A (Post)Feminist Kaleidoscope

A Study Interrogating Gender in Swedish Management Education

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Abstract

Title	A (Post)Feminist Kaleidoscope: A Study Interrogating Gender in Swedish Management Education
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Keywords	Management Education, Sweden, Gender, Gender Equality, Postfeminism, Feminism, Individualism, Voluntarism, Ontological Flexibility
Purpose	To critically interrogate gender in Swedish management education, with the objective of making it more gender equal.
Research Questions	How do business case studies represent and illustrate gender? How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions? How do students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality?
Methodology	Following a multi-paradigmatic approach, shifting between interpretative and critical feminist knowledge interests, we developed a qualitative study simultaneously working with theory and empirical material. We got to our findings by analyzing business case studies, and by conducting two focus groups with ten students and seven single interviews with teachers.
Findings	Management education remains gendered in several ways, but students and teachers are reluctant to recognize that as a problem for themselves. Rather, students make sense of gender using discourses of individualism and voluntarism, and teachers express an 'ontological flexibility' where gender is important in theory, but not as relevant in practice. Further, we found disagreement among participants as to whether management education has a role to play in working towards gender equality.
Contributions	Our findings support scholars arguing that management education is gendered, and contributes to the underdeveloped field studying postfeminism in educational settings. We further contribute 'triangular insights' to how postfeminist discourses obstruct gender equality in management education.

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1. Introduction

Our interest in gender in management education was sparked during our first term as Master's students in a program on Management and Organization Studies in Sweden last fall. From our vantage point, we interpreted a masculine symbolism permeating course curriculum and classroom interactions. The curriculum was largely occupied with 'case studies'[1] portraying almost exclusively male protagonists, whereas the (few) women illustrated often were left on the periphery. Moreover, a highly gendered language appeared to soak through classroom interactions circulating around management, leadership and consultancy. It was not uncommon for students to use the pronoun 'he' in reference to authority figures, regardless of sex, seemingly without reflecting upon the assumptions underlying this language. We were also struck by the absence of conversations on gender, despite its apparent influence on curriculum and interactions. Gender was rarely discussed as integrally connected to concepts such as management or leadership.

Our observations appeared paradoxical to us, considering the presumably socially progressive context and location of the program. Sweden is a world leader on gender equality, ranked as the fourth most gender equal country in the world (WEF, 2014). Moreover, the university in which the studied management program is located seeks to become a "world-class university that works to understand, explain and improve our world and the human condition" by for example operating in a context of gender equality (LU, 2015a). Grounded in its long and vibrant history, the university has now reached a "position of excellence in international teaching and research" (LU, 2015b), which its recent international rankings confirm; it is today the number one ranked university of Sweden and top 60 in the world (QS, 2014/2015). The School of Economics and Management, in which the program is situated, states the following on their page for 'core values':

> The promotion of gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity is a *prerequisite* for achieving a better work and learning environment. By *integrating* the work on gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity as a natural part of *daily work duties* at the School of Economics and Management, an attractive workplace is created where everyone can thrive and develop by being

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[1] A case study is 'actual empirical material' of a management situation, to which students apply theoretical concepts discussed in readings and during lectures (Pedagogical idea doc, OD)

given *the same conditions* for career opportunities, personal development and studies. (LUSEM, 2015a, emphasis made by the researchers)

The management program explored in this study, educates students in for example knowledge management, organizational identity and culture, strategic change work, human resource management, corporate social responsibility, and management consultancy. It aims to provide skills in "how to make it happen as a leader, manager, or consultant" by fostering critical thinking and practical application (LUSEM, 2015b, p. 3), or as the program director commonly puts it: "to provide students with an intellectual repertoire". Many teachers at the program have a background in Critical Management Studies, which is a research tradition that understands management as a "political, cultural and ideological phenomenon", and gives voice to for example issues on gender (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992, p. 8).

For a country and university that emphasize gender equality as one of their cornerstones, and for a management program foregrounding a critical mindset, our observations of gendered curriculum and classroom interactions seemed paradoxical. This paradox prompted us to explore how students and teachers make sense of gender in the program. To pursue this aim, we developed the following research questions:

- How do business case studies represent and illustrate gender?
- How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions?
- How do students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality?

To address these questions, we designed a qualitative study simultaneously working with literature and empirical material in an iterative process. Delving into the literature on gender and work, and gender and management education, a key argument framing our work is that a masculine symbolism permeates social institutions (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Sinclair, 1995; Thomas, 1990), including universities. Management education is often considered particularly gendered in a way that favors a masculine understanding of organization and management related topics (Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000). The problem with gendered spaces, is that gender is then deeply hidden in content and practices that "appear to have nothing to do with gender" (Acker, 1990, p. 251), making them seem "gender-neutral, 'ben-

eficial to all', and part of everyday practice" (Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012, p. 392). The cultural and social creation of gender inequalities is thus very subtle, and consequently easy to dismiss. What happens below the surface, however, is that students and faculty members who do not belong to the masculine norm become marginalized and excluded (Dever & Mills, 2015; Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Olsson & Olsson, 2004; Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012). This is a key problem motivating our research.

Our purpose with this research project is to critically interrogate gender in Swedish management education, with the objective of making it more gender equal. Being a thesis project with a substantial set of empirical material, our primary aim is to advance both theoretical and practical understandings of discourses on gender in the context of a Swedish management program; a context that appears to have all prerequisites for gender equality. Our theoretical aim is to contribute a 'triangular insight' on gender in management education that includes our own insights as participant observers, as well as insights from students and teachers. More specifically, we aim to advance the understanding of postfeminism as a useful lens to make sense of spaces that remain gendered. One of our key findings is that students and teachers often fail to 'see' gender as an issue in management education until it is brought to light at which time they grapple with the implications in several ways, often by denying the significance of gender. Therefore, we encourage readers to view our findings through what we label a '(post)feminist kaleidoscope' which can help practitioners and scholarship to see the complex pattern of contemporary postfeminist discourses that limit management education from promoting gender equality. The imagery of the kaleidoscope also enables practitioners and scholars to rotate the kaleidoscope and view gender in management education from a feminist perspective which enables a recognition, dismantling and disruption of gendered and postfeminist discourses. Rotating the kaleidoscope allows us to pursue our more personal and practical aim, which is of socio-political nature. As feminists, we are motivated to seek equal opportunities and inclusion for women and men [2]. Such an agenda prompts us to provide suggestions about what could be done differently in order to promote gender equal management education. That said, our objective is not to provide a 'blueprint of success' (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008), but to rather present a number of context-specific suggestions.

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[2] For the purposes of this project, we are satisfied with exploring the experiences of women and men who we assume have a cis gender, meaning "individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity" (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009: 461)

The outline of the thesis is as follows. In Chapter 2, we discuss the interpretative and critical feminist paradigms guiding this research, and provide a detailed description of how we went about designing, conducting and analyzing our qualitative study. We also show how we addressed issues of self-reflexivity and subjectivity. In Chapter 3, we embed our research in literature on gender and work, gender and management education, and finally postfeminism. The essence here, is that 1) the socialization of women and men in management and business take place in many institutions, including management education; 2) social constructivist research can help us understand the notion of 'gendered' workplaces and educational settings; 3) postfeminism works as a useful lens in understanding why management education remains gendered and how women and men, in particular, eschew the politics of gender. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 constitute the heart of our study, exploring how students and teachers make sense of gender at the program, as well as how they conceptualize management education's role in promoting gender equality. Here, we also analyze case studies as agents of socialization. In Chapter 7, we address our purpose and research questions, and outline our core findings, to then make use of our kaleidoscope metaphor by 1) discussing the 'so what' of our findings through a current lens of postfeminism, and by 2) rotating the kaleidoscope and viewing gender in management education through a feminist lens, suggesting a number of practical implications. Finally, we discuss the study's theoretical contributions, reflect upon limitations and propose future research.

2. Methods

In this chapter, we articulate how we addressed our three research questions and executed our study in a reflexive way. Being a study with a substantial set of empirical material, we find it particularly important to extensively describe our methods. In order to allow readers to understand and assess how we got to our findings, we provide details on our philosophical grounding and the paradigms guiding our research, the sources we have used for constructing our set of data and who our research subjects have been, our approach for analysis and interpretation of data, and how we have worked with reflexivity and quality considerations.

2.1 Philosophical Grounding

In this study, we have adopted a multi-paradigmatic stance, shifting between interpretative and critical feminist patterns of thought depending on the stage of our research. Our interpretative stance means that we view reality as constructed by individual interpretation in a certain social context and at a particular point in time (Merriam, 2002; Prasad 2005). It further means that we recognize that there is no single truth, and no one method that leads to real or pure knowledge (Spender, 1985). We are instead convinced that multiple subjective truths about reality and knowledge can exist side by side (Reinharz, 1992). Similarly, our feminist perspective means that we adopt several voices, use several methods to answer our questions, and deal with issues that have no absolute answer or solution (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Reinharz, 1992). However, our feminist perspective adds to the interpretative perspective our belief that one or a few of the many 'truths' existing in the social world, is socially and culturally afforded status as 'more true', which means that less accepted truths often become neglected and marginalized. Our aim, therefore, is to bring multiple voices and experiences to the fore.

The multi-paradigmatic approach selected for this project may mean that we have to be particularly explicit with the meaning we attach to certain concepts, such as 'feminism' and 'feminist research'. We have sometimes encountered a misconception of feminism as hostile to men and masculinities (Prasad, 2005), which is why we would like to emphasize that our research project does not stem from such attitudes. Instead, our feminist perspective is "based on the premise that the experience of all human beings is valid and must not be excluded from our understandings" (Spender, 1985, p. 5).

Thus, as feminists, we believe that everyone's experiences are equally valid and that all have the right to be heard. Moreover, we agree with Reinharz (1992) who asserts "feminist research methods are methods used in research projects by people who identify themselves as feminist" (p. 6).

So how specifically have we shifted between an interpretative and a feminist paradigm? While approaching gender in case studies (research question 1), we employed a feminist approach located in a critical paradigm, seeking to dismantle and question representations and illustrations of gender (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Merriam, 2002; Prasad, 2005; Reinharz, 1992). However, while exploring how students and teachers talk about gender in case studies and classroom interactions (research question 2), we shifted to an interpretative paradigm as we found it important to stay open to how they "experience and interact with their social world" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4) rather than to interrogate their world views and political standpoints. As we explored how students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality (research question 3), however, we again adopted a feminist stance, critically interrogating gender in management education.

2.2 Construction of Data

This qualitative study focuses on our and the participants' subjective understanding of gender in management education. According to Bowen (2009), qualitative researchers are expected to draw upon "multiple (at least two) sources of evidence" when carrying out their enquiries (p. 28). Although looking for 'evidence' may not be an appropriate aim for qualitative researchers in the first place, we have made use of Bowen's advice and used multiple methods when constructing our set of data. More specifically, we have employed the three methods available for qualitative researchers: "hanging out", "reading the papers", and "asking questions" (Dingwall, 1997, p. 5); the first referring to observations of gender in the classroom, the second referring to an analysis of gender in the case studies, and the third referring to conversations with students and teachers. In this section, we explain how we have sampled and constructed our set of data.

2.2.1 Hanging Out: Observations of Classroom Interactions

"Hanging out" refers to our fieldwork and observations of gender during lectures and seminars, which we began around four months prior to the start date of this thesis project. As students in the

program, our observations took place solely within the classrooms where various management, leadership, and consultancy issues were discussed. The four courses we observed were Corporate Social Responsibility, Strategic Human Resource Management, Strategic Change and Leadership, and Research Methods. Following the vocabulary of Goffman (1959, 1963), we could say that we employed several dramaturgical roles: we were present in the 'back regions' of the program, keeping some cognitive distance as we observed and tried to elicit meaning and understand what was going on 'beyond the surface', and we were active in the 'front regions' as we took active part in discussions and made public presentations, and were thereby influencing and defining social situations in the classroom.

That we were active participants, hanging out in the research context for quite a long period of time, gives our study some ethnographic influences (Prasad, 2005; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Being feminist researchers, we chose methods that brought us closer to our participants, as we are interested in understanding their subjective life worlds (Prasad, 2005). In line with our feminist stance, we believe that our research is produced in a 'joint venture' between our participants and ourselves (Reinharz, 1992). Our active participation has facilitated a comprehensive background understanding of the research problem, context and subjects, and it indeed improved our ability to conduct an in-depth study.

During lectures and seminars, we were mainly attentive to 'critical gendered incidents' and discourses, which we recorded by taking field notes. Before starting to write notes, however, we were mindful to get the teachers' consent, which they articulated either by email or in person. One teacher did not reply to our request despite a few reminders, which we interpreted as dissent. Consequently, we did not make any notes during the classes taught by this teacher. Although we do recognize that it would have been good academic practice to also inform our peer students about our observations, we decided to not actively inform them, but to be transparent about our research aims if they asked. The reason for that, was that we believed such awareness could have led to a tense classroom climate and to constrained and extensively 'politically correct' ways of talking and interacting. We wanted to observe in as authentic a context as possible, since we recognized that what we noticed and recorded would be quite decisive for the rest of the study (see Wolfinger, 2002).

We took notes on our observations along with details about time and context, roughly following what Emerson et al. (1995) call 'the salience hierarchy', solely describing situations that occurred noteworthy and interesting to us. This process is of course highly subjective and depends vastly on our tacit preconceptions and personal experiences. Along with Wolfinger (2002), we suggest that "tacit knowledge is perhaps the most important consideration in determining how particular observations are deemed worthy of annotation" (p. 87). So what was our tacit knowledge? As described in the introduction chapter, we had interpreted an underlying assumption among many students that managers, researchers or people of any kind of authority are men, which was articulated in the use of "he said, he did, he will" and so on. Moreover, previous experience told us that gender can be a rather electric topic, and that people often get either highly engaged or markedly unresponsive in regard to conversations on gender. Another preconception was that women and men tend to communicate and utilize space differently. When taking field notes, we were thus attentive to gendered discourses and 'man as norm' attitudes, emotional reactions to the topic of gender, and communication styles among students and teachers. Nonetheless, we recognize that there is much tacit knowledge we are not aware of which has indeed guided our attention in certain directions. Becker (1986) explains it rather well: "You have already made many choices when you sit down to write, but you probably don't know what they are" (p. 17). Thus, although we did not fully recognize it at the time, we were gradually building frames of reference for areas to focus on during the research process.

2.2.2 Reading the Papers: Content Analysis of Case Studies

As a second means of data, we have followed Dingwall's (1997) advice and read "the papers". As described in the introductory chapter, "the papers" we have studied are business case studies, which we regard as a relevant sample of course curriculum for a number of reasons. First, they have been used as a significant pedagogical tool during the program, and they have consumed a relatively large proportion of our classroom and study time. Second, and in contrast to other educational material such as books and articles, case studies quite literally ask students to identify with the actors of the case and apply their newly acquired theoretical knowledge to an 'empirical reality'. Based on our assumption that social identity and gender necessarily comes into play in such an identification process, we decided that the cases constituted an interesting and relevant piece of data for the purposes of our project.

