) argues, identity formation allows for a “dynamic and multifaceted picture of class, gender, and ethnic processes, dramatically different from a categorical approach that begins with assigning individuals to... positions” (p. 58). In relation to Acker (1999) it could be said that in these examples the women have refused to be linked or fixed to the intersection of their age and gender. Rather, it was to desire respectability, and they had chosen to identify with another subjectivity to build capital in their situations. Although, by saying this, there is the assumption that one can take up an identity, or a position at will. Yet, as Skeggs (1997) illustrates, the working class women in her research were positioning themselves within, and being positioned by, social structures. Skeggs (1997) argues class is a “structuring absence” (p. 74). In this sense, I would agree with Skeggs that for Isabel, Anna, Lou, and the other participants, class has framed the possibilities of their access to various forms of capital (Skeggs, 1997). For these women, their ability to accumulate value through other means of capital was only possible through their middle class status. This means that, their class informs what it is means to be feminine. Thus, this class status may be viewed also as a form of capital.

In contrast with these age and body judgements, some other women described their age as a positive element in their work life. These women were mostly in their mid career, being in their late 40's and 50's and they experienced a sense of freedom and empowerment with their age. A study by Jyrkinen and McKie (2012), which analysed the impact of ageism on women in management careers, also found, and even suggested, that the optimal age for a woman in management was somewhere between 40 to 50 years of age. Whilst it is not in the

scope of my research to find out the optimal age, it was something that came up during my fieldwork with Katarina. During Katarina's morning meeting she sat around a table with an almost even balance between men and women managers. For the most part, all of these managers were the same age as her. When we were talking she described what she believed was the reason to why all the others in the room were the same age as her, and stated "I think it's because no one can have small children and no one can be over 60 years because it is too damn hectic to do this kind of work so there's this 45 to 60 year range" (Katarina, Interview, January 2013). At this point Katarina drew on her prior knowledge to make sense of age. She has two grown children herself and with this it has brought her more time to invest in her work life. In accordance with Jyrkinen and McKie (2012) I would agree in the case of Katarina that this age is optimal. Her life course and age have brought her various forms of capital to negotiate in the field of management.

These examples demonstrate how the habitus between older and younger women is different and thus they have differing dispositions and capabilities to focus upon and against gendering. Age appears to be a category in which these women are expected to move. I have attempted to show how the intersection of their age/life course and gender have had a strong impact on these women's experiences of doing management and their career paths. Their ages were experienced in gendered ways, in that for some it was to be devalued while for others it was a source of empowerment. Inclusions and exclusions in the workplace are not formally based on suitable or unsuitable age or gender because of discrimination laws, but nevertheless, for these women age intersecting with their perceived gender impacted those at earlier and later stages in their careers, creating certain disadvantages. The situation is not simple but complex and diverse. Their everyday cannot be defined to dominant masculine norms and it is not easy to speak of women as a single category as is often done in organisational research. This complexity highlights how the women draw on differing resources to maintain their careers.

3.3 Language and Communication

In this section, I do not wish to elaborate on the style of management of women compared to men to see if they differ or not (for an overview on this type of research see Alvesson & Billing, 2009, p. 151 - 157). This is neither in the scope of this research nor given the variation between people, would it be possible to predict the management ideals and behaviours from the sex of a specific person (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). What I do wish to elaborate on is a common theme appearing in my fieldwork where many of the participants

encountered and explained differences in their language and communication in comparison to their male colleagues during both formal and informal meetings.

On many occasions, when speaking with participants, they reflected on formal meetings where they felt their form of language and communication was not as effective as those of their male colleagues. For instance, when speaking with Eva (Head of Department) about any challenges or problems she may have experienced with being a female manager, she reflected:

As a woman you are, well at least I, I have noticed... women tend to be more concrete. They describe situations with more simple words in a more concrete level. While men they abstract it and use more complicated words. And then you can sit in a meeting and hear a woman say something and then the man actually says exactly the same things but in a completely different way. It is more theoretical and, as I said, in more advanced words. And then it sounds so good (we start laughing) and that is something I have been thinking about for many years. And when I say something in a meeting I try to adapt to the language of men. But I am quite bad at it and it's not natural for me at all (Eva, Interview, January 2013).

