

IT'S ABOUT TIME

A study of Norwegian managers' handling of time at work

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Abstract

This thesis enhances existing insights and knowledge about how managers handle their time through exploring how Norwegian *managers handle time at work*. More specifically, this thesis aims at answering the following research questions: 1) *What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work?* and; 2) *Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so, how and to what extent?* In the first part of the thesis, these research questions are approached from a rational, structural perspective.

Empirical data from an extensive leadership survey (N=3172) is analysed in order to answer the research questions. The analyses reveal that when Norwegian managers make choices and prioritize their time at work, they pay attention to; i) *the internal conditions* in the organizations, ii) the organization's *external environment*, and iii) *their own interest*. The findings of this study also show that managers' access to different types of resources has less impact on their perceived room for exercising choice in their jobs than what was expected, based on existing literature. The findings indicate that managers' handling of time is a more multifaceted and complicated process than what is proposed in the rational perspective. It is argued in this thesis that the existing literature on managers and time are *overly rational* and *too descriptive*. It is advocated that to understand the how managers handle their time at work other theoretical perspectives should be consulted.

In the second part of this thesis, the rational assumption underlying existing contributions is questioned as a third research question is introduced: *To what extent, and in what ways, is managers' handling of time a result of choice?* To address this question, a cultural perspective is probed. More precisely, theory focusing on managers' *underlying logic of action* and their *level of reflection* is consulted. A qualitative study is conducted to answer the third research question, and the findings indicate that it is important to recognize that managers handle their time in more or less *mindful* ways: While some managers appear very conscious about how they handle their time, others appear to be governed by old habits and routines. Moreover, whereas some managers are primarily concerned with calculating the consequences when handling time, others are found to be primarily concerned with what is *perceived appropriate*. In the last part of this thesis a typology, describing four different approaches on which managers may rely when handling time, is proposed. The four approaches are labelled i) *mindful calculations of consequences*, ii) *mindless calculations of consequences*, iii) *mindful rule-following*, and finally, iv) *mindless rule-following*. Finally, the thesis ends with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

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1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how Norwegian managers handle their time at work, or more precisely; how do managers make sense of different choice situations they face when handling time. Making sense of choice situations might be analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. In this thesis, I first draw on a *rational perspective*, in which managers are assumed to make rational choices to handle their time. The rational perspective is associated with what is referred to as *the logic of consequences* ((March, Olsen, & Christensen, 1976). One essential challenge within this perspective is to ensure that managers have sufficient room for exercising choice (Stewart, 1982a). Hence, in the first part of this thesis, I investigate how resource limitations influence managers' room for exercising choice. In the second part of the thesis I also draw on a *cultural perspective* to analyze how managers handle their time. Within a cultural perspective, focus is aimed at elements such as norms, identities and rules which govern what is perceived as *appropriate* behavior. The cultural perspective is associated with what is referred to as *the logic of appropriateness* (March & Olsen, 1989). This perspective offers an alternative approach from which we can understand how individuals attempt to make sense of the situation they are in.

In the thesis I argue that to understand *how* managers' attempt to make sense of the situation when they handle time is significant in order to understand which activities or events get the managers' time and attention, and *why* it is just these activities or events that do receive the attention. I further argue that broadening the understanding of this phenomenon is of great importance for organizations, as I rely on the assumption that managers may have a significant impact on organizations' performance. Arguments substantiating this assumption are elaborated in later sections of this chapter. Although there is a rather extensive body of research that focuses on *how* managers spend their time in terms of how many minutes or hours managers typically spend on different activities – the best known are the classical contributions from Mintzberg (1973) and Kotter (1982) – little attention has been paid as yet to questions regarding *how individuals relate to time* (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Claessens, 2004;

Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2004). In other words, there are yet few empirical and theoretical contributions that have focused particularly on the *underlying processes* of managers' handling of time. This is perhaps because such processes are quite complex and hence more challenging to study than merely quantifying the amount of time managers spend on different activities. However, as these underlying processes have received limited attention until now, there are not many existing insights into the effects such processes have on how managers' actually spend their time.

In this thesis I address this gap. I start by reviewing the existing research on managers and time; i.e. theoretical approaches that have previously been applied in studies of managers and time. I then develop a research perspective, derived from the literature review and the gaps revealed in existing knowledge. The research perspective is developed based on previous theoretical contributions, which are combined in order to focus on the managers' handling of time and time-related choices. However, analyses performed in the first part of this thesis reveal that a conventional rational approach forms an insufficient basis for answering the research questions addressed in this thesis. Thus, in the second part of this thesis I develop a *revised perspective on managers and time*. In the revised perspective I combine the rational perspectives on managers and time with a new and novel approach, as I include theoretical contributions focusing on *the logic of appropriateness* (March & Heath, 1994; March & Olsen, 1989) and differences in the managers' level of reflection (Langer, 1989). The revised perspective enables me to develop a deeper understanding of the process of handling time.

1.1.1 Main purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine *how managers handle their time at work*. Many managers in today's business life are constantly in a hurry. In a global market place where speed and tempo is perceived as being critical to corporations' success, managers put extensive amounts of hours into their work (Perlow, 1997, 1999). Still, "*Too much to do and too little time to do it*" has become an often-heard refrain. Although time is often

referred to as the most democratically distributed good there is – we all receive the exact same amount of it – time also constitutes an essential limitation. In an era where the demands of work have generated concerns that people in general, and managers in particular, are overworked (Schor, 1993) and severely pressed for time (Perlow, 1997), understanding *how* managers make decisions about their time is important (Sanford & Jeffrey, 2007). Much of managers' time at work is often controlled by others, for instance through routine-based activities the managers have to perform (such as participating in meetings, administering internal reporting, etc). However, all managerial jobs also offer elements of choice (Stewart, 1982c) and in this thesis, I focus at the parts of managers' time which the managers *can* influence or choose how to fill. The purpose of this study is thus to investigate *how managers handle their time at work* in a situation as described above where scarcity of time for many managers has become a central part of their working life situation.

In the early phases of the study I started out using the term *managing time*. However, as Claessens (2004:10) states, "*The term time management is actually misleading. Time, in fact, cannot be managed, because time is an invariable factor. Only the way a person deals with time can be influenced*". Despite this, Claessens still chooses to apply the term *time management* in her studies, as she argues that self-management, which could have been an alternative label for the processes she is interested in studying, has a different meaning in the literature. Claessens continues by listing numerous definitions of time management found in earlier studies. The definitions vary with respect to their focus, and there is no agreement on the definition of time management. Still, most of the definitions listed by Claessens share one underlying common feature; they refer to different behaviors that aim at achieving an efficient and effective use of time. However, in the study reported in this thesis, the focus is not aimed at how efficient or effective managers are with respect to their use of time. There is research which distinguishes between *time management* and *management of time* and defines ***management of time*** as part of the organizational actors' ongoing active production and reproduction of their social context (Nandhakumar, 2001). Although *time management* and *time management* are defined differently and hence reflect different processes, the term *to manage*, which implies

proactive and purposeful behavior, is still shared in the two concepts. However, since the focus in this study is aimed at how the managers handle their time in a broader sense, regardless of whether the processes are purposeful and active or not, I choose *not* to apply any of the concepts of *management of time* or *time management* in this study.

Opposed to the time management literature, I do not focus on whether managers do (or do not) succeed in handling their time. Rather are interested in studying *managers' perceived room for choice*, as well as *how* the managers actually handle time. More specifically, this study focuses on managers' *perceived discretion over time*, which is defined as *people's sense of their own ability to determine how they allocate their time to various activities* (Staudenmayer, Tyre, & Perlow, 2002). Hambrick (2007; 1987) also focuses on managerial discretion, which he defines as *latitude of action*. In the literature review in the next chapter, I will discuss the managers' room for choice more comprehensively, as it is one of the core elements in this study.

Moreover, in this study I am concerned with investigating how managers handle situations characterized by perceived tension among competing task and demands, which is defined as *people's sense that multiple tasks compete for attention during the same time and that not all requirements can be satisfied during that time slot* (Staudenmayer, Mayer & Perlow, 2002: 588). I refer to this as *balancing time*. More specifically, I focus on how managers balance their time between long-term planning and daily work for instance. This is referred to as the *time horizon considered*, which is defined as *the length of time that people take into account* (Staudenmayer et al., 2002, p. 588).

As the main purpose of this thesis is to study how managers handle their *time at work*, a preliminary clarification of different conceptions of time is needed to clarify the focus. In this study I differentiate between the objective (quantitative) time on one hand and the subjective (qualitative) time on the other. Objective, quantitative time is defined as "*continuous, homogeneous, and therefore measurable because equal parts are equivalent*" (Starkey, 1989, p. 36) whereas subjective qualitative time is a product of the norms, beliefs, and customs of individuals and/or groups. Subjective time reflects

constructed conceptualizations of time, where time is "*defined by organizational members and is assumed to be neither fixed nor invariant*"(Clark, 1985). Time viewed from such a perspective is seen as relative, contextual, organic and socially constructed (Adam, 1990; Glucksmann, 1998). As we will see from the literature review in the next chapter, an objective, linear, Newtonian perspective on time is the prevailing view in the Western world. The clock time perspective has also dominated the organizational literature in the western world (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Clark, 1985).

1.1.2 The research questions

Managers in today's business life live with more or less implicit expectations of how to *handle their time*; to find ways and develop strategies that enable them to balance, stretch, extend, juggle and control their time. But how do they do it? What are the underlying processes that influence how managers attempt to accomplish this? As we will see from the discussion of existing research on managers in Chapter two, there is a growing body of research focusing on managers and time from various perspectives. However, within this increasing amount of research, sparse attention has so far been given to the *underlying processes* regarding *how* managers handle their time. By underlying processes, I mean how the managers understand and make sense of the choice situations they are in, and what makes them chose one alternative over another. Therefore, in this thesis, I am not primarily interested in the *results* of these processes, in terms of how many hours managers typically spend communicating, performing different tasks or participating in specific activities, rather I am interested in studying the *underlying processes as such*. The research questions raised in this thesis are thus concerned with different aspects regarding the underlying processes of managers' handling of time. In the following sections each of the research questions are presented respectively.

The first of the research questions is concerned with managers' prioritizing of time at work. As we will see from the literature review presented in the next chapter, to my

knowledge there is little existing empirical research that has explicitly focused on examining what Norwegian managers consider relevant to pay attention to when they prioritize their time and make choices at work. As elaborated in later sections of this chapter, the national cultural context is argued as influencing how managers handle their time. It is therefore important to address this question in a Norwegian cultural context. Moreover, I find it highly interesting and relevant to investigate what Norwegian managers consider is important to pay attention to when they prioritize their time at work. Broadening the understanding of the managers' priority processes will provide a deeper understanding of how Norwegian managers actually handle their time, which is important in order to understand what gets the Norwegian managers' time and attention. More specifically, this means that I am interested in investigating how Norwegian managers make choices to prioritize their time at work. Therefore, the first of the research questions posted in this thesis asks:

1) What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work?

Secondly, in this study I also address and question the alleged relationship between managers' access to various resources and their opportunity for exercising choice and prioritizing time. In a theoretical model developed by Stewart (1982a), managers' access to various resources is assumed to strongly influence the *room for choice* in their jobs. Because the aim is to enhance the existing knowledge about managers' handling of time, the models focus on managers' perceived maneuvering room for exercising time-related choices makes it adequate as part of the theoretical basis for this study of Norwegian managers' handling of time. However, in this thesis I question the dynamics proposed in the model, which states that managers' room for choice can be viewed as a residual between the demands in their jobs (defined as what the manager cannot neglect to do nor delegate to others) and the constraints in their jobs (defined as all factors limiting what the manager can do, such as for instance resource-limitations). This dynamic is built on a rational assumption of managers and their handling of time, as managers' room for choice is seen as a *function* of the level of demands and constraints in the managers' jobs.

In this thesis, I question whether managers' perceived room for exercising choice could be calculated as easily and straightforwardly as anticipated in this theoretical model. Thus, in the second research question, I focus on the link between the perceived *level of constraints* and the *room for exercising choice* in managers' jobs. As we will see from the literature review, resource limitations are claimed to constitute a typical and often extensive constraint in many managers' jobs. Hence, one of the purposes of the study reported in this thesis is to question and test the alleged impact of managers' access to various resources for the managers' perceived room for choice. Therefore, the second research question is:

2) Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so, how and to what extent?

1.2 Outline of the structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: This *first chapter* gives an introduction to the phenomenon of interest; *managers and time*, or more specifically *how managers handle their time*. Chapter one also presents the background for the choice of the topic for this thesis through an introductory discussion of why managers and time is an interesting and relevant topic for research. Furthermore, *the research-questions* guiding the study reported in this thesis is presented. Finally, I end chapter one by arguing why the *national cultural context* is highly relevant in studies focusing on time, and more specifically why it is important to study managers' handling of time in a *Norwegian cultural context*.

In *the second chapter* relevant literature is reviewed and critically assessed. Since the study focuses on both *time* and *managers*, two fields that have been subject to much research, the review starts with a brief introduction to each of the fields respectively. The review of time-related studies includes studies that are particularly relevant to the present study. In the introduction to the field of management research, I briefly discuss definitions of leadership and management, and a definition is chosen for this thesis. In the

main part of the literature review, literature focusing particularly on *managers and time* is reviewed and critically assessed in order to position the study.

The literature review reveals that none of the existing theoretical contributions single-handedly forms an adequate basis for this thesis; hence a research perspective is developed in *Chapter three* to address the gaps revealed in existing knowledge. A set of empirically testable hypotheses is developed. The hypotheses address elements of the proposed dynamics of a theoretical model developed by Stewart (1982), where manager access to various resources is assumed to influence the managers' perceived maneuvering room for making choices and prioritizing time.

Chapter four presents the study's research design and documents the methodology applied in the first part of the study reported in this thesis. In *Chapter five*, the results of the quantitative analyses are presented. More specifically, the results of an explorative factor analysis performed to address Research question one, as well as the results of a test of the hypotheses (Research question two) are presented. To test the hypotheses, multiple stepwise regression analyses are performed.

In *Chapter six*, I discuss the findings and conclude that since the results only offer such moderate support to the proposed dynamics between the managers' access to resources and their perceived room for exercising choice, a different theoretical perspective should be considered to gain more insight. Methodological explanations are considered and discussed. Although methodological limitations are identified, the findings suggest that other mechanisms or additional factors than those in focus in the original research model seem to influence managers' handling of time. In other words, the revealed findings indicate that the conventional theoretical approaches to managers' handling of time are insufficient to fully grasp and comprehend the dynamics of this complex phenomenon. Although Stewart (1982) included managers' time-related *choices* in her CCD model, neither she nor other research contributions have focused more profoundly on problematizing *how* the managers' time-related *choices are actually made*. Thus, I end *Chapter six* by introducing Research question three, which questions the rational assumption underlying the theoretical contributions on which the first part of the thesis is

based. Chapter six ends by concluding that a new and *revised perspective* on managers and time is needed to fully understand the underlying processes encompassed in managers' handling of time.

In *Chapter seven* new theoretical contributions are introduced as a revised research perspective on managers and time is developed. Central elements in the revised perspective are *i)* different underlying *logics of action* on which managers rely when handling time and *ii)* differences in the managers' level of reflection regarding how they handle time. This revised perspective brings about new requirements with respect to research design. Consequently, to address *Research question three*, a new study applying a *qualitative* approach is designed to explore the underlying processes of managers' handling of time. In *Chapter eight* the research design and methodology applied in the qualitative study is reported.

The findings revealed through the qualitative study are then reported in *Chapter nine*. The findings are structured according to themes, which include: *i)* different underlying logic of action *ii)* different levels of reflection, and *iii)* age and experience. The first two of these themes are combined as a typology is developed. The typology is partly based on the empirical findings revealed in this chapter and partly on the theoretical basis for the study. The typology portrays different approaches managers may display when handling time. Moreover, I also draw on the findings revealed through the qualitative part of this thesis to suggest and discuss possible explanations why the hypotheses tested in the first part of the thesis receive moderate support.

Finally, in *the tenth* and last chapter, I conclude the thesis by discussing the study's major contributions and limitations. Some of the most prevailing practical and theoretical implications of the findings reported in this thesis are also discussed.

1.3 Managers' handling of time: Why is it interesting to study?

There are several lines of debate that are relevant to explain an interest in studying managers and their handling of time, both theoretically based arguments and more empirically oriented arguments. Although this thesis is primarily based on theoretical arguments as to why the combination of managers and time is an interesting topic, there are also empirical (practical) arguments that have contributed to my interest in the topic. Therefore, in the following sections, I will present and discuss practical as well as theoretical arguments. However, the next sections start with a brief anecdote describing how I initially became aware of the great interest in time and how to handle time among a selection of Norwegian managers.

1.3.1 Managers' own interest in time and how to handle it

My personal point of departure for this thesis was my participation in a European research project focusing on management development, in which I was engaged in the period 2002 - 2003. During this project, 200 Norwegian managers¹ were interviewed about their views on and experience with management development activities. These interviews were structured with predefined answers and boxes to tick. However, in almost every interview there was one topic that kept reappearing – although it was not mentioned in the interview-guide: *time*. The managers were observably interested in and concerned about the topic of time, which was brought up in numerous ways: some managers refused to participate in the study due to *lack of time*, others explained how they *did not find time* to participate in management development activities and yet others described how they participated in management development activities in order to be able to *spend their time more efficiently*. The managers had different approaches and reasons for bringing up the issue of time; still, it was remarkable how time surfaced as a topic in interview after interview. As I became aware of managers' extensive interest in time and time related issues, I realized that if time is as important as it appeared to be to the managers, it is essential to study it and try to understand more about how managers think

¹ In addition 200 managers from Great Britain, Germany, Spain, France, Denmark and Romania was also interviewed in this research project.

about time, relate to time, handle time, how they try to juggle, stretch and manage their time.

Colbjørnsen, Drake and Haukedal (2001) confirmed my observation of Norwegian managers' great concern for time and time related questions. In their extensive study of Norwegian managers, *time deprivation* or *lack of time* was perceived as one of the greatest of all the challenges managers reported to face in their jobs. Given the range of challenges that managers actually face, this finding is rather remarkable. Furthermore, it underlines the need for more research to investigate and explore how managers handle their time in what is perceived to be a very challenging situation.

The managers' interest in and concern for time and time related challenges, discovered through my personal experience and through Colbjørnsen et al's findings, led to a preliminary literature search in order to explore the phenomenon and the research focusing on this phenomenon. The literature review revealed interesting research on managers and time, as well as questions yet unanswered. It also revealed several arguments as to why managers and time is an interesting topic for research, arguments that will be presented in the following sections.

1.3.2 Managers' handling of time matters

In this thesis I build on the assumption that management matters to organizations in terms of their performance. This assumption is built on an extensive body of research on management in general – and on managers in particular – which recognizes managers' significance to organizations: how the managers enact and fulfill their roles, what managers do and how they spend their time, which has been found to influence organizations. This view, which is the prevailing tradition of strategic management, that top executives greatly influence what happens to their organizations (Finkelstein &

Hambrick, 1996), is referred to as an “*individualistic view*” (Thomas, 1988)². Managers have been found to be significant to their organization and its performance in several studies, e.g. because of personal traits such as charisma (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002), their leadership style (Jung & Avolio, 2000), or because of their symbolic impact on the organization and the actors in it (Pfeffer, 1977; Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In the following sections I will elaborate on various arguments that support the view that managers, and consequently how managers handle their time, are significant and thus an interesting topic to study.

Simply put, management is about achieving objectives through others and with others (Yukl, 2002). Managers’ contributions to achieving the objectives can be *indirect* or *direct*: First, managers may have an *indirect* influence on organizational performance through the impact they have on their coworkers, for instance as described in Leader-Member-Exchange-theory (Graen, Alvares, Orris, & Martella, 1970); (Dienesch & Liden, 1986) and in transformational leadership theory (Dvir et al., 2002; Jung & Avolio, 1999)). Research on transformational leadership has revealed significant correlations between the managers’ style and the organizations’ performance. In transformational leadership theory focus is primarily aimed at *what managers do* (the leadership style) and at the documented effects of managers’ emphasizing *intellectual stimulation* of their coworkers, *inspiring motivation*, showing *individual consideration* and ensuring *idealized influence* (Bass, 1985). Managers who pay *personal attention* to their coworkers through *individualized attention* are perceived as more transformational than managers who are more distant towards their coworkers. In order to show personal attention, the managers must allocate at least some amount of their time to their coworkers. There is a rich body of literature documenting how different leadership styles are correlated with different performance, and where transformational leadership is claimed to be *the* most effective

² The competing view coming out of e.g. population ecology (e.g., (Hannan & Freeman, 1977)), and new institutional theory (e.g., (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)), states that executives have little effect because organizations are exceedingly inertial, swept along by external forces, and constrained by a host of conventions and norms (D. C. Hambrick, 2007). This view is referred to as a “*contextualistic view*” (Thomas, 1988). Within the “*contextualistic view*” the constraints placed on managers by contextual factors are emphasized (Liebersohn & O'Connor, 1972).

leadership style (Bass, 1997; Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). A transformational leader spends her time quite differently than a typical “laissez faire” manager, hence different leadership styles can also be assumed to correlate with different ways in which managers handle and consequently spend their time.

How managers handle their time is therefore of great importance to organizations through the impact it has on the employees of these organizations. The managers’ impact as *role models* adds further importance to understanding how managers handle their time, what factors influence their handling of time and what is found relevant to pay attention to when prioritizing time. The followers of a role model will attempt to reproduce their role models’ behavior. Hence, managers’ handling of time can be assumed to be part of the behavior that is imitated. The managers’ impact as role models means that extending the knowledge about how managers handle their time can also contribute to extend the understanding of their co-workers’ handling of time, because the managers’ behaviors can be expected to be reproduced and imitated by their followers and thus spread in the organization.

A rational perspective: Managers’ influence on organizations’ performance

In addition to the *indirect* effects managers have on organizations and their performance through their impact on coworkers, managers are also assumed to have a *direct* influence on organizations’ performance. Within a rational perspective, managers are viewed as important decision makers constantly working to optimize the performance of the organizations. Furthermore, managers and their decisions are assumed to be influential for the results which an organization is capable of achieving. This is partly because managers have substantial control of how the organizations’ resources are allocated through the central role they often have in major decision processes. Decision-making is an essential part of a managers’ job. Simon (1979) goes as far as to claim that decision-making and leadership should be viewed as synonymous concepts. Mintzberg (1973) also emphasizes the managers’ role as a decision maker in his classical work, *The Nature of Managerial Work*. When managers are to make decisions, they are typically confronted with numerous pieces of information that demand their attention (Mintzberg, op cit).

Hence, managers must be able to differentiate between important and less important information, and select the relevant information they should pay attention to when they make decisions. Managers must also be able to identify the information they have to respond to and what response they should provide. In other words, the managers must recognize and choose the appropriate response in the given situation in the given context (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990).

In addition to responding to existing situations, managers must also act proactively; that is to attempt to predict what the future will bring and how they can act in order to have the best possible position to meet future challenges. A manager's ability to perceive and interpret strategic signals has been found to be significant (particularly in top executive jobs) to the company's performance. In order to perceive such strategic signals, managers must allocate at least some of their time to supervise the company's surroundings, the market, their competitors, and so on. Although managers in modern organizations rarely make essential decisions all by themselves particularly not in a Norwegian cultural context, where employee involvement in decision-making has long traditions and a strong, statutory position, managers often have a final say when major decisions are made. How much time managers have - or chose to spend on - familiarizing themselves with the alternatives can therefore be quite essential to the organization and even have a *direct* impact on its performance. Hence, managers handling of time can be argued to be significant to organizational performance and competitiveness.

Managers' handling of time: A cultural perspective

How managers handles their time and what managers choose to invest their time in is also important from a *cultural perspective*. Within a cultural perspective, focus is aimed at aspects like *norms*, *identities* and *rules*. Based on the individual's identity a set of rules is evoked that governs the individual's appropriate behavior. How the managers handle their time is thus important in the sense that it signals to what extent the managers appears to be able fulfill their identity and prioritize time in ways which is *perceived*

appropriate. The cultural perspective is in this thesis associated with what (March & Heath, 1994) refer to as *The logic of appropriateness*.

By assigning priorities, managers also wield a tremendous *symbolic power* of time (Zerubavel, 1981). If a manager (particularly managers at higher levels of an organization) chooses to allocate greater parts of her time to a department, a particular customer or an activity, this can be perceived as an expression of that particular department, customer or activity's importance, which can be perceived as greater than what it is in reality. What managers choose to spend their time on may thus be perceived as a signal of what is *appropriate* to pay attention to, and what is perceived as worth prioritizing in the organization.

Furthermore, within a cultural perspective, how managers handling of time can be assumed to effect the *organizations' norms* regulating what others in the organization believe is important to spend time on, which subsequently will influence how they spend their time. This gives a self-energizing effect, where the managers' allocation of time is perceived as a symbol of importance and hence influences what is seen as *appropriate* to prioritize time to.

Summarized, we see that how managers handle their time at work is important to organizations from various perspectives: i) through a rational perspective which focus on the managers' effect/influence on co-workers' motivation and effort to reach the organization's goal, and on the managers' direct influence on the organization's resources and important decisions, and ii) through a *cultural perspective* where the managers' use of time is viewed as governed by what is perceived *appropriate* according to the managers' roles and identities.

1.3.3 Challenges related to managers' handling of time

Managers' handling of time is, however, not only *particularly significant*, in the following sections I will discuss different reasons why manager handling of time is also *particularly challenging*. These challenges represent additional arguments why studying managers and time is relevant and interesting.

First, the *openness* in many managerial jobs imposes a challenge to manager handling of time. By openness, I here refer to the nature and content of many managerial jobs, where several of their responsibilities or tasks typically have no clearly defined end or finishing point. This makes it more difficult for managers to know when a task is completed or “good enough”, since the managers often have to define for themselves what is “good enough”. In many cases, whether or not a task or job is satisfyingly performed is a question of evaluation and many managers have to make these evaluations themselves. Most managers are part of a hierarchy where they have superiors to report to, and in that respect they are subordinates as well as managers. However, there are a great number of situations where the managers to a greater extent than others have to set their own standards for when a task is completed, when a job should be considered fulfilled or when it is time to move on to another task. This makes it more complicated for managers to estimate their need for time, schedule their days or set deadlines.

A second reason why it is challenging for managers to handle their time is the *lack of feedback*, which managers typically experience to a greater extent than others (Selvik, 2005). Research has revealed that managers are less likely to receive (negative) feedback on their work. Employees are reluctant to impart bad news to their managers, due to fear of being associated with the negative news. This is observed to lead to skewed feedback, where managers get more positive than negative feedback, regardless of whether this fits the actual performance (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). Selvik (op cit) who has studied managers and the feedback they (do not) get in a Norwegian cultural context, claims that the relationship between managers and their co-workers in several cases is characterized by “*extensive silence and concealment*”, which may increase the risk that the manager makes misjudgments. If a manager receives little honest feedback from her co-workers,

this also makes it more challenging for the manager to know whether her handling of time is perceived as appropriate by her co-workers and in the organization as a whole. Put differently, if the manager's handling of time is perceived as inappropriate, it is less likely that she will get feed-back which might enable her to handle her time differently. Thus, this constitutes an extra challenge for many managers in their attempt to handle their time in a suitable manner.

A third challenge, which makes managers' handling of time extra demanding, is found in the *structural circumstances* surrounding managers' jobs. Managers typically have large networks with many connections, internally as well as externally. Building and maintaining various networks often constitutes an important part of their jobs (Kotter, 1982). Managers are thus expected to spend time maintaining the organizational external contacts, such as customers/clients, suppliers and partners. Additionally, managers are also expected to spend part of their time internally, for instance to be available for their co-workers, handle internal challenges, and so forth. Hence, there are a number of actors and activities competing for the managers' time and attention. This adds extra challenges for managers' handling their time; particularly managers at higher levels, as they are expected to both attend to their internal responsibilities and take care of the organizations' external interests. Combined, these structural elements, where managers' attention is expected to be divided between internal and external aspects, make it particularly challenging for managers to handle their time.

A fourth issue that makes managers' handling of time challenging, is the expectation many managers feel to put in extensive amounts of hours at work (Perlow, 1997) A successful manager is typically busy and full of activity, and she is expected to be equal to the many brief activities that typically fill a managers' day (Kurke & Aldrich, 1983; Mintzberg, 1973). Put differently, managers face expectations that they should work longer hours than others, and that they should deal with large amounts of brief activities while they are at work. Furthermore, managers are often viewed as a privileged group that has great autonomy and freedom, large salaries, interesting work and high status in their jobs. Combined, these constitute a rather extensive output or reward side related to

being a manager. According to equity-theory (Adams, 1963), these influence how much input managers feel they have to put in to “balance the scores” and create a satisfying balance.

Fifth and finally, there have also been developmental changes in the technological context in which managers operate that make their handling of time extra challenging. Technological developments such as the Internet, online availability and new communication skills open new possibilities, but also add new challenges to managers’ handling of time. These challenges do not exclusively concern managers; new technology creates new situations, possibilities and challenges for many actors in today’s business world. Nevertheless, managers are heavily influenced by the new situation where *constant availability* is a key issue. The borders between work and leisure time have become more blurred, as managers often are online at home as well as at work. These new elements and their consequences for organizations as well as individuals have been the subject of several studies. For instance, the new situations are referred to as the *flexible work place* (Sennett, 2001) or *the new deal at work* (Cappelli, 2002). The new situations make handling of time different, and perhaps even more challenging, today than it was only a few decades ago. The classical “*Parkinson’s’ Law*” formulated in the 1950s states that “*Work expands to fill the time available for its completion*”. (Parkinson, 1981) In the present situation, where not only managers, but also many other actors with whom managers are in contact have constant online availability (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), one can ask how much time there is available for a manager to fulfill her work. Thus, managers in today’s business life must draw their own lines regarding the borders of their jobs to a greater extent than earlier, for instance in terms of working hours. Although the above discussed development opens new possibilities, it also makes managers’ handling of time more challenging.

To summarize the challenges discussed above, we see that not only is managers’ handling of time *particularly important* to organizations and the people in them, there are also a number of factors which make this *particularly challenging*.

1.4 Why focus on managers and time in a Norwegian cultural context?

Time is perceived and handled differently in different cultures. According to the well-known anthropologist Edward Hall (1984), every culture has its own time frame in which the patterns are unique. Hall claims that to be able function effectively in a new country requires that one not only learns the spoken language, but also learns the “*language of time*”. Managers’ perception of time is also influenced by the cultural context (Stewart, 1996). In a study comparing German managers to Anglo-American managers Stewart revealed several differences between the two groups related to time. One of the differences was related to how they handled their time at work: the German managers were described as working hard and leaving on time, whereas the British managers were described as working less intensely, but often staying late, taking work home or dropping in over the weekend. Furthermore, the German managers were also described as more task-oriented than the British, and allocated more of their time at work to help their subordinates with technical issues in their work. Although Stewart’s study focused on how the managers actually allocated their time – not at the underlying processes - her study still recognizes the effect of the different socio-cultural constraints in different countries and the influence this has on how managers handle their time.

Another study examined the effects of transformational leadership and leader member exchange on job satisfaction in five different cultures³ (Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999). The results revealed interesting differences across cultures; among other things it revealed significant differences related to how managers in different cultures allocated their time. The study also investigated the effects the managers’ allocation of time had on their subordinates. The effects were also found to be influenced by the cultural context. Moreover, differences in the *perception of time* is in recent contributions by Hofstede (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) included as an additional dimension in his model applied to describe different cultures

Managers are influenced by the cultural context in which they operate. Managers perform their jobs and handle their time within their cultural context, under the norms and

³ The following countries were included in the study: Australia, Colombia, India, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.

institutions that characterize their cultural context. Hence, when studying time and how managers' handle their time at work, it is important to recognize the cultural context and its influence. Therefore, in this thesis I will study how managers handle their time at work within a *Norwegian cultural context*, recognizing that there are differences between the Norwegian cultural context and many other cultural contexts, for instance regarding average working hours. The Norwegian work force in general works fewer hours per week than what is average in the European Union (Statens Arbeidsmiljøinstitutt, 2007). The average working hours for Norwegian full-time employees are 39 hours per week, whereas the average working hours among Norwegian managers is app. 46.5 hours pr week⁴. Furthermore, the average working hours in Norway has *decreased* over the last decades (Statistic Norway), whereas it has increased dramatically in the US. Schor (1993) observed that from 1970 to 1990, American working hours increased by about 8 hours per year, and that the cumulative impact is equivalent to working an extra month per year. Furthermore, a report from the International Labor Organization (2001) states that in the decade following the period Schor studied, Americans added nearly another full week to their work year. According to Brett & Stroh (2003), American workers work 137 hours more per year than Japanese workers do, 260 hours per year more than British workers do, and 499 hours per year more than French workers do. Although these numbers say nothing about the Norwegian working hours, the numbers still document the massive differences that exist among different countries regarding average working hours. Furthermore, these country-wise differences constitute important parts of the context surrounding managers' handling of time, and hence underline the relevance of the cultural context in time-related studies.

⁴ The average weekly working hours for the managers participating in our study are 45,6 hours per week. There is a noticeable difference between male managers that worked an average of 46, 6 hours a week and female managers who reported working app. 43, 3 hours pr week.

2.0 Literature Review

"Nothing is as practical as a good theory" (1945)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant research on how managers handle time. As the study reported in this thesis is concerned with *management* and *time*, the chapter starts with a brief general introduction to relevant research on the topics *time* and *management* respectively. Then, research focusing on *managers and time* is reviewed and critically assessed. More specifically, I first review literature focusing on managers' perceived room for handling time, exercising choice and prioritizing time. In addition research that focus on factors influencing the managers' perceived room for choice is also reviewed.

2.2 Time

Time is the most widely used noun in the English language, according to Adam (1995). Time as a phenomenon has also been portrayed in various research studies from a number of different theoretical angles; as Jaques (1982) notes, the concept of time has been of central concern to philosophers for more than 2000 years. From the earliest times, great philosophers have spent lifetimes wondering and debating what time really is. Time is also a central concept within a variety of other fields of knowledge, such as the natural sciences of biology or physics. But resolving the mystery of time is not only of significance to philosophers and physicists, it is also a very *practical concern* (Raju, 2003), which forms a highly relevant perspective in the social sciences.

Perspectives on time spans from philosophy through the natural sciences, to more practical oriented theories, such as e.g. sociology (Adam, 1995), organizational theory (e.g. Ancona, Okhuysen et al., 2001; Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Butler, 1995; Gersick, 1988, 1994; Sahay, 1997; Whipp, 1994; Whipp, Adam, & Sabelis, 2002) and management (e.g. Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Staudenmayer et al., 2002; Stewart, 1982b; Tengblad, 2006). In this thesis, the focus is aimed at how managers attempt to

handle, manage and juggle their time at work; therefore research with a practical rather than a philosophical approach to time has been chosen as theoretical point of departure. Although undoubtedly interesting, the philosophical features of the phenomenon time are not within the scope of this study, and therefore not elaborated here.

The increasing interest⁵ in time and time-related issues is annotated in a special issue of *Academy of Management Review* (2001): "*Academic journals also have seen a proliferation of research papers on time and timing. ... As the pace of research dramatically accelerates, however, time and timing have moved from the background to the foreground*" (Ancona, Okhuysen og Perlow, 2001:512). The increased popularity that research on time has achieved may be due to various reasons; one is that the time crunch is increasingly recognized as widely felt in affluent societies. More and more people are experiencing what is characterized as "*a 24-hour, all-year-round, non-stop global world of just-in-time trading and financing, which is constantly cutting time...*" (Rämö, 2004b). The great public attention to the millennium has also been claimed to have induced a greater interest in time as a phenomenon (Whipp et al., 2002). Yet another reason is related to the fact that research tends to evoke more research: When researchers read academic journals and find various results of time related-studies reported there, it tends to induce greater interest in the topic, which in turn may result in more research.

The increased interest in temporal perspectives in research has resulted in a rich variety of new expressions, concepts and metaphors about time. Examples include *the time famine* (Perlow, 1999), *entrainment*⁶ (Standifer & Bluedorn, 2006), *polychronicity* (Bluedorn, Kalliath, Strube, & Martin, 1999), *chronos and kairos* (Miller, 1992; Rämö, 2004a), *temporal playing fields, punctuated equilibrium* (S. Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997;

⁵ One illustration of the richness and complexity of the concept of time is the number of entries found for it when searching in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary⁵ where there are no less than 98 entries! The number of hits one gets when entering *time* as a search keyword in the *ProQuest Online Information Service* serves as another illustration of how numerous the studies of *time* are. In November 2003, ProQuest returned 1,543,686 documents as a result when searching using **time** as the keyword, whereas the same search conducted in July 2008 returned no less than **7,238,716** documents!

⁶ *Entrainment* is a concept borrowed from biology used to define the process by which one cyclic rhythm becomes captured by and set to oscillate with another (McGrath & Kelly, 1986) which argues that socially constructed rhythms based on either the calendar, the clock or event-based cycles (Clark, 1985) dictate the individual's behavior (Perlow, 1999)

Tushman & Anderson, 1986), *socio-temporal order* (Zerubavel, 1981), *time crunch* (Perlow, 1997) and *the time bind* (Hochschild, 1997).

However, the rapid growth in the number of time-related studies and the development of new concepts and expressions has resulted in a challenging lack of coherence within the field, which is claimed to cause a number of potential problems related to ensuring cumulativeness in time-research (Ancona, et al, op cit). Research on time is described as the initial period of experimentation, where a dominant paradigm is yet to be developed (Abernathy, 1988; Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Problems arise because concepts are applied differently by different researchers and because the field is still fragmented with little or no dialog between researchers who are applying different theoretical perspectives (Ancona, et al, op cit). This lack of coherence represents a challenge when attempting to provide a review of time-related studies, since there are few commonly accepted structures or frameworks based on the collective use of concepts, variables or theories. In order to meet the challenges, Ancona et al. (2001) argues that research needs to develop a rich and unambiguous dictionary of time-related concepts to clarify what is referred to when researchers apply different concepts and notions.

Despite the increasing general and academic interest in time and time-related studies, (Ancona, Goodman et al., 2001) states, “*Given the different manifestations of time in organizational life, there is surprisingly little research on time in this setting*”. Bluedorn (2002) confirms Ancona’s observation, and states that temporal research traditionally has been given scarce attention within organizational research (Bluedorn, 2002; Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988). This means that although research on time-related issues in organizational contexts is increasing; limited research is conducted. Moreover, research focusing explicitly on *how individuals relate to time in organizational contexts* is particularly limited (Claessens, 2004). Therefore, the study reported in this thesis will focus particularly on broadening the existing understanding of how individuals, or more specifically Norwegian managers, relate to time in organizational contexts. In addition to the above-described general shortcomings in existing knowledge about time-related issues, there is a particular need for more research on time-related issues in organizational

settings in a *Norwegian cultural context*. As discussed in the previous chapter, time, perceptions of time and how people view and relate to time, is highly influenced by the cultural context. Hence, reliance solely on studies conducted in the US or the UK, for example, would be insufficient to fully comprehend how Norwegian managers handle their time at work. To provide new knowledge about how Norwegian managers relate to time is thus important and will constitute highly relevant contributions to the understanding of management in Norway.

2.2.1 Conceptions of time

In the first chapter, a distinction between two different conceptions of time was introduced: the objective, quantitative time, and the subjective, qualitative time. A number of other conceptions can also be found in existing research: e.g. homogeneous and heterogeneous time, regular and irregular, precise and imprecise, reversible with irreversible, objective and experiential, closed with open, and clock time with event time (Ancona, et al 2001:515). However, although the literature describes numerous different conceptions of time, this review is limited to focus on objective time and subjective time.

2.2.1.1 Objective time

A fundamental dichotomy underlying much of the social sciences in general, including perspectives on time, is that which is between *objective* and *subjective* realities (Adam, 1995; Blyton, 1989; Jacques, 1982). According to the objective view, time is "independent of man" (Clark, 1990), a view that is aligned with a Newtonian assumption of time as: abstract, absolute, unitary, invariant, linear, mechanical, and quantitative. *The clock* has emerged as a primary metaphor in this conceptualization of time. The original purpose for using clocks was to assemble people for prayers. But advantages far beyond the religious setting were soon discovered: The enormous potential related to synchronizing people's time and creating universal perceptions of temporal factors such

as “when” or “how long” was initially revealed and exploited (Eriksen, 2001). As follows, the clock acquired great value as a device to organize and synchronize peoples’ work and life rhythms. Mumford (1934, cited in (Ulvenes, 1997, p. 236), goes so far as to claim, “*The clock, not the steam engine, has been the driving force of the modern, industrial world*”. Technological development has made it possible to split time into smaller and smaller units. Division of time in equal units is the fundamental characteristic of clock time: “*time is infinitely divisible into objective, quantifiable, units such that the units are homogenous, uniform, regular, precise, deterministic and measurable*” (McGrath & Kelly, 1986). Lee & Libenau (1999:1037) pose that clock time, “*is homogenous and divisible in structure, linear and uniform in it’s flow, objective and absolute, that is existing independent of objects and events, measurable (or quantifiable) and as singular, with one and only one correct time*”.

Within an objective perspective on time, time is described as a linear dimension that passes at a constant pace from the past through the present to the future (Ulvenes, 1997). In western parts of the world, this view has become the prevailing way to conceptualise time (Eriksen, 2001). The clock time perspective has also dominated the organizational literature in the western world (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Clark, 1985; George, 2000).

However, one of the most central issues within time-related studies throughout the years has been to determine not only how time may – but also whether time *should* - be described or characterized⁷. The objective clock-time approach is criticized and described as insufficient to understand how individuals relate to time. “*In organizations, people need to do more with time than simply measure it. They need to allocate, schedule, and synchronize activities. Thus in practice clocks and calendars are not sufficient*” (Yakura, 2002). A few scholars have attempted to reconcile the objective-subjective dichotomy in the social sciences (see e.g. Adam 1995, Clark, 1990).

⁷ One of the earliest contributions to the discussion about the value of viewing time as an objectively measurable phenomenon was made by Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1928. In his doctoral thesis from 1889, “*Essai sur les donnés immédiates de la conscience*” (“*Time and the free will*”), he confronts the idea that time is something objective and measurable that should run people’s lives.

Managers' average working hours (measured in objective hours) are included in this study as *the objective time* is found relevant. Average working hours have been given a great deal of attention in various studies (e.g. DeVoe & Pfeffer, 2007; Hochschild, 1997; Perlow, 1997; Schor, 1993). Furthermore, in several studies of managers' work with regard to time (e.g. (Carlson, 1951; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973; Stewart, 1982c; Tengblad, 2006) focus has been aimed at how managers' time is divided between different activities during a typical workday. In this study I do not measure how many hours Norwegian managers spend on different tasks or activities; I aim at understanding the processes underlying how they prioritize their time at work. Nevertheless, the objective time offers an important perspective to the study and is thus included.

2.2.1.2 Subjective time

“When a man sits with a pretty girl for an hour, it seems like a minute. But let him sit on a hot stove for a minute and it's longer than any hour. That is relativity.”

*Albert Einstein, 1938*⁸

Individual's experience of time is, according to Adam (1995), far too complex to capture using only the traditional clock time. Adams argues that, for an individual, a moment in time comprises a complex set of temporal experiences of the past, present and future, as well as linear and cyclical time, and objective and subjective time. However, the review is limited to focus on temporal perceptions, leaving temporal personality variables out. More specifically, I focus particularly on perceived or *subjective time*.

Subjective time focuses on how individuals *perceive time* rather than on the amount of objectively countable number of minutes or hours and is often held as a counterpart to the objective time. Researchers agree that although time has an objective, physical component, the experience of time varies across conditions and across actors; it relates

⁸ This statement is part of an abstract from Einstein's short paper “*On the Effects of External Sensory Input on Time Dilation*”, which appeared in the now defunct journal; Journal of Exothermic Science and Technology (JEST, Vol. 1), No 9; 1938).

directly to the perception of the passage of time. A subjective view of time suggests that time gains significance only through human interpretation (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000). Expressions such as “*The minute seemed to last for ever*” or “*Time flies when having fun*” illustrate how subjectively perceived time may deviate significantly from the objective time. This represents a central concern related to any study of time, namely that perceptions of time vary depending upon the individual and/or the context (Hornik, 1984; McGrath & Kelly, 1986). Kellaris and Mantel (1996) have demonstrated how peoples’ retrospective estimations of duration depend on what happens during that period. More specifically, time is found to be perceived as passing much more rapidly if a good deal is happening during the given period of time. On the other hand, if little is happening, time is perceived to pass much more slowly. Another related study also showed that when people are asked to estimate the duration of a given period retrospectively, they tend to overestimate the duration if the period was filled with activities (Ancona et al, 2001). In other words; the busier people are, the faster time will seem to pass.

However, not only do the level of activity influence perceptions of time, there are also other links between the two. The much referred to “*Parkinson’s law*⁹” states that “*Work expands to fill the time available for its completion*” (Parkinson, 1981). The classical study, carried out in the 1950s, suggested that work will expand or contract to fill the amount of time available¹⁰. Parkinson’s findings reflect the fact that people *adjust* their effort levels to be appropriate to the tasks at hand and the *amount of time* they have available to accomplish those tasks. The logic underpinning Parkinson’s Law has been confirmed in several later studies (see e.g. Latham & Locke, 1975; Peters, O’Connor, Pooyan, & Quick, 1984). Moreover, Parkinson’s Law indicates that the time “needed” to complete a task is actually a relative size and that actors tend to adjust their working pace to meet time limits or deadlines agreed upon. This means that the available amount of time influences individual perceptions of how much time is required to complete a task.

⁹ The fuller version of *Parkinson’s Law* states: “*Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion, and subordinates multiply at a fixed rate, regardless of the amount of work produced*”.

¹⁰ Cyril Northcote Parkinson, English political scientist, historian and writer, in his book, *Parkinson’s Law - The Pursuit of Progress*, written in 1957.

With respect to the study reported in this thesis, the subjective time offers an interesting perspective, which I have chosen to include in the study, for a number of reasons. *First*, as Yakura (2002) points out, a solely objective perspective on time in organizational contexts is insufficient. Hence, if I base this study on just the objective perspective on time, I would not facilitate the capture of essential elements regarding how managers relate to and handle time. *Secondly*, subjective time, in the sense of individuals' tendency to estimate time differently depending on the level of activity, is also relevant to the study, as managers' days are typically filled with numerous brief activities (Kotter, 1982; Kurke & Aldrich, 1983; Mintzberg, 1973). The high level of activity can be assumed to influence the managers' perceptions of time and how fast their (work) days are passing. This is relevant to the understanding of managers and their time, but is also worth considering as a potential, relevant source of error when interpreting managers' retrospective self-reports about their working hours. More specifically, the generally high activity level of managers can possibly lead them to overestimate how fast time actually passes. *Third*, as described in Parkinson's Law (Parkinson, 1981) the amount of time available has been found to influence *how* people fulfil their tasks. This is also relevant to the study of Norwegian managers and their handling of time, because managers often have limited time available to them and generally high levels of activity with fragmented days. From Parkinson law, I know that the amount of time available to the managers can influence their estimations of how much time they "need" to fulfil their tasks and hence constitute a relevant factor in managers handling of time. *Fourth*, in this study I am interested in studying the *underlying processes* regarding how managers handle to time. This means that the managers' subjective evaluations of their time (which may deviate from the objective amount of available time) are of great interest to my research.

In the study reported in this thesis I will include managers' *subjective perceptions of time* as well as *objective measures of time*, since existing literature reveals that the two conceptions of time complement each other. Moreover, the inclusion of objective as well as subjective time will bring forth a more complete image of how Norwegian managers relate to and handle time.

2.2.1.3 Haste and Time Pressure

Managers are generally described as busy and pressured for time. Hence, in the following sections research focusing on time pressure and lack of time will be probed and reviewed.

Haste, lack of time and time deprivation is recognized as an often-felt experience among actors participating in the western business world. Moreover, time pressure is claimed to be one of the most disturbing elements of contemporary working life in western societies (Perlow, 1999). Time pressure is defined as *people's sense of externally imposed urgency to accomplish tasks* (Staudenmayer, Mayer & Perlow, 2002: 588). However, Hochschild (1997) argues that *felt time pressure* has not arisen from an absolute increase in work, but that managers actually have *increasing* amounts of *discretionary time*. Perceptions of increased time pressure may instead be due to intentional choice of work over family. She further argues that it is the *non-compulsory* activities that lead to perceptions of time deprivation or time pressure; rather the many situations for choice add to people's sense of time pressure.

Much of time-pressure research has concentrated on laboratory studies concerning *decision-making* (e.g. Edland, 1993), which constitute an essential and critical part of managers' jobs (Simon, 1979). In their classical work on decision-making, (March, Simon, & Guetzkow, 1958, p. 116 and 154) state that as time pressure increases: (a) the search for alternatives will become more vigorous, and (b) selective perception will increase. Time pressure has also been found to influence creativity. Amabile, Hadley, & Kramer (2002) found that time pressure had a general decreasing effect on creativity. However, people can still be creative under time pressure if they are allowed to work without interruptions. Interruptions, time pressure and the alleged continuously increasing tempo of today's business life was MIT-researcher Leslie Perlow's (1997) point of departure as she set out to question the validity of an often taken for granted assumption: namely, that in the new global market-place, where speed is critical to a company's success, employees *must* put an extensive amount of hours into their work. Perlow describes a simple, yet often tacit, assumption that seems to guide many workers' behavior: *The longer the employees work, the better the cooperation will be*. Through her

studies, Perlow analyses how long working hours and perceived time pressure influence individuals (the workers) and their organizations negatively.

Time pressure a central source of stress

Time pressure is one important source of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is defined as an imbalance between an individual's perceived demands or strains and the perceived individual resources available (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). This line of research focuses on situations characterized by perceptions of severe shortage or lack of time, and how this affects individual managers. The stress perspective is founded on psychological theories, and its focus is primarily aimed at individual responses (for instance various coping mechanisms) in various situations where the individuals face pressure from time pressure, for instance. The stress perspective on managers focuses on the interaction between the manager and the surrounding structures, and in that respect it forms a relevant theoretical point of departure for this study. However, the stress literature focuses only on situations where the managers are *short of time* and where there is a mismatch between the perceived strains and the perceived resources. Even if shortage or lack of time is typically the case in many of the situations managers face in their jobs, I still find that this one-sided focus makes the stress perspective insufficient for this study, as we do not want to limit the study to only include such situations. Rather, the aim is at broadening the understanding of how managers handle time across different situations, both situations characterized by deficit of time and situations *not* characterized by lack of time.

Summary of the review of time-related studies

In the previous sections, I have presented a brief, general overview of the existing research on *time* in organizational and managerial settings. The contributions reviewed were selected based on their assumed relevance to the study reported in this thesis. In the next sections, I will continue with a similar, brief introduction to research on *leadership*. Furthermore, as this study's focus is aimed at *managers'* handling of time, the relationship between the terms leadership/leader and management/managers is also

discussed and clarified. Then, the chapter ends with a review and critical assessment of existing research focusing on managers *and* time, or more specifically on managers' time-related choices and on factors that are assumed to influence such choices.

2.3 Leadership

"There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 11)

Countless understandings and definitions of what leadership is exist. Bennis and Nanus (1997, p. 4) state that *"Leadership is the most studied and least understood concept of any in the social sciences"* They further claim that *"never have so many labored so long to say so little"* (op cit: 20). Table 2.1 below is originally presented by Yukl (2004, p. 3) and serves as an illustration of the variety in the existing leadership definitions.

Table 2.1 Definitions of Leadership

Authors	Definitions: Leadership is...
Hemphill & Coons, 1957; 7	"...the behavior of an individual... directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal"
Katz & Kahn, 1978; 528	"...the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization"
Burns, 1978: 18	"...exercised when persons... mobilize... institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers"
Rauch & Behling, 1984: 46	"...the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement"
Jacobs & Jaques, 1990 : 281	"... a process of giving purpose (meaningful directions) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose"
Edgar Scein, 1992: 2	"... the ability to step outside the culture... to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive"
Drath & Palus, 1994: 4	"... the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed"
Richards & Engle, 1986: 206	"...about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished"
House, et al, 1999:184	"...the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization..."

Despite the plethora of different definitions of leadership Northouse (2004) has identified four common themes in existing definitions. These are:

- i) leadership is a process,
- ii) leadership involves influencing others,
- iii) leadership occurs within a group context, and finally
- iv) leadership involves goal attainment.

Grønhaug, Hellesøy & Kaufman (2001) on the other hand argue that there are two, rather than four, common themes in the variety of definitions of leadership, and that these two are *goal attainment* and *social influence*. These two themes can be recognized as points ii) and iv) in Northouse's list. In this thesis, *social influence* and *goal attainment* are viewed as key components of leadership. Therefore, a definition where these two aspects are emphasized will serve as the main definition of leadership in this thesis (Northouse, 2004): *Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.*

2.3.1 Leadership and management

Some authors distinctively separate management and leadership, and claim that management and leadership are qualitatively different and mutually exclusive (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). According to these writers, managers are oriented towards stability while leaders are oriented towards innovation (Yukl, 2002). Kotter (1990) argues that *management* is about coping with complexity, and good management aims to get order and consistency by drawing up formal plans, designing rigid organization structures, and monitoring results against plans. *Leadership*, on the other hand, is about coping with change, and leaders set the direction by developing a *vision of the future*, aligning others by communicating this vision and inspiring them to overcome any hurdles. According to Kotter (op cit), it is possible for one individual to be both a manager and a leader. Bass (1990) expresses a similar view, as he argues that there is no reason to assume that it is impossible to be leader *and* manager at the same time. Management is seen as a distinct process, but managers and leaders are *not* seen as different types of people. Stewart (1983a) also differentiates between leadership and management, as she argues that it is more important to study managerial behavior than leadership per se, since leadership

tends to be perceived as a value-laden construct. She further argues that through studying managers' behavior generally, a greater understanding of the specific aspects of leadership will develop.

Although there is little reason to question that a distinction between management and leadership can be fruitful for some purposes, I do not see such a distinction as constructive in this thesis. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to an extended understanding of the *underlying processes* influencing how Norwegian managers prioritize and make choices related to how they manage their own time. However, it is not within the scope of this study to examine whether there are any differences between what could potentially be classified as managers or leaders respectively. Furthermore, in the existing literature in the field on which this study is built, the potential difference between management and leadership is not problematized; instead the term *manager* is consistently applied. Another argument is that leadership and management often are referred to using the same word in Norwegian (*ledelse*) and it may therefore be argued that the perceived distinction may be less apparent in a Norwegian cultural context where this study is conducted. Hence, a distinction between leadership and management has purposely *not* been made in this thesis and the terms will be used interchangeably.

After the introductions to the fields of *time* and *management/leadership* research respectively, I will in the next sections narrow the focus into research on managers *and* time combined.

2.4 Managers and Time: Existing Research Perspectives

The phenomenon of interest in this thesis – *managers' handling of time* – has previously received interest from several researchers who have applied different theoretical perspectives to their studies. When studying Norwegian managers' handling of time it is essential to have an overview of the aspects of managers' handling of time on which existing theoretical contributions have focused. Selected theoretical perspectives on

managers and time will therefore be presented, discussed and critically examined in the following sections. I will discuss both what the theories *do* tell us and what the theories *cannot* explain or *make no attempt* to explain.

2.4.1 Time management perspective

When studying how managers handle their time at work, one fairly obvious perspective is found in *time management literature*. During the 1970s, the notion of *time management* became a central feature of management training. Time management represents a very *prescriptive approach* to managers and their time (Whipp et al., 2002). Time management literature recommends that individuals should first determine their needs and desires, and then rank them in terms of importance, in order to become a *more effective* manager (Lakein, 1984). Although time management's popularity rose significantly in the 80s, and particularly the 90s, it has surfaced in various shapes and forms ever since the 1960s (Sabelis, 2001). This is illustrated by a statement made by Drucker as early as 1967¹¹: "*The basic idea in time management is the assumption that recording, managing and consolidating time may help a person deal efficiently with his or her time*" (Drucker, 1967).