Guided by questions such as *"Who is the protagonist in the case? What role does s/he occupy? What industries and sectors are they operating within?"*, our aim was to create a common platform and provide the reader with a basic understanding of the representation of women and men, as well as feminine and masculine industries[3] in the cases (Appendix C). Although such a quantitative analysis may not seem appropriate for a social constructivist research project, we found it important to sketch a 'holistic picture' of gender in the whole set of cases, in part to be able to distance ourselves from our own preconceptions of gender in the cases. These preconceptions can be articulated quite straightforwardly: after having spent months reading, analyzing, writing, listening to and presenting on case studies almost only about men and masculine industries, we were quite annoyed and convinced that a change was needed. Due to this rather value loaded bias, we also found that an 'objective' and quantitative analysis was a good way of guarding ourselves against a possible accusation that our interpretations of gender in the cases were solely an artifact of our own biases (see Patton, 1990). Moreover, making a quantitative content analysis corresponds to a feminist agenda of identifying gender patterns, which we can use to "press for social change" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 155).

However, along with Alvesson and Billing (2000) we suggest that counting female and male bodies (or feminine and masculine industries) is not enough to elicit a rich and comprehensive understanding of gender. Based on our conviction that stories and narratives, and thus also case studies, are important ontological instruments for how students construct meaning around work life 'realities', we found it important to our research to develop a more in-depth understanding of how women and men are illustrated in the case studies. Consequently, we explored how women and men are portrayed, in order to dissect how cases construct the very notions of being a woman or man in the world of business. Due to the large amount of cases, we found it necessary to select a sample of data to analyze more in-depth. Our sampling strategy adhered to the following logic: we 1) used a spreadsheet to list the twenty-two cases in chronological date order as we worked with them during the program; 2) dismissed five cases of which two did not contain rich narratives, and of which three did not have any distinctive characters; and 3) selected every third case out of the seventeen that were left. This left us with six representative samples, which we analyzed by critically interrogating illustrations of female and male characters.

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[3] We found an absence of studies outlining feminine and masculine gendered industries. Therefore, we have drawn inspiration from Billing and Lundholm's (2012) description of what characterizes gendered workplaces.

2.2.3 Asking Questions: Focus Groups and Interviews

In order to explore how students and teachers talk about gender in case studies and classroom interactions, we had to ask them questions. This part of our data primarily addressed how students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions, but was also aimed at understanding how students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality.

In order to explore how students talk about gender in the program and to facilitate open discussion, we decided to use focus groups. The rationale for our decision to conduct focus groups instead of single interviews was that focus groups would allow us to speak to a larger number of students, and that it would be an appropriately informal setting in order for students to feel relaxed and confident in sharing their experiences, interpretations and observations (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Another reason was that group discussions could allow us to analyze the dynamics of the students' interactions with us and each other. To be able to interpret the teachers' experiences of gender in our program, we decided to use single interviews, which is a good way of gaining access to and understanding of the research subject's observations, feelings and experiences (Denscombe, 2010). We wanted to explore what the teachers had to say individually rather than in groups, partly due to the manageable number of teachers; nine in-depth interviews were within the scope of our research project.

Another, perhaps more significant reason, was possible concerns related to power and identity. According to Reinharz (1992), interviewing people in positions of authority can be a tricky business. The teachers are all knowledgeable and experienced researchers, they have all been our teachers, some of them are gender scholars, one of them is our supervisor, and one will be our examiner. During the interviews, the traditional roles were to be reversed; *we* were going to interview *them*, which could likely bring power and identity questions to the fore. This consideration prompted us to have a plan for how to manage being both a student and an interviewer. Leaning on our feminist perspective, we had no single strategy for handling the power-relations, but to emphasize trust and openness to several possible meanings in the discussions (Reinharz, 1992). However, as we were 'studying up', that is interviewing people likely possessing more power than we do (ibid), we probably prompted less than we could have, as we did not want to diminish our teachers' power.

In order to get as rich and trustworthy data as possible, we decided that all students should have the opportunity to participate in the focus groups. As a result, we conducted an online survey where all students could self-select and report their interest by simply ticking a box for 'yes' or 'no'. The survey presented our research questions and described the basic set up of a focus group. We shared our ethical considerations and explained that quotes were going to be anonymized, and that their participation would be treated confidentially: all names used in this thesis are pseudonyms. There was significant interest in participating; 18 out of 39 students agreed to participate. We then approached these 18 students via an online scheduling tool that allowed us to set up a number of time slots that the students could choose from. Eventually, after a couple of reminders, we had six female students signed up in one focus group, and three female and one male student in another. Presumably the eight students who dropped out did so because the focus groups were scheduled for the first two days of the Master's Degree Project course. Most students were probably eager to get their own projects started and therefore felt prompted to decline to participate. In retrospect, we think it would have been a good idea to conduct the focus groups a few weeks earlier, when students were perhaps less constrained with their schedules.

All nine teachers who had lectured during the program were invited for an interview. Of these, two are women and seven are men. Via the online scheduling tool mentioned above, we offered several interview slots per day during a one-week period. As with the students, we informed them about our objectives, ethical considerations, and confidentiality concerns. Seven teachers confirmed their participation, one declined and one did not reply (despite a number of reminders).

Kvale (1996) suggests that thematizing is an important step of an interview as the thoroughness of this stage will have a large impact on the end result. We thematized our interview guides with the research questions and our empirical observations in mind, not as a dictating structure, but as sources of inspiration. We followed semi-structured interview guides (Appendices A & B), which primarily revolved around students and teachers' experiences and observations of gender in case studies and classroom interactions. Moreover, questions were included that asked for their thoughts about whether something could be done differently to promote gender equality. Both our semi-structured guides included a set of fixed 'how and what questions' which we had formulated with Kvale's (1996) "types of interview questions" (p. 133) in mind. Yet, we allowed ample room for spontaneity and follow-up questions related to both what was said and what was expressed non-verbally.

Two focus groups, each lasting 60 to 80 minutes, were jointly conducted by the two of us. We audio recorded the conversations, with students' consent. Although we were committed to play as passive a role as possible and let the students talk with each other rather than with us, we allowed ourselves the freedom to ask for clarifications and elaborations when we wanted to explore interesting stories, comments or ideas in more detail. According to Kvale (1996), silence is an effective means to achieve significant data since the subjects then have "ample time to associate and reflect and then break the silence themselves with significant information" (p. 135). Although it was rather challenging to stay quiet when students were talking about topics we are passionate about, we made sure to employ silence and allow pauses in the conversations. The two of us were equally participative in asking questions and observing non-verbal communication such as tone of voice and body language, taking occasional notes. In short, balancing 'how and what questions' with silence allowed the participants to communicate with each other in a relaxed manner.

To explore what the teachers had to say, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted: five in a room reserved at the University, one at a café, and one over Skype. With the exception of the interview at the café, we found it important to conduct the interviews at a neutral and secluded place in order to avoid interruptions and disturbances (Cohen et al., 2007). We aimed for one-hour-long interviews, but they turned out to be quite different in length ranging from 40 to 80 minutes. We found it important to allow for time flexibility, as we did not want to interrupt teachers who had interesting stories to tell or ideas to share, and as we did not want to squeeze information out of those who felt that they were finished speaking. During the interviews, we regularly asked questions such as "Could you give an example of …?", "Could you describe that situation in more detail?", "Am I correct when I say that you are … about this?" (Kvale, 1996 p. 133), as such questions could help us gain a deeper and richer understanding (Denscombe, 2010). Both of us were present at all interviews, and we alternated the roles; one was the interview leader asking the pre-formulated questions and keeping track of the time, while the other one had the opportunity to listen more actively and ask well-timed follow-up questions. An important aspect we continually thought about during the interviews, was our non-verbal communication: our tone of voice and body language. Keeping an open body position and not interrupting the respondent are, according to Kvale (1996), prerequisites for achieving the desirable dynamic between interview leader and subject.

After each conversation with students and teachers, we summarized our reflections, interpretations and observations in a document, which later turned out to be very useful for our data analysis. The focus groups and interviews were transcribed manually. In retrospect, we think our interview guide could have been formulated a little differently. Although we did ask broad explorative questions such as "We would like to know a little about your experiences and observations of gender in our program, speak freely of whatever comes up for you" we followed these with specific questions on case studies and interactions. We now think it could have been valuable to remain with the broad pre-formulated questions in order to see whether some other observations or experiences would have been more salient for the participants.

2.3 Approach for Data Analysis

As a result of our sources of data presented above, our methods left us with field notes, a table summarizing representations of gender in case studies (Appendix C), six case studies to analyze more in-depth, as well as interview and focus group transcripts. The transcripts included not only the words used by the research subjects, but also expressions that could later help us make better sense of our data such as sighs, laughter, emphases and longer periods of silence. As Denscombe (2010) describes, grasping such expressions can help the researcher better understand what assumptions or feelings are underlying what is being said. What we also had at hand for our data analysis, was the quite large portion of notes we took right after the conversations with students and teachers. There, we had summarized our initial thoughts and reflections related to non-verbal expressions and our grasp of 'the whole' such as atmosphere, coherence and contradictions, similarities and differences to what others had said before, as well as thoughts about what was not being said. We regard our conversations with students and teachers as the data of primary significance and interest, and analyses of classroom interactions and case studies as relevant additional data in order to better be able to present our case and analyze what students and teachers said about gender at the program.

As we have worked with our data analysis as an iterative, continuous, and overlapping process of reading and interpreting empirical and theoretical material (Bowen, 2009), we find it rather difficult to accurately explain exactly when and how we started analyzing our data. The analytical process began as we consciously or unconsciously decided what theories to use or not use, what to record during observations, what to ask during interviews and what to be attentive to in case studies. Thus,

as interpretation of data took place simultaneously with reading literature, we have had to continually revise our topics of interest and focus during the process (Daft, 1983; Merriam, 2002).

Our strategy can be labeled an abductive approach, which is informed by both induction and deduction and thus moves simultaneously between pre-conceptions, theoretical understandings and interpretation of empirical material in an iterative process; the results of one piece of theory or data functions as a starting point for the next and so it goes on (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In our study, the abductive strategy has meant that we have used empirical material as our starting point (similar to induction), but that the data analysis has been informed by our review of previous research; not that we have mechanically applied a theory or concept on sole parts, but that we have rather used theories as sources of inspiration (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). The process is well illustrated by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) who state that they "work with the challenge of accomplishing a good trade-off between theoretical inspiration and openness toward empirical material, between reading into data a certain vocabulary and certain preferred results and a naïve empiricism in which theory-free data are believed to lead the researcher to the truth" (p. 968). This reflexive strategy has indeed facilitated an understanding of our data and helped us find interesting patterns and clusters of further interest.

What has further inspired our analysis of data is a critical hermeneutic reading (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), which has prompted us to go beyond the "appearances of the text to elicit an understanding of what lies behind them" (Habermas, 1990 in Prasad, 2005, p. 34). During the following discussion on our specific methodology for analyzing and exploring our empirical material, we demonstrate how we have switched between parts of the data (such as quotes) and the material as a whole (such as contradictions and interesting absences), between preconceptions and findings, as well as between the position of research subject and object (Patel & Davidson, 2003).

2.3.1 Analysis of Field Notes

When analyzing the field notes we took when observing classroom interactions, we first went through them several times in order to find what themes appeared as most salient and interesting. We coded the themes by different colors, and gave each a meaningful label. Thereafter, we selected the themes that appeared most relevant for our research project. However, due to scope limitations

of this thesis, we have disregarded our observations of classroom interactions in the chapters of data analysis. Instead, they have been used for building our rationales for the project.

2.3.2 Analysis of Case Studies

We analyzed the six sampled case studies by critically interrogating illustrations of women and men, looking for "contradictions within or between texts that illustrate the pervasive effects of patriarchy and capitalism" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 149). We started by reading the cases as a whole to elicit an understanding of the case characters and the connections between them. On the second read, we paid attention to quotes that distinguished the characters; we then compiled them in a spreadsheet organized per character. As a third step, we looked for metaphors that could illustrate how women and men are depicted in these 'empirical realities', which according to Ryan and Bernard (2003) is a technique that is well-suited for "rich narrative data" (p. 100). Indeed, using metaphors allowed "us to develop creative insights in a clear way around a very indistinct phenomenon" (Spicer & Alvesson, 2011, p. 48), which in our case were illustrations of gender. When reporting our analysis of the case studies however, we decided to not present the characters by using the metaphors, as we had to heavily shorten our text and 'kill some darlings'.

2.3.3 Analysis of Interviews and Focus Groups

From our point of view and in line with a hermeneutical perspective, interpretation of the data starts long before the first reading of the transcripts. As discussed above, we had both participated during all the interviews and focus groups, and we continually reflected upon them and compared them with each other throughout the process. Nonetheless, upon our first 'real' reading we worked with the material individually, made some memos in the margin, and highlighted quotes that we thought stood out from the text. Afterwards, we met and collected our thoughts and ideas and summarized a number of identified salient themes. At this point, we began to appreciate the complexity in dealing with such large amount of data. Dobelli (2013) describes our so called 'action bias' quite well:

> In new or shaky circumstances, we feel compelled to do something, anything. Afterward we feel better, even if we have made things worse by acting too quickly or too often. So, though it might not merit a parade in your honour, if a situation is unclear, hold back until you can assess your options. (p. 135)

Almost a week of frustration later, where we had simultaneously dealt with theory and empirics, it was just for us to grasp the nettle and take charge of what may be the most important yet equivocal part of writing a thesis: to thoroughly and systematically 'sort and reduce' our material (Rennstam, 2015). We realized that our early writing of our findings was rather ambiguous and difficult to grasp, which in our case led to what Rennstam (2014) once called an 'Agatha Christie' essay, where it is up to the reader to fill in the missing puzzle pieces, and where the writer does not solve the mystery until the very end. This led us to start over, and systematically process our material by following the technique of 'cutting and sorting' (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

We started by again printing all of the transcripts, reading them through out loud and cutting out quotes as we worked our way through the text. As we were also concerned with analyzing non-verbal and emotional expressions, such as laughter and visual cues, we cut out those sections too. On the back of each piece, we wrote down our interpretation of the quote as well as some of the context; what question they were answering and what had been discussed right beforehand. We then spread out the quotes on a large table and started to sort them into envelopes of similar quotes, which we labeled with a descriptive title. At this point, we sorted quotes from teachers and students separately. Still following the advice of Ryan and Bernard (2003), we were initially concerned with finding as many themes as possible, which we subsequently grouped into meaningful overarching categories, both by applying the simple comparative method of 'similarities and differences' (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) and by trying to go beyond the surface of the text to gain an understanding of what assumptions where underlying them (Habermas, 1990 in Prasad, 2005).

