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“Like some people just don’t know, and they don’t know that they don’t know”

A qualitative study on Line Managers
situation in a new organisation

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Abstract

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- Title: “Like some people just don’t know, and they don’t know that they don’t know” A qualitative study on Line Managers situation in a new organisation.
- Author: Arna Jonsdottir Myrdal
- Supervisor: Katarina Sjögren
- Summary: Being a Line Manager is a hard and complex job. The role consists of providing support towards employees and communicating and presenting visions and goals between upper management and employees within the group. This requires structure and meaning towards the Line Managers. The purpose of the study is to examine how clear and unclear role definitions and expectations and leadership in a cultural context contribute to creating structure and meaning towards Line Managers in a young organisation.
- The study has a social constructionist approach. The empirical material is sampled through qualitative interviews with Line Managers at an organisation. The empirical material is analysed in relation to the theoretical framework, which is Role theory and culturally constructed Leadership theory.
- The study shows that structure and meaning is created by support from upper management and an interdependent relationship between Line Managers and their team, which is created through goals and team work.
- Key words: Line Manager, Role, Leadership, Structure, Meaning

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1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a background of the chosen topic for the essay. After this the purpose of the study and the research question are presented followed by a definition of the concept of a Line Manager. Then there is a delimitation of the study and lastly the outline of the study is given.

1.1 Background

Being a Line Manager is a hard and complex job. The role consists of providing support towards employees and communicating and presenting visions and goals between upper management and employees within the group. This requires structure and meaning towards the Line Managers. This thesis looks at how clear and unclear role definitions and expectations and leadership in a cultural context contribute to creating structure and meaning towards Line Managers in a young organisation. Previously research have focused on managers situations within changing organisation, this study brings a new focus as it is on a young organisation and the structures are still being defined.

When a new organisation is developing there is need for goals and a vision of how the structure should be composed. The organisational structure defines how the work is divided between the roles within the organisation. Roles are a way to position the individuals and are a framework for them to relate to. However, it is not the structure that determines how the organisation actually works; the structure is socially created.

The fall of 2014 and spring 2015 I had an internship at the Human Resources (HR) department at an organisation that started up recently and is still developing. One of

my main focuses during the internship was to create a Manager Handbook to support the Line Managers at the organisation in their work and to bring more stability and structure in their work. This was a request from parts of the organisation to the HR department, since some of the Line Managers felt like they lacked support within their roles. While making the Manager Handbook an interest in the Line Managers situation awoke therefore I decided to write my thesis on the subject. In the following study the company where the study took place is addressed as “the organisation”.

1.2 Purpose and Research question

The purpose of the study is to examine how clear and unclear role definitions and expectations and leadership in a cultural context contribute to creating structure and meaning towards Line Managers situation within a young organisation. The following research question for the study is:

- How are structure and meaning created and managed in an organisation in an early stage of development from Line Managers perspective?

1.3 Definition of Line Manager

There is no uniting title of managers in leadership research. The management title usually depends on their position in the hierarchy, which affects the nature of their work. A rough division at managerial levels is high executives, middle managers and first-line managers. There is a lack of clarity in the distinction between first-line and middle managers and who is considered as a middle manager varies from organisation to organisation (Ellström & Kock, 2009). The organisation where the research takes place, the middle management is called Line Management, thus in this paper there is a parallel drawn between these terms. The broad definition of the Line Managers role is that it is a position between the top management and the operational staff. The role consists in providing support, transferring communication and presenting visions between upper management and employees (Herzing and Jimmieson, 2006).

1.4 Delimitation

There are endless subjects that can be analysed within an organisation and when studying management. This study focuses on the Line Managers situation within an organisation that is in its early stage of development. Therefore the empirical material emphasises the Line Managers perspective. A total of nine interviews have been done with Line Managers.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

After this introductory chapter there follows a section on previous research on studies that are presented within the field, which are relevant to this study. Then the methodological framework of the study is presented. The methodological chapter contains a methodology philosophy, course of action and a methodological discussion. The fourth chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study, which begins with an interpretative theoretical framework followed by a chapter on Role theory and a chapter on Leadership theory. After follows the analysis where the empirical material of the research are presented and discussed in relation to the presented theories. Finally there is a concluding discussion of the study and proposals on further possible research.

2. Previous Research

This chapter presents previous research. This is a presentation of some of the knowledge that is presented in the field today that is relevant for this studies research position.

To understand research on Line Managers and their situation within organisations previous research has been studied. Far from everything is mentioned in this essay, but it was an important starting point to comprehend the problem area. What was found is that there is a lot of research on organisational change in existing organisation and studies on Line Managers situation stuck between upper management and their employees. The knowledge gap is on new organisations being built and the Line Managers situations within these, which this thesis focuses on. In this chapter previous research papers that are relevant to this studies research position are presented.

J. Balogun (2003) has in a study researched the middle manager's role as a change agent and calls them “change intermediaries”. Middle managers are often seen as the connecting link between the strategic and the operational core of the organisation since they transfer the information both upwards to the upper management and downwards to the staff members. Middle managers interpret, communicate and implement change, and thus affect the results of the change. Since middle managers have an important role, they might affect the result in a bad way if they are against the change. The result of the study was that the middle managers process in the implementation of the change is to coordinate, manage and create meaning, both in relation to themselves and towards their employees. Further, the middle managers go through four phases in the implementation of change. These are undertaking personal change, keeping the business going, helping others through change and implementing

changes to departments. The first phase is done individually while the other three phases occur in parallel. The first phase is the most important one, as the interpretations the middle managers do at the personal change affects not only them but also how they encourage their employees to the change. Interpretation and translation in this phase is done with the help of colleagues, but also by means of communication with management. The study shows that the process of interpretation has received insufficient attention and appreciation from management. This has meant that sufficient support was lacking, which can lead to resistance to change from the middle managers.

The National Institute for Working Life (Swedish: arbetslivsinstitutet) (Pettersson et al. 2006), have done a study on Line Managers and their situation in the public sector. The study focuses on Line Managers situation within the organisation and also towards the external world. The study examines cuts in the public sector that were done in Sweden in the 1990s. The study describes how the managers must abandon their own professional standards in order to handle the situation. High workload, unclear requirements, and conflicts between the management, colleagues and clients are claimed contributing to psychosocial problems. Line Managers are stuck between upper demands from superiors on one side and the needs on the ground level on the other side. Additional complexity of the public sector is that these organisations have been constructed through political decision. Therefore they are controlled politically and by authorities who developed the role of the Line Manager. The study shows two different approaches when it comes to changes. One approach is changes initiated from the political level. This approach has a rigid process where managers and employees do not get any opportunity to respond or discuss consequences and do not get necessary information. It contributes to difficulties Line Managers have since they do not know how to act or how to ensure that processes are functioning effectively in future. The second approach is the changes initiated from below. This approach shows that the staffs have a varied participation which affects the implementation and employees positive. The result of the study shows that the manager's role is ambiguous and there are two variations of the manager's role. In one the manager's duties is dominated by administrative issues and performance. The other view is dominated by the role of leadership issues and the main task of the manager is to put together different interests and to provide employees with support and to show trust.

M. Drakenberg (1997) argues in her book “Middle managers- From management tools to business engine” (Swedish: Mellanchefer- från ledningens redskap till verksamhetens motor) that flat organisations have created a new middle management with a budget responsibility and own personnel. Middle managers are expected to be a driving force and because of that they may have a strong position within organisations. The trend with flat organisations has led to increased responsibilities and larger units to be head of and the middle management often have to take work with them home. Drakenberg further thinks that the middle manager role is unclear. Also, the middle manager is often female which brings focus to gender questions. With this in mind, she believes that the established leadership theories are not sufficient to research the middle management role.

3. Methodological framework

The following section covers this study's methodology; the course of action, the procedures of the interviews, the selected interviewees, ethical difficulties, an assessment of the quality of the data and finally a concluding discussion about the study's methodology.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Social constructivism. The study has a social constructivist approach, which aims to explain and understand varied focuses. According to Gergen (1985) people have different truths and there is no situation where the truth is more “true” than the other. Knowledge has a social origin and is socially distributed. Social constructivists highlight how people perceive the social structures and intentions. Without us the truth is objective and does not exist independently (Fangen, 2005).

According to social constructivists there is no such thing as pure and simple facts. Rather facts are selected from a universal context by the activities of the mind and are therefore always interpreted in a context. This does not, however, mean that it is unable to grasp the reality of the world. It rather means that we grasp certain aspects of it, namely, those that are of relevance for us (Schuetz, 1953). Thus, the observer is an active and constitutive part in the process of gaining knowledge (Hekman, 1997).

Knowledge changes over time, since according to social constructivists there is a contextual factor of time dimensions, yesterday, today and tomorrow, and these changes the different truth. The world existed before we were born, and others experienced it before us and they had their interpretations All knowledge that we have are constructs, abstractions, generalizations, formalizations and idealizations that we, ourselves, have created through experience and cultural heritage (Schuetz, 1953).

3.2 Course of action

3.2.1 Qualitative methods. The choice of research method is based on the purpose of the study. The qualitative method's strength is to achieve an understanding and more advanced knowledge of the issue studied. The qualitative method tries to capture the overall understanding of the problem and to find patterns and themes in the empirical materials through interviews and observation, which are the tools for gathering material. In qualitative studies it is assumed that reality can be perceived in many different ways and, consequently, there is no absolute and objective truth. The qualitative method is therefore a suitable approach when the researcher wants to understand the way people reason and act (Trost, 2010). The qualitative approach is suitable for this study because it is based on the participant's realities and their perceptions, which is collected through interviews.