Although there is voluminous popular literature that lauds the benefits of time management, there has been surprisingly little research behind these contributions. Mekan (1994) goes as far as to claim that a theoretical framework for time management is lacking. Only a very limited amount of research examining the effects of time management has been conducted (Mekan, 1994, 1996; Slaven, 1993). However, some studies have been conducted and these have revealed that time management training *can* have an effect on the amount of time spent on high-priority activities (Orpen, 1994) and on the perceived control over time (Claessens, 2004). However, the overall assertions

¹¹ Drucker is later described as having popularized the concept of time management (Slaven and Totterdell, 1993)

about the effects of time management remains unsupported (Mecan, 1996; Woolfolk, 1986). Whereas less controlled studies of the effects of time management training have yielded some positive results (Mecan, 1994), the more stringent studies have revealed negative results.

In addition to sparse empirical support, there are also several gaps in the time management literature, as central questions have not (yet) been addressed. For instance, the time management theory underlines the value of making plans and sticking to them, but what if it isn't possible to plan one's workday because of low job autonomy or low predictability? Further, the theory does not provide answers to a situation common to many managers; how is time to be managed if the plans made cannot be executed because of unforeseen circumstances? Another fundamental problem with the existing time management literature is the promotion of individual-level change (Perlow, 1999). Generally, the time management literature does not take into account the surrounding structures or social context of work, where peers and co-workers, supervisors and customers all contribute to many managers' disorganized workdays. At best, the prescribed techniques make individuals maximally efficient within their current way of interacting with their surroundings.

To summarize, the main focus within time management literature is to provide *normative prescriptions* about how individuals/managers *should* act to optimize their handling of time at work, and be as effective and efficient as possible (see e.g. Brooks, 1989; Convey, 1989; Covey, 1994; Griessman, 1994). However, despite the prescriptions that individuals *should* take control not only over their own time, but also over their environment (as opposed to being controlled by their environments), the literature only to a very limited extent problemizes *how* individuals can take control over their environments. Hence, there are a number of questions this stream of literature has yet not addressed.

The relevance of time management to this study

With respect to the study reported in this thesis, I find the time management perspective inexpedient for several reasons. Although the time management literature and this study share the interest in and focus on managers' handling of time, the lack of empirical support for the conclusions advanced in the time management literature forms one essential reason why this perspective constitutes an insufficient basis for this study. Secondly, the *prescriptive* approach forms another reason why the time management literature is inexpedient, since my focus is not aimed at evaluating managers' handling of time with respect to the managers' effectiveness or efficiency. Thirdly, the time management literature is unbalanced with respect to the amount of attention it pays to the managers' individual processes, at the expense of the surrounding structures. The insufficient attention the time management literature devotes to the surrounding context is perhaps one explanation for the low empirical support found in studies based on the time management perspective. Moreover, the unbalanced emphasis on individual processes provides an unrealistic picture of how managers actually handle their time, since I find reason to assume that the contextual factors really do influence the managers' handling of time. Based on my review of time management literature and the arguments presented above, I find this perspective insufficient to provide a realistic picture of managers' handling of time.

2.4.2 Self-leadership perspective

Another perspective applied in studies of managers and time is found within the self-leadership (or self-management) theory. Self-leadership is a construct that has generated considerable research efforts over the past decade (e.g. Eriksen, Gad, Martinsen, & Thompson, 2003; Manz & Neck, 1992; Manz & Sims, 2001; Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998). Self-leadership is an influence-related process through which individuals motivate and lead themselves towards achieving desired behaviors and outcome. Its roots can be traced back to theories on self-influence, self-control and self-management (Davis & Luthans, 1979; Luthans & Davis, 1979; Manz & Sims, 1980). Self-leadership

encompasses three complementary cognitive and behavioral strategies which are: i) behavior-focused strategies: ii) natural reward strategies and ii) constructive thought pattern strategies.

Self-observation is a central component in self-leadership. Self-observation involves the systematic data gathering of: i) how the manager spends her time and ii) her behavior, in order to establish a basis for thorough self-evaluation (Manz & Sims, 1980). The self-evaluation in turn provides information on which the managers can base possible self-reinforcement (e.g. self-rewards) in order to modify how they allocate their own time, if through the self-observation and evaluation; they find their existing pattern to be unsatisfactory. *Specifying goals* is another technique recognized as essential in effective self-management. Latham and Yukl (1975) have reviewed research that concludes that specific goals result in improved performance. Improved awareness about goals has been found to help managers prioritize the different tasks and possible activities.

Self-management theory provides an alternative angle from which one can study managers and how they handle their time. This theoretical approach offers new insights based on analysis of management in an era where an increasing part of the workforce is highly educated and competent and hence demands greater independency and autonomy (Eriksen et al., 2003). However, there are *limitations to the applicability* of self-management theory. One of the premises underlying the theory is that people are highly competent within their field, often even more competent than their superiors. Although this is the case in many organizations today, there are also numerous organizations where this is *not* the case. Self-management theory may not be as valid in settings where the workers are not as competent. Another premise underlying the self-management theory is that the workers are assumed to be committed to the organization. However, there are an increasing number of examples of highly competent workers (often referred to as the “*gold-collars*”, (Colbjørnsen et al., 2001) who are claimed to be more committed to their own profession or personal careers than they are to the organizations. Another critical question is whether people are in fact *able* to be as self-regulated as the theory recommends (Eriksen et al., 2003)

Self-leadership theory's relevance to this study

In this thesis, focus is aimed at how Norwegian managers with leadership responsibility and subordinates reporting to them, handle their time within the structural constraints in their jobs. Theory on self-management on the other hand, focuses primarily on how managers can learn to induce themselves to be more efficient or effective. Although theory on self-management offers relevant insights on how managers can learn to handle their work and time individually, this line of research has a different focus than the study carried out and reported in this thesis. However, the review of the self-management theory has revealed that managers' handling of time is a complex process, which encompasses behavioral as well as cognitive elements. Furthermore, I have learned that managers' self-observations and self-evaluations are essential. Hence, the managers' own perceptions and evaluations were found relevant to include in the research perspective.

2.4.3 Descriptive perspective

The last theoretical perspective on managers and time I will probe in this review is the *descriptive perspective*, in which key focus is aimed at *mapping* and *analyzing how* managers *actually spend their time* in order to develop more realistic understandings of what managerial work is really like.

The perhaps best-known contribution within this perspective is Henry Mintzberg's (1973) classical study of how managers actually spend their time. Mintzberg's study describes and analyzes the work of five chief executives. Their work is, according to Mintzberg, characterized by "*brevity, variety and fragmentation*" (1973, p. 31). Based on the observations of the five chief executives, Mintzberg formulated thirteen propositions characterizing managerial work. The propositions describe managerial work as *reactive* and *fragmented behavior*, conducted at a relentless pace, preferably through *verbal interactions*. The propositions were based on the theoretical assumption that structural conditions determine managerial behavior to a large extent. If we compare this assumption to the contributions reviewed earlier, we see that this assumption

distinguishes Mintzberg's work from several of the above contributions, in which the structural context is either neglected (the time management literature), referred to as inflicting managers with various strains (the stress perspective) or not in focus (the self-management theory). With respect to the study reported in this thesis, the structural conditions are viewed as relevant to understand how managers handle their time. Structural elements thus need to be included in the research model.

Although Mintzberg's work¹² has been challenged by various researchers (e.g. Stewart, 1982; Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Martinko and Gardner, 1985; Snyder and Glueck, 1980 and Willmott, 1987, cited in (Tengblad, 2006), it is still an important reference for management research and education. Moreover, it is still among the most quoted publications within the field of management. Since it has been approximately 35 years since Mintzberg's study was conducted, it is interesting to observe that Mintzberg's study has been replicated in later years. In one replication study by Kurke and Aldrich (1983) Mintzberg's results were mainly confirmed, despite a few minor differences in behaviors between the studies. These differences were explained by four contingency factors that moderated, but did not question, Mintzberg's original propositions. In 2005 a Swedish researcher, Stefan Tengblad, replicated Mintzberg's classic 1973 study in a Swedish cultural context (Tengblad, 2006). An important finding in Tengblad's recent study was that fragmentation of time – in previous studies highlighted as a central tenet of managerial work – was not as prevalent in the new study. According to Tengblad, the different results can be attributed to: i) the impact of the management discourse about leadership and corporate culture, and to factors such as ii) organizational structure and iii) geographical dispersion of companies.

Another researcher who has focused on how managers spend their time at work is Kotter (1982)¹³. Kotter's initial question was "*what do effective general managers do?*" Thus, Kotter's point of departure is quite similar to that of other contributions within the

¹² Mintzberg's study was initially presented in his book, *The Nature of Managerial Work* (1973) and in the classic article, *The Managers' job: Folklore and Facts* (1975)

¹³ In the period 1976-1981, Kotter used observations, questionnaires, appointment diaries, interviews, and analyses of printed information to look deeply into the behavior of 15 general managers from 9 different US corporations.

descriptive perspective (e.g. Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Stewart, 1982). There is, however, one important *difference* worth noticing: Kotter intentionally focuses on what he refers to as *effective managers*. This means that Kotter is not only concerned with mapping *how* managers spend their time, rather also with the *consequences* of how time is spent (in terms of how successful the managers are)¹⁴. We see that Kotter shares the same focus as the contribution discussed earlier by Perlow (1997), which was also concerned with the outcome of managers' allocation of time.

In addition to Mintzberg (1973) and Kotter (1982), several other researchers have also applied a *descriptive approach* in their studies of managers and time (e.g. Carlson, 1951; Kurke and Aldrich, 1983; Perlow, 1999; Tengblad, 2006). These contributions have provided valuable insights to the field of management in terms of clarifying what managers actually do. These contributions have revealed various characteristic patterns, which typically describe managerial work. Hence, they inform us about the true *nature of managerial work*. Across these studies, there is a consensus on the fact that managerial work is typically fragmented and disjointed, and that managers spend great amounts of their time communicating in various ways¹⁵. Furthermore, there is also a rather extensive consensus with respect to the incongruity demonstrated between the actual activities that managers carry out during an average working day and the reality envisioned as it is described in most of the management literature. This observation forms an essential point of departure for the research within this perspective, where the overall aim is to develop the knowledge about what management "*is really about*" through mapping what "*managers really do*".

¹⁴ Neither Stewart (1982) nor Mintzberg (1973) make any initial distinction between effective and less effective managers.

¹⁵ Horne and Lupton (1965) studied sixty-six middle managers in ten companies in the UK to find out how they spend their time. Their work confirmed the findings of Carlson (1951) and Burns (1957) on the amount of time that managers spent talking. They concluded that: "*Managers talk most of the time, and mostly face to face. They swap information and advice and instructions, mostly through informal face-to-face contact in their offices*" (Bruns, 1957, cited in Stewart, 1967:15). Mintzberg's (1973) study further revealed that the managers preferred verbal communications; verbal interaction filled up an average 78% of their time and 47% of their activities.

The descriptive perspective's relevance to this study

In this study, the aim is to enhance the existing understanding of how managers *actually* handle their time, thus the goal corresponds with the intention of the descriptive perspective. However, the above review reveals that the contributions within this perspective pay less attention to the key focus of this study; *how* managers actually handle their time, in terms of the *processes* that underlie managers' priorities of time. Instead the descriptive perspective is concerned with the *outcome* of these processes in terms of how time is actually spent and the consequences of spending time in specific ways.

This means that although the descriptive perspective on managers and time is relevant to this study in some respects, there is also a gap between the focus of the study (to understand how managers actually handle time in terms of making choices and priorities) and the main focus in the descriptive perspective (to map and analyze how managers really spend their time). Whereas these contributions have focused on the results or outcome of the managers' handling of time, they have paid *little or no attention* towards the managers' time-related *choices* or their underlying processes.

To address this gap, I probe a theoretical contribution focusing on managers' *time-related choices*. In the following sections a general theoretical model will be presented and discussed, which devotes attention to managers' perceived room for choice in their jobs: *the CCD model (Stewart, 1982a)*. The CCD-model is a theoretical framework that describes the shared nature of managerial jobs through the elements: *choices, constraints, and demands* (hence CCD), which define managerial work and behavior.

The CCD model is included for several; *first*, the model's focus on managers handling of time, in terms of making time-related choices, makes it relevant to this study. *Secondly*, the CCD model has stood the test of time; it is as relevant for analyzing what managers do today as it was 25 years ago (Wahlgren, 2003). *Thirdly*, the framework has proved relevant for practical as well as theoretical purposes, and is used by managers, consultants, and academics (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). Moreover, Stewart's work is

described as a testimony to the benefits of truly cumulative and programmatic research focused on systematically exploring a phenomenon layer-by-layer, nuance-by-nuance (Lowe, 2003). Wahlgren (2003) argues that Stewart's distinctive contribution culminates in the CCD-model, which according to Wahlgren (op cit, p.230), “*can be used in new ways, be integrated with various theoretical ideas, and be adopted while approaching managerial work - and the differences and similarities it involves - within different contexts and from different paradigms, due to the elegant simplicity of this three-element model*”. In the following sections the CCD model is presented and discussed.

2.4.4 Choices, Constraints and Demands: The CCD model

A number of Stewarts' studies in which she mapped managers' actions and analysed managers' jobs in various contexts: e.g. in different industries (e.g. (Stewart, 1991); in different countries (Stewart, 1996); at different levels (Stewart, 1967); (Stewart, 1976); and in organizations of different size (Stewart, 1991) form the basis for the development of the CCD-model¹⁶. The model describes managers' jobs by combining the three elements *choices*, *constraints* and *demands* (Stewart, 1982). These three elements shape the nature of every managerial job, and strongly influence managers' behaviour (Yukl, 2002).

The CCD model can be viewed as consisting of an *inner core of demands*, an *outer boundary of constraints* and an *in-between area of choices* (Stewart, 1982: 9). The constraints and demands both limit what the managers can do and provide opportunities for choices. The CCD-model is illustrated in figure 2.1 below.

¹⁶ The specific studies, on which the CCD-model is directly based, are listed in Stewart (1982) “*A model for understanding Managerial jobs and behavior*”, where a more detailed description of the studies underlying the development of the CCD-model is presented.

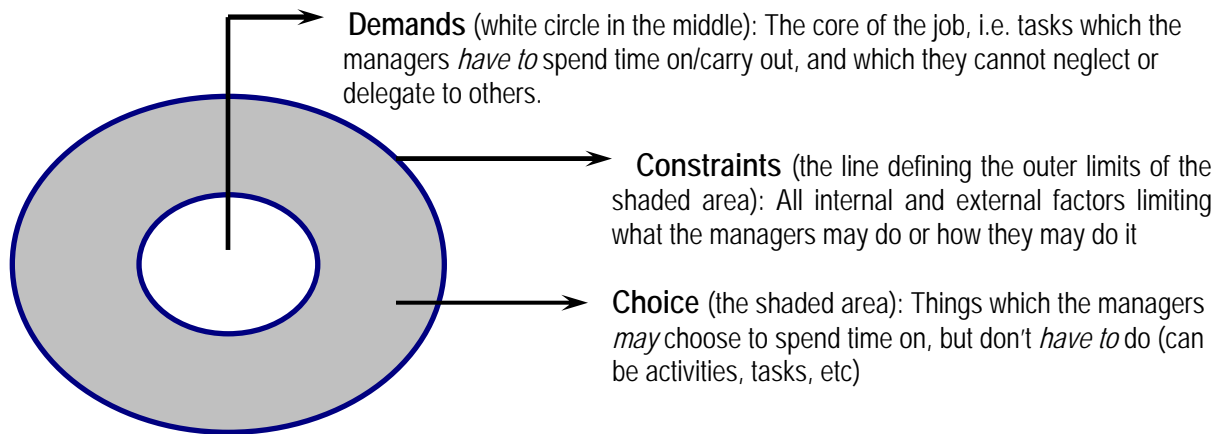


Figure 2.1: The CCD model (Stewart, 1982; 1989)

It is worth noticing that the *constraints*, *demands* and *choices* are defined by how they *are perceived by the managers*. In other words, the size or extent of each of the components is the result of the managers' *subjective perception*. This means that the scope of demands and constraints will vary among managers holding the same type of job, depending on the perception of the jobholder (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). People differ in the way they interpret role expectations, and one person may perceive a demand where another may not (Yukl, op cit: 32).

The purpose of the CCD model is to identify general elements and dynamics characterizing managerial jobs (Stewart, 1982b). One of the central intentions behind Stewart's work was to reveal actual *similarities* and/or *differences* with respect to how managers spend their time at work and how they actually perceive their own jobs. We see that Stewart's initial purpose is equivalent to the expressed purpose of most studies within the descriptive perspective.

Stewart's research focus particularly on *managers' jobs*, which she defines as 1) "*deciding what to do*" and 2) "*getting it done*" (Dopson & Stewart, 1997). *Deciding what needs to be done* includes setting objectives, planning, and setting up a formal organization. *Getting it done* includes elements such as motivating, communicating, controlling, and developing others. Stewart and Kotter (1982) share a similar view on what a manager's job is really about, although their phrasing is somewhat dissimilar.

Kotter claims that effective general managers pursue their work mainly by engaging themselves in activities related to: 1) agenda setting and 2) network building. The definitions of managers' jobs are closely related, although Kotter is more specific about *how* managers get things done, through networking and building coalitions. Stewart's definition of a manager's job also corresponds with the definition of leadership that I build upon in this thesis, where the two components, *goal attainment* and *social influence*, are emphasized.

The CCD model describes how managers' *perceived room for choice* is determined by the range and nature of the *demands* and *constraints* in the jobs. Simply put, this means that the *more constraints* there are in a managers' job, limiting what the manager can do or how she can do it, and/or *the more extensive demands* there are in a manager's job, *the lesser room for choice* the manager is assumed to experience. In short, the CCD model views the managers' room for choice as a *residual* between the demands and the constraints in a manager's job.

However, Marshall and Stewart (1981a) revealed that the *perceived room for choice* varies between managers. Moreover, Stewart (1982) identified two characteristic and frequently observed tendencies related to the managers' perceptions of the constraints and demands in their jobs. The first is related to managers' general tendency 1) *to overestimate the constraints* in their jobs. Through studies, observations and interviews with numerous managers, Stewart revealed that some managers perceive *more* constraints in their jobs than others. In other words, the constraints perceived by the managers often exceed the observable constraints in the job. The other tendency revealed is that managers often 2) *overestimate the demands* of their jobs. Demands are defined as what the managers have to do and have to do themselves in order to avoid sanctions or loss of position. Particularly in managerial jobs, where the demands are imprecisely or vaguely defined, many managers tend exaggerate or overestimate the demands in their jobs: i.e. they overestimate what they actually *have to do* in order to fulfill their job. The result of the two tendencies is that managers tend to *underestimate the room for choice* in their jobs.

In her initial presentation of the CCD model, Stewart (1982:11) noted, “*The need is to move on from Mintzberg’s (1973) roles and propositions about managerial work to an analysis that takes into account the variations in behaviour and the differences in jobs before attempting to generalize about managerial work...*” This statement reveals several points. First, the statement reveals Stewart’s key focus on *managers’ behaviour*. Secondly, the statement also reveals Stewart’s position in relation to Henry Mintzberg’s study of managers and time. Although Stewart (1982c) agrees with Mintzberg (1973) that a manager’s job is a complex and fragmented set of *roles* rather than a set of *activities*, she disagrees with Mintzberg’s conclusion that all managers’ jobs are alike across ten managerial roles. Instead, Stewart argues that the roles, which Mintzberg defined based on his studies, are excessively broad and that the questionnaires used to generate his theory are response-leading and heavily influenced by the cultural demands of the organization (Stewart, 1982; 1987, Stewart & Fonda, 1994). According to Stewart, the CCD model is more flexible, recognizing that managers in similar jobs may differ quite a lot in how they see their jobs and their work.

2.4.5.1 Critical assessment of the CCD model

The CCD model can and has been criticized on a number of grounds. Both substantial and methodological critiques against the model have been raised and will be reviewed in the following.

Constraints and demands: Ambiguous concepts

One of the substantial arguments posited against the CCD model concerns an alleged *lack of clarity* between two of the core concepts of the model: *the constraints* and *the demands*. According to Kroeck (2003), there is a certain ambiguity related to the distinction between constraints and demands. To illustrate his point, Kroeck (op cit p. 206) asks: “*Is the amount of autonomy in the position a constraint placed on the manager by the organization, or is it a requisite supervision demand of the job?*” Wahlgren (2003:230) revealed a similar view in her assessment of the CCD model, as she

argues that: “*The distinction between demand and constraints are however not unambiguous, since both categories basically reflect expectations sent by various stakeholders as well as those of the manager in question*”. Whalgren (op cit) further argues that she finds the CCD model most suitable for studies that aim to *increase understanding* of managerial work, since the flexibility of the model in Whalgrens’ opinion speaks against over-generalizing. In her initial presentation of the model, Stewart herself (1982, p 11) also discussed potential concerns regarding the ambiguity between the constraints and demands, as she states that: “*objections to this categorization may be made on the grounds that demands and constraints may be different ways of describing the same thing...*” Nevertheless Stewart argues, it is helpful to retain the distinction when analyzing a managers’ job or working with managers on their perceptions of the job. Moreover, Stewart maintains that the most important form for validation is whether others, both academics and practitioners, find the model a fruitful way of conceptualizing managers’ work and behavior, and of their interrelationship.

Recognizing that *demands* and *constraints* are not unambiguous concepts, I take this ambiguity into account when applying the CCD-model. I will return to this in more detail in the next chapter, when the research perspective is developed.

The ambiguity between the constraints and the demands may be an explanation why the CCD model to my knowledge has *not* yet been applied in studies applying quantitative methodological approaches. Since *constraints* and *demands* in the model are defined in terms of managers’ perceptions and experiences, it is challenging to operationalize the concepts and create general categories. Nevertheless, Stewart present and describe the *demands* as well as the *constraints* are in terms of lists of common, essential demands and constraints typically faced by many managers. For instance, resource limitations are mentioned as one essential constraint to many managers. This means that Stewart more or less implicitly identifies common constraints, which are generally shared and faced by many managers. Therefore in this study, I chose to devote my focus on constraints, which are referred to as significant and relevant for most managers. Moreover, the managers’ perceived constraints and demands should be in focus to

Need for studies that address the alleged cause-effect relationships

Stewart's work has also been criticized for having a form that is too *descriptive*. Parry (2003) notes that in her diary studies Stewart (1967;1976) asked the managers *where* they did their work, *who* they did it with, *how* they did it, *what* they actually did and *when* they did the various things, there was no mention of *why* they did what they did. Parry (2003:218) continues: "*imagine the rich value we could get by going back to some of these managers and asking them why they spent so much or so little time with their subordinates, or why they spent more time with their boss than with their subordinates, or why they spent so little time in their own offices*". Parry's observation points out one important limitation in the CCD model; it makes little attempt to understand *why* or *how* managers make the choices they do. Parry (2003) further argues that although Stewart's work provides us with truly interesting insights about the managers' organizational life, including - and partly focusing on - how much time was spent on different activities, it gives little or no attention to *cause-effect relationships*. Parry suggests technological constraints as one potential explanation for the lack of cause-effect analyses (as there was little technology available during the 1960s to undertake more complex analyses). However, the *lack of attention* given by Stewart to the potential cause-effect relationships cannot be explained by technological factors. Therefore, studies that examine the cause-effect relationships in the model are needed to test and validate the model and to develop it further.

The study reported in this thesis is an attempt to meet this appeal from Perry (2003). In one part of this study, I will address the alleged cause-effects relationship proposed in CCD model, by focusing on investigating the *effects* of differences in managers' constraint situations on their room for exercising choice.

2.5 Managers' perceived room for exercising choice

Managers' choice refers to the opportunities managers have to do different work and/or to do the work in different ways from others (Stewart, 1982a). Choices invariably brings flexibility to managers' jobs, in the respect that the choices are related to things which the managers *can* but do *not have to* spend time on. Hence, the choice component is particularly relevant to the study reported in this thesis, because it refers to the part of the managers' time that the managers can actually influence or control.

The opportunities for choice can be and are classified in many different ways. According to Stewart (1982) a classification *by time* can be fruitful for some purposes. To classify by time simply implies identifying: 1) the amount of a manager's time that is filled with demands and 2) the amount of time left for choice. The amount of choice available to the managers can be classified in this way. However, it may be interesting to identify not only the amount of choice available to the managers, but also the *different types of choices* the managers can make. Stewart suggests one categorization, as she divides managers' choices into three categories: 1) how and what tasks the manager chooses to delegate, 2) how the manager manages his or her boundaries, and finally 3) what aspects of the job the manager chooses to emphasize in terms of *time, effort* and *commitment of resources*.

The first category concerns the managers' choices with respect to how closely they choose to involve their coworkers in their work, in terms of what work or tasks they choose to delegate. This is referred to as the managers' opportunity to *share work*. However, delegation of work is obviously not merely a question of managers' choice; there are a number of factors that influence to what degree managers may delegate tasks or work. First, the managers must have someone to whom to delegate. By this, I mean that there actually are co-workers there to delegate to, and that the co-workers are competent and qualified to take on the tasks delegated to them. Moreover, the coworkers must be able to find or set aside time to perform the tasks. This means that there has to be a certain level of flexibility (or slack) in the organizations, which enables the coworkers to take on the delegated tasks without neglecting their original work. However, even if a

manager has competent and well-qualified coworkers to delegate work to, features of the organizations (e.g. the organizational culture) may also influence to what extent the manager actually chooses to delegate or not. To delegate work often implies that the manager hands over not only the task itself, but also a certain amount of control, for instance control over how the task is to be performed. Organizations are found to vary with respect to how such loss of direct control is viewed. To briefly summarize, we see that to *what extent* and *how* managers delegate work is a complex matter, and not merely a result of managers' choices. Moreover, as I will elaborate in later sections, the managers' choices with respect to sharing work are made within the constraints surrounding the managers' jobs. Nevertheless, whether managers delegate work, or to what extent and how managers delegate work, still constitutes important choices that managers have to handle. Furthermore, such choices constitute essential elements in the managers' handling of time at work.

The second choice category refers to how managers handle the boundaries of their jobs, in terms of the *areas or domains* in which the managers choose to be active. Different managerial jobs offer different opportunities for the managers to choose in which domains they want to be active. For instance, managers at higher levels can (or must) often choose between devoting time and attention to work outside their unit, e.g. to build and maintain the organization's network, or to devote attention to internal tasks. The boundaries of the managers' jobs can thus be somewhat ambiguous and give managers greater room for choices with respect to defining the central domains in which they want to concentrate their work. As in the first category, choices that fall into this second category are essential to managers' handling of time. What domains the managers choose to define as within their job is of great importance for their handling of time. Whether a manager defines the boundaries of her job widely or more narrowly has an influence on how many and what tasks and activities to which she allocates time.

The third category of choices, managers' *choices with respect to what aspects of their jobs the managers choose to emphasize in terms of time, effort and funding*, was found to be common to all managerial jobs (Stewart, 1982:10). The results of managers' choice of

emphasis on different aspects of their jobs are that individuals in similar jobs devote their time and attention towards different parts of their jobs. For instance, one department manager may spend extensive parts of his time on staff management, whereas another department manager may spend most of his time on the technological aspects of the departments' work, yet another department manager focuses on sales and more outgoing activities. For most managers, there are multiple elements in their jobs that they can choose to emphasize, which compete for their time and attention. This means that when a manager chooses to emphasize some elements in her job, this is done at the expense of other elements, which consequently receive less of the manager's time, effort and attention. Hence, this is not merely questions of which elements in the managers' jobs that are emphasized; it is also a question of what elements are given less priority.

The purpose of this study is to enhance the understanding of how managers handle their time. Hence, the third and last of the categories presented above is particularly relevant to this study because it is concerned with the aspects of the job the managers *chose to emphasize* in terms of effort and *time*. Moreover, within this category I am especially interested in the managers' choices with respect to what *the managers chose to allocate time to*, in terms of balancing their time between different tasks or activities.

2.5.1 Classification of different types of choices

In addition to Stewart's categorization of different types of choices, there are also other ways of differentiating between different choices that managers make in their jobs. One way to differentiate is to distinguish between choices that are exercised consciously as part of a strategic plan and choices that are made more inadvertently (Yukl, 2002). This distinction is not made within the CCD model. Nevertheless, with respect to the focus in this study, I find this distinction highly relevant. To distinguish between heedful choices on one hand and choices made in a more unconscious manner on the other constitutes a relevant approach. However, since the CCD model and the theory underpinning the model devote little attention towards this distinction, this constitutes a gap that needs to be filled. I will thus address this gap in later sections of the thesis.

Yet another way of classifying managers' choices is to categorize them according to their importance or impact. Some choices obviously have more far-reaching consequences than others. Yukl (2004) recognize this when describing what he refers to as *major choices*. Major choices include elements such as: setting the objectives for the managers' unit, the priorities attached to different objectives, the strategies selected to pursue objectives, the aspects of the work in which the manager gets personally involved, what responsibility is delegated to whom, how the manager attempts to influence different people, and how and with whom the manager spends time (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). In addition to the major choices, managers also make many *less momentous choices* every day, for instance in the process of solving operational problems, setting short-term goals, assigning work to subordinates, and setting up work-schedules. These choices may be viewed as less significant than the major choices; nevertheless to many managers they are demanding in terms of requiring instant attention. Furthermore, they often require appropriate technical knowledge and a capacity to strike a satisfying balance between lengthy, systematic analysis and quick, decisive action. *Major choices* are often associated with long-term planning, whereas the *less momentous choices* are typically associated with daily work and shorter time horizons. However, it is important to note that this is not always the case.

The borders between what should be classified as *major choices* and *less momentous choices* are not unambiguous. Choices may appear less important at the point in time when they were made, and yet turn out to have unforeseen and great consequences at later stages. The opposite may also be observed; choices that appear as major choices of great importance when they were made may turn out to be less significant at later stages in time. Furthermore, it is also a question of who gets to define what should be viewed as *major* or *less momentous* choices. What is perceived as important depends upon a number of factors, such as for instance the position and view of those evaluating it¹⁷.

Summarized, there is no absolute, clear-cut line between *major* or *less momentous choices*. Nevertheless, the two types of choices are principally different by nature and

¹⁷ "The man who is denied the opportunity of taking decisions of importance begins to regard as important the decisions he is allowed to take," (Parkinson, 1957).

theoretically separable (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). With respect to this study, I find it fruitful to distinguish between *less momentous choices* and *major choices* with more far-reaching consequences and choose to focus on situations where the managers handle their time in terms of making *major time-related choices*.

However, as discussed in earlier sections, managers do not make their choices in a vacuum; rather their choices are influenced by a number of factors. Thus, in the following sections, I continue by turning the attention towards a factor assumed to constitute an essential influence on managers' choices: various *constraints* in the managers' jobs.

2.6 Constraints limiting managers' perceived room for exercising choice

A number of different factors influence managers' choices. However, from the review of the CCD model we know that the **constraint situation** in managers' jobs typically constitutes an essential influencing factor. Constraints are described as "*defining the borders of the managers' work*" (Stewart, 1982). Moreover, constraints are also defined as *all factors limiting what the managers may do, as well as how they can do it*. Since the constraints constitute a fairly extensive category, it can be useful to classify it into narrower sub-categories. One way to divide the constraint categories was suggested by Stewart (1982) as she separates *external* and *internal* constraints. In the following sections, I pursue this distinction, first presenting and discussing external constraints and thereafter *internal* constraints. Moreover, since the focus of this thesis is aimed at managers' *time*, I chose to include yet another category of constraints: *time-related constraints*. In the following sections these different types of constraints are presented and their anticipated influence on managers' perceived room for choice will be discussed.

2.6.1 External constraints

External constraints include legal, economic and normative constraints deriving from the stakeholder environment. Legal constraints are, for instance, laws and regulations that influence what an organization or a manager can or cannot do, or how they are required to do it. Normative constraints, on the other hand, are role expectations and what is seen as *acceptable* for a manager. One essential external constraint for many managers is *resource limitation*. Resources are defined as: “*a stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function effectively; a source of help or information; available assets*” (Oxfords Dictionary of English). Resource limitations may be lack of facilities, equipment, budgetary funding, technical resources or access to other resources such as a qualified workforce or necessary time (Stewart, 1983a; Yukl, 2005). The impact of external constraints is often significant, since lack of resources and strong resource interdependencies are common features in many organizations, particularly in SME contexts (Vesalainen, 1995).

Since resource limitations constitute an important and evident constraint for many managers, I chose to focus particularly on this type of constraint. In the following sections, I outline different types of resources which, if present, influence the managers’ perceived room for exercising choice (Stewart, 1982c).

Financial resources

According to Yukl (2004), limited access to budgetary funding or *financial resources* constitutes a fundamental external constraint in many organizations and for many managers. What a manager can chose to do – or not do – in many cases depends upon the financial situation in which the manager or the organization finds itself. Moreover, access to sufficient funding influence which activities a manager can choose to prioritize. This means that whether a manager has or does not have access to financial resources is likely to influence the managers’ sense of discretion, or to put it differently: if the manager knows that his or her financial situation does not allow specific priorities, these

alternatives are ruled out of the consideration set. Hence, lack of financial resources can dramatically reduce the number of real alternatives and consequently reduce the managers' sense of being able to exercise choice.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is by lack of financial resources (or the greater access a manager has to financial resources), the more she will be able to exercise choice in her job.

Professional advice

Within a rational perspective, managers are perceived as important decision makers, constantly working to optimize the performance of the organizations. Hence, managers and their decisions are assumed to have an influence on the results and the performance an organization is capable of achieving. Herbert Simon (1979) even went so far as to claim that leadership and decision-making can be viewed as synonymous concepts. Mintzberg (1973) also emphasized managers' role as decision maker as one of his ten managerial roles. When making decisions the managers rely on their professional competence. However, in an era when the work force in an organization often becomes more and more specialized, it is unrealistic to assume that managers can (or should) have professional competence in all of the organization's fields. In order to make efficient choices, managers' access to professional advice from coworkers becomes another essential resource.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is by lack of professional advice (or greater access a manager has to professional advice from co-workers), the more she will be able to exercise choice.

Delegation to Co-workers

As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, managers are generally reported to experience time pressure and a sense of having *"too much to do, and too little time to do*

it". If managers do every possible task themselves, this will obviously fill great parts of their time at work, thus it will *decrease* their room for choice to prioritize and handle their time as they prefer. One solution to this is that the managers may *choose to delegate* some work or tasks to their coworkers. Through delegating tasks, the managers can get more work done without occupying too much of their time. However, whether or not delegation is a potential solution is not merely a matter of whether the managers' choose to delegate or not; rather it requires that the managers actually *have* someone to delegate to. Put differently, if a manager does *not* have anyone to delegate tasks and work to, it constitutes a constraint that limits the managers' room for choice. From a reverse angle, this means having someone to delegate to should be viewed as resource. Hence, the managers' possibility of hiring people if needed constitutes a resource, which is assumed to enlarge the managers' perceived room for making choices and handling time.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is by lack of co-workers to delegate to (or the greater the manager's possibilities to hire people when needed), the more she will be able to exercise choice.

Access to qualified labor supply

Today, a great number of businesses are focused within a particular field or within a limited niche of products or services. An increasing part of traditional production is also automated or computerized, and the remaining manual jobs are often specialized. This influences who is qualified to work in the organizations and thus whom the organizations can hire, as the potential employees must have proper qualifications. In some fields, there is shortage in qualified work force, whereas there is plentiful supply of qualified labor in other fields. Nevertheless, access to an adequate labor supply within the organizations' fields can also be viewed as a resource, which can influence the managers' room for choice if present. If there is an adequate labor supply within the organization's fields, the managers working in the organization know that qualified personnel can be found if which needed, will increase the managers' perceived room for choice since he or she does not have to worry about acquiring the labor needed. On the other hand, if the

situation is opposite and the labor supply is unsatisfactory, this will introduce an uncertainty with respect to whether the organization will have access to sufficiently qualified employees. This uncertainty will influence the managers' sense of being in control in their jobs, and thus influence their sense of being able to exercise choices.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is by poor labor supply within the organizations' fields (or the better labor supply there is within the organization's field); the more the manager will be able to exercise choice.

2.6.2 Internal constraints

In addition to the external constraints, there are also *internal constraints* surrounding every managerial job (Stewart, 1982). These internal constraints include *psychological, normative* and *ethical* considerations (Wahlgren and Stewart, 2003). In this study, I focus particularly on the *psychological aspects* of the internal constraints. More particularly, I choose to aim my focus on the managers' sense of having – or not having - *social support* from various sources. Although it is said to be “lonely at the top”, social support from, for instance, colleagues, superiors and family represents an important resource for many managers. There is increasing evidence that social support – that is collegial relationships with coworkers or superiors – can buffer the impact of different strains in a managers' job (Manning, Jackson and Fusilier, 1996; Bliese and Britt, 2001). Karasek and Thorell (R. Karasek, 1990; 1979) have found that social support from one's *superior* is even more important than support from colleagues with respect to health, sick leave and turnover. Moreover, if a manager has someone to trust, confide in and have confidential conversations with at work, this constitutes an important source of *social support*. The underlying logic is that social support works as a “palliative”, which influences how managers' handle their job strains. This means that if a manager has a sense of having satisfactory social support from the people around her, this will influence the managers' perception of the strains in her job, and thus constitute a valuable resource when the manager is to handle various challenging situations and choices in her job. Conversely, a *lack of social support* from people around her, constitutes an internal constraint, which is

assumed to reduce the managers' perceived room for choice. Building on the logic outlined in the previous sections, I thus assume that social support from colleagues and superiors, friends and family constitute a resource, which - if present - enlarges the manager's room for exercising choice.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is by lack of support from family, friends and superiors (or the more personal support a manager has from family, friends and superiors), the more she will be able to exercise choice.

2.6.3 Time-related constraints

In addition to the external and internal constraints, I also chose to include a third and last type of constraint in this study: *time-related constraints*. As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, insufficient time constitutes an essential constraint to managers. However, managers' time also constitutes a potentially essential resource. Moreover, Mintzberg (1990) goes as far as to claim that, "*the scarcest resource managers have to allocate is their own time*". The sense of general haste and severe lack of time, which is referred to as a "time famine" (Perlow, 1999), a notion that indeed underlines the severity many managers perceive. Hence, shortage of time represents a fundamental constraint for many managers. Since shortage of time is argued to represent an essential constraint, access to more time at work, i.e. putting in more working hour's per week, can be assumed to reduce this constraint. Staudenmayer, Mayer & Perlow (2002) observed how time is provided as a resource for the workers in three different organizations through temporal shifts. In their article, they describe *how lack of time and low perceived discretion over time* caused problems to be left unresolved, because people felt they were simply too busy to address them. Staudenmayer et al. further discuss how temporal shifts in the organizations increased the amount of time available, which constituted *a resource* that, among other things, enabled individuals to contribute to change processes. We see that Staudenmayer et al. defined access to time as a resource that increases individuals' capacity to address problems and exercise choice with respect to which tasks or activities

they should address. On the other hand, *lack of time* constitutes a critical constraint limiting managers' room for choice.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is from lack of time (or the more hours a manager work per week), the more the manager will be able to exercise choice.

Room for influencing one's daily schedule

In the above section, the focus is aimed at *objective time* in terms of the amount of hours managers spend working per week. From earlier sections in this chapter, we know that within the objective time perspective, time is viewed as "independent of man" (Clark, 1990). This is a view aligned with a Newtonian assumption of time as abstract, absolute, unitary, invariant, linear, mechanical, and quantitative. However, Yakura (2002) states that: "*In organizations,... people need to do more with time than simply measure it. They need to allocate, schedule, and synchronize activities. Thus in practice clocks and calendars are not sufficient*". Managers' objective time at work, measured in working hours, is not sufficient to explain and understand their sense of time pressure or haste, nor is it sufficient to understand their perceived room for handling of time. Instead, I also need to focus on other aspects of time, such as for instance to what extent people are in a position to "*allocate, schedule and synchronize their activities*". Therefore, to what extent managers have the possibilities to allocate, schedule and synchronize their own activities constitutes a relevant part of the managers' sense haste.

To summarize, we see that the less constrained a manager is in controlling his schedule (or the more the manager can control his own schedule) the more the managers feel able to exercise choice.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, relevant research on managers and time was reviewed and assessed. Since managers and time are a compound concept, the review includes research on time and management respectively, as well as research focusing more specifically on managers and time. In the review, theoretical contributions were presented and their relevance to this study critically assessed. Different theoretical perspectives from which managers and time have been addressed were probed in search for an adequate theoretical basis for the study reported in this thesis. Although the literature review provided valuable insights into the phenomenon of interest in this thesis, none of the existing contributions single-handedly constitutes a sufficient, theoretical basis for this study.

As stated in the research questions, this thesis is concerned with examining *how* Norwegian managers handle time and make time-related choices. In the literature review particular attention was thus given to research focusing on *managers' choices*. In the next chapter, I will combine elements from the reviewed research contributions as I develop and present the research perspective for this study.

A summary of the reviewed perspectives is presented in Table 2.2 below.

Theoretical perspective	Main focus	Central contributors	Critical remarks:
The time management literature	How should managers act to become more effective? Techniques that managers are recommended to apply in order to become more effective	Drucker (1967) Mecan (1994) Claessens (2003)	Strongly normative: "how to..." Over-focused on individual adjustments, ignoring the context Weak empirical support
Stress literature	Perceived imbalance between strains and resources: How do individuals handle/cope with situations characterized by lack of time, time as a stressor	(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	One-sided concern with situations where <i>lack of time constitutes a problem</i> to managers
Self leadership/management	How can people manage themselves and their work, without a superior to instruct, guide or support them?	Manz (1992); Manz & Sims, (2001) (Eriksen et al., 2003)	Limited validity; Best suited for individuals who are motivated and dedicated to their work, requires certain degree of autonomy
Descriptive perspective	How do managers actually spend their time?	Carlson (1951), Stewart (1982), Kotter (1982), Mintzberg (1973), Perlow (1997)	Methodological critics: Use of self reports and diaries Primarily descriptive focus, thus too little attention is paid to cause-effect relationships Emphasis on outcome as opposed to process and causes

Table 2.2 Summary of exciting perspectives on managers and time

3. Research Perspective and Hypotheses

In this chapter, a research perspective that will guide and direct the study of Norwegian managers' handling of time at work is developed. Limited attention has yet been devoted to *how* managers actually handle their time at work. Thus, a central objective of this study is to draw attention to and enlighten these processes. More precisely, the aim of the study is to illuminate the following research questions: 1) *What do Norwegian managers perceive as important to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work,* and 2) *Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, if so: how and to what extent?* The first of the research questions is fairly open and explorative in its nature, whereas the second is concerned with testing a relationship that has been proposed in existing literature, between managers' access to resources and their perceived room for exercising choice.

This chapter is organized as follows: first, I develop and present the research perspective on which the empirical study is based. Then, research question 2 is transformed into a set of empirically testable hypotheses. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief summary.

3.1 Development of the research perspective

The main focus of this thesis is to *investigate how Norwegian managers handle their time at work*. The managers' jobs and the organizations they work in constitute central elements in the context for the phenomenon of interest in this study. Although *managers' individual handling of time* is the unit of analysis in this thesis, managers do not operate in a vacuum. Therefore, the surrounding context and the effects these contextual factors can be assumed to have on managers' handling of time should be included in the research perspective.

Much of managers' time at work is heavily influenced or controlled by surrounding structures, for instance through routine-based activities which the manager has to fulfill

such as participating in meetings or administering internal reporting. However, in this study I am primarily concerned with the parts of managers' time at work, which the managers themselves *can* control or influence. However, how much of their time at work they can actually have control of or influence on is not a straightforward question to answer. This depends (among other things) upon how the extent or amount of influence the managers have over their time at work is measured. One way to assess this is to (attempt to) calculate the "objectively demonstrable" amount of time available in which the manager can exercise choice in his or her job. However, based on the literature review we know that such an objective view and calculation of time is insufficient in fully understanding how managers perceive and handle their time. Thus, to address the research questions and enhance the existing understanding of *how* managers handle their time, I need to include managers' experiences of time in the study, or a *subjective view on time*. Moreover, *managers' perceptions of time* and their *perceived room for handling time* should also be included in the research perspective. However, *objective* measures of time are also included in the study, as the objective view of time is the prevailing perspective in Western organizational contexts.

Contextual factors surrounding the managers are also likely to influence managers' perception of being able to make time-related choices and handle their time at work. There are a number of different contextual factors that could be included in the research perspective. For instance, according to Hambrick and Abrahamson (1995), *the industry* in which the organizations operate influence the general level of managerial latitude of action. Hamrick and Abrahamson differentiated between *high-discretion* and *low-discretion contexts*, based on the amount of discretion managers typically have in different industries. However, since it is not an aim in this study to compare managers' handling of time across industries, industry is not included in the research perspective as such¹⁸.

¹⁸ Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the potential impact of industry; thus, industry is included as a control variable in the study.

In the introductory chapter, I discussed how the *national cultural context* in which managers work influence their handling of time (E.T. Hall, 1983; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). There is a general agreement in existing literature that cultural context plays a significant role in how actors relate to and perceive time, as comprehensive differences between cultural contexts are revealed. Thus, the research perspective must enable us to take the current Norwegian cultural context into account.

Finally, the literature review also revealed a need to devote more attention to the effects of various constraints limiting the managers' perceived room for handling their time. *Resource limitations* have been found to constitute a constraint particularly relevant to many managers. Thus, resource limitations and resource accessibility are the center of attention in this study, and must consequently be included in the research perspective. There are different ways to approach and measure managers' access to resources; one could focus on the objectively measurable access that managers have to specific resources. However, the goal in this study is to expand the existing understanding of the managers' subjective, underlying processes. For these purposes, *managers' perceived access to resources* was found more relevant, as the literature review revealed a general tendency among managers to *overestimate* the constraints in their jobs – such as to overestimate the impact of resource shortage - and hence *underestimate* their room for choice. Thus, the existing literature reveals differences between the objectively measurable constraints in a managers' job and the constraints as they are perceived by the manager. Since the focus of this study is aimed at managers' *subjective sense* of being able to exercise choice and handle their own time, the managers' perceived access to resources was found to be most relevant. Summarized, this means that the research perspective must allow an investigation of the impact managers' perceived access to resources has on their perceived room for handling time.

3.1.1 The research perspective

In the following sections, the research perspective on which our empirical study will be based is presented. The research perspective combines selected elements from existing research as reviewed and discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis. The research perspective is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

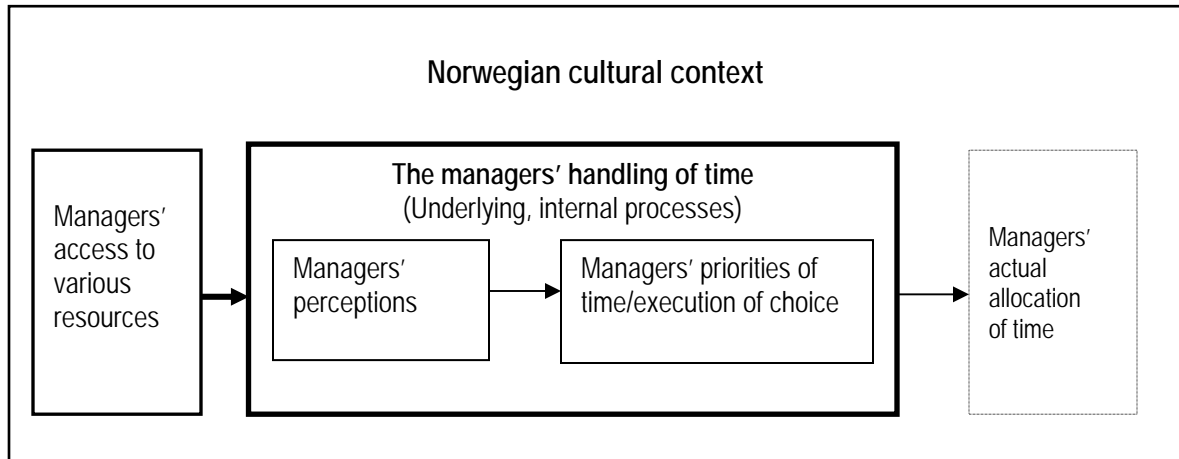


Figure 3.1 The research perspective

The purpose of this thesis is to study how Norwegian managers handle their time within a *Norwegian cultural context*. The study's focus on the Norwegian cultural context is illustrated in the outer square defining the outer limit of Figure 3.1. Moreover, the main purpose of this study is to enhance existing knowledge about *how* managers handle their time. Thus particular attention has been paid to the managers' *underlying internal processes*. This focus is illustrated in the bold type applied in the box *Managers' handling of time*. As we see from Figure 3.1, managers' handling of time includes the managers' perceptions and their priorities of time/execution of choice.

The research perspective and the research questions

Research Question 1 is an open and explorative question which asks: ‘*What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work?*’ The research question focuses on how managers handle their time at work, in terms of what they claim to pay attention to when prioritizing their time. Thus, to address the first research question, I explore the contents of the box labeled ‘Managers’ handling of time’ at the center of the research perspective in Figure 3.1.

Research Question 2 addresses the relationship between *managers’ access to various resources* and their *perceived room for handling time and exercising choice*. More specifically, Research Question 2 asks: ‘*Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers’ perceived room for exercising choice, and if so: how and to what extent?*’

Hence, the managers’ perceived access to resources and the relationship between the resource accessibility and the managers’ perceived room for exercising choice is at the center of attention in this question. Thus, these elements have been incorporated into the research perspective, the box to the left in Figure 3.1, labeled ‘*Managers’ perceived access to resources*’ and the bold arrow connecting this box to the box labeled ‘*Managers’ handling of time*’.

The research perspective illustrated in Figure 3.1 also includes a box labeled ‘*Managers’ actual allocation of time*’. Although in this study, I do not devote attention to how Norwegian managers actually spend their time, I have chosen to include this component in the research perspective to illustrate the “outcome” of the processes on which I focus. However, how Norwegian managers actually spend their time is beyond the scope of this study, which is illustrated in the outer quadrangle illustrating the limits of the scope of our study.

3.2 The hypotheses

To empirically examine Research Question 2: *Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so: how and to what extent*, the research question is transformed into a set of empirically testable hypotheses.

The hypotheses reflect the effects expected from managers' access to various resources on the perceived room for choice in their jobs, as previously discussed in the literature review (J. Marshall & Stewart, 1981a, 1981b; Stewart, 1982c). Better access to resources implies fewer/lesser constraints in the managers' jobs and hence greater room for exercising choice. The basic logic underpinning the hypotheses is as follows: *improved access* to various resources is expected to *reduce the constraints*, and thus *enlarge the managers' room for exercising choice* in their jobs.

Improved access to resources → less constraints → greater room for exercising choice.

One could argue that managers' access to resources is more relevant and will have greater impact on how managers can *implement* their choices rather than on managers' choice as such. I will, however, argue that this view is based on a theoretical, sequential perspective on managers' choices, where managers first make their choices and then implement them, leading to different consequences. I will further argue that in real-life, managers' choices are *not* as sequential as portrayed in the theoretical models; rather the different phases are interwoven with each other. When managers make choices, they inherently evaluate the realism of implementing each alternative (for instance with respect to whether the resource situation allows the implementation of the choice) as part of the choice-process. These arguments are in line with the rational choice theory, in which evaluations of the consequences related to each alternative (in terms of the alternative's utility) constitute the premise for individual choices.

However, as discussed in earlier sections, managers do not make their choices in a vacuum. Instead, the managers make their choices and priorities *within* the existing constraints and under the influence of the demands they have to fulfill to avoid sanctions

in their jobs. This means that although, in theory, elements such as the constraint situation are primarily relevant when *implementing* the choices, they also influence the manager's *choice processes*. Thus, managers' access to resources affects managers' perceived room for exercising choice.

To develop the hypotheses, I start by introducing three situations in which managers *exercise choice*. Theory, which was reviewed and assessed in the previous chapter, is applied to identify three choice-situations, that are emphasized as essential to managers and their organizations, and in which I will empirically study the managers' perceived room for exercising choice to prioritize time.¹⁹.

3.2.1 Managers' perceived room for exercising choice

The first choice-situation is related to managers' *time horizon considered*, which is defined as *the length of time that people take into account* (Staudenmayer et al., 2002). More specifically, I focus on managers' sense of being able to make choices to balance their time between *daily work and long-term planning*²⁰. Today's business life is characterized by increasing tempo, time pressure and forced pace (Perlow, 1999). Time to market has become a critical factor in many industries, which creates a more or less constant, perceived time pressure on organizations, as well as the people working in them. As discussed in the literature review, such constant time pressure generates a *crisis mentality*, which directs peoples' focus towards short-term goals (Perlow, 1999). Furthermore, time pressure also legitimates constant interruptions, as they are perceived necessary in order to achieve short-term goals within the given time limits (e.g. to minimize time to market or produce certain deliveries within the set time limits). Perlow (op cit) further argues that although there is obviously not a deliberate intention to interrupt (for instance to ask for information or assistance), such interruptions may still

¹⁹ The choice situations are later included as dependent variables in the empirical study

²⁰ Although the boundary between *daily work* and *long-term planning* may not be straightforwardly recognizable, it can be argued that the two categories are by nature different, and that the core difference is where the managers' main focus is aimed. Furthermore, such a distinction is also found to be applied in various fields of research, for instance in strategy and leadership.

obstruct people from concentration on complicated and complex tasks, which in turn may impede the attainment of the organization's goals. This is referred to as the "*vicious work time circle*", which yields negative outcomes at both the organizational and individual level. Although working at a strategic level with long-term planning forms an essential part of many managers' jobs, there is an increasing pressure on the managers to prioritize more short-term activities. This increased pressure towards more short-term focus may yield negative outcomes for the organizations e.g. in the form of myopia or reduced long-range strategic competitiveness, as well as for the managers working in the organizations, e.g. in the form of stress and a sense of lost control over own work.

Based on the above, we see that managers' ability to balance their time and attention between daily works (short-term focus) and long-term planning is of great importance to organizations, as well as to the managers. Thus, I choose to examine managers' choices related to the prioritization between daily work and long-term planning. I will examine whether changes in the managers' constraint situation in terms of access to various resources, influence their sense of being able to balance short-term (daily work) and long-term activities. Managers' sense of being able to make choices to balance their time between daily work and long-term activities is therefore included as the first dependent variable in the study.

The second choice situation included in the study concerns the managers' sense of being able to make choices to allocate sufficient time to *maintain their professional competence*. To maintain professional competence is essential not only to the managers, but also to the organizations, which to an increasing extent depend upon the competence of their human resources. In what is often referred to as the *knowledge society*, characterizing most of the western business-world, maintaining one's competence is thus essential to many managers. However, to maintain or develop their professional competence, the managers must (*choose to*) allocate time to various activities that enable them to learn and acquire new skills or abilities, such as attend courses or management development programs, read professionally relevant material of different kinds, etc.

Nevertheless, in relation to this choice-situation managers are found to state that it is simply “not possible” to find time to participate in such activities, as they are too busy handling the ordinary tasks of their jobs. Some even claim that they *would have* prioritized the maintenance of their professional competence, if only it was *possible* – if only they had a choice. Implicitly - or explicitly - the managers have stated that they don’t feel they have any room for choice and that the tasks they have to do to perform their jobs are so comprehensive that it is practically impossible for them to find time for activities such as professional seminars or courses. Put differently, the managers do not feel that they have any room for choice; they would like to prioritize differently (spend more time maintaining own professional competence) if only they had greater room for choice. Hence, I want to examine whether a less constrained situation – where managers have better access to different resources – influences a managers’ sense of being able to allocate the desired amount of time to maintain own professional competence.