Here we also faced the challenge of 'killing our darlings', as some of the envelopes had to be disregarded since there were others that seemed more worthy of further interpretation and scrutiny. Being left with what to us appeared to be interesting and salient data, we saw clearly how there were not so many discrepancies between how students and teachers talked as we initially had expected. Some of the envelopes marked 'students' and 'teachers' were labeled in a similar or even identical way, so we compiled these into common themes. Yet, there were a number of interesting and important themes that differed, which we kept as they were. On the envelopes, we continually wrote down theory-related comments that appeared to be relevant to the enclosed material. This thorough and systematic analysis of the data enabled us to move forward and quite easily write the data analysis chapters.

2.4 Reflexivity and Quality

Rather than adhering to quality criteria from the quantitative research community such as generalizability, validity, and neutrality, we have in this project aimed for 1) self-reflexivity and transparency; 2) thick and rich descriptions; and 3) relational ethics, which in short means a mindfulness of our own "characters, actions and consequences on others" (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). This section elaborates mainly on reflexivity, which we see as the most important quality aspect.

Reflexivity is a term that covers a broad range of meanings, easily becoming one of those catchwords that people use without considering what it actually means (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Some scholars argue that researcher reflexivity is a procedure that is "clearly positioned within the critical paradigm" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127), whereas others suggest that reflexivity is an important means of qualitative research, located within a number of different intellectual traditions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Tracy, 2010). In their book *Reflexive Methodology*, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) propose that two core characteristics of reflexivity are "careful interpretation and reflection", the latter referring to critical self-exploration, and "interpretation of interpretation" (p. 9). Drawing upon their ideas, we view reflexivity as a process that involves continually moving our minds between different ways of interpreting our own and our research subjects' assumptions about various social phenomena, such as gender.

Considering that we have been participants in the context of the study, and that we are personally familiar with the research subjects, remaining aware and critical of our own biases has been of highest priority. We relate to bias as influences and prejudices (OED, 2015a), and the tacit knowledge and preconceptions (Wolfinger, 2002) we have in regard to ourselves, the research subjects, and the topic of study. So what are our biases? Our feminist assumption is that management education (and other social institutions) remain organized in ways that favor men and masculine understandings, and that we need to get to the core of constructions of various organization and management-related concepts (such as leadership) in order to provide equal opportunities for women and men to pursue successful careers and a work life free of too much psychological stress. Our interpretation of the case studies and classroom interactions as androcentric - meaning an adherence of a masculine norm as 'standard' (Lindsey, 2011), for example in terms of language and case characters - has given us a 'thorn in the side'. Where is there a place for our social identity in this world of work? This

bias, however, has had to be carefully managed, as it would be detrimental to our study to get "stuck in a particular fixed position" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 263) and simply take for granted that peers have had a similar experience. When interpreting our data, we have therefore been careful to ensure that we are not disregarding data that does not conform to our own bias.

However, as it is our whole being rather than only our eyes that see (Hanson, 1958), our bias will impact our study whether we want it to or not. Moreover, in an interview process all involved parties make assumptions about the other, which impacts the interaction (Kelan & Jones, 2010). Along with Tracy (2010), we recognize that "self-reflexive researchers examine their impact on the scene and note others' reactions to them" (p. 842). As we have been closely familiar with both 'the scene' and 'the others' (i.e. the program, and its teachers and students), we have had to take into account that this may have impacted our interactions (Creswell, 2003). Several participants were aware of our preconception that the program is gendered and needs to change in order to promote gender equality and this probably influenced our conversations. Accordingly, we have been attentive to how our standpoints may have 'infected' what was voiced during focus groups and interviews.

We also believe that the purposes and 'agendas' with our research project are important biases to take into consideration (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Tracy, 2010). As discussed in the introductory chapter, our feminist agenda to critically interrogate gender in management education may have at times led us into a trap of attributing marginalization and inequalities to settings where they did not make much sense. Here, Habermas' (1972) 'human interests' have enabled us to re-examine our assumptions. For example, we have been able to see women and men as products (or victims) of hegemonic[4] practices. Thus, we have been able to look beyond the face value of individual comments about gender in the management program and rather see them as products of dominant discourses and expectations. Shifting between paradigms has made us able to see the world with 'new eyes' (Kuhn, 1962).

To avoid using reflexivity as an empty catchword, we have tried to "*show* rather than *tell* self-reflexivity" by incorporating "reflexive considerations of self-as-instrument throughout the research report" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). This has been done by maintaining awareness and openness about our

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[4] Hegemony means "social or cultural predominance or ascendancy; predominance by one group within a society or milieu, or by a particular set of social or cultural ideas, way of doing things, or item, esp. to the exclusion of others." (OED, 2015c)

biases and the subjectivity of our assumptions. In our data analysis, we are, for example, frequently writing things like "Our reading of this quote tells us that…" and "It appears to us that…". As qualitative researchers, we are the primary instrument for interpretation of theory and empirical material (Merriam, 2002), which is why we have tried to keep our subjective voice alive and be 'in' the project rather than to block ourselves out of it and try to be objective. Being 'the primary instrument', we would say that our passionate interest in gender equality has been beneficial, as it has helped us to stay strong in times of frustration and uncertainty.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Following our multi-paradigmatic research approach, shifting between interpretative and critical feminist knowledge interests, we developed a qualitative study seeking to interpret and critically interrogate gender in management education. About four months prior to the start date of the research project, we began the process by observing classroom interactions, which became useful background information for our research process and helped us gain close intimacy with the research context. To address our first research question, we critically analyzed representation and illustrations of gender in business case studies. To explore the second and third questions, we conducted two focus groups with ten students in total, and seven interviews with teachers. Drawing upon an abductive research strategy, we worked simultaneously with theory and empirical material and analyzed our findings by continually shifting between parts and whole, preconceptions and interpretations of theory and data. Throughout the process, we emphasized self-reflexivity and awareness of our biases.

3. Review of Literature

In this project, we are studying management education as a place where professional socialization takes place, and argue that management education can work as an instrument for either reproduction or disruption of norms and attitudes about what it means to be a 'woman' or 'man' within the world of work. Gender in management education is a topic that has been addressed in various ways. In this review of literature, we will elaborate on the two main streams of gender and management education: functionalist scholars who tend to suggest a numerical balance of women and men as a solution to inequalities, and social constructivist scholars who instead interpret and critique cultural norms and discourses constructing gender inequalities. In particular, and as a result of our interpretivist and feminist research interest, we emphasize the latter stream and how management education is gendered. We begin with outlining the primary research on gender and work, continue with gender in management education, and conclude by discussing postfeminism as a lens of understanding and interrogating gendered discourses in work and management education.

3.1 Gender and Work

Since the program of study is situated in organization and management studies that prepare students for careers in leadership, management and consultancy, we find it fruitful to broadly discuss what has been said within the field of gender and work. As much of the research within this field has been preoccupied with functionalist streams, we start with a short discussion of this stream of work. Thereafter, we move on to discuss research situated in a social constructivist paradigm, which argues that work is gendered. We end this section by noting that gender is socially constructed, and that this socialization occurs in many places, one of them being higher education.

Gender and work has been well-debated the last 30 years, with many different theoretical underpinnings (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Billing, 1994; Carriagan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987; Kanter, 1977; Powell, 1999; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Traditionally, gender and organizational scholarship have been concerned with how women 'fit' into management and organizational life. Theoretically, this field is called Women in Management (WiM). This research tends to individualize the question of gender, and view gender as inherently linked to sexed bodies. Individualized rationales for a paucity of women in management in the 1970s and 1980s discuss gender and work in

rather simplified ways, focused primarily on divisions of labour and an increase of women in higher positions as a solution to gender inequalities. (see Carriagan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987) Moreover, WiM research tends to view organizations as entities outside social and cultural creations, and as independent of relations between organizational members (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008). Here, structural and cultural dynamics of how organizations are gendered are ignored. However, as more and more women entered organizations, and sought positions of leadership (Alvesson & Billing, 1999) scholars began to challenge the neglect of the social construction of gender in management studies, and to question the common assumption that organizations are gender-neutral. Zimmer (1988) notes:

> There is no reason to assume that increasing the number of women in an organization will necessarily improve their conditions of employment. It may even be the case that increasing the number of women, without addressing the sexist attitudes imbedded in male-dominated organizations, may exacerbate women's occupational problems. (p. 64)

Instead of focusing solely on female bodies at work, scholars began to explore organizations as spaces where women and men 'do gender' (Billing 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987). For example, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that femininity and masculinity is not what one is, but what one does; differences between women and men are not natural or biological, but instead constructed and negotiated in a continuous process. From this view, gender is acted out in interactions, and behaviors associated with a specific gender are assessed based upon socially accepted negotiations of gender. Thus, societal expectations decide what is appropriate behavior for women and men.

The idea of 'doing gender' is related to Acker's (1990) argument that organizations are gendered. By 'gendered' she means that gender is "deeply hidden in organizational processes and decisions that appear to have nothing to do with gender" (p. 251). Most jobs, workplaces, and industries subscribe to some form of femininity or masculinity, vaguely or specifically, in terms of what characteristics and tasks the work includes in relation to what characteristics are typically possessed by a woman or a man (Billing & Lundholm, 2012). Thus, work can be said to be gender-labeled and have some sort of gender symbolism, as it is defined as either feminine or masculine, which means that it is easily seen as 'natural' for a certain sex (ibid). This gendered orientation bleeds into the expected behaviors of women and men at work, constructing women as emotional and illogical, and

men as rational and effective (Acker, 1990). Thus, organizations often "both reflect and reinforce prevailing conceptions of masculinity and femininity" (Powell, 1999 p. 71). Perhaps not surprisingly, this subtle process is often advantageous to men and exclusionary of women (Acker, 1990). Scholars, therefore, need to be mindful of gender symbolism and not only gender-labels (Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Billing & Lundholm, 2012).

Management education is one place where these meanings, images and associations of what feminine and masculine mean come to life. As we have discussed, although organizations are often interpreted as gender-neutral, they are infused with gendered norms that constitute how women and men are expected to act (Acker, 1990). Management education is an institution that is part of people's socialization in society, and it can be seen as a gendered space, as it is an institution belonging to organizational life.

3.2 Gender and Management Education

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a degree designed to develop the skills required to pursue careers in business and management, and is often viewed as a 'career enhancer' (Smith, 2000). Research has shown that management education plays a significant role in the formation of managerial careers, in shaping future leaders' perceptions of working life, and in training them in appropriate business behavior (Ehrensal, 2001; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Simpson, 1996). Therefore, the social construction of education and occupations in terms of femininity and masculinity can be seen as decisive for how women and men are positioned on the labour market and within organizations (Alvesson & Billing, 1999).

In this section, we argue that gender in management education is important to examine because this is where ideas about leadership, careers, and abilities take shape. Therefore, we narrow our focus to how higher education, and especially management programs, are gendered. Drawing upon literature addressing gender in management education and in higher education at large, we found that two primary research streams, similar to those in gender and work stood out: studies concerned with numbers of women and men, and studies concerned with the gendered culture underscoring academic disciplines. Below, we start by briefly elaborating on the first, functionalist, stream of research,

and then move on to more extensively discuss the gendered nature of management education in general, and gendered course curricula and classroom interactions in particular.

Sex segregation between academic disciplines is a frequently discussed area on gender in higher education (McDaniel, 2012; Lindsey, 2011; Xu & Martin, 2011). Particularly, men's domination within science, technology, engineering and mathematics, (Xu & Martin, 2011), as well as women's domination within areas such as arts, humanities, social work and education (Lindsey, 2011) have been on the agenda. Considering gender and management education, much of the research has discussed female bodies, and particularly their access to MBA programs (Clark et al, 1996; Fisher, 2001; Jacobs, 1996). For example, research in American context has shown that only 30 percent of students in highly ranked business schools are women (Di Meglio, 2004 in Kelan & Jones, 2010). Moreover, the number of women in faculty also remains low (Kelan & Jones, 2010). Different reasons for this female-male asymmetry have been proposed. For example, there are theories suggesting women's lack of competence, or that women will have children and only be able to invest limited time and effort in their future work (Shellenbarger, 2008; Sinclair, 1995). Nonetheless, attempts to increase women's access to management education have been made, some examples being specific classes for women, special scholarships and women's networks (Kelan & Jones, 2010).

It appears that much of the research on gender in management education (as well as higher education at large) is preoccupied with the relative number of women and men in the room, suggesting 'adding women' is a fruitful solution to reduce gender inequalities (Flynn et al., 2015; Jacobs, 1996; Kilgour, 2015). Such view neglects gender as an organizing principle (Acker, 1990), and assumes that management education is a gender-neutral space. In contrast to this, other gender and management scholars argue that adding bodies does not necessarily address long-standing gendered dynamics in academia or organizational life (Acker, 1992; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Sinclair, 1995). For example, Thomas (1990) has argued that although women today constitute a numerical majority in higher education, they are still a cultural minority.

Social constructivist scholars argue that education is not gender-neutral, but that there is a masculine culture inherent in the educational system that limits women and men from having the same possibilities (Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000). Because of this cultural bias, a small privileged group, often white heterosexual men, have

become the unquestioned norm, and norms that are not questioned become ideals that everything else is compared to and considered deviant from (Olsson & Olsson, 2004). As the people belonging to the norm hold the positions of power, research questions and content that may jeopardize their status have often been disregarded (ibid). Due to this subtle, privileged, gendered social order, management education reproduces practices and attitudes that favor men and masculinity (Ely & Meyersen, 2000) leading to a state where people are being treated differently in very subtle ways (Dever & Mills, 2015). In the field of management education, 'gendered' thus means that people associated with feminine values and characteristics often become excluded and marginalized (Acker, 1990; Ely & Meyersen, 2000). Feminine perspectives in classrooms of management education are generally downplayed or disregarded (Kelan & Jones, 2010).

The gendering of academic disciplines plays out in many ways, including via course curricula. Scholars argue that large parts of the management education curricula are gendered, wherein men and masculinity is again the norm (Kilgour, 2015; Symons & Ibarra, 2014). Although gender biases in curricula are often camouflaged, they can constrain students not associated with the norm from envisioning what they could become, and restrict their sense of where they belong (Blumberg, 2009). For instance, Symons and Ibarra (2014) found that by reproducing the image of men as central leaders, management education communicates masculinity as the normal and 'approved' state of being a leader. The times when women are portrayed as leaders, they are often illustrated as incompetent and unknowledgeable, making them seem like a burden rather than an advantage. Moreover, women are often portrayed alone at the top, which further reinforces the assumption of isolation as well as the idea that women do not help each other climb up the hierarchy. (ibid) Thus, management curricula often reinforce the masculine norm as they predominantly portray men as normal and natural leaders (Kilgour, 2015; Symons & Ibarra, 2014), and women as deviant 'tokens' who do not belong (Kanter, 1977).

