A Little Play Goes a Long Way:

The Limitations of Managing Play in a Knowledge Intensive Firm

by

Karla Pedak
Aslaug Theodora Smaradottir

May 2017

Master's Programme in Managing People, Knowledge and Change

Abstract

The activities work and play were seen as antithesis in the literature since the early 20th century. However, during the past four decades, play has been argued to produce beneficial outcomes within organisations. Since then play has become an increasingly popular management tool, inspiring managers to implement elements of play into work in order to influence employees, morale and work itself in a positive way. The purpose of this study is to interpret if and how play can be utilized by managers to have an impact on employees, the organisational culture and the workplace, more specifically why managers experiment with play and what their objective was to implement it. Moreover, we aim to gather insight if play is manageable altogether.

We conducted a qualitative single case study within an organisation in a Nordic county. Ten individuals were interviewed, five managers and five employees, in order to gather in-depth knowledge on how managers implement play elements into the company, what is its purpose, how do employees experience it and what are its outcomes. The managers within the organisation had outlined several different elements of play, investing time and resources into events with moderately beneficial outcomes. However, an aspect dismissed as marginal, a pool table, proved to have a large impact on workers, atmosphere and organisational culture. We found that managing play within a company is largely limited to introducing and implementing play.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   Background

The concept of play has been studied since the early 1900's, mainly as the antithesis of work. Articles written in the beginning of the 20th century on the topic argue that work and play are separate aspects, where they should not be mixed with one another as it was believed to decrease productivity (Ford, 2007 [1922]). Other research argued that play was not suited for an organisational setting, that it is common sense that workers should work while at work and work for their wages not play for them (Huizinga, 1949; Taylor, 1911 cited in Kavanagh, 2011). According to Miller (1973), a distinction should be made between work and play in their concern on process and outcomes. His approach indicates that work activities would be more attended to outcomes and ends, whereas play in turn is concentrated on processes and means.

Many scholars have attempted to establish a definition for the term play, yet their definitions vary. Play is often associated as something only children participate in and not for adults (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Play can take many forms in different scenarios and last over various lengths of time (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Huizinga (1949) defines the term as a voluntary activity that occurs outside reality, connected with social groups without a profitable interest. Huizinga's (1949) study on play in cultures was revolutionary and his study leads by example in many researches today.

However, in recent decades play has gained popularity in academic literature as well as business literature as a beneficial aspect to incorporate into organisation. Due to this trend in management studies, contemporary organisations have begun to involve play in work in order to acquire various beneficial results (Penenberg & Zichermann, 2015).

A need to unite the concepts of work and play has since then been argued as the mentality and characteristics of work has changed and requires new perspectives (Denhardt, 1981). The blurring of the two concepts has been described as a bridge between meaning-driven

employees and result driven leadership in modern companies (Kane, 2004). Suggestions that regard reframing work activities as play might transform the employees' perspectives towards work (Dougherty & Takacs, 2004). Deal and Key (1998) argue how it can pay off for organisations to involve play in their company, as play can be used in formal and informal ways to build team spirit for example.

The concept of 'serious play' has therefore gained popularity in literature on the topic as it is a term used to describe the notion of employees participating in playful behaviour or activities to accomplish work related objectives (Statler, Roos & Victor, 2009). Furthermore, Roos, Victor and Statler (2004) examine how serious play has potential to be controlled by managers when preparing strategy and facing challenges in organisational practice. As a result of the popularity of the concept, play, games and toys have been introduced increasingly in organisations (Costea, Crump & Holm, 2005). The aforementioned topic of managing play is relatively new in the academic world and research on this topic is comparatively scarce.

As the concept of serious play suggests a high degree of control, further studies have emerged on if play can be managed or not alongside the increased use of play (Dougherty & Takacs, 2004; Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). It is debatable whether play in organisations can be managed at all (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012) and furthermore, whether or not play will result in beneficial outcomes (Fleming, 2005). Many scholars have found that play can indeed be beneficial and have positive outcomes in an organisational setting. Play can increase motivation (Glynn, 2004), creativity (Sandelands, 2010; Isen, 1999), teamwork and job satisfaction (Meyer, 1999; Karl & Peluchette, 2006).

The functions of business and work have changed since the beginning of the 20th century and have evolved to be more knowledge intensive (Alvesson, 2004; Newell et al, 2009). The company we researched is a knowledge intensive firm and there connection between play elements and knowledge intensive work will be further examined.

1.2   Purpose and the Research Question

The specific purpose of our research is to qualitatively analyse the implementation of play within organisations as well as to interpret if and how play can be utilized by managers to

positively affect the employees, interpersonal relationships and organisational culture. Moreover we intend to analyse why managers experiment with play and what their purpose was for implementing it. We aim to gather knowledge on whether managers are able to use the play aspects as a tool to influence human capital for the benefit of the organisation. The study will address the effect that the concept of play has on the Nordic organisation, a knowledge intensive firm that utilizes play within the context of work, and discover how and why managers embrace play in the organisation. We aim to understand how management can implement play elements to work, what they aspire to achieve and influence.

The aim of this thesis is to generate new insights into the roles of managers and employees in an organisation where play elements are implemented. We intend to provide an in-depth view on organisational play theories and a single case study at a knowledge intensive firm. We are fascinated to view whether further use of play as a tool may be to indirectly manage employees and their habits or guide them into becoming more devoted to the organisation. This research aims to advance the knowledge on the effectiveness or limitations of play on employees and organisational culture. Moreover, our overall purpose is explanatory, to contribute to the literature of managing play in organisations. We aim to add to the existing literature on play in order to go further than to simply describe current theoretical framework.

Finally, with the case study, we additionally strive to provide a good description of the elements of play present in the company of focus, examine their purpose and possible outcomes. To further examine the effect of play, we will analyse how employees of a case study experienced play aspects in question and whether it was as the managers had intended. We will also interpret how the play elements have or have not influenced the organisation as a whole.

Hence, the relevance of this thesis is to provide practitioners and managers insight into knowledge of introducing and implementing play aspects within their companies. In this thesis we intend to convey the extent to which play can be managed, supplying readers a realistic view of the limits of control regarding play and its outcomes. Practitioners receive an in-depth view of what they should be aware of when implementing play and the restrains management has regulating the reception of employees.

Toward the end of this study, we aim to demonstrate practical recommendations to the reader with regard to managing play. Managers ought to implement various opportunities of play

which empower employees to take control, let it run its course and allow employees access to play elements. The outcomes of play should then come naturally, if employees are enabled to lean towards a play element of their choosing. This thesis should be read by managers and practitioners planning to experiment with play elements within their organisations, in order for them to gather a realistic view of implementing and managing play.

The purpose and relevance of the study led us to the following research question, which will guide our empirical investigation:

> ➢ How do managers implement play elements into work and how do subordinates experience it?

1.3   Research limitations

Firstly, this thesis will cover managing and experiencing play from the perspectives of implementation, purpose, result and experience. Therefore, it will not cover other perspectives, play's financial impact, designing play or other aspects of managing an organisation. This study will not investigate the actual process of playing, but only its objectives, influence and result as experienced by managers and employees. Finally, this thesis will not focus on the future of play in the specific organisation, we will simply present recommendations regarding the direction that could be taken.

1.4   Thesis Outline

The following chapter aims to explain play and portray the definitions of the concept. We then present a literature review which includes relevant literature related to the topic of play, and an overview of the changed attitudes on whether play belongs in a work setting throughout the 20th century. Moreover, modern literature of the past few decades on the benefits of play elements is examined, blurring between play and work as well as the concepts as separate entities. Thereafter, literature on play within organisations is presented, the different perspectives on it as well as introducing serious play and critical view towards it.

Our third chapter addresses methodological considerations on which our research is based on and how empirical data was gathered for this qualitative study. In the chapter we present, describe and analyse the approach we have found most appropriate when undertaking the data collecting process. Following the purpose, relevance, objective and research question established above, the methodology chapter explains how we achieved to deliver answers and results to them.

Thereafter, the collected empirical data is presented with the main findings and themes gathered from the interviews. We found the managers had implemented several play elements within the company and only a marginal aspect of a relocated pool table proved to have a large effect on all workers, working environment, ambience and the organisational culture. Alongside findings we additionally analyse and examine the data in depth, uncovering the limits of managing play evident in the case. Management's control of play was limited to introducing and actualizing elements providing the opportunity for employees to take charge or their play in action.

The discussion will follow in the penultimate chapter where we match the patterns of the collected data to the literature supplied previously in the thesis. We observed a contradiction between the literature on serious play implying play can be managed to a large degree and the limitation of it we discovered in the empirical data. Moreover, we discuss the unpredictability of play that can be to blame for the limits of controlling it and the importance of enabling employees to take over managing play for themselves following the implementation. Lastly, we conclude our findings throughout the study and what they signify as well as provide suggestions for the future.

2 Theoretical Frame of Reference

In this chapter we present the existing literature on play and elements of it within an organisational context. We first aim to explain the concept of play, its ambiguity and the definitions it has been given by scholars. Then we review a theoretical framework including relevant literature related to our topic of interest, which contains a short overview of the change in views on play from the antithesis of work from the beginning of the 20th century to the perspective of play as a popular management tool employed to benefit workers during the past decades. Furthermore, we overview modern literature on the blurring between play and work, as well as the outlook of the two concepts as separate beneficial entities. Lastly, literature on play within an organisational setting is presented, the possible benefits of play elements, the different perspectives on managing play as well as examining the term 'serious play' and a critical view by literature contradicting it.

2.1 What is play?

Many scholars have attempted to define the term 'play' and yet they rarely agree on a theoretical definition. Everyone has played or plays occasionally, therefore aware of what play feels like, however it is difficult to understand and define due to its ambiguity (Sutton-Smith, 2001). 'Play' can stand for many diverse things and happenings, therefore scholars find it difficult to choose a specific definition for the concept (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Turner (1969) defines play as 'liminal', meaning that it is a threshold between reality and unreality.

In Huizinga's (1949) study on play elements in culture, he defines play as voluntary, non-serious and engaging. According to him, play is an activity that occurs outside reality and has its boundaries of rules, time and space. Due to its connotations, play is often taken for granted and tends to be generalised as appropriate activity only for children, not for adults (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Research suggests that children who play are more likely to develop and mature, while play is merely considered a distraction for adults (Sutton-Smith, 2001).

Play as Huizinga (1949) presents it, is in connection with a social group and has no profitable interests. Furthermore, he argues that play is not an activity that serves a purpose other than play in itself and has intrinsic value. (Huizinga, 1949). Play may simply stem from the sheer delight of emotional release (Spariosu, 1989). According to Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) it is crucial to acknowledge that play is 'autotelic' in order to understand it, signifying it has a purpose in itself.

Csikszentmihalyi and Bennett argue that play is an entity of itself or in other words "play is going"(1971, p.45). This means that once playing starts, there is no ulterior motive, all that matters is the play at hand and it serves no external purpose (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennett, 1971). There are multiple forms of play that can be found in the 'play' sphere as it can occur in anything, in many different scenarios and can last over multiple lengths of time (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Sutton-Smith (2001) presents a list of play forms and experiences to show the various kinds of play, from dreams to bungee jumping. He organised play into the following categories: mind and subjective play, solitary play, playful behaviour, informal social play, vicarious audience play, performance play, celebrations and festivals, contests as well as risky and deep play (Sutton-Smith, 2001). According to Sutton-Smith (2001), elements of play can be for instance birthdays, balls, sports, board games, card games, playing music, joking, parties, dancing, restaurants, leisure and pool.

2.2 Work and Play as Separate or Blurred Aspects

Historically, in articles made on the topic from the early 1900's, 'work' and 'play' were seen as clearly separate aspects of life that should not be mixed under any circumstance, as Ford argues, "the sole object ought to be to get the work done and to get paid for it" (2007 [1922], p.65-66). He further explains that one should not play unless work is completed (Ford, 2007 [1922]), as that it would hamper productivity. Huizinga agrees that work and play should not be mixed, claiming that "we do not play for wages, we work for them" (1949, p. 51).

This perspective suggests that play is not suited for organisations, that according to common sense, employees' working hours should be planned in a manner that they "'work while they work' and 'play while they play' and not mix the two" (Taylor, 1911, cited in Kavanagh, 2001, p.344-345). Furthermore, Miller (1973) suggests a further distinction of focus between

work and play activities, specifically on process and outcomes; or means and ends. According to this perspective, work activities are more concerned with outcomes and ends, whereas individuals performing 'play' are concentrated on processes and means (Miller, 1973).

However, more recent literature does not predominately portray play as an opposite of work, yet some scholars nonetheless continue to highlight the differences between the two concepts. Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) argue that the focus of 'play' on process, rather than outcome, is accompanied by differences in the manner the activity in question is conducted. They elaborate that work is more likely than play to be conducted in a way that is rational and logical or manner of various steps, constantly being aware of the end outcome (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010). Alternatively, when participating in play, rationality loses primacy, which makes room for other ways of decision-making, including emotion, intuition and risk taking, these deviations from regular rules of conduct and operating procedures may facilitate creativity as well as expression (Isen, 1999). The overriding drivers of behaviour in play are enjoyment and discovery, instead of objectives and goals of work (Csikszenmihalyi, 1990; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; March, 1976).