The third and last choice-related situation I chose to include in the study is somewhat different from the first two; it concerns the managers’ sense of being able to balance their time at work in a way that is consistent with a satisfying *work/life balance*. To be a manager is often an engaging and absorbing job, which can greedily consume the managers’ time at the expense of other parts of their lives. As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, time is often represented as a linear, finite commodity (objective time) in the time literature. Within this perspective, a gain in work time is viewed as a loss of family time (e.g. Adam, 1990; Friedman, Christensen, & DeGroot, 1998). The choices managers make at work, for instance regarding how much and/or how they delegate work to their co-workers, or what aspects of their jobs they chose to emphasize (Stewart, 1982c), may have great impact on the managers’ work/life balance. For instance, if a manager chooses to involve herself heavily in several time-consuming tasks at work, this requires that the manager devotes sufficient time to these tasks. Managers

are typically found to work *longer hours*²¹ than the general work force. If relying on the perspective where a gain in work time is viewed as a loss in family time, we see that the choices managers make may directly and heavily influence the managers' balance between her work and the rest of her life.

The work/life balance may well be viewed as one of the most essential balances managers strive to strike; hence it constitutes an essential and relevant aspect in managers' priorities of how to spend their time. Moreover, managers' room for choice and prioritization of time are essential to their chances of striking a desired balance between life and work. Managers may often state that they just *have to* work late or put in extra hours because they are short of people for instance, there is no one else who can do their job, or because they are pressured by customers to get work done within strict time limits. In other words: many managers feel they have *no choice* but to work long hours to fulfill their jobs. But what happens if the managers' room for choice is extended, through fewer constraints because of added resources, so that they actually *do* have a choice? Put differently, what happens if the managers are less pressured by resource limitations in their jobs? According to the proposed dynamics of Stewart's CCD model, a manager who has satisfactory access to various resources at work has less constraints and hence greater room for choice, which again is supposed to increase the manager's room to make choices that are more consistent with a rewarding work/life balance. I will test these dynamics by examining whether managers' access to various resources at work in fact have an effect on – or influence - the managers' sense of being able to combine their job and life in a fulfilling manner, or put differently: strike a pleasant work/life balance.

²¹ Average weekly working hours for the managers participating in our study was 45.6 hour's per week. There is a noticeable difference between male managers who work an average 46.6 hours a week and female managers who work app. 43.3 hours per week.

3.2.2 Managers' access to resources

The literature review presented arguments why managers' increased access to resources was expected to *decrease* the constraints in the managers' job, and hence enlarge the managers' perceived room for exercising choice. Moreover, the theory distinguished between external, internal and time-related resources, which were assumed to reduce the constraints in the managers' jobs if present. In the following sections, I follow the structure from the theory as I develop three sets of empirically testable hypotheses: the first set of hypotheses is concerned with the managers' access to *external resources*, the second is concerned with the managers' access to *internal resources* and finally, the third set is concerned with the managers' access to *time-related resources*.

3.2.2.1 Managers' access to external resources

The first of the relationships I address in the hypotheses is the effect managers' access to external resources is assumed to have on their perceived room for exercising choice. From the literature review we know that managers' access to: *i) financial resources, ii) professional advice, iii) hiring people if needed* and finally, *iv) sufficient labor supply* is assumed to influence their perceived room for exercising choice. Thus, I start by developing a set of hypotheses regarding the anticipated effects of managers' access to external resources in the three situations.

Hypothesis 1: Managers' access to financial resources

Financial limitations have been found to severely limit many managers' room for choice (Stewart, 1985; Wahlgren, 2003). Thus, I hypothesize that if managers have satisfying access to financial resources; it will increase their sense of being able to exercise choice, since their access to financial resources will enable them to choose more freely when balancing their time between various alternatives without thinking too much about the costs. If, on the other hand, a manager has poor access to resources, the most costly alternatives will not be realistic alternatives to consider; hence the managers' room for exercising choice will be limited. A manager with poor access to financial resources may

feel forced to devote greater parts of his or her time and attention towards short-term activities in order to improve the financial situation. Moreover, managers with poor access to financial resources may also be forced to do greater parts of the daily work themselves, since they do not have the necessary financial resources to pay others to do it. Such situations are expected to be detrimental to the managers' perceived room for balancing their time between daily work and long-term planning. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1a: The greater access a manager has to financial resources, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

Moreover, managers' access to resources is also expected to influence their perceived room for finding time to maintain their professional competence. The better access a manager has to financial resources, the more freely the manager can choose how to spend his or her time without concerns for the costs of each alternative. Moreover, the participation in competence-upholding activities tends to be rather costly, which makes access to financial resources relevant. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1b: The greater access a manager has to financial resources, the more room she will have to allocate time to participate in activities to maintain her professional competence.

Furthermore, managers' access to financial resources is also expected to influence their perceived possibilities to make choices compatible with a satisfactory work/life balance. More specifically, if a manager has good access to financial resources, he or she will have a greater perceived room for exercising choice (Stewart, 1982a). Such an enlarged perceived room for choice will enable the manager to make choices and balance their time in ways that enable the managers to combine their jobs with a good life, and hence achieve a good work/life balance. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1c: The greater access a manager has to financial resources, the more room she will have to exercise choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

Hypothesis 2: Managers' access to professional advice

From the literature review we know that within the rational perspective, managers are seen as important decision-makers, constantly working to optimize the organizations' performance. Thus, the managers and their decisions are viewed as significant to the organizations' results and performance. When managers make decisions they rely on their insights and professional competence. However, in an era where the work force tends to become more and more specialized and highly competent, it is unrealistic to assume that managers can (or even should) have professional competence in all the organizations' fields. Moreover, theory on bounded rationality (Simon, 1979) asserts that there are limitations in peoples' mental capacity with respect to processing information and making decisions. Hence, managers' perceived access to professional advice constitutes an essential resource, which is expected to increase the managers' perceived room for exercising choice. The second set of hypotheses is thus related to the managers' access to professional advice from coworkers.

More specifically, access to professional advice will increase the managers' perceived room for balancing their time between *daily work* and *long-term planning*, since access to professional advice will give the managers an extended understanding of the organizations' operations and challenges. Such extended understanding is expected to provide the managers with a better overview and basis for their priorities of time. Such an overview is expected to increase the managers' perception of being able to make choices to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2a: The greater access a manager has to professional advice from coworkers, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

Managers often feel pressured for time (Perlow, 1999). At the same time, we know that many managers feel that the professional development within their field is rapid and increasing. Moreover, many managers feel they ought to stay professionally updated to be "good managers". The result is that they experience a squeeze between the perceived

time available and the perceived need for professional updating. However, if managers get professional advice from their co-workers (i.e. knowledge sharing), this is expected to influence the managers' sense of being able to uphold their professional competence, and hence reduce some of the perceived time-squeeze. Moreover, if managers have access to professional advice from co-workers, such advice may also cause the managers to keep professional updating high on their priority lists when handling time. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2b: The greater access a manager has to professional advice from co-workers, the more room she will have to allocate time to participate in activities to maintain her professional competence.

A managers' access to professional advice is also relevant to their perceived room for striking a satisfactory work/life balance. In order for managers to experience a satisfying balance between their work and the rest of their lives, their perception of being able to do well at work is relevant, because of spillover effects. This means that a managers' sense of being able to succeed at work influences their perceived room for striking a satisfying work/life balance. If a manager has access to professional advice from co-workers, this will increase the likelihood that the managers feel able to do well in their jobs. Professional advice is hence also expected to be relevant to the managers' work/life balance. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2c: The greater access a manager has to professional advice from coworkers, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

Hypothesis 3: Managers' possibility to hire people if needed

As described in the literature review, managers often express that there is "*Too much to do and too little time to do it*" (Claessens, van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2007). If this statement holds true, it implies that there are more tasks to be completed than the managers feel able to perform within the time available. However, some tasks may be

carried out by others; they may be *delegated*. This requires that the managers have someone²² to whom to delegate. Thus, a managers' possibility to hire more people when needed constitutes another resource that, if present, can be expected to increase managers' perceived room for exercising choice.

Much of the daily work managers are engaged in is routine-work, which is often not particularly difficult or complicated, but still quite time-consuming. Hence, if the managers do not have anyone to delegate this kind of work to, they have to spend much of their time doing it themselves. Moreover, if the managers have no one to delegate to, this is expected to *decrease* their perceived room for exercising choice to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning. I thus hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a: The greater possibilities a manager has to hire people when needed, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

Being able to hire more people when needed constitutes a resource, which if present is expected to provide the managers with greater room for exercising choice in their jobs according to the proposed dynamics of the CCD model (Stewart, 1982b). Hence, a managers' possibility of hiring people is expected to also influence the extent of the managers' perceived room for choice with respect to how much time they will allocate to activities aimed at upholding their professional competence. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3b: The greater possibilities a manager has to hire people when needed, the more room she will have to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

However, if a manager *cannot* hire more people when this is needed in an organization, it will *increase the workload* on those already working in the organization, including the

²² As discussed in the literature review, this is not just a question of having "someone". Instead, those delegates must have the necessary qualifications to perform the delegated task. However, the first condition is that the managers actually have someone to whom to delegate work.

managers. One way to handle such increased workload is to *work longer hours*. Long working hours constitute a strain on peoples' work/life balances (Ford, 2007). However, heavier work loads may not necessarily lead to longer working hours; instead, some managers may try to get more work done *within* their regular working hours. The managers' perceived room for striking a satisfactory work/life balance may still be influenced; the managers will have more to do within their working hour, which causes them to be more pressured for time and thus experience less room for making choices that are compatible with a good life outside their jobs.

Moreover, managers are responsible for getting the organization's work done and providing satisfactory results. Hence, if there are an insufficient number of people available to carry out the organization's or department's work, the manager is still responsible for the results the organization or department is able to produce. Managers will thus often go far in order to produce satisfactory results, sometimes even at the expense of their personal life. This means that the extent to which managers have the possibility of hiring more people when needed is likely to influence the managers' work/life balance. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3c: The greater possibilities a manager has to hire people when needed, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

Hypothesis 4: Satisfactory labor supply

Access to a *qualified labor supply* is also relevant to the managers' perceived room to exercise choice. More specifically, if a manager knows that within his or her field, it is generally very hard to find qualified labor, this will represent a constraint to the managers' work for several reasons. First, if one of the employees chose to quit their job and needed to be replaced, the managers know that it is generally challenging to find a qualified replacement. Hence, they know that they are exposed if they loose qualified labor and that such a loss will potentially inflict on them problems they must spend time to handle. Secondly, an unsatisfactory labor supply will also make it harder for the

organization to grow, as it is hard to find new, qualified people to hire, thus the managers must spend more time and effort on finding qualified workers. Thirdly, if it is hard to find qualified labor this means that the organizations are more dependent on the people presently working there than the other way around. Power can be defined as the inverse of dependence, thus the managers have to handle a situation where the employees have a powerful position in the organization. This may also limit the managers' room for exercising choice and balancing their time. More specifically, unsatisfactory labor supply introduces an uncertainty with respect to the basic premises (access to qualified labor), which makes it harder for the managers to strike a satisfying balance between daily work and long-term planning. I thus hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4a: The better labor supply there is within the organization's field, the more room a manager will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

The labor supply situation will also influence the managers' room for finding sufficient time to maintain their professional competence, since the same uncertainty discussed above will also influence the managers' perceived room for allocating time to uphold their own competence. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4b: The better labor supply there is within the organization's field, the more room a manager will have to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

The labor supply situation is also expected to influence how the managers' perceived room for making choices could be compatible with striking a satisfactory work/life balance. When managers know that it is hard to find qualified workers, this will influence their sense of *being in control* at work, because the uncertainty affects the basic premises (having sufficient and qualified people to get the work done) for their jobs. Hence, if a manager's sense of being in control is reduced, this is expected to influence their sense of

being able to make choices that are compatible with a satisfying work/life balance. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4c: The better labor supply there is within the organization's field, the more room a manager will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

3.2.2.2 Managers' access to internal resources

Not only manager's access to external resources is assumed to influence their perceived room for exercising choice; their access to *internal interpersonal resources* is as well. Social support from family and friends, social support from superiors and someone to confide in are all examples of resources assumed to significantly influence managers' perceived room for exercising choice. Hence, in the following a set of hypotheses regarding the relationship between the managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources and their perceived room for exercising choice is formulated.

Hypothesis 5: Managers' personal support from superiors

Personal support from *superiors* is particularly significant to peoples' contentment at work (R. A. Karasek, Jr., 1979; R. A. Karasek et al., 1988). However, support from one's superior is not only important to peoples' contentment; there is also reason to assume that it is significant to their perceived room for exercising choice. More specifically, support from superiors constitutes a resource that, if present, makes the manager more assured and confident, and hence makes the managers feel more able to exercise choice. The underlying logic is that social support works as a "palliative", which influences how the managers' handle various strains and challenges at work. Balancing the time at work between daily work and long-term planning is such a challenge that is expected to be influenced by the managers' access to personal support from their superiors. The managers' perceived room for balancing their time between long-term planning and daily

work is thus expected to be influenced by the level of support they receive from their superiors. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5a: The more personal support a manager has from superiors, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

Moreover, support from ones superior is also likely to influence to what extent the manager feels able to find sufficient time to uphold her professional competence. More specifically, support from superiors is expected to increase the managers' confidence and belief in his or her importance to the organization, which is expected to make it easier for the manager to justify spending time upholding her competence. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5b: The more personal support a manager has from superiors, the more room she will have to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

Support from superiors is also expected to be significant for the managers' perceived room for making choices that are compatible with *a good life*. Social support includes focus not only on the purely professional aspects of the job and the jobholder; instead other aspects such as relational and interpersonal aspects are relevant. Although the importance of the managers' sense of being able to do well in their jobs to their work/life balance were emphasized in the work/life hypotheses presented above, the interpersonal aspects of the managers' jobs are also vital for the managers' sense of being able make choices that are compatible with striking a satisfying work/life balance. If managers perceive support from their superior, this is expected to *increase* their sense of having room to exercise choice that is compatible with striking a satisfying work/life balance. More specifically, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5c: The more personal support a manager has from superiors, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

Hypothesis 6: Managers' personal support from family/friends

In this study I primarily focus on how managers' handle their time *at work*. Nevertheless, I recognize that in order to fully understand how the managers make their choices and prioritize their time, focusing only on the managers' professional life is insufficient; instead, I also need to devote a certain amount of attention to the managers' personal life. As discussed in the literature review, a manager's sense of having personal support from their family and friends is relevant to their performance at work. More specifically, if a manager perceives little or no support from her family and friends, this can be expected to influence her ability to handle the various strains that she is inflicted with at work negatively. Likewise, if a manager perceives support from family and friends, this can be expected to represent a buffer that will increase the managers' ability to handle difficult situations at work (R. Karasek, 1990). Striking a satisfying balance between daily work and long-term planning is, as discussed above, referred to as a basic – yet essential – dilemma in most managers' jobs. Thus, if a manager has support from family and friends, this is expected to increase the managers' ability to handle this dilemma. More specifically, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 6a: The more personal support a manager has from her family and friends, the more she will feel able to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

Social support has been found to increase peoples' sense of being able to handle challenging or demanding situations at work as well as in general. Managers generally report feeling pressured for time, hence being able to allocate time to maintain one's professional competence typically constitutes a challenge to most managers. Building on the logic described above, we see that support from family and friends constitutes resource that, if present, can be expected to *increase* the manager's sense of being able to handle the challenges related to finding time to uphold their professional competence. Hence, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 6b: The more personal support a manager has from her family and friends, the more she will feel able to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

Managerial jobs are typically described as absorbing and time-consuming. Thus, managers can easily spend great amounts of time and attention on their jobs at the expense of their family time. However, in a meta analysis Ford (Ford, 2007) revealed that family support significantly *reduces* work interference with family life. Thus, support from family and friends constitute a resource that, if present, is expected to *increase* the managers' sense of being able to combine their jobs with a good life. More specifically I thus hypothesize:

Hypothesis 6b: The more personal support a manager has from family and friends, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

Hypothesis 7: Having colleagues to trust and confide in

From the literature review, we know that although it has been said to be "*lonely at the top*" whenever managers have someone to trust and confide in, this reduces the managers' sense of being alone. Thus, if a manager has someone at work with whom she feels she can trust and confide in, a trusted "sparring partner" to consult when faced with difficult questions or problems, this represents a resource that, if present, is expected to increase the managers' perceived room for exercising choice. To have such a "sparring partner" to consult and get feedback from is also expected to help the managers handle challenging situations. From the introductory chapter, we know that many managers receive less feedback than they wish (Selvik, 2005). To have someone to confide in, who can be a trusted source of feedback, can thus be expected to increase managers' confidence, and consequently *increase* the managers' perception of being able to strike a satisfactory balance between daily work and long-term planning. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 7a: The more a manager has colleagues whom she can trust and confide in the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

To have someone to trust and confide in at work represents a source of social support that is expected to influence managers' sense of being able to handle perceived strains in her job (R. Karasek, 1990). As discussed in previous sections, such support has been found to constitute a resource that, if present, is expected to increase managers' ability to handle the demanding situations and dilemmas at work. Being able to find and allocate time to uphold one's professional skills within the limited available time constitutes such a dilemma. If the manager has someone she can trust and confide in, she will be better suited to handle this situation. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 7b: The more a manager has colleagues whom she can trust and confide in, the more room she will have to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

To have someone at work to trust and confide in is also relevant with respect to the managers' sense of being able to make choices that make their jobs compatible with a good life. To have someone to trust and confide in can be viewed as a part of a good life. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 7c: The more a manager has colleague, whom she can trust and confide in, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

3.2.2.3 Managers' access to time-related resources

In the literature review I discussed how time constitutes a very scarce resource in today's business life, and how lack of time constitutes a constraint for many managers. Access to time and time-related resources is thus expected to relieve some of the constraints in the

managers' jobs, hence enlarging the managers' perceived room for exercising choice. The anticipated relationships between managers' access to time-related resources and their perceived room for choice are incorporated in the last of the hypotheses in this study.

However, the literature review revealed that it was not only the amount of *hours spent at work* (the objective time), but also the managers' subjective sense of being able to control or influence their own time, that was assumed to influence their perceived room for exercising choice (Yakura, 2002). Thus, hypotheses that address both the objective and subjective time are developed in the following.

Hypothesis 8: Effect of managers' time at work

Time is described as the scarcest of all resources there is (Yukl, 2002). Hence, lack of time constitutes a limitation. This means that if a manager increases the amount of time spent at work, this can be expected to decrease this perceived limitation, simply because there is a greater amount of time (hours) available to distribute to the various tasks and activities to which the managers have to attend. This means that the managers will be less pressured for time and hence experience greater room for exercising choice. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 8a: The more hours a manager works per week, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

More hours spent at work increases the amount of time available at work, or said differently, the outer boundaries of available time to allocate to various activities are expanded. When there is more available time to allocate to different activities, I consequently expect it to *increase* the managers' sense of being able to allocate time to participating in activities to maintain their professional competence. Hence, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 8b: The more hours a manager works per week, the more room she will have to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

However, although putting in more hours at work is expected to increase the managers' room for maneuvering and balancing time at work, it is simultaneously expected to reduce the managers' sense of being able to combine her job with a good life. In a meta analyses of 120 previous contributions about work/family balance, Ford et al (2007) revealed that average working hours significantly increases the work's interference with family. Hence, I expect that if managers spend longer hours at work, this will reduce their perceived satisfaction with their work/life balance. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 8c: The more hours a manager works per week, the less she will be able to combine her job with a satisfying life.

Hypothesis 9: Managers' subjective sense of being able to control own schedule

From the literature review, we know that the application of the objective perspective on time alone is insufficient to fully understand the various aspects of how individuals perceive and are influenced by time (Yakura, 2002). This means that I need to include a hypothesis that focuses on the managers' subjective perceptions of being able to control or influence their time at work. If the entire workday is determined by persons other than the managers themselves, this leaves no room for exercising choice to balance time. Thus, managers' perceptions of being able to influence their own time constitute an essential resource that, if present, is expected to *increase* managers' perceived room for balancing their time. The more the managers feel able to control their own schedule, the greater their perceived room for balancing time is expected to be. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 9a: The more control a manager has over her own daily schedule, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning.

Being able to control one's schedule is not only expected to influence the managers' sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning; there is also the expectation that their sense of being able to allocate sufficient time to uphold their professional competence would be influenced. More specifically, to feel able to find time to maintain one's professional competence, there must be at least some time for the managers to allocate. This means that if managers have no control over their own schedule, they just have to carry out the pre-determined schedule, and have no room for exercising choice to allocate their time in specific matters. Hence, the managers' room for allocating time to maintain their professional competence requires a certain amount of control over own schedule. Thus I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 9b: The more control a manager has over her own daily schedule, the more room she will have to allocate time to maintain her professional competence.

Finally, the managers' sense of being able to control their own schedule is also expected to influence their perceived room for making choices that are compatible with a good life. To have a certain amount of control over own schedule is emphasized as an important benefit of being manager (Colbjørnsen et al., 2001). Managers, like other people, have different preferences with respect to *how* they want to balance the job and the rest of their lives to be. This means that: a) there is not one optimal way to balance life and work; instead individuals have different preferences, and b) if managers have an influence on their own schedules, this will allow different managers to organize their jobs in different ways, and hence suit their individual preferences. Thus, I end by hypothesizing:

Hypothesis 9c: The more control a manager has over her own daily schedule, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life.

3.2.3 Summary of the hypotheses

In the above sections I have formulated a set of hypotheses addressing the relationship between the managers' access to resources and their perceived room for exercising choice. A total of three sets of independent variables: 1) external, 2) internal and 3) time-related resources, and three dependent variables: a) balancing daily work/long-term planning, b) finding sufficient time to maintain professional competence, and c) striking a satisfactory work/life balance are included in the hypotheses as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below.

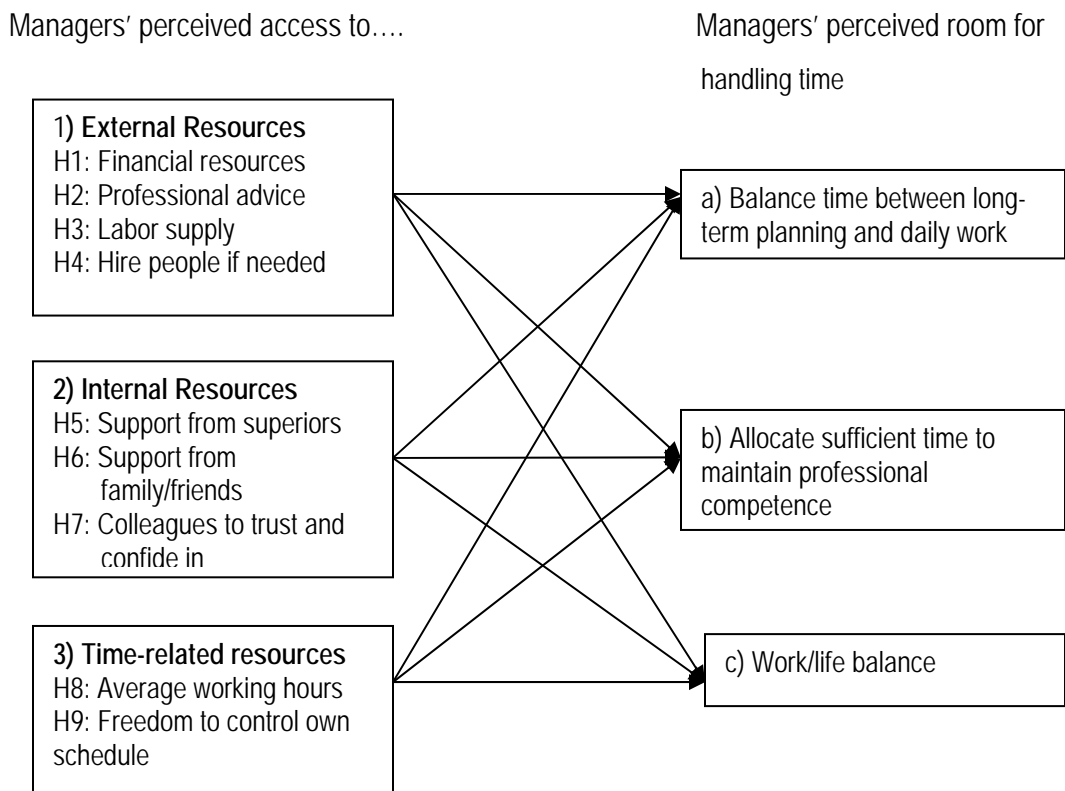


Figure 3.2 Summary of the hypotheses

3.3 Summary

In the first part of this chapter, a *research perspective* for the study reported in this thesis was developed. The development of the research perspective was guided by the nature of the research questions and was based on gaps and unaddressed questions revealed through the literature review presented in the previous chapter. The research perspective forms the theoretical basis, which will guide and direct the empirical part of this study.

In the second part of this chapter, the second of our research questions was transformed into a set of empirically testable hypotheses. The hypotheses were developed to address the relationship between managers' access to resources and their perceived room for choice. In later chapters of this thesis, the hypotheses will be tested empirically in nationally representative survey data.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology underlying the empirical part of the study is reported. The empirical study reported in this thesis was designed to address the two research questions presented in Chapter One. The development of the research design was guided by requirements given by the nature of these research questions. The requirements and their implications for choice of research design will be discussed in the following, before the study's research design is presented.

The empirical data applied in the statistical analyses will also be presented in this chapter. In this study survey data, which were gathered before the work on this thesis was started, are applied. This data set is extensive, both with respect to the number of respondents (N=3172) and the number of topics covered in the survey. In early phases of the study, the survey was inspected and found to contain interesting, relevant data about the phenomenon of interest in this thesis: managers' handling of time. Thus, access to the data set was considered beneficial to this study for a number of reasons, which are discussed in later sections of the chapter. The application of existing data also implies certain challenges, which are also discussed. In last sections of the chapter, the statistical procedures that were applied are presented and the most prevailing measurement issues are discussed with respect to the reliability and validity of the study.

4.2 Research design

The research questions in this thesis are concerned with how Norwegian managers handle their time at work. More specifically, the aim of this thesis is: 1) to explore what Norwegian managers perceive as important to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work and 2) to investigate the effects of resource limitations

on Norwegian managers' perceived room for exercising choice to handle their time at work. To gain insight into these questions, there are certain requirements that the research design of the study must fulfill. In the following sections, these requirements and their implications will be presented and elaborated.

4.2.1 Criteria for design

The requirements stemming from each of the questions point in somewhat different directions. Thus, the requirements derived from each research question will be discussed separately.

The first research question asks: *What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work?* This is an open and explorative question, in which the focus is aimed at identifying different factors that Norwegian managers take into consideration when they make choices and prioritize their time at work. To answer this question, the following requirements must be fulfilled.

First, the introductory chapter and the literature review have revealed that only limited attention has been devoted earlier to this theme in a Norwegian cultural context. Hence, there is *limited a-priori knowledge* about what Norwegian managers pay attention to as they prioritize their time at work. This means that an *explorative approach* is required in this study, since there is little or no existing research to inform us about what we should search for or expect. Consequently, to address **Research Question One**, the study must have an open and explorative design, which allows a broad search for possible answers.

Secondly, as the first research question is concerned with exploring what Norwegian managers pay attention to when prioritizing time at work, access to empirical data that can shed light on this question is needed. This is information that cannot be found in established registers or records, as it is the managers' personal opinions and views that are of interest to answer this question. Moreover, as the literature review has revealed that

there is limited existing research focusing on this topic, the necessary information cannot be found in the existing literature. More specifically, this means that I need access to *empirical data*, which can be analyzed to reveal what Norwegian managers take into consideration (pay attention to) when they make choices and prioritize their time at work.

Thirdly, since the information I need cannot be found in existing registers, records or databases, access to a selection of Norwegian managers who are willing to share their views and standpoints, would also be required. A qualitative explorative approach involving a limited number of respondents using in-depth methods, such as personal interviews, was considered. However, although access to a limited number of managers could provide interesting information to enlighten this question, access to a *broad selection* of managers would be preferential for several reasons: first, as there is limited a priori knowledge regarding the phenomenon of interest, it is hard to predict the answers I might get when asking this question. Hence, *a broad sample of Norwegian managers* would increase the possibilities of being able to capture potential diversity in the managers' answers. Moreover, another purpose of this study is to identify *general patterns*, which can be argued to be *typical for Norwegian managers*. This constitutes another argument as to why access to a broad selection was required.

Summarized, the following is required to address Research Question One:

i) an *explorative* research design, ii) access to a *broad selection* of Norwegian managers, and iii) *empirical data* about what these managers take into consideration when they prioritize their time at work.

From **Research Question Two**, we see that another purpose of this study is to *test a causal relationship* described in the existing literature. More specifically, the alleged effects of managers' access to various resources on their perception of being able to make choices and handle their time are intended to be tested. This research question was

transformed into a set of hypotheses in the previous chapter. To be able to address this question (test the hypotheses), the following requirements must be fulfilled.

First, as the aim of this research question is to test the proposed relationship between managers' access to resources and their perceived room for prioritizing time, access to empirical information about both these two variables is required. Moreover, the information must be *measurable* and *quantifiable* in order to perform valid and reliable statistical analyses. In the previous chapter, different types of resources were specified in the development of the hypotheses. To test the hypotheses, *satisfying measures* are required for the different variables, which will be included in statistical analyses.

Secondly, access to a sample of managers who are willing to answer questions regarding the variables of interest (the managers' access to resources and their perceived room for exercising choice) is required to test the relationship between these two variables. Access to a *broad* sample of managers provides possibilities to bring forth more information than a smaller sample would, as a broad sample will make it possible to capture and identify variation among groups, etc. Hence, access to managers is required, and access to a broad sample is advantageous.

Thirdly, since the relationship I intend to test is *causal*, this imposed requirements with respect to the timing of the data collection. The variables should be measured in the proper order: first the expected cause, and then the potential effects.

Summarized, the following requirements were identified: i) information (satisfying measures) of the managers' access to various resources and their perceived room for exercising choice, ii) access to a broad sample of Norwegian managers, and iii) the alleged cause and effect should be measured in the proper order.

In the following sections, I discuss how this study should be designed to meet the requirements outlined above and justify the choice of research design.

4.2.2 Choice of research design

To address *research question one*, an explorative approach is chosen, based on the arguments outlined and discussed in the above sections. An explorative approach enables the researcher to capture answers that may be original or unexpected. The generation of lists of predefined answers from which the respondents can choose, requires a theoretical basis from which such lists of possible answers can be generated. In this study, no such theoretical basis was found, as the theoretical field is described as underdeveloped, although rapidly developing (Ancona, Okhuysen et al., 2001). Thus, an open and explorative approach is chosen to address the *first research question*.

Exploratory factor analysis is a method often used in the early stages of research to gather information about (hence *explore*) the potential interrelationship among a set of variables (Pallant, 2005). EFA is typically applied in new or poorly developed theoretical fields characterized by no or limited a priori knowledge (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003). Thus in this study, *explorative factor analyses* were chosen to address *Research Question One* and explore what Norwegian managers take into consideration when they make choices and handle their time at work.

In order to be able to capture potential variety in the managers' answers and to be able to identify patterns probably typical for Norwegian managers, access to a broad sample of managers was identified as another requirement in the above sections. However, to get access to a broad sample of managers and get them to answer an extensive survey is often very time-consuming and challenging. Given the limitations under which this Ph.D. dissertation has been carried out, it has been a tremendous advantage that AFF²³ has generously given me access to an *extensive leadership survey*. The survey was conducted in 2002 among 3172 Norwegian managers, and is truly extensive by Norwegian standards. The broadness in this sample of managers is in line with the requirement identified above.

²³ Administrativt Forsknings Fond (Daley)

Access to quantifiable data about what Norwegian managers take into consideration when they prioritize their time was identified above as a third requirement that the design of this study must fulfill. In the leadership survey referred to above, questions concentrating on exploring what Norwegian managers pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work were included. More specifically, the managers were asked “*There is a lot to pay attention to when you make decisions as a manager and prioritize your time at work. To what extent to you take the following factors into consideration in your job as manager?*” The question was followed by a wide-ranging list of 31 suggested answers. The items covered a broad variety of aspects, which managers potentially can take into consideration when they prioritize their time. The managers were asked to rate to which extent they paid attention to each item on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent), to 5 (can not answer/not applicable)²⁴. Summarized, this means that 3172 Norwegian managers’ ratings of these 31 items were included in an explorative factor analyses performed to address *Research Question One*.

To address *Research Question Two* a different set of requirements were identified. The purpose of research question two is to *test a causal relationship* proposed in existing theory. This means that whereas the first research question primarily aimed at developing new theory in a field characterized by limited a priori knowledge, the second research question was concerned with questioning a proposed relationship in existing theory through testing a set of hypotheses, which were developed in Chapter Three.

Quantifiable and measurable information about the variables included in the hypotheses was the first requirement identified in the previous sections. This means that *quantifiable information* about each of the elements included in the proposed causal relationship is needed. More specifically, this means that I need quantifiable information about managers’ *access to various resources*, and about *the managers’ perception of being able to handle their time*. Furthermore, this information must be linkable, so that the relationships between these sizes can be evaluated and determined. In other words, the

²⁴ The 31 alternatives are listed in Chapter 5.

research design must allow an examination of the nature and strength of the proposed relationship between these two elements in managers' jobs.

The literature review identified an need for studies to address the proposed cause-effect relationships of the CCD model (Stewart, 1982b, 1982c) in a more systematic manner (Lowe, 2003). Although the model has been widely applied in various research (Wahlgren, 2003), the model has so far only been applied in *qualitatively based* studies. Hence, the proposed causal relationship between the constraint situations in managers' jobs and their room for exercising choice has not yet been addressed or tested in research applying quantitative statistical methods. Thus, a research design that permits a *test of the proposed causal relationship* through the use of *statistical methods* has been chosen in this study.

However, since the proposed causal relationship between managers' access to resources and their perceived room for exercising choice has not yet been tested through quantitative methods, no *established measures* or *scales* have been developed yet for the variables included in the model. The lack of established scales constitutes a challenge to this study. This challenge and how it is handled, is discussed more thoroughly in later sections of this chapter.

When testing a causal relationship, information about the variables included must be measured at different points of time. However, in this study, we rely on a cross sectional (correlation) design, even if this makes it impossible to study directionality, as the study was only conducted at *one* point in time. Implications of this choice of design for the validity of the study are discussed in the last sections of this chapter. Nevertheless, the choice of design is a result of a tradeoff between different considerations; first, I took into consideration that to conduct a stringent test of a causal relationship, information about the variables *must* be gathered in the proper order to address the directionality in the relationship: first information about the cause, then, at a later point of time, information about the effects. Cross sectional data can, however, provide information about *correlations* between the variables included in the analysis and could be a starting point

for longitudinal studies later, for instance time series or panel studies. On the other hand, I also considered the fact that the leadership survey, which is an extensive survey accessible to us, contained relevant information about i) Norwegian managers' access to resources and ii) their perceived room for exercising choice. However, this information was gathered in a cross sectional study. Although not unproblematic, I chose to tradeoff the challenges related to applying *cross sectional data* against the advantages related to applying the extensive leadership survey in the statistical analyses²⁵. However, this tradeoff must be recognized when interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions from the analyses. The main arguments behind this tradeoff are that: 1) the resources available were limited; that is, the time and cost of conducting data collection in two (or more) separate periods were considered too consuming, and 2) the advantages related to applying the extensive, available data set were seen as considerable.

Multiple regression analysis is a research method for concurrently measuring the relationship between a set of independent variables and one dependent variable in terms of the direct effects of several independent variables (cause) on one dependent variable (effect)²⁶. The aim of this study is to assess the proposed effects of managers' access to various resources and their perception of being able to handle time. Hence, multiple regression analysis was found to be adequate to address the second research question.

²⁵ Advantages and challenges related to applying the leadership survey are discussed further in later sections of this chapter.

²⁶ The relationship between the independent and the dependent variable is usually expressed by a standardized regression coefficient, the beta coefficient, which expresses the change in the dependent variable when the independent variable is increased by one standard deviation (Hamilton, 1992). The closer the coefficient is to either -1 or +1, the more significant the association between the variables is. Furthermore, *the coefficient of determination*, R^2 , expresses how much of the total variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the independent variables together. R^2 varies from 0 to 1. The closer to 1 the coefficient is, the greater the amount of the total variance in the dependent variable is that can be accounted for by the independent variables.

4.3 Presentation of the empirical data

In this study I analyze data gathered through an extensive leadership survey conducted among 3172 Norwegian managers in 2002²⁷ to which I was generously granted access. The survey was funded by AFF²⁸. Since this leadership survey was conducted before I started the work on this thesis, I was not involved in the process of designing the study or gathering the data. Hence, the presentation of the empirical data is based on available documentation of the leadership survey (Dalen, 2002) and on presentations of the data given in publications in which the data has been used (Colbjørnsen, 2004; Colbjørnsen et al., 2001).

4.3.1 The selection of managers

In the leadership survey, *managers* were defined as “*persons who have one or more people reporting to them*”. The sample of managers is a stratified sample drawn from a population of managers, which at the time of the survey, was estimated at approximately 130,000 persons in Norway (based on the definition given above) (Colbjørnsen et al., 2001). As no established register of the population of managers in Norway exists, Telenor’s “Yellow Pages²⁹” was applied as a database from which the selection was drawn. The sample unit was independent businesses, which means that the unit must be listed in the telephone directory and have an own address.

In companies where the top managers were to be interviewed, the interviewer asked directly for this manager. In organizations where other managers were to be interviewed, the interviewer asked for an HR responsible or another person with an overview over the organization. These persons were then asked to make a list containing the names and phone numbers of all the managers in the organization. From these lists, a random

²⁷ The leadership survey was also conducted in 1999, but in this study we analyze data from the 2002 survey.

²⁸ AFF is a consultant company which is one of Norway’s oldest and largest players in the field of leadership and organizational development. Professor Tom Colbjørnsen was responsible for the preparation and design of the survey, whereas MMI was responsible for its execution.

²⁹ Telenor’s “bedriftsdatabase” in Norwegian

selection was drawn. The managers selected were then contacted by phone and asked to participate. There were a total of 3172 managers in the sample. Managers from the private as well as the public sector are included.

The leadership survey aims at being representative for Norwegian managers across different industries³⁰ and at different managerial levels (except first line managers) in organizations with more than 10 employees (Colbjørnsen, 2004). The sample is stratified based on industry (see the Appendix for an overview of the industries) and managerial level (top managers and other managers). The initial intention was to have 300 respondents from each industry. However, because of high response rates there were more than 300 respondents from some of the industries. The selection was also stratified based on *managerial level*, to ensure a sufficient number of top managers.

In earlier sections, I have labeled the survey *extensive* according to Norwegian standards. The reason for calling attention to the survey's extensiveness is that in the methods literature there is a general agreement that large samples are crucial for the stability of statistical analytic results. However, there is no agreement as to *how large* a sample must be in order to complete reliable analysis. Cattell (1978:492) referred to samples below 200 subjects as "smallish", whereas Hair et al. (2006) argued that 15-20 observations per independent variable is desired. The leadership survey consists of the answers of 3172 Norwegian managers. This is nearly 15 times as many as Cattell (1978) referred to as smallish, and it allows studies with up to approximately 150 independent variables, according to Hair's recommendations. Hence, the extensiveness of the leadership survey constitutes an essential advantage, particularly with respect to the external validity of the study reported in this thesis.

³⁰ A presentation of the 11 industry categories and the distribution of respondents within each category are presented in the Appendix.

The managers

The sample consists of 2462 (79.1%) male and 649 (20.9%) female managers. Average working hours per week among the male managers was 47.0 (std. dev. 7.87), whereas the female managers worked an average of 43.5 hours per week (std. dev. 7.86). The managers' ages varied from 24 to 66 years, and the average age in the sample was approximately 46.5 years (std. dev. 8,824).

An overview of the sample's variety with respect to the managerial level is presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Managerial Level

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Top manager	891	28.2	28.2
General manager	1094	34.7	62.9
Middle manager (incl. project managers)	1019	32.3	95.2
First line managers	153	4.8	100.0
Total	3157	100.0	
System	15		
Total	3172		

From Table 4.1 Managerial Level, we see that the sample consisted of only 4.8% first line managers, whereas there were 28.2% top managers and 34.7% general managers. This illustrates that the selection is not representative for Norwegian first line managers, as pointed out above.

The managers in the sample also varied with respect to the level of education. An overview of the level of education is presented in Table 4.2 Level of Education below:

Table 4.2 Level of Education

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary/elementary school (9 years)	127	4.0	4.0
Upper secondary school	225	7.1	11.2
Vocational education, technical college or similar	589	18.7	29.8
Up to 4 years college/university education	1265	40.1	69.9
More than 4 years college/university education	948	30.1	100.0
Total	3154	100.0	
System	18		
Total	3172		

From Table 4.2 Level of Education, we see that a great majority of the managers had college or university education of different kinds; a total of more than 70% of the managers had a collage or university education (40.1% had up to 4 years college or university education, whereas 30.1% had more than four years education). Moreover, Table 4.2 also reveals that only 4% of the managers in the sample had primary/elementary school as their only educational background.

4.3.2 The data collection

MMI³¹ was responsible for executing the data collection process of the leadership survey. The interviews were conducted between January and April 2002. The managers were first contacted by telephone and asked if they would participate in a leadership survey. Between 90 and 95% of the managers contacted agreed to participate. The survey was then distributed via post to the managers who accepted participation. In total, 78% of the managers contacted answered and returned the questionnaire (Colbjørnsen, 2004; Colbjørnsen et al., 2001). This response rate is exceptionally high for postal surveys and thus constitutes another strength of this survey.

³¹ Markeds og Media Instituttet (MMI) is a Norwegian market research company.

4.3.3 Application of survey data

As previously mentioned, the leadership survey was conducted before I started working on this thesis. The application of this data, which was gathered by other researchers to address other research problems than the ones in focus in this thesis, entails both advantages and challenges, which are discussed in the following sections.

The first, and most important advantage, is related to the time and effort saved from not having to design, administer and execute an extensive survey ourselves. Given the limitations within which I operate when pursuing a Ph.D. degree (with respect to time and other resources), access to the leadership survey constitutes a tremendous advantage. Moreover, obtaining access to organizations and the managers working in them can be challenging as organizations and managers in general are busy and pressed for time. In the leadership survey, several MMI associates worked for weeks and months to gather the data. If I had to have done this job by myself, it is highly likely that the result would have been a less extensive survey with fewer respondents. Access to an extensive sample, encompassing a broader selection of managers, is essential for the external validity of the statistical analyses. Hence, access to the leadership survey represents an advantage for the *external validity* of the study.

However, there are also challenges related to the application of data gathered by other researchers for other purposes. First, since I was not involved in designing the survey, I was not able to include certain measures, scales or questions to address any of the research questions specifically. As a result of this, the study was developed through a more iterative process than portrayed in most methods' literature. In the methods' literature, the research process is described as a (almost) linear process, where the researcher starts with formulating a research question, then designs a study to address this question and finally develops a survey (or another method, if more appropriate) to investigate and answer the research question. In this study, however, I started the research process by going back and forth between reading and reviewing the existing literature and consulting the empirical data from the survey, searching for interesting and unaddressed questions in the literature that I could address by applying the leadership

survey. It is important to note that this could represent a limitation to the study; I might have emphasized other aspects or elements in managers' handling of time if I had not had access to this survey. However, I have tried to be conscious of this threat, and attempted to free the development of the research questions as much as possible from the limitations found in the leadership survey. Moreover, as I have discussed in earlier sections, the leadership survey is extensive, not only with respect to the number of respondents, but also with respect to the number of topics addressed in the survey and the number of questions included. This means that this survey offered a fairly extensive variety of possible theoretical angles from which managers' handling of time could have been addressed. I will thus argue that the extensiveness of the leadership survey reduces the impact of this limitation.

Another challenge is related to the fact that when pursuing a Ph.D. degree, a central objective is to develop the student's competence with respect to design and the administration of data collection. In choosing to apply an existing data set, i.e. data gathered by other researchers, I was deprived the experience of conducting data collection. On the other hand, access to such an extensive data set also provided opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise.

4.4 Measurements

In Chapter 2, the relevant *theoretical concepts* were defined and explained on the basis of the existing literature, and in Chapter 3, the expected relationships between the theoretical concepts were formulated in a set of hypotheses. In this section, I will present and discuss the operationlization of the constructs included in the statistical analyses.

Although it is recommended as far as possible to apply established theoretical constructs and measures that have been tested and validated in previous studies (Churchill Jr., 1979), this was difficult in this study for a number of reasons, which are presented and discussed in the following.

First, despite an extensive literature review, I was unable to find established validated scales to measure most of the theoretical concepts included in this study. The lack of established measures may be explained by the fact that the study addresses new aspects of managers' handling of time, which have not received much attention so far. Previous studies of managers and time have primarily focused on other aspects of managers' time-related choices than I have done in this thesis. More specifically, existing contributions have focused on the *results* of managers' time-related choices in terms of how managers actually spend their time: how many hours or minutes they generally spend on different tasks or activities (Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006), or on the *consequences* of managers' allocation of time – in terms of the managers' success, for instance (Kotter, 1982; Perlow, 1997).

Secondly, although a focus on managers' choices over time is actually included in research by Stewart (1982a), thus far, her research has only been applied in qualitative studies, as previously mentioned. Although this has resulted in an expressed need for studies that address the proposed causality of the model in systematic manners through statistical methods (Lowe, 2003), it also has the consequence that I have found no presentations of validated or established measures for the theoretical concepts included in Stewart's model. This means that a central contribution from this research is that I address an expressed need for new methodological approaches to test a proposed causal relationship in existing theory, but the novelty of the study results in a lack of established scales to apply. However, the lack of established validated scales is not only limited to Stewart's research; the research field on which we base this study is described as being poorly developed heretofore (Ancona, Okhuysen et al., 2001). Absence of commonly accepted, applied concepts and validated scales is thus referred to as characteristic to the theoretical field.

Lastly, since for reasons discussed in earlier sections, I have chosen to apply data initially gathered to address other research questions than the ones addressed in this study, the items included in the survey limit the possible operationlization of the theoretical concepts included in the analyses. However, since there are no/few established scales (as

discussed above) that I could have applied to measure the theoretical concepts included in this study, this limitation was acceptable. Even if I had designed and conducted an own study, I would have had to construct own measurements as there were no validated scales covering the aspects of interest to this study that I could have incorporated into a survey. Thus, I have constructed the measures applied in study, based on theory and the available leadership-survey. In the following sections, the measures constructed are presented and discussed.

A total of *nine independent variables, three dependent variables and three control variables* were included in the regression analyses performed to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 3. In the following, the operationalization of the dependent variables are first presented and discussed first, then the independent variables, and finally the control variables included are presented.

4.4.1 The dependent variables

Three dependent variables were included in the regression analyses and consist of three situations in which managers' perceived room for handling time is measured. The theoretical basis for the choice of dependent variables has been presented and discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Briefly put, each choice situation was included because it was evaluated as significant for the managers and for the organizations in which the managers work.

In each of the three situations, the managers were asked to rate to what extent they felt able to handle and prioritize their time as they would prefer. Thus, focus is aimed at the managers' *perceived room for exercising choice*, not on whether or how the managers actually use their potential room for choice. Put differently, this means that I do not measure or evaluate how the managers handle their time, with respect to how successful or not they are, rather I focus on and measure the managers' perceptions of having room for exercising choice. This further means that two managers in seemingly similar

situations may *perceive* their own room for choice differently and thus answer the questions differently. Although exploring such differences may constitute an interesting line of future research, it is beyond the scope of this study and thus not pursued further. Rather, the aim here is to capture and investigate the underlying processes in terms of the effects of managers' access to resources on their perceived room for exercising choice in three choice situations. More specifically, the situations include the following.

1) The managers' sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning. In existing research, this is referred to as *the time horizon considered* (Staudenmayer et al., 2002), and this has been proved to be a hard balance for managers to strike. Although hard, this balance is considered important for managers to achieve. Thus, the managers' sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning is considered to reflect an essential aspect of managers' handling of time.

In the literature review, I have not found any validated scales that could have been applied to measure this variable. The first dependent variable is thus measured through the following statement: *How often do you feel that daily work causes you to give insufficient attention to long-term planning?* A five-point Likert scale was applied, ranging from 1 (= never) to 4 (= often), and 5 (= can not answer/not applicable). The more seldom a manager feels daily work causes them to give insufficient attention to long-term planning, the more room for exercising choice to prioritize time the manager is interpreted to have.

2) The managers' sense of being able to make choices at work that are compatible with a pleasing work/life-balance is included as the second dependent variable. There are scales found in existing research that I could have applied to measure this variable (see e.g. (Brett & Stroh, 2003; Ford, 2007; Frone, 2003)). These scales were however not incorporated in the leadership survey, and thus not possible to apply in this study. This may constitute a limitation to the study. The second dependent variable is measured

through the following statement: “*I am able to combine my job with a good life*” The same five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 as described above was applied.

3) The managers’ sense of being able to find sufficient time to participate in activities to uphold their professional competence is the last dependent variable included in the analyses. In today’s knowledge society the managers’ competence is considered crucial to many organizations, nevertheless, many managers report that they struggle to find sufficient time to uphold their professional competence (Perlow, 1997). The literature review did not reveal any established scales that I could have applied to measure this variable. Thus, this variable is measured through the following statement: “*I am able to allocate enough time to stay professionally à jour, through attending courses, reading, etc*”. As for the two previous dependent variables, the same five-point Likert scale was also applied in this analysis. If a manager felt unable to find sufficient time to participate in activities to uphold her professional competence, this was interpreted as indicating that the manager felt unable to exercise choice.

4.4.2 The independent variables

A total of nine independent variables were included in the regression analyses. The independent variables are clustered in three sets. Each set was included in the model based on theoretical arguments regarding the hypothesized effects of managers’ access to various resources. The three sets of independent variables include managers’ access to:

1) *external resources*, 2) *internal, interpersonal resources*, and 3) *time-related resources*.

As discussed in the above sections, there are a number of arguments as to why I have not applied validated scales to measure the variables included in this regression analyses. The same arguments apply to the independent variables; the theoretical field is underdeveloped and thus far, validated scales have not been developed for most of the variables. However, for certain variables, there are scales that could have been applied. But, as these scales were not incorporated into the leadership survey, I was unable to

apply then in this study. As discussed above, this may constitute a limitation to this study. However, this is only the case for a very limited number of variables; for the most part there are no applicable validated scales.

When developing the regression model, I evaluated the possibility of combining the items included in each set of independent variables to compute new multi-item variables. The items included in each set are positively correlated (see Appendix X for an overview of the correlations) and reflect different aspects of the managers' access to external, internal and time-related resources respectively. Still, when assessing the items of each set of independent variables, I found that if they were combined and new variables computed, these variables would have unsatisfying internal consistency³². Moreover, we would be unable to establish the effect of each of the items on the dependent variables. Hence, we chose to include the items clustered in three sets of independent variables as presented above.

The independent variables were measured on an ordinal level 5-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 1 (never/not at all) to 4 (always/to a great extent), to 5 (can not answer/not applicable).

Set 1: Managers' perceived access to external resources

- 1) The managers' access to *financial resources*: the extent to which the manager is in a financially acceptable situation to perform his job, measured by the following item, "*I have the financial resources I need to do a good job*".
- 2) The managers' access to *professional advice*: the extent to which the manager has co-workers to consult for qualified, professional advice, measured by the following item, "*I have colleagues who are able to offer qualified advice when I need it*".
- 3) The managers' possibilities to *hire people if/when necessary*: the extent to which the manager has opportunities to increase the number of employees, for instance, in particularly busy periods, measured by the following item, "*I can hire people when necessary*".

³² Internal consistency was assessed through the variables' Cronbach's alpha values, which were found unsatisfactory according to conventional criteria.

- 4) The managers' *access to qualified labor* (the labor supply) within the manager' professional field, measured by the following statement, "*Within my area of responsibility it is generally not too hard to find workers/people when we need it*".

Set 2: Internal, interpersonal resources

The second set of independent variables consists of what can be referred to as internal, "softer", interpersonal resources related to the managers' sense of having access to personal support from various sources. The second set includes the following items.

- 5) *Access to personal support from superiors*: the extent to which the managers experience they have support on a personal level from their superior(s), measured by the following statement, "*I have superiors who support me at the personal level*".
- 6) *Level of support from family and friends*: the extent to which the managers experience they have support from others outside the job, measured by the following statement, "*I have friends and family who support me through stormy times at work*".
- 7) *To have colleagues one can trust and confide in*: to what extent the managers have co-workers that they feel they can talk to in confidence and/or confide in, measured by the following statement, "*I have co-workers with whom I can talk confidentially*".

Set 3: Time-related resources

The third and last set of independent variables included in the regression model is concerned with resources related to the managers' time and includes the following.

- 8) *The managers' freedom to set her own schedule*: the extent to which the manager has a perception in her job of being able to make autonomous priorities and influence or control her own daily agenda, measured by the following item, "*I can control my daily schedule/agenda*".
- 9) *The managers' objective amount of available time at work*: the managers' average working hours measured by the following question, "*Approximately how many hours do you average at work per week?*"

4.4.3 Control variables

In addition to the independent variables listed above, a set of three control variables was included. The control variables are: *industry, gender and age*³³. With respect to industry, I make a distinction between 11 different categories. The categories and number of respondents within each category are described in the Appendix.

In the above sections the measures applied in this study was presented and discussed. I also presented arguments why established validated measures could not be applied in this study, and pointed out potential limitations this imposes on this study. In the following sections, I continue by presenting and discussing the statistical procedures applied to address the research questions posted in this study.

4.5 Statistical procedures

4.5.1 Exploratory Factor Analyses

To address the first research question (*What do Norwegian managers pay attention to when they make choices and handle their time at work?*), an exploratory principal component analysis with oblimin rotation³⁴ was applied. The items were added in to the analyses without differential weighting. To determine the number of factors to retain from the EFA, the following criteria were applied; 1) Kaiser's criteria³⁵, 2) the amount of variance explained, 3) the Scree Plot, and finally, 4) an evaluation of the factors' theoretical coherence.

³³ Managerial level was initially also included as a control variable. However, managerial level was not found significant in any of the analyses and was omitted as a control variable.

³⁴Rotation is a way of maximizing high loadings and minimizing low loadings so that the simplest possible structure is achieved and hence produce a pattern easier to interpret. There are two basic types of rotation: orthogonal (where the factors are assumed to be uncorrelated) and oblique (where the factors are assumed to be correlated, which is probably most likely the case for most measures (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995).

³⁵ Kaiser's criteria: Eigenvalue over 1, applied as the default criteria in SPSS.

The EFA was conducted to examine whether the empirical data allowed a more manageable number of underlying dimensions to be uncovered. To seek to uncover such underlying dimensions was done for two purposes: first these dimensions, if theoretically reliable and consistent, would represent factors that Norwegian managers find relevant to pay attention to when prioritizing their time at work, and hence answer the above referred research question. Secondly, the dimensions or factors revealed through the EFA would also allow the construction of new variables that could be included in further multivariate analysis³⁶.

4.5.2 Regression analyses

Stepwise, multiple regression analyses were applied to address the research question: *Does access to various resources effect Norwegian managers' handling of time, and if so, how and to what extent?* Multiple regression analyses allow the researcher to investigate the relationship between several independent variables (cause) and one dependent variable (effect). In this study, the effects of managers' access to various resources (cause) on their perception of being able to exercise choice and handle time (effect) were examined.

Stepwise procedures were applied, because these allow the researcher to examine the development in the model's explained variance as more independent variables are included in the analyses. In this study, this means that regression development in the models' explanatory power could be monitored, as the different sets of independent variables were included. These sets included: 1) managers' access to external resources, 2) managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources, and finally, 3) managers' access to time-related resources.

³⁶ I attempted to include the factors revealed through the EFA into further statistical analyses, but these analyses proved to be an unsuccessful path, which was not pursued further.

Potential multicollinearity in the analyses was assessed in a correlations matrix counting all the included variables (see Appendix X). Although several of the variables included were correlated, the correlation coefficients were below the conventional criteria for multicollinearity (Hair, 2006).

The *sample size* affects all results in statistical analyses. Hence, according to Hair (2006) anytime the sample size of a study exceeds 400 respondents, the researcher should examine all statistically significant results to ensure their practical significance (i.e. not only assess the results based on the statistical significance), due to the increased statistical power from the sample size. The sample applied for the analyses in this thesis was extensive (N=3172). Thus, to assess the' practical significance of the revealed findings, the *effect size* was calculated for all significant results.