It is not only curricula that reinforce the masculine norm and male dominance, but also the 'hidden curricula' in participants' interactions (Kilgour, 2015), or in other words, what students learn about the culture from classroom interactions. One result of a gendered classroom favoring a masculine norm, is that students who have social identities not aligning with the masculine norm experience a loss of confidence (Smith, 2000) and a drop in self-esteem (Lindsey, 2011): women often experience a 'chillier' classroom climate than their male peers (Sandler, 2004). The inherent norm perme-

ating the classroom moreover often leads to a scenario where educators fail to recognize women's contributions and competencies, further reinforcing a marginalization of women (Smith, 2000). Also female teachers face consequences of the male norm; male students seem to have difficulties accepting and respecting female teachers (Gallos, 1995), and often question their authority and competence (Sinclair, 1997). Moreover, since women often find themselves in lower hierarchical positions, they are less likely to question and argue against these practices (Smith, 2000).

If masculine symbolism, informed by individualism, competitiveness and instrumentalism, is practiced in the classroom, this way of talking and behaving continues to shape students' interactions and practices outside of the classroom (Sinclair, 1995), for example in their future work life. As Sullivan and Kedrowicz (2012) argue: "Since these patterns have been reproduced for so long, they however appear as gender-neutral and 'beneficial to all', which makes them difficult to notice and argue against" (p. 392). Therefore, in many instances management education needs to be reshaped, and needs to start treating gender as a topic beyond a fashion, fad or special subject (Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1995). Rather, management education should take seriously the idea that it is a significant institution in shaping women and men's future managerial life (Smith, 2000). To deal with this, we along with Wahl (2015) argue that the normalized male norm "needs to be visualized and problematized in management education" (p. 315). Thus, the gendered norms and practices that are reproduced in management education need to be identified and acknowledged (Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012), to enable management education to address the issue and generate equal opportunities for all.

Complicating matters, however, is that currently, many women in management education eschew gender as a relevant issue (Kelan & Jones, 2010). Although there seems to be an evident masculine norm permeating management education, studies show that women often do not experience themselves as being part of a marginalized group, and instead suggest that inequalities in management education have already been solved (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012). Arguments that gender is no longer a concern can be understood in the light of postfeminism, a relatively new discourse characterized by ignorance of structural and cultural barriers. From this perspective, gender equality is important, but fighting for it is passé as it is assumed that we have already achieved the desired state of gender equality (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Modleski, 1991).

3.3 Postfeminism and Management Education

As we worked with the theoretical and empirical material simultaneously, we found that much of our data could be interpreted and critically interrogated though a lens of postfeminism. Therefore, in this last section of our literature review, we examine the main characteristics of postfeminism, and argue why this perspective can help us make sense of gender in management education. We begin by narrating our own experiences of a contemporary postfeminist climate.

Growing up in Sweden in the 1990s, we were not taught to be feminists. The message we were fed with was instead to have 'girl power', referring to "a self-reliant attitude among girls and young women manifested in ambition, assertiveness, and individualism" (OED, 2015). Contemporary discourse taught us to stand up for our rights, be strong, work hard, and to claim space (McRobbie, 2007). The world was ours; we could become anything we wanted as long as we wanted it hard enough, and only the sky was the limit for what we could achieve. Along with icons like Spice Girls and Britney Spears, and series like Sex and the City and Ally McBeal (Hermes, 2006), we learned to look up to strong women who seemed to 'have it all'. Being teenagers in high school, the word 'feminism' appeared an ugly one; people did not want to identify themselves as feminist, as this seemed old-fashioned, boring, and even a bit aggressive. This is, however, an attitude that remains common. As Emma Watson puts it in her 2014 speech for her UN initiative 'He for She': "Feminism has become an unpopular word. Women are choosing not to identity as feminists" (UN Women, 2014). Several scholars argue that what lies behind the resistance of calling oneself a feminist, is a new 'apolitical' perspective called postfeminism (Butler, 2013; Gill, 2007; Gill & Scharff, 2011; McRobbie, 2004).

Postfeminism is a term including a variety of meanings: some refer to it as part of third-wave feminism, some as an 'antifeminist' movement and some as a backlash against second-wave feminism (Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2004). However, we see postfeminism as a 'sensibility', a cultural discursive strategy that incorporates several different interrelated themes. From this perspective, postfeminism means that there is an engagement of traditional gender norms in society, alongside feminist objectives such as female empowerment and equal opportunities (Gill, 2007). Within the context of organizational life, three postfeminist features are predominant: 1) individualism, empowerment and choice; 2) belief in natural sexual differences; and 3) retreat to the home as a question of choice

not obligation (Lewis, 2014). Other characteristics are self-surveillance and self-discipline, as well as an influence of a makeover-paradigm suggesting that women can be 'turned' successful if only they get some help (Gill, 2007). Along with several scholars, we suggest that postfeminism is best understood as a discursive phenomenon (Gill, 2007; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2004; Sullivan & Delaney, 2015). Thus we do not use postfeminism as a "theoretical orientation, new moment of feminism or straightforward backlash to feminism" (Gill & Scharff, 2011, p. 4) but rather as an 'object of critical analysis' (Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009) to better understand the discourses used in contemporary management education.

In general, postfeminism is based on neoliberal assumptions, where entrepreneurial features such as rationality and self-regulation shape individual's responsibility for constructing their own success and destiny (Gill, 2007). The feminist perspective adopted in contemporary society, is according to Gill (2007), a liberal one, where feminism is constructed as inauthentic, harsh and incapable of articulating women's true goals. Younger women have grown up enjoying the progress of the feminist movement, taking the idea of gender equality for granted (Kelan & Jones, 2010). As a result, the contemporary woman "takes responsibility for her life, plans and achieves her goals, works hard, and seizes opportunities" (Sullivan & Delaney, 2015, p. 6). Underlying these ideas, are assumptions that women have already gained the recognition as subjects worthy of the attention that they deserve (McRobbie, 2007), and that they are no longer seen what Simone de Beauvoir once called 'the second sex' (1949). Thus, the postfeminist discourse assumes that the feminist battle for equal rights and opportunities has already been won (Modleski, 1991). Instead, all individuals can now focus on achieving and doing whatever they want (Kelan & Jones, 2010).

There is a prevailing unwillingness in society to acknowledge gender inequalities (Kelan, 2009). When facing challenges in their professional lives, women in management education often deny their gender as a possible reason, and resist using gendered discourses to make sense of these challenges (Kelan & Jones, 2010). Perhaps a reason for that may be that these women do not want to perceive themselves as part of a disadvantaged group, since being 'a victim' does not exactly match the image of an ideal management student. Or as Kelan and Jones (2010) argue, holding structural barriers accountable for not being able to succeed, does not correspond with the image of a successful business leader. However, as long as the importance of gender is downplayed and as long as gender issues remain difficult and uncomfortable to articulate, management education reproduces a

prevailing attitude, which fosters exclusion of identities deviating from the norm (Kelan & Jones, 2010). As Butler (2013) argues, contemporary discourses on gender only reinforce hierarchies, and ensure that the male, heterosexual and white privilege remains intact. Furthermore, conversations on gender are interpreted as being passé and not part of a modern agenda (Kelan & Jones, 2010).

Considering the gendered nature of management education and the contemporary postfeminist discourse, it appears to us that many women (and social identities not aligned with the masculine norm) engage in what McRobbie (2009) calls a 'postfeminist masquerade': many women see themselves as empowered and included, but the cultural norm favoring masculine ideals still keeps them marginalized and excluded. Thus, these 'deviant' people face several paradoxes, as they believe that they compete on equal terms (McRobbie, 2007), but actually face structural and cultural barriers when trying to do so (Gill, 2007; Kelan & Jones, 2010; McRobbie, 2007).

3.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have embedded our research in literature on gender and work, gender and management education, and postfeminism. We have argued that the socialization of women and men in management and business takes place partly in management education, which is a space permeated by masculine symbolism. Thus, management education can be seen as 'gendered' in a way that favors masculine images and ideals, which social constructivist scholarship has helped us understand. To be able to understand reasons for why management education is so rarely seen as gendered, and why conversations on gender are interpreted as passé and unimportant, we argue for the use of a critical lens of postfeminism. Moving on to interpret empirical material from case studies and conversations with students and teachers, we bring understandings of gender at the program, as well as management education's role in promoting gender equality, to light and life. We do so by separating our analysis into three chapters, which fluidly correspond to our three research questions. Following our abductive approach, we have used theories as sources of inspiration rather than as a mechanical application (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). The order of the data analysis Chapters 4, 5 and 6, does not reflect causalities as such found during focus groups and interviews, but helps us structure the empirical material.

4. Management Education: A Perpetuator of Gender Stereotypes and Hierarchies?

In this first of three chapters of data analysis, we address our research questions *How do business case studies represent and illustrate gender?* and *How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions?* First, we analyze representation and illustrations of gender in the business case studies used in the program and reflect on how these cases reproduce and perpetuate gender stereotypes and hierarchies. Second, we relate what students and teachers said about gender in the program to social constructivist theories of management education as gendered. However, we found additional stories to be told relating to our second research question, which we continue to address in Chapter 5.

4.1 Approaching Gender in Case Studies

In this section, we discuss our findings on gender in case studies and thereby address our first research question. We analyze gender in the case studies by 1) discussing how teachers view the role of cases in management education; 2) showing the numerical representation of female and male characters as well as feminine and masculine industries found in the set of 22 cases examined; and 3) interpreting illustrations of women and men in the sampled six cases. We wrap up the section with our reflections on how management case studies contribute to a perpetuation of gender hierarchies and stereotypes of women and men in management and business.

4.1.1 Case Studies: Agents of Socialization?

As mentioned in the Methods Chapter, business case studies have constituted an essential part of the program to engage students in a wide range of topics related to management and organization. However, gender and gender equality have been almost absent from these conversations. To get an understanding of the teachers' objective with putting such emphasis on working with case studies, we asked them what role they thought the cases play in the management program. We found that their answers were generally characterized by two logics: cases as pedagogical instruments, and cases as socialization tools. All of the teachers stated that the case studies fulfilled the pedagogical purposes of introducing students to various organizational dilemmas and of letting students apply their theoretical knowledge to identify and interrogate problems in an 'empirical reality'. For example, Char-

lie explains that case studies represent practical work life, and that they are "as close as you can get to organizational practice". Anders brings it a bit further, and suggests that a core purpose of using case studies is to establish common ground for students:

Perhaps the most important thing when working with concepts is to translate them to the reality you live in yourself. What do they mean to me? Can we work with these? (...) The point of the cases is that they create common questions, a common platform, and a common practice that everyone can read about and assimilate (...)

Teachers generally agree that the cases are an important part of the education. Our aim here is not to question that case studies are a good pedagogical tool. Yet, as social constructivist researchers, we take seriously the idea that the stories and narratives we read and the images we are exposed to shape our sense of selves and our views of reality. A few teachers, although not many, expressed a similar view when being asked about the role of case studies. Cecilia illustrates it quite well:

The other more abstract role of a case study is socialization, to literally ask you to put yourselves in the position of the actors in the case. And, I didn't really think about this until your project, but then it became quite clear to me that obviously if we take seriously the second role, that it's a socializing tool, which is asking you to put yourself in this imaginary position, then it could be quite exclusionary to only have a particular group or type of worker represented.

In this project, we base our approach to the case studies on the assumption that they act as agents of socialization, and that they shape students' construction of what the world of work is like and what the professionals acting within this context are like. With this basis, we present how gender is represented in the total set of 22 case studies used on the program.

4.1.2 Representation of Gender

Appendix C provides a 'body count' of women and men, as well as feminine and masculine industries, in the 22 business case studies used on the program. In summary, the table tells us that: A) 16 cases portray male main characters, 1 portrays a female main character, and 5 do not have any distinctive main characters; and B) 15 of the industries depicted can be identified as masculine, 2 as feminine and 5 could not be identified as either or.

Viewing case studies as tools of socialization, we suggest that such an imbalanced representation of gender is indirectly translated into assumptions about what the world of work is like for women and men. This set of cases shows that the program allows a perpetuation of images about who is doing 'the real business' (men) and what type of organizations are interesting to discuss in terms of management and organization (masculine).

4.1.3 Illustrations of Gender

In order to elicit a rich and comprehensive understanding of gender in the cases, we need to develop a more in-depth and qualitative understanding of how women and men are illustrated. In this section, we critically analyze gender in a representative sample of case studies (find section 2.2.2 for sampling process). We found that women were largely depicted as dependent, emotional and unprofessional and that men were illustrated as relaxed, confident and aggressive.

As seen in Appendix C, Philips is the only case that employs a female protagonist (Rangan & Weidinger, 2012). However, in contrast to many of the male leading characters in the case studies, Barbara Kux is not one of those who single-handedly manages a great organizational turnaround. Instead, the story underlines that Kux needs support in her management role; it describes how she has a board that encourages her, a management committee that assists her, and a team of specialists to help her "get the figures on the table" (p. 6). Like Kux, Karen, a woman portrayed in the Adnams case (James & Verity, 2011), is also a manager who needed a pair of strong helping hands. In the story about Karen's career journey, we find support for what Gill (2007) calls a 'make-over paradigm'. Karen started working for Adnams as a cleaner in order to manage her domestic situation, and from there on her life is portrayed as an 'organizational saga', or what Sullivan and Delaney (2015) call a "Disney-fied transformation from 'rags' to 'riches'" (p. 27). There is no question about who the active agent is in Karen's successful rise to the top; like a father-figure, Andy supports Karen on her way to become manager in several ways, including ensuring that she gets a Management Diploma. As a manager, Karen is portrayed as humble and motherly, she does not like talking about herself, and she attributes her success to the people around her.

In the case on Gore & Associates Inc, we are presented to Vieve Gore and Bill Gore, who started the company together (Shipper & Manz, 1996). Although Vieve co-founded Gore and outlived her husband, she is only presented very briefly in the case, mainly in relation to her domestic role as

Bill's wife. In general, Vieve has a highly marginal role in the case: she is her husband's right hand, and an administrative supporter. It is her husband, Bill, who is the agent and who does the 'real business' - he is the product manager, the sales manager *and* the president. Bill is a calm, informal and secure man with an unconventional, yet widely celebrated leadership style. Following the fatherly principle of freedom with responsibility, Bill is unauthoritarian, has a good sense of humor and does not seem to have much need to control his associates. Years later, when Bill dies and the company flourishes, their son Bob becomes president, and Vieve remains a secretary.