3.2.2 Interviews. For the study a semi-structured interview format was chosen. A semi-structured interview predetermines questions with the use of an interview guide, but also leaves room for follow up questions that might arise during the interview (Aspers, 2011, Brinkman & Kvale, 2009). In accordance with Brinkman and Kvale an interview guide was written to structure the interviews. The questions were formulated in order to be short and easy to understand, and also adapted the language for the purpose of the interview (2009). The intention was to make the interviewees feel comfortable, therefore the interviews started with some general background questions about the interviewee's education and previous experiences. The following questions were more specific about the manager role, leadership and so on. Although there was an interview guide there were questions that arose naturally during some of the interviews. These questions were follow up questions about topics that emerged during the interviews.

3.2.3 Interviewees. The interviewees were selected through a strategic approach. The purposed study group was defined in advance (Aspers, 2011, Trost, 2010). The selection is thus considered to be strategic since it aimed to find Line Managers who fit the study. The selection of interviewees was done with the help of a

key person, a so-called "gate-keeper" (Trost, 2010), which was an employee at the Human Resources department. Researchers use gatekeepers to find interviewees, in instance if the sample group is limited or for other reasons it is difficult to get in touch with. Using gatekeepers to get to the interviewees is beneficial in the sense that it is easy to get hold of people who fit the chosen group referred to examine.

However there are also some risks since the gatekeeper can influence the selection by choosing people who they find more knowledgeable and more representable which may affect the results. The researcher can also miss dissenting cases that might be interesting for the study. Another risk with using a gatekeeper is that it might take longer time to find the interviewees (Trost, 2010). Although it was helpful for this study to use a gatekeeper, since it was easier to establish contact with the Line Managers and all of them answered quickly. For the study, nine Line Managers were interviewed all working at in the same organisation. These will remain anonymous and referred to as interviewee A, B, C...

3.2.4 Ethical aspects. The ethical aspect always needs to be taken into account when personal information is selected from people in interview situations (Brinkman & Kvale 2009). This study is therefore based on four main requirements that the Swedish research council has established: the information requirement; the consent requirement; the confidentiality obligations, and the utilization requirement (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011).

The information requirement states that the interviewee must be informed about that the participation in the study is voluntary, what the interview aims to study and where the information will be published (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). The participants for this study were initially contacted by e-mail about the purpose of the study and asked if they wanted to participate. When the interview took place they were again informed of the aim of the study and also asked if they could be recorded. The consent requirement states that the interviewees have to give their consent to be recorded and also that they are free to withdraw this consent at any time during the study (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011).

The confidentiality obligations refer to giving the interviewees anonymity in the

publication of the material (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). The participants were told before the interview that they would be anonymous, and that in the published study they will all be referred to with pseudonyms.

The last requirement is the utilization requirement, which means that the information collected during a study may only be used for research purposes (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). In line with the requirement, the participants were informed about that the material would not be used for anything else but the study, before the interviews started.

3.2.5 Collection of literature. The sampling for relevant literature has been searched on the Lund University library catalogue Lovisa and Lund University's search database LUBsearch. Also the databases EBSCOhost, Google Scholar and Emerald have been used. Further a lot of old essays have been looked at to get inspiration for theories and references that are relevant within the subject of this study. Many interesting theses and research literature has led on to other more relevant literature, which has been consistent with the theoretical and methodological needs. Original references have been used as far as possible. In addition to this, both international and national researches in the area have been used. The keywords written when searching are role, role theory, Line Managers, middle managers, leadership, culture, organisation, new organisation to name a few. Continuously deeper and more relevant theory linked to the study's purpose and research question has been searched. An active reflection on the choice of literature and how it will fulfil a purpose to further provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon has been done.

3.3 Concluding methodological discussion

The scientific community has taken its greatest inspiration from the natural sciences for a long time with its studies of objects. But people are not objects; they do interpretive actions and are responsive unique individuals. Just as every person is unique, every situation is unique (Sjöberg et al., 2008). Therefore as a researcher,

using a qualitative method, it is important to be alert and to have in mind that people's realities differ. This has been taken into account through this research. Further, it is important to reassure that the issue being researched and the used approach is adapted to each other. Research questions that are suitable for qualitative techniques and approaches rarely have a width to the eyes. As the name indicates, researches in qualitative traditions are primarily looking for quality of the material, not the amount and width. The qualitative studies materials are inherently too small that comparisons should have some general relevance (ibid.). The research approach taken for this study is based on the Line Managers reality and view on things and therefore the qualitative method is the suitable approach for the study.

Before starting this study, I had an internship at the organisation's Human Resources department. The internship gave experience and deeper understanding of the organisations activities and an insight into the employees work. Hartman argues that the researcher's preconceptions affect the understandings of the study. As an interviewer it is not only important to know which questions to ask, but also how to understand the answers. The researcher can interpret personal statements and actions on the basis of an already formed perception (2004). But the internship was limited to the HR department and before interviewing I had not met most of the interviewees. During the internship there was little contact with other departments at the organisation and neither did I have knowledge on the Line Managers daily work. But off course it is not excluded that the interviewees might have been affected by the fact that I was an intern at the organisation. Another person could have interpreted the answers of the interviewees differently and the answers might have differed than those given to me if the questions were asked by someone else. Having information about the organisation beforehand might have affected the results of the empirical data, this is something that has been reflected on. The answers of the interviewees might also differ if the study was done in another time or place. But the aim of the study was to research the interviewees' reality at the present time.

There are some risks with qualitative methods; there can occur unpleasant situations, moral dilemmas can arise and there is always a risk that the interviewees do not express their real opinions (Alvesson, 2011). The chemistry between the researcher and the person being interviewed can affect the research (Sjöberg et al., 2008). In

qualitative studies there is rarely consensus. Since like the social constructivists denotes; people's experiences and opinions change over the course of time (Patel & Davidson, 2011, Trost, 2010).

Brinkman and Kvale argue that there is an issue of trust in interview situations; the interviewees might avoid answering some questions (2009), as the social constructivism approach argues, we all have different realities. It is also hard to control the data independently of the interview situation; the answers might differ over time (Fangen, 2005, Gergen 1985, Hekman, 1997, Schuetz, 1953). It is the interviewees that control the interviews with their answers. The questions can be interpreted in different ways. This does not have to be negative; rather it can lead you in to unexpected realities (Sjöberg et al., 2008). However qualitative interviews are the most suitable approach since the purpose of the study is to grasp the realities of the Line Managers. During the interviews the feeling was that the interviewees felt relaxed and that they were in a trustworthy environment. There is no guarantee that they shared all information, but the impression was that they opened up and talked truthfully about the asked subjects.

According to Trost the researcher should, in an interview situation, ask questions and listen. The researcher should not share opinions or reflections to influence the interviewees (2010). It is not possible to be totally objective in a qualitative research, but as a researcher, I have done my best not to affect the interviewees and their answers. Another risk that you meet is that you are assigned a role by those you meet, which can inhibit your access to some information which can affect the research.

To avoid all the hazards with using a qualitative approach and to strengthen the study, several strategies have been used. By designing an interview guide it was assured that the interviews were focused on themes that were relevant to the study. But off course there have also been follow up questions that have differed between the interviews depending on the interviewees answers. When raising the questions in the interview situation, the aim has been to ask questions as unprejudiced as possible. The reason for this was to not influence the interviewee's answers in a certain direction. The interviews have also been recorded and transcribed, which has reduced the risk at losing information. It is helpful to have the interviews on record since it gives an

opportunity to listen to the recordings a couple of times. This opens up for the possibility to hear new things that might have been missed the first times. A qualitative research is considered to have high relevance if the researcher has enough material to make a credible interpretation of the interviewee's experiences and opinions (Davidson & Patel, 2011). Credibility is one of the biggest difficulties with qualitative research because of the size of the empirical material (Trost, 2010). Nine Line Managers have been interviewed which is enough data to analyse for the size of this study.

4. Theory chapter

This chapter presents the theoretical framework. First the study's interpretive framework is introduced. Afterwards there is a section on sociologist Ervin Goffman's Role Theory. Then a chapter where Mats Alvesson's, business economist, Linda Smircich, professor of management and Gareth Morgan's, organisational theorist, culturally constructed Leadership Theory are presented. Lastly there is a concluding theory discussion.

4.1 Interpretive framework

Organisations are composed through goals and a common objective. A well thought-out structure brings stability and credibility to the work. The structure is the organisations skeleton. It gives the organisation its form as well as specifies the employees' requirements. The organisational structure creates focus and defines which employees are in charge. An organisational structure also defines how the work is divided between those who work in the organisation. However, it is not the structure that determines how the organisation actually works. When people work together they set up the goals and norms of the organisation. These norms and perceptions contribute to form the organisational culture (Abrahamsson & Andersen, 2005). When the structure is unclear, there is a lack of framework for the employees relate to.

In recent years, identity has become a popular theme in studies of organisations, manager groups and various individual phenomena. Identity seems to speak to virtually all people since self-image is something that most of us at different times in life reflect on. We try in different ways to understand ourselves: who am I, what do I really want and what do I stand for in different contexts? Identity can also involve

collective, such as professions or organisations. Who are we? What does this organisation stand for? What is distinctive and consistent for us? (Alvesson, 2015).

Identity is a useful concept since it can be used to describe many different conditions on both collective and an individual level. Identity is partly about identification, it is a feeling of similarity and belonging and how we are influenced and define ourselves. The members of an organisation must identify with their organisation to evolve a distinctive organisational culture. Identity is thus how we try to create a coherent and reasonably stable idea of who we are and what we stand for. "We" can be the organisation, a part thereof or any other group, such as a professional category (ibid).