Throughout history, a scholarly consensus states that the concepts of work and play portray different manners of approaching, and frames for, activities, instead of simply divergences in the activities themselves (Bateson, 1955; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Miller, 1973; Glynn, 1994). According to this, play should be viewed as a way of organising the ends and means of a particular action or aim in which the means are at the focus of interest (Miller, 1973). According to Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010, p. 6): "'Play' is distinguished from 'work' by contrasting its purposes, places, and processes". Moreover, they argue that work is "conducted in the real world; play's context is the threshold between current reality and future possibilities" (2010, p. 3). They further claim that in play, commitment is provisional, thus play aspects produce variety, instead of consistency (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). However, the attitudes towards play have arguably softened, some even stating that work and play are becoming indistinguishable. Kane (2004) argues that despite these differences in purpose, the play ethic may act as a bridge between meaning-driven workers and results driven management in the modern organisation or company.

Alternative to previous perspectives Starbuck and Webster (1991) suggest that the distinction between work and play has become less clear. Denhardt agrees (1981), describing a need for

uniting the concepts of work and play because the distinction between them seems blurred. Denhardt states that "work will become a reflection of one's commitment to certain actions, and since pleasure comes from meaningful work, work in fact becomes pleasurable" (1981, p. 125-126) and therefore "work will become play" (Denhardt, 1981, p. 125-126). However, this approach would require employees to have a positive perspective and welcome play as a part of work.

As an example of blurring, a part of the differences between work and play is arguably psychological, as "the benefits of play can be achieved by reframing activities, since relabelling tasks as play instead of work transformed people's perceptions, judgments and motivations" (Dougherty & Takacs 2004, p. 576). Hence, they suggest that taking work out of its usual setting, even if simply renaming activities and circumstances, may make a difference in how employees view their work. The perspective of play and work becoming blurred has been connected to involving playful elements to work in order to gain beneficial outcomes. As Starbuck & Webster state, "play at work may be time wasted, of course; but it may contribute to high-quality results, and it may induce workers to work longer" (1991, p.2).

2.3   Play in Organisations

The presumptions made on play as hindrance and inappropriate during work have progressively been discarded with the increasing popularity of the topic of play alongside work (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). During recent decades, play has emerged as a sustained topic in popular business literature and a vital element of organisational culture (Costea, et al., 2005). Deal and Key (1998) argue that not only is play beneficial for companies, it is additionally financially lucrative, stating "it pays to play" (p.115). They encourage managers to find a reason every month to celebrate, establish recognition of employees and using formal as well as informal time to build the team spirit (Deal & Key, 1998).

Play, games, and toys have been introduced increasingly more in contemporary organisations, since they are no longer seen as disruptions of production, or opposites of so called 'serious work' (Costea, Crump & Holm, 2005). Since games and play are focused on participants achieving various goals while having fun, plenty of companies have embraced them in order

to make employees more satisfied, more focused on their work and better trained as well improve services and products (Penenberg & Zichermann, 2015).

Companies such as Google, Lego, and Sony have adapted their organisational culture to play with, for example: "team-building exercises, simulation games, puzzle-solving activities, office parties, themed dress-down days, and colourful, aesthetically-stimulating workplaces" (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012, p.82). As an example of a successful engagement with play, Google has been in the spotlight of the press for their exceptional approach to integrating the trend of work and play in their workplace, resembling a playground more than a typical office space (Walker, 2011).

Outcomes of play

According to Deal and Key (1998) play should be primarily used to enhance communication, since information binds a team together. Mainemelis and Ronson in turn (2006) are adherents of play as stimulants of creativity in organisations, claiming play acts as a type of engagement with work while also able to be a diversion from alienating tasks work contains. Penenberg and Zichermann, (2015) suggest managers can implement play aspects and create games in order to increase quality control, worker morale and productivity.

Glynn (1994) found that performing play tasks influenced the individual on how any given information was comprehended and was then used in order to construct judgments and to form behavioural responses. When performing play tasks, individuals administered more to information regarding the quality of their performance; while making more elaborated, image-loaded responses; as well as being more intrinsically motivated (Glynn, 1994). The differences between work and play task cues according to Glynn (1994) affected the individuals' performance results indirectly via instantiating cognitive orientations associated with them, work with an ends orientation and play with a means orientation.

Sandelands (2010, p. 72) claims that "play is the creative dynamic of human community". He elaborates that play requires the utmost vitality of community and thereby also its largest possibilities for development and adaptation. Furthermore, the deviations from regular operating proceedings and rules of conduct indicate that play concepts allow and facilitate creativity and expression (Isen, 1999).

According to critical motivational theory, if people's intrinsic motivation, or what they genuinely love to do, is aligned with the work environment, we may unlock great potential (Penenberg & Zichermann, 2015). However, economy arguably only works if individuals additionally do what they ultimately need to do (Penenberg & Zichermann, 2015). Penenberg and Zichermann, (2015) recommend 'gamification' as a repeatable, cost-effective and simple way for turning intrinsic motivational wish and work to a joint coherent system.

According to Karl and Peluchette (2006), workload can have negative effects on employees which can result in burnout and emotional exhaustion as well as decreasing job satisfaction. Employees who experience fun at work are more likely to be motivated as well as more energetic at work, and they are considered better at team-working under these circumstances (Meyer, 1999; Karl & Peluchette, 2006). Hence, this may arguably lead to better quality of work and thus, to profit for the organisation. Therefore, play seems to have positive impact on workplace tensions and stress among employees resulting in a better organisational culture (Karl & Peluchette, 2006).

2.4   Managing Organisational Play

Due to the reported benefits of play, literature also has examples of recommendations to consider when implementing play. Csikszenmihalyi, (1990) argues finding meaning and being self-conscious in one's experiences such as play is fundamental in improving its impact, while finding flow and reflect in the activity. This means managers fostering play must make sure employees know the purpose of participating in play and enable them to reach a level of flow when immersed in play.

Moreover, unlike play, work in turn is more suitable to be conducted in a step-by-step or logical way with the worker constantly being aware of the end outcome instead of themselves within the experience (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). Hence in order to implement play in work context, guiding figures such as managers must make room for play (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010), by providing a level of separation from professional interactions of routine in which the individual has been entrenched (Ibarra, 2003).

Dougherty and Takacs (2004) argue that play is highly manageable in an organisational setting where managers should strategically create rules and boundaries of the play, such as if it were a game. They focus their research on 'team play' and see play as a complicated social function where play is both organized and improvised (Dougherty & Takacs, 2004). Their view is that the team interacts and formulates a strategy while playing according to the rules and each player knows their place (Dougherty & Takacs, 2004).

Lafley and Martin describe strategy as "an integrated set of choices that uniquely positions the firm in its industry so as to create sustainable advantage and superior value relative to the competition" (p. 3, 2013). Implementing play in organisations is a choice managers make and could therefore be regarded as a strategic option. Penenberg and Zichermann (2015) agree with the idea of play as a tool to achieve outcomes of large calibre, emphasizing that play should not simply regard foosball tables, open-plan seating or a free lunch, instead the focus should be on improving the quality of work. The attention must be used to reconsidering the world of work in order to make it more engaging, successful and fun (Penenberg & Zichermann, 2015).

Serious play

However, play in organisations may take different forms depending on how it is received. Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) categorize three differences in which play manifests itself in work are: "play as a (serious) continuation of work, play as a (critical) intervention into work and play as (uninvited) usurpation of work" (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012, p.81). Firstly, from the standpoint of play as a continuation of work, play is seen as separate from work but still cooperating towards a shared objective or goal. This is a common viewpoint in the literature on play and is similar in nature to 'serious play' (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012).

From the second perspective presented by Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012), play is seen as an intervention of work, play can serve as a way to intervene work and when this occurs, the two concepts are no longer harmonious. In this instance play can take the form of mimicry, playful criticism or breaks from work (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). From the last point of view, play is capable of taking over tasks in the workplace that the company is not capable of managing and therefore play usurps work (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). Here, play takes over and exposes the organisation's inabilities, therefore play does the task, without consent, that is commonly the task meant for the organisation to do (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012).

A significant amount of current literature on play focuses on serious play. The approach suggests play as a management tool, controlled by managers to accomplish a certain objective. Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) argue that serious play is one of two camps the term of play can be categorized into, the second being work and play as a phenomenon that cannot be distinguished in organisations. Statler, Roos, Victor (2009) concur, stating that in the context of serious play there is a clear distinction between work and play. According to them, the term 'serious play' can be defined as employees participating in playful behaviour to accomplish objectives related to work (Statler, Roos, Victor, 2009). The concept describes play activities that differ greatly from work activities but are nonetheless beneficial to organisation in a purposeful way (Statler, Roos, Victor, 2009). Furthermore, they suggest in their earlier research that serious play is an activity where a person draws on his or her experiences, imagination and integrate their cognitive, social as well as emotional dimensions that benefit the organisation (Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004).

Roos, Victor and Statler (2004) use the term 'serious play' in their organisational research where they examine the potential of utilizing serious play in organisational challenges, particularly preparing strategy as controlled by the managers. Roos, Victor and Statler (2004) suggest that serious play is a tool that should be included in the strategy making process. This should not be done by forcing strategy makers to manage serious play intentionally or deliberately but rather to manage the conditions in which serious play can emerge (Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004). This perspective on serious play implies the concept can be a tool within the control of managers with the purpose of achieving specific results.

Roos, Victor and Statler (2004) also connect serious play with the management task of strategy, indicating that changing strategy processes' constraints would additionally change the generated content, which was researched by changing the usual mode of work to serious play and transform the regular medium from graphic, verbal and text by introducing 3-D media, specifically LEGO bricks. In their study, the altered medium and mode constraints had the argued immediate actual effect of making the program of executive education appear less like 'work' while appearing more like 'play' (Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004). However, left unanswered are the constraints of the medium of 3-D materials and mode of serious play, which may lead the appearance of innovative and adaptive content.

Critical view to serious play

Contrastingly, Statler, Heracleous and Jacobs (2011) criticise the notion of control connected to serious play, highlighting the paradoxical nature of it in their study of serious play. In this research they claim that serious play cannot be managed fully because of its ambiguity (Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs, 2011). Statler, Heracleous and Jacobs (2011) further explain that the outcomes of serious play are unpredictable hence, it is better to experiment with specific activities and gauge the results, if there are noticeable results then it can be repurposed within a specific activity that is beneficial to the company.

Also in contrast to serious play, Hunter, Jemielniak and Postula (2010) argue that when managers simply provide the opportunity to play by introducing basic elements of play, such as table tennis and foosball tables with free snacks and drinks, they can foster play in their organisation and play from that aspect remains informal in day to day working environment. According to this critical perspective, managing play can be done simply by providing unsophisticated play aspects such as foosball and other games, which suffices to make an impact on employees. MacIntosh and Beech (2011) do not promote control of play but simply suggest that fantasy can be utilized by management to strategically construct visions of the future through role playing and role taking. Furthermore, according to Grugulis (2002) managers can use jokes and humour to manage themselves, as they can make use of play to change the perspective, re-evaluate dilemmas or cope with problems in their work in a playful manner.

Moreover, according to Fleming (2005), 'cultures of fun' or highly managed workplace fun such as serious play suggests, could have unintended effect that most of other researches do not consider. Such activities may generate cynicism, resistance among employees or that employees experience the fun as inauthentic and therefore unwilling to participate. (Fleming, 2005). Hence, play can in some cases have negative effects on organisations and corrupt its operations. Although, managers' intentions might be good, individuals have different preferences, aspects of play may be welcomed by others with beneficial outcomes and alternatively regarded negatively by some, resulting in dissent and dissatisfaction (Denhardt, 1981).

In agreement with this perspective, Fleming's (2005) research shows how employees perceive play within their organisations and conclude that some employees often feel that it came off

as inauthentic despite management committing fully to it. Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) also argue that producing authentic organisational play is very difficult and even impossible. Tökkäri (2015) states that managing play is ambiguous and therefore requires managers to stimulate workers to engage in spontaneous and authentic play.

Tökkäri (2015) argues that play can be fostered in workplaces only if authenticity is fostered. However, managers can in some cases find that instead of stimulating employees for the benefit of the company, they have lost control of the organisations function (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). Fleming (2005) also notes that in past research, authentic fun occurred mostly in workplace where employees created fun themselves. Furthermore, Fleming (2005) implies that the source of authentic fun comes from self-management and genuine autonomy, placing as much duty or responsibility on workers and also managers to create authentic fun.

A general consensus in the research of management of play is that managing play is possible but there are examples that show that play can only be managed to a certain degree and employees are capable of managing play themselves. In Lee and Lin's (2011) research on online player game workers, they found that employees were in charge of managing their own work and play time, deciding when to play and when to work. Furthermore, employees can adjust play in their work to reflect their lifestyle and their true self (Guerrier & Abib, 2003). Play can be considered a tool for employees to manage their play in order to make sense of time and work space and therefore manage play further to increase relationship with co-workers (Hunter, Jemielniak & Postula, 2010).