These gender differences in language and behaviour during meetings were based on Eva's observations of men and women interacting in meetings. This was also seen in a study by sociologist Gillian Ranson (2005) who researched the identities of women in traditionally male-dominated occupations, such as engineering. It was argued by Ranson, that all women in engineering must manage their gender to 'fit in' to existing organisational cultures, requiring them to initially identify with the 'macho' identity, through such actions as language. She argues that women in masculine organisations are 'conceptual men' until they become mothers. At a first glance, Eva did describe an instance where she tried to fit in. This action can be seen by Ranson as an adaptive strategy. Similarly, such a strategy was also suggested by gender scholar Jane Jorgenson (2002). Jorgenson notes in her research, also on women's identities in engineering, "a typical adaptive strategy on the part of many women who measure the requirements of success in male terms... attempt to assimilate by disqualifying their femininity and by matching male styles of behaviour" (p. 351). In this regard, the women who spoke of adapting to this masculine behaviour do so to fit in and in doing so disqualify their feminine identity. I would argue, however, that this is too general a statement. It would assume the only cultural norm being performed in the workplace is the male norm, and it categorically places women and men with specific identities and styles of leadership. It does not account for the complexities and differences seen between the three ideal groups that I have found in my empirical material.

In these instances of performing masculine behaviours it could be said though that these women were living up to the standards set by others (Beauvoir, 1997). They were imposing standards on themselves from another group. Through Eva's perspective it could be interpreted that she had to perform what she described as masculine behaviours for she did not initially have any alternative that could hold as high value within the local space. This is an example of how some norms may be adapted and others abandoned. Even though she worked and attempted to adapt a strategy to fit in and gain workplace recognition, I would argue that it was not necessarily the same as identifying with men, it was rather an opportunity to accumulate value and maintain her stake in the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In contrast to Ranson and Jorgenson, I also found that even if the women in this study perceived that they actively performed aspects of masculine behaviour, as when they described their practices with gender categories, they also gave reflections of reluctance in adopting this masculine language, especially those from group B. This reluctance was explained by stating that it did not feel right, or that it did not help them fit in.

Interestingly, when reflecting back to the three ideal groups, women who could be associated with group A often did not talk of incongruence between their communication and that of the organisation, nor did they criticize their male colleagues. For the younger women, they felt they were equal to their co-workers and if they met any gendering attempts they plainly refused them. In groups B and C, even though some women performed and reproduced aspects of the male norm they were also, however, exposing and criticising male managerial behaviour. The participants criticised their male colleagues (who were also managers) for not being effective in their communication style and/or for directing too much. Accordingly, the male manager did not live up to the idealised image of the manager. It is possible to say that the women in groups B and C were reproducing norms set by men, however, in their performance as managers they were also criticising and exposing male behaviour and hence counteracting the dominant norm. Group C, however, more often privileged masculine norms as this helped them conduct their daily affairs. These positions indicate management positions are experienced very differently. In some situations these women have used gender categories to make sense of their daily practices and at other times they are not as solid. How these women use gender as a form of capital will be taken up in the following chapter.

3.4 Summary

In the arguments developed above, I have shown the complexities that exist within these women's daily lives as factors including gender, age and class intersect. This provides for different experiences of doing management and shaping different identities that could potentially be summarised into three ideal groups. Given the intersecting sets of practices, these may open potentials for women to move more flexibly and take strategic advantage of other capitals. In this analysis I have shown these women sometimes use gender categories, but they are not fixed. Rather they are complex with gender being experienced differently when intersected with other social categories, as for example, age and class. Further, sometimes participants encountered the masculine norm and saw it effective to adopt it to assist in conducting daily affairs while others did not. This highlights the contradictory nature of gender. Thus, it is far too general to speak of maleness being the norm in explaining women's difficulties in management, as there is no single women's voice just as there is no single male voice. An intersectional perspective paints a complex picture, but through this research it is possible to approach it through the three ideal groups unique to this context.