Leadership, like other social phenomena, is socially constructed through interactions (Berger & Luckman, 2003), emerging as a result of construct and actions of both those who lead and those who are led. Roles, for example, institutionalise the interactions and definitions that shape the reality of organisational life. Rules, conventions, and work practices present ready-made typifications through which experience is to be made sensible. Authority relationships legitimise the pattern of dependency relations that characterise the process of leadership, which is to define organisational reality, and in what circumstances. Authority relationships specify who is to define the experience of others, to lead, and others to have their experience defined, to follow (Alvesson, 2015).

For an individual to be able to understand his or her own identity and for others to grasp a person, structure might be required. One way to get more structure is by taking on different roles. Depending on the context, an individual possesses a variety of roles. The leadership role is for an example one role that the individual can possess (Goffman, 2004). The following theory chapter discusses this further. The theory chapter is divided into two parts; the first is about society's impact on the individual. This is presented through Ervin Goffman's role theory. The second chapter is on leadership, which is defined through a social process.

4.2 Role Theory

Sociologist Ervin Goffman (2011) introduced that role theory originates from the theatre world and considers individuals to be actors performing for an audience. The actor consciously and unconsciously acts on a stage, in front of an audience, and together this is the framing/setting. During the performance, the actor is constantly giving impressions to the audience and is affected by the audience, in the form of expectations. The role is linked to the scene where the performance takes place, and the actor and the audience can transfer between different stages. Individuals act on different scenes including at work, in school or at home. The action of a role is usually a routine and normally performed unconsciously, especially when talking about the professional role (Goffman, 2011).

Further, Goffman (2011) explains that an individual possesses a variety of roles. Roles are acquired throughout life, both through socialisation in society, but also through conscious choices that the individual makes, such as the choice of a profession. None of the roles are, however, persistent, which means that during our lifetime we are socialised into different roles. We get married, move, change profession or change tasks and so on (Berger & Luckmann, 2003). Sometimes we need to adapt to old roles that are attributed to new expectations, and sometimes we are separated from a role and enter into a new one. When individuals are assigned a role, they label themselves accordingly and though this gets some kind of structure. The individual knows how to act according to the “stage” they are on. An individual is in the professional role when in the place of work, the social role among friends and personal role at home (Goffman, 2011).

4.2.1 Role expectations and Role conflicts. The expectations of a role are the beliefs, attitudes, norms and values of what we can or cannot do and what is consistent with the role that we possess. For each role, the individual's function in a context has an influence on the expectation of appropriate behaviour. The audience expects that individuals really have the qualities that are linked to the role. Our performance is evaluated through how we handle the expectations of the role. An

individual is more likely to acquire a role and by extension, develop a role if he or she gains recognition and admiration for their skill. In example, if a person is new in a professional role, there are expectations from the surrounding of how the person is supposed to act. If the person in question adapts well to the new role, according to the audience, and senses that he or she is doing a good role adaption, then he or she are more likely to develop the role and make it a part of him- or herself (ibid.).

The expectations of most roles are socialised into them. The process involves that the role is shaped and reshaped to fit the requirements and expectations of the environment. The socialisation process can be a complex process for the individual, since it is not always clearly stated what everyone's expectations are. In order to take in the expectations of a role, it requires the individual to internalise and accept the values and norms of the role. Some of these expectations are explicit and clear, while others are unspoken and unclear (Berger & Luckmann, 2003.).

Furthermore, the role expectations can be flexible and thus give individuals more room to vary and shape their behaviour. Other role expectations are more specific, as in the case in professional roles, which is controlled by the job description and employment contract. The explicit roles are easier for individuals to understand and provide security. Sometimes there are different views of different roles and how the individual should behave. A lack of clarity about the role can give great freedom to the person exercising the role but it is a risk where the person could choose to do the tasks that are in the person's own interest (ibid.).

According to Goffman (2013), role conflicts are termed into two categories. The first is inter-role conflict, which is a role conflict that arises when an individual finds it difficult to fulfil a role where diverse behaviour is expected. When this happens, it can become difficult to know which behaviour is right. The second type of role conflict is called intra-role conflict and can arise when an individual experiences differing expectations about what the correct behaviour is in the role. These role conflicts may occur in the workplace, for instance, when employees experience conflicting demands and expectations from various sources within and outside the organisation.

If an employee does not know what to do mistrust can appear. Mistrust can be the result of both inter-role conflict and intra-role conflict. Therefore, it is important that the expectation of the role is clear. The relationship between people in the workplace affects the organisational culture and collaboration between the employees. Consequences from a conflict of the role can be frustration, inefficiency and limitation of actions (ibid.).

4.2.4 Development of the role. The development of the role begins with an individual or transmitter that sends expectations on the role to a receiver. The transmitter's intention with the transferred role expectations, which are communicated via both language and body language, is to influence the role of the receiver. How the role is received depends on the recipient's interpretive and cognitive ability, as well as how they meet or do not meet the expectations of themselves. Then, based on their abilities and expectations the receiver shows a behaviour that makes the transmitter more or less value the receiver's performance. The transmitter's power position, in relation to the recipient, has an impact on how the recipient adapts to the expectations. It affects how the recipient evaluates the signals that the transmitter sends (Kats & Kahn, 1978).

How an individual handles his or her role depends on the individual's personality. An individual with good self-esteem might find it easier to resist and distance themselves from a role when expectations are conflicting or too many (Goffman, 2011). Individuals who are in the role make subjective interpretations of the expectations, both in terms of their expectations and the signals that the transmitter sends. Organisational factors, personality factors and relationships between individuals affect the development of the role. Among the organisational factors are the organisational structure, organisational culture, technology, and formal policies. With regard to personality factors the person's characteristics, values, feelings, fears and motivations affect the role of the development process (Kats & Kahn, 1978).

4.2.2 Role expectations and environment. The dynamics of a group consist of social structures, where traditions and prevailing culture is created; this is the environment that an individual can be in. The environment depends on the context and stage the individual is in, it can be the organisational environment and thus the organisational culture is the environment. Individuals relate both intentionally and consciously to the social status and the expectations that the members of the group have on each other. Every social context is in a way a power play between individuals. Individuals' social status in a group controls how they relate to other members of the group. In example, the Manager of a group of organisational members has higher power than the rest of the group or at least is supposed to have that. Sometimes the individual acts according to what the group considers to be socially accepted and expected, but that is not necessarily the individual's desire (Goffman, 2011). Individuals are socialised into a role through the values and norms it retains, which are then transferred and incorporated by the individual (Berger & Luckmann, 2003).

Linked to the socialisation process and the role construction is the understanding of what others anticipate from each other, and what happens if the behaviour differs from the expectations that the role possesses. The individual can to some extent control and manage what others perceive and interpret. But there are also parts that the individual has no control over. That depends on how others define the individual's role and what is expected of him or her. All individuals, early on in their introduction in the group, contribute to the impression that they, at least for the moment, think is socially accepted in the group (Goffman, 2011).

The different roles the individual retains helps to manage the environment. For example, the role determines our behaviour in the workplace. Through it, we know how we should conduct ourselves in meetings with clients, with our colleagues, managers, etc. Based on the role we also know what is included in our tasks. The workplace, for instance, often has a clear model with clear expectations, job description and qualifications, among other things. The goals of the organisation decide which roles that exist within it. At a workplace, new roles are created and old mature (ibid.).

4.2.3 Team performance. Goffman (2011) defines a team as a group of individuals who act together expressing a specific definition of a situation. It is an effect of close cooperation between the members. The members included in the team have a relationship to each other; it can for example be a team of members in an organisation. In order not to sabotage the performance, the members must trust each other to behave correctly. This unites the members and creates interdependence. If there is a consensus about the goals of the performance, it is possible for members to make different performances. Then they can perform similar or dissimilar performances as long as that it fits into the big picture and appears as a team impression.

Interdependence can overcome social deviation within an organisation and lead to a stronger performance. If the members act according to different situations it may be difficult to create a common view of team performance. In situations where different circumstances change the interpretation of the new situation can vary. Therefore it is important that there is some loyalty within the group to support the frames they act within. To protect the team it is important to give a common statement about what applies in cooperation so that no team member is left out. If a member does not act according to what is decided, the performance can be sabotaged (ibid.).

According to sociologist Scheff (1997), team members can become insecure when its members lack a clear understanding of what the expectations of the group are. This can be a consequence of lack of communication between the parties and difficulties with collaboration. Consequently, this can lead to isolation from the team. The relationships can then be defined by constant misunderstanding and rejection. Confident relationships occur when there is balance between closeness and distance and when people mutually understand, identify with and recognise each other. Such a relationship eliminates the feeling of “me” and “them”, and instead unites the feeling of “us”. This balance in the relationship shows that there is good communication between the parties. If there is, on the other hand too much closeness it can lead to a too intense relationship. This may be a result if, the group members identify themselves strongly with each other and feel a strong loyalty to the group. A too strong group relationship can make it difficult for team members to distance themselves from their roles and prevent self-reflection.

Goffman (2011) explains that the problems, introduced in the section above, as the individual have been misled in their actions and temporarily convinced that he or she acts in is the true and genuine reality. In such a situation, the individual becomes his or her own audience, by making an appearance while observing their own behaviour. This is a result where the individual has incorporated and absorbed group norms and he or she maintains these in the lack of presence of others. The individual then see their behaviour as the right social way to act. When an individual's behaviour is governed by integrated standards it might help if or she continues to act from the learned behaviour standards also in their private lives. In some cases the individual might not believe in their own actions without having a perception that there is an invisible audience that observes.