In order to fully comprehend the effect play can have, it is imperative to consider that organisational play can have advantages and disadvantages for the company. If play is considered fun then it is a benefit for the organisation as it encourages innovation, increases productivity and enhances team spirit (Dougherty & Takacs, 2004). Yet, "it is difficult to categorise what is and is not fun from an external point of view" (Plester, 2009, p. 597). Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) argue that play and fun are separate concepts. Fun is correlated with enjoyment and pleasure yet managed fun is not always associated as pleasant or enjoyable for every employee (Sørensen and Spoelstra, 2012). Fleming (2005) further explains that parties and games planned by management are not as authentic as actual parties or games. Hence, prominent part of modern literature appears to be in disagreement whether play can be or should be managed and which are the limits.

3   Method

In this chapter we present, depict and justify the methods we used when constructing this thesis. Furthermore, sections that outline the data collection alongside with analysis of the data and methods used for it are additionally presented the justification for conducting in-depth research is to gather systematically information about a problem and to increase knowledge of it. Yet, to successfully conduct such a research, it is favourable to first comprehend the difference between methodology and method (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The underlying conceptions, notions and assumptions are methodology of the researchers who then determine the utilization of method. The pragmatic approach to actual collecting and analysing data is emphasized in the method, while methodology covers how research must be designed and then executed when considering the theories' presumptions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In the methodology chapter we aim to portray and analyse how we achieve the purpose of this study and answer the research question, concluded finally by a summary of methods.

3.1   Research Approach

Selecting an appropriate research philosophy is indispensable to successfully execute a thesis study, since it reflects the authors' strategies, perspective and purpose by which knowledge is developed throughout the study. According to Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2009) mainly two research philosophies prevail, positivism and interpretivism. Positivism philosophy argues in essence that simply observable phenomenon will then lead to producing reliable findings and data for correlations and consistencies (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2009). However, we conducted our thesis based on interpretivism to attain a view of our organisation of focus, in order to study how play elements are constructed, their purpose and outcome.

The principal characteristic of interpretivism is that circumstances are a complex issue and people are continually interpreting situations and circumstances (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2009). Those interpretations of social factors ultimately adjust individual's own

behaviours and actions. Thereby, the pivotal aspect of interpretivism philosophy is observing the context of the subjects of research and to understand the unique perspectives of them (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2009). In this thesis we acknowledge complexity of individuals and situations within the focus company, examining play aspects while continuously keeping the specific context of the organisation in mind.

Dissimilar to natural science, interpretivism proposes that the generation of knowledge in fields of research that consist of social factors and individuals, should be handled differently. Whereas physical objects are independent from human construction and understanding, as well as tend to retain intrinsic data, individuals generally possess and utilize their own notion of the social world. We firstly intended to receive a view of the interviewees' social context and surroundings before focusing on particular aspects and activities of play inside the socially constructed world.

Researchers are supplied instruments by qualitative research methods to explore the why and how questions of a research, in place of simply answering who, what, when or where (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, in-depth examinations and smaller samples are consequently more commonly used in qualitative research. Our thesis was constructed in the sample size of 10 individuals within a single company, through in-depth interviews. Furthermore, qualitative research concentrates on the comprehension of the social universe by investigating and decoding its members' interactions (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Interpretivism philosophy is typically linked to qualitative research, as it permits researchers to construct understanding of complicated human behaviours or social phenomenon in a subjective way. Hence it is our chosen perspective, as it suited the aim regarding our topic of interest which includes notions such as individuals, their opinions, actions and social concepts. Moreover, since a qualitative research attempts to explain, describe, interpret, theorise and structure a subject (Prasad, 2005), we felt it the most appropriate approach to our study.

Consequently, we used qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and observation of participants and organisational environment to successfully execute the study. We came to this decision based on the issue of validity, whether the method is fitting with regard to our research question. With the interpretivist perspective, we were able to gather insight of play within the organisation, reasons for it and its outcomes, as well as obtain a greater

understanding of the context surrounding play. Additionally, the research entails abstract subjects of study, such as playfulness, motivation, management and interpersonal relationships. The variables are not straightforward to measure, assess or quantify, since they are complex and difficult to pinpoint. By examining and investigating interview answers of a sample of ten individuals, we applied methods of qualitative research to gather, collect and analyse data, as well as develop outcomes and findings through the thesis. Thus, we conducted a qualitative research utilizing the philosophy of interpretivism, as the premise and research question of the study is in the format of "how" and since the subject of the thesis is complex, comprising of individuals, a company and social phenomena.

3.2   Research Design

Following the clarification of a research philosophy, we established the approach and design required to achieve the purpose of the study when conducting research. Three prominent research approaches can be identified; inductive, abductive and deductive, each of which vary in order of empirical data and theory (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). With regards to the order of process used to conduct the research, empirical data or theory is the primary focus. The approaches are concerned with either propositions that are developed from current theory, theory that is generated from gathered data or developing new concepts and improving of theoretical models (Johansson, 2003).

Firstly, inductive approach allows the analysis of collected data to proceed the development of theory (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The approach enables alternate explanations for the subjects studied, instead of focusing strictly on predefined theories that are proposed by deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Deductive approach in turn commences with the construction of hypothesis linked with prevalent theories, which is followed with empirical data in order to explain findings (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Nonetheless, in this thesis, we decided upon an abductive research approach to interpret the empirical data we gather against existing theory, rather than testing a predetermined hypothesis. Hence our findings on the limits of play were then compared to the prevailing literature on play, contradicting with the managerial control suggested by literature on serious play.

Primarily, abductive approach enables us to form a foundation for our research by utilizing existing theories as well as granting the development of new theories by analysing empirical data collection's themes or patterns. Hence, the approach combines inductive and deductive approaches, and it is appropriate when handling qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). A perception of the characteristics, factors and consequences of the case study with the perception of abduction thus needs an integrated approach, since the main issue of case studies tends to be handling the interrelatedness of the numerous elements within the research. (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Hence in this thesis study, we merge a theoretical foundation of assumptions made in prevailing research, a deductive approach, with an inductive approach, with which we found a gap in existing literature within a single case study. Consequently, the abductive research approach is most suitable for our thesis since it allows us to form foundations of research by using prevailing theories, the case of focus.

3.3   Data Collection Method

Two methods are most commonly used when conducting research, quantitative and qualitative research, as well as mixed methods comprised of the two (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative approach examines the relationship between variables and the data collection is composed of quantity such as numbers, counts and scores, as well as statistical results (Bryman & Bell, 2011, Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research in turn explores and aims to understand the meaning people give to social problems. Qualitative data alludes to data that is non-numeric, emerging and can include themes of responses based on a survey or answers of in-depth interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011, Creswell, 2014). Thus, in order for us to answer the research question of this thesis, we used the qualitative research method.

Both qualitative and quantitative, as well as a mixed data may be used to carry out a case study. Case studies convey unique ways of developing theory by using in-depth understanding of empirical phenomena and the contexts they have (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Essentially, a case study signifies an empirical inquest of phenomenon in a context of real-world, while using various sources of evidence and theoretical representations (Yin, 2013). However, qualitative data is the optimal way of gaining knowledge since a case study design often uses methods such as observations or unstructured interviewing (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The case study strategy is used best when there is little understanding regarding the

occurrence of certain social phenomenon and the researchers have little or no control over the phenomenon and its context (Yin, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989).

Theses containing research questions of "why" and "how" nature may often be conducted by utilizing a single case study, however in particular cases performing multiple case studies might be favourable in order to examine possible findings in various contexts (Yin, 2013; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Hence two varieties can be identified, single- and multiple case studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Yin, 2013). When the objective is to gather in-depth knowledge on details of a case, a single case study can be utilized, while when two or several cases are studied in order to look at differences or similarities a multiple case study is optimal (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

In our study we felt a single case study to be most appropriate in order to gain in-depth data from the company in question. Focusing on one case enabled us the depth we needed to examine managing the concept of play and how the organisation experienced it. The case study is assumed to portray the complexity of a single case, and the suitable methodology which enables it was developed in the social sciences (Johansson, 2003). Furthermore, two types of single case studies may be differentiated, holistic and embedded studies. The former approach refers to studying and examining the case in question in total, while the latter alludes to studying different identified subunits within the case study (Yin, 2013). We chose the holistic perspective in order to gain a thorough outlook of the whole organisation.

An integral piece of carrying out a case study is determining the research scope through affirming the direction and rationale of the case in question as well as units of analysis intended to define the data collection context and limits of the case's limits (Yin, 2013). The practice not only abolishes the chance of a superficial and ambiguous research design, but also enables researchers to form feasible limits in their study while identifying the most relevant knowledge on the subjects selected (Yin, 2013). Conducting a single case study is arguably favourable under specific situations when the case serves an exposing purpose or represents a critical test of an existing theory (Yin, 2013).

We decided upon conducting a single case study that corresponds to the *how* variety of research question in order to achieve descriptive answers and knowledge on a thorough level. Furthermore, in order to gain perspective from decision makers as well as subordinates we

chose managers and employees as the units of analysis. The reason for us to have selected to collect empirical data on five of the company's managers and five employees as units of analysis, is to be able to attain an in-depth understanding of the issue as a whole and triangulated knowledge on the topic of our focus. The aim of this research is to examine how managers have implemented the company's play aspects, possible strategies related to it, how the employees experience the elements of play as well as its outcomes.

The primary perspective we contemplated to study were the ways, plans and intentions of managers relating to play elements. Managers as decision makers behind implementing play formed a vital part of the research and were interviewed first. Managers have various roles such as setting objectives, implementing strategies, planning, motivating employees, delegating tasks, controlling, allocating resources and so forth. We aimed to understand how play elements align with those tasks, if play complements other objectives. In order to effectively perform in several positions, the manager must obtain a diversified and competitive skillset (Tavitiyaman, Weerakit & Ryan, 2014). Therefore, interviewing half of the company's managers gave us variation on those skillsets and responsibilities as well as enabled us to gather insightful and in-depth knowledge with regard to the case and study subjects. Additionally, we used other employees as additional units of analysis for their perspective as well as to attain a more reliable and comprehensive empirical data base.

3.4   Interviews and data collection

We collected the secondary data for this thesis mainly from online databases such as Lund University Library's search service, and Google Scholar. The articles we utilized were found by us using search terms as 'play', 'work and play', for example. We also utilized books found through the Lund University Library database. Additionally, the reference lists of some of the most relevant articles for this thesis were also used in order to find other articles.

Furthermore, primary data in the form of interviews were a crucial part of the research. Interviews as a data collection method enable flexibility to the research, hence it was our method of choice. Moreover, interviews additionally allow deviations and recognise emergent factors which can be added to the research, in order to find the most pertinent data for the subjects studied in this thesis, particularly those that may be abstract. In qualitative method of

interviewing, the interviewees tend to supply rich, detailed and in-depth answers regarding the subjects of study from their personal perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.5 Structure of interviews

Three varieties of interviews can be identified: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When conducting a structured interview, all interviewees are delivered the identical strictly designed questions aimed at identifying variances and similarities in the answers in a direct manner. Conversely, during the most informal kind of interviews, an unstructured interview, only a list of topics is prepared and follow-up questions tend to be granted along the course of the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Semi-structured interviews combine the elements of the two.

The type of interview chosen by us was a semi-structured interview since it enables a mixture of structured and unstructured interviews, hence the questions are open-ended in general and are closely related to the research question. In order to gather a thorough view of the objectives, we chose to have similar lists of questions for all the participants, however follow-up questions were frequently utilized by us and emergent factors allowed. We asked the managers some slightly different questions than the employees since their roles and responsibilities in the company as well as authority relating to the play elements are not the same. Since respondents were allowed to answer in a free manner during semi-structured interviews, they gave us more varied data to analyse, while minimizing the possible answer bias at a great scale. As the interviews were not entirely unstructured, the topics of study were maintained in focus in order to utilize the answers at an optimum level.

Moreover, the formulation of questions is a vital aspect of conducting interviews that must be considered (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Four types of questions may be identified, according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), and they can be utilized when executing a semi-structured interview. These four are: specific, probing, closed and open questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The purpose of specific and closed questions is to obtain specific information and are generally used in structured interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In contrast, open questions tend to start with why, how and what, providing insightful and wide answers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Moreover, as well as open questions,

probing questions are aimed to lead respondents to disclose specific information (Turner III, 2010). In this thesis we favoured open questions to obtain broad information on our subjects of study. We decided to utilize open questions for the intention of proposing a general set of questions that cover the subjects of study, hence the data could have been easily structured and then analysed while still enabling additional discussion.

With regard to semi-structured interviews, we had a list of questions on pertinent topics that we decided should be covered in order to answer the general research question. However, we proposed additional impromptu questions in order to accommodate emerging yet relevant topics of discussion. Moreover, the interviewees were given the opportunity to answer freely and frankly to the questions and the sequence of them was varied (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The questions were divided into two parts for both managers and employees. Firstly in order to obtain a complete view of the context in which the workers operate, the internal climate of the organisation as well as provide basic questions for the respondents to break the ice. Secondly we began asking questions relating to play which formed the last two thirds of the interview. However, depending on emergent aspects we allowed variation in the order in which the questions were presented.