4.6 Validity and reliability

In any empirical study, it is essential that the interpretations made from the empirical data are testable and readily available for others to judge. It is vital for all empirical studies that the researcher can show the readers the procedures used to arrive at the conclusions to ensure that the methods are relative and the conclusions are valid (Silverman, 2000). Thus, in the following sections, the validity and the reliability of the study presented in this thesis are discussed.

4.6.1 Validity

Validity is defined by Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002, p 34) as, “*the approximate truth of an inference*”. Hence, validity is a property of inferences and not a property of any methods or designs in itself; the very same design may contribute to more or less valid inferences under different circumstances. In the following, the *internal validity*, the *construct validity* and the *external validity* of this study will be discussed and evaluated.

A study's **internal validity** is concerned with the postulated relationship between two variables: does x have an impact on y? In this study, one aim is to test the proposed causal relationship between managers' access to resources (x) and their perceived room for exercising choice (y). According to Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002), a causal relationship exists if: i) *the cause precedes the effect*, ii) *the cause is related to the effect*, and iii) *no other plausible explanation is found*. Bollen (1989) focuses on the three components respectively: *direction*, *association* and *isolation*. With respect to these components, the cross sectional correlation design that I have chosen in this study has certain weaknesses; even if correlation among the variables is demonstrated through the conducted analyses, this does not prove causation, since the correlation design does not meet the criterion of *directionality of influence* (Bollen, 1989). Direction of influence means that the cause precedes the effect with respect to time, but in the cross-sectional design, information about both cause and effect is gathered in one point in time. In addition, the correlation design provides relatively weak abilities to establish *isolation*, compared to the classical experimental design. However, in this study a classical experimental design was considered an inappropriate design, as the *external validity* of the study would have suffered. Nevertheless, the weakness in the directionality argument can be strengthened based on *theoretical* and *logical grounds*. When choosing to apply a cross-sectional design to address the theory-testing research question of this thesis, I relied on *a priori knowledge* to presume the order of the variables. This does, however, constitute a weakness to the study.

Construct validity is described as the most fundamental form of validity and refers to the extent to which an operationalization of a concept, in fact, measures the concept it claims to measure (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Construct validity refers to whether or not there is a fit between the *theoretical* and *operational* level, or in other words: Do we really measure what we intend to measure? Construct validity thus constitutes an essential condition to ensure meaningful, interpretable and generalizeable results.

Face validity is a sub-version of construct validity, and refers to the intuitive equivalence between theoretical and operational definitions of the variables. In this study, where I have not applied established, validated scales to measure the variables, it is essential to evaluate the variables' face validity. When conducting studies with exploratory aspects, or novel approaches (as in this study), inspecting the existing empirical contributions where related concepts are included constitutes one way to assess the face validity of the variables. The independent variables included in the regression analyses were grouped into three sets, to increase the probability of actually measuring managers' access to external resources, internal resources and time-related resources respectively. If I had included only one item to assess each of these kinds of resources, the risk of actually measuring something other what I intended to measure would be substantially higher. Hence, the study's construct validity would have been lower.

Another sub-version of construct validity is the *nomological validity*, which describes the fit between the data patterns obtained and the theoretical predictions about the expected data patterns. In this study, I found only moderate support for the proposed causal relationship subject to testing; hence the theoretically predicted data pattern and the empirically revealed data pattern deviated to a certain extent. This could indicate that the nomological validity of the study is weak. However, in later sections of this thesis I introduce and discuss substantial theoretical explanations, based on findings revealed in later parts of this study, as well as theoretically-based arguments to explain the moderate support revealed for the proposed hypotheses.

A study's **external validity** refers to the extent to which the findings in a study can be generalized beyond the setting and selection included in the present study ((Yin, 2003). Thus, the question of interest is: to what other groups, units or populations (Caporaso, 1995) can the findings revealed in this study be extended? The broadness of sample applied in the statistical analyses in this study was previously said to represent a strength to the study's external validity. However, in the introductory chapter of this thesis I presented a number of arguments as to why it is important to recognize the impact of the surrounding cultural context when conducting studies of managers and time. These

arguments are also valid with respect to the study's external validity. More specifically, this means that I should be cautious about generalizing the findings revealed in this study to managers working in other cultural contexts. To what extent the findings revealed can be generalized to a Nordic cultural context, for instance, is an interesting question worth discussing. Perhaps it is even an interesting direction for future research, but in this thesis I will argue that there is reason to be restrictive when generalizing the findings across cultural context, given the importance cultural context has been identified to have. However, within a Norwegian cultural context, I will argue that the external validity of the study is good, and the findings can be interpreted as indicating patterns that tend to be typical for Norwegian managers.

With respect to the external validity of the study, it is also interesting to discuss to what extent the findings revealed in this study are typical for people other than managers, for instance other employees. As I have discussed in previous sections, the sample consists of nearly 70% general managers and middle managers. This means that the majority of the respondents were managers *and* subordinates at the same time; they were at the middle level of their organizations. Although in this survey the respondents were addressed as *managers* - hence their managerial roles were evoked - there might still be reason to assume that the findings to a certain extent could be generalized to other workers in the organizations as well, even if they had no managerial responsibilities.

4.6.2 Reliability

Reliability is a necessary condition for validity. Contrary to validity, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measures, whereas validity is concerned with how well the construct is defined by the measures (Hair, Anderson, & Tatham, 1987). Three basic methods can be used to assess the reliability of measurement scales in quantitative studies: test-retest, internal consistency and alternative forms (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

In this study, I rely on measures made at *one point in time*; hence I have not applied the *test-retest* method to assess the reliability of the data. Instead the normal procedure to assess internal consistency by using Cronbach's Alpha (α) was employed³⁷. Cronbach's α is an important and widely used measure of reliability (Cronbach, 1951, 1984, cited in (Pett et al., 2003). All the factors revealed through the factor analysis consisted of five items each and exhibited satisfactory internal consistency with Cronbach's α ranging from 0.682 to 0.704. The reliability of a study is also related to whether or not another researcher would arrive at the same conclusions when following the same procedures. The procedures I have applied are thus quite accurately presented to enable others to, if not replicate, at least assess the reliability of the study.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, the methodology underlying the empirical study was reported. The research questions guiding the study address different aspects of managers' handling of time. The questions are different in scope and nature; the first research question required an explorative and open methodological approach, whereas the second research question aimed at testing a proposed causal relationship described in the existing literature. In the first sections of this chapter, various requirements stemming from the research questions were discussed before the research design chosen was presented. To address the first research question, an explorative design was found to be appropriate. More specifically, explorative factor analysis was found to constitute a suitable methodological method to address this first question.

³⁷ See Section 5.2 for a detailed discussion of the reliability of the factors revealed through the EFA. Cronbach's α may vary from 0 (indicating no correlation at all) to 1 (indicating perfect or complete correlation). The higher the correlation between the items, the higher the value the Cronbach's α is. Although there are no definite guidelines, values of 0.6 to 0.7 are deemed as a lower limit of acceptability (Hair, et al., op cit; (Nunnally & 2006)). However, the size of the coefficient α is not only influenced by the strength of the correlation between the items included in the factor, but also by the *number of items* included. Increasing the number of items in a set (factor) will hence increase the coefficient α , even when the correlations are small.

With respect to the second research question, arguments for a cross-sectional (correlation) design were presented. More specifically, stepwise, multiple regression analyses were found to constitute a suitable method to address the second question.

The empirical data, which stem from an extensive leadership survey among 3172 Norwegian managers, was presented and discussed with respect to procedures and challenges of defining the population, drawing a selection and gathering the data. As the empirical data applied in this study was gathered by other researchers and for purposes other than this study, the most prevailing advantages and challenges related to applying such data were discussed. Finally, the chapter ended with a discussion of the study's validity and reliability.

5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings revealed through the statistical analyses. The chapter is structured as follows: *First*, the results of an exploratory factor analysis are presented. The factor analysis was guided by the following research question: “*What do Norwegian managers perceive relevant to pay attention to when managing their time at work?*”

Secondly, findings revealed through multiple regression analyses are presented. The regression analyses were conducted to address the second research question posted in this thesis; *Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers’ perceived room for exercising choice, and if so, how and to what extent?* This research question was transformed into the set of empirically testable hypotheses in Chapter Three. The hypotheses were tested and resulted in the findings presented in this chapter.

Finally, in the last part of this chapter, the regression analyses performed to address Research Question Two were also performed in a *sub-selection*, that was limited to managers working in the *finance sector*. The rationale for conducting the regression analyses in a finance-sector subset was to get an indication of to what extent managers working in this sector resemble the average manager in the total sample. The reason for including these analyses is that in later chapters of this thesis I report findings from a qualitative study carried out in the finance sector to address the phenomenon of interest from a different theoretical and methodological approach. Hence, the analyses are performed to address the level of coherence between the quantitative and the qualitative data applied in this thesis.

5.2 What do Norwegian managers pay attention to when prioritizing time at work?

To identify what Norwegian managers pay attention to when making choices and prioritizing their time at work, and consequently to answer one of the research questions raised and presented earlier in this thesis, exploratory factor analyses were conducted. Factor analysis allows the researcher to condense a large set of variables or to scale items down to a smaller, more manageable number of dimensions or factors (Pett et al., 2003).

The following question formed the basis for the EFA conducted here:

*"There is a lot to pay attention to when you make decisions and prioritize your time as a manager.
To what extent do you pay attention to the following factors in your job as manager?"*

The respondents were presented with a list of 31 items and asked to rate the extent to which they pay attention to each of the items when prioritizing their time at work. An ordinal level scale³⁸ was used, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent), in addition to 5 (can not answer/not applicable)³⁹.

The 31 items listed in Table 5.1 below represent a broad variety of factors that managers possibly pay attention to when prioritizing time. A principal component analysis⁴⁰ of the 31 items was conducted.

38 An ordinal scale is a scale where the alternative answers are mutually exclusive and ranked (Hellevik, 2002). This means that although it is meaningful to say that one alternative is higher or lower than another, we cannot say *how much* higher or lower one alternative is compared to another.

39 The original scale ranged from 1 (to a great extent) to 4 (not at all). The scale was reversed to obtain a more pedagogical form, where a higher number indicates higher attention paid.

⁴⁰The theoretical method is called *factor analysis (FA)*, but when extracting factors statistically, methods such as principal component analysis (PCA) are often used. The difference between PCA and FA is that FA seeks to explain the common variance, while in PCA all the variance of the variable is explained, both the common and the unique variance. However, in most cases the results of PCA and FA harmonise ((Hair, 1995)

Table 5.1: The items included in the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items included in the factor analysis	
1 The employee representatives and unions	17 Your future career
2 Customers/clients/ visitors	18 Your professional reputation in the industry
3 Your superior(s)	19 The organizations' partners
4 Unwritten rules regulating how things are done in the organization	20 Your reputation in your social circles
5 Unforeseen circumstances	21 Management consultants
6 Competitors	22 Global competition
7 Other managers in the organization	23 New technology
8 The formal work instructions and procedures	24 The organizations' financial situation
9 Suggestions from subordinates	25 Ethical standards
10 Your marriage/relationship	26 Safety conditions in the organization
11 Your leisure activities	27 The environment outside the organization
12 Owner demands to the organization	28 Corporate social responsibility
13 Your personal reputation in the media	29 The work place environment
14 Other departments in the organization	30 The well-being of your co-workers
15 Events in the political environment	31 Labor supply
16 The organization's reputation in the media	

Despite the importance of *factor retention decisions* and extensive research on methods for making retention decisions⁴¹, there is *no consensus* on the appropriate criteria to use (Hayton et al., 2004). However, there is consensus on the importance of examining the *theoretical comprehensibility* of the different solutions, in addition to different statistical methods. This implies that: i) more than one statistical method should be applied to decide the number of factors to retain, ii) the methods applied may not suggest identical solutions, and iii) the factors' theoretical comprehensibility should be examined.

In this study the following criteria are applied: 1) *Kaiser's criteria*; 2) the *cumulative percentage of variance extracted by the factors*; 3) *Cattell's Scree test*, and finally, 4) the

⁴¹ A number of criteria are available to assist these decisions. Different methods of specifying the number of factors to retain often lead to different solutions (Hayton, Allen, & Scarpello, 2004).

factors' theoretical comprehensibility. Each criterion and its suggested solutions will be discussed in the following sections.

1) Kaiser's criterion: The results of the EFA revealed 8 *factors* with *latent roots* or *eigenvalues* above 1, which according to the widely used Kaiser's criterion is the recommended limit for retaining a factor⁴² (Kaiser, 1960, cited in (Pett et al., 2003). If I base the retention of factors solely on the Kaiser's criterion, the results indicated that a total of *eight factors to be retained*. Kaiser's criterion may, however, overestimate or underestimate the true number of factors. According to Lance, Butts, and Michels (2006) most simulation study evidence suggests the Kaiser criterion is a conservative criterion, which usually *overestimates* the true number of factors, sometimes severely so. Hence, additional methods should be applied to determine the number of factors to retain.

2) The cumulative percentage of variance extracted by the factors is another criterion for determining the number of factors to retain. The cumulative percentage of variance in the factors in this study is presented in Table 5.3 below. The table further shows that 53.5% of the variance was explained by the eight factors initially extracted based on Kaiser's criteria. There are no definite guidelines for the amount of variance that should be explained to retain or reject a factor (Pett et al., 2003). However, Hair et al. (1995) argued that factors that explain 5% or more of the variance should be retained. In this study, it means that 3 *factors* should be retained, as 3 factors met the 5% criterion.

3) Cattell's Scree Test is another commonly used method for determining the number of factors to retain. Cattell's Scree Test involves examination of a plot of the eigenvalues for breaks or discontinuities⁴³. The criterion for factor retention is to identify the break point

⁴² Kaiser's criterion is also the default criterion in SPSS.

⁴³ The rationale for this test is that a few major factors account for the most variance, resulting in a steep "cliff" as these factors are identified first, followed by a shallow "scree" describing the small and relatively consistent variance accounted for by the numerous minor factors. Cattell's Scree Test plots the components as the X axis and the corresponding eigenvalues as the Y axis. When one moves to the right (toward later components) the eigenvalues drop.

at which the scree begins and retain only the factors above the scree. According to Stevens (1996), the scree plot forms a reliable criterion for factor retention in studies with 200 or more respondents. In this study $N = 3172$, hence a scree test was conducted and assumed to give a reliable indication of how many factors to retain.

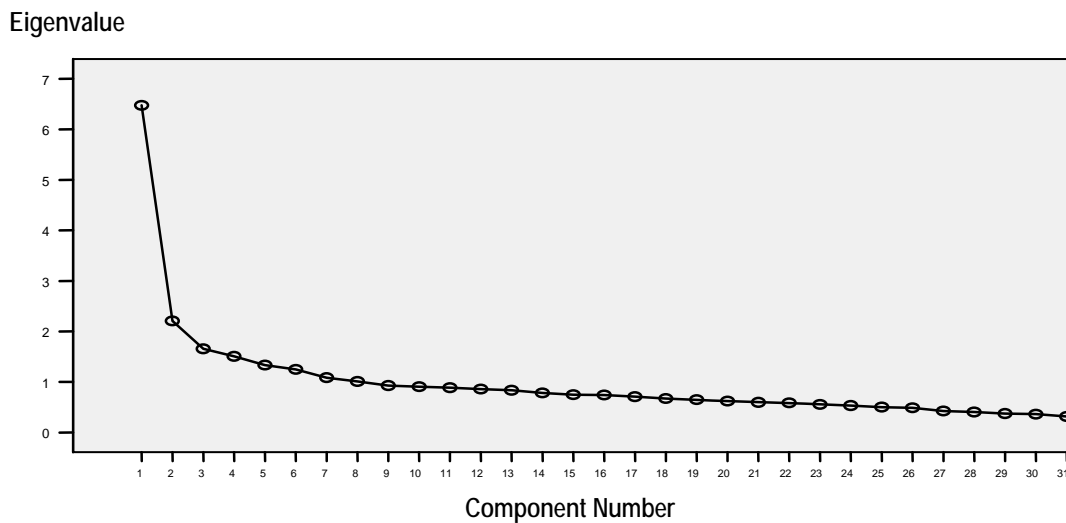


Figure 5.1 Scree test

The Scree Test criterion often results in fewer factors than the Kaiser criterion (Stevens, 1996). From Figure 5.1, we see that this is also the case in this analysis, as the Scree Plot here indicated a much more limited number of factors than the Kaiser criterion did. Figure 5.1 shows that the curve starts to flatten out after the second factor, and flatten out even more after the third factor. However, it is not a very sharp break. A strict interpretation of Cattell's criterion (retain only factors *above* the breaking point on the curve) would imply retaining only two factors. However, Pett et al. (Pett et al., 2003) argue that if the retained factors only account for a minor percentage of the variance, one should also consider including the factor that is found *at* the breaking point. To decide whether or not to include this factor, Pett et al. (op cit) stated that the loadings of the items on the factors should be examined to determine the solution that makes the most theoretical and intuitive sense. Summarized, we see that the result of the Scree Test is not unambiguous; instead it indicates that *either two or three factors should be retained*.

4) *The factors' theoretical comprehensibility* should, in addition to different statistical methods, also be evaluated. As the statistical methods applied here suggest divergent answers to the question of how many factors to retain, the theoretical comprehensibility of a both a *two-factor* and a *three-factor* solution was examined⁴⁴. The item loadings, as well as the theoretical substance of each potential factor were assessed. In other words, an assessment of the: i) factors' theoretical substance, ii) their item loadings, and iii) the results of the statistical methods applied (as accounted for and discussed above) altogether form the basis for deciding the final number of factors to retain.

Test of a two-factor solution

When the two-factor and three-factor solution are tested, then both a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and a Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) are conducted and their results compared, as recommended by Pett et al. (Pett et al., 2003). The matrixes, produced by the PCA and the PAF respectively, produced similar patterns where the items tended to cluster in a homogenous manner. Yet, the best fit appeared in the PCA matrix. To achieve a simple structure and improve the theoretical clarity of the factors, the factors were rotated⁴⁵. Since a factor correlation analysis revealed that the factors were positively correlated, oblimin⁴⁶ rotation is applied.

An initial principal component analysis with the number of factors set to 2 revealed two very wide-ranging and broad factors: One of the factors was mainly associated with organizational aspects, whereas the other was associated with various aspects of the

⁴⁴ A four-factor solution was also tested, as the Kaiser criterion indicated a larger number of factors. The results were theoretically comprehensible to a certain extent, but the pattern of item loadings did not form a satisfactory basis for computing reliable variables. Based on these results, combined with an evaluation of the results of the scree test and the amount of explained variance by the fourth factor, a four-factor solution was rejected.

⁴⁵Rotation is a way of maximizing high loadings and minimizing low loadings so that the simplest possible structure is achieved and hence produces a pattern easier to interpret. There are two basic types of rotation: orthogonal (where the factors are assumed to be uncorrelated) and oblique (where the factors are assumed to be correlated, which is probably most likely the case for most measures (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995).

⁴⁶ According to Tabachnick and Fidell, (2001) oblique rotations result in solutions that are more difficult to interpret, describe and report, but these allow the factors to be correlated. In practice, the orthogonal and oblique approaches result in very similar solutions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Here the analysis was also tested with oblique rotation. The results were *not* notably divergent, as predicted by Tabachnick & Fidell.

individual manager. 28 of the 31 items included were found to load on one or both factors. As the list of 31 items had been constructed to cover a broad variety of factors, the high number of items found to load on one or both factors was an indication of the broadness of the factors. The two factors were thus evaluated and found too general and wide-ranging to offer relevant information.

Since neither of the explained variance criterion nor a theoretical (substantial) assessment of the factors supported retaining two factors, a *two-factor solution was not pursued further*.

Preliminary test of a three-factor solution

A principal component analysis with the number of factors set to 3 revealed three theoretically consistent factors. The analysis further revealed a distinct pattern of item-loadings, where a total of 28 items (of the initial 31 items presented in Table 5.1) loaded on one of three factors. However, when I set the number of factors to three, each factor was more consistently specified by the items loading on it. Some item-loadings were low however, and thus excluded from further analysis. The 5 highest-loading items on each factor were included⁴⁷ as three factors computed. The items were added without differential weighting when used in further analysis. Cronbach's α was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the dimensions. The result of the three-factor solution is presented in Table 5.2 below.

⁴⁷ This means that 15 of the initial 31 items presented in Table 6.1 are included when the three factors were computed.

Table 5.2 Factors Norwegian managers pay attention to when prioritizing time at work

Items	Factor 1: Internal conditions	Factor 2: Personal interests	Factor 3: External environment	Cronbach's α
1. The workplace environment	0,798			
2. The well-being of your co-workers	0,719			
3. Safety conditions in the organization	0,601			
4. The employee representatives and unions	0,525			
5. The formal work instructions and procedures	0,499			0,704
6. Your reputation in your social circles		0,732		
7. Your leisure activities		0,665		
8. Your future career		0,647		
9. Your marriage/relationship		0,633		
10. Your professional reputation in the industry		0,555		0,742
11. New technology			0,612	
12. The organization's reputation in the media			0,610	
13. Events in the political environment			0,509	
14. Corporate social responsibility			0,438	
15. The environment outside the organization			0,391	0,682
% of total variance	21,010	7,581	5,117	
Eigenvalue	6,513	2,350	1,586	
N	3147	3139	3116	

The theoretical substantial foundation and reliability of each factor will sections be examined and discussed in the following.

5.2.1 Factor 1: Internal conditions

If we consider the theoretical content of the items loading on Factor 1, they are all associated with various aspects of the *internal conditions* in the organizations. All items relate to different aspects of the internal working-conditions in the organization, ranging

from more formal aspects, such as instructions and procedures, to more informal aspects, such as the well-being of the workers and the workplace environment. Another common feature amongst the items is that they all reflect various aspects of the internal situation in the organization in a collective way: the items are concerned with matters that in different ways (and to different degrees) are relevant to multiple actors in the organization. For instance, Item 1: the workplace environment and Item 2: the well-being of subordinates, concern people at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, Item 4: employee representatives and unions are collectively oriented by definition, as their job is to take care of the employees' interests.

All the items share a concern for the employees, a direct concern for their well-being and their safety, and more indirectly, a concern for the workplace environment and the employee representatives and unions (whose job is to ensure that the employee's interests are looked after). The formal work instructions and routines can also be viewed as a concern for the employees: adequate routines enhance the employee's confidence by providing a safe setting, where employees know what to do and when and how to do it.

In sum, the first factor was found to consist of a theoretically consistent substance with five items, which all regard the internal conditions in the organization.

Although the factor has a reasonable theoretical content, its' reliability must also be assessed before the factor can be retained. As shown in Table 5.2, Factor One's Cronbach's α ⁴⁸ value was 0,704. Although there are no definite guidelines, Nunnally (1994) recommends that the alpha-values should be app. 0, 7 or above to be satisfactory. Hence, Factor 1 has *acceptable reliability*.

⁴⁸ Cronbach's alpha represents the proportion of total variance in a given scale that can be attributed to a common source (DeVellis, 2003). It is also defined as the estimated correlation of the given scale with another scale of the same length from the universe of possible items (Kline, 1986, cited in Pett et al., 2003:185). Cronbach's coefficient alpha is intended for use on items scored on a continuum, i.e., ordinal level of measurement. In the analyses conducted here, the items were scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 5. The method was thus found suited to this study.

Summary Factor 1

Based on the above evaluation presented above, the factors' theoretical content and its reliability were found to be satisfactory according to conventional guidelines. Factor 1 was thus retained from the EFA. Based on an assessment of the theoretical contents of the items that form Factor 1, it has been labeled **Internal Conditions**.

5.2.2 Factor 2: The managers' personal interests

Table 5.2 shows that all items in Factor 2 start with the word "*your*". This undoubtedly indicates how the managers themselves and their individual interests are the core of the items forming the second factor. All of the 5 items focus on the manager's individual personal interest in different aspects. Some of the items are concerned with the manager's personal life, such as the managers' marriage/relationship and their leisure activities, whereas other items are more concerned with the manager's individual professional interests, such as his or her professional reputation and future career. Although the items focus on different aspects of the managers' life and interests, they all share a common focus on the manager as an individual. The factor may also be related to remarks about selfish managers, with great concerns for their own well-being. Without going more in-depth into this here, I have clearly identified a theoretically consistent content in all items forming the second factor. Cronbach's α for factor 2 was 0,742, which is satisfactory.

Summary Factor 2:

Based on the assessment presented above, where both the factors' theoretical content and its reliability were found to be satisfactory according to conventional guidelines, Factor 2 was retained from the EFA. Based on an assessment of the theoretical contents of the items that form Factor 2, it has been labeled the managers' own individual interests.

5.2.3 Factor 3: The organization's external environment

As shown in Table 5.2, all the items loading on Factor 3 regarded different aspects of the organizations external environment or the organizations' interaction with various external factors. The items include various external aspects, which can be argued to influence the organizations in different ways. Some items may influence the organizations on a higher level, such as for instance Item 13: *Events in the political environment* (that can be assumed to have a more indirect effect on the organization's daily work). Other items may also affect the daily work in a more direct manner, such as for instance Item 15: *The environment outside the organization*. Making sure that the work in the organization does not damage the environment outside the organization may influence the daily routines in organizations directly. Yet, other items may influence the organizations both directly and indirectly. Item 11: *New technology* may, for instance, influence the work in many organizations directly (for instance if the organization starts to use the new technology in their production) as well as indirectly (for instance if the organization's competitors start to use new technology that influences their cost structure and hence the competition in the field). Despite possible differences related to level, the five items loading on the third factor still share a distinct underlying dimension; they are all related to various aspects of the organizations' external environment.

The Cronbach's α of Factor 3 was 0,682. The alpha value of Factor 3 thus indicates a reliability that was satisfactory according to conventional criteria.

Summary Factor 3:

Based on the assessment presented above, where both the factors' theoretical content and its reliability were found to be satisfactory according to conventional guidelines, Factor 3 was retained from the EFA. Based on an assessment of the theoretical contents of the five items that form Factor 3, the factor has been labeled The organizations' external environment.

5.2.4 The relative importance of the three factors

Although the EFA revealed three factors, which Norwegian managers stated they paid attention to when prioritizing their time, the factors did not receive equal attention from the managers. In the survey, the managers responding rated *to what extent* they paid attention to each of the items when making choices and prioritizing time at work. Five items were included in each factor. The items were not weighted when the factors were computed. The factor score was calculated as the mean score of the five items included in each factor. An ordinal level scale was used, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent), to 5 (can not answer/not applicable). Hence, the higher score a factor had, the greater attention the factor was (allegedly) given when Norwegian managers prioritized their time at work. Even though an ordinal scale was applied to measure the variables, I have calculated the mean score of each factor to get an indication of to what extent the managers paid attention to each of the factors. The mean score is presented in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.3 The factors' relative importance

Factors:	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Internal conditions	3151	3,06**	,479
External environment	3133	2,54**	,542
Personal interests	3144	2,37**	,546

** The mean scores were significantly different for all three factors

Table 5.3 reveals that the managers pay greatest attention to internal conditions in the organization (mean = 3,06), somewhat less attention to the external environment (mean = 2,54) and least attention to their own personal interests (mean = 2,37). In further exploratory analyses I revealed statistically significant differences related to the managers' *age* and *gender*. An overview of relationship between the managers' age and the level of attention they report to pay to each of the factors is presented in Figure 5.2 below⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ The y-axis shows the level of attention the managers paid to each of the factors (the mean score was calculated for each age category). The x-axis shows the managers' age, ranging from 24 to 66.

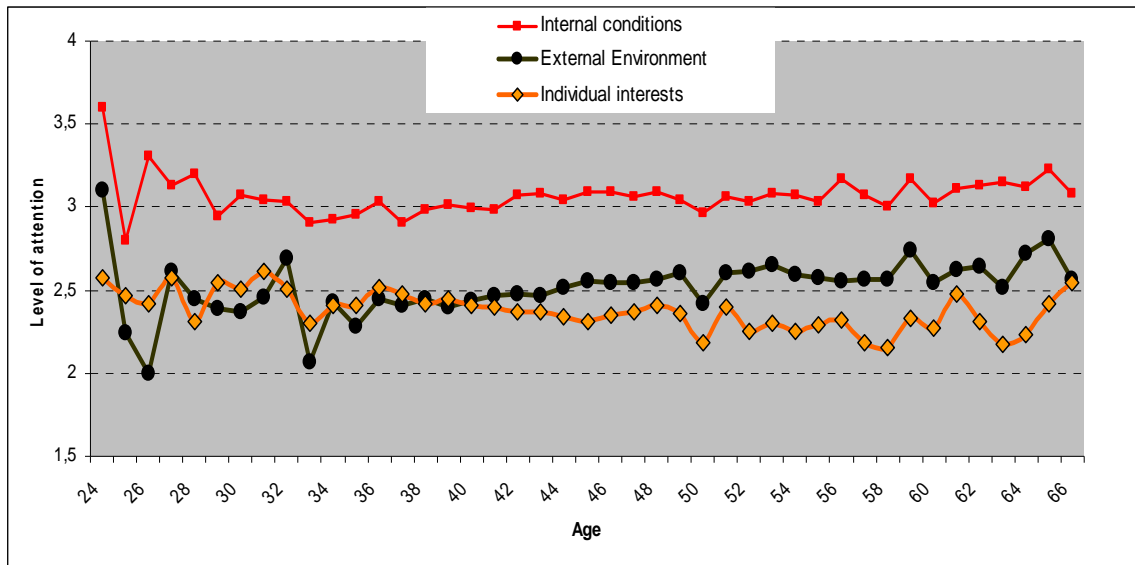


Figure 5.2 Level of attention paid to the revealed factors

Figure 5.2 reveals that managers of all ages paid most attention to the *internal conditions* in the organization. However, the figure also shows that the amount of attention the managers pay to the internal environment varied between managers of different ages. More specifically, we see that managers in their mid-thirties reported paying less attention to the internal conditions than managers of any other age. From Figure 5.2, we see that the curve dropped just below three for managers between approximately 33 and 39 years.

Moreover, with respect to the level of attention which Norwegian managers reported paying to the organization's *external environment* and their *individual interests*, Figure 5.2 reveals an interesting picture: We see that for the younger managers (up until the managers are in their late thirties), which of the two factors the managers reported paying the greatest attention to varied. However, when the managers turn approximately forty, they consistently reported paying more attention to the organizations' *external environment* than to their *own interests* when they prioritized their time at work. But, as the managers approached their age of retirement (from approx. 64 years), we see that the managers' own interests were given more attention again.

Gender differences

Through comparing mean scores for the factors differences between male and female managers were discovered. The differences are reported in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4 Gender differences

	Male Managers		Female Managers	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Internal conditions	3.05	.471	3.14	.501
External environment	2.54	.531	2.57	.584
Individual interests	2.38	.532	2.34	.598
Valid N (listwise)	2440		636	

We see that the factors were rated in the same order by female and male managers, but that the female managers paid greater attention to the *internal conditions* in the organizations and less attention to their *own interests* than male managers did. However, the differences were modest.

To get a more detailed impression of to what extent the responding managers pay attention to the organizations' internal conditions when prioritizing their time, I combined age and gender in Figure 5.3. The figure shows the level of attention paid to internal conditions by male and female managers respectively.

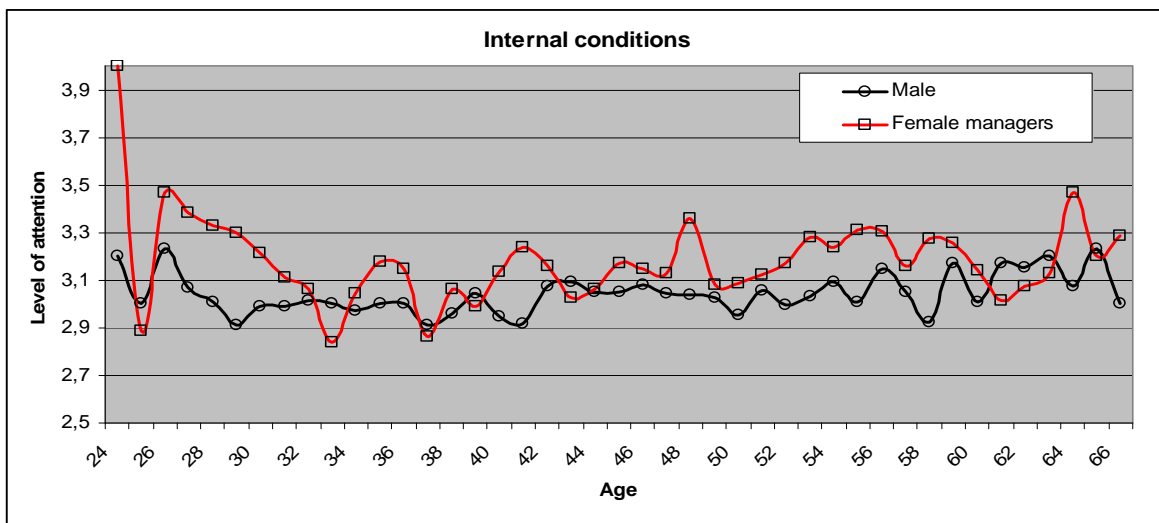


Figure 5.3 Level of attention paid to internal conditions

From Table 5.4, we see that the female managers generally reported paying more attention to the internal conditions than the male managers did, except in certain age categories: among managers in their early thirties and in their early sixties, male managers reported paying greater attention to the organization's internal conditions than the female managers did.

Furthermore, I was also interested in investigating the differences between male and female managers of different ages with respect to the amount of attention they paid to their own interest. This is illustrated in Figure 5.4 below.

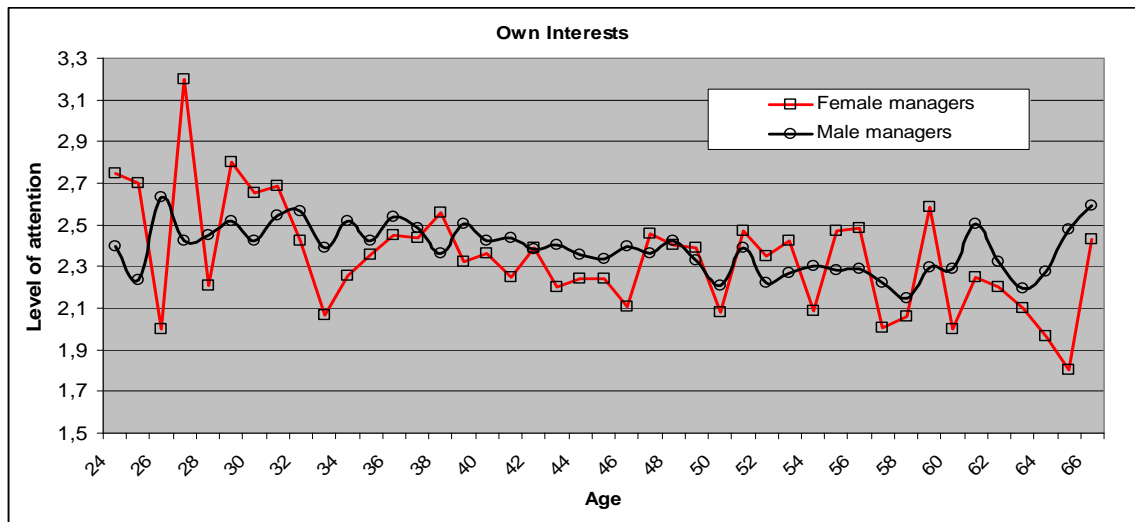


Figure 5.4 Level of attention paid to own interests

Figure 5.3 reveals that the differences among male and female managers were noticeably larger among the youngest and oldest managers. More specifically, we see that among the youngest managers (below approx. 30 years), the female managers tended to pay more attention to their own interests than the male managers did, whereas among the oldest managers, the situation was quite the opposite; among managers above approx. 60 years, the male managers tended to pay more attention to their own interests than the female managers did.

Results based on self-reports

The factor analyses and their results as presented in the above sections were based on analyses of managers' *self-reports*. Although the use of self-reports is discussed more thoroughly in the method chapter, I also find it worth commenting here, where the results are presented. The basis for the EFA presented earlier, is the managers' *own opinions* about what they pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize time. This is particularly relevant to keep in mind when studying the results of the EFA and the relative importance of the three factors. The results express what factors *the managers claim to pay attention to* when they make choices and prioritize their time. However, the results do *not* provide any objective measures of what Norwegian managers actually do pay attention to when prioritizing their time. Neither do the results give any objectively provable level of attention that managers pay attention to each factor; instead the results indicate the level of attention the managers *claim to pay to these factors*. There are several reasons to assume that the managers' self reports may deviate from others' reports on the same phenomenon. First, based on Argyris & Schön's (1978) work about theory-in-use and expressed theory, there is reason to assume some discrepancy between what the managers *say* they pay attention to and what they *actually* pay attention to when they make decisions and prioritize their time. Secondly, there may also be a discrepancy between what managers claim to pay attention to and what their subordinates (if they were asked) would say that their managers paid attention to, for instance. Nevertheless, I still find it interesting to analyze what managers report to pay attention to when they prioritize their time, as I believe it can be viewed as an interesting indicator of what Norwegian managers consider *relevant* to attend. The extent to which the managers actually are successful in attending to these factors is an intriguing question, but it is also a question beyond the scope of this study.

5.2.5 Summary of the exploratory factor analysis

Through an EFA, a set of three theoretically consistent factors, which Norwegian managers pay attention to when making choices and prioritizing time at work, has been revealed. The factors' reliability was found to be satisfactory according to conventional

guidelines. The factors revealed included: i) *internal conditions in the organization*, ii) *the managers' own personal interests* and iii) *the organization's external environment*.

The factors' relative, perceived importance was assessed. The managers evaluated the *internal conditions* in the organization as most important to pay attention to, followed by the organizations' *external environment* and thirdly the managers' *personal interests*. In the next chapter, the results of the EFA will be discussed.

5.3 Test of the hypotheses

The second research question in this thesis asks: *Does access to various resources affect Norwegian managers' handling of time, if so how and to what extent?*

To investigate this question empirically, the research question was in Chapter 3 transformed into a set of empirically testable hypotheses. The overall logic underpinning the hypotheses is that resource shortage is emphasized in theory as a central and essential constraint in many managers' jobs. Consequently, managers' access to various resources is assumed to *remove some of the constraints* from the managers' jobs, and thus *enlarge the managers' perceived room for exercising choice*. In the following sections, the hypotheses will be compared to the findings revealed through multiple regression analyses.

Stepwise multiple regression analyses were applied to examine how the models' explanatory power develops when different sets of independent variables were included in the model. The sets of independent variables were constructed based on theory as reviewed and discussed in Chapter 2.

5.3.1 The Independent Variables: Access to Resources

The three sets of independent variables incorporated in the regression analyses⁵⁰ included the managers' (perceived) access to: 1) *external resources* (measured by four items), 2) *internal, interpersonal resources* (measured by three items), and 3) *time-related resources* (measured by two items). As described in the previous methods chapter, an ordinal level scale was applied for all the independent variables, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*to a great extent*), to 5 (*can not answer/ not applicable*)⁵¹.

The first set of independent variables consisted of different external resources, traditionally assumed as being essential for managers to have access to, and included the following items: i) *Access to financial resources*: the extent to which the manager is in a financially acceptable situation to perform his job, ii) *Access to professional advice*: the extent to which the manager has co-workers to consult for qualified, professional advice, iii) *The managers' possibilities to hire people if/when necessary*: the extent to which the manager has opportunities to increase the number of employees, for instance in particularly busy periods, and iv) *Access to qualified labor* (the labor supply) within the manager' professional field: how problematic or easy it is to find qualified labor.

The second set of independent variables consisted of what can be referred to as “softer”, interpersonal resources related to the managers' perceived access to personal support from various sources. The third set included following items: i) *Access to personal support from superiors*: the extent to which the managers experience having support on a personal level from their superior(s), ii) *Level of support from family and friends*: the extent to which the managers experience having support from others outside the job, and iii) *Having colleagues to trust and confide in*: to what extent the managers have co-workers that they feel they can talk to in confidence and/or confide in.

⁵⁰ Descriptive statistics for all variables is included in Appendix X.

⁵¹ The scale is reversed to obtain a more pedagogical form, where a higher number indicates that higher attention was paid. The original scale ranged from 1 (to a great extent) to 4 (not at all). The value 5 was set to *system missing*. Only a negligible number of cases were lost due to this.

The third set of independent variables is concerned with managers' access to resources related to the managers' time and included the following items: i) Freedom to set one's own schedule: the extent to which the manager in her job has a perception of being able to make autonomous priorities and influence or control her own daily agenda, and ii) The managers' objective amount of available time at work, the managers' average working hours.

Control variables In addition to the independent variables, three control variables were also included in the analyses. The control variables include: *industry, gender and age*⁵². With respect to industry, there are 11 different categories. The categories and number of respondents within each category are described in the Appendix.

Multicollinearity

Whenever two or more independent variables used in regression analyses are not independent but correlated, the question of multicollinearity arises (Schroeder, Sjoquist & Stephan, 1986)⁵³. With multicollinearity, the statistical estimation techniques are incapable of sorting out the separate independent variables' effects on the dependent variable⁵⁴. Hence, the correlation among the independent variables was assessed before they were included in the multiple regression analysis, and the analysis revealed that the independent variables were not independent, instead most were significantly correlated at the 0.01 level. However, although statistically significant, none of the correlations were higher than 0.401 and only three correlations were higher than 0.3. This indicates that *multicollinearity does not represent a problem* in these analyses (see the Appendix for an overview and discussion of the correlations among the independent variables).

⁵² Managerial level was initially also included as control variable. However, managerial level was not found significant in any of the analyses and was omitted as control variable.

⁵³ Perfect multicollinearity occurs when the independent variables are perfectly correlated ($r = 1.00$).

⁵⁴ Another consequence of multicollinearity is that the standard errors are likely to increase.

5.3.2 The dependent variables

Three different dependent variables were included in the regression analyses. These independent variables are three situations in which managers *exercise choice* regarding how to balance their time at work. More specifically, three choice-situations that are emphasized as essential to managers and their organizations in existing theory were included as dependent variables. Each of the dependent variables is presented in the following sections.

5.3.2.1 Dependent Variable 1: Daily Work vs. Long-Term Planning

As discussed in Chapter 3, managers often struggle with striking a satisfying balance between *daily work* and *long-term planning*. Although the boundary between the two may not always be easily recognizable, it can still be argued that they are by nature different, and that the main difference regards the time horizon considered (Staudenmayer et al., 2002). Managers' sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning can be viewed as reflecting the managers' handling of time.

The managers' sense of being able to balance long-term activities and daily work was measured by the following statement: *How often do you feel that daily work causes you to give insufficient attention to long-term planning?* A five-point Likert scale was applied, ranging from 1 (= never) to 4 (= often), and 5 (= cannot answer/not applicable).

A great majority of the managers in this study reported that they *sometimes* (48 %) or *often* (35.6%) felt that daily work causes them to give too little attention to long-term activities. The balance between long-term tasks and daily work hence seems quite hard to strike: only 1.8% stated that they *never* felt that daily work causes them to give insufficient attention to long-term tasks (see Appendix X for descriptive statistics/frequencies for Dependent Variable 1).

5.3.2.2 Dependent Variable 2: Work/Life Balance

To be manager is often an absorbing job, which greedily can consume the managers' time at the expense of other parts of their lives. Thus, another essential choice-situation that managers face is *the balance between work and the rest of their lives*. Managers' choices and prioritizing of time at work are essential to their chances of striking a desired balance between life and work. Here, the managers' life/work balance was measured by the following statement: "*I am able to combine my job with a good life*". The same five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 as described above was applied.

A majority of the managers in the study expressed being fairly satisfied with their work/life balance; approx. three of four managers (75.2%) found this statement *quite correct* or *absolutely correct*, whereas only 3.6% stated that they felt *not at all* able to combine their job with a good life. (See the Appendix for descriptive statistics/frequencies for Dependent Variable 2).

5.3.2.3 Dependent Variable 3: Maintain Professional Competence

The third dependent variable included in this second part of the regression analyses, is related to whether or not the managers are able to allocate enough time to maintain their professional competence. Maintaining the managers' professional competence is essential not only to the managers themselves, but also to the organizations that depend upon the competence of their managers. The managers' ability to prioritize the maintenance of their professional competence was measured by the following statement: "*I am able to allocate enough time to stay professionally à jour, through attending courses, reading, etc*". As for the two previous dependent variables, a five-point Likert scale has also been applied in this analysis.

Approximately half of the managers in the study (50.8%) reported that it was *somewhat correct* that they feel able to allocate enough time to maintain professionally à jour through reading, attending courses etc. Only a very modest part of the managers (1,7%) stated that this was *absolutely correct*, whereas approx. three out of ten managers

(30.2%) reported that they were *not at all* able to allocate enough time to stay professionally à jour. (See the Appendix for descriptive statistics for Dependent Variable 3)

5.3.5 Results of the regression analyses

In the following, the results of the regression analyses are presented. The findings are then evaluated to the hypotheses developed in Chapter 3.

In Table 5.5 below, the effects of managers' access to various resources in three choice situations are presented. When interpreting the coefficients presented in the table, one should remember that in the first choice situation (daily work vs. long-term planning), the managers have rated how often they felt that daily work causes them to give *insufficient attention* to long-term planning. Hence, negative correlations indicate/reflect a positive effect on (an increase in) the managers' perceived room for exercising choice to balance daily work and long-term planning.

In the other two analyses, the managers responding have rated to what extent they feel able to: i) exercise choice in ways that are compatible with a good life and ii) find sufficient time to maintain their professional competence. Hence, negative correlations in these analyses indicate/reflect a negative effect (or a decrease in) the managers' perceived room for exercising choice to balance their time.

Table 5.5 The effect of resource accessibility on managers' perceived room for choice

	Daily work vs. long-term planning			Work/life balance			Stay professionally à jour		
	B ^b	Se. B	t	B	Se. B	t	B	Se. B	t
External resources									
Financial resources	-,031	,018	-1,744	,019	,018	1,027	,100**	,018	5,516
Professional advice from co-workers	-,027	,018	-1,467	,092**	,019	4,882	,029	,018	1,554
Hire people if necessary	-,035*	,015	-2,319	-,025	,015	-1,617	,012	,015	,833
Sufficient labor supply	-,048**	,016	-2,929	,060**	,017	3,613	,069**	,016	4,199
Internal, interpersonal resources									
Personal support from superiors	-,036*	,016	-2,227	,053**	,016	3,220	,006	,016	,391
Colleagues to trust and confide in	,020	,017	1,167	,038*	,018	2,137	,048**	,017	2,774
Support from family/ friends	,016	,017	,932	,184**	,018	10,370	,039*	,017	2,261
Time-related resources									
Set own schedule	-,111**	,018	-6,248	,148**	,018	8,109	,132**	,018	7,372
Average working hours	,011**	,002	6,017	-,020**	,002	-11,279	-,008**	,002	-4,313
Control variables^a									
Age	-,007**	,002	-4,274	,002	,002	1,272	,008**	,002	4,852
Gender	,086*	,036	2,395	-,114**	,037	-3,119	,017	,036	,483
Adjusted R²	,093			,167			,099		
N	3151			3160			3136		

^a Industry is included as control variable; see Appendix for an overview of the 11 industry categories.

^b** p < 0,01, * p < 0,05

Effects of managers' perceived access to external resources

Table 5.5 reveals that managers' access to financial resources was only significant in one of the three analyses; it significantly affects the managers' sense of being able to find time to uphold their professional competence. More specifically, this means that only Hypothesis 1b was supported, whereas neither 1a nor 1c received support. The results showed that the better the financial situation is, the more the managers are likely to report being able to find sufficient time to stay professionally à jour. However, this is not particularly surprising, as the question regarding to what extent the managers feel able to allocate sufficient time to retain their professional competence explicitly mentions activities that tend to cost quite a lot, for instance attending courses. Hence, the financial situation is obviously quite relevant. What may be viewed as somewhat more surprising is that managers' access to financial resources was *not* a significant predictor in any of the other analyses; neither the managers sense of being able to balance daily work and long-term planning, nor their sense of being able to combine their job with a good life was significantly influenced by the managers' access to financial resources. Summarized, this means that Hypotheses 1 a) and 1 c) were not supported, whereas *hypothesis 1b was supported*.

Managers' access to *professional advice* was also only found to be a statistically significant predictor in one of the three analyses; it significantly affects the extent to which managers have a sense of being able to combine their jobs with a good life (*work/life balance*). However, access to professional advice from colleagues was *not* a statistically significant predictor of to what extent managers are able to allocate sufficient time to maintain their professional competence, or balance their time between long-term activities and daily work. In Hypothesis 2 I predicted that access to such professional advice would represent a resource, which, if present, was expected to increase the managers' perceived room for exercising choice across all the three situations. However, the results revealed a different picture. Hence Hypothesis 2a and 2b were not supported, whereas *Hypothesis 2c was supported*.

Sufficient *labor supply* was the only external resource found to be a significant predictor in all the three analyses. This is in accordance with what I proposed in Hypotheses 4. Hence, *Hypotheses 4a, 4b and 4c were supported.*

In light of the significance revealed of sufficient labor supply, it is interesting to observe that whether a manager has or does not have the possibility to hire people if necessary was only found to be a significant predictor in one of the analyses. In Hypothesis 3, I predicted that if a manager had opportunities to hire more people if needed, this would increase the managers' perceived room for exercising choice, in terms of balancing daily work and long-term planning, finding sufficient time to stay professionally à jour and striking a satisfying work/life balance. However, the results presented in Table 5.5 revealed that such possibilities only influence the managers' perception of being able to balance daily work and long-term planning in a statistically significant manner. Thus, *Hypotheses 3b and 3c were not supported, whereas Hypothesis 3a was supported.*

The effects of access to internal interpersonal resources

When inspecting Table 5.5, we see that none of the internal, interpersonal resources were significant or insignificant across all three analyses; instead all were significant in some and insignificant in other analyses. More specifically, the findings revealed that managers' *personal support from their superiors* is a significant predictor of the managers' sense of being able to i) balance their time between daily work and long-term planning (as proposed in Hypothesis 5a), and ii) strike a satisfying work/life balance (as proposed in Hypothesis 5b). Hence, *Hypotheses 5a and 5b were supported, whereas Hypothesis 5c was not supported.*

Table 5.5 further revealed that if managers have colleagues to trust and confide in, this is a significant predictor of the managers' sense of being able to i) strike a satisfying work/life balance (as proposed in Hypothesis 6b) and ii) finding sufficient time to maintain their professional competence (as proposed in Hypothesis 6c). However, it was *not* a significant predictor of the managers' sense of being able to balance daily work and

long-term planning (as proposed in Hypothesis 6a). Thus, *Hypothesis 6a was not supported*, whereas *Hypotheses 6b and 6c were supported*.

The support managers receive from family and friends was also revealed as having a significant effect on the managers' expressed sense of being able to i) strike a satisfying work/life balance (as proposed in Hypothesis 7c) and ii) find sufficient time to maintain their professional competence (as proposed in Hypothesis 7b). However, this kind of support was not a significant predictor of the managers' sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning. Hence, *Hypothesis 7a was not supported*, whereas *Hypotheses 7b and 7c were supported*.

Effects of access to time-related resources

With respect to managers' access to time-related resources, Table 5.5 revealed that both the time-related resources had a significant effect (at 0, 01 level) on all the three dependent variables. This indicates that both the managers' objective amount of hours spent at work, and their perceived freedom to control own daily schedules were significant predictors of to what extent managers: i) experience that daily work causes them to give insufficient attention to long-term activities, ii) they are able to combine their jobs with good lives, and iii) are able to allocate sufficient time to stay professionally à jour.

More specifically, the results showed that if a manager has more freedom to set her own daily agenda, it is *less likely* that she, i) experiences that daily work causes her to give too little attention to long-term activities (as proposed in Hypothesis 9a). Moreover, control over own schedule also tends to increase, ii) the managers' perception of having a satisfying work/life balance (as proposed in Hypothesis 9b), and iii) to what extent they feel able to allocate a sufficient time to maintain their professional competence (as proposed in Hypothesis 9c). This is consistent with what we proposed in *Hypotheses 9a, 9b and 9c, which were consequently all supported*.

Interestingly enough, managers' average working hours were found to have an opposite effect on managers' sense of being able to balance between daily work and long-term planning than what I proposed in Hypothesis 8a. Table 5.5 revealed that the more hours a manager reports to be working per week, the *more* she tended to report that daily work was carried out at the expense of long-term activities. This means that managers who work longer hours tend to feel *less able* to exercise choice to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning than managers who work shorter hours. Hence, *Hypothesis 8a was not supported.*

Furthermore, the more hours' managers averaged of work per week, the *less* they tend to feel able to combine the job with a good life (strike a satisfying work/life balance). This is consistent with what was proposed in *Hypothesis 8b, which consequently was supported.* Table 5.5 also revealed that the more hours' managers work per week, the *less* able they tend to feel that they allocate sufficient time to maintain their professional competence. In Hypothesis 8c, I proposed that if a manager spent more time at work it would increase their perceived room for choice, as they would simply have more time available to fill with different activities. The results revealed an opposite picture; the more a manager worked per week, the *less* she felt able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her own professional competence. Hence, Hypothesis 8c was not supported.

The control variables

When examining the control variables included in the regression analyses, we see both *age* and *gender* were significant predictors in some analyses. More specifically, we see that *older managers* reported that they felt *more able* to allocate time to maintain their professional competence than *younger managers did.* Moreover, we also found that *female* managers tended to be significantly less happy with their work/life balance than *male* managers were.

The models' explanatory power

Although table 5.5 revealed several significant correlations, the model's overall explanatory power is relatively low, considering the importance and broadness assumed in the resources included in the model. In light of the theoretically expected effect of managers' access to resources on their room for choice, this is a bit surprising. Resource shortage is described as representing an *essential constraint* to many managers, limiting their room for exercising choice (Stewart, 1982). Consequently, managers' access to various resources was expected to reduce these constraints and hence provide the managers with greater room for exercising choice. However, the results of our analyses do revealed a more complex and multifaceted picture, where managers' access to various resources was found to have varying impact in different choice-situations. However, Table 5.5 showed that one of the analyses stands out by having higher explanatory power than the other two: to what extent managers felt able to combine their jobs with a good life (work/life balance; $r^2 = 0.167$).

This means that managers' access to the resources included in the regression model were more relevant predictors of managers' sense of being able to achieve a satisfying work/life balance, than they are predictors of the managers' perceived room for balancing daily work and long-term planning or the managers' perceived room for finding time to maintain their professional competence. As stepwise regression is applied, it is interesting to observe how the model's explanatory power develops as the different sets of independent variables are included. Table 5.6 below shows this development.

Table 5.6 The regression models' explanatory power (Adjusted R^2)

	Long-term vs. Daily work	Work/life balance	Stay professionally à jour
Model 1 ⁵⁵	,063	,051	,066
Model 2 ⁵⁶	,065	,100	,072
Model 3 ⁵⁷	,093	,167	,099

⁵⁵ Managers' access to external resources.

⁵⁶ Managers' access to external resources, internal, interpersonal resources.

⁵⁷ Managers' access to external resources, internal, interpersonal resources, time-related resources.

From table 5.6, we see that the explanatory power makes a leap from .10 to .167 between Models 2 and 3. The difference between Models 2 and 3 is that the two time-related resources were added to the model.

3.3.6 Effect size

A number of statistically significant relationships were revealed through the regression analyses. However, given the size of the sample applied in the analyses (N = 3172), even very small differences can become statistically significant. Hence, the *effect size* was calculated for all significant predictors to assess the impact of the findings.