When an individual is assigned as a manager it is not always easy to know what is expected in the beginning and he or she has to adapt to the role. The personality of the individual plays a crucial part in being a manager. It is not only the individual that has to adapt to the new role, the role is also shaped to fit the personality of the individual. This will be addressed in the following chapter on leadership.

4.3 Leadership

Leadership is included in almost every individual's working situation and is a result of the bureaucratic society we live in today. Every person in an organisation, except top managers, is subject to some leadership. Most agree that leadership is important and even critical to an organisation's ability to achieve success (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2007). There are many different theories and models that show how leadership can be practiced, but there is no unambiguous definition of the term. Leadership requires what Smircich & Morgan (1982) address as an element of management of meaning, which is defined as the fact that leadership can affect and shape people's ideas, values, beliefs and emotions. This means that leadership by definition can be perceived as "cultural". In other words that leadership takes place in a cultural context and all leadership actions have their consequences by the (culturally

driven) interpretation given by those involved in the social processes in which leaders, subordinates and leadership actions are inherent (Alvesson, 2015).

The appearance of leadership in unstructured situations points towards four important aspects of leadership as a phenomenon. First, leadership is fundamentally a social process defined through interactions. Second, leadership involves the process of defining reality in a way that is sensible for those being led. Third, leadership involves the dependent relationships in which individuals surrender their powers to interpret and define the reality of others. Fourth, the emergence of formal leadership roles represents a stage of institutionalisation, in which rights and obligations to define nature of experience and activity are recognised and formalised (Smircich & Morgan 1982).

The main characteristic of formal leadership is that experiences are structured and defined by a stock of taken-for-granted meanings that underlay the everyday definition and reality of the organisation. In particular, a formal organisation is built upon shared meanings that define roles and authority relationships that institutionalise a pattern of leadership. The leadership process actualises the characteristics of social origins into sets of predetermined roles, relationships and practices, providing a blueprint on how the experiences of how organisational members is to be structured. Explicit roles, for example, institutionalise the interactions and definitions that outline the reality of organisational life. Rules, conventions and work practices present ready-made typifications through which experience is made sensible. Authoritative relationships legitimise the patterns of dependency relations that characterise the process of leadership, specifying who is to define organisational reality, and in what circumstances. Authority relationships regulate a hierarchical pattern of interactions in which certain individuals are expected to define the experience of others, to lead, and others are to have their experiences defined, to follow (Smircich & Morgan 1982).

4.3.1 Leadership in an organisational cultural context. Alvesson (2015) states that the relationship between leadership and culture is complex. Leadership is an activity influenced by the culture and can work as a tool for the

organisational culture. This does not necessarily mean that the leadership creates or changes the culture; rather that leadership is a cultural manifestation that affects common views on the organisational goals, technologies and trends. Leadership can have a reaching influence on employees' values and orientations.

The founders of an organisation are also seen as creators of cultures, or at least as important for the values that the members overtake and reproduce. Although senior managers can put relatively strong impact on an organisation, Alvesson (2015) finds it doubtful that they are of great importance for the culture. The culture probably characterises the leadership rather than the other way around.

The specific cultural ideas and meanings of the organisation can control and limit the leadership. If we disregard the use of "pure" power the meaning of leadership is to appeal to people. The visions, instructions, goals, the way to build up the image of the company must be seen as legitimate and meaningful. The leader's actions and standards have to act according to standards and frameworks relating to those who will be affected. To that extent, it is subordinate to the collective that decides what functions leadership has. This does not mean that the leader is totally subordinate to a given set of meanings and ideas. The leader can change this, but only gradually and to do this, he or she has to assume that people have certain ideas, values and preferences. The leader is involved in a kind of bargaining. It is not uncommon for managers to have values and norms somewhere between the senior executives and those their subordinates stand for (Alvesson, 2015).

4.3.2 Leadership as the management of meaning. Smircich & Morgan (1982) define leadership as a social process in which organised settings are created, sustained and changed by the people within it. In understanding the way leadership actions attempt to shape and interpret situations to guide organisational members into a common interpretation of reality, it can be understood how leadership works to create a significant foundation for organised activity. This process can be most easily conceptualised in terms of a relationship between figure and ground. Leadership action involves a moving figure, a flow of actions and utterances (i.e. what leaders do) within the context of a moving ground, the actions utterances, and general flow of

experience that constitute the situation being managed. Leadership as a phenomenon is identifiable within its wider context as a form of action that seeks to shape its context.

To lead is to influence the relationship between figure and ground, and hence the meaning and definition of the context as a whole. The actions and utterances of leaders guide the aims of those involved in a situation by consciously or unconsciously shaping and influencing the situation. The actions and utterances draw attention to aspects of the overall flow of experience by giving it meaning, which can be interpreted in terms of the context in which it is set. Indeed its meaning is embedded in its relationships with its context. For example, if there is a situation in which a leader loses his or her temper over the failure of an employee to complete a job on time. For the leader this action gives meaning to the accident in a significant way e.g. a reprimand for the employee has been overdue. For the employee, the event may be interpreted in a similar way, or a spectrum of different constructions might be placed upon the situation, e.g. the employee might find that the leader loses his or her temper occasionally. The leaders' action may thus set up a variety of interpretations that set the basis for meaningful action (ibid.).

According to Smircich & Morgan (1982) organised situations are often characterised by complex actions that give meaning, based on rival interpretations, to the situation. Different individuals may make sense of situations with different interpretive schemes, establishing "counter-realities". A cause of tension in the group may set the basis for change of an innovative or disintegrative type. These counter-realities underwrite much of the political activities within organisations. This gives the leaders a chance to present alternative views. Effective leadership depends upon the extent to which the leaders' definitions of the situation, for example, people in this office are now working hard enough, serves as a basis for action by others. It is in this sense that effective leadership rests a great deal on the framing of the experience of others, so that action can be guided by common conceptions as to what should occur. The key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals adapt to the desirable level of achievement. In this attempt the use of language, ritual, drama, stories, myths and symbolic construction of all kinds may take a significant role.

Words and images, symbolic actions and gestures, leaders constitute important tools in the management of meaning. They can structure attention and stir up patterns of meaning that give considerable control over the situation being managed. These tools can be used to forge particular kinds of figure-ground relations that serve to create appropriate modes of organised action. Leadership rests as much in these symbolic modes of action as in those instrumental modes of management, direction, and control that define the substance of the leaders' formal organisational role (ibid).

4.4. Concluding Theory discussion.

In this paper I draw on Goffman's Role theory and Smircich & Morgan and Alvesson's culturally constructed Leadership theory to make the argument that society, hence, organisations are socially constructed. Therefore individual's act according to the socially constructed roles they conduct through life. Goffman's Role theory is especially useful to my analysis as it allows us to examine the empirical data in relation to it. To this end Alvesson's and Smircich & Morgan's conceptualisation on Leadership theory is generative for grasping how the Line Managers at the studied organisation relate to the cultural given leadership roles. The theories will be presented and analysed in the following analyse chapter in relation to the research question which is, *how are structure and meaning created and managed in an organisation in an early stage of development from Line Managers perspective?*

5. Analysis and Result

In this chapter an analysis of the empirical data is presented and discussed in consideration with the theories stated above. First the empirical material is analysed in relation to Role Theory. After that follows the data of the interviews analysed and discussed in relation to leadership theory.

5.1 Role Theory

According to Goffmans (2011) role theory, all individuals are actors consciously and unconsciously performing on a stage in front of an audience. The role is linked to the scene the actor is in. The stage where this study takes place is in an organisation, and consequently the actors are taking on their professional roles. As Goffman (2011) states, the performance of a role is usually done on routine and becomes a habit, a specially the professional role. When individuals are assigned a role, they label themselves accordingly and through this get some kind of structure. The individual acts according to the stage they are on. When going through the interviews it is clear that the interviewees identify themselves through the manager role. The interviews started out by me asking open questions about the Line Manager's backgrounds and previous experiences. Every person interviewed started with telling about their previous work related experience. They instead, could have started out by telling about their personal life, but none of them did that. This is probably a consequence of the fact that the interviews were held in their place of work and therefore it was natural for them to act on the "work stage". They were likely affected by the audience (me), the stage (the workplace) and the setting (the interview room) and interpreted that they should act accordantly (Goffman, 2011). If the interviews had been held in another setting, for instance in a home environment, the interviewees might have instead taken on the role they have when they are at home. A consequence of this then could have been that the answers could have differed. The intentions of the questions

were to gain experience on their professional roles, and of course there are no right or wrong answers.

When a role is clearly defined it becomes easier for the person performing to act according to it. As Goffman (2011) states, the role defines which tasks should be performed and by whom, and therefore makes it easier for the individual to act accordingly. When the role is not clearly defined it can become confusing for the individual, since they might not know what is expected from them. Line Managers or Managers in general, need support from their surroundings and clear directives from the upper management to know what is required from them. All of the interviewees, Line Managers themselves, requested this clarity. When help or support is not given, there might be confusion and it can become a struggle. Interviewee H exemplified these issues when he explained that he needed support from the higher management team to get clarity in his role as Line Manager.