Five managers and five employees were interviewed in order to obtain a triangulated view of the play aspects of the company case, their purpose, usage and outcome. Both managers and employees were included for the aim of collecting reliable and highly representative empirical data when being limited by time and accessibility. We wanted to offer the option of anonymity for those interviewed, in order to enable them to be able to respond to the interview questions openly and frankly. In order to make use of a diverse information pool, the managers from different areas were chosen and were compliant to participate in the interview process. We seek to portray an accurate illustration of management in the company, thus to achieve this, employees were additionally interviewed for their perspectives and experience. Throughout the thesis we will use 'workers' as a term for both managers and employees.

We conducted all of the ten interviews at a professional workplace. All of the ten conducted interviews were anonymous and made within a company in the real estate industry. Moreover, each person gave their consent to record the interview and to be transcribed later for further process of data analysis. The interviews were held in the office of the firm in a Nordic country

and carefully translated by Smaradottir, a native speaker, in order to evade possible misunderstandings in the interview phase. The interviewees have been given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, the names beginning with the five first letters of the alphabet indicating managers and the following five letters for employees. The duration of each interview can be seen below in detail:

Managers		Employees	
Anna	29:21	Freja	30:08
Björn	27:59	Greta	30:43
Carl	35:12	Helga	30:25
David	24:13	Ingrid	26:40
Ebba	29:36	Jonna	36:02

3.6   Data analysis

At the core of building a conclusion from a case study is analysing the data. Several methods can be distinguished for analysing data, a few of these including: logic models, pattern matching, time-series analysis, explanation building and cross-case synthesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Yin, 2013). The method of logic models requires a relationship of causality to exist within a case study. The explanation building method in turn is often utilized in exploratory case study, whereas the cross-case synthesis method applies solely to analysing multiple case studies (Yin, 2013). Moreover, the time-series method is generally applied to experiment research (Yin, 2013). Hence, our choice of data analysis in this study was pattern matching as well as a hermeneutical approach, which enabled us to interpret texts in depth (Prasad, 2005).

Essentially, pattern matching includes the proceedings of comparing a pair of patterns, the empirically detected and predicted pattern. When the similarity of the two patterns increases, the cases study's validity increases (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Yin, 2013). According to Yin (2013), pattern matching is the most popular method of analysis for case studies. We found the pattern matching method to be most appropriate for

this thesis study, as the aim of the research was to compare the relationship between patterns we discovered in empirical data to ones found in existing theories, in order to uncover new knowledge from the case.

To achieve the purpose of this study stated previously within this thesis, we aimed to first examine relevant literature on the topic of play and uncover patterns in second hand data. Hence, after this step we performed a within-case analysis, in which we generated a pure data description (Eisenhardt, 1989). We focused on five managers and five employees in our case, as significant step when conducting a single-case study to define the units of analysis (Yin, 2013). A larger sample would have been preferable, however we were met with limitations of the time constraint. Thereafter, the empirical data was collected through interviews, recorded and transcribed. We matched the patterns of literature to those found within the case study as well as to themes we discovered within the collected empirical material. The process facilitated to increase our familiarity with the case and enabled case patterns, such as the limits of managing play, to emerge before we generalized the patterns that were compared between the case and existent theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) and found contradictions.

Furthermore, the data description alleviated us to ensure that the units of analysis were in effect relevant to our research question in the single case study. The basis of our research question is examining play aspects, the manners and limitations of managing them as well as the relationship between play and work. The interviews we conducted were the source of the primary data and facilitated the recognition of patterns we found in the primary data that indicated the difficulties of implementing play. The existing literature however, appeared to lack the gravity of the issue that managers planning on implementing play have attempting to convince others to take the value of play seriously. Moreover, the impact of simple play aspects such as a pool table was not given sufficient significance. The literature on serious play suggests it is highly manageable, yet we found contradictory themes within the case study. Finally, a conclusion of the results of pattern matching were established, as we argue that little play goes a long way yet has limitations in its controllability.

According to Yin (2013), if the evidence from empirical case matches successfully the predicted theory patterns, the results reaffirm and enhance existing theory with a consolidated internal validity. However, if an extensive amount of differences are found by the researchers during pattern comparison method, the results will then yield a novel and unprecedented

theory that might provide a rival explanation to the predicted theory. We did not aim to attempt constructing case explanation nor were required to collect data over a significant period of time, hence we dismissed other analysis methods that were mentioned above.

3.7   Validity and Reliability

Yin (2013) identifies four different case study quality tests: construct validity, reliability, internal and external validity. Validity mainly concerns the integrity of the conclusions of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In particular regarding construct validity, study subjects must be defined by the researchers and relate them to the objectives of research question of the thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Additionally, credible sources of evidence need to be utilized by the researchers for data collection, such as peer reviewed articles. Reliability in turn concerns with whether the findings of the research can be repeated or to allow others to replicate the studies of the research (Yin, 2013). Internal validity relates to conclusions that are in the nature of a causal relationship yet fail to include further variables into consideration. Finally, external validity concerns whether the study's conclusions can be applied to other research that are outside the specific research context and generalization of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

We construct validity for this study by involving numerous sources of evidence, for instance scientific books and peer reviewed articles. Internal validity in turn is reaffirmed by the theories' relationship model in the framework of reference, while external validity is demonstrated via the conclusion's analytic generalization. Finally, we documented the entire process of research for the intention of creating reliability. However, this thesis was limited to ten interviews within a single company case and alas are not generalizable. For future studies to reach greater entail, size of the sample should be increased. The conclusions may be pertinent for other nations and industries since the strengths of play in a working environment are arguably universal.

3.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter we presented and explained the methods we have used to conduct this qualitative thesis. To reflect our perspective and research purpose we base our study on interpretivism to attain a complete view of our organisation of focus. This approach acknowledges that circumstances are a complex issue and people interpret situations, which is appropriate for our study on how play is managed and how subordinates experience it.

The research design chosen to complete the aim of the study is abductive approach, which enables us to answer our research question. This approach enables us to form a foundation for our research by using existing theories as well as granting the development of new theories by analysing themes and patterns found in empirical data we collected.

For this qualitative single case study, we chose the holistic perspective in order to gain a thorough outlook of the whole organisation. Our chosen method of in-depth interviews as a data collection enable flexibility to our research. Data analysis of this thesis is based on pattern matching as well as a hermeneutical approach, both of which enable us to interpret texts in depth.

We use semi-structured interviews to collect information, knowledge and comprehend participants' experiences. The method allows us to comprise and ask follow up questions. Overall, we selected 10 participants to interview, five managers and five employees, in order to triangulate the collected information. The interview sessions were then audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards. Hence, the interview transcripts and observation field notes form our data and were analysed.

4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

This section presents the collected data from the interviews, from which we identify themes and patterns evident in the case and analyse them throughout. Firstly, in order to thoroughly examine the specific aspects of play in the context, we aim to capture a complete view of the reasons and issues leading to changes done within the company in the past years. We will start by analysing how the internal climate was before the play elements were implemented in the company, before examining how aspects of play were introduced, what they were and how the managers implemented them in the organisation, thus presenting the case at hand. In this chapter we discover that the managers had implemented several play elements and only a marginal aspect of a relocated pool table proved to have a large effect on all workers, working environment, ambience and the organisational culture. Through these findings we analyse the expectations of managers, their intentions for play and unanticipated outcomes, uncovering the limitations of managing play evident in the case. Management's control of play was limited to introducing and actualizing elements, providing the opportunity for employees to take charge or their play in action.

4.1 The implementation of play

According to the respondents, the company had various internal issues with communication and interpersonal relationships in the past. Departments did not cooperate well with each other which complicated plenty of projects and work processes within the company, while the morale was impacted negatively. Due to these problems, efforts were made to improve the situation.

> *There was a pretty bad vibe here before. It was around the stock market crash and way back in the past. There were a lot of changes here because of that. So I have worked here during the bad and the good days. There were glimpses of improvement before the changes that were made here like the pool table and all that, but I think the change really impacted the company in a good way.* (Ingrid, employee)

The issue described was that groups of workers were divided and were only working with people in their own department, which was problematic when many of them needed to work on the same project and that caused them to be delayed. Some of the managers decided that a change was needed. Carl further explained what they wanted to accomplish, having been prompted to introduce play elements to the company:

> *It wasn't anything special that we had to solve but rather to clarify a new beginning [by introducing play]. There were few problems in cooperation that were surfacing and there was a great need to change, also just because our jobs have also changed.* (Carl, manager)

The company had experienced bad morale and issues with communication for a while and perhaps since the organisation was not accustomed to change, no attempts to fix the situation were made. The managers seemed to have had discussions regarding it since all of them mentioned information flow between workers and departments, they appeared to have reviewed possible solutions to the lack of communication, flow and cooperation during a time of issues. Workers at the company were under pressure and they had great responsibility in their work. The demanding knowledge intensive work was taking a toll on the employees and a lack of communication as well as collaboration damaged the processes.

However, after an economically turbulent time, financial reorganising and getting listed in the stock exchange, an opportunity arose to initiate change. According to Carl, as the company was at crossroads, the managers tried to seize an opportunity for a rare change process and to denote a beginning for the organisation. In order to attempt to fix the issues regarding morale, information flow and collaboration, play was first introduced to the company in the form of a presentation by one of the managers, Carl.

> *We were sort of on crossroads with the company because the banks had a tight grip on us after the financial crisis and after our financial reorganising we were kind of free to manage our company with less restriction and with fewer constraints. We, also, wanted to mark a new beginning.* (Carl, manager)

Carl believed play and activity based office may be a tool to change behaviour to benefit the company and generate creativity in informal circumstances. He introduced play to his company both in terms of improving their office and in order to educate employees regarding

upcoming trends on the market since they might gain competitive advantage. Carl further explained the content he introduced to the workers:

> *And this kind of activity based office, which is surfacing, but it's not for every company but it doesn't suit all offices. How you organize [a space] and where you place certain things can change behaviour, and we are trying to achieve all kinds of change management, to try to get the company to change course or something like that and then the space is just right for that, a tool to do that, you know, creating a will. If you want to generate ideas, you don't get ideas when sitting in front of a computer screen but when people stand up and are mingling, even in unserious circumstances and everything up to play that helps loosen up in the right hemisphere or something like that so it generates ideas more easily.* (Carl, manager)

In order to achieve a successful change and reduce resistance, Carl wanted to introduce the concept of play and its purpose. He shared his ideas and highlighted the benefits play could have for employees and company as a whole, portraying the overall objective to avoid dismissal of the opportunity. However, he did not assume full responsibility for implementing play.

> *You are always more responsive to changes especially if it is explained why instead of just doing it and you don't know about it and it's not beneficial to you. But if you see the bigger picture or the main objective then that puts things into perspective, this might sound to the staff like it was all coordinated but this was just me kind of sharing my ideas before we might possible make any mistakes. Or maybe first and foremost, not seizing this special opportunity brought on by these changes and to use them to the fullest. That was what I wanted to achieve. It seems like we managed to implement some play elements.* (Carl, Manager)

After the presentation many were sceptical about the concepts and reacted negatively to an idea of a full-blown 'playful office', however the display did help the workers to achieve a mind-set for some elements of play to be implemented. Noticeably, no type of formal or informal discussion or exchange of feedback took place, instead opinions appeared to have spread by hearsay. According to Carl, even though play was introduced as part of the change process, it was not taken seriously by some. When Anna was asked how she thought workers received the idea of play as Carl proposed, she was under the impression that it was not a

good fit with the company and was going too far. However, some changes were made based on his display, with the eventual permission from the board of directors.

> *Like I say, this was not taken too seriously by the board of directors, yes we made these changes and made some progress but I think these types of things are discussed by the board of directors before they are implemented.* (Carl, Manager)

In effect, the changes were then implemented by the CEO, the CFO and David with plenty of input from other undisclosed individuals. According to David, he did the constructions of reorganising the office place while the CEO oversaw other changes. Annual events were reintroduced, enhanced and provided with more resources. Firstly, the Annual Gala is a gala event for workers and their spouses, containing various activities, while held every other year abroad hence, requiring large amount of resources. Secondly, the Christmas party is an event where workers gather for a buffet and an elaborate party at the end of November. Thirdly, the Goal-Orientation Day, includes organised workshops and workers are required to gather in a meeting-like setting and discuss the future of the company and its goal in a playful way. Fourth event, The Cleaning Day, combines the dreary task of cleaning and tidying the office space with music and fun in informal setting before partying afterwards. Moreover, the 'School' which is organised on Friday mornings, including either educational lecture or seminar, a mixture of informative seminars and playful lectures, which the managers felt was a good fit for knowledge workers.