Chapter Four: Management and Gender Capital

In the previous chapter I introduced the complexities and limits of these women's gender capital and what forms of value exchange they engage with (for example, the value of their class and age) and how through their experiences they become subjects (Beauvoir, 1997). The aim of this chapter is to expand on the lived contradictions and complexities introduced above but to focus on gender as capital. This is to consider whether femininity and female capital are enacted in these women's managerial work and drawn upon as a resource to maintain their careers. This idea of female capital will be the focus of the beginning of this chapter and I will then move on to analyse how and if feminine skills are drawn upon by these participants and act as capital. Finally, the chapter ends with a concluding analysis of these forms of capital within the field of management and depicts if these have become a form of currency that may provide women with a stake in the management game. This also allows the possibility to consider the ways women in management positions may shape contemporary management practices.

4.1 Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunity is a topic that featured frequently during the discussions on the theme of gender in the interviews. In Chapter Two I introduced that the gender equality discourse was prominent in the organisation, which reflects the participants viewing a gender equal work environment. I argued this was a modern attitude and the idea of doing gender without knowing it (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Even with these responses there were interesting contradictions. Some participants stated that they believed their femaleness has been an advantage and valuable in their career. Many of these participants were either of group C, which I introduced above (the older generation women), or in occupations/departments that were heavily dominated by men; for example in the natural sciences (but not exclusively).

Since the 1970's there has been much policy activity concerned with progressing gender equality. Especially for those women who entered academia and organisations in the 1970's this was a time when the discourse on equal opportunities and affirmative action was high on the agenda and women were actively sought after for high positions on the basis of their gender (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). It is possible to question if this was a time when female capital could be seen to be in operation. When Lou and I were discussing her move from abroad to Sweden in the late 1970's, she mentioned it was very difficult to get an academic job, as there were so few positions available. Lou also mentioned that she has no

children and that would have been a problem to make a move if she had a family. I asked her how it felt to be a female from abroad looking for work during this time and she answered:

Well I came from [abroad] and in the late 70's there were very, very few women in academia [...] in Sweden I found people were great and I saw no problems whatsoever with being a woman. Quite the opposite actually in the sense that I think I was encouraged very much because people were desperate to get women into academia. Already they were beginning to think, you know, we need more women in the system [...] I guess being one of the few women around in the 80's and 90's I must have sat on every single national committee for evaluating grants and things like that. So I got a lot of experience. And that was extremely positive. It was very hard work (Lou, Interview, February 2013).

Thus, Lou was able to achieve an advantage both in entering academia as well as in being considered for other positions within the academic system as the organisation worked in trying to address the gender balance. At this time I would interpret Lou's advantage came about from being recognised as female, but not essentially as feminine. I would argue then that during this time female capital was in operation. However, when talking with Lou about what she attributes to the success of their career, she pointed out that whilst gender may have provided advantageous experiences and opportunities it did not necessarily wholly contribute to her success. Indeed, this view was held by a number of the participants and for some of these women, like Lou and the older generation participants, their success had more to do with their decision not to have children than with the equal opportunities quota.

Even today the equal opportunities discourse continues to hold prevalence, as was introduced in Chapter Two. Currently, the *Discrimination Act* in Sweden requires that all employees actively peruse goals to increase and promote equality between men and women (Swedish Institute, 2013). At Lund University a working group has been active on these requirements and some departments have been working on gender certification, whereby they aim to increase knowledge on gender issues (Per, Interview, October 2012). When speaking with Per (during the internship fieldwork), who is a part of this working group and is working with the gender certificate, he stated that goals have been set and one of these goals is to encourage more women to enter higher positions and to participate on boards (Per, Interview, October 2012). During an interview I conducted with Annett (a Dean), we discussed whether gender had ever been an advantage during her career. In her response female capital can be seen to be operating when she stated:

When there are few women on a certain level you get a lot of questions or people wanting you to participate on boards or what not [...] I think I have had more opportunities connected to the fact that, you know, women are needed because you cannot have a board in a government ruled organisation where there are no women in

it. That's not possible anymore. Maybe I have had more opportunities in that way in comparison to if I had been a man (Annett, Interview, February 2013).