“Support makes my role quite clear... becoming a Line Manager... the role becomes quite clear. It was a response to my request to the upper management.” (H)

Interviewee H felt like there was a lack of consensus in his role before he became a Line Manager, which affected his professional role and hence, the work tasks. When he requested a more distinct title the work tasks were easier to comprehend and it became clearer what was expected from him to do as a Line Manager. The professional role is for the most part defined by some kind of job description and employment contract which provides guidelines that the individual can relate to. As interviewee H said above, he needed to have support from the higher management team to know what was expected from him.

Interviewee G explains that he did manager tasks before becoming a manager. He became frustrated towards the upper management team when they did not assign him the title from the start.

“It took a while before it was, how should I put it, before I was finally assigned. I was told that I was acting manager, but after a few months I

got tired and told them you know that, either you assign... either I am the manager or I'm not the manager, so I became the manager. It was not new to me I've been manager in my job." (G)

As Interviewee G said, he took on the Line Manager's tasks before actually becoming a Line Manager. But he felt he wanted the title to have a clear comprehension both towards him, and further also to send clear signals to his environment so they could know what was expected. As stated, the Line Manager title comes with a job description and responsibilities. One responsibility is to manage people in the work unit. As Goffman (2011) says, the different roles we have help to manage the environment and thus, the work role helps us to determine our behaviour in the workplace. It helps to know how we should behave in meetings with clients, with our colleagues, managers, etc. And also to know what our tasks include, as the workplace often has a clear model with clear expectations, job description and qualifications, among other things. As interviewee G says, he already was doing the Line Managers tasks but getting the title made it easier for him to know how to act towards his co-workers, employees, clients etc. And also, it became easier for the people around him to know how to act and where to turn for assignments or help. But the employees also have to have in mind that it is an organisation in change so it can be hard to determine roles. The employees have to work from the perspective that they have now and then also be prepared to follow the changes that might come. Things can in the future take on a completely new direction and thus the roles might change.

5.1.1 Role expectations and role conflict. As established above, when a role is not clearly defined it can become confusing for the individual to know what is expected from them, and therefore how to act. For each role the expectations of proper behaviour depends on the character's function in a context. The audience expects that individuals really have the qualities or do the tasks that are linked to the role and the individuals are evaluated through how they handle the expectations (Goffman, 2011). It was a struggle for interviewee B to meet the expectations of the manager role in the beginning. She opened up in the interview and told that she did not feel like she got the support that she needed to understand what was expected

from her. She expressed that she was more or less thrown in to the role, because the person doing the job before her suddenly fell ill and therefore, interviewee B did not have a lot of time to grow into the role. It was more or less learning by doing, as she puts it, since it was full speed ahead. Before becoming the Line Manager she had been working in the same group as she was now supposed to manage. When she was promoted she was separated from her old role at the organisation and had to enter into a new one with new expectations. The expectations of a role is a socialisation process and that the role is shaped and reshaped to fit the expectations of the environment, which can be complex since it is not always clear what everyone expectations are (Berger & Luckmann, 2003). In the professional life the socialisation process includes that the new employee replicates a role model until the individual has installed him- or herself in the role and made it his or her own. This was what Interviewee B did in the beginning but she wished that there were some kind of guidelines to know was anticipated from the new role to make the first time as Line Manager easier.

“Well I actually asked my manager when I got my first manager position, I asked “OK now what? How do I do this?” (B)

But she did not feel like talking to her manager was helpful so she went ahead and gave herself the help she required by using Google and books.

“/.../ yeah it’s been a journey, I actually just gave myself the support that I needed, I just Googled ‘good leadership coaches’ and I Googled books that I could read, because that was the advice that I got “well you can Google it”. So I did. I mean, I wouldn’t create the wheel, but if there is something, some way to get this information, easily, assessable, I would have loved to get it. And to hear that, you know what, you are a good manager.” (B)

This could be related to what Goffman (2013) calls inter-role conflict, which is a conflict where an individual finds it hard to meet the different expectations a role has. But also what Goffman refers to as intra-role conflict, where there are differing expectations about what is the correct behaviour in a role. Interviewee B both found it difficult to meet the expectations that the role required and also she did not know

which behaviour is right. In the beginning Interviewee B imitated the role model; in this case what Google and what the books she found said was good leadership, until she made the manager role a part of her. It took some time for her to internalise and accept the norms the role entails. When you are assigned a role that you are not familiar with, it takes some time to adapt to it and you can not to everything right from the beginning. This is something that interviewee B is aware of.

“/.../ I mean I look back in my role in five years and I off course see that I do things that I wouldn't be doing today.” (B)

So it was a socialisation process that interviewee B went through when becoming a Line Manager, with all the expectation the role has and it was struggling from time to time, but in the end she got through it without help. But it would have been helpful and made the first time as a Line Manager easier if there was some kind of support and somewhere to turn for guidance and help.

Some of the interviewees expressed that they want more clarity within the roles so that everyone knows what is expected, and from whom. Interviewee I told me that he thinks that manuals can standardise the organisations way of doing things which helps to make things clearer for the employees.

”...I wholly encourage manuals. Because it helps to clarify and standardize the responsibilities that you have as a manager and it gives the manager a very clear guidance on how to address issues”. (I)

Interviewee I thinks that manuals are a way of standardising the responsibilities of the managers. But there are also other aspects that they want to improve and develop. Interviewee C told me that she feels like there is missing a place where all procedures and policies are put and because of this there is a risk of misunderstandings because everyone assumes that everyone knows everything.

“I am missing a place for, you know, all the policies of the organisation, all the procedures that are approved. Like I don't know what I'm actually supposed to know. You know. I'm missing something but I really don't

know where to get it. More structure, then the risk is that it could... like some people don't know, and they don't know that they don't know. And then other people assume that everybody knows and are following the policies“(C)

Interviewee E tells me that there is need for “a more structured way of introducing the Line Managers”. This is so that they can have a clear view of expectations from the beginning. Other interviewees expressed that they want more comprehensive introduction days for all new employees and some want the Line Managers to get coaching help from senior managers. These are ways to get a more comprehensive introduction to the different roles within the organisation. As already discussed there can be confusion when someone is new in their role. As Line Manager it is expected to have the knowledge to be able to lead others as well as performing the job duties. Some of the interviewed Line Managers are fairly new in their managing role and find that there is a lack of support and confusion and would like structure to ease their reality. The studied organisation is still in early development, and so still defining which requirements belong to the different roles and job titles. As the organisation is still finding its ways, the roles and expectations of them can be shifting through time. Employees can find or get new assignments and in that way move in to new roles and positions. As the organisation is still defining the structures the different roles can change through time. New employees can come in to the organisation and make their own mark, and other people can leave. When leaving the employees can give place to other to take on their roles and assignments and thus develop them in their way and put their mark on things.

5.1.2 Development of the role. The development of the role begins when the expectations are sent to the receiver. How the role is received depends a lot on the recipient's interpretive and cognitive ability, as well as their own expectations of themselves. The sender's power position has an impact on how the recipient adapts to the expectations (Kats & Kahn, 1978). If the framework of the role is already defined it might be easier for the individual to act according to it. But that might also inhibit the individual to make their own

marks on the role. And as Goffman (2011) explains how an individual handles its role depends on the individual's personality. An individual with good confidence might find it easier to resist and distance themselves from a role, when expectations are conflicting or too many. Interviewee A explains that the Line Managers are delegated tasks from upper management and they are not in the position to always question it. And even if they maybe do not feel like it is of value to them and do not understand the purpose of the task they do it anyway because they are not able to distance themselves from the Line Manager role, since it is in a lower power position than the upper management.

“So people will tend to focus too much on achieving something which they don't necessarily have any purpose or value, they tend to be the managers that kind of push a lot of people around without getting any solid results.” (A)

He continues and explains that he as a leader tries to avoid this. What thrives him to develop as a Line Manager is by involving the team in the values and sending out signals that he is confident and responsible.

According to Goffman (2011) the more an individual gains recognition and admiration for their skills, the more likely it is that the individual will acquire the role, and by extension, enhance the role. Interviewee C tells me that she gets a lot of stimulation from building the team and further that she gets a lot of positive feedback from other parts of the organisation. This makes her thrive and makes her want to be a good leader and create a positive environment for her employees.

“I think I'm caring for the team, I think I'm able to motivate the team, kind of bring them together and kind of find a way to move forward in the situation that we are in right now... being conscious of what the team needs are right now.” (C)

Interviewee Cs motivation to being a good manager is thus by getting admiration from her team. She develops as a leader through her well-functioning team and by getting her employee work together.

If the expectations of a role are not clear there is sometimes need for help to develop the role. Interviewee B who, as already stated before, felt like she was thrown in to the leadership position. She got help from Google and books and she also told in the interview that she got help from a coach to develop herself in the manager role.

“So I’ve been seeing a person, she’s a coach and that has been very valuable for me... First of all, this is a very hectic workplace so you never really get to sit down to think. It’s such a luxury to just sit down and reflect. We never have time to do that. But with her I have one hour, sometimes an hour and a half and we just talk, we reflect... it’s so good. We talk about setting goals, what are your goals? What are the goals for the group? And we really talk about that. And how do you see yourself as part of that? And what kind of manager would you like to be? What are your weaknesses? What are your strengths?” (B)

So since interviewee B did not get support from upper management or other parts of the organisation she instead turned to someone outside of the organisation for coaching, which has been very helpful and it has helped her to evolve as a manager. She explained that an important aspect of coaching is to set goals, and finding a way to reach these, which is what interviewee B did together with her coach. Interviewee B further told that she, together with her coach filled out a form of areas of improvement in the beginning of their sessions.