> *We always had the pool table in that conference room on the other side and, yes, I do see a change in that regard that it was maybe a bit more, now it's more visible than before and somehow you feel more welcome to join, before you had to go into this closed off room and I remember the guys used to do that but because it was in that room you kind of felt like you were entering their playground or kind of more like you felt like you should be working instead. But now it's here in the middle which has changed a lot and you feel like you are more allowed to play.* (Helga, employee)

The employees explained that the pool table was previously not as accessible as it was after the changes, therefore they did not play as much when the pool table was in a closed room. They imply that they did not feel they were allowed to play before. Carl further promotes the power of visibility in terms of play and the impact it has as a central feature, however admitting the nonchalant attitude and lack of planning the managers had regarding the table.

We had this pool table before and it was in use a bit and we wanted to keep it but I don't think it was really anything planned using the table and we had so we might as well use it. But, it is a big difference having it inside an a conference room versus having it out here in the open space because then people see it and usually someone wants to play when they see it and people get up and well, now it's like a place to gather and we have like happy hours there, you know, and somehow it's more inviting to come and hang out by the table rather than going into the kitchen or be somewhere else. (Carl, manager)

A change process, including an effort to implement several elements of play, was attempted in order to mark a new beginning and to improve internal issues that resulted in a bad morale as well as negatively affecting work processes. However, a lack of feedback was prominent and play was not taken rather seriously.

4.2   Play in action

The company had throughout the years had modest elements of 'serious play' involved in their practices, even though they might have not considered it as such, workers referring to them as standard. After the changes were done regarding play, these events were reintroduced as enhanced versions with greater resources. The company had four big events for each season: Annual Gala, Christmas party, Goal-Orientation Day and Cleaning Day as well as a so called company School. The events are presented on a large calendar that hangs on the kitchen wall for everyone to see, an additional change that was done by David.

> *Annual Gala and the Christmas party and we also try to do something in the spring and fall, and after that go out together for dinner.* (Anna, manager)

When we asked the interviewees what playful events they had, most of the interviewees only remembered a few of the events, similarly to Anna, and then referring to other playful things, such as the pool table, treasure hunt or happy hours after work. Most of them mentioned the Annual Gala and the Christmas party, failing to mention or remember the Goal-Orientation Day, the Spring Cleaning Day or the School. Therefore, we speculate that they might not

think of the forgotten events as playful or significant. The Annual Gala and the Christmas Dinner seem to be the main events for the company out of these five serious play elements.

> *Then the Galas are usually in the fall and every second year the Annual Gala is held abroad and we just save up for two years so that, or to clarify we have saved up for our spouses but the company pays for the staff. Usually when we meet before that Annual party at noon then we play games or take a tour or something, we have hiked and done some fun things. It's either games, outdoor activities, tours or something like that. We have been on a treasure hunt a couple of times where we have to solve some puzzles or something like that as a team, um. It's mostly games for the group where we are split into teams that have to solve something or just do something funny. And yes, we also have a Christmas dinner, which is usually at the end of November.* (Jonna, employee)

According to interviews, the Annual Gala involved team-building, simulation and puzzle-solving games and activities for the group. Jonna was the only employee that mentioned these games and activities in relation to the Annual Gala, others talked about the Annual Gala and the Christmas dinner as fairly standard. What we also thought was noteworthy was how frequently employees mentioned that they were being treated nicely due to the fact that the company paid for these events. Hence, the events were received positively, yet did not prove to be a significant success regardless of the large resources they required.

Goal-Orientation Day appeared to be a way for management to encourage interaction and teamwork within the company. As an example of serious play that is clearly connected to work, it did not seem to be thought of as very playful or noteworthy. Managers used this event to strategize the following year, creating goals and direction for the employees.

> *Then in the fall we have a Goal-Orientation Day and that is very often something related to work, then we are doing some kind of goal orientation or looking at various things, for example we have examined our work process, then we do some work, where all the departments, everybody working together, where we try to figure out and solve problems, you know, we have some outside consultation to help us like a management consultant or something like that and when that is done we do something fun.* (Jonna, employee)

37

These goal orientation exercises are partly done with play, both during the event and as a reward for cooperating in the event. Even though the participants might do something work related, they do playful activities as well, during and after the event. We interpret that workers described this event as a tool for management to get employees in the right mind-set and to work towards a certain goal, not as a play element that benefits them. The final sentence in Jonna's quote describes accurately how this is perceived, stating they would do something 'fun' after the event is finished. Managers seem to be using play combined with non-playful tasks during the Goal-Orientation Day and the Cleaning Day, where the chore of cleaning combined with playfulness and togetherness resulted in a useful party.

> *[We have] one cleaning day, then you know that everybody shows up and are just cleaning and there is music and fun and then at the end of the day we have a few beers and then we head out dinner together.* (David, manager)

The cleaning during the Cleaning Day seemed to revolve around the reward of dinner workers receive after they were done with the cleaning. This might be the reason why they forgot the Cleaning Day and the Goal-Orientation Day, because they were ordered to clean or create goals before the actual play could begin. These events were not disliked and the play element seemed to make them more enjoyable, yet failing to mention them as examples of play indicated they were not entire successful in achieving their objective. Furthermore, when the interviewees were asked about playful activities none of them mentioned the company School and we had to specifically ask what the School included.

> *Ahh yes, I forgot to discuss that earlier. That is also of course very nice. We talk about something that is not related to work, lectures and seminars and all sort of things which is very fun. We sit in conference rooms and have breakfast together and listen to someone speak to us and then discuss. This was really fun at first but you can see that there is maybe certain disrespect towards it. People are booking meetings, not watching out to reserve time for the School because it's time consuming, if you are really busy, then you perhaps don't have the time to attend but I think it's really important because this is very good for everyone.* (Anna, manager)

Anna implied that the School is neither prioritised by management nor employees. It is organised as serious play by management yet she and other managers did not remember to

mention it. Employees seemed nonchalant and uninterested in the School. They regarded it as a way to do something else than work, yet did not consider it play or very beneficial for them.

> *I think it's just to break up the day a bit, have something like, it's being a part of an event in a way and just a good way to do something different and, you know, often it's very educational and it depends on the lecture but some are very interesting while others are only okay.* (Freja, employees)

The workers mostly agreed that the purpose of the School was to take a break or a distraction from work. Yet, we did not detect that they thought this was particularly playful in itself. Most of them thought it was educational, interesting or done to increase knowledge. Managers seem to think that the School was more interesting than the employees, who indicated it was not always interesting and perhaps boring. The lukewarm and incidental reception to serious play indicated the workers had a different idea of play that what managers originally expected.

In order to view what the workers considered play and since play is an ambiguous phenomenon we asked our interviewees what the word *play* means to them.

> *In a work setting that means to relax and have quality time with my co-workers, to stand up from your computer, chat, play pool and re-energize for next upcoming work sessions.* (Anna, manager)

According the interviews, play was considered to be quality time and gatherings in a group done to gain energy for work at this company. Interestingly, most of the people at the company associated play as *fun*, *pool* or *playing pool.* They considered play as standing up from work, playing pool together and engaging in informal conversations.

> *Play is kind of like happiness and fun and to just stand up from your desk and doing something else. Play is just something fun.* (Jonna, employee)

Notably according to the respondents, the most visible and prominent play element was the pool table. We examined that the pool table was definitely overlooked by management as simply a single modest example of play. Their general view of the table was:

> *Some don't care for it and that is no problem, it's just a pool table and chairs and is possible to sit down if whenever they see fit.* (David, manager)

The pool table was only considered marginal in the eyes of the managers and they emphasised other changes they had made, such as team-oriented workstations and location of the employees. Regardless of the simplicity of the pool table, it has a large impact on its personnel. Björn explains why simply this single play element has made a difference:

> *Just by having this pool table here like it is now makes it more informal and more comfortable.* (Björn, manager)

According to the most of the respondents, playing pool signifies bringing people together outside work tasks. Employees felt they were a part of play even as spectators of the game, engaging in informal communication and mingling, suiting their preferences to participate in active playing or not. Many of the workers claimed that they played weekly if not daily.

> *The pool table is used the most and like people are playing it's like: "hey, come and play a game with me" and this perhaps creates a connection with others that are not directly working together which I think is very nice.* (Ingrid, employee)

Based on the answers, there was certain level of freedom that the pool table provided. Full access without limits was granted to employees and an uncontrolled play enables a sense of freedom which appeared to increase the effect of play element. Moreover, as no set time or date was established when pool was permitted, participating in play could then be decided by employees themselves according to their individual schedules or wishes. Workers could then for instance set play as either reward after completing a work task or a break during demanding assignments, thus having a positive effect on the work.

Additionally, after the pool table proved to be a success, a more organised type of use was attempted. Hence, a tournament was organised in order to establish a friendly competition as well as to encourage more employees to utilize the opportunity of play. This was a great success, provided a feeling of unity and shared experiences through an organized continual set of events. However, a level of freedom was still attached to the endeavour as set time slots were not introduced enabling pool to continue as informal as originally established.

I think the billiard table is pretty genius; we had a tournament the other day. It was something new so we put up a detailed tournament schedule and everybody took part, this lasted a couple of weeks. And then it ended one day where someone won and received the prize and that created just a very fun atmosphere. And you know, this just like: "yeah, we are next in line to play, we have to find the time to do that!" and you know there was like no pressure and it was managed by writing down who made it out of the group stage. (Ebba, manager)

By deciding to have a tournament, managers were able to engage all the employees in play to some extent. Since playing pool requires a level of skill, continuous engagement encourages further utilization for the betterment of skills. Without management providing rules on when and how to play, pool was effortlessly enabled to find popular times of use. Friday afternoons appeared to have become commonly acknowledged time to play pool, which then evolved into an unofficial celebration of the end of a week. This seemed to have become a new tradition, supported and endorsed by top management including the CEO.

And sometimes we have beer after work, just a bit extra usually on Fridays, you know, it's not advertised much and sometimes the CEO just stands up and tell everyone: "Happy hour!" Or like around 15:30 and everybody gets up to grab a beer or whatever they would like to drink and we try to keep some supplies in the fridge for these occasions, so people maybe have one beer and play pool or just sits and chats and then people just go home on similar times as they would form work. (Freja, Employee)

According to the workers, they often gather for a so called 'happy hour' at the end of the day. These are very informal gatherings as they happen spontaneously whenever either management or employees decide. Both managers and employees demonstrate that play is not simply for appearances, as they claim they play pool during the day and also at gatherings at the end of the day.

And now it's in our routine. It was, of course, proposed to management for acceptance but I'm in no way the author of the changes that we did or anything like that you know. But the pool table, I would have strongly objected if someone would have wanted the table removed, because we had that before as well. (Anna, manager)

The pool table obviously is important to the managers as well, like Anna described. She would have strongly objected if the pool table was to be removed and that indicates how playing pool is involved in their corporate culture and routine. Freedom to engage in play additionally benefits those who have different preferences with play. Hence, employees are not forced to participate or coerced to cut down on playful activities. Moreover, the central location of the pool table enables an informal setting that benefits those who prefer to mingle and watch, involving more people in playful activity. The other events seem to be relatively standard in organisations and respondents provided little to no in-depth discussion on play. Moreover, these other events and activities are scarce, annual or rarely organised while the billiard table is utilized near daily.

4.3 The effects of pool

The interviewed managers and employees admit to a worse morale in the years prior to when the play elements were implemented, reorganised and improved since, an outcome that is confirmed by near all participating workers. In addition to implementing other play elements, the relocating of the pool table coincided with other slight changes, mainly to improve the open office setting that surround it.

> *I sense a much better morale and to say truthfully it happened for real, even though the main objective was to create a clear milestone, but that information and cooperation flow better in this setup and this is just a confirmation that if you change the setup you change the behaviour and that is pretty impressive. I would say there were fewer points of collision and because of that people became more easy-going after that, so maybe there was unnecessary friction in place. We are certainly more playful after the changes but whether we have the pool table to thank for or the general attitude change well I'm not sure.* (Carl, manager)

Throughout, the outcome of the pool table is clear. The managers' original intended outcome was modest, yet the play aspects' result reached further than intended. The pool table provided an unprecedented amount of positive reactions from both the managers and employees, yet the latter were most vocal on the importance of such a simple example of play.

Noteworthy is that the change was not seen as a step to fix morale, instead a continuous process to also keep it improved. The original aim was described as to:

> *To improve morale and, you know, to keep it good. I think the purpose is to think about something else then the work sometimes together.* (Anna, manager)

In addition to morale improvement, play in groups also enhances the group dynamic. As workers experienced play together, connecting through game or as spectators, they may be better equipped to collaborate in work tasks. The significance of communication during informal settings such as pool is among other benefits that eases other discussions and opens discourse to work related communication. All participants experienced various positive effects, when asked if she had noticed any changes amongst her co-workers after the play elements were implemented Jonna confirmed the impact:

> *Yes, I think so. It results in more unity, we understand each other better, I think this opens the possibility for friendships. There you get to see a whole different side to your co-workers and I really like these people and think they are fun to be around. After the events everybody is talking about what happened and about the food or the event itself, it becomes like, it opens the communications.* (Jonna, employee)

According to employees, the changes that occurred through and alongside the relocation of the pool table resulted in improved employee satisfaction. They claimed that play had made a difference in the overall atmosphere in the company, excitement and fun which in turn has led to better job satisfaction. With the pool table in the middle of workstations, it also acts as a common ground for departments to mingle with each other, regardless of their preference to play or not. This resulted in familiarity and ease in addressing each other through relaxed circumstances and affects the entire office.