This view was also shared by a number of other women. For example, Anna also reflected that it had not been a "disadvantage to be the underrepresented sex when applying for things like grants" (Anna, Interview, February 2013). The gender capital that Annett and Anna experienced is also a result of the organisation attempting to undo the privileges or bias that has existed towards men. This equal opportunities discourse holds a high impact and, even though it could be seen to produce positive gains for some women in the workplace, it is also creating unwanted influences in terms of demand. These unwanted influences were discussed, mostly by those women of group B and, as mentioned below, from Anja (high level faculty manager):

The university has a policy that most things should be gender balanced. So I think out of our faculty there are eight prefects and one is female. So that is definitely not gender balanced. Very often you cannot achieve a gender balance. If you want to have people with a lot of experience and professors in the boards and committees, but only 20 percent of these are women, you can't have a gender balance in these leading groups. Otherwise those women who are sitting there are only sitting in meetings (Anja, Interview, February 2013).

This view of being needed to fill quotas was also continued by Isabel, but Isabel also touches upon the difficulty to break into male networks. For example:

Isabel: I have the feeling you are demanded more. And we have to do more because we are fewer and also for less recognition, not only in terms of salary but generally less recognition in workplace compared to men.

Donna: How have men in your experience had more recognition?

Isabel: I have a very concrete case, for example, participating in interesting, challenging and powerful tasks inside the organisation. I mean when it comes to the executive group that implements and designs the strategies it's always made up of men. We are two [female professors], and neither of us is asked to participate. And that has been for a long time now. But when it is something that is related to, I don't know, electronic working papers or the committee for selecting visiting professors then yes of course they ask. I mean when it is power related I think that it is always males in these groups. Males choosing males. And that is upsetting sometimes (Isabel, Interview, February 2013).

Isabel describes a sense of disappointment, injustice, and the limits of the equal opportunities discourse. The female gender capital does not always provide advantages; it has its boundaries in some instances in this field. Both her comments and Anja's point towards issues that have been thoroughly discussed by many gender scholars, which include: being unable to access male networks as through informal networking and other processes these

male networks become ‘closed ranks,’ or a patriarchal culture, preventing women from climbing the ladder (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ilo, 2011); tokenism, where women exercise little authority and become reduced to tokens (see well-known article Kanter, 1977); and women have the demand to take on many roles (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Whilst these are important issues, these have been thoroughly discussed and it is not within the scope of this thesis to focus on these barriers, nor was it time feasible to conduct such additional fieldwork. It is important to note, however, that these processes continue to surface. I also caution upon these issues for, as Billing (2011) claims, focusing on these barriers constructs a discourse that women and men are different assuming a universality between all women and then all men, and that there is congruency between men and managerial jobs. From these examples, however, I have wished to highlight how the advantage of female capital from the equal opportunity discourse is situational and does not always operate over the whole field.

Hence, I argue the privilege provided by the equal opportunities discourse co-exists with disadvantage. Where gender may have assisted in allowing these women to be considered and brought to the table, they have not necessarily attributed their gender to the success of their career and it does not operate over the entire field. Thus, there are both benefits and limits of equal opportunity policies.

4.2 Feminine Skills

During the interviews one of the themes I discussed with these women were their experiences and reflections on the role their gender played in their career and their experiences of, and approach to, managing. This was to capture their descriptions and perspectives of what enabled them to maintain their careers. Whilst I am interested in the cultural practices of these women, it is also important to understand how the participants see their own experiences and identities, for as Skeggs (1997) argues, people play a role in their identification, they are not just “ciphers from which subject positions can be read off; rather they are active in producing the meaning of the positions they (refuse to, reluctantly or willingly) inhabit” (pg. 2). Therefore, to explore the participant’s habitus and the practices that inform the capital they hold, we discussed, for example, the characteristics needed in conducting their work, work histories, and how femaleness may have provided for advantages or challenges in their work. Initially, when starting this topic of conversation I was usually met with pauses of silence from the participants. These pauses were usually moments of thinking and in reflecting some even responded by saying that they thought these were difficult questions for it was not something they often reflected upon. The initial

responses after these silences often included that even though they were a woman they did not feel their gender was an issue. Interestingly, as the conversation progressed participants – most often from groups B and C – reflected on situations of gender in their work and identified examples of feminine skills they held. Some stated they saw these feminine skills as particular to their gender.