In contrast to how female leads are depicted, a man who did not restrain his authoritarian management style, is René Obermann who took charge over Deutsche Telekom after a period of falling share prices (Korotov et al., 2009). Obermann is a young go-getter, an opportunity seizer with tremendous self-confidence who makes it to the top faster than lightning and against the odds. When the case writer describes Obermann's entrepreneurial and successful career path, it becomes clear that he is a fast and rather aggressive climber of the corporate ladder:

> *His approach was to try and change the organization to suit him rather than to try and adapt himself to the bureaucracy (...) Obermann had been characterized as straight-forward, efficient, and boisterous, as a perfectionist with expertise and a workaholic (p. 4)*

Just as Obermann, or 'The Dobermann' as he is sometimes called in the case, is characterized by rationality and superiority, intolerance of failure, and strive for perfection, so is Ravi Chandry, a character depicted in the Tug-of-War case under the heading 'The Rottweiler' (Sheffi, 2005). This heading becomes rather amusing when compared to the one introducing Margie, a manager depicted in the same case. Her role in the business is described under the heading 'A Cozy Relationship'. Ravi is a "tough minded leader" who "saved the company millions through operational efficiencies" (p. 42). The case writer sends the reader an unequivocal message that being tough-minded and acting like an aggressive dog will pay off: "Ravi, who looked to be only in his fifties, had recently 'retired' and was spending his time playing golf and doing some consulting" (p. 42). Margie on the other hand, is not illustrated in such an impressive way. She is a highly knowledgeable of the world of fashion, but "truth be told, Jack [the CEO] even felt a little intimidated by her" (p. 41). It is, however, not her knowledge that strikes us as readers of the case, but rather her temper and emotional outbursts. In the case, Margie is depicted as a 'token' (Kanter, 1977) for people who are usually un-

desired within the world of work; she is unrestrained, unprofessional, irrational and she cannot separate her emotions from the business. Moreover, she takes criticism personally, and is protective of her own unit rather than the business as a whole.

4.1.4 Merging Representations and Illustrations

By critically interrogating representation and illustrations of gender in business case studies, we found that 1) male protagonists and masculine industries heavily dominated the total set of case studies; and 2) women and men were depicted in largely stereotypical ways, presumably reproducing gender hierarchies in business and management. Taking seriously the idea that stories, narratives and discourses construct people's sense of selves and sense of reality, we argue that the gendered content of the case studies shape students' perceptions on what the world of work is like and where their social identities belong. So what do case studies tell us about where women and men belong? Rather straightforwardly, they tell us that women have a trivial and marginalized role in organizational life, being dependent, emotional, unprofessional, and mainly fostering 'cozy relationships'. The stories about men look rather different; they are portrayed as confident and relaxed father figures, or as tough and aggressive alpha dogs fighting their way to the top of the pack. Based on our analysis, we argue that case studies perpetuate rather drastic gender stereotypes and that this aspect of the cases is frequently neglected when working with them in management education.

4.2 A Gendered Management Program?

As discussed in our review of literature, scholars on gender in management education suggest that management programs are profoundly gendered (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Sinclair, 1995; Smith, 2000) and that a masculine symbolism permeates both curricula and classroom climate (Kilgour, 2015; Lindsey, 2011; Sandler, 2004; Sinclair, 1995; Symons & Ibarra, 2014). Moreover, scholars propose that management education often reproduces gender stereotypes, making male protagonists the norm from which females are deviant yet compelled to adhere to (Olsson & Olsson, 2004). This portrayal of men as the 'natural leaders' leads to a marginalization of both women and feminine perspectives on organization and management (Acker, 1990; Ely & Meyersen, 2000). Above, we have analyzed how business case studies contribute to such reproduction of gender stereotypes and hierarchies, by representing a male domination and illustrating gender stereotypes. However, to this point our question on how students and teachers talk about gender in classroom interactions and

case studies, in a Swedish and 'world-class' academic context, remain unanswered. We now analyze our findings from focus groups and interviews relating to perspectives of management education as gendered.

To introduce this section on students and teachers' interpretations of a masculine norm and the dominance of male role models permeating the management program, we present an excerpt from a conversation between two female students, which can be seen as a representative for how both students and teachers talked:

Alice: I think it is very much men role models and very much men in the cases we have been studying, the leaders are mostly men and when it is females they are HR managers only or taking care of situations or people.

Alexandra: And if it is females sometimes it is often a wonder. Remember that female last time, she was a cleaning lady and then she became a leader. (...) On the other hand, it was in consulting class, there was this woman who was leading but she was the one making the big mistake.

Alice: Yeah exactly, women and men are portrayed differently, how I see it.

Alexandra: Yeah but maybe we are seeing it from a different kind of view, as we see, well I am not a feminist but this is not really equal and again it is women that are being treated differently (...).

Alice and Alexandra paint a picture of the management program being gendered. They experience that 'there are many male role models' and that 'the leaders are mostly men'. They also illustrate an observation on how women are 'being treated differently'. Our interpretation of 'differently' suggests two readings: women are being portrayed as different from men, but also as different from the norm of a successful business leader. Interestingly however, although recognizing gender inequalities, Alexandra's last comment conveys a cognitive and emotional distance from the notion of being a feminist: 'well, I am not a feminist but this is not really equal'.

4.2.1 Men as Norm

One critical finding in our focus groups and interviews was that men were seen as norm. As one student, Alice, said; "I would feel in this program talking about management, we emphasize too much on men." Interestingly, although nearly every student recognized that managers and change agents portrayed on the program are men, and many students concluded that men are portrayed as 'the natural leader', they only became aware of this as they participated in our project or after a teacher, Marie, had interrupted them when they had said 'he' during a seminar. Thus, several students only consciously made sense of gender in the program once someone had made it explicit.

Teachers in the program also recognized the male norm. Several concluded that men constituted the main actors in many of case studies and the norm in classroom interactions. Fredrik noted, "It is all about 'he did that, he does that'". Similarly, Paul reflected:

I mean, I think these illustrate that men are the… You know, a lot of the times you get these stories about leadership, it is not necessarily heroic leadership but it is men in leadership roles, isn't it? I think. And that naturalizes it (...) I think the fact that it is usually men that are taking on these change agent roles, it is naturalizing men in that kind of role.

Teachers, like students, consciously recognized the gendered nature of the program when directly asked about it. Further, we also found that a number of students and teachers thought that the industries used in the program were drawing on a masculine symbolism. As one teacher explained, many occupations are gendered as such, and the ones exemplified on the program are generally masculine. Charlie said:

Maybe I have to give this some thought. Well, so yeah, so there is a kind of masculine symbolism in the industries that have been selected, you could say. Well, that you notice now when I think about it.

This quote signals a commonly found theme among students and teachers: 'Yes, the characters and industries in the cases are either men or masculine, but I haven't really thought about it before you asked'.

4.2.2 Women as Deviants

As we saw in the conversation between Alice and Alexandra above, the women in case studies were perceived as something other than the norm. This was apparent both explicitly, as several students pointed out that women in leadership roles are often seen as 'a surprise', and implicitly, when some students and teachers elaborated on the symbolic value of predominantly exemplifying men in higher positions. Alice and Alexandra, active students in one of the focus groups, elaborated:

Alice: We are very used to this male leader domination and when we are not seeing the males but the females, that is the un-normal thing and when we think about that the leader is not a 'he' but a 'she'. But when a leader is a 'he' we are probably not thinking about it because that is the normal way we are used to seeing it.

Alexandra: I think we foster these assumptions we hold about that it is natural that men are the leader and women are not the leader, because then if it is the other way around, sometimes we get surprised.

These expressions of 'the un-normal thing' and 'we get surprised' speak rather well for themselves: several students experience female protagonists or antagonists in case studies as deviant from the norm, or as what Kanter (1977) labels 'tokens'. Another student, Sofie, had a quite interesting comment related to this dichotomous relationship: "If we were equal, we wouldn't think it is strange that a leader is a woman".

This perception was not as prevalent amongst the teachers. However, one male teacher said that they do not exclude a female perspective or female characters on purpose, but that it could be a result of having such a male dominated group of teachers educating in the program. Along with Sinclair (1995), we believe that as long as men's interests, values and experiences are favored in management education, women's perspectives will be downgraded. This reasoning in combination with the common experience among students and teachers that there is an inherent masculine norm permeating the program, led us to interpret that students experience an absence of female role models and an exclusion of a feminine perspective.

The female teachers we interviewed, Marie and Cecilia, had gendered experiences of another kind. They both told us stories about being approached differently by students compared to their male colleagues. As Marie said:

> *It was* very *often that students came to me with tears in their eyes, which they never did to Charlie (...) I experience an expectation on me as a woman to be soft and easy, and perhaps easily 'flirted' and persuaded. And that I noticed when I was course responsible, and some boys came to nag their way into you know 'eh, it's really important for me to get a good grade' and yeah, I thought this was very, very strange.*

Marie said such experiences made her think carefully about how she presents herself in order to gain more authority among the students: "I don't dress my most feminine". Both Marie and Cecilia sometimes experienced a disrespectful attitude from students, which they attributed to their sex. Cecilia told us about a situation where she was criticized by a class of students for smiling too much and for not being authoritarian enough in the classroom. The students asked her to change her behavior in order for them to take her seriously. When telling this story, Cecilia said, "For me, a cultural and gendered critique was occurring without critical reflection from the students." When the incident happened, she talked to a male colleague about it. He too recommended that she change her behavior, as she "was spending too much time 'taking care' of students".

It appears to us as if the two female teachers have many experiences in common; they have either felt that they need to, or have been explicitly told by students or colleagues that they need to, change their behavior or appearance. Our interpretation suggests the following: dress and behave less femininely, and perhaps you will be taken seriously. Dever and Mills (2015) support our interpretation, and suggest that women often need to act in a masculine way to be accepted and taken seriously in the context of management education. That Marie and Cecilia were urged to change their behaviors, indicates that a masculine symbolism permeates the program, and that too feminine attributes (smiling, dressing femininely, being caring) are not considered appropriate. None of the male teachers we talked to told us about any hostile experiences when we asked about gender in interactions.

4.2.3 The Norm - Deviant Relationship

Some students and teachers elaborated on the implications of seeing mostly men as leaders and managers. Several students said that only seeing male leaders could lead to prejudices and subconscious influences on how they view leadership. For instance, one student, Lukas noted:

It cements the fact that you see CEOs as men or you see top management or the vast majority of top management as men and maybe, if something, that is a positive thing if you want to be a CEO. That the fact that you are man will be beneficial for you.

Some students considered that the prevalence of leaders as men, associates the very notion of success with men. A group of students also had a discussion about writing 'he' when referring to a manager and concluded that it will likely affect how they "talk about leaders later on". Some teachers also commented on the implications for students when a masculine norm is perpetuated. Cecilia argued that if female students only see male leaders in successful positions, it will probably become a conflict at some point in her life as she navigates through the world of work:

Certain bodies and identities will either find alignment and certain bodies and identities will find misalignment with what is going on in the cases. And that over time, if a student fails to see herself or himself in the role of the hero or heroine or protagonist or antagonist, then one might begin to question 'where is there a place for me in this organization or in this role of management, or in this world of work'.

Another teacher, Charlie, reflected on a majority of male professors in the classroom. He noted that female students will probably then ask themselves "why aren't there any females?". He said that this could result in a feeling among the female students of not belonging in the academic world, which could make them refrain from pursuing a research career.

4.3 Reflections

Our conversation with students and teachers about gender in case studies and classroom interactions implies that a small privileged group of men have become the unquestioned norm (Olsson & Olsson, 2004) and that students deviating from the norm may have a hard time envisioning what they

can become due to gender biases and stereotypes (Blumberg, 2009). As both students and teachers discussed, if the success in working life is associated with men, what it means to be successful for women becomes questionable. As a number of female students expressed, a male norm probably impacts them subconsciously, which could perhaps lead to a situation where women view their career options differently or find that their confidence in being a successful future manager or leader could be jeopardized (Smith, 2000). Thus, it became clear to us that many students and teachers concur that the management programs is gendered in its practices and values (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Sinclair, 1995), and that this masculine norm is being upheld, leading to an abstract exclusion and marginalization of women (Ely & Meyersen, 2000). In this chapter, we have analyzed how business case studies represent and illustrate gender and we have found that they contribute to the reproduction and perpetuation of gender stereotypes and hierarchies. We have also analyzed how students and teachers talk about the management program as gendered, noting that for many the issue was first brought to their conscious mind during their participation in our study, while others were already aware of the issue. This is, however, far from the whole story of how they talked about gender in classroom interactions and case studies. When first asked about gender in the program, there was a rather strong line of discourse among our participants that indicated that gender was not really an issue in the program. In the next chapter, we continue by exploring this other side of the story.

5. Gender in Management Education: Not Really an Issue?

As shown in the previous chapter, students and teachers did talk about the dominance of male characters and masculine symbolism in the management program. However, most of them initially said that they had not noticed anything related to gender. When we asked what implications the gendered content and practices in the program may have, several students and teachers argued that it did not affect them personally and practically. Among students, this conceptualization was expressed through individualism, self-reliance, and free will. As for the teachers, we found flexibility between how they talk about gender in theory and how they talk about it for their practical teaching; a discourse that we have labeled 'loose coupling'. In this chapter, we continue to elaborate on our second research question *How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions?* and analyze arguments presented by students and teachers that rely on assumptions that gender is not really an issue at the management program, and that gender equality is consequently nothing to worry about.

5.1 Gender: I Haven't Thought About It Actually

As discussed in Chapter 4, when being probed about gender in case studies and classroom interactions, students and teachers started talking about the dominance of male protagonists in cases, and the masculine symbolism permeating conversations during seminars and lectures. However, in many instances students and teachers had not paid attention to anything related to gender until they were explicitly asked to do so. When asked about gender in the program, both students and teachers very commonly responded "I don't know" and "I haven't noticed anything". Two students discussed why they had not found anything related to gender in the program:

> *Linnea: But it is maybe because we didn't have the impression that it is unequal?*

> *Lisa: Yeah, I never thought about it. You said it and then I started thinking about it.*

Many students agreed that they had not considered gender as an issue, as they thought of the program as already being quite gender equal. Among the teachers, we also found a lack of thoughts on

gender. Below are excerpts from two separate conversations with teachers that together illuminate the absence of considerations on gender in the program:

Fredrik: My sense making of gender… To be honest I don't think about it that much. I really, really don't.

Anders: I don't think about it… hahaha… yeah… this perspective yes… but… but… I don't work so much with it…

That many students and teachers did not notice the masculine symbolism and male dominance permeating classroom interactions and case studies at first, is likely due to the postfeminist assumption that gender equality has already been reached (Kelan & Jones, 2010; McRobbie, 2007; Modleski, 1991). As discussed in Chapter 3, a common assumption in contemporary society is that feminism has already won all of its battles, and that women can now enjoy the privilege of equal opportunities and take gender equality for granted (Kelan, 2009; Kelan & Jones, 2010; McRobbie, 2007). Our reading of Linnea, Lisa, Fredrik and Anders' quotes above, expressing an absence of thoughts about gender, suggests a widely held assumption that there is no need to worry, as gender inequalities are not really an issue anymore. Moreover, we interpret the absence of discussions of gender-related experiences and observations is because of an assumption that case studies and interactions are gender-neutral (Acker; 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012); that no gender is favored or marginalized. Based on the analyses in Chapter 4, this leads us to interpret that there is an assumption among students and teachers that masculine language and characteristics are neutral and constitute a norm that classroom discussions adhere to. To repeat Sullivan and Kedrowicz's (2012) thoughts: "Since these patterns have been reproduced for long, they however appear as gender-neutral and 'beneficial to all', which makes them difficult to notice and argue against" (p. 392).