> *Now it is out in the public area and it's more common that people sit down and talk, use the launch area by the pool table, use the open space to discuss something fun.* (David, manager)

Additionally, the play is utilized as a way to take a break from demanding work to play pool, easing the stress and ensues consequently in improved quality of work and motivation.

> *You get in a better mood that is just the way it is. Sometimes you just need a break, stand up. Talking to other people.* (Björn, manager)

According to all the interviews, the simplicity of the pool table as an element of play had a significant impact on not only how workers feel at work but additionally how they consequently work. Jonna explained from the perspective of employees why and how the play aspects influence them, she described feeling complimented and therefore raising productivity when returning to work. Moreover, the outcome of job employee satisfaction has an effect on talent retention which is crucial for a knowledge intensive firm.

> *It's just easier to be at work, the atmosphere is lighter and happier, because there is so much pressure on each employee and very often everybody is just at their desk face down then it becomes that more important to shake things up and stand up. And I think that this shakes things up so that we get back to our desks it's like you, it's kind of like getting praised or complimented, you are more productive after that for some strange reason. This increases job satisfaction which means that you want to continue working here if you are happy in your work and if you like your co-workers then you also want to continue working somewhere. It is also important for a company to keep employee turnover low because every employee here possesses a lot of knowledge and skills because we are so specialised and it's extremely expensive and takes a long time to replace us with a new employee.* (Jonna, employee)

Noticeably, multiple employees say they were being treated well by the organisation. Most of them connect to the notion to play, seeing it as something extra that the company does not need to do but chooses to enable. Some employees mentioned that since they are being treated so nicely, they work harder and are more motivated to do a good job in return. As the work is demanding and employees are under pressure, the play element can act as a relief from the stress. Pool and its limitless availability are seen as a reward to the employees for their work and they feel more motivated to be productive to show gratitude to the employer. Ingrid explained that she experiences play as if it is something done for employees as an act of kindness and employees should be glad to be able to play, even if they have different preferences. Pool was additionally seen as encouragement and as an impact to the moods of workers.

I would also say that this is very encouraging, especially in a company where everyone has a lot on their plate, a lot of pressure on each employee, so everyone is busy with their own work and it's so easy to only focus on work and become disgruntled towards other who are not doing what you want them to do so you can finish your projects but if these are your friends then you are more tolerant and patient towards them and you can also approach them differently. (Jonna, employee)

It seems that play has affected the workplace to a great extent and an effect on teamwork, which in turn improves the quality of their work. Having experienced play with fellow co-workers, approaching them for collaboration or help is made easier, familiarity with each other fostering patience and tolerance. According to Jonna, having group exercises such as the pool tournament that requires employees to be matched into groups or pairs facilitate working together after being assigned to complete playful activities as a team.

After the effort was made in the form of implementing play, the company appears to have found a balance between the serious nature of a knowledge intensive firm and playfulness. When asked to describe the company in general, the managers as well as the employees gave similar descriptions, a balance of seriousness in work and an atmosphere of fun. They portray a challenging knowledge intensive company of responsibility and stability, yet friendly ambience.

[It is] a large and stable company, a huge operation. But the workplace is, I would say, very positive and fun workplace. I think it benefits us having such a small workplace so people know each other better and knows more about each other. There is a lot of laughter and fun, we tell jokes and permit ourselves to smile and fool around. This is not a work place with shushing, and I think it came along with the changes like putting the pool table there and all those things. (David, manager)

Originally, the managers attempted to re-introduce and implement elements of serious play, spending a significant amount of resources and time in them. They assumed to have control over them, did not consider the value feedback might have had and tried to manage play to fix internal issues. However, as a fluke, only the implementation of the simple aspect of a pool table, being located in the centre of the office and provided full access to, had a large impact on the organisation. It appears the pool table resulted in a change in the culture of the company. The positive outcomes of play were clear throughout all the interviews, affecting

the individuals, their interpersonal relationships, teamwork and ambience, all of which in turn led to improved job satisfaction, talent retention and the organisation as a whole.

5 Discussion

The previously presented and analysed data has shown how management implemented play elements along a change process and how those play aspects affected the company. Several aspects of play were introduced, however the managers failed to foresee that the single element with a vast impact was moving a pool table to a more central position. The outcome of these finding show the unpredictability of play, hence indicating the limits managers face when attempting to control play. This section presents a discussion involving the empirical data and the literature previously presented in this thesis. We will start by discussing the limitations of managing play and how those limitations contradict with the literature suggesting high manageability of 'serious play'. Secondly, we will discuss the evident irregularity of play, observable the reception of pool compared to other aspects of within the company as well as its outcome of a change in the organisational culture which the managers did not expect. Lastly, we will discuss how based on the case, ultimately the success of managing play relies on the employees. We conclude this chapter with demonstrating that the success of the pool table lies in the managers' willingness to hand over control to employees, grant them limitless opportunity to manage their own play and the employees eagerness of receiving the specific element of play.

5.1   The Limitations of Managing Play

According to the literature displayed previously in this thesis, incorporating play aspects into work in order to benefit the organisation or its employees has become a popular management tool in the recent years (Statler, Roos, Victor, 2009; Dougherty & Takacs, 2004). Carl, the manager who initially suggesting play, had clearly researched the concept prior to presenting it to the company, he appeared to truly believe play could make an impact on the behaviour of employees. However, we propose he additionally considered play as a management trend he wanted to try because of its popularity. Carl's submission to involve play in the office,

although met with scepticism, eventually convinced top management to be in favour of implementing further play and support the change process.

Consequently, David, another manager, and the CEO implemented the change within the office space, enhanced and effectuated several play aspects. As seen in the empirical findings, elements such as events, the Annual Gala, the Christmas party, Goal-Orientation Day, the Cleaning Day and an educational 'School' were introduced, as well as other play aspects such as treasure hunt, board game and a pool table. Managers believed they had in control of play after the implementation and appeared to be invested in serious play. They put more effort into planning and financing the events as well as closely monitoring their progress.

The company indulged in serious play during some of these events such as described by literature on the matter, stimulating games, team building events and puzzle-solving activities (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). According to the literature, serious play signifies play the events that have a purpose for the organisation, yet differing from work and the events portrayed before in the case can therefore be considered serious play (Statler, Roos & Victor, 2009). As displayed in the literature review, Roos, Victor and Statler (2004) refer to serious play when they examine the potential of using serious play in organisational challenges, especially in management activities such as preparing strategic plans. This suggests control over the activities. However, the results of our study imply that managers did not in fact have control over the use of play beyond introducing them or the influence that the play elements had. It appeared to be merely a fluke that a marginal element such as the pool table, placed in the middle of the office space, made such a large impact.

We detected from the interviews that certain play elements that managers expected to be successful did not significantly affect the company. Most of the serious play activities involving different kinds of stimulation yet were not connected to play as much as the pool table. When asked to describe playful elements within the company, the workers primarily mostly talked about the pool table as well as the informal and fun atmosphere it created. Although a modest one, the pool had a purpose to improve moral, which it clearly accomplished beyond expectation as the most effective element of play. The pool table had a large impact on the atmosphere, employees, morale and even the corporate culture. Not only did managers not anticipate the pool table to have a significant effect, they did not appear to

consider that any type of play could achieve more than good morale and improve flow of information.

The literature on serious play and play in organisations claims that great things could be accomplished with play (Statler, Roos, Victor, 2009; Glynn, 1994; Isen, 1999; Penenberg & Zinchermann, 2015; Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Meyer, 1999). This suggests that play can be managed and controlled to a great degree and that it can be utilized to accomplish set outcomes. In our case we noticed not only were the managers not in control of play and its results, but that management was not even aware of the magnitude of what could be done with play within the organisation. They simply associated the purpose of play with better flow of communication and marking a new beginning for the firm. However, they also hoped to achieve those objectives by simply reorganising the seating arrangement within the office. Eventually however, the effect of pool table was much larger which implies the managers were not in charge of how it affected the employees.

Notably, even though the workers viewed all the events of play in a relatively positive way, yet they referred to them as standard for any organisation. It seemed as if the more that these serious play elements were connected to work tasks, the less the workers at the firm connected them with play. An example of this was the 'School', which comprised of regular meetings, lectures and educational play which managers presented as serious play, yet the employees did not seem to think of it as play related, even though they thought it was educational. Additionally, none of the workers remembered or thought to mention the School without being asked about it, proving that the initiative failed to arouse any of the enthusiasm the pool table had attracted.

The pool table seemed to be fresh in the respondents' minds and was most often first to be mentioned as an example of play, its frequent use indicated that it had become a legitimate part of the organisation. Employees seemed to link the pool table directly to positive outcomes and happiness, which the managers clearly did not anticipate according to our empirical material. The employees' perspectives of play were in accordance with some of the literature, saying that the primary determiners of behaviour within the context of play are enjoyment and discovery, not of objectives and goals (Csikszenmihalyi, 1990; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; March, 1976). All the effort and resources that management has spent on involving the serious play activities seemed to affect the employees less than simply moving

the pool table to the middle of the work environment. Moreover, although not intended as other than convenience by the managers, the repositioning was interpreted by employees as acceptance from management to play freely, something that they did not anticipate (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012).

The general literature on serious play assumes that play can be managed much like a game where play must be set with rules and boundaries (Statler, Roos, Victor, 2009; Dougherty & Takacs, 2004). Contrary to what one may expect on the basis of such literature, our empirical material suggests that play is not as highly manageable nor do employees receive rules and limits positively. We therefore contradict this view. Moreover, Roos, Victor and Statler (2004) suggest that serious play is a tool used by managers. The literature does not give sufficient attention to the limits of managing play. Based on our case the limits were prominent after the introduction and implementation stage of managing play and the control reached no further.

According to the case, there are limits to knowledge on how management should plan or organise play and what must be done for the play to have a beneficial effect. The company's managers did not in fact know which implemented elements would be successful and how to maintain them in order to achieve positive results, they seemed to happen by fortuity. In fact, managers arguably had no other control over the success of play other than enabling different elements as options for employees to then consider and assume. Moreover, the employees might have had certain preconceived notions on what they wanted or found a suitable addition to their work environment and those implementing a change of play might have faced resistance or dissatisfaction without their knowledge (Fleming, 2005) or could not have predicted. This is evident in our case when employees resisted attending the School and dismissed it, of which the managers did not appear to be even aware of. Any official or unofficial feedback related to play was not exchanged.

Penenberg and Zichermann (2015), argue that when considering play, one should not focus simply on insignificant items such as foosball tables, open-plan seating or a free lunch, instead the target should be on greater things like improving the quality of work. However, on the contrary our empirical data shows otherwise, the outcome of the case study manifestly shows that elements of play as simple as a pool table without an ambitious purpose may have an impact larger than managers attempts to improve the quality of work, for example through

the School, Goal-Orientation Day and Cleaning Day. As evident in the case, the simplicity of the play aspect does not dictate the magnitude of the outcome, factor that additionally complicates attempts to manage play.

As a result, the pool table seems to have been a catalyst for other play elements to flourish. The pool table fostered more play such as happy hours, informal mingling and board games to become the standard in the organisation. Therefore, the physical element of a pool table additionally nourished relationships among people at the company and morale. However, these outcomes were beyond the control managers had over play, indicating clear limits in managing play. Arguably the uncertainty of play and its popularity evident in the case proved to be the main reason managers were not able to control play or its outcomes

5.2   The Unpredictability of Play

The literature on serious play (Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004; Statler, Roos & Victor, 2009) appears to underestimate the difficulty of managing play in reality. This can be seen in the way that management in our empirical material was not able to predict the success of the pool table and was not in control of play beyond introducing and implementing it. This could stem from the fact that the term play itself is hard to understand and define as it is highly ambiguous (Sutton-Smith, 2001) and can be seen as a threshold between reality and unreality (Turner, 1969).

In our case, Carl initially struggled to overcome scepticism and convince other managers to incorporate play into the organisation. Had he not suggested and David completed to move the pool table to a central location, arguably the result of other play elements would have been merely passable regardless of the good intentions of managers. Moreover, the pool table was not even a new addition to the company, it had been located in a closed room and previously not widely used. It never occurred to the managers that moving a pool table would prove to be such a success. Hence, the outcomes of the case study show that the reception to introducing play is nearly impossible to forecast.

The grand idea that management wanted to implement was first and foremost other factors to change, for example the work seating arrangement and serious play. As mentioned earlier,

managers introduced multiple play aspects and the pool table was only considered a marginal part of the plan. David displayed the aloof attitude the managers originally had towards pool, stating that since they had it already, they might as well use it. Initially, the pool table was not a part of the idea, it was simply relocated because of Carl's influence and out of convenience. Ultimately as mentioned, the serious play elements planned by management proved ineffective and the simple movement of a pool table had such a large impact it modified the culture of the company. Hence, we argue that managing play is unpredictable as we see clearly throughout our case.