These feminine skills were prominent in both the participants perspectives of their experiences and when relating to their ‘doing’ in their management style. In addition, I also observed these feminine skills in practice, for example, when participating in a meeting with Inga. In the following, I will elaborate on such examples to illustrate the complexities and how feminine skills operated to these women’s advantage. It is important to note these participants’ middle class positioning and habitus impact their practices and the profit they gain from femininity. Their gendered practices are classed (Skeggs, 1997) and how their class intersected with gender is something that may be of value for these participants in this field (that is not to forget that their other positions, for example age, may impact upon their uptake of these capitals). In this analysis, I firstly see feminine skills as what these participants believe from their ‘being’, for example listening, intuition, cooperation, and social skills. These ideas of feminine skills were similarly also identified in the empirical material of another study (Billing, 2011). These feminine skills may appear stereotypical (and could also be of relevance to men) but nonetheless for these women they interpreted them as valuable. In the following, I am interested to study if feminine skills (these skills may be embraced by not just women but by men as well) are gaining currency in the field of management.

Feminine skills became noticeable when many of the participants described how the impact they made on the work place was via their social feminine skills, and often these skills were described as imminent to their success and movement within the management field. They were seen to come from either their biology or their early background; hence, I would interpret that these skills were then a part of a feminine disposition. These skills were a part of their habitus. For example, these feminine skills became evident when I met with Inga (Head of Department) during both interviews and in some meetings, in particular a large meeting she was chairing that I shadowed. In our second interview we were talking about her relationships with her colleagues when she reflected:

I don’t think I am a dictator (laughing). I think I am good at communication and perhaps I am a good listener too. And I try not to be too much of a listener and I try to think of what is best for the school too [...] If I had been a man, perhaps I would have acted another way. I think that it is typical for a woman not to take this situation so easy. If it would be possible to live my life again I think I would have been a little bit

tougher from the beginning but I have chosen my strategy and I am happy with it. My strategy is different. Perhaps I could have arrived earlier to this position but it was my way and I am happy for it (Inga, Interview, January 2013).

This view was also echoed in our first interview where she also reflects on how she is a kind and strong manager but that by being a woman her kindness is misunderstood by others and she feels she is perceived as a mother (Inga, Interview, September 2013). In these examples, Inga provides a perspective on not only how she views herself but also her perspective on how she does management. I witnessed Inga's kindness, warmth and humour first hand, however, I also note that she would often take a phone call during the middle of our conversation or would attend to someone who knocked on the door. I interpret this as indicating that she was also direct and strong in order to ensure effective practice, something that I also witnessed in the meeting I sat in that Inga was chairing. In this meeting Inga was positioned at the head of the table. She initially welcomed everyone and then warmly introduced me with a large smile on her face and then continued with business. I unfortunately could not follow the entire meeting (it was in Swedish) but this allowed me to focus on other aspects, such as the body language. Everyone in the meeting sat with an open page in their notebook in front of them with a cup of coffee or water next to it. Not many notes were taken and at the beginning of the meeting most people sat still with their focus on Inga. As the meeting progressed others spoke and people gradually slouched in their chairs and began to be distracted. Inga, however, in contrast was alert and upright, continuing to maintain eye contact with those in the meeting (c. Fieldnotes, September 2012).

From the above fieldwork – in particular the interview excerpt – Inga in her perspective creates categories, based on different kinds of behaviour she has seen others do, and through this portrays her skills as feminine. The categories surface when she contrasts her style of management (good communication skills) to being a 'dictator', which through her joking laughter after this statement, I would interpret this 'dictator' style of management is, for her, a negative way of doing management. This oppressive and controlling style of management is often depicted negatively in popular culture. Culture may also play a role here where Swedish managers are considered consensus oriented rather than authoritative (Billing, 2011). Perhaps this impact of culture would also explain her perspective on her management style but, I would argue, in addition to this she perceives her listening and communication skills as being advantageous in her movement within the management field. I would interpret these skills as somewhat feminine skills, this is similar to what Alvesson and Billing (2009) also found in their empirical material when researching in a Swedish advertising company.