5.2 Gender: There Is a Problem, But It Doesn't Really Affect Me

As discussed, when probed about gender in case studies and classroom interactions, students and teachers started recognizing the dominance of male protagonists in cases, and the masculine symbolism permeating conversations during seminars and lectures. Nevertheless, a very interesting finding is that, even after becoming aware of the gendered case studies and interactions, several

students and teachers did not think of such gender asymmetries and symbolism as an issue for themselves. Instead, many thought of it in terms of 'that's what reality looks like'. From here on however, students and teachers talk differently about how these negotiating processes of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmermann, 1987) do not really affect them.

5.2.1 Gender: It is Not Going to Limit Me - I Can Do Whatever I Want

Among students, we found positivist and voluntarist discourses in how they talked about the implications of a gendered management program. The conversation below between three female students illustrates these discourses rather well:

Sara: But going back to what you said about not being bothered about 'he' or 'she', I feel the exact same that when people say 'he', I don't care.

Julia: Mmm.

Sara: It's just a pronoun, not about… I don't think it changes the way I look at my future if I say 'he will be a manager' because I believe that women can do whatever they want if they just want to do it, so I don't think it's a really big problem like you said.

Julia: And I also think that our teachers are aware of gender equality and they probably also support it, but I don't think that they think of using the term 'she' for a manager, at least I wouldn't, I wouldn't think about it. Even if I support gender equality, I wouldn't think of using the term 'she' because I don't know if it changes anything in this sense.

Sara: And then if you would have to say 'he or she', then it just makes it super annoying to listen to and super complicated to even speak.

Victoria: Yeah.

Julia: Yeah.

First, we analyze expressions along with 'saying he doesn't matter because it is just a pronoun' and 'saying he or she would just be super annoying.' We suggest that these expressions rely on a positivist understanding of the social world, as language is implied to not be a carrier of meaning, but only a functional tool to make ourselves understood. Second, we explore voluntarist discourses taking shape by quotes such as 'women can do whatever they want if they just want to do it'.

The Manager - He? Whatever!

Among the students, we found an assumption of language as a functional tool, and not something that constructs reality. Gendered language was thus not considered a problem. One student explained that when she refers to a manager, she rather says 'he' than 'he or she' because "you want to have a flow (…) and you want it to be nice to listen to." Thus, saying 'he or she' was considered to complicate and disrupt the way she talked. Some other students argued that when they refer to managers as men, it does not matter because 'he' is "just a pronoun". This gendered way of speaking seems to affect students, however. Josefine even recounts how when she first started the program, she thought that referring to the manager as a 'he' was a correct way of using the English language:

Yeah but I never really thought about it before. Before I was just like… maybe it is because I am not a native English speaker, so it is more, okay the manager, 'he', whatever!

Moreover, students struggled to make sense of gender beyond body counting, a view of gender that we critique in our review of literature. Drawing on a cause-effect thinking, many students hypothesized that if the amount of female leaders and managers increased, social and cultural changes will naturally occur. Yet students did not critically analyze that although the management program is primarily made up of females, cases and interactions represent organizational life as primarily organized around men and masculinities. Many students figured that this was "weird", but did not theorize beyond this. Perhaps in a hopeful way, some students noted that there will likely be more female professors in the program soon because the majority of the students are female. Therefore, key to several students' ideas on solutions to gender inequality, is the argument that *when* (rather than *if*) more females are illustrated in the cases and seen in professor positions, the masculine culture will be neutralized and management education will become more gender equal. This view is problematic because, as scholars note, without addressing the ways in which gender inequalities infiltrate social life, it may instead increase women's occupational problems (Zimmer, 1988), further cementing men as the norm, thus making everything else 'deviant' (Olsson & Olsson, 2004). This, in turn, would mean that management education would continue to perpetuate values and practices favoring men and masculinity (Ely & Meyersen, 2000).

Women and Men *are* Different, But It Is Our Free Will That Determines Success

Among students, we also found voluntarist discourses and relatively strong convictions that gender is not a limiting barrier, as it is up to each individual to steer their own destiny. Students also expressed ambivalence towards whether gender differences in management education and work were a result of biological differences or created and shaped by social and cultural norms:

Josefine: Maybe it's more their nature, in nature of males to say like 'I can do it, I will do it'.

Alice: What do you mean with nature?

Josefine: Like in their…

Lisa: Genes

Josefine: Yeah the way they act. Yeah that they are like 'yeah I want to do it, I am going to do it'

and females are more like stepping down a bit…

As illustrated in the conversation above, and seen in other discussions in the focus groups, students often emphasized 'natural' differences between women and men as determinants for inequalities in work and education. Sara, a student, said, "It is important to remember that there *are* different genders, so there are natural differences that might affect how people perceive you or how you might behave". An overall assumption from several students was thus that there are natural differences between women and men, and that these differences will affect how women and men act in life. Some students also discussed that there are inherently different leadership styles between women and men, and that this has implications on how women and men are perceived as managers and in leadership positions.

Other students believed that biological differences determine aspirational levels among women and men. One female student concluded, "men more likely want to become managers". Several female students agreed, and remarked that they did not want to become CEOs, but believed that the male students more likely wanted to. Some students thought it was natural that they did not have as high aspirations as their male peers, as the natural differences between women and men made that self-explanatory. For example, Sara asserted: "The biological differences make it challenging to actually achieve gender equality fully". Thus, we found a positivist view upon gender among students, as some of them assumed that 'can do attitudes' and aspirational levels of women and men are different by nature.

Interestingly, these female students did not view these 'natural differences' as problems, roadblocks or limitations, but instead strongly emphasized every individual's free will. Here, gendered inequalities are erased. Alexandra said, "I think men from our program will become managers, and more females do not really want to become managers. They *could*, but they do not *want* to." Another student argued that it is up to everyone's self-confidence to reach one's goals. Thus, if individuals do not reach their goals, it is not because of their gender, but because of their personality. Nearly every woman in our focus group believed that women can become whatever they want, but they likely do not want to become senior managers. When one student asked other female students whether this was strange, considering that they all studied a program in management, they said that they perhaps want to be middle managers or have "some kind of responsibility", just not CEOs. However, they all agreed that probably the majority of male students aspired for CEO positions. Instead of making sense of the gendered tensions evident in these statements, almost every student agreed though that it is up to each individual's free will to decide what to become in the future. Sara notes:

For example for me, I don't think that it is my gender that is gonna limit me, because I do believe that I can do whatever I want, if I just want to do it.

What is interesting here is that students believe that women and men are different, but at the same time, believe that this will not affect them in their work life. We discussed earlier that many students recognize that the program is influenced by a masculine norm, and that this could have implications on their future careers. However, later in the conversation, students seemed to dismiss the masculine symbolism in the program as something that will limit them in their career aspirations. We interpret that this due to the strong neoliberal belief in society that it is the individual's responsibility to construct their destiny (Gill, 2007). Further, we relate this to McRobbie's (2007) argument that women often believe that they compete on equal terms in their work and educational life, but do not acknowledge the gendered structural barriers that face them when doing so. We imagine, however, that the female students do not want to be seen as a marginalized group, as it does not correlate with being a successful leader and management student who is taking responsibility for their own success (Kelan & Jones, 2010).

5.2.2 Loose Coupling Between Theory and Practice

As discussed in Chapter 4, teachers also recognized issues related to gender symbolism in the program, such as gendered industries in the cases and masculine norms in the classroom. However, we suggest that teachers' way of expressing the 'it doesn't really affect me' discourse, draws upon what Weick (1976) has labeled loose coupling. What loose coupling means for us, is a degree of flexibility between one's theoretical abstraction of reality, and the practical actuality in which one acts. All teachers quite easily argued theoretically that a gender perspective in management education is important, but many had a hard time translating their reasonings into practical behaviors:

We have a more critical and open view on the subject of gender, and I think that is sort of interesting in a philosophical sense, but I think for my practical teaching it doesn't really affect me that much. (Fredrik)

Thus, we found a flexibility in how teachers speak theoretically about gender in the program, and how they talk about gender for their practical teaching. Fredrik continued and said, "There is no sort of active, there is no reflection, or sense making in sort of an active sense I think". On the basis that a similar reasoning was found among several teachers, we interpret this 'ontological flexibility' as the teachers believing that they are sufficiently gender conscious, and do not have to use any 'gender glasses' when they teach. Anders notes:

The gender glasses are not the glasses that dominate (...). To say anything else would be the most ridiculous thing to say haha... Right? Haha... You wouldn't believe me anyway... haha... I don't dare to say that...

There was an apparent discrepancy between how important the teachers said gender was philosophically and theoretically within their field, and how peripheral it was for their own practical teaching. We interpret an unease in this, and suggest that gender may be downplayed in the management program as gender issues are often perceived as difficult to articulate (Kelan & Jones, 2010). The loosely coupled notion on gender among the teachers implies a view of gender as quite passé (Kelan & Jones, 2010), and thus not worthy of attention in their practical teaching. During the interviews however, many teachers realized that they did not problematize gender enough in the program, and that a gender perspective had perhaps been downplayed.

Unlike students, several of the teachers distanced themselves from the 'body counting argument'. When we asked about gender equality in management education, teachers said that they did not believe that the increase of female bodies in management education has necessarily made it more gender equal. Thus, making sense of gender as a 'variable' and gender equality as a cause-effect relationship dependent on bodies, was not supported by the teachers. Yet, when asked about gender in our program, all teachers initially talked about the proportion of female and male bodies. As Daniel said:

Maybe I'm not seeing it, I'm not experiencing what is there… But yeah, I mean I've noticed that this year in particular, there is, or maybe my course, but I guess in general, there are far more women than men in the program, no?

Anders, another teacher, discussed that women and men are often being treated differently in work life, in that their ideas and comments are credited different status. When we asked if he saw something like this in our program he answered:

Yes, that's a good question, absolutely spot on… However I must say that I haven't noticed anything at the program… Aren't we like 80 percent girls there?

Consequently, all of the teachers viewed gender in a problematizing and critical way, when talking about it theoretically, philosophically, and in other contexts. However, in a practical sense and in the context of the management program, many teachers interpreted gender primarily in terms of body counting. Thus, theoretically all of the teachers seem to acknowledge the structural problems with gender (Acker, 1990), and saw it as a cultural and social construction (Billing 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987), but when practically discussing gender, there seemed to be a simplified understanding of it. Our understanding of this suggests that there is an unanswered question among teachers as to how they could translate their theoretical knowledge about gender inequalities into practical behaviors that address this issue.

5.3 Reflections

In this chapter, we have analyzed the assumptions behind the absence of students and teachers' observations and experiences of gender at the management program. Initially and before we asked about it, most students and teachers expressed that they had not noticed anything relating to gender in the program. We have argued that this 'absenteeism' is likely a result of the assumption that gender equality has already been reached (Kelan & Jones, 2010; McRobbie, 2007; Modleski, 1991), and that masculine norms and ideals are so deeply rooted in practices and content in management education that they appear gender-neutral (Acker; 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012). We have also analyzed the 'gender doesn't really affect me' discourse found with both students and teachers, and shown how this discourse took different paths among students and teachers. As seen in Chapter 4, students did recognize the dominance of male case characters, and masculine norms in classroom interactions as problematic in one way or another, but many dismissed the idea that it would affect them in their own lives. Drawing upon discourses informed by individualism, self-reliance, and free will (Gill, 2007; Lewis, 2014), several students claimed that gender will not be an issue for them in their future careers. Rather, their success in management and business was perceived to be contingent upon hard work, strong determination, and self-confidence (Sullivan & Delaney, 2015). An interesting theme we found among the teachers was that what matters in theory, does not always apply in practice. We have proposed that such an ontological flexibility can be understood through the label loose coupling (Weick, 1976). What this means in this context, is a flexibility between teachers' understanding of gender in theory (an important organizational principle), and their handling of gender in practice (either not so important or not enacted).

6. Gender Equality in Management Education: A Utopia?

As articulated in the introductory chapter, our feminist agenda with this research project seeks to create more gender equal management education. In this last chapter of data analysis, we address our third research question *How do students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality?* Indeed, this question has a normative core; it relies on an assumption that management education is *not* gender equal, and that its gendered culture must change in order to provide students with equal opportunities to pursue successful and psychologically stress-free education and careers. Opinions as to whether management education has a role to play as an agent for gender equality differ among the participants: some students and teachers suggest that gender equality is far too abstract and complex a problem for single programs of management education to handle, whereas others argue that there is much that can be done within the context of management education - some even suggesting that it is their responsibility. Grounded in this discrepancy, a question surfaced: Is gender equality in management education a utopia? In this chapter we analyze both sides of the story.

6.1 Gender Equality: An Uneasy Problem for Someone Else to Solve

Common for several students and teachers was an assumption that gender does not belong in the management program, as it is not part of topics such as leadership and management. For example, Linnea reflected: "But I guess that [gender] wasn't on the topic, because we had that strategic change thing, the leadership stuff." Several students and teachers held this view, that gender is a topic that needs to be addressed separately, away from the ordinary discussions in the program. Several participants viewed conversations on gender as an 'interrupter of the flow' and as something that disrupted the 'real topic'. As Fredrik, a teacher, notes:

> *You need to think about it if it becomes a problem, an obvious problem, and otherwise I think we should proceed and try to make everyone learn the way they are supposed to, in a way they, the way we actually draft our learning objectives.*

Some students discussed gender in a similar way, by rationalizing that they do not take a program studying gender, but leadership and management. In Shakesperian terms, management and leadership thus seem to make 'strange bedfellows', pushing gender out of the bed. Suggestions by students and teachers on when gender *should* be discussed, included a two hour seminar on the program, and an elective course on gender. One teacher suggested that if one is interested in discussing gender, they can take a program in gender studies. On the program, several participants saw gender as a topic to be raised only if there was 'an obvious problem', or if a critical gendered incident occurred. Consequently, several students and teachers believed that discussions on gender did not belong in the program, except in special circumstances. Interestingly, the ways in which gender permeates topics such as leadership and management was not addressed (Sinclair, 1995). Thus, such topics were not interpreted as gendered (Acker, 1990), and there was a lack of recognition of the ways in which gender symbolism is rooted in non-explicit meanings and concepts (Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Billing & Lundholm, 2012).

A salient theme found among students and teachers, was that gender equality is an issue to be solved by someone else in another societal context. For example, students suggested that kindergarten teachers, parents, and marketing organizations were social institutions that could be held accountable for addressing gender inequalities. When teachers discussed whose responsibility it is to raise awareness of gender issues within management education, one teacher pointed to the students and said it is up to the individual student to be aware and critical. Considering gender representations and illustrations in case studies, another teacher said it is up to the case writer to be sensitive to gender. Regarding the cases, some students argued that if they were to be more gender equal, then "something in society" needed to change first. Victoria, a student said:

The cases, they should still present the business reality that we are having out there, so it is more logical that there are more men than women.