According to Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) there are three ways in which play can present itself within a company. Play can manifest itself in work as a continuation of work, intervention into work and usurpation of work (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). In our case, play seems to have usurped work and taken over tasks that the company could not handle by itself (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). Play seems to have taken over without consent of managers as if it had a will of its own (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012). This is apparent in our case where managers did not think the pool table would produce many benefits yet unexpectedly improved multiple issues. Play, instead of management, took control of the company's problems (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012).

Nonetheless, management successfully implemented play as a solution to their issues and achieved their purpose, yet not in the way they thought. Thus, in our case we examined that managing play is highly unpredictable due to the fact that play appears to have a will of its own. This is arguably because play is an activity that has intrinsic value and does not fulfil a purpose other than the play activity itself (Huizinga, 1949). Also according to the literature, play has no ulterior motive and is an entity in itself (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennett, 1971). As established in the literature review, Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) argue that in order to manage play effectively, management must acknowledge that play is 'autotelic' by nature. Play cannot be forced on employees as play is voluntary and engaging (Huizinga, 1949). Therefore, we concur with Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) who state that play is a dynamic that can take over with unpredictable results.

The outcome of the pool appears to be in line with Huizinga's (1949) research on play elements in culture, also highlighting the optional nature it had. He portrays play as voluntary, non-serious and engaging, attributes that pool had, which managers in effect appeared to offer

unintentionally. However, management did not intentionally plan pool to have these characteristics, further demonstrating how little control and authority they were able to obtain over play. The fact that the pool table was so successful is ultimately because employees took over, assuming it as a part of their routine and managing it themselves. As mentioned, managers implemented several aspects of play, yet only a marginal element a pool table proved to affect the company tremendously, proving how unpredictable play is and the control employees had.

5.3   The Power of the Employees

According to the empirical data, managers in our case were able to control play beyond introducing and implementing options. Hence, the outcome was unpredictable as previously established and the management did not have full control of the play elements. This is in accordance with Statler, Heracleous and Jacobs (2011) who highlight the paradoxical nature of play and argue that play cannot be fully managed because of its ambiguity. However, the pool table did prove to be successful, implying that since the managers were not in charge or the outcome, the employees were.

Our empirical material suggests that managers were only able to manage play up to a certain degree, meaning they can have influence and manage how employees play only by introducing certain amount or types of play. According to our results, management could simply present the options of play such as playing pool, and employees took control of the play elements following the implementation. Hence, it was evident managers could introduce play and there guide it to the right direction by presenting certain types of play, yet not completely control or manage it.

As the outcomes of play are unpredictable, Statler, Heracleous and Jacobs (2011) encourage management to experiment with specific play activities and that way gauge the outcome. If there are noticeable results then they can repurpose the successful activities to benefit the organisation (Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs, 2011). In our case managers eventually recognised how dominant the pool table had become and could further repurpose that play element. For instance they did implement a more organised way to play by introducing a tournament, further enhancing teamwork.

Our argument is that management can manage play by introducing different play activities and repurpose those that prove effective but ultimately the success of the play implementation depends on the employees. Hence, the outcomes of play are eventually up to the employees since they are the ones who decide whether they engage or are intrigued in specific play elements. The empirical data shows how the employees were not interested in the serious play elements and only fully participated in playing pool, resulting the former to not have the level of impact the latter did. However, employees cannot implement their own play in a work setting without management's approval, they can only engage in play after it is introduced and allowed by management (Lee & Lin, 2011; Guerrier & Abib, 2003; Hunter, Jemielniak & Postula, 2010). This means not only is the control of management limited, but also that the power of employees has limitations.

In our case study, the managers encouraged employees to play by making the pool table more accessible and forming no restrictions to it, therefore enabling them to play more without limitations. Managers in our case influenced their company to become more playful by allowing play to be exercised with limited rules and thus handing the control over to the employees, as mentioned in the literature (Lee & Lin, 2011; Hunter, Jemielniak & Postula, 2010).

According to Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010), in order for management to implement play in work they must make room for play for employees to engage in it. Management was not involved in the actual process of playing with regard to the pool table itself and employees started to manage it themselves since they had permission and felt welcomed to play. Both the empirical data and literature showed that allowing employees to feel in charge of their own play enabled play to be associated with a level of freedom, relief and reward as they could decide when to work and when to play themselves (Lee & Lin, 2011).

This proved to be a successful way to include play in work, therefore maximising the benefits of play aimed at averting workers from the pressure of work and raising morale as mentioned in literature (Karl & Peluchette, 2006). It is apparent in the empirical material, that the pool table provided a social setting through which employees use play to increase relations with other co-workers as they please since they can decide whether to play, how much play they indulge in or even if they mingle while others play (Hunter, Jemielniak & Postula, 2010). Naturally, the usage of play can be taken advantage of without set rules or if employees do

not know their boundaries. The literature agrees that management might have to interfere if they feel that they have lost control completely and play becomes a disruption of work rather than being beneficial (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2012).

In accordance with Huizinga's (1949) studies on play, free accessibility to play pool arguably enabled the play to become more voluntary and engaging. After being introduced to playing pool, employees were able to take control which allows the play to come naturally. As the pool table was made accessible physically and mentally, it became a part of their routine. This is shown in our empirical data since playing pool is for example an integral part of the working week such as lunch breaks and informal happy hours at the end of the day on Friday's.

In our case study we noticed a certain pattern among all the interviewees. When asked what play means to them, workers usually involved the word 'fun' in their answers (Dougherty & Takacs, 2004). Most of the interviewees named fun at some point when asked any question regarding play. This is in accordance with Mainemelis and Ronson in turn (2006) who mention that a diversion from alienating tasks work is an attribute of play. As evident from the case, play to both employees and managers also means relief, to stand up from work, take a break, highlighting that something they talk about is separate from work and it is something they do for fun. During these breaks most of the people mentioned playing pool or engaging in informal communication with colleagues while watching others play. Such breaks from work are additionally an example of the control employees have in the case both regarding play as well as freedom to apply themselves as they wish.

Many of the participants mentioned that this "something fun" and playing pool is in their routine, as if alongside work yet not work. As Dougherty and Takacs (2004) argued, if play is considered fun then it has advantages for companies and the fun increased productivity, innovation and enhances team-spirit. As fun is hard to categories since it is perceived differently by different people (Plester, 2009), it is difficult for managers to predict what employees connect with fun and hence choose to engage in without employees input. In our case, fun seems to achieve formerly mentioned outcomes as the employees think pool is connected to fun and acts as diversion from work.

As the four events and the School were perceived as less fun they were the less likely to be connected with play and hence proved to be less popular amongst employees. The events that

management controlled the most, as in decided on the specific activities or what time the event took place, were the events that employees thought of as less fun. The more that the event was directly connected to work, the less employees experienced it as fun. Hence, the less employees managed their own play the less fun they experienced. Therefore, we found that these events produced less positive results than the pool table because they did not enable authentic play. As Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) state, fun is correlated with enjoyment yet managed fun is not always pleasant for everyone, therefore serious play within our case was not always be considered fun.

As established in the theoretical framework, Fleming (2005) argues that, planned games and parties by management are not as authentic, and we see this clearly in our case study in relation to the managed events. Fleming's (2005) research is in line with our findings showing that even though management committed to play, some employees experienced it as inauthentic. Furthermore, he stated that authentic fun is created with self-management and autonomy, therefore employees are also responsible for authentic fun (Fleming, 2005). This is clearly demonstrated in our case, highlighting the power that empowering employees to assume control through self-management has.

In the case of this company, it is clear that the physical simplicity of the pool table goes beyond a game, the artefacts of play and especially a pool have a great effect on the working environment and its employees. It seems as though the only authentic play is somehow connected to the pool table or play when employees manage themselves. Authentic play cannot be forced by managers, they must allow subordinates to have their own preferences and liberties to assume authentic play organically.

We therefore agree with Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012) who argue that authentic organisational play is difficult and even impossible to manage. In line with Sørensen and Spoelstra (2012), play can be fostered in workplaces only if managers encourage employees in authentic play according to Tökkäri (2015). Management in our case gave access to play and employees were allowed to play freely and therefore fostering authentic play by granting that access enabling employees to manage play. It is therefore possible for management to foster play this way and produce authentic play without hands-on managing the play as such. Free accessibility of a pool table, board games and informal events appeared to have been

optimal for the intended outcome of raising morale and improving cooperation. This may result in how the play is received, how much it utilized and thus what its outcome is.

Furthermore, the undefined rules on the amounts or timing of usage of the pool provide multiple benefits. It shows trust from the behalf of the managers to have faith that the availability of the pool table is not violated, overused or otherwise. Thus, in effect it is an indirect way to empower employees and provide them the responsibility of managing themselves and their breaks from work. By enabling employees to play this way and allowing them to manage play, the limits of management are evident as they can only offer opportunities. Ultimately employees assume the control of which element of play offered to them becomes successful and has an impact on the organisation.

This was achieved in the empirical results, although unintentionally. Managers did not specifically demonstrate reasoning behind the free accessibility of the pool table and appeared to do so without a purpose. Manifestly, playing pool has derived undeniably positive results, providing an informal setting for workers to mingle, enabling communication, team building, stress relief and result in better morale, which is in line with the literature previously mentioned (Glynn, 1994; Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Meyer, 1999). Hence the pool table is unpredictably embraced by managers and employees, therefore positively affecting the organisation as a whole and its corporate culture.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Research Aim

Our study set out to research play in a knowledge intensive firm and to explore the phenomenon of play implemented in organisational practice. With this study we contribute to the burgeoning literature on work and play by examining the notion of how managing play is limited and the power employees have in shaping its outcome. Our guiding question was: *How do managers implement play elements into work and how do subordinates experience it?* An interpretive method was used throughout the research, where we provided further understanding of studies on the topic. We used a qualitative research approach by examining the existing theoretical framework and gathering empirical findings through ten in-depth interviews within a case study company. Our aim was to provide further theoretical and practical insight on the topic of managing play. This chapter summarises the main findings of the study as well as reflects possible direction of future research.

6.2 Main findings

Managing play is unpredictable and limited

Our findings were in line with the literature on play stating that as the topic is undeniably ambiguous and difficult to fully comprehend. Due to the nature of the concept, managing play in organisations and serious play are concepts similarly ambiguous. As the literature on organisational play and managing play contradict with each other through different research, we analysed both views. Our case shows the unpredictability of play greatly influencing the manageability of it. It was apparent that the pool table was a successful implementation of play even though it was merely introduced as a marginal aspect and the serious play elements unexpectedly did not prove as effective as management thought they would be.

Additionally, the pool table was a catalyst for other play elements to flourish and further foster informal elements to be involved in the organisations routine. As a result, the pool table sustained internal relationships among workers which resolved the issues the organisation was facing. However, this was not accomplished through the specific play elements management expected it to, displaying the unpredictability of play. The pool table exceeded expectations and positively affected more factors and issues than managers intended on solving. The analysis resulted in one main idea, portraying the limits of managing play, as management can only provide the opportunity of play. They can manage how to introduce and implement play in their organisation, however there lies their limitation.

Furthermore, evident in our case was that when management has reached that limitation employees have to take over play and manage it themselves in order to achieve beneficial results. Employees in our case could this way produce authentic play after being introduced to it or involved in it. Other, more managed, aspects of play proved to be ineffective at producing authentic play as well as proved not to have the outcome the pool table did. The limitation of management's control over play is at a certain degree where they can introduce which type of play employees participate in and in what setting, yet no further than that. Play can therefore be successfully managed if it is managed by both by management and employees. This stems from the finding that play which is managed completely did not prove to be authentic, voluntary or fun, in the eyes of the employees.

In the case at hand it is also evident that management could not produce the results they aspired to with the specific type of play they wanted, showing the unpredictability of the concept. Play had its own will, took over and improved various issues through ways the management did not anticipate. Beyond implementation, management appeared to be only able to repurpose play elements that they experimented with in order for them to prove successful. In conclusion, as demonstrated in our case, play can foster and produce beneficial outcomes if managers introduce or implement play to employees who then are allowed to further assume control over play and enable results naturally without coercion. Therefore, we conclude that play can only be managed up to a certain limit by management.

Access produces authentic play

As evident in the case study, the underestimated repositioning of the pool table had tremendous influence on the corporate culture of the company. The formulation of this set up

was planned by management even though it was not considered as an important aspect. By moving the pool table form a closed room to an open area between office functions, visible to all workers and without set rules, management partly unknowingly granted the employees access to the pool table. Consequently, employees felt empowered to manage their own play.

Employees experienced the free and granted access to playing as an expression of goodwill from management, as a reward for work. In return, they admitted to be more motivated and productive on their work. However, management simply introduced the play and followed by that employees started to manage play themselves and controlled when they worked and when they played. Noticeably, the freedom to assume responsibility over play was not violated by overuse. The accessibility to play demonstrated it has intricate value and is purposeful in itself.