Although, Inga also acknowledges, had she been a man, or been tougher in her management style, she would have been successful in her career sooner. This tougher approach for Inga, however, was not the right approach, even if it was slower for her and as she has said, she has been happy with her approach. Even by seeing herself through the eyes of the other she recognised the limits but this did not affect her practices or opinion of her approach (Beauvoir, 1997). As Skeggs (1997) argues people play a role in their identification and for Inga she draws upon these gender categories in this instance. The doing she described was also evident in her chairing and in our meetings and interviews together. This practice reaffirms how she has described herself and her practices. Thus, the feminine skills she has drawn upon have been a positive experience for her.

In addition, Eva (Head of Department) also discussed feminine skills and the importance of sociability in the workplace, including the need to have people talk, interact and communicate. When Eva and I were first in contact and scheduling a time for an interview she gave me directions to her office but asked that I check the coffee room for her first. It was mid Friday morning when I was walking through the department looking for the coffee room. As I climbed the stairs and walked through a big heavy glass door I could hear the distant chatter and smell the coffee. Usually getting lost in these corridors I followed the smell of coffee, which led me to the right room. Arriving at the coffee room I was met by what seemed to be the whole office. It was busy with lots of people chatting. Eva found me there and we then walked to her office a few short steps from the coffee room. Later in the interview, she told me when she took over being Head of Department she introduced Friday morning coffee to be able to inform the staff on what was going on and to try to keep the workplace 'together'. She considered it important in her leadership to talk with people, to listen, to communicate and to trust her own feelings when something felt wrong. In Yvonne Due Billing's (2011) article she notes that characteristics of creativity, emotions, teamwork, communication, empathy, social intelligence and intuition are now positive code words within organisations. She argues that there is a de-masculinisation of leadership positions and an erosion of the cultural connection between men and leadership. These new characteristics were being labelled feminine. Further, she stated, even though this labelling can bring mixed blessings it can provide advantages. I would agree with Billing in that with the dissolution of the link between masculinities and leadership, or in this study masculinities and the management field, it can allow for opportunities and open doors of movement for women within the management field. For Eva, as I saw in her practice, she was drawing on these feminine characteristics, for example creating an environment for teamwork and

communication. She also explained through her perspective that she relied on her intuition during her doing of management. Thus, for Eva she draws on feminine capitals that may operate to her advantage.

Other participants also stated that they drew on their social and organisational skills, which they related to themselves being female in their doing of management. This included, for example, organising alumni meetings or initiating social activities to build a supportive work environment. For Lou in particular her idea of responsibility in the workplace was attributed to what she called a “woman thing” (Lou, Interview, February 2013). She informed me that she took personal responsibility for many problems, including irregularities in the finances that were done by a computer as she said they were sort of “whizzing around” beyond her control (Lou, Interview, February 2013). She reflected that she took great responsibility for this economy and in doing so she always followed any rules, which she thought her male colleagues might not. She attributed this responsibility to doing a good job, however, she also felt she took responsibility too seriously, something her male colleagues “just let run off” (Lou, Interview, February 2013). For Lou, being a woman provided her with skills to take on responsibility, although simultaneously she reflected that this gendered role was limiting and unproductive. Again, these feminine skills that the women have attributed to themselves are an embodied cultural capital that operates within limits.

4.3 The Role of Gender Capital in the Management Field

These examples from the participants above demonstrate how feminine and female capitals may be drawn upon and are advantageous in the field of management. With the participants utilising these capitals I would argue in doing so they destabilise the traditional masculine field of management. Female and feminine capital may take the form through equal opportunities or feminine skills.

Contrary to much organisational research and popular understandings concerning female subordination in organisations I would argue that in some instances femininity or being female may be empowering in this local context thus providing agency for these women (feminine capital may also be used by men). This also suggests that female and feminine capital appear to be gaining currency. This is also made possible by the intersections of their gender and class practices. This is similar to as Lovell (2000) proposes, that femininity as cultural capital is increasingly gaining currency in unexpected ways. The women have demonstrated through their practice of doing management that feminine capitals

are tangible and exist but it has also demonstrated that this capital operates within boundaries and is limited.