Effect size is a measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables or a way of quantifying the size of the difference between two groups (Hair, 2006). Calculation of effect size is typically applied to assess the *size of the effect* of some kind of treatment or stimuli given to one of the groups being compared. In this study, I investigated the effects of managers' access to various resources. Hence, in this study, the groups compared were one group of managers - "the experimental group" - which had good access to resources, and another group, "the control group", which were managers with poor access to the same resources. Several measures of effect size are in current practice (Coe, 2002). Here, effect size was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Effect size} = \frac{[\text{mean of experimental group}^{58}] - [\text{mean of the control group}]}{\text{Standard dev}^{59}}.$$

⁵⁸ The mean of the experimental group was calculated using the standard regression formula: $Y = a + bx$

⁵⁹ The standard deviation in the sample, presented in Appendix X.

Table 5.7 The effect size

	Short vs. Long-term activities	Work/life balance	Stay professionally à jour
Intercept	3,69	2,277	0,815
1. External resources			
Financial resources			0,45
Professional advice from co-workers		0,45	
Hire people if necessary	0,13		
Sufficient labor supply	0,22	0,28	0,32
2. Internal interpersonal resources			
Personal support from superiors	0,15	0,23	
Colleagues to trust and confide in		0,17	0,22
Support from family/ friends		0,92	0,19
3. Time-related resources			
Set own schedule	0,54	0,75	0,64
Average working hours	0,14	0,25	0,10
Age	0,05		0,06

There are different ways to interpret the effect size (Coe, 2002; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1982), see e.g. (McGraw & Wong, 1992; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1982). Generally, the larger the effect size, the greater the impact of an intervention is. Cohen (1988) suggests that effect sizes of *0.20 are small*, *0.50 are medium*, and *0.80 are large*. Here I rely on Cohen's suggested classification, which is referred to as *Cohen's standard* (J. Cohen, 1988).

From Table 5.7, we see that the effect sizes vary from 0.06 to 0.92. More specifically we see that the managers' perceived support from family and friends stands out with

noticeably higher effect size (.92) than in any other relationship included in the regression model. Moreover, Table 5.7 also shows that the managers' room for setting their own schedule had moderate to high effect size across all the three analyses (ranging from .54 to .75). This is in contrast to the effect of average working hours where effect size was low across all the three analyses. These results indicate that managers' sense of being able to influence or control their own time had a greater impact on their perceived room for exercising choice in the three situations included in this study than the objective amount of hours the managers on average spent at work did.

5.3.7 Summary of the hypotheses

In the above sections, the results of the regression analyses performed to test the hypotheses were reported. A brief summary of these results is presented in the following. The hypotheses supported are rejected are presented in Table 5.8 below.

<i>Hypotheses concerning managers' access to external resources</i>		
Hypothesis 1:		
1a	The greater access a manager has to financial resources, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Not supported
1b	The greater access a manager has to financial resources, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Supported ⁶⁰
1c	The greater access a manager has to financial resources, the more room she will have to exercise choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Not supported
Hypothesis 2:		
2a	The greater access a manager has to professional advice from co-workers, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Not supported
2b	The greater access a manager has to professional advice from co-workers, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Not supported
2c	The greater access a manager has to professional advice from coworkers, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Supported

⁶⁰Supported at the 0.05 level

Hypothesis 3:

3a	The greater possibilities a manager has to hire people when needed, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Supported
3b	The greater possibilities a manager has to hire people when needed, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Not supported
3c	The greater possibilities a manager has to hire people when needed, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Not supported

Hypothesis 4:

4a	The better labor supply there is within the organization's field, the more room the manager will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Supported
4b	The better labor supply there is within the organization's field, the more the manager will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Supported
4c	The better labor supply there is within the organization's field, the more room the manager will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Supported

Hypotheses concerning *managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources*

Hypothesis 5:

5a	The more personal support a manager has from superiors, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Supported
5b	The more personal support a manager has from superiors, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Not supported
5c	The more personal support a manager has from superiors, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Supported

Hypothesis 6:

6a	The more personal support a manager has from her family and friends, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Not supported
6b	The more personal support a manager has from her family and friends, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Supported
6c	The more personal support a manager has from her family and friends, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Supported

Hypothesis 7:		
7a	The more a manager has colleagues whom she can trust, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Not supported
7b	The more a manager has colleagues, whom she can trust, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Supported
7c	The more a manager has colleagues, whom she can trust, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Supported

Hypotheses concerning <i>managers' access to time-related resources</i>		
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Hypothesis 8:		
8a	The more hours a manager works per week, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long term-planning	Not supported
8b	The more hours a manager works per week, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Not supported
8c	The more hours a manager works per week, the less room she has to combine her job with a satisfying life	Supported

Hypothesis 9:		
9a	The more control a manager has over her daily schedule, the more room she will have to balance her time between daily work and long-term planning	Supported
9b	The more control a manager has over her daily schedule, the more she will feel able to allocate sufficient time to maintain her professional competence	Supported
9c	The more control a manager has over her daily schedule, the more room she will have to make choices that make her job compatible with a good life	Supported

Table 5.8 Summary of the hypotheses

5.3.8 Summary of the regression analyses

Stepwise regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter Three. The findings reveal that i) 16 of the 27 hypotheses receive support, and ii) managers' access to the broad variety of resources included in the independent variables only explain a fairly moderate part of the variation in the dependent variables (from 9,5% to 16,2% explained variance). In light of the proposed dynamics of the CCD model (Stewart, 1982), these results are somewhat surprising, as managers' access to resources

was expected to reduce the constraints in the managers' jobs and hence enlarge their room for exercising choice.

Moreover, it is interesting to notice that managers' access to financial resources was among the variables that were found *less* important. Difficult financial resource situations are often described as constituting an essential constraint for companies and many managers. However, the results of our regression analyses suggest a different picture; the responding managers in this study did not view their financial situation as a critical factor for their perceived room for exercising choice.

Summarized, the findings revealed through the regression analyses indicated a rather complex picture, which questions the proposed universality of the theoretical model underpinning the hypotheses. The findings and their implications will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

5.4 Test of the finance sector

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the regression analyses were also conducted in a limited selection of managers working in the *finance sector*. The interviews, which constituted the qualitative part of the empirical basis for this study, were conducted in a Norwegian bank. It is therefore relevant to examine if, and if so to what extent, managers in the finance industry deviate from managers in general with regards to how they manage their time.

Although the analyses of the qualitative and the quantitative data are by nature different, the phenomenon of interest was managers' management of time in both the qualitative and the quantitative parts of the study. Hence, the analyses of the finance sector have been included as an indicator of to what extent the managers interviewed in the finance sector were comparable to Norwegian managers in general. In Table 5.9 below, the results from the finance sector are presented.

	Short vs. Long-term activities				Work/life balance				Stay professionally à jour			
	B ^b	Se. B	Beta	t	B	Se. B	Beta	t	B	Se. B	Beta	t
Time-related resources												
Set own schedule	,003	,053	,003	,047	,003	,053	,003	,047	,140**	,061	,153	2,289
Average working hours	-,003	,005	-,036	-,579	-,003	,005	-,036	-,579	-,014**	,005	-,170	-2,768
General resources												
Financial Resources	,030	,058	,038	,515	-,006	,065	-,006	-,091	,112	,066	,121	1,683
Professional advice from co-workers	-,146**	,055	-,173	-2,651	,150**	,062	,149	2,417	,057	,063	,058	,901
Hire people if necessary	-,126**	,047	-,193	-2,704	-,041	,052	-,053	-,789	-,026	,053	-,035	-,494
Sufficient labor supply	-,113**	,047	-,155	-2,421	,049	,053	,056	,926	,091	,054	,107	1,701
Interpersonal resources												
Personal support from superiors	-,064	,044	-,100	-1,452	,003	,050	,003	,053	,096	,051	,129	1,905
Colleagues to trust and confide in	,126**	,047	,177	2,704	,095	,052	,112	1,811	-,004	,053	-,004	-,068
Support from family/ friends	-,065	,048	-,086	-1,352	,362**	,054	,406	6,734	,090	,055	,103	1,647
Control variables^a												
Age	-,005	,005	-,063	-1,001	,005	,006	,052	,879	,013**	,006	,141	2,276
Gender	-,028	,100	-,018	-,279	-,151	,113	-,081	-1,339	,099	,115	,054	,863
Adjusted R²		,129				,221				,158		
N		272				272				272		

Table 5.9 Results of the regression analyses: The finance sector

The sample from the finance sector consisted of 272 managers, whereof 217 were male managers and 55 female managers. From Table 5.9, we see that the results in general confirmed the patterns revealed through the analyses of the complete sample. However, there were fewer significant coefficients in the analyses of the subsample than in the analyses of the total sample⁶¹. This is, however, not unexpected given the differences between the samples with respect to size (N= 272 compared to N=3172).

However, there are also certain differences worth noticing. First, the explanatory power of the regression models was somewhat higher in the analyses of the finance sector than in the complete sample. The highest explanatory power was found in the regression analysis, where the managers' work/life balance was included as a dependent variable. In the finance sector sample, the regression model had an explanatory power of $R^2 = 0,221$ compared to $R^2 = 0,167$ in the total sample. The same tendency was also observable in the other two analyses, where the explanatory power (R^2) was 0,129 in the finance sample compared to 0,93 (managers' perceived room for balancing own time between long-term planning and daily work) and 0,158 in the finance sample compared to 0,99 (managers' perception of being able to find sufficient time to maintain one's professional competence). This means that the independent variables included in the regression model explained more of the variation in the dependent variables in the finance selection than in the total selection.

To summarize, the analyses of managers working in the finance sector generally revealed similar patterns as the analyses conducted in the total sample. However, although the main tendencies were comparable between the finance sector and the total selection, there were also minor differences as reported above. The most noticeable difference was related to the models' explanatory power, which was higher in sub-selection analyses than in the analyses of the total selection.

⁶¹ Descriptive statistics for all variables included in analyses of the managers working in the finance sector is presented in Appendix Q.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have reported the findings revealed through the empirical analyses conducted to address the research questions of this study.

First, I presented the results of an *explanatory factor analysis*, which was guided by the first research question posted in this thesis: ‘*What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work?*’ The results of the EFA revealed three theoretically consistent factors: i) the organizations’ internal conditions, ii) the external environment of the organization, and iii) the managers’ own interests. The factors’ relative importance was assessed; the managers reported that they paid most attention to the internal conditions in the organizations, followed by the organizations’ external environment. According to the managers’ answers, they paid least attention to their own interests when making choices and prioritizing time at work. Furthermore, gender was found to be a significant predictor of to what degree managers pay attention to organizations’ *internal conditions*⁶² and their *own interests*⁶³.

Then, Research Question Number Two was addressed. To address the second research question, I tested a set of hypotheses developed in Chapter Three. The hypotheses were tested in three situations in which managers balanced their time at work. These situations regard managers’ sense of being able to balance their time between: i) daily work and long-term activities, ii) their jobs/work and the rest of their lives, and finally iii) finding sufficient time to participate in activities to maintain their professional competence.

27 hypotheses were generated and tested through the regression analyses; 16 were supported, whereas 11 were not supported. The general pattern arising from the regression analyses were that although managers’ access to certain resources has observable, statistically significant effects on managers’ sense of being able to exercise

⁶² Female managers tended to pay greater attention to internal conditions than male managers did: significant at 0.01 levels.

⁶³ Female managers tended to pay less attention to their own interests: significant at 0,05 level.

choice and handle their time at work, the managers' resource accessibility tended to influence the managers' room for exercising choice far less than expected based on existing theory.

Finally, in the third and last part of this chapter, the regression analyses were conducted in a sub-sample of 272 managers working in the finance sector. The purpose of these analyses was to examine if the general patterns identified through analyses of the total selection was also representative for the finance sector. This was addressed since the qualitative data gathered for this study was from a large Norwegian bank. Hence, it is relevant to examine to what extent the finance sector managers deviated from the general managers. The analyses revealed that although minor differences were observable, the main patterns were similar.

6. 0 Discussion

6. 1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the empirical analyses as presented in Chapter 5 are discussed. The discussion is structured according to the research questions, for which the results suggest answers. More specifically, this chapter is structured as follows. First, I discuss the results of the exploratory factor analyses conducted to answer the first research question of this thesis, “*What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they manage their time at work?*” Then, I discuss the findings revealed through multiple regression analyses, which were conducted to address the second research question posted in this thesis, “*Does access to various resources have an effect on managers' management of time, and if so: how and to what extent?*”

6.2 What do managers pay attention to when prioritizing time at work?

The question raised in the heading of this section is the first research question that this thesis intends to answer. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to address the question and the findings were reported in the previous chapter. The results revealed theoretically consistent factors that Norwegian managers report were relevant to pay attention to when make choices and prioritizing their time at work: *i) internal conditions in the organization*, *ii) the managers' own personal interests*, and *iii) the organization's external environment*.

The three factors did, however, not receive equal attention from managers as they prioritize their time; when comparing the factors' mean scores, I found that managers reported paying the most attention to *internal conditions in the organization*⁶⁴, followed by the organizations' *external environment*⁶⁵, and thirdly their *own personal interests*⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Mean score = 3.06

⁶⁵ Mean score = 2.54

When inspecting the general picture that arises from these findings, we see that Norwegian managers is unquestionably most concerned with paying attention to the organizations' *internal conditions*, i.e. factors such as the workplace environment and the well-being of their co-workers, when they make choices and prioritize their time at work. Given the Norwegian cultural context in which the responding managers operate, this is not very surprising. In what is often referred to as a *Scandinavian management tradition* (Byrkjeflot, 2000, 2001), great focus has traditionally been devoted to the organizations' employees, in terms of their well-being and working conditions for instance. The Norwegian working life has traditionally been characterized by values such as *equality*, *employee participation* and *entitlements* (Byrkjeflot, 2001). These work values influence and constitute a different context for management in Norway than in American organizations for instance, where employees typically have fewer privileges, are less involved in the organizations' decision-making⁶⁷ and where the managers are often portrayed as more goal-oriented and less concerned with the "softer" aspect such as co-workers' well-being or workplace environment. Summarized, I see little reason to be surprised by the fact that Norwegian managers pay most attention to internal conditions in the organizations.

The findings further revealed that in addition to the perhaps more obvious factors, *internal conditions* and *external environment*, the managers also reported to pay attention to a third, and more individual factor when prioritizing time at work: the managers also pay attention to *their own interests*. So, what does this tell us? *First*, it shows that managers are not only professional managers; they are also human beings, who, like most other humans, are concerned about their own interests. When managers prioritize their time, they are not solely concerned about the organizations and their environments; instead they also pay some attention to their own interests, in terms of their future career, their personal and professional reputation, their marriage and their leisure activities. *Secondly*, this means that organizations should be careful and not think of their managers

⁶⁶ Mean score = 2.37.

⁶⁷ In Norway, employees have a legally established right to participate when the organizations make major decisions that influence their jobs, as the employees' right of co-determination is incorporated in the Norwegian Working Environment Act.

as purely altruistic and exclusively concerned with the organizations' interests. Organizations should instead have a realistic view of what is perceived important to their managers when prioritizing time, and take this into account when designing managerial jobs: For instance, managerial jobs should allow managers to handle professionally challenging tasks to develop and broaden their professional competence, since the findings show that managers do pay attention to their *future careers* and *professional reputation* when prioritizing their time at work. Furthermore, organizations should recognize that life is more than work (even for managers). Hence, managerial jobs should be designed in ways that also enable managers to combine their jobs with satisfying personal lives, as the results reveal that managers pay attention to their *leisure activities* and their *marriage/relationship* when making choices and prioritizing time at work.

Summarized, the findings revealed in this study indicate that although Norwegian managers assert to pay greatest attention to internal conditions of their organizations when making choices and prioritizing their time at work, followed by the organizations' external environment; they also state to pay attention to their own personal interest. This is however not a very original observation; self-interest and individual utility maximization are recognized as basic assumptions underlying classic economic theory and decision-making theory.

It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss whether or not managers focusing on own interests represent a challenge to Norwegian organizations. However, it is important that organizations recognize that managers are not indifferent with respect to their personal interest. Organizations would thus be wise to attempt *to align* the managers' personal interest with the organizations' interest if possible. If, for instance, a manager achieves a professional reputation as being highly skilled and capable, this will be beneficial for the organization as well as for the manager personally. Moreover, if managers are able to balance their jobs with a satisfying personal life, the organizations can also benefit from this: first, through managers with more stable personal foundations for performing their job. Secondly, life/family-friendly managerial jobs can also be assumed to be more

attractive in the job market, hence attracting more applicants to the organization and reducing turnover rates.

6.2.1 Gender differences

However, the findings presented in the previous chapter showed certain gender differences within the overall picture. More specifically, the findings revealed that Norwegian *female* managers claim to pay *greater* attention to the organizations' *internal environment* than the male managers do.

When comparing these findings to existing theory, it is not too surprising that female managers were found to be more concerned with the internal conditions in the organizations than the male managers were. Although Eagly (2001) concluded that general differences between male and female managers are negligible, others have argued that general differences *do* exist with respect to how female and male managers lead. This proposition has received support in various management research (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001)⁶⁸. Female managers are said to have certain "*feminine qualities*" such as being more cooperative, mentoring, and nurturing. These are qualities that are wanted and welcomed in the modern organizations of today, where the traditional industrial hierarchies with traditional leadership styles and qualities, have been replaced by new organizational structures, new conditions of employment and constellations of competence. For instance, women are said to be more *interpersonal* and *relationship oriented* (Barth, 2007). If these "*feminine qualities*" are compared to the items constituting the factor *internal conditions*, we easily see recognizable links, as the factor includes items focusing on interpersonal and relationship oriented aspects, such as the workplace environment and the well-being of one's co-workers.

⁶⁸ This proposition has, however, caused a debate among management scholars and there are other contributions that have concluded that there are *no* differences in the way men and women approach management (Daley, 1998) or that the differences are negligible (Eagly, 1995). The proposed rationale for such absence of sex differences is based in a belief that managers become socialized in the organizations (Feldman, 1976), and that this process of socialization *overrides the gender roles* into which humans are socialized during their childhood and adolescence (Kanter, 1976)

Although the revealed gender difference is limited, the study is conducted using a very broad sample of Norwegian managers. Hence, although modest, the difference should still be noted. Furthermore, the findings supported the gender-based difference proposition, since it confirmed that there is a noticeable gender difference with respect to the extent to which Norwegian managers pay attention to i) *the internal conditions* in the organization. However, with respect to the other two factors revealed through the exploratory factor analyses, the gender differences were negligible. Thus, the overall picture arising from the findings showed only very modest gender differences.

6.2.2 Age

The analyses further revealed some interesting differences when inspecting to what extent managers of different ages pay attention to the revealed factors. More specifically, the analyses showed that all managers, regardless of age, pay the most attention to the organizations' internal conditions when prioritizing their time. However, when inspecting to what extent the managers paid attention to the other two factors, *the organizations' external environment* and *the managers' own interest*, interesting differences arose when including the managers' age in the analyses. From the time the managers are approximately 40 years old, they paid more attention to the organizations' external environment than to their own interests. But, the results also revealed that *younger* managers (i.e. managers under 40) tend to pay *more* attention to their own interests than to the organizations' external environment.

This finding could be explained by different phases in the managers' life, where some phases are more demanding than others. Before the managers reach 40, their lives are often eventful and demanding in several arenas simultaneously: in the professional arena, they have typically finished their education, gotten a managerial position and are often concerned with positioning themselves with respect to further career possibilities. In the private arena, many managers in this age group set up families and have children (who need attention and time), buy or build new homes, etc. Somewhat jocularly, "*the hard thirties*" is no longer said to refer to the 1930s, but to the challenging decade between 30

and 40 years of age. Hence, the differences among managers of different ages could be explained by different phases in the managers' lives, which influence what they perceive is relevant to attend to.

However, the age difference may also be interpreted as an indication of a change in priorities among Norwegian managers. It could indicate that managers in the future could be expected to be generally more concerned with their own interests than what has traditionally been the case. There are ongoing debates regarding the alleged increased individualism in today's society, where individual values and interests are claimed to be becoming more predominate at the expense of more collective values. The findings revealed in this study could be viewed as confirming such a trend.

However, when inspecting the findings in more detail, I find that when the managers in the study turn sixty, the level of attention paid to their individual interest tend to *increase*, whereas the level of attention paid to the external environment tend to *decrease*. I take this as an indication that the differences revealed should be related to different phases in the managers' lives, rather than to general changes in the priorities among Norwegian managers and generally increased individualism. When the managers reach 60, they are approaching a new phase in their lives, the life of retirement. Hence, their own interests, in terms of their leisure activities and their marriage/relationships, again become more relevant to pay attention, as it was in early phases of their managerial careers.

6.2.3 Managers' priorities of time compared to existing theory

In the first chapter of this thesis, the importance of taking national cultural context into account when studying managers' handling of time was emphasized. Still, I find it interesting to compare the findings of this study to existing theory about managers and time, keeping in mind that the theory was developed in a different cultural context. Hence, in this section the results of the EFA (the factors Norwegian managers pay

attention to when prioritizing time) will be evaluated in comparison to Mintzberg's (1973) and Kotter's (Kotter, 1982) classical work on managers and time.

Mintzberg's managerial roles

When comparing the three factors revealed in this study to the ten managerial roles that Mintzberg developed in 1973, the managers' focus on the *internal conditions* is recognized in what Mintzberg refers to as *Interpersonal Roles* and (partly) *Decision-Making Roles*. When a manager is to fulfill his interpersonal role as *liaison*, *figurehead* or *leader*, to pay attention to the internal conditions in the organization is obviously relevant. Moreover, the attention managers pay to the *organizations' external environment* can also be recognized in what Mintzberg refers to as *Information Possessing Roles*. More specifically, to pay attention to the organizations' external environment is particularly relevant when managers are to fulfill the *monitor role* and supervise the external environment: for instance with respect to what is published about the organization in the media, how issues of particular relevance to the organization are handled in the media, what political processes of relevance are ongoing, and so on.

However, the third factor revealed in this study, *the managers' attention to their own personal interests*, is, interestingly enough, not recognized in any of Mintzberg's ten managerial roles. The focus in Mintzberg's managerial roles was exclusively aimed at organizational interest. The result of this study suggests that this one-sided focus on organizational factors may be insufficient to fully understand how managers actually prioritize their time at work, as the findings showed that Norwegian managers paid attention to both organizational factors *and* their own interests when making choices and prioritizing time at work.

Since the importance of cultural context has been underlined in this thesis, one obvious question to raise is to what extent the discrepancy between Mintzberg's roles and the factors Norwegian managers pay attention to when prioritizing their time at work can be related to differences in the cultural context. Mintzberg's study was conducted in the US

in the early 1970s, whereas the survey analyzed and reported in this thesis was conducted in a Norwegian cultural context in 2002. If the differences could be explained by contextual, cultural factors, it would imply that American managers paid less attention to their personal interests in 1973 than Norwegian managers did in 2002. Based on general descriptions of what are referred to as typical for American and Norwegian managers, I find little reason to assume that there are such differences. Rather, in (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) classic studies, Americans were found to be generally: i) more *individualistically orientated*, and ii) more *masculine* than Norwegians were. This means that paying attention to others rather than to oneself, and being attentive are typically perceived as *more* important in a Norwegian cultural context than in an American (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Thus, I will argue that Mintzberg's lack of focus on managers' own interest in his ten managerial roles does *not* reflect a culturally-based true difference between Norwegian and American managers; instead it may reflect a difference in the scope of the research. Whereas Mintzberg in his study focused on the managers' *observable behavior*, the focus in this study is aimed at the underlying considerations managers' make when they prioritize their time at work.

Nevertheless, the results revealed in this study showed that to fully comprehend how managers handle their time, make choices and prioritize their time at work, managers' attention to their own personal interests should not be neglected.

Managers' considerations and Kotter's managerial activities

It is also interesting to compare the results revealed through this study to another central contribution focusing on managers and time: Kotter's (1982) contribution on how *successful managers* handle their time. In this study the focus was not aimed at the *consequences* of managers' handling of time. Still, it is interesting to compare the findings from this study to Kotter's findings. Kotter states that managers primarily are concerned with two elements when handling time: 1) *to set the agenda* (i.e. deciding which goals and directions the organization should pursue) and 2) *to network* (i.e. building a coalition to ensure achievement of the organizations' goals). When comparing

the results of the factor analyses to the two main activities described by Kotter, several interesting links are recognized.

First, the managers' attention towards internal conditions in the organization is closely linked to what Kotter refers to as *networking*. To pay attention to internal conditions in the organization, such as the working climate and the well-being of one's co-workers, is quite essential for a manager if she is interested in building a coalition with these co-workers, to ensure the achievement of specified goals, or to put it in Kotter's terms: *to network*. Co-workers, who sense that their manager is attentive of them and their needs and pays attention to their well-being, will be more committed to both the manager and contributing to the organization's goals. To paying attention to internal conditions of the organization can thus be argued to constitute an essential part of the *managers' networking*.

Secondly, with respect to the attention managers pay to the *organization's external environment*, this factor can be related to what Kotter refers to as *setting the agenda*. Through paying attention to the organization's external environment, managers are concerned with issues influencing what goals the organization can or should pursue (for instance through new technology, or changes in political regulations that affect the organizations' operations). Moreover, when managers pay attention to the organizations external environment, they are concerned with positioning their organization, for instance with respect to which the goals are wise to pursue or which markets they should pursue. These are also key elements in what Kotter refers to as *setting the agenda*.

However, as discussed above, the results revealed that Norwegian managers also paid attention to their own interests. When managers spend time and work to *set the agenda*, the findings from this study indicates that they not only take organizational objectives and goals into account; managers may set their own *personal agendas* as well. This is not captured in Kotter's theory, as Kotter focus on how managers work through their networks to ensure the achievements of *organizational goals* and agendas. The results of this study indicate that managers also have a more personal or individual agenda that they

work to achieve. That managers pursue individual, personal agendas is in correspondence with what would be expected based on the *rational choice theory* (March & Heath, 1994), which asserts that individuals are expected to optimize their personal utility when making choices.

According to Kotter, the organizational agenda is assumed to be predominant; managers are assumed to work to fulfill the *organizational* agenda through networking. According to rational choice theory, the managers' individual personal optimum is assumed to be predominant. The results revealed in this study do however indicate that managers typically pursue more than one agenda, as managers were found to pay attention to their own interests *and* organizational factors (*internal conditions* and *external environment*) when prioritizing their time at work. Hence, the results revealed in this study confirm Kotter's finding that managers involve themselves in networking to ensure achievement of specific goals. However, the findings also indicate that managers might be networking to ensure the fulfillment of different agendas – including their individual agendas.

6.2.3 Summary of the discussion of the EFA

In the above sections, I have discussed the results of the exploratory factor analyses. The analyses showed that when Norwegian managers make choices and prioritize their time at work, they pay attention to: *the internal conditions* in the organization, the organization's *external environment*, and their own *personal interests*.

The results were discussed and compared to classical contributions on managers' and time by Mintzberg (1973) and Kotter (1982). Neither Mintzberg's nor Kotter's contributions included explicit focus on managers' individual interests or agendas, rather these contributions concentrated exclusively on the managers' *organizational roles* and agendas. The findings of this study reveals that Norwegian managers, when prioritizing their time at work, simultaneously pay attention to multiple factors – and not only organizational factors. When Norwegian managers prioritize their time at work, they pay

attention to more factors than described in existing contributions central within the field of managers and time. Moreover, although managers' concerns for their own interests so far has mainly been ignored in existing theory, the results of this study indicate that to fully understand how Norwegian managers handle and prioritize their time at work, the managers' attention to own interest should not be neglected.

6.3 Effects of resource-accessibility on managers' perceived room for handling time

In Chapter 3, a set of hypotheses was developed to address the second research question posted in this thesis: "*Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so: how and to what extent?*" Multiple regression analyses were performed to test the hypotheses. The results revealed surprisingly moderate support for the hypotheses: only 16 of the 27 hypotheses were supported. The results also revealed that in general the three regression models explained a fairly moderate part of the total variance in the dependent variables. More specifically, the amount of variance explained was found to vary from 9.3% to 16.7% among the analyses.

Possible methodological explanations for these findings should not be neglected. One essential question in studies like this is to what extent the measures applied in the study have succeeded in capturing the true sizes or reflecting the theoretical concepts included in the model. The conceptual, theoretical model is broader than the operationalized model which is subject to empirical testing. An essential question is thus to what extent the variables included in the empirical study do justice to the conceptual model. As discussed in the methods chapter, the model, which constitutes a theoretical basis for this part of the study, has previously only been applied as a conceptual basis in qualitatively oriented studies; it is to my knowledge not yet tested through quantitative, statistical methods. Hence, no validated scales were available to measure the included variables. This could

constitute a limitation to the study. On the other hand, the independent variables included in this study cover a fairly broad selection of resources, which in theory were assumed to have great impact on the managers' room for exercising choice. It is also worth noticing that the scale applied to measure the variables ranges from 1 to 5⁶⁹. This is a rather short scale, which captures less of the variation in the respondents' answers than for instance a scale ranging from 1 to 7 would have done. The amount of variation in each of the independent variables also influences the total amount of variance in the model. The impact of the scale applied to measure the variables should thus be recognized when interpreting the results.

Finally, when interpreting the amount of variance explained (R^2) by the variables included in the regression model, it is also relevant to inspect the nature of the sample applied in the study. Although all the respondents in the study are managers, the sample may still be argued to be fairly *heterogeneous*. For instance, the responding managers work in organizations of different sizes and in different situations with respect to competition and life cycle, they have different professional backgrounds and educations and live in different parts of the country, etc. Although in the regression analyses I have included age, gender and industry as control variables, and hence controlled for some of the heterogeneity, there are still a number of dimensions along which the responding managers differed. In heterogeneous samples, the level of explained variance is typically lower than in a homogenous sample. Hence, the composition of the sample applied in the analyses is not irrelevant.

Despite the above discussed limitations, several interesting findings were revealed when testing the hypotheses. These findings will in the following sections be discussed. The discussion is structured to the hypotheses: first the effects of managers' access to *external resources* is discussed, then the effects of managers' access to *internal resources* and finally the chapter ends with a discussion of the effects of managers' access to *time-related resources*.

⁶⁹ 1 = "not at all", 4 = "to a great extent", 5 = "cannot answer/not applicable"

6.3.1 External resources

The better access managers have to *external resources*, the greater their perceived room for handling time was hypothesized to be. The hypothesized effects of managers' access to external resources are illustrated in Figure 6.1 below.

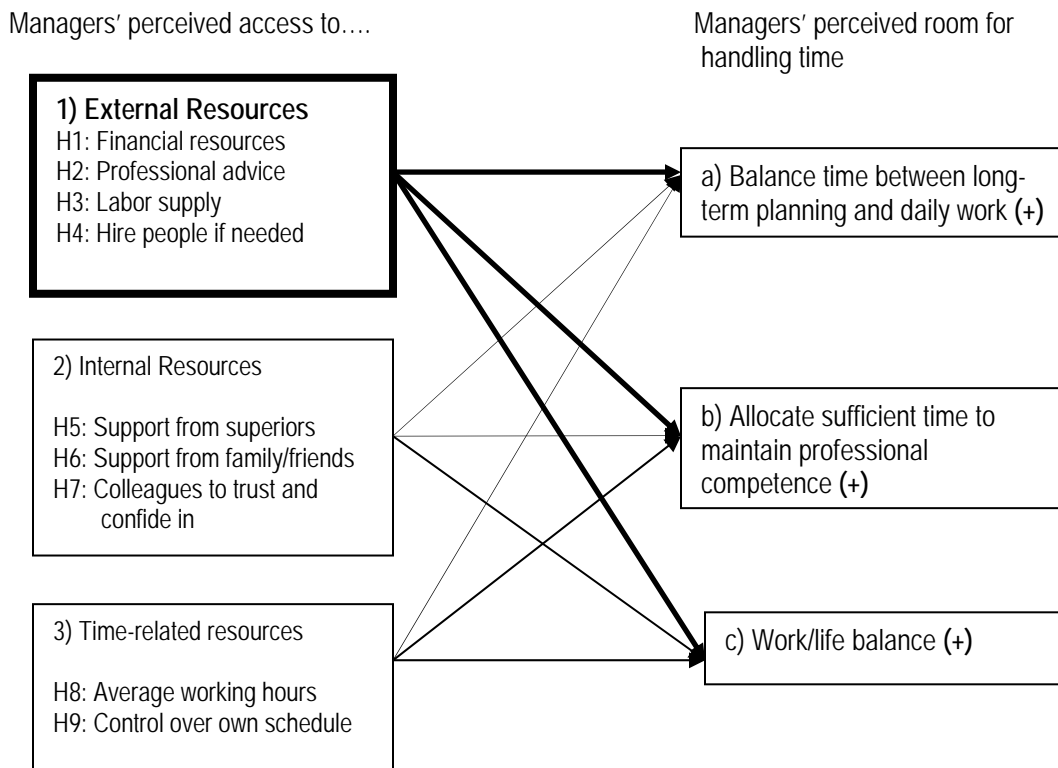


Figure 6.1 The hypothesized effects of managers' access to external resources

When inspecting the results of the regression analyses, the overall effect of managers' perceived access to external resources was unexpectedly low, given the broadness of the included external resources and their theoretically assumed importance. Only 6 of the 12 hypotheses regarding managers' access to external resources were supported. In the following, each of the hypotheses will be discussed respectively.

Hypothesis 1: Managers' access to financial resources

First, we see that of Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c, only Hypothesis 1b was supported. In 1b, managers' access to financial resources was hypothesized to increase the managers' sense of being able to maintain their professional competence. The item applied to measure this relationship includes the managers' participation in various competence-building activities, such as attending seminars and courses for instance. In light of this, the support for Hypothesis 1b was not very surprising; such activities tend to be rather costly. Hence, the managers' financial situation is directly relevant. In contrast, what is more surprising is that managers' access to financial resources did *not* influence the managers' sense of being able to exercise choice in any of the two other choice situations.

The results reveal that managers' access to financial resources had no significant effect on the managers' perceived room for striking a satisfying work/life balance, or on their sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning. One way to interpret these results is that the term "financial resources" may be a too broad, general label to be perceived as directly relevant when the managers are to prioritize their own time. The notion "financial resources" is more often found applied at higher, more general levels, for instance in relation to budget plans of project work. This may cause the managers to perceive the term *financial resources* as not directly relevant to their handling time at work.

However, the results may also indicate that managers' access to financial resources and their sense of being able to prioritize time in fact *were* independent sizes. Put differently, this means that the managers' sense of being able to prioritize their time at work time was unaffected by whether they have good or limited access to financial resources. The financial resources in themselves do not help the managers handle their time; instead the financial resources must be used in useful ways to enlarge the managers' perceived room for exercising choice. This implies that improving these managers' access to financial resources will *not* increase their sense of being able to balance their time in a satisfying manner, unless the managers are able to find practical ways to make use of the financial resources. Moreover, these findings indicate that if managers feel unable of striking

satisfying, timely balances at work, the assumption that providing the managers with additional financial resources constitutes a solution is too simple.

Hypothesis 2: Managers' access to professional advice from colleagues

The results show that the hypotheses regarding managers' *access to professional advice from colleagues* were partly supported: Access to professional advice was found to affect the managers' sense of being able to combine their job with a good life (Hypothesis 2b was thus supported). Access to professional advice is, however, not a significant predictor in any of the other analyses (Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2c were thus rejected).

The rejection of Hypotheses 2a and 2c may be related to how the managers perceived the professional advice they receive. In order for professional advice to have any value to the managers, and consequently actually constitute a true resource, the managers must find ways to make practical use of the advice they receive, for instance as they attempt to balance their time between the daily work and long-term planning. Professional advice from a colleague may be interpreted in many different ways; it may be interpreted as friendly and helpful assistance, given to contribute to the organization's achievement of objectives. However, professional advice may also be interpreted as indirect – or even direct - criticism or a demonstration of the receiver's lack of knowledge or skills, which makes such advice necessary. If the advice is not perceived as helpful or if the managers do not see any way to make use of the advice they are given, then it will not constitute a perceived resource to the managers, and cannot be expected to reduce their sense of being unable to prioritize their time as they would like.

Hypothesis 3: Managers' possibility to hire more people when needed

Another somewhat surprising result was found in relation to Hypothesis H3, which is concerned with the managers' *possibility to hire more people when needed*. Only one of the three hypothesis regarding managers' possibilities to hire people when needed was

supported. More specifically, the results revealed that if a manager can hire people when needed, this is only a significant predictor of the managers' sense of being able to balance his time between daily work and long-term planning. It is not a predictor of the managers' sense of being able to balance his job with a good life, or find time to maintain his or her professional competence. Hypothesis 3a was thus supported, whereas Hypothesis 3b and 3c were rejected.

In light of the well-known refrain among many managers, "*Too much to do, and too little time to do it*", it is a bit surprising that whether or not managers' can actually hire someone to delegate work to is insignificant to their sense of being able to prioritize their time as they would prefer. I expected that if a manager was able to hire more people when needed, this would ease the managers' workload, as there would be more hands and heads available to get the work done, hence providing the managers with greater room for exercising choice. However, the results reveal that this was not the case; instead the possibility to hire more people and the managers' sense of being able to prioritize their time appear to be independent sizes. How can we explain this?

First, it could be explained in a parallel manner as was suggested to explain the insignificance of managers' access to professional advice. It could be that for managers to perceive the possibility of hiring extra people as a valuable resource, which eases some of the constraints in their jobs, they must actually find ways to *make practical use of it*. More specifically, this means that for the managers to make practical use of hiring extra people (and hence reducing their work load), this requires that: i) the reason why the managers are unable to balance their time as they would prefer to do is that there is actually more work to be done than the managers are able to do themselves, and ii) the managers must actually be ready to delegate some of their work. However, to delegate implies not only being relieved from the delegated tasks, it also implies letting go of some of the *control* over what is done or how things are done. Control is something managers often value very highly and only reluctantly accept. Moreover, delegating work may result in tasks being performed differently from how the manager would have preferred to do them. Furthermore, delegating work may also *decrease* the managers'

firsthand knowledge about the activities that were delegated. To summarize, there are a number of reasons why some managers – consciously or unconsciously – may view delegation not only as a benefit or a resource, but also as *loss of control and oversight*. Such loss of control may be perceived to counterbalance the gains from being relieved from some of one's workload. Hence, this could explain why having the possibility to hire more people may not be perceived as merely a constituting a resource.

Secondly, another explanation may be that in this study the managers are asked whether they have the possibility to hire more people when needed, they are not asked to what extent they actually take advantage from this possibility and actually do hire more people when needed. Put differently, this means that although a manager may have the possibility to hire more people, it is not certain that he will actually hire more people. And, as discussed above, even if the manager does hire someone, it is still not certain that he is comfortable with the idea of delegating some of his work.

Hypothesis 4: The labor supply

The results presented in the previous chapter show that all the hypotheses (4a, 4b and 4c) regarding the labor supply within the organizations' fields were supported. This means that the labor supply is a significant predictor of the managers' perceived room for balancing their time between daily work and long-term planning, finding time to participate in activities to maintain their professional competence and striking a satisfying work/life balance. Although the effect size for this variable according to Cohen (1988) can be characterized as small⁷⁰, the results were still statistically significant, indicating that contextual factors such as the labor supply should not be neglected when attempting to understand how managers perceive their room for handling time at work.

⁷⁰ As presented in Table 5.12, the effect sizes ranged from .22 to .32

Summary of the discussion of the external resources

In the above sections, different reasons why managers' access to external resources had such a surprisingly moderate effect on managers' perceived room for choice as revealed in the analyses was discussed. For some of the findings, methodological explanations cannot be ruled out; the terms applied in the study may be interpreted differently than I anticipated by the managers. For instance, it could be that the managers may interpret the term *financial resources* as more relevant in relation to budget planning than in relation to their own balancing of time, hence I may have been unable to capture what I intended to through this question. Moreover, it could also be that I have measured to what extent the managers *can* hire more people when needed, rather than to what extent they actually *do* hire more people when needed, however, the last would have been more relevant.

Nevertheless, when inspecting the general picture revealed through the analyses, an interesting pattern is visible across all the analyses. In this empirical study, managers' access to external resources was found to be notably less significant to the managers' perceived room for exercising choice than what was expected based on the existing theoretical predictions. Moreover, for access to external resources is to actually constitute a valuable resource for the managers, it requires that the managers actually find ways to *make practical use* of the resource. If they don't, the resources have no impact on their situation, and hence will not influence their sense of being able to prioritize their time.

6.3.2 Internal, interpersonal resources

With respect to the managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources, it was hypothesized that the *better* access the managers had to this kind of resources, the *greater* their perceived room for handling time would be. The hypothesized effects are illustrated in Figure 6.2 below.

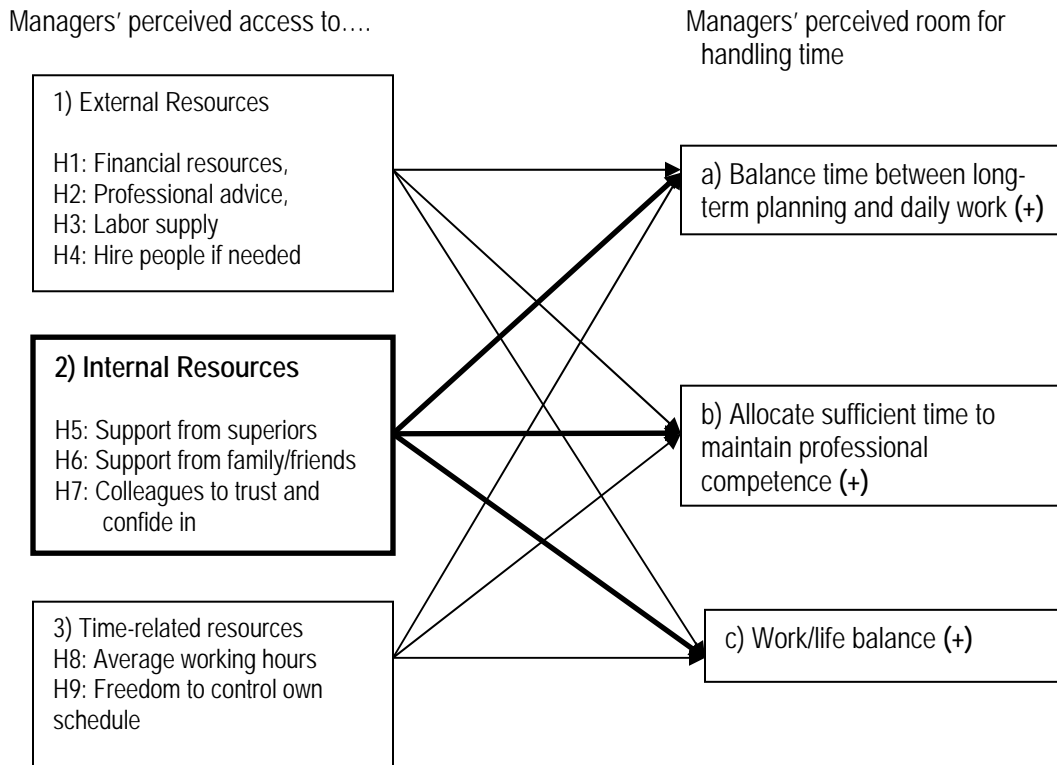


Figure 6.2 The hypothesized effects of managers' access to internal resources

When inspecting the results of the test of Hypotheses 5 through 7, a somewhat different pattern than in the above sections arose regarding the external resources. Opposed to what was the case above, all the hypotheses regarding managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources were supported in the analyses where the managers' work/life balance was the dependent variable. Put differently, the managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources in terms of support from superiors (Hypothesis 5c), support from family and friends (Hypothesis 6c), and to have someone at work to trust and confide in

(Hypothesis 7c), were significant predictors of to what extent the managers felt able to combine their jobs with a good life. Thus, Hypotheses 5c, 6c and 7c were supported.

Although all the three hypotheses regarding the managers' *work/life balance* were supported, there were also noticeable differences among the three analyses. More specifically, we see that the managers' *support from family and friends* was particularly important for the managers' perceived room for combining their jobs with a satisfying life. First, we see that the beta coefficient was substantially higher (.184 compared to .053: support from superiors, and .058: to have someone to trust and confide in at work). Secondly, the effect size was .92, which according to Cohen's standard (J. Cohen, 1988) is characterized as *high*. This means that the managers' support from family and friends as particularly relevant to their work/life balance.

The results indicate that managers' access to interpersonal resources is of greater importance in some choice situations than in others. Opposed to managers' work/life balance, managers' sense of being able to balance their time between daily work and long-term planning was only significantly influenced by *one* of the internal, interpersonal resources. More specifically, the results show that only personal support of the managers' superior (Hypothesis 5a) is a significant predictor of managers' perceived room for balancing time between daily work and long-term planning. The managers' perceived daily work/long-term planning balance was *not* significantly influenced by the managers' access to personal support from family and friends or by the managers having someone to trust and confide in at work (thus, Hypotheses 6a and 7a were rejected).

This means that when managers handle their time at work, it is necessary to differentiate between different types of choice situations when evaluating the impact of managers' personal support, as the impact of interpersonal resources vary between different choice situations. However, the managers' access to interpersonal resources has a surprisingly moderate overall impact on the managers' perceived room for exercising choice.

To explain this moderate impact of managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources *the principle of reciprocity* may suggest an interesting approach. According to the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, *reciprocity* involves mutual exchange; the notion of equally giving and taking (Reber, 1995). If this principle is applied to interpret the results revealed in these analyses, we see that if a manager receives social support from colleagues or friends over time, he will typically develop a sense of obligation to give something in return. This may lead to a “*zero-sum game*”: The manager receives social support, which in the short run may constitute a resource to him and hence increase the manager's sense of being able to exercise choice or prioritize his time. However, in the long run, if the manager continues to receive social support, this will release or trigger a sense of *obligation to give* equal support back. However, giving social support is time-consuming and requires personal involvement, which hence may equally *decrease* the managers' perceived room for exercising choice.

The findings in this study suggest that managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources only moderately affect the managers' sense of being able to exercise choice and prioritize their time at work. However, as discussed above, it could be that such interpersonal support actually *does* influence the managers' room for choice, but that the influence is both negative and positive at the same time, so that these effects counterbalance each other in a “zero-sum game”.

Summary of the discussion of the internal, interpersonal resources

Like the managers' access to external resources, managers' access to internal, interpersonal resources have a fairly moderate impact on the managers' perceived room for exercising choice; six of the nine hypotheses regarding access to internal, interpersonal resources were supported. However, as discussed in the above sections, there were noticeable differences among the different choice situations included in this study. Access to interpersonal resources is particularly relevant to predict the managers' perceived room for combining their jobs with good lives.

The varying impact access to resources has shows that when discussing the effects of managers' access to interpersonal resources, one should be careful not to generalize across the different choice situations. Instead, each situation should be assessed separately. Finally, the reciprocity principle was suggested as a possible explanation for the moderate impact managers' access to interpersonal resources had.

6.3.3 Time-related resources

Third and finally, the effects revealed of managers' access to *time-related resources* are discussed in the following sections. Like access to external and internal resources, managers' access to time-related resources was hypothesized to increase access to time-related resources would increase the managers' perceived room for exercising choice. However, there was one exception: in Hypothesis 8 regarding the expected effects of managers' spending more time at work (average working hours), I hypothesized that this would *increase* their sense of being able to: a) balance time between daily work and long-term planning, and b) allocate sufficient time to maintain their professional competence, but *decrease* their sense of being able to handle time in ways which where compatible with a good life.

The hypothesized effects of managers' access to time-related resources are illustrated in Figure 6.3 below.

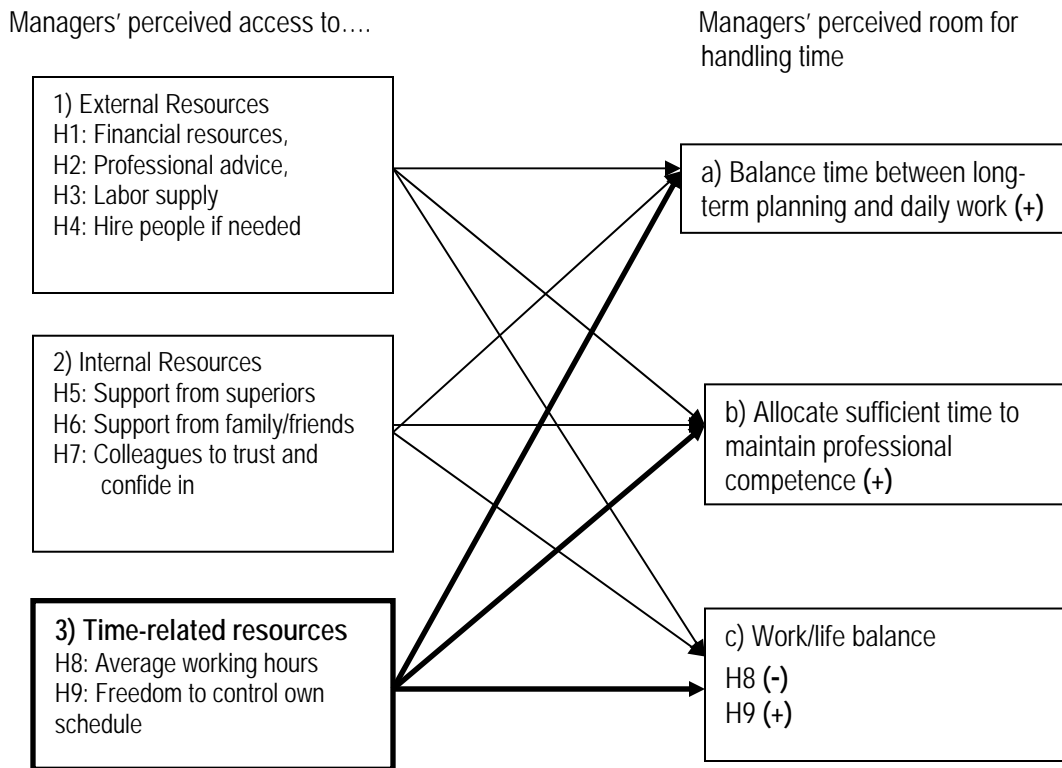


Figure 6.3 The hypothesized effects of managers' access to time-related resources

Hypothesis 8: Average working hours

Managers' average working hours was a significant predictor across all the three analyses. However, the effect in two of the analyses was *the opposite* of what I hypothesized: working longer hours did *not* increase the managers' sense of being able to prioritize their time as they would like, rather it has a statistically significant *negative* effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice: The longer hours managers work, the more often they tend to feel that short-term activities are done at the expense of long-term planning, and the less managers' feel able to allocate sufficient time to participate in activities to uphold their professional competence. Put differently, long hours tend to *decrease* rather than increase managers' sense of being able to prioritize their time between daily work and long-term planning, as well as to allocate time to competence-upholding activities. Hypothesis 8a and 8b were thus rejected.

That working long hours decreased managers' sense of being able to allocate time to competence-upholding activities could reflect many managers' assumption that attending courses or seminars is something one should do *in addition to* – not as part of – one's daily job. This could also explain why many managers felt unable to allocate sufficient time to participate in such activities. Managers are known to work long hours; hence their leisure time is scarce. If a manager assumes that to participate in courses or attend seminars he has to use some of this spare time, the alternative cost of participating in courses is high. Moreover, the managers may experience compound pressure; on one side they may feel an obligation to uphold their professional competence and thus to allocate time to competence-upholding activities. On the other hand, as many managers already work long hours, they may feel an obligation to protect their spare time with family and friends.

Furthermore, the results show that working long hours also have a significant negative effect on managers' sense of being able to make choices and prioritize time in a manner that is consistent with a satisfying work/life balance. This is in accordance with what I hypothesized in Hypothesis 8c, which is consequently supported.

Summarized, we see that the long average working hours significantly influence all the choice situations included in this study negatively. When interpreting these results, one essential question to ask is *why* managers spend such long hours at work. It could be related to (external) factors beyond the managers' control, such as heavy workloads, inefficient organizational routines or shortage in human resources. On the other hand, it could also be related to internal factors, such as the manager's personal effectiveness or ability to concentrate. If a manager works ineffectively, she may work long hours to compensate and actually get the job done. Alternatively, if a manager works long hours because of external factors, such as heavy work loads or insufficient human resources, this may cause her to feel that she is “drowning” in daily work, which prevents her from getting an overview of the bigger picture (which again is essential for being able to strike a satisfying balance between long-term planning and daily work).

The risks of working extreme hours⁷¹ include damage to psychological and physical health, poor productivity, and distressed family and social relationships (Brett & Stroh, 2003; Sparks, Cooper, Fried, & Shirom, 1997; Worrall & Cooper, 1999). Hence, the negative effects of working long hours revealed through this study are in line with existing research, which describes how long working hours constitute threats not only to the managers' efficiency (or capability to prioritize their time), but also to their health. The relationship between long working hours and an unsatisfying work/life balance has been confirmed in several studies. As discussed in the literature review, within a clock time perspective (which is the prevailing time perspective in the western world), a gain in work time is a loss in family time; hence, the more time managers spend working, the less time is left for family life, resulting in unsatisfactory work/life balance.

However, the picture may be more complex than this. The amount of working hour's per se that may not be the core of the problem; instead one should look deeper into *why* the manager works lengthy hours. It may be that managers feel incapable of coping with their jobs within the regular working hours, and thus puts in extra hours as an attempt to cope and overcome the problems at work. Alternatively, the problem could be quite the opposite: the manager's problems may not be associated with their work situation, but stem from the family arena (as suggested for instance by (Hochschild, 1997). Research shows that that dissatisfaction or negative events in one domain is found to prompt a person to increase his or her involvement in or seek rewards in another domain (Tenbrunsel, Brett, Maoz, Stroh, & Reilly, 1995). Work-family theory thus proposes what it referred to as the "*compensation hypothesis*": People who work long hours do so to avoid stress associated with their family. If relating this hypothesis to the findings of this study, it implies that when the managers report that long working hours has a negative effect on their sense of being able to combine their jobs with satisfying work/life balances, it can not be ruled out that the managers in fact work longer hours to escape from an unsatisfactory family life. However, although interesting, this question is beyond the scope of this study and thus not problematized further here.

⁷¹ There is no absolute limit for what can be referred to as extreme hours, but Brett and Straw (2003) defined extreme hours as working 61 or more hours per week

Hypothesis 9: Control over own schedule

To apply merely an *objective perspective on time* with respect to how managers' perceive their room for handling time provides an insufficient picture; therefore, a *subjective perspective on time* was also included in the analyses. The managers' perceived control over their schedules (their subjective sense of being able to control and influence their time) constitutes the resource focused on by Hypothesis 9. The results revealed that the managers' perceived control over own schedule is a significant predictor across all three analyses; hence Hypotheses 9a, 9b and 9c were supported. Moreover, the effect size in these analyses varied from .54 to .75, which is among the highest in the regression model.

The findings show that the *more* managers feel able to influence their daily schedule, the more they feel able to balance their time satisfying manners. This indicates that managers are in fact able to prioritize their time in ways they perceive as satisfying, if only they have enough control over their daily agenda to do so. It is, however, worth remembering that in this study I did not evaluate the quality of the managers' priorities; my focus is aimed at the managers' perceived room for actually making the priorities. Nevertheless, the findings showed that the room for making choices and prioritizing time was significantly influenced by managers' control over their own agendas.

6.3.5 Summarized discussion

In the above sections, the findings revealed through multiple regression analyses conducted to test the hypotheses were discussed. 16 of the 27 hypotheses were supported, whereas 11 hypotheses were rejected. The moderate number of hypotheses supported was somewhat surprising for several reasons, both methodologically and theoretically. *First*, the extensiveness of the sample applied in the analyses made even small effects statistically significant. Even if the managers' access to a certain resource only caused a

minor difference in the dependent variable, this would still be statistically significant⁷². *Secondly*, the limited number of hypotheses that received support was also fairly surprising because of the broadness and theoretically assumed importance of the independent variables (the resources) included in the analyses. The resources were expected to have greater impact on the dependent variables than what was revealed through the analyses. Nevertheless – surprising or not - the findings revealed in this study portrayed a somewhat different picture than what was hypothesized based on existing theory. The incongruence revealed between the theoretically expected and the empirically revealed results have been discussed from different angles, both methodologically and theoretically.