The free access and informality of the pool table additionally resulted in voluntary participation of the employees which catered to their varying preferences. As not all employees expressed preference to actively engage in pool itself, they were able to participate as spectators and felt included. Therefore, the simple notion of free access to playing pool in a welcoming environment fostered authentic play and manifested into the corporate culture of the organisation. Play in form of the pool table appeared to be a solution to the issues the organisation had in previous years. The resolution included introducing play in a more visible and accessible way, allowing employees more control, resulting in the current improvement in communication, high morale and interpersonal relationships.

Modest play with significant results

The serious play activities in which management had invested time and resources, such as events and the company School, were considered less authentic and proved less effective in our case. The pool table and other informal play it fostered, such as happy hour after work and mingling while others played, seemed more effective. Evident from the case at hand is how effective the repositioning of the pool table was, resulting in uncontested positive results. The modest play element had beneficial effects on the employees, their behaviour, the culture and the organisation as a whole.

Hence, employees experienced play as a positive factor that caused a chain reaction to further positive advantages. Employees mostly described the play elements and activities as fun,

particularly the pool table. Arguably, this is caused by their view of such play as authentic, therefore not managed fun. The experienced pool as enjoyable and pleasant, which also resulted in the popularity of it. Through this, employees experienced increased morale, which then caused more happiness at work and improved job satisfaction. The informality of the pool table created a platform for communication to blossom and friendlier bonds to be created between employees. They state this resulted in better communication, better information flow and cooperation between departments therefore according to the respondents impacting quality of work.

Employees stated that friendship and communication caused a sense of a united community which resulted in better teamwork. The open office space and team oriented workstations built around the pool table also influenced this result. Furthermore, the effect of the modest pool table arguably guaranteed better talent retention as the organisational culture grew stronger. Hence, the company benefitted greatly as a result of moving a pool table. Therefore, we conclude that a little efforts of play implemented by management can produce great advantages for the company as a whole. These modest endeavours can be as simple as moving a pool table to an open space and therefore we conclude that little play goes a long way.

6.3   Practical and Theoretical Contribution & Reflections and Further Research

This research study contributes to the theories on serious play and organisational play within business context. In line with our thesis, we suggest that further interpretive research should be continued to contribute to our thesis of the limitations of managing play by examining the different outcomes it might have. Further exploration of the notion that employees manage play from the certain stage should be further analysed as well as at what point should management stop introducing.

Research on the topic could be further examined by interviewing larger sample of workers in various business professions and industries for deeper understanding. Further research is also needed on the idea that various types of play influence various types of outcomes. Moreover, various types of play might vary from different industries and business environments and this should be taken into consideration.

References

Alvesson, M. (2004). Knowledge Work and Knowledge-Intensive Firms, New York: Oxford University Press

Bateson, G. (1955). A theory of play and fantasy, *Psychiatric Research Reports*, vol. 2, pp. 39-51

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). Business Research Methods, 3rd edn, New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Costea, B., Crump, N., & Holm, J. (2005). Dionysus at work? The Ethos of Play and the Ethos of Management, *Culture and Organisation,* [e-journal] vol. 11, no. 2, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 2 March 2017]

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 4th edn, London: Sage publications

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, New York, NY: Harper & Row

Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Bennett, S. (1971). An Exploratory Model of Play, *American Anthropologist,* [e-journal] vol. 73, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 4 April 2017]

Deal, T. & Key, M. K. (1998). Corporate Celebration: Play, Purpose, and Profit at Work, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler

Denhardt, R. (1981). In the Shadow of Organisation, Lawrence, KS: Regents Press of Kansas

Dougherty, D. and Takacs, H. C. (2004). Team Play: Heedful Interrelating as the Boundary for Innovation, *Long Range Planning*, [e-journal] vol. 37, no. 6, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 3 March 2017]

Dubois, A., & Gadde, L. E. (2002). Systematic Combining: An Abductive Approach to Case Research. *Journal of business research*, [e-journal] vol. 55, no. 7, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 29 March 2017]

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research, *Academy of Management Review*, [e-journal] vol. 14, no. 4, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 29 March 2017]

Fleming, P. (2005). Workers' Playtime?: Boundaries and Cynicism in a 'culture of fun' Program, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, [e-journal] vol. 41, no. 3, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 8 April 2017]

Ford, H. (2007). My Life and Work, Sioux Falls, SD: NuVision

Glynn, M. A. (1994). Effects of Work Task Cues and Play Task Cues on Information Processing, Judgment, and Motivation, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, [e-journal] vol. 79, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 12 April 2017]

Grugulis, I. (2002). Nothing Serious? Candidates' Use of Humour in management training, *Human Relations*, [e-journal] vol. 55, no. 4, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 12 April 2017]

Guerrier, Y. and Adib, A. (2003). Work at leisure and leisure at work: a study of the emotional labour of tour reps, *Human Relations*, [e-journal] vol. 56, no. 11, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 13 April 2017]

Huizinga, J. (1949). Homo ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture, [e-book] London: Routledge. Available at: http://art.yale.edu/file_columns/0000/1474/homo_ludens_johan_huizinga_routledge_1949_.pdf [Accessed 28 April 2017]

Hunter, C., Jemielniak, D. & Postula, A. (2010). Temporal and Spatial Shifts Within Playful Work, J*ournal of Organizational Change Management*, [e-journal] vol. 23, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 15 April 2017]

Ibarra, H. & Petriglieri, J.L. (2010). Identity Work and Play, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, [e-journal] vol. 23, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 13 April 2017]

Ibarra, H. (2003). Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press

Isen, A.M. (1999). On the Relationship Between Affect and Creative Problem Solving, in Russ, S.W. (Ed.), *Affect, creative experience, and psychological adjustment*, Philadelphia, PA: Brunner/Mazel, pp.3-17, Available at: Google Books: books.google.com [Accessed 20 April 2017]

Johansson, R. (2003). In the International Conference on Methodologies in Housing Research, Case Study Methodology, Available Online: http://www.psyking.net/HTMLobj-3839/Case_Study_Methodology-_Rolf_Johansson_ver_2.pdf

Kane, P. (2004). The Play Ethic, London: Pan Books

Karl, K.A. & Peluchette, J.V. (2006). Does Workplace Fun Buffer the Impact of Emotional Exhaustion on Job Dissatisfaction?: A Study of Health Care Workers, *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, [e-journal] vol. 7, no. 2, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 20 February 2017]

Kavanagh, D. (2011). Work and Play in Management Studies: A Kleinian Analysis, *ephemera theory & politics in organisation*, [e-journal] vol. 11, no. 4, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 5 February 2017]

Lafley, A. G., & Martin, R. L. (2013). Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works, Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press

Lee, Y. and Lin, H. (2011). 'Gaming is My Work': Identity Work in Internet-Hobbyist Game Workers, *Work, Employment & Society*, [e-journal] vol. 25 no. 3, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 3 May April 2017]

MacIntosh, R. & Beech, N. (2011). Strategy, Strategists and Fantasy: a Dialogic Constructionist Perspective, *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, [e-journal] vol.

24, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 4 May 2017]

Mainemelis, C., & Ronson, S. (2006). Ideas are Born in Fields of Play: Towards a Theory of Play and Creativity in Organizational Settings, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, [e-journal] vol. 27, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 29 April 2017]

March, J.G. (1976). The Technology of Foolishness, in March, J.G. & Olsen, J.P. (eds), *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, pp.253-265

Meyer, H. (1999). Fun for Everyone, *Journal of Business Strategy*, [e-journal] vol. 20, no. 2, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 29 April 2017]

Miller, S. (1973). Ends, Means, and Galumphing: Some Leitmotifs of Play, *American Anthropologist*, [e-journal] vol. 75, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 13 April 2017]

Newell, S., Robertson, M., Scarbrough, H., & Swan, J. (2009). Managing Knowledge Work & Innovation, 2nd edn, London: Palgrave

Penenberg, A. L. & Zichermann, G. (2015). Play at Work: How Games Inspire Breakthrough Thinking, New York, NY: Penguin Group

Plester, B. (2009). Crossing the line: boundaries of workplace humour and fun, *Employee*

Prasad, P. (2005). Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions, New York, NY: M.E. Sharp, Inc.

Relations, [e-journal] vol. 31, no. 6, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 18 April 2017]

Roos, J., Victor, B. & Statler, M. (2004). Playing Seriously with Strategy, *Long Range Planning*, [e-journal] vol. 37, no. 6, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 18 April 2017]

Sandelands, L. (2010). The Play of Change, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, [e-journal] vol. 23, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 5 April 2017]

Saunders, N.K., Thornhill, A., & Lewis, P. (2009). Research Methods for Business Students, 5th edn, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Sørensen, B. M., & Spoelstra, S. (2012). Play at Work: Continuation, Intervention and Usurpation, *Organisation*, [e-journal] vol. 19, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 20 January 2017]

Spariosu, M. I. (1989). Dionysus reborn: Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Starbuck, W. H., & Webster, J. (1991). When is Play Productive?, *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies*, [e-journal] vol. 1, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 5 April 2017]

Statler, M., Heracleous, L. and Jacobs, C.D. (2011). Serious Play as a Practice of Paradox, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, [e-journal] vol. 47, no. 2, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 29 April 2017]

Statler, M., Roos, J., & Victor, B. (2009). Ain't Misbehavin': Taking Play Seriously in Organizations, *Journal of Change Management*, [e-journal] vol. 9, no. 1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 29 April 2017]

Sutton-Smith, B. (2001). The Ambiguity of Play, London: Harvard University Press

Tavitiyaman, P., Weerakit, N., & Ryan, B. (2014). Leadership Competencies for Hotel General Managers: the Differences in Age, Education, and Hotel Characteristics, *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, [e-journal] vol. 15, no. 2, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 16 April 2017]

Tews, M. J., Michel, J. W., & Bartlett, A. (2012). The Fundamental Role of Workplace Fun in Applicant Attraction, *Journal of Leadership & Organisational Studies*, [e-journal] vol. 19, no.

1, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 15 February 2017]

Tökkäri, V. (2015). Organizational Play: Within and Beyond managing, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, [e-journal] vol. 10, no. 2, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 8 May 2017]

Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators, *The qualitative report*, [e-journal] vol. 15, no. 3, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 5 April 2017]

Turner, V. (1969). The Ritual Process, New York: Aldine

Walker, A. (2011). 'Creativity Loves Constraints': The Paradox of Google's Twenty Percent Time, *Ephemera Theory & Politics in Organisation*, [e-journal] vol. 11, no. 4, Available through: LUSEM Library website http://www.lusem.lu.se/library [Accessed 20 February 2017]

Yin, R. K. (2013). Case Study Research: Design and Methods, 5th edn, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications

Appendix A

Managers:

1. How would you describe the company?
   a. What is your organisation like?
2. How do you like working at the company?
   a. Why is that?
3. What makes company different from other companies?
4. What would you say are the strengths of your company?
5. What would you say are the weaknesses of your company?
6. How is the relationship between the managers and employees?
7. What does the word 'play' mean to you?
8. What do you do for fun at your job?
9. What makes your job fun?
10. How would you describe the parties, trips and elements of play in your company?
    a. What are they?
    b. Do these events have good turnouts?
    c. Do you join the events and trips?
11. What would you say were playful things that you do in your company?
12. Do you think that everyone in the company like these playful events?
    a. Do you think your employees like attending events outside of work?
13. How do the play elements look like in day to day activities, or on a weekly or monthly basis?
14. What is the company 'School'?
    a. What is the purpose of the school?
    b. What is your experience with School?
15. What did you hope to accomplish/gain with the elements of play?
    a. What is the purpose of the play elements?
    b. Do/Did you have a strategy behind the play elements?
16. How do you think the that/play elements influence your company?
    a. In what way?
17. Have you noticed any changes around the workplace after the play elements were implemented?
    a. How was it different before?

Appendix B

Employees:

1. How would you describe the company?
   a. What is your organisation like?
2. How do you like working at the company?
   a. Why is that?
3. What makes the company different from other companies?
4. What would you say are the strengths of your company?
5. What would you say are the weaknesses of your company?
6. How is the relationship between the managers and employees?
7. What does the word 'play' mean to you?
8. What do you do for fun at your job?
9. What makes your job fun?
10. What would you say were playful things that you do in your company?
11. How would you describe the parties, trips and elements of play in your company?
    a. How do you like the play elements?
    b. Do you participate?
    c. Does everyone participate?
12. How do the play elements look like in day to day activities?
13. What is the 'School'?
    a. Have you participated in the School?
    b. What do you think is the purpose of the School?
14. How do you think the playful events influence your company?
    a. In what way?
    b. Do you see any improvements?
    c. What do you think these elements accomplish?
    d. Is there a good balance between work and playful events?
15. Have you noticed any changes amongst your co-workers after the play elements were implemented?
    a. Do you think other employees are currently happy with the play elements of the company?
16. In what way do you think the Play elements affect you as an employee?
    a. Do you think the elements of play make you a better/worse employee?
    b. In what way?