The asset of feminine capital was never outwardly expressed by the participants, which I interpret is in part attributed to viewing the workplace as gender-neutral as discussed in Chapter Two. Some of the managers felt the need to distance themselves from roles ascribed to women, and needed to develop characteristics mostly ascribed as masculine. In this sense, they confirm the importance of masculinity in the field of management. These women tended to come from the older generation, but importantly Lund University is an old organisation that may be resistant to change. For this older group of women (group C) they became managers some time ago and may have experienced feelings of uncertainty when first holding these positions. As they stated, they have felt that they have challenged traditional ideas concerning suitable work behaviour for women. Therefore, it may have been more prevalent for them to work in a way in accordance with the rules of the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Whilst this distancing from female roles may appear contradictory it can be illustrated by the metaphor of the double-edged sword. This metaphor can highlight how in some situations female and feminine capital operates to these women's advantage and in other situations their gendered dispositions disadvantage them. Hence, femaleness and femininity operates as a double-edged sword – it enables advantage but it also limits it. Meaning, gender is working for and against these women.

Feminists working with a Bourdieuan framework have expressed such limitations. As Skeggs (1997) argues feminine capital “provides only limited access to potential forms of power” and “that femininity can be used in tactical rather than strategic ways” (p. 10). Drawing from De Certeau's (1988) definitions of these concepts Skeggs explains strategies have an institutional positioning where their connections with power are concealed, whereas tactics have no institutional location and are unable to capitalize on the advantages of such positioning. This means that the gender capital for these women can manipulate constraints turning them into opportunities but not overturning the power. As Skeggs (1997, p. 10) states, it is not a strong asset.

Given that gender is not a strong asset on which a woman can succeed it is understandable that these participants have drawn upon other forms of capital as was analysed in the previous chapter. They relied on their education, training and seniority to move within the management field highlighting much about the current management field. That is, that it is complex and that there are no easily identifiable categories. Through this analysis it can be seen though that there are changes within the management field, favouring

feminine forms of capital. These complexities and contradictions also highlight that whilst most people gender themselves, are gendered by others, and use gender appropriate behaviour to conform to gender norms, there is great variation. The management field and the norms enacted within it are context dependent and continually changing and developing (Billing, 2011). At the same time masculine forms of capital or the male norm developed through organisational history, is experienced daily, and holds greater currency than feminine forms of capital.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter I have analysed the women in the management field and how they accumulated capital, with an emphasis on gender capital. These women in their practices and perspectives on their practices demonstrate that female and feminine dispositions have become currency dissolving the links between management and some male norm. In this local context these forms of capital are a form of individual agency for they provide these women a stake in the game and they used these capitals throughout their differing practices to maintain and at times improve their positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Looking Forward: Applicability of the Research

The insights about gender at work may be of obvious interest to those working on gender policy formation and leadership development at Lund University and also for organisational researchers. This study provided a discussion about gender in the everyday of women in management, which could be useful for those working on implementing gender policy and change to know more about when talking of change and equality. A question itself pertains to the construct of gender equality. Debates have taken place (Squires, 2007) and questions involved have considered similarities and differences between masculinities and femininities and men and women. Numerical representation have also been used as an indicator of equality but it is a contested way to count fairness (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). When calling for change, since the 1970's strategies have been labelled equal opportunities, affirmative action, positive discrimination, gender mainstreaming, or today diversity or gender management (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Improving the position of women in organisations may require changes in organisational practices and there is growing literature on such but little is known on sustainable change (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This calls for actionable insights.