“I just filled in a whole page, because I’m kind of good criticising myself, so it was easy to see areas of improvement... and I had a meeting with her a month ago, and I realised, amazing, I just realised the list I put down... is no longer valid... they are not my weaknesses anymore. And that’s just so amazing, it’s fantastic really. And I don’t know? What happened? I just you know, matured in my role... learning by doing I guess /.../” (B).

By getting help from coaching, interviewee B got in a structured way help in setting goals and which parts of her management she had to work on. The coaching helped her in her socialisation process of the role as Line Manager. It helped her to mature in

her manager role, she might have had the same socialisation process without the coach, but it probably would have taken longer time to get to the point she is in today. As she says in her quote, she sees areas of improvement as manager, but she feels like she has grown a lot. Evolving by help from a coach can be of support to some people. And it was a request that some of the interviewees wanted and saw as a helpful way of getting support in their role as Line Managers. But not everybody is fond of coaching as a tool to evolve. Interviewee E explained in the interview that he does not like it.

“/.../ I know one of those things that is very popular now is the coaching kind of leadership... if one of my staff comes to me with “I had this problem, I’ve tried to solve it but I’m unable to get on with it. What do you thing that I should do next?” I think the worst answer for me as a person could get is “yeah, but what do you think you should do?” I think that that’s not an answer, that’s a question... so I’m not found of the coaching approach to leadership. I mean I would expect my staff to ask themselves the question “what can I do” I mean, they are intelligent people, they know how to do problem solving.” (E).

So getting help from a coach can be of help and creating support for some people, but it is not something for everyone. Maybe it could be a solution to gain support to offer coaching, or other development tools, to the Line Managers, though it is not something that the organisation does today.

5.1.3 Roles and the environment. According to Goffman (2011) the dynamics of a group consists of social structures. Individuals both intentionally and consciously relate to the social status and the expectations of the members of the group have on each other. Sometimes the individual acts according to what the group considers to be socially accepted. Individuals’ social status in a group controls how they relate to other members of the group. An individual can to some extent control how others perceive them but there are parts that the individual has no control over (Goffman, 2011). There are also hierarchy within an organisation that decides which role has the higher power, which can change the social status in the group.

Interviewee B told that she felt like it was hard to separate her from her old role and adapt to the new one, where she is in charge of her old colleagues which has sometimes been a struggle.

“/.../ what’s important to think about when you are new in your role, how should you conduct meetings, how do you create balance all of a sudden. I mean because we were all colleagues when I became their manager, that’s also a very tricky situation.” (B)

When a group in a workplace changes because of role change there is need for support from upper management, which already stated, interviewee B felt there was lack of. As Goffman (2011) argues, being in a certain role involves privileges but also responsibilities and you are expected to have the qualities that are associated to the role. Interviewee B told me that she felt like she was evaluated, by her surrounding, over how she handled the expectations of the role. When interviewee B did not act according to the expectations of the manager role from the beginning, it became an inner conflict for her. When she was no longer one of the colleagues anymore, it became hard to know how she should act among them and she felt alone. She expressed that she could have used some help in how to conduct herself in the new situation, as a Line Manager and also how to behave towards her old colleagues.

“/.../ send me off to someone, give me courses, seminars, I don’t know, should I have a mentor? Should I be given a mentor? Perhaps someone within this organisation, I don’t know but I know I felt very alone, all of a sudden I was their boss, we weren’t colleagues anymore” (B)

Maybe it could have helped if interviewee B got what she requested, that is support from the upper management. Then she could have handled the new situation better.

5.1.4 Team performance. When there is a group of employees, working as a team, reaching for the same goals, they are together doing a performance. To act together as a team there has to be close cooperation, trust and a relationship between the employees since there is an interdependent relationship. If there is trust and

interdependence the members of the team can give each other freedom to make different performances as long as it fits the big picture and as long as it fits the team performance (Goffman, 2011). Interviewee C and her team work actively to show the outside world that they are united.

“We are all individuals so maybe we do some things a bit different but then we all, from the outside world they get a consistent answer”. (C)

Interviewee G told me that he tries to give his employees freedom to do their work tasks independently.

“/.../ I mean I try to give freedom, to people who show that they can do with the freedom. Which means that I mean, initially I say that I delegate this to you and this is your work, use it if you like. So you are responsible for this and do this and then they feedback to me what is going on, and I tell them what I think. Normally I don't think too much if it makes sense I tell them to go ahead. And I tell them that really, you don't have to ask me about everything as long as it looks good and as long as I generally know that is going on. I give them the possibility to kind of manage their own ship if they like.” (G)

When there is balance between closeness and distance and people mutually understand, identify with and recognise each other confident relationships are built. Such relationships unify the relationship of “us”, and eliminate the feeling of “me” and “them”. But if the group of employees is not working together as a team, difficult situations can arise. An absence of the common view of what the goals of the unit are can appear. If there is lack in communication within the group the employees might not understand what the team performance is supposed to be (Scheff, 1997). During the interviews there were more comments on when the teams have not worked in unity, but this will be discussed more in the chapter on leadership. Interviewee G told me that sometimes there can appear situations where the aims of the performance are not always clear.

“Sometimes I have to tell people that I have to take a closer look at stuff,

because things have not been going as according to plan, but this is normally not a big deal. I mean if somebody told me you know, this is not going as it should, I might step in and take a look at it.” (G)

So what interviewee G exemplifies in this quote is a situation where the group of people are working towards the same bigger goal but there are situations where there can be performances of team members that deviate from the rest of the group.

When a group has worked together for a long time it can unite the feeling of “us”. The studied organisation is quite new and the teams have not been working together that long. But they do have a common goal that motivates them. These goals can differ from team to team but there seems to be a consensus in being part of a new project that can make a difference to the world.

“/.../ they are commonly motivated by building something new, the opportunity to be part of a range of things.” (C)

The common goals seems to be what motivates both the interviewed Line Managers and what they think motivate their employees. Since they have the same overall goal they are together as a team working to reach it.

5.1.5 Summary. The expectations of the role are socialised into it, and it is shaped to fit the needs and expectations of the environment (Berger & Luckmann, 2003). Since the organisation is still developing, it is a unique possibility to form how the ideal manager should act, according to the organisations desired standards. The role defines which tasks should be performed and by whom, and therefore makes it easier for the individual to act accordingly. When the role is not clearly defined it can become confusing for the individual, since they might not know what is expected from them (Goffman, 2011). A clear comprehension towards the Line Manager role was something that the interviewed Line Managers found was lacking and they requested more clarity and support from the upper management. Some of the interviewees found it hard to meet the expectations of the role in the beginning and since they did not get the help they required instead tried to figure out on their own how to act as Line Managers.

Organisational factors, personality factors and interaction between individuals have an impact on the roles development progresses. The organisation has the position of power and therefore has a big impact how the recipients are affected (Kats & Kahn, 1978). But as Goffman (2011) says, the individual's personality also affects how they handle the role. Sometimes the Line Managers are delegated tasks from upper management and they are not in the position to always question it. And even if they maybe do not feel like it is of value to them and do not understand the purpose of the task they do it anyway because they are not able to distance themselves from the Line Manager role, since it is in a lower power position than the upper management.

According to Goffman (2011) the dynamics of a group consists of social structures and it is an interdependent relationship. Since there is lack of support from upper management it can be hard to know how to act in relation to the environment. When there is support the management can in a way guide the organisational culture, thus the social statuses of the organisation. The relationship between people in the workplace affects the organisational culture and collaboration between the employees. But if the group of employees is not working together as a team, difficult situations can arise (Scheff, 1997). Therefore there is need for a common goal for everyone in the organisation.

5.2 Leadership

5.2.1 Leadership in a cultural context. Leadership can be perceived as a cultural phenomenon and is essentially a social process defined through interactions. It involves the process of defining reality in a way that makes sense for the subordinates. The founders of an organisation are seen as creators, or at least of importance for the organisational culture (Smircich & Morgan 1982). But as Alvesson (2015) points out, it can also be the other way around; the culture characterizes the leadership. There is thus an interdependent relationship between the culture and leaders. Since the studied organisation is in its beginning phases the organisational

culture is still developing. So perhaps in this phase the Line Managers have an even more important role in shaping the culture of the organisation. The Line Managers are the ones that guide the group of people they are leading in to a common reality, and the group of people are of importance of how the leadership develops. The interdependence relationship was something that was noticeable in the interviews. Interviewee E exemplifies that.

“I try to ask my employees what would keep you motivated? Most answer that they want to develop in their work. Then we together set up goals and projects.” (E)

Interviewee E demonstrates that he, at least tries, to communicate with his employees and together set up goals and projects for them. I followed up with the question: “What motivates you?”

Interviewee E: “Probably the strongest motivation is that people want me as Line Manager.”

So interviewee E thus is saying that he would not be a Line Manager if the group of people he is head of would not want him in the position. Interviewee D also illustrated the interdependence relationship between the Line Managers and the employees.

“What motivates me as a leader is the team and the team work. I could never do the work by myself.” (D)

Both interviewee E and interviewee D emphasise that they as Line Managers, together with their employees are a team that together are reaching for a goal. The team spirit was something that was clear through all the interviews. Interviewee C explained in her interview that “leadership is about pulling the team together and moving them in one direction”. Thus, this also points to that the interviewees’ found that the Line Managers are of great importance for the culture guiding them in to common goals. But also, that the employees are of importance for how the Line Managers leadership develops.