The methodological explanations considered included a discussion of the measures applied in this study. The extent to which the measures have succeeded in capturing the true sizes or the theoretical concepts included in the model is an essential question. As discussed above, the conceptual, theoretical model is broader in its categories than the operationalized model, which was empirically tested. Moreover, focus in this study was aimed at the managers' *perceived* rather than at the *objectively measurable access to resources*. Although this focus is in accordance with the theoretical basis for the study (Stewart, 1982), the results could have been different had variables measuring the managers' *actual* rather than *perceived* access to resources been included. However, the main focus of this thesis has been to study how Norwegian managers handle their time at work, or more specifically, to investigate and explore the internal, underlying processes of managers' handling of time. *Managers' perceptions* have thus been the center of attention in this study, and their *perceived* access to resources was consequently found relevant. Since focus is on managers' *perceived access* to resources, I have relied on the managers' self reports in this study. The level of congruence between the managers' perceived and actual access to resources is however not assessed, as this is beyond the scope of this study.

⁷² To address this challenge, the *effect size* for all significant correlations was calculated. The results revealed that only one of the correlations had an effect size above 0.8, which can be characterized as *high*, whereas the other effect sizes were found to vary between *low* (0.2) and *moderate* (0.5).

Another explanation for the moderate findings revealed through the regression analyses may be found in the methodological approach chosen for this study. The findings (the moderate level of explained variance) may indicate that the quantitative approach applied in this study, even if called for in existing research on managers and time, may not be an adequate approach to fully capture and comprehend the phenomenon of interest in this thesis. The main purpose of this thesis is to expand the understanding of *how* Norwegian managers' handle their time at work. The intention behind the analyses performed in this study was thus to extend the knowledge regarding different effects of managers' access to resources on their perceived room for handling time. The moderate effects revealed through the analyses, and the moderate amounts of variance explained indicate that I have not fully succeeded on this intention.

Theoretical explanations for the incongruence revealed between the theoretically expected and the empirically revealed results of the analyses. This incongruence could indicate that the *theoretical contributions* on which I have relied to address the phenomenon of interest in this research question were insufficient to be able to fully understand how Norwegian managers prioritize and handle their time at work. Even though aspects assumed relevant subtracted from existing theory on managers and time were combined to develop the research perspective applied in this study, the findings (the moderate number of hypotheses supported and the moderate amount of explained variance in the regression models) indicate that these contributions did not provide a sufficient foundation for gaining a deeper understanding of the processes of interest. The findings discussed in this chapter reveal a need for a new and *revised perspective on managers and their handling of time*. This need is elaborated in the following sections.

6.4 Need for a revised perspective on managers and time

The results presented and discussed in the previous sections revealed that the approach to managers and their handling of time applied in this study are insufficient to fully capture the phenomenon of interest: the underlying, internal processes. Although the analyses revealed statistically significant results, which provided valuable insights into the effects of managers' access to resources, the calculation of effect sizes and the moderate amount of variance explained by the regression models both point in the same direction: Towards a need for a new and revised approach to managers and time. In other words, in order to develop a deeper understanding of how Norwegian managers handle their time at work a new theoretical approach is needed.

The overall question underlying this thesis asks: *How do Norwegian managers handle their time at work?* To address this general question, more specific research questions were formulated; 1) *What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they make choices and prioritize their time at work?* and 2) *Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so: how and to what extent?* To address these questions, theory focusing on managers' time-related choices was applied. From the literature review, we know that managers are assumed to handle their time through exercising choice. Thus, the proposed dynamics between the managers' access to resources and their perceived room for exercising choice was incorporated into the research model on which the study was based.

However, based on the findings, as discussed in this chapter, I find reason to question whether managers in fact can be expected to perceive *their room for choice* in such a straightforward and rational manner as proposed in the existing literature. Moreover, a need for further studies to investigate how managers actually handle their time has been identified through the findings in this study. More specifically, I find reason to question the realism in viewing manager's handling of time as merely a rational choice process,

which is a central underlying assumption in the existing literature. Thus, I introduce a third research question, which asks:

To what extent, and in what ways, is managers' handling of their time a result of choice?

This question has to my knowledge not yet been addressed in existing research. Previous research on managers and time has primarily focused on: i) how managers actually *spend their time* (e.g. Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006), and ii) the *consequences* of managers' different ways to spend their time (e.g. Kotter, 1982; Perlow, 1997). Although the literature review revealed how Stewart (1982) included managers' *time-related choices* in her CCD model, neither she nor any other contributors have focused specifically on *how* managers' time-related choices are actually made. The choice processes *as such* have thus far not been problematized in existing research on managers and time. These choice processes are, however, at the very core of the third research question posted in this thesis. The positioning of the third research question in this thesis is illustrated in Figure 6.4 below.

Figure 6.4 consists of a line on which different *phases* in managers' handling of time, that is first the *choice processes*, then the managers' *actions/behavior*, and finally the *consequences* are placed. Central existing theoretical contributions are included in the figure to illustrate their focus. More precisely, Figure 6.4 shows Carlson's (1951), Mintzberg's (1973) and Tengblad's (2006) focus on the *managers' action/behavior*, Kotter's (1982) and Perlow's (1999) focus on the *consequences* of managers' handling of time and Stewart's (1982) focus on the dynamics between managers' choices and behavior, as well as this study's focus on the choice processes.

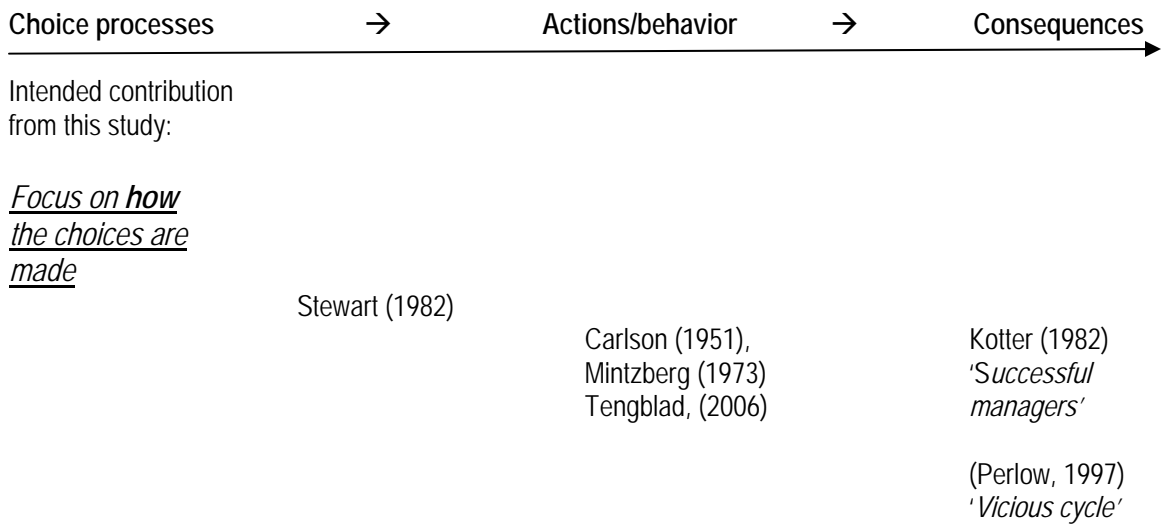


Figure 6.4 The positioning of this study compared to previous contributions

As illustrated in figure 6.4 previous research contributions on managers and time have *not* focused on how managers actually handle time, in terms of to what extent managers' handling of time is a result of (rational) choices. Hence, there is a need to shed more light on these processes. However, to expand the understanding of these processes I need to consult new theoretical perspectives, since the rational choice perspective underlying the existing theory is found insufficient. In the next chapter I will thus address this need and develop a new approach to enhance the understanding of *how* managers handle their time at work.

7.0 Towards a revised research perspective on managers and time

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I concluded that the existing perspectives on managers and time were insufficient to fully capture and understand the phenomenon of interest in this thesis: *how managers handle their time at work*. In the discussion, I argued that the empirical findings could be taken to indicate that the theoretical approach chosen devoted *insufficient attention to the choice processes as such*. Based on this, a need to focus more attention towards the *cognitive aspects* of the choice-processes was advocated.

An additional research question was also derived from the findings presented and discussed in the previous chapter. This research question asks: *To what extent, and in what ways, is managers' handling of time a result of choice?* To address this question, we need a revised theoretical perspective, which focuses more explicitly on cognitive aspects of *the underlying processes* of managers' time-related choices and handling of time. The purpose of this chapter is thus to develop and present such a modified and revised perspective on managers' handling of time, which addresses the revealed insufficiencies.

This chapter is organized as follows: First, I review and assess research focusing on the managers' *decision processes* and, more specifically, on *how* the managers' priorities of time may be made. Based on the review, selected elements are extracted and integrated in a revised research perspective. The revised perspective is presented in the last part of this chapter.

7.2 The underlying processes: Different logics of action

Every managerial job offers elements of choice (Stewart, 1982b; Yukl, 2002). However, the existing research on managers and time has devoted little attention so far to *how* managers' *time-related choices* and priorities are actually made. The underlying basis on which these decisions are made has not received much attention either. However, although not explicitly expressed, a rational choice perspective forms the underlying assumption of the CCD model (Stewart, 1982b), the proposed dynamics of which constituted a central point of departure for the development of the hypotheses tested in the previous chapters of this thesis.

The findings revealed in the first part of this study, suggest that we in order to expand out understanding of how managers' handle their time need to consult other theoretical approaches. More specifically, explicit attention should be devoted to the underlying assumptions and processes. Thus, in the following sections I review well-known theoretical contributions regarding human decision-making and different *underlying logics of action* (March & Heath, 1994; March & Olsen, 1989; March et al., 1976).

First, rational choice theory, also referred to as the *logic of consequences* (March & Olsen, 2004), will be consulted. Within the rational choice perspective, human choices and actions are seen as the resulting from intendedly rational calculations of expected consequences. Rational choice theory has been consulted for several reasons. First, since the previously applied theoretical contributions implicitly rely on the rational perspective, it is important to explicitly investigate the impact of this basic assumption. Secondly, when managers handle their time at work, the *consequences* related to the different alternatives are clearly important to the managers, thus logic of consequences is relevant to understanding managers' handling of time. Furthermore, within the logic of consequences, the main focus is aimed at *optimizing the consequences* and at *goal achievement*. From the discussion of definitions of leadership, presented in Chapter Two,

we know that *goal achievement* also constitutes a core element in most leadership definitions⁷³.

However, the findings revealed in the first part of this thesis give reason to assume that to rely solely a rational-choice approach is insufficient to fully understand how managers actually handle their time. Thus, an alternative approach was also introduced, in which managers' handling of time is viewed as the outcome of other processes than rational choices. More specifically, the *logic of appropriateness* (March & Heath, 1994) will be reviewed and assessed, as a contrast to the logic of consequences. Within *the logic of appropriateness*, human choices and action are seen as driven by *rules of appropriate or exemplary behavior* (March & Olsen, 2004). This logic of action is thus also referred to as the rule-based model.

In the following sections, I will review the two perspectives on human choices and action and assess their relevance to this study.

7.2.1 Logic of Consequences: Rational choice

Rational choice theory aims at explaining human behaviour (Elster, 1989a, 1989b). Moreover, rational choice theory is referred to as the *basis* for standard explanations of human behaviour (March & Heath, 1994). However, in the classic book *Sour Grapes*, Elster (1983) opens by noting that not only human behavior, but also an incomprehensible amount of entities, such as beliefs, preferences, choices, decisions, actions, persons, even collectivities and institutions, are said to be either *rational* or *irrational*. The length and extensiveness of Elster's list indicates the wide-ranging and universal application the theory on rationality has obtained. March (1999) confirms Elster's observation, as he states, "*Virtually all of modern economics and large parts of the rest of social sciences, as well as the applied fields that build upon them, embrace the*

⁷³ Social influence is described as the other core element of leadership ((Grønhaug et al., 2001)

idea that human action is the result of human choice and that human choice is intendedly rational”.

The term *rational* is in other words comprehensively used. However, like so many other commonly used words, *rational* has come to mean many things. For instance, rational is used as a synonym for *intelligent* or *successful* for *coldly materialistic* and for *sane* or *reasonable* (March & Heath, 1994). Moreover, in the Oxford Thesaurus of English (Waite, 2006) *rational* is defined as follows: “*Rational approach to the problem: logical, reasoned, well reasoned, sensible, reasonable, cogent, coherent, intelligent, wise, judicious, sagacious, astute, shrewd, perceptive, enlightened, clear-eyed, clear-sighted, commonsensical, common-sense, well advised, well grounded, sound, sober, prudent, circumspect, politic, down-to-earth, practical, pragmatic, matter-of-fact, hard-headed, with both one's feet on the ground, unidealistic; informal joined-up. Opposites: Irrational, illogical*”

The variety in the different meanings of the term *rational*, underlines the need to clarify how the term is understood in this thesis. Additionally, a number of closely related terms, such as: 1) *rationality*, 2) *the rational model*, and 3) *rational choice* are also widely used and thus require a certain clarification.

First, the term *rationality* may, in a simplified manner, be said to characterize, “...*behavior that is logical in pursuing goals*” (Dean & Sharfman, 1993). Secondly, Allison (1971) described the *rational model* in the following way: “...*the rigorous model of rational action maintains that rational choice consists of value maximizing adaptation within the context of a given pay off function, fixed alternatives and consequences that are known*”. Furthermore, Loewenstein and Elster (1992) described *rational choices* as instrumental and guided by the expected outcome of the action. Actions are valued and chosen not because of what they are in themselves, but instead as a more or less efficient means to further an end. *Calculation of consequences* is thus an essential element.

In the study reported in this thesis, I have relied on Loewenstein and Elster's (op cit) definition of *rational*⁷⁴ *choice*. Moreover, I will use the terms *rational choice theory* and *logic of consequences* interchangeably. Related to this study, this means that when I refer to managers who rely on a *logic of consequences* to handle their time, it implies that whenever managers can, or have to prioritize their time, and thus decide which activities (or tasks) to perform, instrumental *calculations* of the *expected consequences* (outcomes) are assumed to form the basis for the managers' decision.

How are *Rational Choices* ideally made?

The rational choice theory normatively portrays the ideal decision. So, how then does the rational choice theory describe *rational actors* making *rational choices*? First, a *rational decision maker* is defined as a decision maker that makes *consistent, value-maximizing* choices within specified constraints (Robbins, 2005).

Secondly, *rational choices* are described as being made following a ideal *six step rational decision-making model*. The first step is to define the problem (i.e. the divergence between the existing and the desired state). The second step is then to identify the decision criteria that will be important in solving the problem. The third step is to weigh the criteria, in order to give them the correct priority in the decision. The fourth step is to generate possible alternatives that could succeed in resolving the problem. The fifth step is rating each of the alternatives on each criterion. And finally, the sixth and last step is to select the *best alternative*, i.e. the alternative that optimizes the actor's expected utility.

⁷⁴ In his work Elster distinguishes between a *thin theory* of rationality and a *thick theory* of rationality. In the thin theory of rationality, Elster argues that rationality is all about *consistency*: consistency with the belief system, consistency within the system of desires, and consistency between beliefs and desires on the one hand and the resulting action on the other. However, in the *thick theory of rationality* consistency is not sufficient. Elster argues that in a thick theory of rationality the beliefs and desires must be rational in a more substantive sense, which implies a close link to *judgment of evidence*. Nonetheless, the presentation and discussion of rationality in the following sections is based on what Elster refers to as the thin theory of rationality.

The rational choice theory is based on 4 *underlying assumptions* March et al. (1994).

1. The problem is assumed to be *clear and unambiguous*, and the decision maker is assumed to have *complete information* regarding the decision situation.
2. The decision maker is assumed to be able to identify all relevant criteria and *list all alternatives*. Furthermore, *all consequences* of each alternative are assumed to be predictable.
3. All the alternatives are assumed to be possible to rank and weigh to reflect their importance.
4. The decision-maker is assumed to consistently choose the alternative that yields the *highest expected utility*.

If these underlying assumptions are related to the study reported in this thesis, where the aim is to investigate *how* managers actually handle their time at work, they imply the following. When the managers rely on a logic of consequences as they handle time, they are assumed to: i) have clear and unambiguous goals, and complete information about the decision situation, ii) be aware of all possible ways to spend their time in the given situation, iii) be able to predict all the consequences of each alternative, and iv) be able to rank the alternatives and consistently choose the alternative that yields the greatest utility for the manager.

7.2.1.1 Challenges and limitations to the rational choice theory

The rational choice theories have well-established positions in the prediction of aggregated general behaviour (Elster, 2007). However, March et al. (1994; p 4) argued that, “...*despite the theories’ utility for aggregated predications, pure versions of rational choice theories are hard to accept as creditable portraits of actual individual or organizational actors*”. There are several reasons why it is hard to acknowledge pure versions of rational choice theories as reliable representations of actual decision-making. These reasons are related to both 1) *the decision maker* and 2) *the information* on which the decision is to be based. In the following sections, I will elaborate these reasons.

Decision makers have limited mental capacity

The first challenge is related to the *decision makers*, or more specifically to the decision makers' *limited mental capacity*. To generate lists of *all* potential alternatives (and their consequences) is an unrealistically demanding task, which easily can exceed the mental capacity of any decision-maker. Thus in a number of decision-situations, it is unrealistic to assume that the decision makers are capable of generating such exhaustive lists of alternatives. Furthermore, there are *alternative costs* associated with the time and mental capacity the decision maker invests in a decision. The decision maker could have spent his or her time and mental capacity on other tasks or activities, which could have been more important or yielded greater utility. Moreover, the assumption that the decision makers have stable and clear preferences has also been questioned. Rather than stable and clear preferences, decision makers are found to have contradictory or incompatible preferences, changing according to the context and setting.

Uncertain information

Another challenge is related to the information on which the decisions are to be based, or more specifically to various forms of *uncertainty in the information*. For instance, an essential question is that of *timing*, i.e. *when* the different alternatives present themselves to the decision maker. Different alternatives often appear at different points of time. Hence, they may be difficult - or even impossible - to compare. With respect to timing, there is also the challenge of *predicting future outcomes*, which normally involve a certain amount of uncertainty. The uncertainty makes it hard to predict *what* the future outcome will be, and to time *when* the predicted outcome can be expected.

Related to this study, this implies that when managers are to evaluate the expected outcomes of alternative ways in which they can prioritize their time at work, it can be difficult to predict and compare the expected outcomes related to each alternative. Moreover, the rational choice model builds on the assumption that only information about *actual alternatives* is evaluated before a decision is made. However, studies have revealed that decision makers do not always limit themselves to evaluating actual

alternatives; in some situations so-called *phantom alternatives* are also considered. Phantom alternatives are choices that *appear* to be real, but are actually unavailable (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1992). For instance, faced with unpleasant experiences or outcome, people tend to mentally undo actual experiences and imagine pleasanter phantom alternatives (Kahneman, Tversky, & Slovic, 1982). If I relate these findings to this study, this means that the managers, when evaluating different alternative ways to prioritize their time, may evaluate both *real* alternatives (which could be pleasant or unpleasant) and phantom alternatives (which are more pleasant and evoked by the unpleasant real alternatives).

How are the challenges handled?

As a result of the challenges discussed above and related to: 1) *the decision makers limited mental capacity*, and 2) *the uncertainty in the information* on which the decisions are based, there have been numerous efforts to *modify* the theory of rational choice, keeping the basic structure, but revising the key assumptions to reflect the observed behaviour more adequately.

Recognizing the *limitations in decision makers' mental capacity*, Herbert Simon's (1979) concept of **bounded rationality**⁷⁵, which has become essential in modern decision-making theory (March & Heath, 1994). The core notion of bounded rationality is that individuals are intendedly rational, but that they suffer from limited *cognitive capabilities* and *incomplete information*. Their actions may thus be less than completely rational, despite their best intentions and efforts. Bounded rationality is based on studies of actual decisions in the real world. These studies suggest that not all alternatives are known, that not all consequences are considered, and that not all preferences are evoked at the same time. Instead of considering all the alternatives, decision makers typically appear to consider only a few and to look at them sequentially rather than simultaneously.

⁷⁵ Professor Herbert A. Simon, Carnegie-Mellon University, USA, received the Nobel Laureate in Economics in 1978 for his pioneering research into the decision-making process within economic organizations.

Furthermore, decision makers do not consider *all* the consequences of the available alternatives, but focus on some and neglect others. Relevant information is not sought out and available information is not used. Moreover, decision makers also adopt incomplete and inconsistent goals to simplify complex situations and use heuristics and frames to cope with complex information (Kahneman et al., 1982). Finally, individuals sometimes choose to do something for no better reason than because someone else is doing it, or that they just “feel like” doing it (March, 1999).

“*Satisficing*” is an essential concept within the idea of *bounded rationality*. It refers to how alternatives, although not *optimal* as prescribed in the rational choice theory, are still selected if the decision makers perceive them as “*good enough*”. In other words, decisions are made when the decision makers recognize an alternative that *satisfies* their personal criteria (Elster, 2007; Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa, 1999; Simon, 1979). If “satisficing” we should expect to see managers in our study forego lengthy searches for optimal alternatives, in favour of acceptable or “good enough” alternatives.

In recent years, the idea of *bounded rationality* has come to dominate most theories of individual decision-making (March & Heath, 1994). Moreover, the idea of bounded rationality has also become sufficiently integrated into the conventional theories of rational choice theories to become *generally accepted as part of rational choice theory*. As a result, virtually all modern theories of rational choice are theories of bounded rationality (March, 1999; (Holmstrom & Tirole, 1990; Kreps, 1988).

Whereas integrating the notion of bounded rationality into the theory of rational choice is one approach, another approach to address the challenges discussed above has been to view rational choice models as *normative decision models*, portraying *ideal decisions*, which are distinguished from the *descriptive decision-making models*, that portray *actual decisions*.

Descriptive decision-making theory sharply contradicts the rational, normative model in several aspects (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). For instance, managers seldom make major

decisions at one single point in time; instead they make numerous, less momentous choices during a regular workday (Mintzberg, 1973). Most of the managers' decisions happen rapidly, in interaction with others and without time for extensive rational choice processes of generating lists of alternatives, evaluating consequences and choosing an alternative based on the maximized expected utility. Moreover, discrepancies have also been revealed between the normative and descriptive decision-making *processes*. In real life, decision-making processes are often more characterized by confusion, disorder and emotionality than by rationality (Yukl, 2003: 25). The so-called "garbage-can-model" (M. D. Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972) even asserts that decisions happen as a result of exogenous, time-dependent introductions of choice opportunities, problems, solutions and decision makers. Descriptive decision-making theory shows how elements such as: emotions (see e.g. Simon, 1987), framing and heuristics (Kahneman et al., 1982), (Gigerenzer & Todd, 1999), and intuition and biases (Plous, 1993) influence the decision-making process. While none of these aspects are recognized in the classical rational choice theory (Bazerman, 2006), they still constitute central aspects of the descriptive decision-making theory.

Summary

Based on the above review of the rational choice theory, and the assessment of essential challenges and limitations to the theory, the rational choice approach to human decision-making processes is considered to be relevant to this study. However, based on the limitations discussed for the rational choice theory, the need to complete the picture by including an alternative underlying logic is recognized. Thus, in the following sections, the *logic of appropriateness* will be reviewed and critically assessed.

7.2.2 Logic of Appropriateness: Rule following

Within the *logic of appropriateness*, or the rule-based model, individuals' choices and actions are matched to situations by means of *rules* organized into *identities*. The logic of appropriateness sees human choices and action as driven by rules of *appropriate behavior* rather than calculations of expected utilities (March & Olsen, 2004). While the term logic of *appropriateness* may evoke associations of morality, the theory in itself is value-neutral. The behavior, which the rules prescribe as appropriate, may or may not be morally acceptable (March, 2006).

As discussed above, many decisions are not based on calculations of expected utility. Individuals have even been observed to make decisions that might make their situation worse, or in the terms of rational choice theory: reduce their own utility. Although these decisions, choices and actions cannot be explained by the classical rational choice model, they *can* be explained through the logic of appropriateness. Decisions are not based on calculations of anticipated future consequences, as they are in most contemporary conceptions of rationality. Instead, the actors seek to fulfill perceived obligations that are encapsulated in a role, an identity, or a membership in a community or group and the practices and expectations of its institutions (March & Olsen, 2004). Embedded in a *social collectivity*, they do what they *perceive appropriate* in a specific type of situation. Like the logic of consequences, the logic of appropriateness also builds on a basic assumption of rationality, but rationality on a *different basis*: Rather than a calculative, consequence-oriented rationality alleged to describe the "*economic man*", other factors, such as *identities, norms, rules, and expectations* are taken into consideration in the logic of appropriateness.

When actors make decisions based on the logic of appropriateness, they are assumed to focus on three questions (March & Heath, 1994):

- 1) The question of recognition: what kind of situation is this?
- 2) The question of identity: what kind of person am I?

- 3) The question of rules: what does a person such as myself do in a situation such as this?

The process addressing these questions is described as a systematic process: although the questions appear simple, to address them is often a quite complicated process, in which the focus is aimed at establishing the actor's *identity* and matching the *rules* to the recognized *situation*.

7.2.2.1 Rules are perceived differently

Rules prescribe, more or less precisely, the appropriate action in a given situation. They also, more or less precisely, tell actors where to look for precedents, who are the authoritative interpreters of different types of rules, and what the key interpretive traditions are (March & Olsen, 2004, p. 7). Still, the same rules are not necessarily perceived identically by different actors who share the same identity. The judicial application of law is an often-used example to illustrate how identical rules (i.e. the law) may be applied differently. Whereas one jurist may choose to apply the law in a *sensible manner*, using the discretion available to seek a practical solution to a dispute, another jurist may choose to apply the law in a bureaucratic and rigid manner, perhaps to set an example or merely out of habit. Related to the topic of interest in this study, this means that although the actors may share the same identity as managers, they may still perceive the rules regulating the appropriate action for managers like themselves differently.

The above section reveals that it is essential to understand the processes through which rules are translated into actual behavior. Sometimes action reflects the prescriptions embedded in the rules in a straightforward way. For instance, being a "*good manager*" in a given organization can stand for knowing, accepting and following a variety of socially constructed and maintained rules that control individual behavior in considerable detail. A socially valid rule creates a thought, which applies to several specific situations (March, 1994). This means that most actors, most of the time, perceive the rule as a

“*fact*” that is not questioned, thus the actions that follow the rules are not questioned. Such a straightforward relation between rules and actions can most likely be observed in stable and well-defined contexts and situations, where the dominant institutions prescribe *when, how* and *why* the rules are to be acted upon.

If we relate this to the study reported in this thesis, we see that the more stable and less ambiguous the context surrounding the managers is, the less managers are likely to question the actions prescribed by the rules regulating their identities. If, for instance, the rules for the identity “*a good manager*” in a stable organization prescribes that “good managers” are expected to allocate time to participate in the weekly meetings, it is more unlikely that a manager who identifies himself as “*a good manager*” will question the value of participating in such meetings, and thus question the rule.

However, contexts are not always stable and well defined. Many managers face rapid changes and frequently experience new situations in their jobs. In more ambiguous contexts, actors have greater problems resolving the ambiguities and conflicts of self, situation and prescriptions for appropriate behavior. Furthermore, more ambiguous situations make it more complicated for the individuals to identify who or what they are, and what their identity implies in the specific situation. To predict actors’ behavior from knowledge about the roles, identities, rules, situations and institutions is thus described as a *non-trivial task* (March and Olsen 2004, p 8). In the following sections, I continue by discussing how actors’ identities and corresponding rules are evoked.

7.2.2.2 Evoking identities and rules

Not all parts of an individual’s identity are evoked or available at the same time. Different behavior, attitudes and motivations are invoked in different environments, in different situations and in different relationships. In some environments, situations and relationships, managers may not identify themselves as managers, but as mothers, co-

workers or friends instead. Moreover, not all potentially relevant rules are evoked at all times; some rules are overlooked, whereas others may be overrated.

According to March et al. (1994), which of the identities and rules that are evoked depends on the interaction among at least four common psychological mechanisms. The *first* mechanism is experimental learning: individuals *learn* to evoke or not evoke an identity in a situation, by experiencing rewards (or punishment) from doing so in the past. The *second* mechanism is *categorization*. Responses to situations tend to be organized around a few central conceptions of an identity. Central aspects of the self are likely to be evoked more frequently than others. A manager who always sees the world in terms of competition is likely to see the central categorizing feature of a situation to be its competitive character, whereas others may focus on other categorizing features. The *third* mechanism concerns *recency*; identities and rules that have recently been evoked are likely to be evoked again. This means that if a manager has participated in negotiations as an argumentative lawyer, he or she carries this identity over to other situations in which they are involved. The *fourth* and final mechanism is the *social context of others*. The real or imagined presence of others highlights social definitions of identities rather than personal ones, and often leads to closer conformity to social expectations. This means that which identity is evoked is influenced by whether the manager attends a meeting with others or works alone at his or her desk, for instance.

Relating *the logic of appropriateness* to this study, managers' handling of time is unlikely to be based on calculations of future consequences alone. Instead, managers are likely to also rely on the logic of appropriateness, involving managers' evaluations of their perceived identities, their perception of the situation, and the appropriate behavior for their identity in the given situation. Simply put, managers evaluate what is appropriate for managers like themselves when handling time at work.

Following rules of a role of identity is, according to March and Olsen (2004) "...a relatively complicated cognitive process involving thoughtful, reasoning behavior". However, from studies of managers and time, we know that not all of the managers'

decisions regarding how to spend their time results from of such complicated cognitive processes as the ones referred to in the above quotation. Sometimes managers' priorities of time rely more on *routines* and *habits*, then on active cognitive processes. This means that for us to be able to fully capture and understand the phenomenon of interest in this study – *how managers handle their time at work* – it would be insufficient to only include the two underlying logics of action in the revised research perspective. Instead, to fully understand how managers handle their time at work, we need to focus on both conscious and *less conscious* handling of time. More specifically, we need to probe and assess theoretical contributions that devote focus to different kinds of cognitive processes.

To complete the literature review, which has been conducted to develop a revised research perspective, we review and assess Langer's (1989) theory on mindfulness. More specifically, Langer's research focused on how individuals' cognitive processes are found to be conducted in *mindful*, as well as *mindless*, ways. This distinction is relevant to expand the understanding of how managers handle time. Hence, this literature review ends with a review of Langer's contribution.

7.3 Mindfulness and Mindlessness

“Mindlessness is the application of yesterday's business solutions to today's problems.”

“Mindfulness is attunement to today's demands to avoid tomorrow's difficulties.”

(Langer 1989: 152)

The first published work introducing the idea of *mindfulness and mindlessness*⁷⁶ was developed by Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz in 1978, when they conducted and reported three studies, which revealed that people may be processing less information than had

⁷⁶ Since mindlessness and mindfulness are compound words starting with the concept *mind*, a definition of *mind* is useful. A general definition found in the Oxford Dictionary of English defines mind as *the element of a person that enables them to be aware of the world and their experiences, to think, and to feel; the faculty of consciousness and thought*. A more specific definition was given by Weick and Roberts (1993:361) who worked within the same stream of literature as Langer, as they defined *mind* as, “...a dispositional term that denotes a propensity to act in a certain manner or style”.

been typically assumed. Langer et al. (1978) distinguished between *mindful* and *mindless* cognitive activities. When actors were observed to rely on what Langer et al. referred to as *mindful cognitive processes*, they were presumed to actively draw distinctions, form meanings and create new categories. In contrast, when the actors' cognitive activities were referred to as *mindless*, the individuals were assumed to rely rigidly on distinctions already drawn and previously developed categories. Mindlessness involved acting on the basis of an established formalized set of rules and attitudes. New events or situations were classified into preexisting categories. Moreover, Langer et al stated: “...*mindless behavior is rigidly dictated by the past and therefore much of the on-going present situation is hypothesized to go unexamined*” (1989).

Several researchers have contributed within this theoretical field. For instance, Brown and Ryan (2003) defined mindfulness as “...*enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality [A]...core characteristic of mindfulness can be described as open or receptive awareness and attention...which may be reflected in a more regular or sustained consciousness of ongoing events and experiences*” (pp. 822-823). However, although several researchers have introduced different definitions of *mindfulness*, Ellen Langer's contribution and definition of mindfulness have been recognized and adopted by several organizational researchers (e.g., Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 1999, all cited in (K. Weick, E & Putnam, 2006). Hence, in the following sections, I rely primarily on Langer's definitions.

Langer (1989) define **mindfulness** as:

- i) active differentiation and refinement of existing distinctions (Langer, 1989, p. 138),
- ii) creation of new discrete categories out of the continuous streams of events that flow through activities (Langer, op cit, p. 157),
- iii) And a more nuanced appreciation of context and of alternative ways to deal with it (Langer, op cit, p. 159).

Mindfulness has been described as a flexible state of mind, in which people are actively engaged in the present, notice new things and are sensitive to the context (E. J. Langer, 2000). A “mindful individual” is not bound by prescribed rigid categories; instead, he or she demonstrates substantial flexibility and perceives how changes in the environment can alter the meaning of a particular idea or behavior. The mindful person uses his or her awareness of multiple contexts to approach potential problems creatively (E. J. Langer, 2000).

Effects of mindfulness have been explored in various studies on a wide range of issues. For instance, mindful conceptualizing has been found to improve coordination (K. E. Weick & Roberts, 1993), reduce the likelihood and severity of organizational accidents (Weick et al., 1999) and produce more creative solutions (Langer, 2005).

Mindlessness is described as the opposite of mindfulness. Langer (2000) argued that when people act *mindlessly*, they:

- i) rely rigidly on past categories,
- ii) act on “automatic pilot,” out of routine or habit, without concentration or conscious thought,
- iii) Or fixate on a single perspective, without any awareness that things could be otherwise.

Mindlessness has been found to reduce creativity and cause people to see events in predetermined ways (Langer, 1989; E. Langer, 1989). The individual is thereby inhibited and deterred from reaching for new goals and deeper understandings of the world.

If relating theory on mindfulness and mindlessness to this study, we see that if managers handle their time *mindlessly*, they can be assumed to handle their time based on previous experiences, without examining potential new characteristics or features in the present situation. They can further be expected to handle and prioritize their time on “*auto pilot*”, i.e. without any conscious thoughts, and without awareness of how the current situation

they are in could be different from previous situations they have handled before. Moreover, *mindless handling of time* implies that the managers' previous patterns or habits with respect to how they have handled their time in the past will be habitually followed.

On the other hand, if managers handle their time *mindfully*, they can be expected to actively analyze the current situation they are in, searching for and noticing possible new aspects in the situation that should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, mindful handling of time implies being sensitive to the situation's distinctive features. Moreover, "mindful managers" can be expected to consciously regulate their handling of time to the distinct aspects of the current situation.

7.4 Summary of the expanded literature review

In the above sections, new theoretical approaches were consulted with the purpose of revising and broadening the existing perspective on managers' handling of time. Research focusing on: 1) *different underlying logics of action* (March & Heath, 1994; March et al., 1976), and 2) *mindless and mindful cognitive processing* (Langer, 1989; E. Langer, 1989) was thus probed. The contributions were critically assessed, and their relevance to this study discussed. Selected elements from each of the two lines of research were found relevant to illuminate the phenomenon of interest in this study, because of their particular focus on different cognitive aspects of the choice-processes. In the above sections I also outlined how the theoretical contributions could be linked to managers' handling of time. More specifically, I discussed: 1) how managers' handling of time could either be based on *the logic of consequences* or on *the logic of appropriateness*, and 2) how the managers could handle their time in mindless or mindful ways.

In the following sections, the selected theoretical contributions will be incorporated as I develop a revised and expanded research perspective.

7.5 A revised perspective on managers and time

To develop the revised perspective, I will first discuss how the different underlying logics of action could contribute to expand the understanding of how managers handle time, and thus should be incorporated into a revised research perspective. Thereafter, I will discuss the increased understanding that could arise from incorporating theory on mindful and mindless cognitive processes. Finally, the revised perspective is presented in the last part of this chapter.

7.4.1 Different underlying logics of action

When managers make choices and prioritize time, they can rely on different underlying logics of action. More specifically, managers may either rely on *the logic of consequences*, which implies that they are primarily concerned with the expected outcomes and consequences of each of the alternative ways to prioritize and spend their time. Alternatively, the managers may rely on *the logic of appropriateness*, which implies that the managers are primarily concerned with recognizing: i) what kind of situation they are in, ii) what identity they have in that situation, and finally iii) what the *appropriate* way to prioritize time would be for someone with their identity in that given situation.

However, although the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences in theory are portrayed as contrasts to each other, the dividing line between the two is harder to define in real life situations. In other words, the two underlying logics of action are easier to distinguish on the conceptual level than on the empirical level. For instance, in some situations *the appropriate behavior* could be to act as guided by calculations of the expected consequences. If, for example, two customer meetings have been scheduled at the same time and a manager must choose which of the meetings he or she should participate in, *the appropriate behavior* would be in many cases to consider (*calculate*) which of the two customers are most important for the organization and participate in the meeting with that customer. In other situations, acting *appropriately* according to expectations or norms is to choose the alternative that causes the best results

(consequences). Nevertheless, the two underlying logics of action are unquestionably different in nature and theoretically separable. And, although the dividing line between them in some situations may be complicated to define, the fundamental differences between the two logics make them a useful approach in this study.

The different underlying logics of action are expected to influence the *managers' handling of time* in the following ways:

- 1) *The managers' perception* of the choice situation: what clues in the choice situations get the managers' attention; do they primarily focus on expectations, norms and rules prescribing the *appropriate ways* to handle time, or are the managers primarily concerned with the *consequences* of the different alternative ways to handle time?
- 2) *How the managers execute choice/prioritize time*: do the managers act according to what is perceived appropriate, and follow the regulating *rules*, or do they prioritize the alternative way to spend time that yields the highest benefit?

Summarized, the different underlying logics of action are expected to influence what we have referred to as *managers' handling of time*. This is illustrated in Figure 7.1 below.

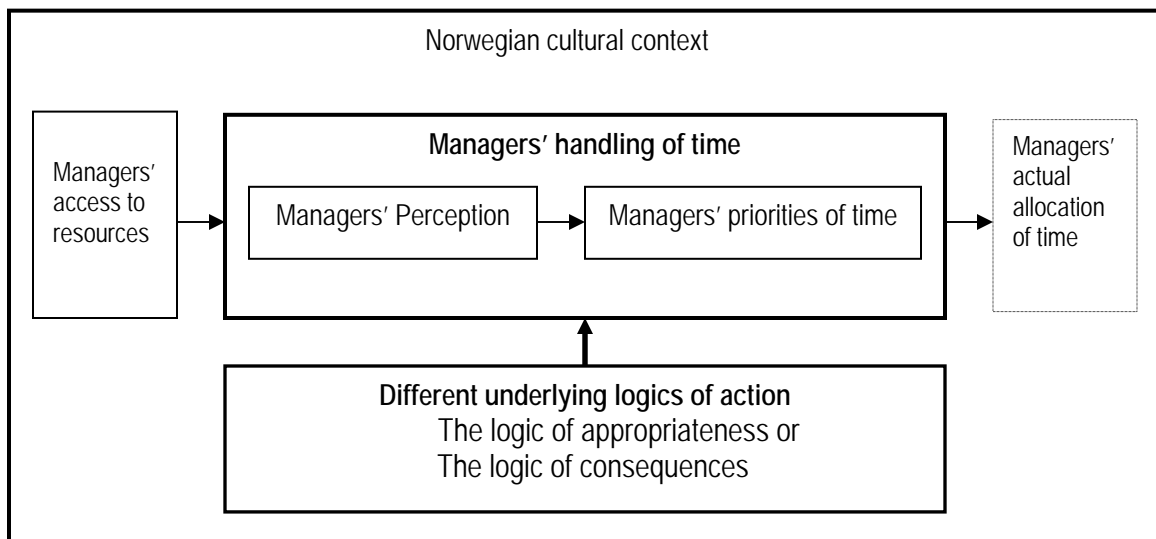


Figure 7.1 Preliminary revised research perspective

Figure 7.1 illustrates how different underlying logics of action are expected to influence managers' handling of time, which includes both the *managers' perception* and the *managers' priorities of time*.

The Norwegian cultural context is retained as in the original research perspective presented in chapter 2. Moreover, the managers' actual allocation of time is also retained as in the original perspective, although in this study I do not map how Norwegian managers actually spend their time. Main focus is to broaden the understanding of the processes that eventually *result* in managers allocating or spending their time as they do. The emphasis of this study is illustrated in Figure 7.1 through the use of bold types.

However, in the literature review we also advocated a need to include theory focusing on the managers' cognitive processes with varying levels of consciousness. Thus, in the following sections, I will expand the revised perspective further, by incorporating aspects from the theory on mindfulness and mindlessness (Langer, 1989).

7.4.2 Mindfulness and mindlessness

Managers may handle their time more or less *mindfully* or *mindlessly*. This implies that managers may rely on active, conscious evaluations of the situations they are in, actively searching for tailored solutions as to how they should handle time in the given situation (*a mindful approach*). Or managers may handle their time in less conscious manners; they may be following their habits or routines, and act as if on “autopilot”. In other words, managers may rely on earlier patterns and handle their time in the same ways as they are used to and have done before, without actively analyzing to what extent the current given situation is similar or deviates from the previous situations (*mindless approach*).

Firstly, these different cognitive (mindless or mindful) processes will influence the *managers' perceptions* of the choice-situations they are in (the first element in the managers' handling of time). Do the managers look for new and distinguishing factors in the situation, for which they may develop a tailored way to handle their time, or do they unconsciously look for aspects that match earlier situations they have been in (the confirmation trap ((Lai, 1999)), to evoke alternative solutions that were applied earlier and which can be re-applied in the current situation?

Secondly, these differences in the cognitive processes will also influence the *managers' priorities of time* (the second element in the managers' handling of time). The managers may either prioritize their time in *mindful* and *aware* manners or in *mindless, atomized* manners. Thus, the two different cognitive processes will also influence the managers' handling of time. How these processes influence the managers' handling of time is illustrated in Figure 7.2 below. In this figure, the additional theoretical contributions are combined and incorporated into the final revised (expanded) research perspective.

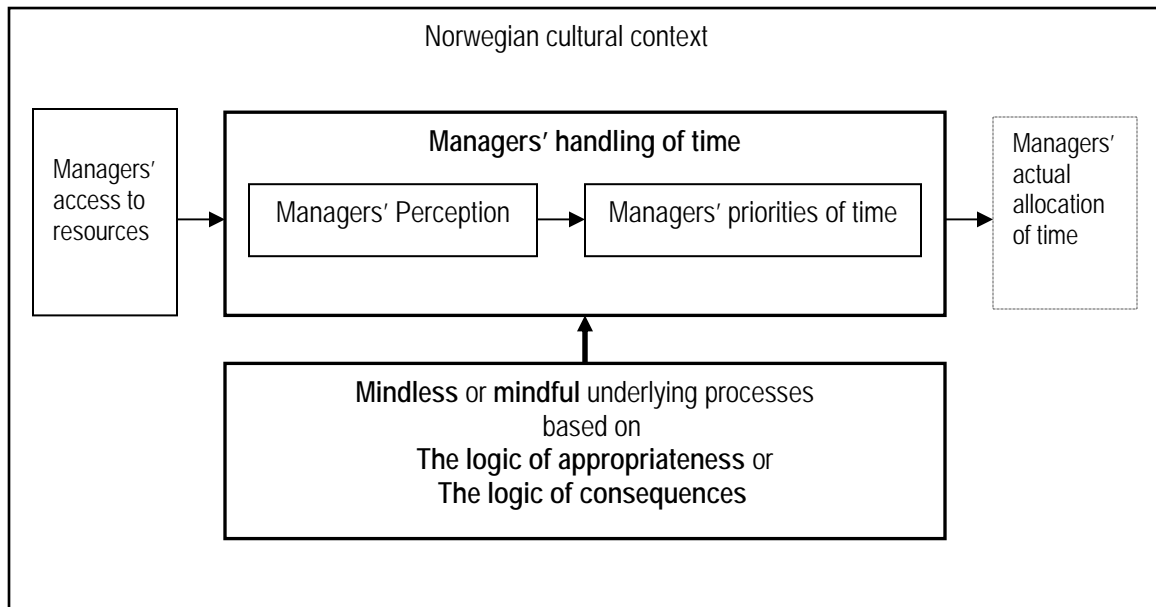


Figure 7.2 A revised research perspective on managers and time

Figure 7.2 shows how the research perspective developed in Chapter 3 has been revised and expanded, as research contributions by March et al. (1994) and Langer (1989) are incorporated. As discussed above, the revised research perspective illustrates a more specific focus on the *cognitive aspects of managers' handling of time*. The main focus is illustrated through the use of bold types in figure 7.2.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how *managers' perceptions* of the available resources could represent one reason for the moderate empirical support the hypotheses received. For instance, if a manager perceived professional advice from his or her co-workers as indirect criticism, access to such advice would certainly not be perceived as a resource. In the previous chapter, I concluded that if a resource was to be useful to the managers, and hence effect their perceived room for exercising choice, it is required that managers' actually *perceive* them as resources (ref. the above example), and that managers find ways to make *practical use* of the resources.

However, to expand the understanding of what managers see as *useful resources*, we need to expand the understanding of how managers may think and reason. The extent to which a resource is perceived as useful is clearly influenced by the *underlying logic of action* on which the managers rely. Moreover, if managers *mindlessly* rely on old habits and routines, it may be harder to find ways to make practical use of the resources to which they have access.

Through incorporating the different underlying logics of action and theory on mindful and mindless cognitive processes into the revised research perspective, we aim at increasing the comprehension of how managers' think and reason when handling time. Furthermore, such increased understanding will provide a new perspective to increase the insights about how managers' handle their time.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter, a revised research perspective on managers and their handling of time has been developed. The revised perspective was developed based on shortcomings in the original research perspective and theoretical approach, which was revealed in previous chapters. More specifically, the previous chapter ended with a discussion of several arguments for revising and extending the research perspective. Although the original research perspective formed an adequate basis for addressing the first research question (*What do Norwegian managers pay attention to when making choices and prioritizing time at work?*), it was found somewhat less adequate as basis for addressing the second research question (*Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so: how and to what extent?*) Although the analyses performed to address the second research question revealed a number of interesting, statistically significant results, the findings also suggested that the approach initially applied in this thesis was not optimal to fully capture and comprehend the underlying processes of managers' handling of time.

Thus, in this chapter I have reviewed and critically assessed research theory focusing on: 1) different underlying logics of action (March, et al., 1994), and 2) mindless and mindful cognitive processes (Langer, 1989). Based on the review and assessment, elements extracted from these lines of research were found to offer relevant contributions to the development of the revised perspective. The main purpose of the revised perspective was to increase the understanding of how managers handle their time, through a particular focus on understanding the underlying processes. Finally, this chapter ended with a presentation and discussion of the final revised research perspective on managers and time.

8. Research methods

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodology underlying the empirical examination of the second part of this study is discussed. This includes a discussion of the *research design*, the *research setting* and the *data collection*. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research design. The research design is the result of requirements given by the nature of the research question addressed in this second part of the thesis. In the first part of the thesis, a quantitative approach was found to be the most suitable method to address the first two research questions. In this second part of the thesis, the phenomenon of interest – how managers handle time at work – is investigated from an alternative perspective, in which other and supplementary aspects are emphasized. More specifically, the aim is to broaden the understanding of the processes underlying managers' handling of time.

Based on the research design, a suitable research setting and sample has been chosen, and the most prevailing measurement issues are discussed. Next, the process of data collection and data analysis is discussed with respect to procedures and challenges in gathering and analyzing data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the chosen methodology.

8.2 Research design

The research design of scientific study depends upon how much existing theory there is within the domain of interest, and the study's research question. The research question guiding the design of the second part of this study is concerned with *how* Norwegian managers handle their time at work. Focus is particularly aimed at developing the understanding of the underlying processes of managers' handling of time from a new perspective, as reflected in the research question that asks: *to what extent and in what ways is managers' handling of time at work a result of choice?* As discussed in previous chapters, this is a question that has only received limited attention in previous research

and these processes have remained less well understood. Hence, to address this question, there are certain requirements that the research design must fulfill. The most prevailing requirements are discussed in the next sections.

Criteria for design

The lack of previous research focusing particularly on the underlying processes of managers' handling of time made me turn to new theoretical contributions, to expand the understanding of the processes of interest. More specifically, I probed research focusing on: i) different underlying logics of action on which managers' handling of time may be based, and ii) to what degree the managers' handling of time can or should be viewed as the result of *mindful* cognitive processes. Hence, this involves applying existing theories in a new field where they have not been applied before. This implies a need for an *open and explorative approach*. The research design must thus provide the researcher with possibilities to *explore i) the managers' underlying logics of action and ii) the levels of reflection*.

To gain insights into managers' underlying logics of action and levels of reflection, *access to managers who are willing to share their thoughts* is required. The managers' personal reflections and thoughts are not the kind of information that can be found in any existing registers or reports. *Access to managers* thus constitutes another requirement that the research design of this study must fulfill.

Moreover, the processes that this study aims to investigate are not directly observable. Thus, the research design must enable the researcher to approach the phenomenon of interest in a way that makes it possible to *capture processes that are not directly observable*.

Finally, there is reason to assume individual differences between managers. However, since limited a priori knowledge within this domain exists, it is not possible to formulate predefined answers that can fully capture these differences. Hence, another requirement

that the research design must fulfill is that the research design must provide the researcher with *possibilities to capture individual differences* among the managers.

Summarized, based on the amount of research available within the domain of interest, and the research questions, the following requirements are identified: *First*, access to managers who are willing to share their thoughts, experiences and reflections is needed; *secondly*, the design must enable me to capture processes that are not directly observable; *thirdly*, an open and explorative approach is required, as there is limited a priori knowledge about the phenomenon of interest; *fourthly*, the design must make it possible to capture individual differences.

Choice of design

Based on the requirements discussed above, a *qualitative approach* is chosen for this part of the study. Quantitative approaches are more appropriate for studying well-structured problems, based on well-developed research. Since research on managers' handling of time remains less understood and the existing knowledge is limited, a qualitative approach is found to be the best way to arrive at an encompassing understanding of the underlying processes of Norwegian managers' handling of time, and to capture the expected complexity in the phenomenon of interest. Concerns of external validity were thus traded off against opportunities to gain insights into an yet incompletely documented phenomenon.

The choice of qualitative research design is primarily based on the requirements derived from the nature of the research question guiding this study, as discussed in the above sections. It is, however, also partly based on calls for more qualitative research on managers and time found in existing research. Much of the existing research on how actors relate to time in organizational settings has primarily applied quantitative methods, which Hassard (1996) notes, "*...mostly fail to capture the complexity of industrial temporality...*" (1996: 585). Thus, Hassard as well as others (e.g. Adam, 1990; Lee & Uebenau, 1999; Nandhakumar, 2001) have argued for more qualitatively oriented

research, which they assert might better capture different experiences of time in work organizations. To be able to capture individual differences with respect to how managers experience and handle time is one of the requirements that the research design of this study must fulfill. Hence, there is concurrence between Hassard's arguments and this requirement that has been identified as relevant to the present study; both point towards a qualitative approach. A *qualitative, open and partly explorative approach* is thus chosen in this study, because such an approach: *i*) provides wide-ranging information about the phenomenon of interest, and *ii*) allows the researcher to develop or adjust the study based on findings revealed during the data collection period.

Moreover, one of the objectives of this study is to integrate new theoretical approaches into the phenomenon of interest. To my knowledge such integration has not yet been observed; hence integration may bring the research on this phenomenon further. The study will rely on previous research with regards to different underlying logics of action (March, 1988; March & Heath, 1994; March & Olsen, 1989) and differences in the managers' level of reflection (Langer, 1989; Langer, 1997). These contributions have been incorporated into the revised research perspective, which serves as a theoretical platform for the study. This implies that although the research design of this study includes explorative elements and approaches, a "*grounded theory*" approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) is not found suitable for this study.

Several different methods can be applied in qualitative studies, such as *observations* or *focus groups* for instance. However, since the purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the underlying processes of managers' handling of time and their personal thoughts and reflections, observations were not considered to represent an appropriate approach, since our focus was aimed at the managers' thoughts and reflections, not their observable behavior. Moreover, individual one-to-one communication was preferable to group discussions in *focus groups*, because of the study's aim was to uncover and explore managers' individual, personal reflections and experiences. *Personal semi-structured interviews* are chosen as method in this study for a number of reasons.

First, the goal of this study is not to clarify or establish a set of simple facts; instead, the aim is to investigate managers' personal reflections, interpretations and individual stories. This means that each of the managers interviewed should be given the time and opportunity to describe and elaborate on his (or her) thoughts and reflections, and to dwell on aspects that he (or she) finds particularly relevant and important. Personal, semi-structured interviews allow such individual adaptations and adjustments.

Secondly, from the literature review we know that many managers live more or less constantly with more or less explicitly expressed expectations to handle their time at work in appropriate manners, to be effective and efficient, even if experiencing haste or feeling severely pressured for time (Perlow, 1997). Moreover, these aspects of managers' jobs are often perceived as demanding and difficult to handle. Some managers may even feel that their attempts to handle their time have been unsuccessful. Hence, I emphasized to create of an atmosphere of trust and openness, in which the managers could open up and speak honestly, without fear of being given away if they felt unsuccessful in their handling of time. In personal interviews, the researcher can evoke an atmosphere of trust, for instance through promising to keep the information confidential and through expressing appreciation for the challenges managers face when handling time at work.

Thirdly, there is often little time and room for managers to reflect upon how they handle their time in their daily work. This means that the managers might need some time to elaborate their thoughts. Personal interviews allow flexibility with respect to time. If a manager has a lot on his (or her) mind with respect to certain aspects of the topic, then the personal interview can easily be prolonged. Each interview was initially designed to last approximately 1.5 hours. However, an hour extra was assigned to each interview, in case the manager had a lot on (his or) her mind. It is important to ensure sufficient time for the managers to elaborate their thoughts and reflections without being cut off by the clock.

8.3 Data collection

As described in the above sections, the data for this study was collected through personal, in-depth interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and based on the revised research perspective. The interview guide consisted of straightforward simple questions regarding the managers and their backgrounds, questions about the nature of and perceived challenges in the managers' jobs, in addition to a number of *open-ended questions* regarding the managers' perceptions of time and how they handled time at work. The open-ended questions allowed for discovering new issues that the managers found particularly relevant, and which could serve to develop our understanding of the phenomenon. Although the topics in the interview guide remained the same throughout the data collection, the exploratory design also allowed adjustments during the process of gathering data. In the following sections, the process of gathering data is presented and discussed.

8.3.1 The research setting and sample

The finance sector constituted the setting for this qualitative part of our study of managers' handling of time. The data in this part of the study was gathered through face-to-face, in-depth interviews with selected *managers at the lower and middle levels in a Norwegian bank*. The bank is large according to Norwegian standards, and is represented by branch offices across the country. In the following sections, arguments for the choice of research setting are presented.

One reason for choosing the finance sector as research setting for this study is that the finance sector has been a turbulent industry over the last decades, characterized by a major number of change processes, such as technological innovations, substantial reductions in manning, and a large number of mergers and acquisitions. The rapid changing environment has created unpredictable working conditions for many managers in the sector. Moreover, another the finance sector's great focus on performance (which constitutes a general pressure on managers to handle their time in ways which contribute

to organizational performance) also makes the finance sector an interesting context for this study of managers' handling of time.

One reason for choosing a bank as a research setting for this study was a SNF⁷⁷ research project, through which contact with central sources in a large Norwegian bank was established and access granted. During this research project, which focused on *managers' room for choice* (Espedal, 2005), a series of meetings between Assistant Professor Bjarne Espedal (main advisor on this thesis), a human resources manager from the bank and myself were arranged. The choice of research setting was thus influenced by our access to this bank.

The bank had just completed a major merger when the interviews were conducted. This merger inflicted the managers in the bank with a lot of new situations, caused by for instance new routines, new structure and organizing, new co-workers and (to a certain extent) new management values. Moreover, the merger and all the new aspects the managers had to react to, also entailed increased time pressure for many managers. This situation was found to make the bank a particularly interesting research setting for this study.