Victoria's quote signals an idea that management education just mirrors 'reality', and that incorporating more women in case studies would be to fake reality, or as Lukas puts it: "to paint reality in pink and gold". Our reading of these quotes suggests that several students preferred status quo over such a distortion of reality.

Similar reasoning was found among a number of teachers. For example, Paul said that cases are "an accurate description of reality" and Fredrik said, "it is empirical fact that probably 80 percent of managers are male". Some teachers and students therefore considered asymmetrical representation of gender in the case studies as logically motivated, as they are just a mirror of reality. This leads us to the interpretation that several participants view the management program as a passive receiver of an external reality rather than a co-constructor of it. Such a view justifies the idea that gender inequalities are issues for someone else to solve. We want to be clear that we do not find it problematic to believe that other instances in society have responsibility to act on issues on gender inequality. However, we suggest that it becomes problematic to do so when not acknowledging any own responsibility. If the examples of management and leadership taken in the case studies and during seminars are just accurate descriptions of reality, then who is responsible for changing this reality? Who and what constitutes reality, and why is management education not part of it?

One reason why several students and teachers do not consider management education as an appropriate change agent of gender inequalities, may be because gender appears to be too complex a problem to discuss. For example, Victoria suggested that discussing gender equality in management education in terms of case studies was rather pointless:

But I also think like, this is the point where it starts, or when you overdo discussions like that, where it also gets ridiculous, because it feels like, I mean it is an important thought and an interesting thing to observe, but it feels like if you're discussing with the focus on tiny little things like that, of a problem that is so big, somehow it feels like the focus is shifted to something that is not so important.

Using expressions such as 'overdo' and 'tiny little things like that' quite clearly imply that a discussion on women and men in case studies is useless and something we should not engage in, other than treating it as 'an important thought'. We interpret an element of unease in all of this; gender is a problem too abstract and complex for management education to deal with, and discussing it becomes rather ridiculous. An uneasiness to talk about gender was also found among the teachers. For example, Paul said that it feels a bit "patronizing to educate people on gender". Moreover, when we asked what could be done differently to promote gender equality in the program, a few teachers in one way or another expressed that they preferred not to give such recommendations. For example,

when one teacher was asked to elaborate on his thoughts on gender issues in the program, he simply said 'no'. Another teacher explained that he had always found it embarrassing that their research group lacked women and that many of the women had left the group, but at the same time he did not want discuss underlying reasons for that.

6.2 Gender Equality: There Is a Lot We Can Do

In contrast to the view of gender equality as an uneasy problem for someone else to solve, a number of students and teachers suggested that there is much that can be done within the context of management education to promote gender equality. For example and in contrast to the view of gender as an isolated topic, some students and teachers suggested that gender should be an integrated perspective in management education. One teacher, Daniel, even suggested that one cannot separate norms and assumptions from the 'actual topic' of leadership or management, as all notions are constructed by meaning, for example related to gender:

I think as soon as you start talking about, ehm, if you have a case on leadership and you talk about the assumptions that are present in that case, ehm, then you're already talking about assumptions that are about leadership. Right? So you immediately go to cultural constructions of leadership.

Daniel suggested that gender should be an integrated perspective in the management program, because concepts such as leadership and the assumptions it relies on are "immediately the same thing". Another teacher, Marie, agreed and said that teachers' role is to "educate and cultivate" students, and that it is their responsibility to "puncture old notions and create new ones". Moreover, Cecilia usually comments in students' papers when they use gendered language and write 'he' for a manager. Thus, some teachers seem to embrace the idea of management education as being an 'interrupter' of gendered assumptions, and as a significant institution in shaping students' future work life (Sinclair, 1995; Smith, 2000). The idea that gendered norms and practices need to be asserted in order to create a more gender equal management education (Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2011), was apparently accepted among these teachers. Their view is summarized by Daniel, who says, "teaching is as much about unlearning as it is about learning".

Along with the teachers above, several students agreed that the management program has a significant role in how they construct gender roles (Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1995; Smith, 2000; Wahl, 2015). Students argued that if teachers did not interrupt them when using gendered language or when taking for granted certain assumptions about gender roles, they would instead probably continue to reproduce gender stereotypes. Alice reflects:

I think, because something I have been thinking about that is not in the cases but in some of our lectures when we talk about different leadership styles or yeah some sort of leadership talks, when students have been raising their hands and talking about leaders as a he, then I think you should step in there as a lecturer and "who is this he you are talking about? because I do not know who you mean", problematize it directly and then everybody would be like "oh that is a good point, I didn't think about that when you were…" Because I mean it is easy to not think about it.

Almost all students participating in the focus groups recounted an incident that occurred at a seminar last fall, where Marie interrupted the class discussion and questioned that students constantly referred to the manager as a 'he'. The students said that this incident had helped them become aware of their gendered language, as well as some of their assumptions of gender and management. Sofie talked about this incident:

After that I was aware of these things [saying he for a manager]. I would be really careful to use that word [he] when I try to communicate with others or try to write something about that. I mean that was Marie that impacted my ways of saying things.

Thus, it is clear to us that teachers can have a significant role in shaping students perception of gender and that they do not perceive it as patronizing, at least not when they have had a chance to reflect upon it. A student said, "without understanding it, it is also hard to improve it" referring to her unawareness about perpetuation of gender roles. A couple of students noted that the management program is the last instance before working life which further increased the need for the program to act as an agent of social change. Several students also said that if their education did not interrupt their assumptions about gender, they would probably carry them forward into working life.

6.3 Reflections

In this chapter, we have analyzed how students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality. We have told two stories, of which the first implies that gender equality is too abstract and complex a problem for the institution of management education to deal with. Included in this story are conceptualizations that gender is a topic isolated from other subjects such as management and leadership, and thus nothing that management education needs to pay much attention to. Here, we also found abstractions of management education as a passive receiver of an external reality suggesting that inequalities in management education are logical due to how it is in the world 'out there'. This view justifies management programs not taking responsibility for gender equality in management education, as 'something in society' must change first. We have suggested that these conceptualizations, along with the 'unease' infiltrating conversations on gender (Kelan & Jones, 2010), add to the idea of gender equality in management education as a utopia. Nevertheless, we have also told a story suggesting that there is much that *can* be done *within* the context of management education. Such conceptualizations suggest that questions and critique on gendered assumptions can be problematized integrally with conversations on, for example, leadership and management. Some teachers embrace a role of acting as an agent of change, which is an approach that several students call for.

In the final chapter of this thesis, we discuss our interpretations of the empirical material presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 by critically interrogating gender in management education through a critical lens of postfeminism. By rotating the kaleidoscope, we are able to view how management education might look if we instead adopt a feminist lens. In the next chapter, we thus critique the postfeminist discourses found among students and teachers, and argue that a different perspective is needed in order to equally enable women and men in management education.

7. Discussion and Conclusions: Rotating the Kaleidoscope

Kaleidoscope ~ an optical instrument for producing a complex pattern of changing shapes and colors as the instrument is rotated [5]

Based on our analysis of empirical material, we argue that postfeminist discourses offer a useful lens for exploring the ways in which our participants talk about gender in management education, as well as how they conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality. We suggest that the metaphor of a kaleidoscope, which is a tube containing mirrors and pieces of loosely connected colored glass or paper, whose reflections, when rotated, produce changing patterns, can provide us with greater knowledge and insight in understanding the complex ways in which students and teachers make sense of gender. Like this iconic toy, the aim of this final chapter is to shift focus in order to challenge a growing trend toward postfeminism in management education. First, we revisit the various rationales behind this research project. We then outline our core findings, to next discuss them by suggesting that the current view through the kaleidoscope illuminates management education as a gendered institution that utilizes postfeminist understandings. We suggest that instead of 'landing' on a vision of postfeminism, we can rotate the kaleidoscope to a feminist lens, which necessarily shifts and distorts a postfeminist view and reminds us that patterns of gendered relationships and understandings are socially constructed and can always be otherwise. Therefore, we move on with recommending a number of practical implications that could make management education question gendered norms and practices and provide more gender equal management education. We wrap up this thesis by suggesting theoretical implications, reflecting upon limitations, and proposing further research.

The roots of this feminist research project are varied. Our initial interest was grounded in personal experiences at the management program. We had experienced gendered classroom interactions and been struck by the virtual absence of positive female role models in the case studies. Further, despite the reputation of the university as 'world class', despite the school's core value of gender equality, and despite the program's critical orientation, we noted an almost total lack of discussion

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[5] Inspired by definitions on http://www.thefreedictionary.com/kaleidoscope

of the influence of gender on central concepts such as leadership, management, and consultancy work. The context, which by all accounts appears to claim and seek gender equality, did not easily line up with our experiences of the management program as gendered.

These roots of interest took hold as we dug into existing research on gender in management education. We discovered that management education and business schools are often considered to be particularly gendered contexts, permeated by a masculine symbolism (Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000). Our own experiences, along with support from gender and organization scholarship that urged more studies on gender in management education, motivated us to explore how students and teachers make sense of gender in management education. Therefore, we developed the following set of questions to guide us in conducting our research, structuring our findings, and to be sources of inspiration for our analysis and discussion:

• How do business case studies represent and illustrate gender?
• How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions?
• How do students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality?

7.1 Main Findings

Our core findings suggest that the management program is gendered, in that it allows a reproduction of gender norms by including case studies that almost exclusively represent male protagonists and that illustrates women and men in largely stereotypical ways. Although students and teachers recognized the gendered elements and experienced that case studies and classroom interactions perpetuated the man-as-norm and woman-as-deviant relationship, we found that they had initially not paid attention to anything related to gender. Instead, we found that many students disregarded gendered content and interactions as a problem, and that discourses on individualism, self-reliance, and free will characterized their sense makings of gender. Among several teachers, we found an ontological flexibility suggesting that gender is an important theoretical abstraction, but that such 'important thought' is not easily translated into considerations for their practical teaching. We have labeled this flexibility 'loose coupling'. We also found that there is disagreement among participants as to

whether management education has a role to play in working towards gender equality. To further explore and discuss our main findings, we make use of our kaleidoscope metaphor and first discuss our findings through the current postfeminist lens. We then rotate the kaleidoscope and explore a vision of what management education could be if it favored social constructivist and critical feminist sensibilities.

7.1.1 The Postfeminist Lens: Bright Colors, But Only on the Surface

As a brief reminder, postfeminism, like most feminist ideologies, is more of a loose conglomeration of beliefs and behaviors than coordinated or stable elements. That said, there are several key elements or thoughts that make-up postfeminism: individualism, empowerment, choice, opportunity seizing, and self-reliance alongside traditional gender norms and beliefs in sexual differences (Gill, 2007; Lewis, 2014; Sullivan & Delaney, 2015). These discourses take gender equality for granted and deny gender as an ongoing challenge (Butler, 2013; McRobbie, 2007, 2009; Kelan, 2009; Kelan & Jones, 2010). Our findings support arguments that postfeminism is, in some respects, 'taking over' more politically active forms of feminism, which, in light of postfeminism, have become passé.

Our findings viewed from a postfeminist lens suggest that *first*, gender is not noticed or perceived as an issue in the program, likely because participants assume that the program already is quite gender equal, making questions on gender redundant. The absence of observations and experiences of gender suggest that masculine norms and ideals are so deeply rooted in management education (Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000) that they appear gender-neutral (Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012), keeping gender inequalities intact. *Second*, it helped us identify a widespread belief among students that their success is solely within their own power through free will, hard work and self-reliance (Gill, 2007; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Lewis, 2014; Sullivan & Delaney, 2015) and that gender is disregarded as a limiting barrier, likely since being a 'victim' does not exactly correspond with images of successful management students or business leaders (Kelan & Jones, 2010). *Third*, it illuminates an emphasis on biological differences between women and men as determinants for gender inequalities (Lewis, 2014); a can-do mentality and go-getter attitude is perceived to be inherent in men's DNA making gender equality in education and work unimaginable. *Fourth*, it reveals neoliberal influences in the university environment (Gill, 2007); conversations on gender are not popular, consumer-friendly, or 'identity-boosting', and

therefore gender and gender equality remain important and interesting theoretical abstractions rather than practical considerations permeating management education. This has materialized in the ontological flexibility we name loose coupling. *Fifth*, it points at a discourse of a 'neoliberal economic calculation' framed by positivist assumptions that a balance sheet of equal numbers of female and male bodies are the solution to gender inequalities. In summary, the postfeminist lens in the kaleidoscope tells us that gender equality in the management program *is* important, but that it is not something that receives much attention, as it does not appear to affect individual actors.

Based on these findings, we argue that the complex pattern of shapes and colors seen through the postfeminist lens obstruct participants from identifying the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in management education. But then, so what? We argue that the postfeminist discourses identified among participants enable a perpetuation of gendered content and interactions, allowing management education to reproduce gender inequalities. Moreover, we argue that the assumed gender-neutrality in management education makes people who deviate from the masculine norm engage in a 'postfeminist masquerade' (McRobbie, 2009), where they believe and act as if they compete on equal terms whereas silent exclusion and marginalization take place beneath the surface (Gill, 2007; Kelan & Jones, 2010; McRobbie, 2007, 2009). This assumed gender-neutrality, the postfeminist assumption that there is no longer any individual and practical need to worry about gender inequalities, is highly problematic as it allows gender stereotypes and hierarchies to be perpetuated.

The arguments among students that masculine gendered symbolism does not matter for them is problematic since it is likely that women, and any people deviating from the masculine norm, will face structural barriers when pursuing their careers (Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000). We argue that there is a risk in celebrations of individualism and free will, as these beliefs in combination with subtle, often invisible obstacles facing people who do not fit the norm, may lead to a situation where 'culturally deviant' people attribute career challenges to their own personality rather than to structural or cultural barriers. Such possible 'fundamental attribution errors' can be detrimental for students' future psychological well-being, as obstacles are then perceived as the fault of the individual, rather than inequalities created by a cultural norm system.

Finally, what we see as our most interesting finding and a contribution to scholarship critical of postfeminism, is the ontological flexibility we found among teachers. Our feminist lens can here provide greater insight to teachers' 'loosely coupled' perceptions of gender in management education, and illuminate a possible assumption that supporting gender equality in theory, legitimizes not acting on it in practice. Loose coupling allows for a reproduction of hegemonic masculinity, as there are no practical efforts made to disrupt gendered norms and practices, regardless of their subtlety. An absence of interference and critique of ongoing 'doings of gender' (Acker, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987), moreover allows postfeminist ideals of individualism, self-reliance, and excessive belief in free will, to flourish, which we have argued could lead to attribution errors in students' future careers. That the loosely coupled notions of gender allow a perpetuation of gender stereotypes and hierarchies is further problematic since higher education is the "end of an educational journey of attitudes and behaviors regarding gender" (Lindsey, 2011, p. 315). A failure to interrupt a reproduction of masculine hegemony is thus troublesome as students then bring with them a gendered set of norms and ideals to the world of work, which they will most likely continue to reproduce.