According to Alvesson, (2015) the visions, instructions, goals of the organisation must be seen as legitimate and meaningful towards the members. The leader is involved in a bargaining process, in Line Managers case both towards their employees and the upper management. In the studied organisation the Line Managers are in charge of communicating the overall goals and visions that come from upper management towards the employees within their groups. Something that was consistent through the interviews was that the overall goal of the organisation was present. Interviewee E explained in the interview that he is proud of the overall goal of the organisation.

”/.../ we are going to do this amazing thing. Whenever I tell people where I work I always feel proud of the work that we are doing because we have a greater goal. I mean science; it could lead to better medicine, better batteries, better environment/.../” (E)

Interviewee B told in the interview that the group she is leading are working at the organisations for the same reason she is. The employees have the same framework and goals as the Line Managers and her responsibility as a leader is to provide the people within her group with tools so they can grow.

“I’m very blessed with self-driven people in my group and they are here for the same reasons as I am. We are all very excited about this project and the outcome of it and we are all working very hard. So leading them, it’s just about providing them with the tools, with trust. Yeah, it’s about providing tools, trust and mandate. I would say that if you do that, people will grow.” (B)

The organisation has an overall goal to increase science and interviewee B knows that the group of people she is leading are there working towards reaching the goals, which was present in other interviews as well.

There seems to be agreement amongst the interviewees that goal setting and to inspire the employees are of importance. When having common goals the group of people are together working towards reaching them. The relationship between people in the

workplace affects the organisational culture and collaboration between the employees. So although there seems to be consistency in goal setting among the Line Managers some of the interviewees told me that the organisations was not focusing on the organisational culture. Interviewee I told that he thinks there is “/.../some lack of consensus in the working culture”. Interviewee H told me that he felt like the organisation was not focusing on creating support towards the Line Managers at the moment, since it is an organisation in its beginning phases the focus seems to be more on the project. He feels like the organisation should be focused at this stage towards creating a good work environment.

“/.../ the role of the Line Manager is of secondary importance to [the organisation]. Maybe the main role should be... eh yeah, should take care of creating a work environment for the group members. But the project that is now, the project is first priority now.” (H)

As the organisation is under construction, the focus seems to, according to the interviewees, be on the project and not on the organisational culture. The stronger the culture the greater the trust is among the employees and management and also the feeling of belonging to the organisation and its ideals. This leads to a greater focus on the goals of the organisation which in extent can increase the productivity of the organisation. Therefore there should be a focus on the work environment among the employees. As a Line Manger, one of the responsibilities is to make the employees in the group grow and set goals and by extension to make the employees have a feeling of belonging, which is something that the interviewed Line Managers mentioned. The Line Managers are key persons in shaping the organisational culture. Thus, the organisation should also focus on supporting the Line Managers in creating a positive organisational culture.

5.2.2 Leadership as the management of meaning. To lead is a social process and it is about influencing and guiding the relationship between the members within it to a common understanding of reality. The process can be conceptualised in terms of a relationship between figure, in other words what the leaders do, and ground, that is

where actions and utterances of leaders guide those involved by consciously or unconsciously shaping and influencing the situation and giving it meaning (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). The leader thus has to listen to the people within the group and adapt to them as well as the other way around. Interviewee A thinks that a good manager has the ability to listen to the employees and adapt to the settings.

“A good manager has the ability to really listen to need of the people that that person is leading I would see as the foremost quality and to adapt to whatever setting/.../” (A)

The leader's behaviours and values have to act according to standards and frameworks relating to those who will be affected. Therefore, there are the employees that decide what functions leadership has. This does not mean that the leader is totally subordinate to a given set of meanings and ideas. The leader can change this, but only gradually and to do this, he or she has to assume that people have certain ideas, values and preferences (Alvesson, 2015). The bargaining relationship requires respect of each other from all parts of the organisation. Some of the interviewed Line Managers expressed that they show respect towards their employees by showing trust and by giving them giving freedom to do their tasks and then provide support when needed. Interviewee F explains his view on the interdependent relationship between Line Managers and employees.

“/.../ the first thing is to gain the respect of those who work for me. So you need to be respected by your staff. And you have to give them the, number one authority, the freedom to work right, so you don't want to hamper them in any way, so you need to provide them with the support /.../” (F)

By having the employees respect interviewee F has the framework to be their leader and has the authority to affect their way of seeing thing. Thus he can lead the employees in to the direction he wants, but the staff members also have an influence on the direction the group is going, so again, it is an interdependent relationship between the Line Managers and the employees. Interviewee B told in the interview

that she is blessed with self-driven people and tries to be a leader that makes people grow.

“I know what leadership is not. It’s not about telling people what to do or directing rules; it’s about making other people grow... I don’t believe in micromanagement. I’m very blessed with self-driven people in my group”. (B)

When a leader and staff are working together as a team there has to be a collaboration between them, where there is giving and taking. It is important that the staff senses that what they see as important gives response from both the rest of the team and from the team leader. If there are differences in opinions it is the team leaders’ role to find the best compromises so all are pleased. The leader creates visions for the group to work towards, by setting up strategies that can be followed to a common goal. If the big picture of where the group is going is in place the way to get there may be easier to achieve. If the managers seeks commitment from the group by giving goals that can be reached with some work, the motivation is built into the effort of the work. A leader can then empower the team to get the best results, as the work that is been done together has a meaning. Even working with a small bit of what is needed doing that as a group can be inspiring if it fits with what the whole organisation is moving toward.

The work to be done is always carried out by a group, the individual is of course important in doing his or her tasks and the leader should encourage initiatives that give the team members special meaning to the work. Then making the connection to what others are working towards is equally important both for the team and the one taking initiatives. It is the Line Managers responsibility to take charge when there is need to give instructions and to put the tasks into context. The Line Manager also has to put boundaries to keep the team to what their assigned duties are. The common goals are important to not lose sight of but an inspired group can as a result achieve more. Interviewee G told that he thinks his job as a leader is to inspire others and help them to set goals.

“/.../inspire others to do better that they thought that’s one thing at least. And also setting goals, help people setting goals, I think that is an

important thing.” (G)

5.2.3 Formal and informal leadership. Formal leadership in organisations is built on shared meanings that determine roles and authority relationships that institutionalise a pattern of leadership. The leadership process illustrates the characteristics of social origins into predetermined roles, relationships and practices, providing how the experiences of how organisational members should be structured. Words and images, symbolic actions and gestures form important tools in the management of meaning, since it structures the situation being managed. Leadership rests as much in these symbolic modes of action as in those instrumental modes of management, direction, and control that define the substance of the leaders’ formal organisational role (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Leadership in the studied organisation is defined through a bureaucratic composition and hierarchical structure. This position is a way for the organisation to set a framework for the members. As been discussed in the chapter on Role Theory the organisation is defining the structures and procedures, and all formal ways are not set yet. Interviewee G explains that in the interview.

“/.../the administration isn’t running smooth yet... I realise that we are not there yet, and I know that [the organisation] is probably doing that, beefing up the administrating side of things. Because it helps to support the managers. (G)

Taking a formal approach can make the contact between team and the Line Manager one-sided when only discussing the tasks ahead and work strategies. By looking at a broader angle into the staffs’ whole life situation and making work only a part of what is ongoing for everyone the concentration to the work is broken and the individual is seen as a more complete person. This may give ways for new ideas even for the work ahead. By having informal discussions as a part of the daily interaction new perspectives can be found even when talking about things that are not work related the team is maybe more inclined to work towards common goals understanding each other’s point. Interviewee C thinks that one approach of being a manager is to reach out to the employees in an informal way given that we are all people.

.../a part of being a manager is being someone that you can approach in maybe some informal ways, because we're all people. You can't really look at it, a staff member is not just a staff member, it is also a whole person and everyone has other stuffs in their life as well, someone who's able to acknowledge that and not fix your personal problem but maybe help you by kind of cope where you are, within that context. (C)

5.2.4 Actions interpreted in context. The actions and utterances by organisational members give experiences meaning, which can be interpreted in terms of the context in which it is set. The actions can thus be perceived in different ways by the individuals within the context. For example, if there is a conflict situation between the manager and the employee, there are two sides of the story, both the manager's and the employee's. Different individuals may make sense of situations with different interpretive schemes, establishing "counter-realities". The leaders' action may thus set up a variety of interpretations that set the basis for meaningful action (Smircich & Morgan 1982). In the interviews, there were some conversations that led in to the subject of conflicts. I asked about the group dynamic and if the Line Manager had open communication with their employees where they can talk freely. In most of the interviews it was expressed that they have a positive climate where the managers and employees have open communication, there were some cases where there had been incidents within the groups. Interviewee A opened up about an issue in his group.

".../ I have one that is catastrophic epic failure eh... I cannot assign a task to this person without this person feeling that it's something wrong or you know, I can't encourage that persons performance without that person feeling discouraged and whatever argument I'd ever put down seems to provoke that person on a challenge that argument ehm... eh.. And normally I would say that that is a situation you can only find when you're in basically a shouting match but eh we've ended up in so different places that we cannot talk really .../". (A)

Since the interviews only were held with the managers of the group, only one side of

the story was heard and as explained, different people perceive us differently. The employee, who does not get along with Line Manager A, might in his view of the world see him as an authorial person. It is easy for employees to transfer their anger on the leader even if he or she might not be the source of the problem. There could have been a range of other circumstances that might have led up to the disagreement. When the question was followed up, interviewee A told that he was trying to solve the conflict.

“So what I have done is that I’ve tried to create an idea on what the dude’s problem is and trying to keep the discussions that we have on problems separated to everything else, I don’t involve others. I try to keep to point and not invest any emotions in it. Just tell them that it’s not working out. And then you know, try to keep kind of a flow within that communication so that you have a feedback situation where the person can hear if they’ve changed their behaviour and if it is better, move on /.../” (A)

So it seems that interviewee A has taken action on the conflict, but he continues and says.