Other alternative research settings were also evaluated. More specifically, we considered studying: *a) non-profit organizations* (because of their modest focus on financial surpluses, we were interested in exploring if and how this would effect managers' handling of time), and *b) small organizations* (because each manager is often involved in a greater variety of activities in a smaller company, we were curious about how this would effect the managers handling of time). Moreover, we also considered doing comparative analyses, in which findings from the bank could be compared with findings revealed from analyses of interviews with managers working in non-profit organizations and/or small companies.

⁷⁷ SNF, The Institute for Research in Economics and Business Administration, is a market-based research organization. The Norwegian name of the institution is "Samfunns- og næringslivsforskning AS", abbreviated SNF, which is the acronym also used in English.

However, the established access to the bank was considered an important advantage with respect to the resource limitations regulating this Ph.D. work. Thus, I decided to start the study by interviewing a number of managers from the bank, and then potentially extend the study at a later stage. Nevertheless, in the early phases of the analyses (during the data collection phase), I realized that I already had extensive amounts of information from the interviews with the bank-managers. Besides, based on the insights gained from the preliminary analyses, I realized that the study's focus on the underlying processes of managers handling of time made factors other than organizational context the prevailing dimensions. Hence, it would be very hard to isolate the effects from differences in organizational size or type.

The sample

A total of 10 managers, working in different branches of the bank, were selected and interviewed. The selection of managers was not based on a theoretical foundation, because of the limited existing research. However, the findings in the first part of this thesis indicated certain interesting differences between managers of different *ages* and *genders*. Hence, I aimed at including managers of both genders and of different ages in the sample⁷⁸. In other words, the selection was not based on theoretical expectations, yet it was not a random selection. The criteria used to select managers are discussed further later in this section.

To get in contact with the managers, the human resources manager made a list with contact information for a number of managers in the bank. The HR manager also sent the managers an email in which he informed them briefly about the research project, and encouraged them to reply positively when they were contacted. This could represent a source of sampling error, since I had no influence on who was asked to participate. I did, however, not interview all the managers who were contacted and encouraged to participate by the HR manager. Instead, I selected a few, whom I contacted and made

⁷⁸ An overview of the respondents, their gender, age and experience is presented in the Appendix.

appointments to interview. Then, after I had conducted the first 3-4 interviews, I applied the “snow-ball method” to get names of potential new interviewees: after each interview we asked the manager interviewed if he (or she) could think of someone he (or she) believed would be interested in participating in this study, for instance because they appeared to be constantly busy, never appeared hectic, or in any other way appeared to handle time in specific ways. The managers were thus selected based on the criteria that they appeared to their colleagues as relating to time in a noticeable way. The rationale for applying this criterion was that the purpose of this study is to explore a phenomenon that has yet received little attention in research: the study is *not* an attempt to provide a general, total picture of how Norwegian managers handle their time at work. Moreover, there were also other reasons for choosing this approach. *First*, the selection new informants after one has interviewed the previous informant is recommended as a way to obtain maximal variation (Johannessen, Kristoffersen, & Tufte, 2005). *Secondly*, I wanted to include potentially *extreme cases* in the selection, to provide breadth in the data and to ensure a certain variation in the variables on which we focused. *Thirdly*, I searched for potential *particularly interesting cases*. Since I did not know the managers, it would be impossible for me to identify such particularly interesting cases. Thus, I had to rely on the interviewed managers’ information and judgments.

8.3.2 The interviews

Each interview lasted for approx. 1.5 to 2 hours each and was conducted in the interviewee’s offices or at meeting rooms that they had booked at the bank. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the researcher to be open to other upcoming issues than the ones covered in the interview guide. These would typically be issues brought up by the interviewee or the researcher, topics that were introduced during the interviews or topics that were introduced when the conversation took other directions than the ones foreseen when constructing the interview guide. There could also be rather specific questions asked by the researcher to follow-up on something particularly interesting mentioned by the managers in one of their answers. Some of these unforeseen issues brought up by the managers were incorporated into the interview guide, so that the

later interviews could also cover these issues. See Appendix X for an example of an interview guide used in this study. In addition, some of the interviews were followed up by phone contact to clarify or spell out particular statements or the manager could supplement his statements from the interviews.

The main focus in the collection of data was to gain insight into the managers' thoughts and reflections about own time handling. Insight into such topics requires descriptive data where the managers describe their thoughts and reflections in more depth, as opposed to quantitative data where the focus is aimed at revealing *how often* various situations occur or *how many times* something is conducted, for instance throughout a regular day or week.

All the interviews were taped and transcribed. Shortly after each interview (within the first few hours), a summary of the interview was written where key points were elaborated, and different potentially relevant information was written down (for instance, how often the manager checked his watch during the interview, if she/he did multiple things during the interview, such as answering phone calls or answer people asking questions at the door, whether the manager took time to show me around the offices before or after the interview, to what extent the manager appeared to be interested in or focused on the topic, and so forth). In addition, I also made notes about my interpretations of what the manager may have meant "between the lines". I also made general notes about each interviewee (for instance how interested he/she appeared to be in the topic, how easily the answers came, etc.) as well as the general, overall impression of the interview. Some of the managers were contacted again after some time, to follow up and elaborate on specific issues, or to clarify imprecise or ambiguous statements. When writing up these notes, a *narrative strategy*, a method that involves constructing a detailed story from raw data (Czarniawska, 2001), was employed as a first step in the data analyses. The process of analyzing the data is further discussed in the following sections.

8.4 Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The data consisted of the interviews as well as the additional follow-up discussions. In addition, the meetings, which I and Professor Bjarne Espedal had with the HR manager from the bank, also provided relevant ideas and insights that were applied in the analyses. The HR manager showed a sincere interest in understanding the prime movers of managers' room for choice, which resulted in interesting discussions about managers' handling of time and different aspects related to it. Although the meetings were not strictly speaking part of the data gathered for this study, the topics that we discussed were closely related to the phenomenon of interest in this thesis. Hence, the meetings were relevant in the analysis phase, as they contributed to my understanding of the phenomenon of interests and to the development of the study reported here. Moreover, the meetings also provided me with more knowledge about the bank and its leadership values and leadership philosophy, which later enabled me to understand some of the statements the managers made during the interviews.

The analysis of qualitative data is known to *not* proceed in a linear process, rather it is typically an iterative process between *using theory* and *analyzing data* in order to find answers to the research problem (Pettigrew, 1990). This was also describing for the process of analyzing the interviews conducted in this study. Although the revised theoretical perspective (as derived and described in Chapter 7) provided a valuable guide for the data collection and the interviews, the analyses of the interviews was not a straightforward, linear process. Since the interviews were only semi-structured, the respondents brought up a variety of topics and issues, which they found important and relevant in association with the topic of the interview. However, these issues were not necessarily in line with the topics covered by the interview guide. Still, some of them offered new and interesting approaches to the research problem, approaches that in some cases were explored and related to existing theory. Some findings revealed in some of the later interviews, also shed new light on issues that were brought up in earlier interviews,

and hence made it necessary to go back and reinterpret statements or points made there, and to look for other themes and patterns than those initially in focus.

As this study was partly exploratory, the theoretical basis for the study was not definitely set in advance of the interviews. However, the study did have a *theoretically based point of departure*, but it also allowed for the theoretical framework to be developed further, as result of preliminary findings. More specifically, it was through analyses of the first few interviews that I discovered the variety in the managers' level of reflection. Initially, I had only included the different *logics of action* (March & Olsen, 1989) in the preliminary revised perspective (as presented in Figure 7.1). But, based on the preliminary analyses of the first interviews, I discovered substantial differences in the managers' level of reflection. I found the differences quite interesting, and thus searched theory for research that addressed similar differences. Through this literature search, I discovered the contributions on mindfulness and mindlessness by Langer (1989; Langer, 1997). Focus on these differences was then included in the remaining interviews, the rest of the analyses and in the final revised research perspective (as presented in Figure 7.2).

8.4.1 Analysis during the data collection

The analysis of the interviews was a process that started as soon as the first interview was completed. Although all the managers I contacted agreed to participate in the study, getting access to the managers' time and attention was challenging. Hence, the interviews were conducted over a time span of approximately six months. This means that the analysis during the data collection also spanned a parallel period of time. In addition, some of the ideas and themes in the interview guide were conceived even earlier, in the initial meetings with the HR manager in the bank, which were arranged a few weeks before the first interview. This means that there was a rather large time span from when the first work was done to plan the interviews until the last interview was conducted and transcribed. Postponing all data analysis until after all interviews were completed would have made it hard to keep an overview, as well as to remember different relevant issues,

comments and concerns that came up during the interviews. Even if the interviews have been transcribed, there are always important aspects that do not appear in written transcripts. This could typically be ideas and connections I thought of on the way, or interpretations of what the interviewee had referred to by saying things in a particular manner, and so forth. To keep track of this, comprehensive summaries, consisting of both descriptive and more analytical parts, were written shortly after each interview. Consequently, the data analyses and the data collection ran side-by-side for the period of time it took to carry out the interviews.

The preliminary thoughts and findings, which were revealed through early phases in the analysis, also enabled me to develop the interview guide further between the interviews. In addition, the preliminary analysis contributed to the development of the research perspective of the study. This was partly because I became aware of new, relevant dimensions (such as the level of reflection) and partly because I discovered links and relationships of which I had not initially thought. In other words, this was the iterative process Pettigrew (1990) refers to, where going back and forth between theory and the analysis of the interviews is essential in developing the understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

8.4.2 Analysis after the data collection

Rather shortly after the interview period was finished, Assistant Professor Bjarne Espedal (main dissertation advisor for this thesis) and I wrote a SNF⁷⁹ working paper⁸⁰ based on selected findings revealed through preliminary analysis of the interviews. The working paper focused on the managers' *room for choice* and Stewart's (1982a, 1983b) CCD model was applied as analytical model. Writing this working paper together with Professor Espedal provided a good start on the after-data collection analysis of the interviews. In the process of writing the paper, Professor Espedal and I discussed various

⁷⁹ SNF (Senter for Næringslivsforskning; Institute for Research in Economics and Business Administration in English) is a market-based research organization with academic ties to NHH.

⁸⁰ (SNF Arbeidsnotat A35/05)

possible approaches to the data and the information that emerged from the interviews. We further discussed different interpretations of some of the interviewees' statements and answers, and these discussions made me aware of several angles to the interviews, which I would not have seen without our discussions. To analyze and discuss the interviews with another researcher, instead of just analyzing them all alone at my desk was extremely valuable to increase my comprehension of the interviews and their meaning. Hence, co-writing the working paper was an important part of the after data collection analyses of the interviews.

To analyze the data, both the written transcripts of each interview and the sound files were used. Through listening to the interviews over and over again, my comprehension and overview of their contents was increased. Listening to the sound files rather than just reading the transcripts also enabled me to capture the managers' tone of voice, which was sometimes used to underline or emphasize certain points and sometimes used to underscore a more sarcastic tone. If I had only worked with the written transcripts, this information would have been less available. Moreover, it was particularly useful to go back and listen to the first few interviews after all of the interviews were completed. It made me discover how some of the statements could be interpreted in more ways than I had initially thought.

To analyze the data, the managers' statements were coded and categorized according to *themes*. Initially, the themes were built upon the theoretical framework and included the variables in focus in this framework. More specifically, I coded the statements to the *logic of consequences* and *the logic of appropriateness*. To uncover whether the managers displayed any of the underlying logics of action, as described by March (1989), different strategies were applied: i) I observed the managers and their behavior in the interview situation and in relation to their coworkers when I visited them for the interview, ii) I aimed at uncovering what the managers perceived as *most essential* in their jobs, through asking the managers directly and in more indirect ways, through analyzing the sum of the managers' statements and their displayed focus throughout the interview, and iii) the managers were asked to explain *what* (factors/aspects/features)

they found relevant to pay attention to when they prioritized their time, and also *why* they saw these factors as particularly important.

To distinguish between the two underlying logics the following criterion was used; all statements that revealed *calculations* and concerns for *expected outcomes, results* and *consequences* in any form or shape were first coded as the logic of consequences, whereas all statements focusing on *roles, expectations, norms* and what was *appropriate, proper* or *suitable* were coded as the logic of appropriateness. However, these categories were soon found to be too broad and extensive. The interviews contained a lot more information that could not be captured by these categories. Hence, a more detailed categorization was deduced from the interviews (rather than from the theoretical framework).

The first additional theme uncovered from analyzing the first interviews was *differences in the managers' displayed level of reflection*. These differences were already noticeable when the preliminary analyses of the first few interviews were conducted. As recommended by Eisenhardt (1989), I turned to existing literature, in search of relevant research to explain and understand the findings revealed through the preliminary analyses. More precisely, I probed research by Langer (1989) on mindful and mindless cognitive processing. Langer's theoretical contribution was found to be suitable to explain the uncovered differences; hence the contribution was integrated into the research perspective.

The categorization of the degree to which the managers appeared as mindless or mindful was based on the following criteria, first the managers' general statements were analyzed and any statement indicating *active reflection, considerations, attention, heedfulness* or similar was categorized as mindfulness. On the other hand, any statement indicating that the managers handled their time with *less attention, were unthinkingly prioritizing time, acting as on autopilot, unconsciously accepting* things as they were, or similar statements, was categorized as mindlessness. In addition, towards the end of the last interviews (after I had discovered the differences related to the level of reflection), the managers were also

asked to describe *if*, how and *to what extent* they thought about or reflected upon their own time at work and how to prioritize and manage it. Although there was a danger of influencing the variables through asking about them (as discussed in later sections of this chapter), I chose to include this question to directly address the managers' level of reflection.

From these analyses the idea of a proposed typology was derived. The typology, which is presented in the next chapter, consists of four categories combining the theoretical contributions by March (1989) and Langer (1989). The four categories were partly derived from the analyses of the empirical data and partly from the theoretical basis of the study. This typology was presented in various settings, and feedback from other researchers and fellow Ph.D. students were incorporated. The development of the typology was also an important element of the data analyses, as the typology involved developing four new and narrower categories.

In addition to the themes discussed above, the analyses also revealed interesting differences related to the managers' *social support*. To give and receive social support were thus revealed as potentially interesting categories, which could have been elaborated further. The analyses also revealed possible categories related to family situation. However, these categories were not pursued, because of this study's focus on managers' underlying cognitive processes when handling time.

Finally, the analyses also revealed differences related to the managers' age. It was striking how all the older managers (above 55 years) brought up age as relevant to their handling of time, whereas the younger managers appeared less preoccupied with this. After discovering the age-related differences, I again turned to theory in search of explanations. Because the pattern revealed regarding age was linkable to theory focusing on relevant cognitive aspects (tacit knowledge, (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), I chose to include this finding in the discussion.

Writing up the findings

A number of different styles have been used to present qualitative research, and often a description of the data precedes the analysis (Stensaker, 2002). In this thesis, the theory is first introduced, and then the data is presented and analyzed interchangeably. This is referred to as a “*tell-and-show, show-and-tell*” style (Golden-Biddle, 1997; Huff, 1999), consisting of a mixture of descriptions, supported by quotations, and analyses. Rather than structuring the presentation strictly in terms of first describe and then analyze, the presentation and discussion of the findings are structured according to the theoretical basis.

8.5 Methodological strengths and weaknesses

In every empirical study there are various methodological challenges of which the researcher must be aware. All methodologies have their strengths and weaknesses. In the following sections we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this study.

Since the data collection and analyses were guided by a theoretically deduced model, there is a risk that this theoretical framework has been “forced on the data”, since the focus primarily was aimed at the key variables in the model. However, although the revised research perspective focused on the process of gathering and analyzing the data, the analyses were also kept open to what the data were “saying”. To interpret and understand what the data were saying required sensitivity, openness and creativity, therefore I actively looked for other interpretations of the data than those guided by the research perspective. During the analyses, I discovered different themes, and their relevance to the research questions was evaluated. Two examples of themes that were discovered were differences in the managers’ level of reflection and differences among managers of different ages.

In this study, I have encompassed new theoretical approaches in a field that has been characterized as *undeveloped* and *poorly understood* (Ancona, Okhuysen et al., 2001). Through this (partly exploratory) study, gaps in the existing research are addressed from

new theoretical and methodological angles. Such studies are called for in previous research, hence the chosen methodological approach represents a strength to this study. Through its qualitative approach the study has uncovered promising insights regarding managers' handling of time. However, the limited number of interviews represents a limitation to this study, which should be recognized when interpreting the findings. Nevertheless, the insights revealed through this study form an interesting point of departure of future research. There are also challenges related to applying qualitative methods. Some of the most prevailing challenges related to the study's validity and reliability are discussed in the following sections.

8.5.1 Validity

Simply put, validity refers to whether what we measure in a study is what we intend to measure. In the following sections, various challenges related to the validity of this study are discussed.

External validity concerns the degree to which a study's findings can be generalized beyond the immediate study (Yin, 2003). The primary objective of this partly explorative study has been to shed light on a phenomenon that is still poorly understood, not to come up with universally representative findings. Hence, more research is needed before the findings in this study can be generalized to a wide population. An essential distinction has been drawn between studies that aim to *test* theory and studies aiming to *build* theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Since the aim in this study is to build - not to test - theory, external validity was not a prime concern. The purpose of the study was to shed light on a yet poorly understood phenomenon. Moreover, the data for this study is gathered from *one* site (a bank), in *one* cultural context (the Norwegian), and this represent limitations to the external validity of this study. To address this limitation, there is a need to expand the study to other contexts. The results revealed in this study should, nevertheless, be viewed as interesting points of departure for future research.

The use of retrospective self-reports

In this study the interviewed managers are asked to reconstruct and self report on how they handle their time. This means that the processes of interest are not studied in real-time, but the managers are asked to recall and report in retrospect. There are several challenges related to applying such a method (Schwarz, 1999).

First, a key issue when relying on self reports is to what extent the respondents' understanding of the questions matches the researchers' understanding and the intention behind the questions. There are two levels of understanding; *the semantic or literal meaning* of the questions (i.e. to what extent do the respondents actually understand the words) and *the pragmatic meaning* (i.e. to what extent do the respondents understand what the researcher wants to know). To address the first level of understanding (the literal meaning), I used a straightforward language in the interviews, avoiding vocabulary or expressions from theory which could be difficult for the managers to understand or that could easily be misunderstood. To address the second level of understanding (the pragmatic meaning) I attempted to explain and elaborate what I was interested to find out.

Secondly, unless the behavior the respondents are asked to retrospectively account for is rare or of considerable importance, respondents are unlikely to have detailed representations available in their memory. According to Schwarz (1999) "...retrospective behavioral reports are highly fallible and strongly affected by the specifics of the research instrument used". Hence, when I asked the managers to recall, reconstruct and tell me how they handle their time at work, it is important to be aware that their answers are influenced by the situation and by the questions I ask. The questions asked evoke associations that are likely to influence the managers' answers. Moreover, unless the managers perceive the topic of discussion (their own handling of time) as important, they might not have any specific or detailed representations available. Still, given general norms of conversational conduct, the parties in a conversation feel obligated to provide the information that the questioner is interested in. This means that the managers may feel obligated to provide an answer to my questions; even if they initially might not have

given the topic addressed in my questions much attention. The managers' answers may thus be produced there and then in the interview situation, rather than reflecting the managers' "true" way of handling time. This may represent a threat to the validity of the study.

Influencing the variables through asking about them?

As discussed in the above sections, I discovered noticeable variations early with respect to the managers' level of reflection regarding how they handle their time. This evoked my interest and led us to pursue this topic in later interviews. However, a major challenge when studying the managers' level of thought and reflections about their own management of time is a well-known and longstanding problem in the social sciences: to what extent can people give meaningful answers to questions about mental processes of which they are not necessarily or only partially aware? These difficulties have been well summarized by Nisbett and De-Camp Wilson (1977). A concern in this study has thus been that when answering questions, the managers could alter their initial ideas about how much they were thinking or reflecting about the way they handled their time, thus making their accounts spuriously over-sophisticated and significantly distorting the understanding of their initial level of reflection. Hence, if I ask the managers directly to what extent they reflect upon the way they handle their working-time, this might influence their actual amount of reflection. In other words: by asking questions I risk influencing what I intend to measure. This paradox is discussed by Morwitz, Johnson and Schmittlein (1993). They explored how simply measuring intent to buy might affect people's behavior and found that merely asking about the customers' intent to buy once, led to an *increase* in the subsequent purchase rate. The effect of repeatedly asking intent to buy for those with a low level of intent is a *decreased* propensity to buy with repeated measures (the two effects are reduced given prior experience with the product). If we relate Morwitz, Johnson and Schmittlein's (op cit) findings to this study, we see that merely asking managers about their level of reflection about how they handle their time could in fact influence the level of reflection, *particularly* if the level of reflection initially was low. Moreover, this means that we risk missing out on the "true" level of

reflection of managers whose level of reflection was initially low, since such a question may evoke greater reflection.

On the other hand, to reflect upon something means to think *deeply* or *carefully* about it. Merely asking managers if, and to what extent they reflect about their own time wouldn't necessarily influence the level of *reflection*, although it may influence the extent to which managers *say they reflect* about how they spend their time. Hence, to reduce the impact of this potential source of error, we did not ask the managers any direct questions to uncover their level of reflection before the very last part of the interviews.

Socially desirable answers?

Another important threat to the validity of the study is the risk that the respondent may deliberately try to please the interviewer or prevent the interviewer from learning something about the respondent. In order to do this the respondent may embellish a response, and give what is referred to as a “socially desirable” response, or omit certain relevant information ((Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In this study, this is particularly relevant with respect to the differences in the managers' level of reflection regarding own time. One could question to what extent managers (with an initially *low* level of reflection regarding their handling of time) will answer according to their actual level of reflection. When a researcher visits and interviews them about their handling of time, how they think and reflect upon how they handle time, it could lead them to answer in ways they believe to be more correct or *socially desirable*. If their handling of time is important enough for a researcher to come and interview them, it could be hard for some managers to admit that in fact, they haven't given the topic much thought at all.

8.5.2 Reliability

“A qualitative study can be evaluated accurately only if its procedures are sufficiently explicit so that readers of the resulting publication can assess their appropriateness.”
(Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

The reliability of a study refers to whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods ((Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000). Contrary to validity, reliability refers to the consistency of the measures, whereas validity is concerned with how well the construct is defined by the measures (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 1998). The question of reliability is relevant in every kind of empirical research, whether qualitative or quantitative methodological approaches are applied. With respect to *qualitative* studies, reliability is concerned with to what extent another researcher, if following the same procedures, would arrive at the same conclusions as in the current study. It is thus essential that the researcher describes how the conclusions have been reached and how the theory has been built in order for others to, if not replicate, at least assess the reliability of the research (Stensaker, 2002).

The procedures in the data collection and analyses are fairly detailed described in this chapter to enable others to trace this study. Since the number of interviews in this study was limited, we did not use any electronic data tools (such as for instance HyperResearch or Nud*ist), to assist the coding or analysis of the data. When the data from the interviews were coded and categorized in search of the different themes, the quotations that formed the basis for developing the themes were presented and discussed with colleagues and fellow Ph.D. students. Through these presentations and other more informal discussions with fellow Ph.D. –students, our understanding and interpretations of the quotations and the coding to develop the themes was checked. This was done to address the *inter-coder reliability* of the findings revealed through the qualitative data analysis. Although I had extensive discussions with other researchers regarding the categories derived from and included in this study, I did *not* arrange any formal test of the

inter-coder reliability, for instance through letting another researcher code the quotations into the established categories and then check how many quotations that were coded to the same categories. This could represent a limitation to the reliability of this study.

8.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed and reported the methodology underlying the empirical part of this study. The first part of the chapter focused on the research design and the requirements for the design. A *qualitative, open and partly explorative approach* was chosen in this study because such an approach: *i)* provided wide-ranging information about the phenomenon of interest, which is as yet poorly understood, and *ii)* allowed the researcher to develop or adjust the study based on findings revealed during the data collection period. More specifically, *personal semi-structured interviews* were chosen as the best way to arrive at an encompassing understanding of the underlying processes of Norwegian managers' handling of time, and to capture the expected complexity in the phenomenon of interest. A large Norwegian bank was chosen as the research setting for the study.

The data collection was guided by the revised research perspective as presented in Chapter 7. However, when the data was analyzed, an open and explorative approach was applied, to avoid letting the theoretical perspective restrain the analyses. Moreover, the research perspective was modified and expanded through findings revealed in the analyses. The chapter ended with a discussion of different methodological strengths and weaknesses in this study.

9. How do Norwegian managers handle time?

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, central findings from the *qualitative* part of this study will be presented and discussed. The presentation of the findings is structured according to different themes⁸¹, partly derived from the theoretical perspective, which was developed in Chapter 7, and partly derived from the analyses of the interviews. The development of the themes has run throughout the entire process of designing, conducting and analyzing the qualitative data gathered for this study. More specifically this means that the process of developing the themes has run through: i) the pre-interview phase – designing the study and developing the interview-guide, ii) the data-collection phase – analyzing the data *during* the data collection period, and iii) post-collection period – analyzing the interviews *after* the data-collection period was ended.

The purpose of this chapter is to address the research question, which has guided the last part of this study. The research question was derived from the results of the quantitative analyses, reported and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, and asks: *to what extent, and in what ways, is managers' handling of time a result of choice?*

To address this question, a revised and expanded research perspective was developed in Chapter 7. This revised perspective placed a particular focus on different cognitive aspects of the underlying processes of managers' handling of time. Hence, these aspects will be emphasized in the analyses of the interviews.

⁸¹ “A theme is typically associated with a relatively long work or discussion and tends to be an underlying idea, recurring throughout it and unifying it” (Oxford Thesaurus of English)

9.2 Managers' Handling of Time: A result of Choice?

The research question, which is addressed in this chapter, comprises two aspects of managers' handling of time; *the first aspect* questions *to what extent* managers' handling of time is a result of choice. This is related to whether the managers' handling of time should be seen purely as the result of choices, or if other aspects or processes also influence how managers handle their time. *The second aspect* questions *in what ways* managers' handling of time is a result of choice. From the literature review, we know that there are several ways to exercise choice. Hence, this aspect of the research question is related to whether the managers' handling of time is merely based on *rational choices*, the consequence-oriented logic (as proposed in existing theory), or if other underlying logics of action (such as the logic of appropriateness) can also be observed. Each of these aspects in the research question will be elaborated and discussed separately first, before they are combined in later sections of this chapter.

To determine *in to what extent* and *in what ways* the managers' handling of time is a result of choice, I will investigate the *underlying processes* of managers' handling of time, starting by investigating the managers' underlying logics of action.

The degree to which the different underlying logics of action were visible or pronounced in the managers' answers to my questions and descriptions of how they prioritized their time varied between the interviews. In some interviews, the managers displayed a fairly visible and easily recognizable underlying logic of action, whereas in other interviews, the underlying logics of action were harder to recognize. This is not too surprising, since the two logics of action included in the revised research perspective, and consequently also included in the study, are not dichotomous variables.

Hence, in order to uncover the underlying logics of action, several different strategies were applied, including observations of the managers' behavior and questions seeking to uncover the managers' underlying assumptions. In the following, selected quotations

from the interviews, which illustrate how some managers displayed a tendency to rely on the *logic of appropriateness* when prioritizing time, are presented and discussed.

To attain one (of several) indicator(s) of the underlying logic of action the managers relied on, I first set out to identify what the managers perceived as *the* most important in their jobs. Thus, the managers were asked to describe what they considered to be the very core (*the* most essential part) of their job. The managers' answers to this question differed noticeably with regard to what they perceived as *the very core* of their jobs. Some explained how the (far) most important part of their job was to ensure *satisfying results*, whereas others were more concerned with what they perceived as important to be "a good manager", such as e.g. their co-workers' well-being and facilitating the co-workers' work. In the following sections these answers, as well as the managers' answers to a variety of other questions, will be elaborated and related to the theoretical framework as presented in the previous chapters.

However, although the *logic of consequences* and the *logic of appropriateness* represent two theoretically distinguishable logics of action, the analyses of the interviews also revealed that it was sometimes difficult to define an unambiguous dividing line between the two in real-life, as discussed in Chapter 7 The challenges related to distinguishing between the two logics in the empirical data, and how this was handled, will also be discussed.

9.2.1 Logic of consequences

When asked to explain what the very core of his job was, one of the interviewed managers looked at me as if I had just asked the stupidest question he had ever heard before, and as if the answer to this question was obvious.

"The core of my - and every managers'- job is to contribute to the bank's financial results! Since, in the end: the results are what matters and what I am measured by!"

The statement shows how this manager when asked to describe *the* most important elements in his job, was primarily concerned with financial results, and how he could help producing them. This is taken to indicate that the manager was primarily concerned with the *consequences* of his choices and performance as a manager. In this case, the consequences were measurements of how well he was performing his job. Moreover, the managers' main focus was aimed at *financial* performance, or at *consequences* in terms of the financial results. This was so obvious to this manager, that he was really surprised I even had to ask. From his statement, we see how the manager appeared to view contributing to the financial results of the organization as a common, general core in any managerial job, because, as he put it, *the results are what matters in the end*. This statement illustrates a view shared by approximately half of the managers interviewed. However, this manager expressed this view the strongest and most clearly.

March & Heath (1994) argue that what is referred to as *the logic of consequences* is characterized by individuals (in this study: *managers*) who are primarily concerned with optimizing the value of the consequences of their choices and actions. Several of the managers interviewed appeared, through their statements and expressed views, to base their handling of time primarily on different types of *calculations of the consequences* associated with each of the potential alternatives. Hence, it was construed that these managers displayed primarily a *consequence-oriented approach* when prioritizing their time.

For some of the managers, the calculation of consequences was evident across different situations; some of the situations were clearly more unexpected than others. An example of a somewhat unanticipated situation, where the consequence-orientated approach was applied, was when one of the managers interviewed described how he decided whether or not he should prioritize time to participate in certain social events at work. In this choice-situation, a situation that normally would not be associated with pure calculations of expected outcome and the value of the consequences, the manager explained in the following way how he made such decisions:

- Sure I can participate in social events like going out for pizza with a crowd from work, but I never go unless there is someone interesting there, who can be useful to talk with or know. I mean – I have friends already; I don't need my coworkers to fill any social needs!

Respondent 1

The manager's statement contains observable elements of calculations of the expected consequences (*the usefulness*) related to participating. When the manager has to choose whether or not he would/should participate in the social events at work, he explained how he estimated/calculated both the potential *short-run* and *long-run benefits* (or consequences) he could gain from participating, such as for instance having good relations with his co-workers, getting access to informal knowledge or making new acquaintances. He was not interested in spending time in ways that he felt did not add any value to his overriding objective, which was quite explicit – to make a successful career for himself.

This manager displayed what I will classify as a fairly calculative, consequence-oriented approach when he evaluated whether or not he would prioritize time to participate in such social events at work. He also referred to similar calculations of potential consequences when answering other questions regarding his priorities of time at work. For instance, this was related to how he prioritized time as he attempted to lead his team. This manager described how he preferred to hold short and effective team meetings, focused on sharing information and coordinating work, as he would rather prioritize other parts of his job, which he perceived more relevant to his future career possibilities.

To examine this manager's position with respect to the alternative logic of action included in the research perspective; *the logic of appropriateness*, e.g. to what extent he was concerned with his *role* as manager, the *expectations* and norms related to this role, or if he was concerned with what was perceived as “appropriate” for a manager like him, I asked directly if he thought about what would be appropriate for him as manager, a question to which he answered:

“Of course I do. What is appropriate for me is to provide good results from my work and to deliver the expected - or better: beyond the expected - results to my boss!” Respondent 1

Throughout the interview, this manager exhibited a major focus on *consequences* in terms of professional and financial results as a leading guideline for how he handled his time. He expressed this both through statements (as in the illustrating quotations above), and through his descriptions of what he considered most essential in his job (to deliver professional and financial results, to have a successful career), as well as through what he found relevant to pay attention to when he handled his time in different situations. The majority of Respondent 1’s time-related choices appeared to be primarily based on calculations/evaluations of what the consequences would be. Based on these arguments, I will argue that Respondent 1 can be seen as an example of how the predominant basis for handling time and making time-related choices is a consequence-oriented approach.

However, although respondent number one was the respondent who most distinctly appeared to rely on the logic of consequences, there were also other managers who appeared primarily consequence-oriented, when handling time. More specifically, I found that several of the managers interviewed appeared to analyze the situation and calculate different consequences, as a basis for prioritizing their time between different activities in which they could participate. Furthermore, the criterion for choosing which activity to prioritize often tended to be evaluations of which alternative would yield the greatest personal outcome or the best outcome for the organization⁸². One of the managers, Respondent 5, even explained how it was not a problem for him to know how he should prioritize his time if one of the major customers made a request:

“When my most important customer calls and asks me to do something for him, of course I drop whatever I have in my hands to help him! I mean – after all, the biggest customer brings in the biggest money; so keeping him happy is the most important!...this is also what my boss has instilled into me as the only right thing to do, so I am quite in line with him on this...which is often a good idea!” Respondent 5

⁸² This is elaborated further in Section 9.2.4

In this statement, several examples of this manager's focus on consequences are noticeable; the first is related to the anticipated consequences of keeping the bank's most profitable and thus most important customers happy (the expected consequences: greater income for the bank). Moreover, the manager also reveals to be thinking in terms of consequences regarding his relationship to his own boss, when he implies that "being in line with" his manager is "*a good idea*". Without expressing explicitly why he considers it such a good idea to be on good terms his superior, the statement still implies that there are future consequences related to having a good relationship with one's superior, and that Respondent 5 takes them into account.

Yet another example of a manager that appeared as primarily consequence-oriented was found in a manager who expressed quite explicit concerns for the anticipated consequences of his priorities of time. He described how he always attempted to evaluate the consequences of not only choosing to prioritize something, but also what the consequences of choosing *not to prioritize* it would be:

"I always try to think about what I stand to gain by doing something and what I risk losing by not doing it."

Respondent 9

From this statement it is observable how the manager attempts to think ahead and *evaluate expected consequences* related to each of the activities to which he may chose to allocate - or to not allocate - time. To prioritize one's time most often involves selecting some activities at the expense of others. The quotation above indicates that Respondent 9 was clearly aware of this, as he described how he calculates the potential consequences related to both prioritizing and not prioritizing things. Another of the interviewed managers, Respondent 8, also revealed a similar way of thinking, when he was asked how he handled situations where he had more to do than there was time. He answered that in such situations, he always made sure to prioritize tasks that involved the customers first, because, as he put it: *it is the customers we live on!* Furthermore, he described how he then calculated the consequences related to not being able to find time to do the

different activities competing for his time and attention. The manager expressed that he would rather prioritize calculating the consequences of not being able to participate or deliver something - even if it took some of the insufficient time – then just go ahead and do what someone who might happen to be around him in that situation would urge him to do. *Then, he said, I try to prioritize my time based on the calculated importance of each alternative, and hence minimize the negative consequences of not being able to find time to perform everything.*

Respondent 8

From the above quotation, we see that this manager even used the terms *calculating the consequences*, when he described how he attempted to prioritize his time. Moreover, he explicitly stated that the basis for his priorities is calculation of the consequences. The above quotation thus serves as another illustration of what we chose to refer to in this study as a *primarily consequence-oriented approach* when the managers handle their time.

In general, the managers, who tended to display a more calculative, consequence-oriented logic, were found to vary with respect to how distinctly they displayed the underlying logic of action. Whereas some displayed a rather clear and obvious calculative approach throughout different situations in which they prioritized time, others were found to display the calculative approach quite clearly in certain situations, but not consistently throughout all the situations discussed in the interviews. However, when prioritizing and handling time, those interviewed were not exclusively concerned with the expected consequences for them personally, at the individual level. Concerns were also expressed for the consequences at an organizational level. This will be elaborated later in this chapter (in section 9.2.4)

9.2.2 Logic of appropriateness

The logic of consequences was fairly noticeable in some of the interviews, as presented and discussed above. However, the analyses also revealed that there were other managers who just as clearly displayed features typically associated with *the logic of appropriateness* (March & Olsen, 1989). In the following sections I will elaborate how we found this logic of action visible in the managers' statements.

For one, the logic of appropriateness became apparent when analyzing the managers' answers, when they were asked to describe what they perceived as the most important or what *the very core of their job* was. In contrast to the answers from the managers who appeared to rely on the logic of consequences, the more *appropriateness-oriented* managers aimed their attention in a different direction in their answers; rather than underlining the importance of generating results of different kinds, e.g. financial results, these managers seemed to be more preoccupied with elements, such as facilitating the work of others, motivating their co-workers, and in different ways fulfilling their role as a leader. One illustrating example is found in the answer of a manager who responded to this question in the following way:

“Being a good leader for my co-workers, I mean to facilitate their work and well-being – isn't that what leadership jobs are all about?”

From his answer, we can observe how this manager displayed a focus on different aspects of being manager. He talks about *leadership jobs* in the plural form, indicating that this is not something he perceives as relevant only to his job; rather he generalizes and refers to elements, which he perceives as appropriate for all leadership jobs. Thus, through his statement, the manager reveals a focus on managers' *roles* and *identities*, rather than on the financial results of the organization or on delivering superb financial results. As the manager puts it, the most important part of the managers' jobs, or the perceived core of this managers' job is to be *“a good manager”*. Through this statement, the manager displays an emphasis on what he perceives as required to fulfill the role as “a good

manager”. Moreover, the manager explains how the main task for a “good manager” is to facilitate the work of his co-workers; hence, according to this statement, the *appropriate behavior* for “a good manager” is to facilitate the work and well-being of his co-workers. Such emphasis on fulfilling a role or an identity is typically associated with *the logic of appropriateness*.

However, it is important to underline that there is no reason to believe that this manager or any other manager, who primarily relies on the logic of appropriateness, is indifferent with respect to their organization’s financial results. This statement indicates that the managers’ primary concerns are related to fulfilling the role of “a good manager”. For some managers, to provide outstanding financial results, can be part of fulfilling the role as a good manager. Nevertheless, *the main* focus is on fulfilling the role and prioritizing time in accordance with the “rules” stemming from the individual’s perceived identity. March and Olsen (1989) argued that “...individuals justify the action (appropriately) by a logic of consequentiality” (p. 162). This means that individuals may justify their choices and priorities using a means-ends calculation, rather than conducting means-ends analysis prior to choice, as in the logic of consequences. In other words, the managers may justify their priorities of time using a means-ends calculation, whereas their priorities in the first place were governed by the rules regulating the appropriate behavior of “a good manager”.

That managers rely primarily on the logic of appropriateness does *not* imply that they are *irrational* or *less rational* than managers who appear to rely primarily on the logic of consequences. Nor does it imply that the managers in general are indifferent to the consequences of their priorities or behavior. The logic of appropriateness does, however, depend upon a *different kind of rationality*, as discussed in Chapter 7, where other aspects than calculations of expected outcomes constitute the basis for the rationality. This difference was also visible in the interviews; the managers who seemed to primarily rely on the logic of appropriateness, appeared to be more preoccupied with how they and their priorities of time were perceived by *significant others* around them, and how they felt

they *ought to* prioritize their time and act in certain ways, to fulfill their role and thus others' expectations towards these roles in an appropriate manner.

However, rules rarely inform individuals as to the *exact* actions to be taken, particularly not in changing environments. Instead, some actions are *ruled in* (permitted), and others are *ruled out* (forbidden). This was also noticeable in the interviews, for instance when a female manager explained how it would be unthinkable for her to block her co-workers out of her schedule for several days in a row (the department the manager was leading, had a shared electronic calendar, in which everyone working in the department had to put in their appointments). Unless when she was on trips out of town or on vacation, the manager explained how she was certain that her co-workers would react negatively if she was unavailable to them for several days in a row. Whenever she was physically present in the office, she felt an obligation to be available for her co-workers. In other words: the manager believed her co-workers would perceive it as inappropriate for her as a manager to be physically present, yet unavailable to them over longer periods of time. We see how this manager perceived blocking her schedule for several days in a row as a “forbidden” action, which was hence ruled out of her consideration set. However, the rule did not inform her exactly how to prioritize her time or fill her days, but it ruled out this one specific way to prioritize her time at work. Choices made by rule-following individuals are from within the set of permitted actions. In this case, the manager could choose between various ways to prioritize her time, as long as her choice was from within the set of permitted actions, or in other words, as long as she did not make herself unavailable to her co-workers for several days in a row. In a rule-governed situation like this, the ruled-out actions were not even considered by the manager; instead she described it as *unthinkable* to block her schedule and be unavailable for a longer period of time.

Another example of behavior that the manager perceived as “forbidden” or ruled-out is illustrated in the quotation below:

“It would be an obvious breach with the expectations resting on me as a manager if I am not available to support or back up my co-workers, for instance in difficult meetings with customers or in complicated credit questions.”

Respondent 4

This statement confirms this manager’s emphasis on being available to her co-workers. It is worth noticing how the manager referred to herself as “*me as a manager*”, underpinning the identity she has taken. Moreover, she used the expression “*an obvious breach with the expectations*”, which is a fairly strong wording, to describe what would happen if she did not fulfill her role. It seems as if being available for her co-workers was perceived as a fairly strict rule by this manager. Since this manager seemed to be fairly aware of her identity as manager, and since the “availability-rule” seemed to be quite essential to her role, there is reason to assume that this rule influences what the manager perceived as “permitted” ways to prioritize her time, as well as what she perceived as “forbidden” ways to prioritize her time.

Evoking identities and rules

Another of the managers interviewed, a female manager who was 33 years old and who had no prior experience as a manager, expressed certain worries about how she found the expectations towards her role somewhat difficult to handle. She described how her initial plan was to prioritize to first figure out and clarify what expectations her superior had towards her role, and then later to expand her focus to others’ expectations towards her role. However, she explained how she very soon came to discover that it was impossible to neglect the expectations from other than her superior, even for a short initial period. She further explained how she realized that there were several expectations she had to live up to when prioritizing her time, stemming from multiple sources – not only from her superior. As she put it:

“But, I have discovered that it is not only your boss who has expectations about what you should or should not be doing – it is just as much your colleagues. So...I should have spent much more time clarifying my role in relation to my colleagues, I can see that now;

I should have made it much more clear how I see my own role! Particularly since I hold a mainly administrative position, others tend to have a lot of opinions about what I should or ought to be doing. They said things like, “This must be something you should typically handle...”, or, “This should be something for you”, and, “Isn’t this in fact your responsibility?” I became a wastebasket! I had to handle everything, from things like, “...we are out of window envelopes...”, to more particular, professional matters, and I had to make it very clear what was my responsibility and what wasn’t!” Respondent 2

This statement shows how this manager devoted a fairly noticeable amount of attention to defining her role or establishing her identity. She described how she found this challenging; partly because others around her appeared to have identities evoked by her role other than she had herself. The manager further expressed how she found this situation challenging, as there was little consensus on what tasks she should or should not be performing. Relating this to the *logic of appropriateness*, we see that different roles or identities were evoked; the manager’s own perception of her identity did not correspond to the identity others perceived she had. Hence, different rules were also evoked. Priorities that could be within the set of ruled-in alternatives based on the manager’s own perceived identity could be within the set of ruled-out alternatives based on the identity that the others around her perceived she had. This could be one explanation for why this manager found it very challenging to figure out how she should prioritize her time and fulfill her role: multiple identities were evoked simultaneously, and this created confusion with respect to what rules the manager should and should not follow.

Expectations stem from various sources

There were also managers who, through their statements, revealed concerns about which expectations they felt it was appropriate for them to match. Expectations were found to stem from the managers’ superiors, colleagues, and subordinates, in addition to their families and others outside the job arena. Although all the senders of expectations were not perceived as equally important, some of the managers expressed how they sometimes found it difficult to prioritize the expectations, which could point in opposite directions.

Hence, when the managers were to prioritize their time, one of them described it as “*a balancing act*”. He knew that there simply was not enough time to fulfill every expectation, and thus felt that he had to choose who he should “*let down*”. It is interesting to notice that what the manager expressed concern about was who he had to let down. This could indicate that the manager was concerned about *which identity* he should let dominate his behavior in the given situation, and hence govern his priorities of time. Different identities impose different rules, which govern the appropriate handling of time.

Regarding the managers’ perceived expectations, yet another distinction came up during the analyses of the interviews: Not only did the managers perceive expectations stemming from their subordinates, from other managers at the same level as themselves, from their superiors and their families, a distinction between the managerial role and a more personal role was also revealed. One of the managers in particular was quite explicit about this as she stated that:

“I cannot flatter myself by thinking that these expectations are aimed at me as a person – it is of course about the role I play in the bank. If I quit, it is beyond any doubt that they would just find my replacement and things will go on as before.”

Respondent 4

Through her statement this manager underlined how she sees all the expectations toward her as related to the managerial role (identity) she presently held. Moreover, she appeared to be very aware of the distinction between her personal role and her managerial role. In the statement, the manager pointed out how she is convinced that others could easily fill the managerial role if she had to leave. In other words, she appeared to see the role as a universal managerial role, which any manager can hold and fulfill. There is nothing in her statement suggesting that she saw anything unique in her identity. Thus, general rules governing how a manager can or cannot prioritize his or her time would be expected to govern this manager’s priorities of time.

Identities govern managers' priorities of time

Through the analyses I found that the managers, who appeared to rely primarily on the *logic of appropriateness*, to a great extent filled their (working) hours with various activities that they described as “*expected from them*” or “*appropriate for a manager in my position*”. When comparing the interviews and aggregating all the different activities, which the managers described as expected or appropriate for “*them as managers*”, it summed up to be a rather extensive list. The list encompasses behavior that the managers perceived as appropriate for “good managers” and hence attempted to do. The managers' choices related to how to prioritize their time appeared to be the choice of *which* expectations from *whom* they should fulfill.

To fulfill the identities as “good managers” typically implied that the managers emphasized prioritizing time to:

- be (physically) available for their subordinates
- support their subordinates in difficult and/or important meetings
- assist their subordinates in especially busy periods or help them with some of their tasks to relieve the pressure on them.
- involve themselves and accompany the subordinates when visiting particularly important clients, etc.
- perform professional evaluations of difficult or ambiguous cases, in order to give their co-workers an extra feeling of confidence that their judgments were correct
- offer social support to co-workers if they or someone in their close family were seriously ill (one of the managers mentioned cancer as a typical example)
- stay updated on relevant technological and software development, in order to be a qualified partner in professional discussions (typically various IT-solutions)

All the activities listed above are examples of activities, tasks and responsibilities that were mentioned during the interviews as typically “appropriate” to which good managers should prioritize time.

As the above list indicates, we revealed a great of number of activities and tasks that the managers felt obligated to prioritize time to. This perceived obligation or expectations were observable through phrases such as:

“It is appropriate for a manager like me to...”

“My co-workers expect that I ...”

“It is part of the job, I cannot just neglect that”

“My co workers would react negatively if I didn’t...”

“As a manager here, I must....”

“I believe it would seem strange if the manager did not ...”

In the above sections, I have presented and discussed how some managers appeared to rely primarily on the *logic of appropriateness* when handling their time at work. However, as briefly discussed in the previous sections, the two underlying logics of action are although theoretically separable, not mutually exclusive. Thus, in the next section we will elaborate how elements from both logics could be observed in the same interview.

9.2.3 Combinations of the underlying logics of action

In addition to observations of the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness as expressed by different managers through the interviews, there were also managers who tended to display elements from both the two logics of action side-by-side.

For instance, there was one manager who said that he *chose* to be available to his co-workers to fulfill their expectations towards him, which, as discussed above, was interpreted to indicate that the manager relied on the logic of appropriateness. However, this manager also explained that the reason he chose this was because he was convinced that his being around to assist and strengthen his co-workers’ beliefs in themselves was essential for his department’s ability to achieve its *goals*. In other words, the manager

chose to do what he found to be the *appropriate* thing to do, but at the same time he expressed that he had considered and calculated the consequences of prioritizing time as he did. Hence, he explained that he handled his time as he did for two reasons: i) because he saw it as appropriate and expected from him as manager for the department, and ii) because he was convinced that it had an impact on the departments' ability to reach its objectives, or in other words, because he had calculated the expected *consequences*.

- I am convinced that the fact that I make sure that I am available to my subordinates- as they expect of me - means a lot to the results we are able to generate.

Respondent 6

Through the above statement, Respondent 6 demonstrated how he *choose* to fulfill his co-workers expectations towards him as manager, in order to achieve desired consequences; better results. Following the “rules” governing his managerial role (being available for his co-workers) does seem to be motivated from calculations of the expected consequences in this case. Hence, this represents an example of how the two (theoretically distinguishable) categories may be somewhat challenging to separate in real life. In this current real-life setting, where the logics are related to managers and their handling of time, we found that it was possible in some of the interviews to identify examples of each *archetype*. It is however, also important to realize that the two underlying logics of action are not purely dichotomous variables where there are only two possible values: either the managers rely on the logic of consequences *or* the logic of appropriateness. I also identified cases in the interviews in which both of the logics were observable, but in which none of the logics were dominant.

9.2.4 Logics at different levels

When analyzing the interviews, I found that neither the calculation of consequences nor the evaluation of what is appropriate was only related to the managers at the individual level. Instead, some of the managers were more concerned about what consequences their

handling of time would have for the organization (consequence-oriented at organizational level), or how they were expected to manage their time to ensure the organizations' reputation (appropriateness-orientated at the organizational level).

A typical example of how a manager who appeared to be consequence-oriented at the organizational level, was found in a manager who stated that she chose to allocate time to participate in meetings with important customers, because it made the customers more satisfied with the bank's service level. The manager was concerned with the expected consequences of participating in such meeting, but not to ensure personal beneficial outcomes. The customers' satisfaction with the bank appeared to be the driving force behind her priorities of time.

Another illustration was found in a manager who described how she chose to actually take some of her co-workers' less rewarding tasks and perform them herself, in order to avoid conflicts between her co-workers (since none of them wanted to perform these tasks). The consequences for this manager at the individual level can be seen as rather negative, as she had to allocate some of her time to do poorly rewarding tasks, which in fact were not part of her job. On the other hand, in the larger picture the consequences of this manager's handling of time, could also be positive for the manager, if her choice to take the less rewarding work was greatly appreciated by her co-workers, and served to increase her legitimacy. However, the manager's expressed motivation for taking on these tasks was not related to what the consequences would be for her as an individual, but rather a calculation of the consequences at a higher level: the work group or the organization. She expressed how she did this to avoid conflicts that would be upsetting in her groups. Nevertheless, what this manager did not appear to reflect upon, was the fact that when she allocated some of her time to perform this task, that amount of time became unavailable for other tasks, which she *was* responsible for as manager in the bank. Put differently, in light of the alternative value of the manager's time, the consequences for the organization may not be as positive as she intended. She was obviously overqualified for the tasks she took on, and in that respect the consequences for the bank might even be negative if they prevented the manager from performing more

value-creating activities. However, these reflections are beyond the point here, which is that when this manager made her priorities and handled her time, she did in fact calculate the consequences of her choices, not with respect to her personal benefit, but with respect to what (she believed) was in the bank’s best interest.

Also in relation to the logic of appropriateness, I found that the managers were concerned not only with what was appropriate for them as individual managers, but also what was appropriate for the bank (at the organizational level). In addition to what they described as appropriate for them at the individual level to allocate time to, there were also expectations related to what they perceived as appropriate for the bank (at the organizational level). This was typically related to how the managers felt they ought to allocate time in specific ways to ensure that the bank was perceived as trustworthy, competent and professional to its customers.

However, each of the logics revealed was observed at different levels, both organizational and individual. These two different logics at the individual and the organizational level are combined in Figure 9.1 below.

	Individual level	Organizational level
Logic of Consequences	<p>What is in it for me?</p> <p><i>Examples: Personal career, individual bonus, future interests, etc.</i></p>	<p>What are the consequences of my priorities of time for the organization?</p> <p><i>Examples: Pleased customers, satisfied coworkers, organization’s reputation, etc.</i></p>
Logic of Appropriateness	<p>What is appropriate for a manager like me?</p> <p><i>What am I expected to do/not do to fulfill my role as “a bank manager”, “a good manager”, etc.?</i></p>	<p>What is appropriate for a bank like this?</p> <p><i>How should I handle my time to ensure the bank’s perceived image in terms of competence, integrity, trustworthiness, etc.?</i></p>

Figure 9.1 Underlying logics of action at different levels

9.2.5 Level of reflection

Analyses of the interviews revealed noticeable differences related to how much consideration or reflection the managers had given their time at work and how they handled it. On one side, I found managers who provided long and extensive answers to my questions, and who appeared to have given the topic quite a lot of sincere thought and consideration. These managers typically offered additional and often lengthy chains of thought and explanations of how they saw different issues related to topics tapped into by the interview guide. Moreover, they presented clear views about a number of matters, such as how much they were willing to work in terms of how many hours per week they found acceptable, and how much of their total work time they would tolerate to spend on what they perceived as poorly rewarding tasks.

On the other side, I found managers who appeared to have given time and how they handled their time very little attention or consideration. This does not in any way imply that these managers are generally less thoughtful, but they appeared as having given this specific topic noticeably less thought and consideration. Their focus and attention was aimed at different factors. Throughout the interviews there was one very noticeable factor that reoccurred, and seemed very important to these managers: they shared an extraordinary strong professional focus. They expressed concerns for several matters related to the professional side of their work, such as for instance their personal professional development, their department's professional development and they were extremely concerned with the professional results they and their departments were able to deliver. This strong emphasis on professional issues appeared to be occupying much of these managers' focus or attention, leaving little attention to other aspects of their managerial role.

In the following sections differences in the level of reflection regarding how time is handled will be further elaborated.

9.2.6 Lower level of reflection: Mindlessness

Even if a majority of the managers expressed they felt that time was an interesting issue for discussions, several of the managers gave the impression of going through different chains of thought related to the topic *for the first time* during the interviews. This can be viewed as somewhat surprising, since the managers' expressed viewing this topic interesting and important, and since the topic frequently appears in different media, such as magazines and newspapers. The topic has also been central in public debate in Norway during the last few years.

One of the questions in the interview guide asked: How much do you work per week on average? This question was included just to establish, what I assumed, was a straightforward fact (the manager's average amount of working hour's per week). However, in several of the interviews this apparently simple question set off a chain of thoughts and reflections, which in some cases even seemed to surprise the managers themselves. The quotations below illustrate this:

- How much I work...well it varies a lot! (long silence, the manager seems to be thinking for a long time)...it depends upon external conditions, in the budget period I often work, I don't know...50 or 60 hours per week, for about a month and a half. But, well usually...if I even it out...I guess I work maybe one or two hours extra once or twice a week, how much is that per week? A little bit extra, but not too much.... I am not sure really!

Respondent 2

This quotation reveals how the manager appeared to be calculating her own working hours while she was answering the question. Still, she was unable to give a conclusive estimate of how much she averages. She also pointed out external factors, (the budget period) as a reason for working as much as she did. Similar reactions to this question were observed in several of the interviews, as illustrated below:

- I guess I work approximately...well, a couple of hours more than regular working hours every day. I never go home before 6 o'clock, but that is no problem now since my

children are grown up. When they were younger and lived at home...well, I guess I worked just as long hours back then, in fact maybe even longer hours – but it was a different time! I felt much guiltier and had more of a bad conscience back then. You know, with children living at home there are many contrary expectations one just has to handle! It can be rather demanding at times.

Respondent 6

The question about working hours was assumed to be an easy question for the managers to answer, but this proved to be wrong, as several of the managers appeared not to have given this question very much thought before we asked them. Moreover, as Respondent 6 started to figure out an answer to this question, he found the question in itself imprecise, and felt a need to clarify the assumptions underlying my question:

- How much I actually work is really a tricky question to answer, because I think what you mean is how much time I physically spend at work - and that is not so hard to calculate and give a straight answer to. But, when I find it hard to answer, it is because I mean that I'm working even when I am not in my office or out traveling. I mean that all the time I spend thinking about work and about the things I need to handle at work is also work! So then you understand that your question about how much I work is really hard to give a simple answer to!