For example, from this study, I have highlighted that gender is not the only identity category for women in management. Multiple social categories, including age, class, and gender intersect in their everyday practices and experiences which should be taken into consideration. This intersectional perspective is not well recognised in organisational research (Holvino, 2010). Organisational research has the ability to understand how to implement change, however, the concepts used to do not capture the complexity of the situation. Gender research in comparison may have recognised an intersectional perspective (McCall, 1992), however, such research may call for changes too soon (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Meaning, generally organisational research has tools to implement change but often has concepts that no longer resonate for the experiences of gender in management. Gender research, however, has developed concepts and content on gender but often not the appropriate tools to implement such research. Therefore a gap appears between these research fields. An approach here would include a dialogue between these two points in this local context. More attention to the way gender intersects with other practices can also be thought through with the three groups outlined in this research.

Change efforts also need to address the whole field, the structural and cultural specificities of the local context. As I have shown, gender inequalities appear to be multidimensional. If change strategies account for only one side it may be undermined by other intersecting practices. The double-edged sword metaphor (gender includes both advantages and disadvantages) can expose gender and see it as multidimensional. Accounting for only individual agency (mentoring) or structural change (quotas) may disrupt some gender norms but not them all. It is, therefore, necessary to consider all social relations and take into consideration the whole field.

This discussion also highlighted a number of challenges that may be faced with gender equality work within the workforce, including the concepts of meritocracy and a gender-neutral work environment. The space for working with inequalities differs and local values and attitudes need to be considered. I suggest, strategies for this can include taking small steps when targeting key organisational values and also to ensure awareness. This can be achieved through public and private session with men and women, or one to one sessions to enable the identification of gender (or applicable for other problem areas). This can allow for flashbulb moments of recognition of gender relations that were noted during my own interviews.

5.2 Concluding Thoughts

The aim of this study was to examine the cultural practices of women in management, at Lund University, and how they reflect and contextualise their position. This thesis begun with a fieldwork observation note referencing the lack of women in high level positions during a day of shadowing a PhD student at Lund University. Such observations have also been seen by organisational and gender scholars and have foregrounded questions of exclusions, and the nature of gender in organisational research.

In the first chapter, I introduced that these questions circulate around arguments that historical and cultural ideas have given management a masculine image and as such prevent women from reaching the top in many countries (Collison & Hearn, 1996). I instead proposed to reverse the research question and ask how do these women do management and what resources do they draw upon to maintain their careers? I sought to analyse if women use gender as a resource in their management careers and if so how? I also explored how does gender power operates in the management field. I have argued, even if management maintains a masculine image the overall picture is less rigid and more varied than this image conceives. These concepts are no longer suitable to explain gender at work, as there are many

intersectional practices. As I have hoped to show, women draw upon female and feminine forms of capitals and as they do they destabilise the masculine norm whilst I have also recognised the problem of gender labelling management. By applying the concepts of Bourdieu this allows the possibility to think beyond dominance and subordination and enable a more complex form of thinking of gender in organisations.

I have applied the concept of gender capital to understand the many ways in which women in management shape contemporary management and practices. In addition, I have shown that women's gender capital is a tangible asset, but one that also works within limits and as such works with limited currency. This capital is situational and is similar to a double-edged sword in that it is tactical rather than a strategic resource (Skeggs, 1997).

When it comes to gender equality in organisations and strategies such as quotas, as being actively discussed by the European Union, representational space cannot be the only goal. In this research I have shown how women in management draw on gender capitals as a form of agency but I have also highlighted why they continue to experience disadvantage when taking part of the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This was illustrated through the metaphor of the double-edged sword where feminine capital may have some advantages but it also operates within boundaries. Therefore, if gender imbalance is to be addressed, feminine forms of embodiment will have to be re-addressed and given more currency and use-value in the field. Applying strategies in the organisational level is a start to counteract this.

With this analysis several suggestions of future research come to mind. Bourdieu's concepts offer the potential to further research on class and gender identities and power in the organisational setting. Further, in this study I have only had the possibility to focus on employees from the core professional careers of Lund University and in order to find out more about diversity it could be beneficial to complement this with research the experiences of those in the non-core professional occupations. It would be beneficial to conduct such a study including more participants, including men, to further explore gender at work and complete the picture. Gender is far from simple, whether acknowledged or not, gender is something that affects the everyday practices and generalisations that people assign in the workplace. It is therefore important to continue with cultural analytical research and encourage strategies for change.

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