“/.../ This has been kind of unsuccessful. I mean it’s hard, it’s only been so many months so I’m still trying to evolve.” (A)

Unfortunately interviewee A has not had success in the conflict management with the employee. He found that he was doing what he could from his part, and that there also has to be some responds from the employee to solve the situation. As he also points out, he is new in the Line Manager role and still growing in to it. Interviewee C also told me about difficult situation she experienced that has had a more successful result.

“/.../ I have had to do with conflicts before, I’ve learned to not to avoid them because they tend to get bigger, either in your mind or in reality. So ehm, there has been a few issues but that’s a different thing. But in the team, not so much conflicts, but there have been a few red flags that have come up, some people’s communication style, or being negative, so we have talked through it. And one of them I’ve seen making a really good

effort to be a bit more thoughtful in communication style.” (C)

Not every leader has the social ability to handle a difficult situation. This requires the right framing of the experience of others so that action can be guided by common conceptions as to what should occur (Smircich & Morgan 1982). Therefore it might be an idea to have more structured and set ways on how to handle a conflict. Something like a manual on steps to go when handling a difficult situation, which has been requested from the Line Managers (see chapter on Role Theory). Of course every situation is unique but a manual can be used as a guideline on how to handle the situation. When the members of the team are engaged, cooperative and listening they can achieve good results. Both interviewee A and interviewee C seem to take action when there is a problem within the team and seem confident in the work they are doing which is crucial when making tough decisions and handling difficult situations.

5.2.5 Summary. Leadership is a cultural phenomenon and is a social process defined through interactions. Leadership involves defining reality in a way that makes sense for the subordinates (Smircich & Morgan 1982). The culture also characterizes the leadership. There is thus an interdependent relationship between the culture and leaders (Alvesson, 2015). Since the studied organisation is in its early stage the organisational culture is still developing. So perhaps in this phase the Line Managers have an even more important role in shaping the culture of the organisation. The interviewed Line Manager expressed that the interdependent relationship of importance.

Goal setting and inspiring the employees is a central part of being a Line Manager according to the interviewees. Through a common goal the organisational culture can grow stronger (Alvesson 2015). But some of the interviewees did not find that the organisation was focused on empowering the culture of the organisation.

The leaders have to act according to standards and frameworks in relation to those who will be affected. Therefore, there are the employees that decide what functions leadership has (Alvesson, 2015). There has to be cooperation when a leader and staff are working together as a team. It is important that the staff senses that what they see

as important gives response from both the rest of the team and from the team leader. The leader creates visions for the group to work against, by setting up strategies that can be followed to a common goal. Leadership is both about formal and informal management. Taking a formal approach can make the contact between team and the Line Manager one-sided when only discussing work. By taking a more informal approach the leaders can see the individual as a more complete person, which can make ways for new ideas even for the work ahead.

Actions by organisational members can be perceived in different ways depending on the individuals and the context (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Some of the interviews led in to a discussion on conflict within the groups. There could have been a range of other circumstances that can lead to the disagreement. It can be easy for employees to transfer their anger on the leader even if he or she might not be the source of the problem. To be able to handle a disagreement requires the right framing of the experience of others so that action can be guided by common conceptions as to what should occur (Smircich & Morgan 1982). Therefore it might be an idea to have more structured and set ways on how to handle a conflict within the organisation.

6. Concluding discussion

In this section, thoughts and reflections on what the study found and concerns related are presented. Also, a section providing suggestions for further research on the subject is given.

I want to begin by stressing the complexity of analysing individual's perception of a subject. There are so many different areas, aspects and factors to keep in mind. The aspects that have been analysed can, from a holistic approach, only be seen as a small sample, but the significance of qualitative research is however that empirical material has quality. The thesis looks at how clear and unclear role definitions and expectations and leadership in a cultural context contribute to creating structure and meaning towards Line Managers in a young organisation. Previously research have focused on managers situations within changing organisation, this study brings new focus as it is on a young organisation and the structures are still being defined.

When a new organisation is developing there is need for goals and a vision of how the structure should be composed. The organisational structure defines how the work is divided between the roles within the organisation. Roles are a way to position the individuals, so there is a framework for them to relate to. Nevertheless, it is not the structure that determines how the organisation actually works; the structure is socially created. When there is a lack of clarity of the roles and the structure, individuals can become unsure of how they should conduct themselves and if that occurs there is need for support. The research question guiding the study has been *how are structure and meaning created and managed in an organisation in an early stage of development from Line Managers perspective?*

A quote describing the situation, and is also the title of the thesis, came from interviewee C.

“/.../like some people just don't know and they don't know that they don't know/.../” (C)

What she is expressing with the quote is that the upper management of the studied organisation is expecting that everyone know the procedures and expectations of each roles. But the interviewed Line Managers did not agree. The Line Managers found themselves in a position where there were sometimes unclear role definitions and there was a lack of support from the upper management. Some of the interviewees found it hard to meet the expectations of the Line Manager role in the beginning and did not get the help they required and instead tried to figure out on their own how to act.

Structure is given by setting framework for the individuals. Leadership is about guiding the people they are leading in to a common view of reality and setting up a common framework for the members. The interviewed Line Managers have been requesting more comprehension in the organisation, more structured ways of knowing what is expected. Some of the interviewees have been asking for standardised manuals to have set ways. When not getting clear guidelines from the organisation some of the interviewees have instead turned outside and gotten help from coaches, internet and books.

It is a socialisation process when adapting in to a role. The organisation has an impact how the role is formed, but the individual's personality also affects how an individual handles the expectations of the role. If the framework of the role is already defined it might be easier for the individual to act according to it. But that might also restrain the individual to make their own marks on the role. From Line Managers perspective, in some cases, they had the feeling that they were not in the position to question the decisions from upper management. There have been occasions where Line Managers have been stuck between the upper management and the people the Line Managers are leading. The Line Managers are thus in a bargaining relationship stuck between all parts of the organisation trying to please everyone. The employees have to work from the perspective that they have now but also be prepared to follow the changes that

might come. Things can in the future take on a completely new direction and thus the roles might change.

There have been cases where the interviewees have been separated from old colleagues and becoming their manager, which has been hard when not getting support. Support towards the Line Managers is supposed to come from upper management but through the study it also has become clear that support can come from individuals within the team. The studied organisation is in an early phase and the organisational culture is still emerging. The research points to Line Managers having a significant role in shaping the culture of the organisation. The Line Managers are the ones that guide the group of people they are leading in to a common reality, and the group of people are of importance for how the leadership develops. There is thus an interdependent relationship between the Line Managers and their employees.

The research further shows that the team of people give meaning towards the Line Managers. According to a larger part of the interviewees the teams are the Line Managers strongest motivation. Developing the team and guiding them in to common goals. Also being a part of a team and having a feeling of belonging is a strong motivation. Some of the interviewees furthermore expressed that they are driven by getting admiration for their work as Line Managers.

The relationships between people in the workplace affect the organisational culture. When having common goals and visions the group of people is working as a team trying to reach the goals, which give meaning to both the Line Managers and the employees. However, the interviewees found that there was lacking focus on the organisational culture in this stage, instead focus seems to be on the organisations big project. A stable culture leads to greater trust among the employees and management which also has impact on the feeling of belonging to the organisation and its ideals. Thus focus should be on work environment among the employees. It is important that what the employees see of importance gives response from both the rest of the team and from the team leader. If there are differences in opinions it is the team leaders' role to find the best compromise so everyone are pleased and that the team are working according to the same framework.

Taking a formal approach is one way of guiding the team into the same framework. But looking at a broader angle and taking a more informal role by seeing individuals as a more complete person can give ways for new ideas and perspectives. Working with people can sometimes be hard and sometimes conflicted situation can occur. It is then the managers of the group responsibility to handle these, which are easier to handle when having knowledge and having a framework to relate to.

So in conclusion, with the empirical material in mind, structure and meaning is created by support from upper management and the interdependent relationship between the Line Managers and the team, which is created through goals and team work.

6.1 Suggestions for further research

It would have been interesting to examine the organisation when it is more stabilised and the daily work had some sort of routine and to see if the organisational culture has changed. It would also be interesting to examine the same things, but from some other approach than Line Managers view on thing, like from an employee's view of things, or on the other hand, from the upper management way of seeing things. The focus could further be on a deeper analysis on Line Managers psychosocial situation within a young organisation. The study touches the issue but does not go deep into it. An aspect that is not touched upon, but is something of utmost importance, is the gender segregation within organisations. Since the analysed organisation is a research facility, it would have been exciting to research the gender structures in a research community.

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Appendix I

Interview Guide

Here is a selection of the interview questions:

Background Questions

- Tell me a little bit about your background.
- Education? (experience)
- Can you tell me about your previous career?
- How did you become a manager?
- Current type of employment? (title)
- Years of service as a manager?
- Responsibilities? (Tell me about your areas of responsibilities)

Leadership

- What is leadership according to you?
- Which qualities signify a good manager?
- Which qualities signify a bad manager?
- How do you think people want to be led?
- Why do you think your employees go to work? How do you motivate them?
- How do you perceive your leadership? What qualities as a leader do you consider yourself to have and be good at?
- What is it that motivates you as a leader?
- Describe a situation where your leadership worked well and less well?
- Do you work actively to improve/develop your leadership style?
- Do you feel that you and your employees have good communication (Do you talk openly about things)?