That students and teachers recognize case studies and classroom interactions as gendered on the one hand, and dismiss its impact on their personal and practical lives on the other hand, leads us to conclude that a culture largely permeated by postfeminism is flourishing within the management program. Such culture communicates that single individual dreams are more than possible to accomplish, but that a state where the collective can enjoy equal possibilities and opportunities remains a utopia. Next, we suggest some practical implications that can perhaps decrease the ontological flexibility between theory and practice.

7.1.2 The Feminist Lens: Changing the Pattern

The postfeminist lens in our kaleidoscope has enabled us to identify and understand a number of discourses that obstruct management education from providing a gender equal learning environment. By rotating the kaleidoscope and viewing gender in management education from a feminist perspective, we are able to recognize, dismantle and disrupt gendered and postfeminist discourses in management education. As our feminist agenda prompts us to seek equal opportunities and inclusion for women and men, we are encouraged to provide suggestions about what could be done differently in order to promote gender equal management education. First and foremost, as we believe that awareness is the first step to approaching any social problem, we suggest that the existence of

this research project has provided a good start. Nevertheless, we now move on with providing a number of context-specific practical implications. These are appropriately seen as recommendations rather than 'blueprints of success' (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008).

Implication I: Do Not Accept Status Quo - Articulate Gender Issues

Management education must take seriously the idea that its curricula and classroom discourses socialize women and men in their perceptions and expectations on their future working life (Alvesson & Billing, 1999; Ehrensal, 2001; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Simpson, 1996; Smith, 2000), since the prevalent masculine symbolism in management education limits women and men from having the same possibilities to pursue successful and stress-free careers (Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000). Therefore, we argue that management education should disrupt status quo and start talking about gender issues. The male norm, which is so normalized in management education that it often appears gender-neutral (Sullivan & Kedrowicz, 2012; Wahl, 2015), needs to be brought to the surface and articulated. Thus, we strongly suggest that management education starts acting on gender issues rather than solely approaching them as 'interesting thoughts'. This can be done if management education sees itself as a co-constructor of a gendered reality rather than as a passive receiver of it.

Implication II: Approach Gender As an Integrated Topic

In order to produce and provide management education that fosters inclusion and equal opportunities for all, we suggest that an integration of gender as a part of the daily conversations is a prerequisite, which is what the School of Economics and Management claims to do (LUSEM, 2015a) and also what a number of students and teachers suggested. Taking social constructivism seriously means to understand that a wide range of norms and attitudes constructs concepts such as leadership and management (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Prasad, 2005). Thus, treating gender as an isolated topic fails to acknowledge the social construction of gender as a crucial organizational principle (Acker, 1990; Billing & Lundholm, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and instead makes gender vulnerable to fashions and fads in society. We suggest that management education must approach gender as an integrated topic, in order to take it seriously and go beyond conversations on gender as a special and isolated subject (Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1995).

Implication III: Take Responsibility: Disrupt and Dismantle!

In order to approach gender as an integrated topic we cannot stress enough that management education *can* and *should* play a crucial role in disrupting and dismantling ongoing reproductions of gender stereotypes and hierarchies. A very pragmatic suggestion is for management education to introduce students to methods in how to approach books, articles and case studies, as well as conversations in the classroom, from critical perspectives early during the program. Starting the program with a course module that teaches students how to adopt a critical mindset would help them to be attentive to underlying assumptions and power relations; not only regarding gender, but also for example race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. Moreover, an early insight in how to operate within a critical paradigm (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Merriam, 2002; Prasad, 2005), can help students to question the sustainability of the socio-political and socio-economic systems currently dominating the Western world. By doing so, students would develop their 'intellectual repertoire' and learn the languages that enable them to act as agents of social change.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

Our findings support studying postfeminism in organizational settings (Gill, 2007; Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009; Sullivan & Delaney, 2015), as management education can be understood as a socializing agent for organizational life. In our study, we have shown that postfeminist discourses provide a useful lens through which researchers can explore gender in contemporary management education. Our study gives in-depth insights on how students and teachers make sense of gender at a Swedish management program. We have highlighted the importance of bringing awareness to gendered curricula and interactions, to treat gender as an integrated topic and to take responsibility and disrupt and dismantle gendered discourses. Our findings support the social constructivist view upon gender in management education (Acker, 1992; Ely & Meyersen, 2000; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Simpson, 2006; Sinclair, 1995; Sinclair, 1997; Smith, 2000; Thomas, 1990) and challenge a more functionalist view where increasing female bodies is seen as a solution to gendered institutions (Flynn et al, 2015; Kilgour, 2015).

In contrast to other social constructivist scholars exploring gender in management education, we have contributed with a 'triangular insight' where we have fully participated in the research context, and sought insights from both students and teachers. Our triangular insight resulted in a discovery

of an ontological flexibility between what theoretically is argued for and what practically is enacted. To scholarship exploring management education through a critical postfeminist perspective, we contribute a scenario where participants problematize gendered issues in theory, but disregard them in practice. We suggest this scenario of loose coupling can be added to the key elements or thoughts that make-up postfeminism in organization and education (Gill, 2007; Gill & Scharff, 2011; Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2004, 2007, 2009; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Sullivan & Delaney, 2015).

7.3 Limitations

As with all research, our study includes a number of limitations. Having aimed for a large portion of self-reflexivity (Alvesson & Skӧldberg, 2009), we have found a range of things that have impacted our study, which could have been done differently. We elaborate on those in Chapter 2. However, worth mentioning here is our binary way of dealing with gender as only consisting of women and men. Today, researchers are more prone to approach gender as a spectrum and through intersectionality analyses taking race, ethnicity, and sexuality into account (Acker, 2006; Butler, 2013; Crenshaw, 1987; Davis, 2008; Holvino, 2010, 2012). As our participants were of various nationalities, such an approach could have been useful. However, as we had observed that the management program did not deal much with the basic social construction of women and men, having an intersectionality approach seemed to be more appropriate for a later stage of investigation.

7.4 Further Research

Based on our findings, we suggest that a critical lens of postfeminism gives significant opportunities for researchers to explore how gender is constructed and acted out within contexts that remain gendered. Postfeminism has heretofore been analyzed in regard to marketing and advertising, but is recently of interest also for scholars within the field of organization and management. We suggest that there is relevance also for scholarly fields such as economics, law, and political science to take into account a dimension of postfeminism. Further, we strongly suggest that scholars within social sciences adopt what we have called a 'triangular insight'. Exploring the close context in which one is operating can enable findings and explorations of interesting social phenomena that perhaps would have otherwise not been illuminated.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Guide Students

Part 1. Introduction

What are we studying?
- How do business case studies represent and illustrate gender?
- How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions?
- How do students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality?

Confidentiality concerns
- If we or our supervisor believe that a quote could be traced to a specific person, we will contact that person and ask for consent to use the quote in our thesis. We won't share your names or talk about your responses to other classmates or teachers.
- Relational ethics will be of particular relevance for our study, as it is crucial that we are mindful of our own characters, actions and consequences on others.

Our role
- We are here to introduce you to the topic of gender in our course curriculum and classroom interactions, and to let you talk about it with each other.
- Our role is not to ask you a lot of straightforward questions, but to let you talk and just make sure that you stick to the topic.
- We would like to audio record the conversation, is that OK?

Your role
- You are here to interact and discuss with each other, rather than with us.
- It is your observations and experiences about this we are interested in.
- Do you have any concerns or questions you would like to bring up before we start?

Part 2. Focus Group Conversations

- What does gender equality mean to you?
    - See examples of general follow up questions below

- What role do you think universities have in the construction of gender?
    - See examples of general follow up questions below

- Now, we would like to bring this discussion to the local context of our program. We will start with talking about gender in the cases.

Gender in the cases
- How do you make sense of gender in the cases?
  - Clarification if necessary: how do you think women and men are illustrated in regards to leadership/management/consultancy work in the cases?

- How do you think those illustrations influence the way you construct gender?

- Do you think something could be done differently with the cases, in order to promote gender equality? What?

Gender in classroom interactions
- How do you make sense of gender in the classroom interactions?

- How does gender influence the way we talk about for example leadership/management/consultancy work during lectures and seminars?

- Do you think something could be done differently during lectures and seminars, in order to promote gender equity? What?

General follow up questions
Mainly based on Kvale's "types of interview questions" 1996, pp. 133-135

Talk level
- Could you give an example of …?
- Could you develop …?
- What are the pros and cons with …?
- Can you tell more about …?
- Do you remember an occasion when …?
- What happened in the … you mentioned?
- Could you describe that situation in more detail?
- Do you have further examples of this?
- You then mean that …?
- Does the expression "…" cover what you have just expressed?

Emotional level
- Is it correct that you feel that …?
- Am I correct when I say that you are … (passionate) about this? Why is that?
- The climate is quite … in here. Why do you think that is?

- How did you feel in the … you mentioned?
- Are there other situations where you have had that feeling?
- Could you describe that feeling more in detail?

Part 3. Reflections

- Before we leave the room, does anyone have any questions or concerns?
- Any reflections you would like to share with us?
- Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B: Interview Guide Teachers

Part 1. Introduction

What are we studying?
- How do business case studies represent and illustrate gender?
- How do students and teachers talk about gender in course curriculum and classroom interactions?
- How do students and teachers conceptualize the role of management education in promoting gender equality?

Confidentiality concerns
- If we or our supervisor believe that a quote could be traced to a specific person, we will contact that person and ask for consent to use the quote in our thesis. We won't share your names or talk about your responses to other classmates or teachers.
- Relational ethics will be of particular relevance for our study, as it is crucial that we are mindful of our own characters, actions and consequences on others.

About the interview
- We are here to listen to your experiences and observations of gender in cases and classroom interactions.
- We have a few questions, but other than that we appreciate if you just speak freely.
- We would like to audio record the conversation, is that OK?
- Do you have any concerns or questions you would like to bring up before we start?

Part 2. Interview

- Would you like to tell us a little bit about your background as a teacher?
  - Where from?
  - Research areas?
  - How long have you been teaching?
  - Any specific relation to gender studies?

- What does gender equality mean to you?

- We would like to know a little about your experiences and observations of gender in our program. Speak freely of whatever comes up for you.

- Can you recall any related gender incidents or patterns in our program?

- We have worked with a number of cases during our program.
  - What role do you think the cases are supposed to play in our education?
  - How have you experienced gender in the cases?
  - What role do you think cases play in the construction of gender?

- We have had many seminars and lectures where we talk about leadership/management/consultancy work in different ways.
  - How have you experienced gender in the interactions between people in those seminars?
  - Have you reflected on any gender related issues in those interactions?

- What role do you think our program plays in the construction of gender?

- Do you think something could be done differently during lectures and seminars, in order to promote gender equality? What?

General follow up questions
Mainly based on Kvale's "types of interview questions" 1996, pp. 133-135

Talk level
- Could you give an example of …?
- Could you develop …?
- What are the pros and cons with …?
- Can you tell more about …?
- Do you remember an occasion when …?
- What happened in the … you mentioned?
- Could you describe that situation in more detail?
- Do you have further examples of this?
- You then mean that …?
- Does the expression "…" cover what you have just expressed?

Emotional level
- Is it correct that you feel that …?
- Am I correct when I say that you are … (passionate) about this? Why is that?
- The climate is quite … in here. Why do you think that is?
- How did you feel in the … you mentioned?
- Are there other situations where you have had that feeling?
- Could you describe that feeling more in detail?

Part 3. Reflections

- Before we leave, do you have any questions or concerns?
- Any reflections you would like to share with us?
- Thank you for your participation!

Appendix C: Representation of Gender in Case Studies

Date	Case	Organization	Industry	Gender of Industry (F/M)	Name of Main Character	Sex of Main Character (F/M)	Role of Main Character	Sampled for Analysis of Gender Illustrations (Y/N)
2014.09.25	The Tug-of-War	Voici Brands	Retail	F	Jack Emmons	M	CEO	Y
2014.10.01	Nokia	Nokia	Telecom/High Tech	M	Stephen Elop	M	Chief Executive	N
2014.10.03	System Wide Change in Cancer Care	Sahlgrenska Hospital	Health Care	F	Nathan	M	Head of Oncology Centre	N
2014.10.11	"Do you really think we are so stupid?" A letter to the CEO of Deutsche Telekom (A)	Deutsche Telekom	Telecom/High Tech	M	René Obermann + "The Technician"	M + M	CEO + Technician	Y
2014.10.11	"Do you really think we are so stupid?" A letter to the CEO of Deutsche Telekom (B)	Deutsche Telekom	Telecom/High Tech	M	René Obermann + "The Technician"	M + M	CEO + Technician	N
2014.10.16	Redesigning Nissan (A): Carlos Ghosn takes charge	Nissan	Automotive	M	Carlos Ghosn	M	CEO	N
2014.10.18	Challenger Disaster	NASA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014.11.05	Deloitte	Deloitte	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014.11.11	W. L. Gore & Associates, Inc	W. L. Gore & Associates, Inc	Varying (technology-driven)	M	Bill Gore	M	Founder, President and Chairman	Y
2014.11.11	Johan & Nyström	Johan & Nyström	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014.11.28	The police – a case of diversity management	Swedish Police	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014.12.03	Wretched Industries	Wretched Industries	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015.01.30	Shinsei Bank: Developing an Integrated Firm	Shinsei Bank	Banking	M	Thierry Porté + Tom Pedersen	M + M	Chief Executive Officer + Chief Learning Officer	N
2015.01.30	BRL Hardy: Globalizing an Australian Wine Company	BRL Hardy	Alcoholic Beverage	M	Cristopher Carson + Steve Millar	M + M	Managing Director of BRL Hardy Europe + Managing Director of BRL and later CEO of the merged company	N
2015.02.06	Organizational Culture at DreamWorks Animation	DreamWorks	Animation	F/M	Jeffrey Katzenberg	M	CEO	Y
2015.02.06	The Moral Compass: Values-Based Leadership	Infosys	Information Technology	M	Narayana Murthy	M	Chairman and Chief Mentor	N
2015.02.12	Whole Foods Market Inc. Inculcating Team-Oriented Culture to Foster Leadership	Whole Foods Market	Food	F/M	John Mackey	M	Founder	N
2015.02.12	Building Cost Competitiveness at the new Philips: The Need for Collaborative Leadership	Philips	Consumer Electronics	M	Barbara Kux	F	Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)	Y
2015.02.26	Celeritas Inc: Leadership Challenges in a Fast-Growth Industry	Celeritas	High-Tech	M	Philip Boyer	M	CEO	N
2015.02.26	Crisis in a Crisis. The Leadership Challenge	EMRI	Ambulance Services	M	Venkat Changavalli + Ramalinga Raju	M + M	CEO + Founder & Chairman	N
2015.03.06	Adnams - a living company	Adnams	Alcoholic Beverage	M	Andy Wood	M	CEO	Y
2015.03.06	Strategic Leadership and Innovation at Apple Inc	Apple	High-Tech	M	Steve Jobs	M	CEO	N
	22 cases	-	-	15 masculine industries, 5 "neutral" and 2 feminine industries	-	16 male main characters, 1 female main character, 5 not applicable (N/A)	-	