Respondent 6

The quotations presented and discussed above, show how my initial assumption about managers' working hours' being easy and straightforward to answer was quite misguided. Instead of giving a straightforward answer, this question served as a starting point for the managers' reflections about their own work time and how they handled it. Furthermore, the question also revealed that although most of the managers expressed that they found time, and how time was handled by managers, a very important topic, only a limited number of them appeared to have actually given the topic much thought before the interview.

9.2.7 Higher level of reflection: Mindfulness

Although I observed a general tendency among the managers to have given limited thought and reflection to how they handled and prioritized time, there were also managers who appeared to have given this topic a considerable amount of thought, and who displayed a higher level of reflection. For instance, one of the female managers explained how she had spent quite a lot of time reflecting about her job in relation to time, and how she could (- *and should!* she added) handle her time in a conscious manner. She described how she was concerned not only about how much the job would demand of her time (concerns for her work/life balance, in other words), but she was also concerned about the balance between what she referred to as “*more boring tasks*” and “*more exciting or rewarding tasks*”. She explained that she had even made a deal with herself that if the “*boring parts*” of her job increased to cover more than approximately 50% of the average time she spent at work, she would change jobs, and find something more interesting to do instead. Among the 10 managers interviewed, she was (by far) the most explicit and articulate regarding her reflections and thoughts about own time.

Another example from the interviews that illustrates a more mindful rule-based approach was another female manager who explained that when she decided how much she would work (her average working hours), she considered how her working hours, as a manager (her time of arrival in the morning and her time to leave) were perceived by her co-workers. More specifically, she expressed concerns about how she, as manager of the department, set important terms, or established the norms, for what was seen as *acceptable* with regards to working hours in her department. She further made a point out of specifying that she was not concerned that her co-workers would work *too little* or *too short hours*, rather her concern was related to establishing a norm of not working too much or too *many* hours. She explained that this was something she had given a lot of thought to and tried to have a very conscious attitude towards, since she had a personal experience with a manager who had set the working hours standards for a department that was extremely demanding to match. This experience had led her to be determined that she would *not* do the same in her own leadership. Her viewpoints in this matter were developed as a result of active evaluations of her own past experience, which led to

conscious views regarding what “working hours norms” she wanted to develop in her department.

Throughout the interview she also gave several further examples of her mindful rule-based approach to managing her time. For instance, she explained how she was reluctant to set up internal full-day meetings for herself in the department’s shared calendar, based on the argument that she would then be unavailable to her co-workers the entire day, something that she did not feel that was appropriate. As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, she was worried that if she was too unavailable, her co-workers could perceive it as an expression of her lack of interest in them, their challenges and what they saw as important. As she put it:

“I participate in enough meetings with customers and other managers in the bank and so I am unavailable enough as it is! Therefore I try to be available for my co-workers when I am at the office.”

There were also other managers who appeared to have reflected upon how they handled their time, although not as extensively as the female manager described above. One of the male managers expressed how he and his wife repeatedly discussed and finally reached an agreement regarding how they should allocate what he referred to as “*the family’s mutual time budget*”. He further explained how this family time budget was subject to frequent renegotiations, and kept reappearing in family discussion. Through these statements, the manager revealed how he and his wife were thinking about the family’s time as one entirety. Furthermore, he also revealed how he saw this entirety as something that could – and should - be consciously allocated between the husband (the manager interviewed) and his wife. He further explained how he perceived clarifying such questions related to how he could handle his time as an essential foundation for his entire work as a manager in the bank.

In light of the above, we see that opposed to the managers described in the previous section, *active calculations* and *mindful reflections* appeared to be essential to the managers described in these sections' handling of time at work. The analyses revealed noticeable differences among the managers; whereas some exhibited very conscious thoughts about how they handled their time, others appeared as not having given their handling of time much thought at all.

In the following sections, the findings presented and discussed above, both with respect to the managers' underlying logics of action and the level of reflection regarding the handling of time, will be further elaborated as a proposed typology is developed in which the findings are combined.

9.3 Combining the logics of action and level of reflection: A proposed typology

The themes, presented and discussed in the above sections, were developed based on a combination of: i) the findings revealed through analyses of the interviews and ii) the application of existing theory. When analysing the interviews in order to uncover how Norwegian managers handle their time at work (and more specifically, to what extent it is a result of choice), I found that the ways in which managers prioritized and handled their time could be pigeonholed into a set of categories. Hence, in the following sections, I propose and discuss a typology describing different approaches that managers could rely on when handling time.

However, it is important to note that the qualitative, empirical data, which is analysed and reported in this thesis, was not sufficient in itself as a basis to derive a typology from; instead, the theoretical basis for the study has also been used to propose this typology. Nevertheless, *the idea* to develop such a typology was derived from the analyses of the empirical data. To propose this typology, the empirical findings were combined with the theoretical contributions included in the revised research perspective. The typology,

which will be elaborated in the following sections, was thus partly derived from analyses of the empirical data and partly from theory. Hence, the typology should be viewed partly as a conceptual and partly as an empirical typology.

The proposed typology was developed as combinations of the two categorizations presented in the previous sections. Furthermore, the typology consists of four different approaches that managers can display when handling their time. These four types, or ways of handling time, are presented in Figure 9.2 below and elaborated in the following sections.

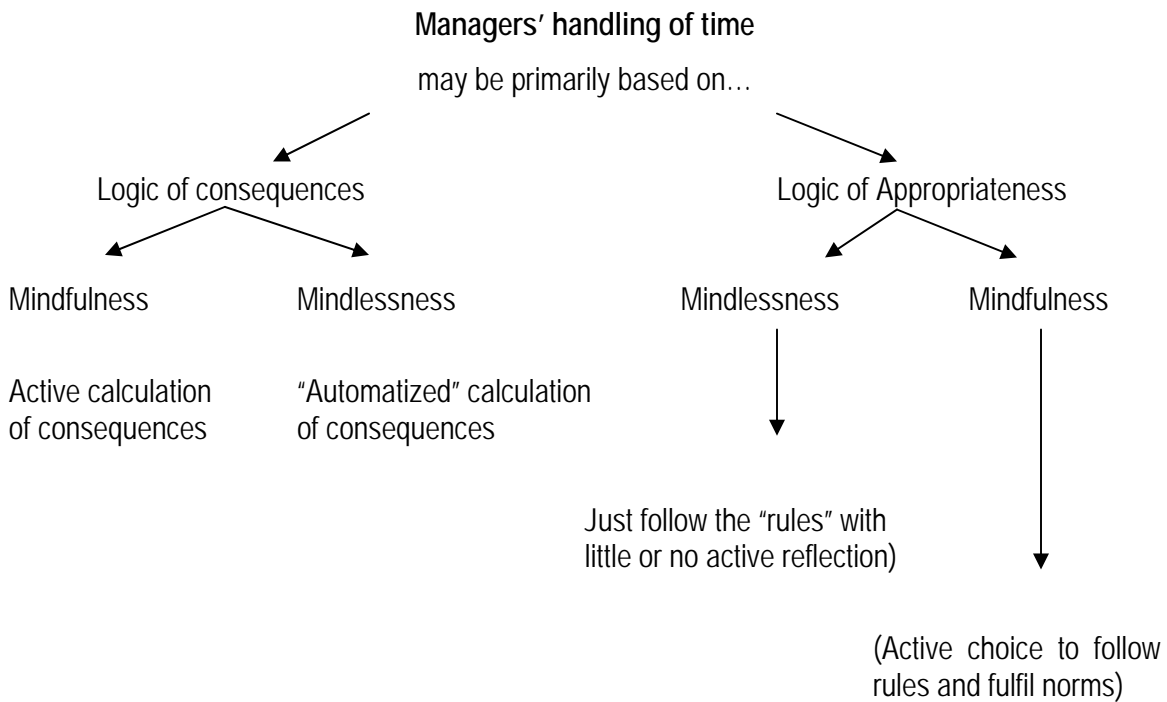


Figure 9.2 Typology combining the different logics and mindfulness/mindlessness

From Figure 9.2, we see that when managers handle their time at work, they may rely primarily on either the logic of consequences or the logic of appropriateness. As discussed in the previous sections, these two categories are theoretically separable and different in their basic nature, and useful for the purposes of this study.

Furthermore, when managers handle their time, the analyses presented in previous sections of this chapter have revealed that managers do so more or less mindfully. Thus, this is integrated into the typology, which then consists of four categories:

- 1) Mindful calculations of consequences,
- 2) Mindless calculations of consequences,
- 3) Mindful rule-following, and finally
- 4) Mindless rule-following.

In the following sections, each category will be elaborated.

9.3.1 Mindful calculation of consequences

By “*mindful calculation of consequences*” I refer to active, cognitive processes in which managers consciously calculate, evaluate and compare the consequences related to alternative ways to prioritize their time, before they decide how to prioritize their time. This first category is perhaps the most obvious, as calculating the consequences is easily recognized as an active, mindful processes. Furthermore, this first category is the category most closely related to classic, normative rational choice theory. However, there are also certain differences. Within the rational model, *all* alternatives with their attached consequences are assumed to be evaluated before the alternative yielding the greatest utility is assumed to be chosen. Throughout several studies, research has established how the rational model makes unrealistic demands on human mental processing capacity. Thus, the concepts of *bounded rationality* and “*satisficing*” have become central elements in several versions developed from the normative rational choice theory. If this is related to the first category, *mindful calculation of consequences*, it implies that managers who tend to rely on mindful calculations of the consequences when handling their time at work, do not necessarily have to calculate *all* the consequences of *all* the alternative ways to prioritize time. Instead they may calculate the consequences expected related to a *limited* number of possible (probable) alternatives, and then make priorities of time based on these calculations. Furthermore, the managers are not expected to consistently choose the *optimal* alternative; instead they may choose to prioritize

alternatives whose consequences are found “*good enough*”. Nevertheless, the key characteristic within the first category is that the managers display a predominant tendency to rely on active, mindful calculations of consequences when prioritizing and handling their time.

An illustration and a typical example of what we refer to as managers’ mindful calculations of consequences is given in the quotation below. The statement is chosen because it illustrates how this manager appears quite conscious about calculating the potential consequences in situations where she must decide whether she should or should not prioritize fulfilling requests from her co-workers:

“...but, if someone other than my boss wants me to do something for them, I see it as a good rule to make sure I get something out of participating in it.” Respondent 10

It is interesting to observe how this manager appears to value active calculation of the consequences (the potential gains or losses) of prioritizing to participate in various activities. She explains how she perceives it “*a good rule*” to make sure she gets something out of participating; in other words, she finds it useful to calculate the consequences at the individual level when prioritizing her time. However, as discussed in previous sections, managers could also calculate the consequences at the organizational level. Such priorities are noticeable in the following quotation:

“I believe that we should all be more conscious about how we and our work contribute to the value creation in the bank. But, this is challenging – because people are different and some will always prefer to keep on working as they have always done!” Respondent 8

We see that this manager also displays concerns for consequences, but in terms of the bank’s value creation, which he asserts should guide everyone’s work habits and priorities, and not consequences in terms of the managers’ individual outcome.

There is a risk that managers' handling of time based on mindful calculations of consequences, particularly if the managers are mainly concerned with the consequences at the *individual level*, may be perceived as cynical or self-serving. On the other hand, it is important to remember that what we have described in the above sections is primarily a conceptual archetype. Hence, the degree to which managers may display this approach will vary. Moreover, it is also important to underline that this typology is *not* a normative model; it does not prescribe how managers *should* handle their time. Nevertheless, the findings revealed in this study do indicate that in some situations, mindful calculations of consequences could not only represent a wise approach to handling one's time, it can be quite necessary.

9.3.2 Mindless calculation

In the second category of the typology, the managers' focus is still primarily aimed at calculating the consequences, only not as a result of active cognitive processes. Instead, we refer to here situations where the consequence calculation has become a habit. This means that the managers are not engaged in conscious calculation, rather they implicitly and unconsciously tend to evaluate different consequences, as an embedded guideline for their handling of time.

Put differently, by *mindless calculation* I refer to processes where the managers:

- i) calculate the consequences of different possible priorities (today) based on past experiences (for instance regarding which activities they previously have prioritized and gained something from),
- ii) calculate the consequences more or less on "auto pilot", that is by habit or without active cognitive processing,
- iii) and finally, are fixated on one single perspective without awareness of alternative perspectives (for instance their own personal advantages or the expected individual outputs from each of the alternatives they can choose to prioritize, without awareness of potential positive outcomes at the collective level).

To give an illustration of what I understand as *mindless calculations of consequences*, a quotation, showing how a manager attempts to make calculation of consequences a habit, is included:

*“I try to make it a habit to do a thorough evaluation before I take on any new tasks.
- Except if it is my boss who asks me to do something, of course!”*

The statement illustrates how this manager explicitly aims at making the calculations *a habit*. If calculating the consequences is made into a routine, one could argue that it would require less of the managers’ cognitive effort and attention. Calculations of expected consequences would still be perceived as the relevant criterion for prioritizing time, but the calculations would be made routinely, involving less cognitive effort. Although infrequently as pronounced as in the quotation above, there is reason to believe that there are managers who tend to prioritize their time primarily based on less heedful calculations as described above. Over time, their calculations have become a routine and an unconscious part of the managers’ way of thinking.

9.3.3 Mindful rule- following

In the third category, the managers’ primary focus is no longer aimed at the *consequences* of their actions; instead their attention is primarily aimed towards what is perceived as *appropriate* for a manager like themselves. To put it differently, the main focus within this category is on recognizing the situation, and the managers’ identity in that situation, in order to figure out which “rules” are governing the appropriate way to prioritize time. Moreover, within this third category the managers actively choose to let certain rules govern their priorities of time. Hence, by *mindful rule-following* I here refer to managers who actively and consciously evaluate which norms or “rules” they perceive relevant to their present identity, and then actively choose either to follow or not follow these rules and norms. This implies that the managers: 1) have a conscious view of which norms and “rules” they let govern their managerial role, and 2) are conscious about how the rules are

translated into actual action or actual priorities of time. Furthermore, since we know from the literature review that multiple identities and multiple rules are often evoked simultaneously, *mindful rule-following* also implies that managers reflect upon which rules they ought to follow in different situations. Managers who tend to rely on mindful rule-following when prioritizing their time, would typically be very aware of different expectations towards them from significant others, for instance from co-workers, but do not act to fulfill the expectations unthinkingly.

To illustrate what I refer to as *mindful rule-following*, a statement from one of the managers is included. In this statement, the manager makes a point out of drawing the line between her identity as a manager, and as a person:

I believe it is really important that I do not take things too personally, or lie awake at night wondering if I have failed as a manager. I cannot take things too personally when for instance I am in a meeting with a co-worker who I have to confront because he hasn't done his job well enough, or with customers who struggle with bad results. It is very important to be explicit about these things; otherwise things will be very wrong. It is important to have a life outside the job!

Respondent 4

Through this statement, we see how the manager distances herself as person from the role as manager, particularly in challenging situations, such as meetings with people who have not met the expectations superiors have of them. When taking on the role as manager, Respondent 4 appears to realize that there are certain “rules” that she should follow; for instance she is expected to confront her co-workers with their disappointing performances. The manager also appears to be conscious about the fact that as a manager she takes on a *role* or an identity, as she states; *it is very important to be explicit about these things*. She also seems conscious about stepping out of the managerial role when she leaves work.

9.3.4 Mindless rule-following

The fourth and last category is labeled “*mindless rule-following*”. As discussed in the above sections, several of the managers interviewed appeared to have reflected very little upon how they prioritize their time. Nor did they appear to have given much thought about how or why they prioritized the activities they did. Instead they made statements such as the following:

“I have accepted this job, and then I just have to do what is expected from me” or
“I have said A - so then I just have to say B too” or
“It is not a question of how much I want to work: Either you’re in - or you’re out!”

These statements indicate that the managers felt that they took on an identity when accepting the job that they are expected to fulfill. The role they accepted when taking the managerial job governs their time, and there does not seem to be much they feel they can do about it. When taking on the managerial role, these managers appeared to have accepted “a script” governing their priorities of time.

Unlike the more mindful rule-following managers, the more mindless rule-following managers did not appear to have given this “script” much attention or questioned it to any noticeable degree; instead they explicitly state that they feel they ought to do as they were expected. In the case of mindless rule-following, managers did not appear to have evaluated the adequacy of the “script” they were following. However, they were busy finding time to perform all these activities which they felt obligated to perform, and may be stressed and feel unable to perform other activities, which they could - or even should - find time to perform.

9.3.4 Summary and discussion of the proposed typology

The four categories included in the proposed typology presented in the above sections, were developed through an iterative process, going back and forth between analyzes of the empirical data gathered through interviews, and the application of theoretical contributions by several researchers (March, 2006; March & Heath, 1994; March & Olsen, 1989) and (Langer, 1989; Langer, Blank & Chanowitz, 1978). Each of the four categories represents an *archetype* of an approach that managers may display when handling and prioritizing their time. Illustrating examples were given to describe and exemplify each category. Hence, the proposed typology is partly a conceptual typology, and partly derived from findings in the empirical analyses.

The extent to which the characteristics associated with each category were visible in the interviews varied. In some interviews, the managers displayed one of the approaches quite distinctly throughout the interview. Other managers displayed the approaches less pronouncedly. Analyses of the interviews also revealed that some managers appeared to vary, for instance between *mindful* and *mindless rule-following*. This may indicate that some managers' seem to rely on one approach in one situation, and another approach in a different situation. This could indicate that there are certain identities and rules for instance, which the managers appear to be quite conscious about, whereas there simultaneously are also other identities or rules, which the managers seem to follow less consciously. Thus the extent to which the managers rely on the different approaches when prioritizing their time appears to be rather dynamic. Furthermore, analyses of the interviews indicate that the extent to which the managers are inclined to display any of the four approaches does not appear to be a stabile attribute or trait; instead it seems to vary across situations.

The analyses of the empirical data in this study revealed that there are differences in how managers handle their time at work, both with respect to their underlying logics of action and their level of reflection. Hence, the proposed typology offers one way to categorize the differences. However, it is important to keep in mind that each of the four categories

represents an *archetype*. This means that in real life, different versions of these archetypes could be expected to be found, since archetypes are seldom found in a pure and complete form in real life. Nevertheless, the typology proposed in the above sections can represent one fruitful way of distinguishing different types of underlying processes when managers handle their time.

9.4 Age and experience

In addition to the themes presented above, I also observed another interesting pattern when I analyzed the interviews. This pattern was related to *the managers' age and experience*. Age and experience was brought up by the managers, it was not initially included in the interview guide. Nonetheless, all the managers interviewed above the age of 55 independently brought up age as an issue that they found relevant in relation to prioritizing their time. Since this aspect appeared to be so important to the managers, I have chosen to include it in the analyses and discussion.

The older managers described how they found it *easier* to handle their time as managers now, than they did when they were younger. Furthermore, they were also convinced that they were *better* at handling their time now than they were before. Interestingly enough, age was not mentioned by any of the younger managers we interviewed, except in one interview where age was mentioned as source of status in the leadership group.

The older managers further emphasized the value of their *experience* in relation to their priorities of time. The terms age and experience were used interchangeably by the managers. Although there are important differences in the two concepts, the managers implicitly referred to experience as a function of age. However, there are different kinds of experience, and to build managerial experience with age requires that one has been in positions that allow the attainment of relevant managerial experience. Some of the managers expressed explicitly how they *knew* that handling one's time as manager was something that one learns over time. One of the managers even made it very clear to me

that this was not something he believed or assumed; he *knew* it. Others expressed these views more implicitly, for instance through statements indicating that they felt more able to handle their time with the experience they had built over the years. As one of the managers put it:

“It is just easier to know what to do now than it was before”

Respondent 9

However, even though the older managers quite collectively claimed that they had learnt something that enabled them to handle their time in better ways now than when they were younger, and that they had developed a certain valuable *knowledge* through their experience, they appeared to be *unable to explain* explicitly *what* they had learnt or what kind of knowledge they had developed. This is illustrated in the following statement:

“After all these years in the game I know what I just HAVE to do, but I also know quite a bit about what I can put on the ‘B-list’. It has something to do with getting more relaxed and patient over the years.”

Respondent 7

The quotation illustrates how the manager points out his own experience over the years as explanation for how it is easier for him to prioritize now than it was before. His statement further implies that there are a number of activities a manager faces which may not deserve too much instant attention, or as the manager puts it: there are activities which can be *“put on the B-list”*. The manager furthermore indicates that this may be related to the manager’s personal development, as he points out his own *patience* and *calmness* as potential explanations.

It is however important to note that in this study I have not made any attempt to evaluate how effective or efficient the managers’ handling of time is. Focus has been on investigating the underlying processes, whereas the managers introduced elements of ranking different ways to handle time, in terms of “good” or “not as good” ways to handle time. Although it could be interesting to pursue and investigate what managers

would classify as “a good way” to handle time, this is beyond the scope of this study. Hence, this will not be problematized any further.

One of the managers explained how his understanding of which activities and events he should prioritize had grown in correspondence with his experience, something that in turn made it easier for him to handle his time. However, when asked to specify *what* he had “learnt” from his experience, or to explain how he reasoned or what he emphasized when he prioritized his time, I discovered that this was very difficult for him. I asked if he had any general criteria he applied when deciding whether to prioritize something or to send it to his “B-list”, and encouraged him to try to describe any such underlying criteria. From the answers he gave to these questions, it seemed as if he had not given this any thought before the interview. It appeared to be very difficult for him to articulate an answer. When trying to describe how he reasoned when he prioritized his time, or outlining any applicable general criteria he applied in doing so, the manager struggled to find words (despite appearing to be a generally talkative and out-going person). In the end the manager decided that he would have to give specific examples rather than describe any general, underlying criteria.

A similar tendency was observable across all the interviews with the older managers; they expressed a firm believe in how age and experience had taught them “*something*”, but when asked to specify what this “something” consisted of, they appeared to have problems articulating it. One of the managers tried to conceptualize his views by applying a metaphor to illustrate what he meant.

“I have been doing this for so long now that I know which eggs I can allow to hit the floor and which eggs I just have to save from cracking!” Respondent 6

The essence in this metaphor indicates that *consequences* appear to be a fairly important element. Related to the above discussion, we recognize the focus on calculating the expected consequences from the rational choice theory. When the manager distinguished

the eggs that he could allow to fall on the floor and crack and eggs that he *had to* save from cracking, this was done based on calculations of the consequences related to each. The manager appeared to use his experience and knowledge to draw such a distinguishing line. Knowledge may be built from experience, from trying different actions and registering the consequences thereof. Still, the problems the managers appeared to have when asked to explicitly express *how* their knowledge helped them to handle their time, indicates that there may be elements of what is often referred to as *tacit knowledge* (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Tacit knowledge and different logics of action

If we pursue the idea of tacit knowledge a bit further: that older managers may hold certain tacit knowledge, which they find useful to apply when prioritizing time, this could be related to both the *underlying logics of action* included in the revised research perspective. First, if managers' tacit knowledge is related to the logic of consequences, we see that the knowledge the managers hold can be useful to them as they are to calculate the consequences of different alternative ways to prioritize time. Over their years as managers, they may have tested different ways to prioritize time, and experienced the consequences related to different alternatives. Hence, their prior experience could enable them to make more certain calculations, particularly if they have personal experiences from similar situations.

Secondly, if we relate the managers' tacit knowledge to the logic of appropriateness, we see that the knowledge the managers hold could be the source that informs the managers about which rules they should follow, and which rules they could to a greater extent neglect. Moreover, the rules to which the logic of appropriateness refers are unwritten informal rules, which according to theory are perceived differently by different managers. Age could be a factor that influences how the rules are perceived, and to what extent the rules govern the managers' behavior. It could also be that the older managers, to a greater extent than the younger managers, have grown into their role, and thus have become less able to recognize different ways to prioritize their time. If there are fewer alternatives to

choose from, the process of choosing could be perceived as more straightforward or easier.

Negative aspects related to the managers' age?

Age was primarily viewed as a positive factor by the older managers, as the experience they had achieved over the years was portrayed as useful when handling time. But, at the same time there were also managers who had observed how age appeared to influence their priorities of time in ways that were not necessarily perceived as only positive. This is illustrated in the quotation below:

"It may be that you – at least when you are at my age – choose to participate in too few competence developing activities. I would have preferred to spend more time developing different competencies that I feel are essential for every manager working in the bank, for instance through participating in conferences or seminars, preferably international seminars, but I just do not take the time to do so. I would also like to be brought more up to date with regards to the different technology we use...I mean, when I see the extent to which my younger colleagues have command over the technology, I realize that this is indeed my "blind spot"....But – I have to prioritize to make the shop go around!"

Respondent 9

The quotation illustrates how the manager realizes that his age influences how he prioritizes his time, and that there are activities that he chooses to prioritize lower now that he would have if he was younger. Another manager also described how he was less ambitious now that he had reached his 60s than he was when he was younger. He further explained that this changed level of ambition clearly influenced how he prioritized his time at work; he described himself as more relaxed and less concerned with the feedback from others on his work; and he said, *"this means that I am more certain of how I want to prioritize my own time"*.

Combined, the above quotations indicate that age seems to influence manager's handling of time in different directions: the older managers referred to experience as a function of their age, and the experience was described as valuable when setting their priorities and handling their time. In other words, the managers expressed that they felt their experience made it easier for them to prioritize time in better ways. However, on the other side, age was also found to influence the managers' priorities in directions with which they were not necessarily satisfied. The managers referred to themselves as less ambitious and more content with the status quo now than when they were younger. Hence, maintaining professional and technological competence was mentioned as examples of activities that one of the managers meant was given less priority than it should be, due to age.

The older managers strongly asserted that they had learnt from their experience. Thus, they found it easier to handle time now, than when they were younger. However, when the older managers compared how they handled their time when they were younger to how they handled their time today, they needed to *recall their memories* from when they were younger. In retrospect, things have a tendency to change character (Schwarz, 1999). Most people like to think that they have learnt something from their experiences. But, perhaps in some cases the truth is that some people may have grown so much into their habits and routines that it simplifies the picture substantially. This could represent an alternative explanation as to why handling time appeared to be easier for the older managers.

9.5 Summary and conclusions: How *do* managers handle time?

Thus far in this chapter, I have analyzed and discussed various findings revealed through the analyses. In the following sections, I end the chapter with an overall discussion. In this discussion, the findings revealed through the empirical analyses of the qualitative data will be related to: 1) the research question addressed in this chapter, and 2) the moderate empirical support for the hypotheses revealed in the previous chapters.

9.5.1 Managers' handling of time: is it the result of choice?

In the research question guiding this last part of this thesis, I asked: *to what extent and in what ways is managers' handling of time a result of choice?* To address this question, I have analyzed the underlying processes of managers' handling of time. The analyses have revealed that when managers handle their time at work, they rely on different underlying processes. More specifically, the findings revealed how managers vary with respect to how they handle time; some were found to exercise *mindful calculations* of the consequences related to the alternatives among which they are to prioritize. Other managers were found to be less mindful, still calculating the expected consequences of the different alternatives, but habitually or by routine. The managers, who were found to rely primarily on *calculations of consequences* (the logic of consequences) whether mindless or mindful, were found to exercise choice to a fairly great extent when they handled time.

In contrast, the analyses also revealed that there were managers who appeared to be concerned with other aspects than the expected consequences when handling their time. These managers were found to be primarily concerned with recognizing the situation they are in and their identity in that situation, and to prioritizing their time in ways that were perceived as appropriate. Among the managers who were found to rely on evaluations of what was perceived appropriate (*the logic of appropriateness*), there were also noticeable differences with respect to the level of reflection. Whereas some were quite mindful about which roles or identities they took on, and thus which rules they let govern their priorities, others were found to be more mindless in these processes. Hence, we differentiated between mindful and mindless rule-followers. The managers, who were found to rely primarily on the logic of appropriateness, were found to exercise choice to a lesser extent; instead their handling of time was the result of fulfilling their roles.

Furthermore, *mindful* managers (whether they primarily relied on the logic of consequences or the logic of appropriateness) were found to exercise choice when

handling time to a greater extent than *mindless* managers. The choices were either related to which identity or role they would take on or which rules they would let govern their behavior (if relying on a *logic of appropriateness*), or the choices were related to finding and choosing the alternative that provided the best outcome (if relying on the *logic of consequences*).

To briefly and summarily answer the research question addressed in this last part of this thesis: the findings revealed and discussed in this chapter have shown that managers' handling of time is both the result of choices, in terms of different mindful processes, discussed in the above sections, *and* the result of other less mindful processes, such as mindless fulfillment of perceived identities (mindless rule-following).

9.5.2 The underlying processes and the effects of managers' resource-accessibility

In Chapter 7, I argued that to fully understand how managers handle their time, attention should be devoted to understanding the processes underlying managers' handling of time. In this chapter, I have investigated these processes thoroughly. However, can the findings revealed in this qualitative study help understand the findings revealed in the first part of this thesis: why the hypotheses we generated and tested in earlier chapters of this thesis received only moderate support?

Based on the findings revealed in this last part of the study, I advocate that the underlying logics of action, which the managers rely on when handling time, may constitute one explanation for the moderate support of the hypotheses. In this study, I have revealed how managers, if relying primarily on the *logic of appropriateness*, tend to fill their days with a number of activities which they perceive *appropriate* for them to prioritize time. Moreover, these activities may or may not contribute to the attainment of the organizations' goals. Some managers may mindfully evaluate to what extent their prioritized activities contribute to the organizations' goals or objectives. Nevertheless,

many managers' days are packed with numerous activities that are perceived to be appropriate, which may cause them to feel busy, pressured for time and that their room for exercising choice to handle time is limited. In such situations elements such as expectations and rules governing the managers' priorities are more important than the managers' access to resources is of less significance. Moreover, based on this line of reasoning, the solution to this undesired situation (in which the managers feel unable to handle their time) might be found through other approaches than providing the managers with more resources. Instead, some of these managers could benefit from becoming *more conscious* about *how* they prioritize their time; *what* activities they prioritize time to and *why* they do prioritize just these activities. As discussed in the earlier sections, following norms and prioritizing time according to expectations and "rules" may represent a wise way to handle time. Based on the findings in this study, I argue that *mindful* rule-following is preferable to *mindless* rule-following. If a manager consciously and actively evaluates which roles, norms or rules he or she wants to fulfill, this would give the manager a possibility to adjust her priorities of time according to the goals they are working to attain. If on the other hand, the manager is *mindless* about which rules or norms she lets govern their priorities, their contribution to the organizations' objectives will depend upon whether the priorities that are perceived to be appropriate are aligned with the organizations' objectives.

The test of the hypotheses revealed that access to resources had a moderate effect on managers' perceived room for handling time. As an alternative way to increase the managers' perceived room for handling time, rule-following managers should actively evaluate the consequences of *not* letting the rules govern their priorities of time. Although the managers may not initially believe it, the consequences could very well be small, or even negligible.

In light of the findings presented in this chapter, I find reason to question the realism in the simple and straightforward rational logic underpinning the CCD model (Stewart, 1982a, 1982b). The CCD model proposed that the managers' room for choice could be seen as the residual between the demands in the managers' jobs and the constraints

surrounding them. Hence, if the constraints were reduced, the room for exercising choice would be increased. However, this proposed logic neglects the impact of difference in the managers' underlying processes as documented in this study. Based on the findings revealed in this study, I find reason to question the alleged universality of the CCD model. Furthermore, the results also indicate that the CCD model, although undoubtedly useful for certain purposes, oversimplifies the picture by neglecting the impact of differences in the managers' ways to think and exercise choice.

10. Conclusions and implications

10.1 Introduction

In the last chapter of this thesis, I draw conclusions from our findings and outline some of their practical and theoretical implications. The chapter is divided into three parts: first, the chapter begins with a brief overview of the *major findings* and *contributions* provided in this study, together with a presentation of *identified limitations*. This leads to Part two, which is a discussion of *practical implications*. Third and finally, *theoretical implications* and suggestions for *future research* are discussed.

10.2 Overview of major findings, contributions and limitations

The main goal of this thesis has been to address a phenomenon that has only received limited attention in research: Norwegian managers' handling of time at work. The purpose of this study has been to enhance the existing insights and knowledge about how Norwegian managers actually handle their time. More specifically, this thesis has been guided by an aim to illuminate the following research questions: 1) what do Norwegian managers pay attention to as they prioritize their time at work, 2) what effects managers' perceived access to resources has on their perceived room for choice, and in the last part of the thesis, 3) to what extent, and in what ways, managers' handling of time is the result of *choice*.

As discussed in *Chapter 1*, the point of departure for this study of managers' handling of time was twofold. First, managers' own reports about how challenges related to *handling time* were perceived as among the most important - and the most difficult - in their jobs triggered my interest. This led to an extensive search in existing research. This review revealed the second point of departure for this study, as it revealed a number of questions yet unaddressed with respect to *how* managers handle their time at work.

In *Chapter 2*, different streams of research on managers and time (the time-management perspective, the self-leadership perspective, the stress perspective, and the descriptive perspective) were probed. Although useful to enhance my understanding of the phenomenon of interest and initiate research, the existing perspectives were found to be incomplete to answer the research questions of this study.

Hence, in *Chapter 3* a new research perspective was developed. The main focus of the research perspective was aimed at *managers' handling of time*, which included *managers' perceptions* and *managers' execution of choice*. The importance of contextual factors, such as the *national cultural context*, was also recognized and thus included in the research perspective. Moreover, the perspective also focused on the dynamics between constraining factors in managers' jobs, such as resource limitations, and managers' room for exercising choice, as proposed in the CCD model (Stewart, 1982a, 1983a). Some of the critiques against Stewart's theoretical contributions have been that they are *too descriptive* and devote *too little attention towards cause-effect relationships*. Thus, a central aim of this study was to address one such relationship by testing part of the dynamics proposed in the CCD model. The effect of managers' access to resources was questioned in Research Question 2, which was transformed into a set of empirically testable hypotheses.

In *Chapter 4*, the methodology underlying the study was documented. In this study, survey data from a survey, which was designed and carried out before this study was initiated, was applied. Advantages and disadvantages related to the use of such data were

then discussed. The survey used had a response rate of 78%, which is extraordinarily high in postal surveys and extensive by Norwegian standards (N = 3172). With respect to the *external validity* of the study, this is advantageous. However, the survey was originally designed for other purposes than this study. This constitutes a limitation to this study, since I was unable to formulate questions explicitly aimed at answering my research questions. Moreover, another consequence of applying survey data gathered before I started working on this thesis was that the theoretical development and the empirical analyses of this study and was a more iterative process than what is normally prescribed in the methodological literature. This iterative process may constitute another limitation to this study, since my access to the existing data may have narrowed my attention into focusing on questions that could be answered from within this data.

In Chapter 5, the findings were reported. To address Research Question 1⁸³, explorative factor analyses were performed. The results revealed that Norwegian managers pay attention to: 1) the *internal conditions* in the organization, 2) the organization's *external environment*, and 3) their own *individual interests* when they make choices and prioritize their time at work. Comparing these findings to existing research on managers and time, I found that previous contributions, to a large extent, had neglected that managers pay attention to their own interests when they prioritize their time at work. Thus, this study's documentation of how managers pay attention to multiple factors, not only organizational factors – but also their own personal interests – constitutes an important contribution from this study. These findings indicate that to increase the understanding of how managers handle their time at work, the attention they pay to their own interests should *not* be neglected. It is, however, important to note that these results were based on the managers' *self reports*. This could constitute another limitation to this study, as there is reason to assume a certain divergence between what *managers* assert they pay attention to, and what *others* (for instance the managers' *co-workers* if they were asked) would assert that their managers actually pay attention to when they prioritize time. Moreover, a divergence between what managers *assert* they find relevant to pay attention to

⁸³ *What do Norwegian managers perceive as relevant to pay attention to when they prioritize their time at work?*

(*expressed theory*) and what they *actually* do pay attention to (*theory in use*), (Argyris & Schön, 1978) could also be assumed to exist. Although unquestionably interesting, these questions were beyond the scope of this study, and thus not problemized further in this thesis.

To address *Research Question 2*⁸⁴, and test the hypotheses, multiple regression analyses were performed to test the effects of managers' access to resources on their perceived room for choice. The results revealed that managers' access to different types of resources had less impact on their perceived room for choice than expected: only 16 of 27 hypotheses were supported, and the amount of variance explained varied from a moderate 9.9% to 16.7%. Hence, the findings only revealed a moderate support for the dynamics proposed in the CCD model. These findings were somewhat surprising, yet they constitute an interesting contribution from this study, since the dynamics tested had not previously been subjected to empirical testing (Kroeck, 2003).

In *Chapter 6*, the findings were discussed. First, methodological limitations and explanations for the moderate empirical support were discussed. However, the moderate support for the hypotheses was taken to indicate that managers' handling of time is a more *multifaceted* and *complicated process* than what was originally proposed in the CCD model. The discussion thus concluded that the existing theory underlying the research perspective, from which the hypotheses were developed, was *overly rational* and *too descriptive*. More specifically, the existing research was found to focus mainly on identifying the *amount of choice available* in managerial jobs and on *the outcomes* of managers' handling of time, in terms of how managers spend their time. Consequently, *the choice processes per se* were insufficiently problematized. An additional research question, focusing particularly on these processes was thus posted, asking: *to what extent and in what ways is managers' handling of time a result of choice?* To answer this question a new approach was thus required, and a revision of the research perspective was required.

⁸⁴ *Does perceived access to resources have an effect on managers' perceived room for exercising choice, and if so, how and to what extent?*

In Chapter 7, new theoretical perspectives were consulted to overcome the revealed insufficiencies in the previously applied theoretical basis. The purpose of Chapter 7 was thus to develop a revised research perspective in order to answer the research question developed in Chapter 6. Theory on different underlying logics of action: *the logic of appropriateness* and *the logic of consequences* (March & Olsen, 1989; March et al., 1976), were consulted and found to be relevant to expand the understanding of how managers' handle their time. Furthermore, theory about *mindless and mindful cognitive processing* (Langer, 1989; Langer, 1997) was also probed and found to be relevant to this study. This may be a limitation to the study, since theoretical perspectives other than the ones included in this study could have been suitable to apply in order to shed light on the research problem of this thesis. However, the theoretical contributions by March (op cit) and Langer (op cit) were found to be most suitable to use in the development of the revised research perspective. A revised research perspective was thus developed, as these contributions were incorporated.

In Chapter 8, the methods used in this part of the study were reported and some of the inherent methodological problems related to qualitative empirical studies were discussed. A potential limitation to the findings revealed through the qualitative part of this study was related to the external validity and generalizability of the findings revealed from the relatively few interviews with managers working in one bank that were included in the study. The findings should thus be interpreted with a certain caution. However, as discussed in the above sections, this study was an attempt to apply new and novel approaches to the phenomenon of interest. The aim of this study was thus to contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon of interest, through integrating new theoretical contributions.

In Chapter 9, the findings revealed in the qualitative part of this thesis were presented and discussed. The analyses revealed how managers tend to rely on different logics of action when they handle time, and how managers do so more or less consciously. The analyses further revealed that many of the situations, which are classified as choices in

the CCD model, were *not* found to be perceived as choice situations by some of the managers. A general tendency among managers to underestimate the room for choice was also recognized by Stewart (1982c), but in this study I went one step further and suggested that *differences in the managers' underlying logic of action* could explain this tendency. In several situations, where the managers *in theory could choose* how to prioritize their time, the managers were found to merely act according to what they perceived as *appropriate* (March, 1994). Although this also involved a certain element of choice (the managers can be viewed to *choose* their identity), such an underlying logic of action involves other processes than those described in existing theory. Thus, one major contribution from this study was that the managers did not perceive these situations as choice-situations, but as *living the consequences* of higher-level choices, which they had already made in the past (e.g. when they chose to become a manager). The analyses further revealed how managers, who tended to rely primarily on *the logic of appropriateness* when handling time, filled extensive parts of their working hours with activities to which they perceived *appropriate to prioritize time*.

Finally, the findings were summarized and combined in a *proposed typology*, in which four different approaches that managers can rely on when handling time were described. The proposed typology was developed based on a combination of the empirical data (the interviews) and the theoretical contributions from March (1989) and Langer (1989). The typology described how managers, who we classified as *mindless rule-followers*, might constitute a certain challenge to their organizations, as they do not actively reflect upon *which* “rules” they allow to govern their priorities of time or behaviour, nor *to what extent* they allow the rules to govern their priorities. Moreover, when prioritizing time, they tend to rely on previously developed categories and act according to historically developed rules, which may - or may not - prescribe behaviour that is suitable in the current situation.

In the last sections of *Chapter 9*, I discussed whether the findings in the last part of this study could be a potential explanation for why access to resources has a moderate impact on managers' perceived room for handling time, as revealed in the first part of this thesis.

Managers who appeared to be mindlessly preoccupied with acting *appropriately* – or fulfilling their identity for instance as “*a good manager*” - presented extensive lists of behaviours and activities which they either felt obligated or expected to prioritize time to, leaving little room for actively handling their time. On the other hand, managers who showed a more calculative, consequence-oriented approach were more preoccupied with ensuring their own room for exercising choice. Finally, I introduced the proposition that managers’ increased access to resources will have *less effect* when the managers primarily rely on mindless rule-following and *more effect* when managers rely primarily on a mindful calculative approach.

10.3 Practical implications

Many managers work long hours, but still experience time pressure and haste. This inflicts the managers with difficulties and challenges related to prioritizing their time between all the various tasks and activities that are competing for their time and attention. These challenges are often perceived as complicated to handle, hence this study has aimed at illuminating some of these complicated aspects of managers’ handling of time. The findings revealed in this study have practical implications for organizations as well as for managers.

This study revealed that when Norwegian managers make choices and prioritize their time at work they pay attention to: i) *internal conditions* in the organization, ii) the organization’s *external environment* and iii) their *own interests*. Moreover, it also revealed that these factors were positively correlated. This has several practical implications for organizations. *First*, one might intuitively assume that if managers pay great attention to one factor when prioritizing their time, it would be at the expense of the attention paid to other factors. However, this study has shown that the factors that managers pay attention to when prioritizing time are *positively correlated*. This indicates that managers, who pay great attention to one of the factors, also tend to pay *more* – and not less - attention to the other factors. However, it is important to note that these findings are on an aggregated level; hence individual managers might obviously prioritize

differently. *Secondly*, the findings also revealed that Norwegian managers do not only pay attention to organizational factors when prioritizing their time, instead they also pay attention to their *own interests*. Hence, if organizations want to fully comprehend how their managers handle their time, make choices and prioritize their time at work, this study reveal that it is important that organizations recognize that managers are not indifferent with respect to their own personal interests. In other words, organizations should be aware that managers do not only consider organizational factors as relevant when prioritizing time, they also pay attention to their own interests. Neglecting these considerations will *not* make them disappear. Furthermore, organizations would be wise to realize that although the attention managers tend to pay to their own interests sometimes might represent challenges for the organizations; the organizations can also use this to their own benefit. If, for instance, a manager pays attention to his professional reputation when prioritizing her time, and achieves a professional reputation as highly skilled and competent, this would be beneficial for the organization as well as for the manager. Hence, when organizations design managerial jobs, they should attempt *to align* the managers' personal interests with the organizations' interests as far as possible. Finally, the findings also revealed differences with respect to age to which it is important for organizations to be aware. More specifically, the analyses revealed that younger managers (managers below approximately 40 years) pay more attention to their own interests than other managers⁸⁵. Hence, organizations should be aware that the managers in different phases of life pay different attention to their own interests. Therefore, to design jobs in which the managers' interest and the organizations' interest are aligned might be particularly important when the managers are young, and in an often hectic phase of life.

The findings also revealed that *managers' access to various resources* appears to have *less* impact on their perceived room for choice than previously assumed in existing research. The results presented in this thesis revealed a multifaceted and complex picture, where managers' access to certain resources significantly influenced their sense of being

⁸⁵ It is also interesting to notice that managers between 60 and 66 tended to pay increasing attention to their own interest as they got older.

able to balance their time in certain situations. However, the overall impact of increased access to resources was fairly moderate. Hence, an important practical implication is that managers' access to resources does not necessarily influence their sense of being able to handle their time. If managers feel unable to handle their time at work, merely providing them with additional resources should not be viewed as a universal solution. However, it is important to note that this does not imply that managers' access to resources is generally unimportant, but, with respect to the managers' *perceived room for choice*, the findings revealed in this study indicate that aspects other than the managers' access to resources may be *more* relevant.

Moreover, results revealed in the second part of this thesis show that managers tend to rely on *different underlying logics of action* when they handle time. Moreover, managers also handle time in more or less *mindless or mindful* ways. These findings have several practical implications for the managers as well as for the organizations.

First, one important implication from this study is that organizations and managers must realize that there *are* in fact differences in the *logic of action* underlying the managers' handling of time. More specifically, if the managers tend to rely on the *logic of appropriateness* when prioritizing their time, they are primarily concerned with enacting roles and fulfilling perceived identities. Hence, to understand how *appropriateness-oriented* managers prioritize their time, the influence of elements such as rules, expectations and norms should be recognized. If, on the other hand, the managers primarily rely on *the logic of consequences*, they tend to prioritize time based on calculations of the expected consequences of the different alternatives. To understand how and why managers handle their time as they do, it is important to identify the underlying logic of action on which the managers rely.

Secondly, the differences revealed in the managers' level of active cognitive process also have certain practical implications. When managers handle their time in *mindless ways*, and hence tend to handle their time "on autopilot" and out of habit (in the same way as they have always handled time), this could represent a challenge to the organizations,

since the managers then prioritize their time without any conscious thought, and without awareness of how the current situation could be different from previous situations they have faced and handled earlier. In other words, the managers do not actively evaluate to what extent their habitual way of prioritizing time contributes to fulfilling organizational objectives in new or changing situations. In particular, if managers are what I have referred to as “*mindless rule-followers*”, they tend to fill great parts of their working hours with tasks and activities, which they perceive that their identity inflicts on them, without consciously evaluating to what extent these activities actually contribute to the achievement of the organizations’ objectives. The increase of managers’ level of awareness regarding how they handle and prioritize their time (that is to encourage more *mindful handling of time*) is thus important in order to ensure that managers handle their time in ways that contribute constructively to the organizations’ achievement of its goals.

One important question with great practical implications is then; *how can managers become more mindful with respect to how they handle their time?* First, if the managers primarily rely on *the logic of appropriateness*, it is essential to explicitly clarify what rules, expectations and norms the manager perceives as relevant as she handles her time at work. Such clarifications require that managers actively analyze their own managerial role, for instance through personal reflection and discussions with fellow managers. Important clarifications include for instance: how do the managers perceive their own role? What rules do they perceive as relevant to their role? What are the expectations aimed at the managers, and which of these expectations must – or should – the managers attempt to fulfill and which could – or should – be neglected? To what extent are the expectations realistic? What would happen if the managers do not act in accordance with their perceived role or neglect the rules of their identity? Secondly, if the managers primarily rely on the *logic of consequences*, it is equally essential to clarify aspects such as: to what extent do the managers let calculations of consequences govern their priorities of time? What consequences do the managers value the most? Are these consequences aligned with the organizations’ interests, or are they primarily beneficial to the managers individually?

10.4 Theoretical implications

This thesis has aimed at contributing to the enhancement of existing knowledge about how Norwegian managers handle their time at work. More specifically, it has aimed at increasing the understanding of a phenomenon that has previously been less studied: *the underlying processes of managers' handling time*. Although we have *not* focused on how managers' time is spent in terms of how many Norwegian managers typically spend on different activities, as in the well-known studies by Carlson (1951), Mintzberg (1973), and Kotter (1982) or the more recent study by Tengblad (2006), the findings revealed in this study still have relevant implications to that line of research. In this study, particular emphasis has been put on investigating and exploring the *underlying processes* on which managers' handling of time is based. However, the result of these processes is managers' actual allocation of time. To broaden the understanding of the underlying processes is therefore interesting *per se*, but it is also relevant to understand how managers allocate their time. The relationship between the underlying processes and the managers' actual allocation of time has been beyond the scope of this study, but represents an interesting direction for future research.

As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, the previous research on managers and time has primarily focused on *organizational aspects*. However, the findings revealed in this study show that Norwegian managers not only pay attention to *organizational factors* when prioritizing their time at work, they also pay attention to *their own interests*. This is an aspect that has to a large extent been neglected in the existing research on managers and time. However, the findings revealed in this thesis show in order for theory to provide an accurate picture of how managers' make choices and prioritize their time at work, managers' focus on own interests should be recognized.

Moreover, the findings revealed in this thesis also question the alleged universality of the CCD model, which is referred to as a *universal model* (Stewart, 1982b; Wahlgren, 2003), applicable to analyze managerial jobs across different industries, organizations, managerial levels, and cultural contexts. Much of the research focusing on managers and time in general – and the CCD model in particular – have however been criticized for

being *too descriptive* and too little concerned with cause-effect relations. The alleged dynamic between the constraint situation (in terms of the managers' access to resources) in the managers' jobs and their perceived room for choice was thus tested. The findings show that changes in the constraint situation in managers' jobs only moderately affect the managers' perceived room for choice. These findings challenge the alleged universality of the CCD model. Moreover, managers' room for choice is in the CCD model viewed as a residual between the *demands* in the managers' jobs and the *constraints* limiting what the managers can do. In light of the findings revealed in this study, these proposed dynamics appear to be *overly rational*. It is, however, important to note that the empirical model we have tested in this study only represents a limited part of the CCD model. Thus, it would be interesting to test other parts and dimensions of the CCD model in future research.

Moreover, the findings revealed in the *qualitative part* of this study show that the proposed dynamics between the managers' perceived room for choice and the resource limitations in their jobs could be influenced by the managers' *underlying logic of action*. The findings revealed that managers who tend to base their decisions primarily on a *logic of appropriateness* are inclined to fill their work time with various tasks and activities that are associated with the enactment of the managers' *perceived identity*. Hence, the managers do not perceive situations where they – theoretically – can choose what to do or how to act, as real choice situations. Instead, in these situations the managers' priorities are governed by their perceived role or identity, and by living the consequences of previous choices (for instance when choosing to become a manager). Thus, another theoretical implication from this study is that the choice component in the CCD model should be further elaborated.

10.5 Future research

This study has not only provided answers, it has also identified new questions, which call for new answers, in the form of future scientific studies. In the following sections, I will suggest directions that I believe would be interesting to pursue.

The study reported in this thesis has revealed how managers tend to rely on different underlying logics when prioritizing their time at work. In this study, two separate sources of data have been combined and applied to answer the research questions: 1) quantitative empirical data (survey data), which were analyzed to reveal the effects of managers' access to various resources on their room for choice, and 2) qualitative interview data, which were analyzed to gain insight into the *underlying processes* of how managers make choices to prioritize and handle their time. For future research, however, it would be interesting to combine the two elements into one integrated study, which would allow the researcher to pursue and further elaborate the propositions developed in this study.

The results of this study challenge the alleged universality of the CCD model. More specifically, I introduced the proposition that managers' access to resources will have *less effect* if managers primarily rely on mindless rule-following and *more effect* if managers rely primarily on a mindful calculative approach. However, the study reported in this thesis does not form a basis on which we can conclude that the alleged dynamics of the CCD model does not hold true. Nevertheless, the findings revealed in this thesis do point towards a need for further research examining the model from various methodological approaches. To my knowledge, this is the only study thus far that has applied *quantitative analyses* to test the alleged causal effects in the CCD model. Hence, there is a need for more studies that apply different methods to examine the model.

The study presented in this thesis is an attempt to broaden the existing knowledge within a field, which is still referred to as underdeveloped, but characterized by increasing interest. Further research along the lines suggested above may provide a clearer understanding of the processes on which managers' handling of time is based, as well as the interactions between these different processes and managers' handling of time.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics for all variables included in regression analyses

Appendix B: Descriptive statistics for control variables included in regression analyses

Appendix C: Frequencies for the dependent variables

Appendix D: Correlation matrix all variables included in the regression analyses

Appendix E: Multicollinearity: Correlation matrix of the independent variables

Appendix F: Descriptive statistics The finance sector

Appendix G: The managers interviewed in the qualitative part of the study

Appendix F: Example of an interview guide

Appendix A

Descriptive Statistics for all variables included in regression analyses

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis		
Independent variables									
						Statistic	Std. E	Statistic	Std. E
Financial resources	3107	1	4	2,42	,891	-.226	.044	-.685	.088
Professional advice from co-workers	3138	1	4	2,08	,804	-.428	.044	-.242	.087
Hire people if needed	3128	1	4	2,83	1,041	.339	.044	-1.125	.088
Labour supply	3106	1	4	2,70	,856	-.018	.044	-.796	.088
Co-workers to trust/ confide in	3119	1	4	2,28	,871	-.179	.044	-.678	.088
Support from friends and family	3095	1	4	1,85	,804	-.563	.044	-.473	.088
Personal support from superiors	2948	1	4	2,76	,927	.225	.045	-.851	.090
Average working hours	3131	5	100	46,31	8,002	.243	.044	4.170	.087
Control own schedule	3142	1	4	2,16	,827	-.329	.044	-.433	.087
Dependent variables									
Daily work/ long term planning	3142	1	4	1,81	,728	-.594	.044	.000	.087
Stay professionally à jour	3135	1	4	3,10	,729	.415	.044	-.252	.087
Work/life balance	3147	1	4	2,04	,774	-.401	.044	-.210	.087
Internal conditions	3151	1	4	3,0636	,47913	-.265	.044	-.027	.087
External environment	3133	1	4	2,5440	,54284	-.125	.044	-.038	.087
Own interests	3144	1	4	2,3704	,54623	.139	.044	-.071	.087
Control variables									
Age	3167	24	66	46,49	8,824	-.136	.044	-.851	.087
Valid N (listwise)	2696								

Appendix B

Descriptive statistics for control variables included in regression analyses

Industry

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary industry	277	8,7	8,7	8,7
Oil & gas production/ Energy	314	9,9	9,9	18,6
Production	310	9,8	9,8	28,4
Construction	255	8,0	8,0	36,4
Trade/hotel/restaurant	282	8,9	8,9	45,3
Transport/Post/telecom	258	8,1	8,1	53,5
Finance	272	8,6	8,6	62,0
Service sector	265	8,4	8,4	70,4
ICT, R&D, cultural and commercial services	320	10,1	10,1	80,5
Public administration / Education	358	11,3	11,3	91,8
Health and social services	261	8,2	8,2	100,0
Total	3172	100,0	100,0	

Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Men	2462	77,6	79,1	79,1
Women	649	20,5	20,9	100,0
Total	3111	98,1	100,0	
Missing	61	1,9		
Total	3172	100,0		

Appendix C

Frequencies for the dependent variables

Frequencies for Dependent Variable 1

How often do you feel that daily work causes you to give insufficient attention to long-term planning?			
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Often	1135	36,0	36,0
Sometimes	1532	48,6	84,7
Seldom	418	13,3	97,9
Never	57	1,8	99,7
Can not answer/ Not applicable	8	,3	100,0
N	3150	100,0	

Frequencies for Dependent Variable 2

I am able to combine my job with a good life			
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Absolutely correct	769	24,4	24,4
Quite correct	1599	50,8	75,2
Somewhat correct	665	21,1	96,3
Not at all correct	114	3,6	99,9
Can not answer/not applicable	3	,1	100,0
N	3150	100	

Frequencies for Dependent Variable 3

I am able to allocate enough time to stay professionally à jour, through attending courses, reading, etc			
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Absolutely correct	53	1,7	1,7
Quite correct	536	17,0	18,7
Somewhat correct	1597	50,8	69,5
Not at all correct	949	30,2	99,7
Can not answer/not applicable	11	0,3	100,0
N	3146		

Appendix D: Correlation matrix all variables included in the regression analyses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Long/ short Term	1													
2 Set own Agenda	-.208(**)	1												
3 Financial Resources	-.157(**)	.385(**)	1											
4 Professional Advice	-.069(**)	.160(**)	.264(**)	1										
5 Personal support from superior	-.088(**)	.154(**)	.203(**)	.268(**)	1									
6 Confidential Talks	-.021	.110(**)	.104(**)	.292(**)	.381(**)	1								
7 Support from Fam/friends	-.009	.098(**)	.078(**)	.212(**)	.165(**)	.239(**)	1							
8 Hire people if needed	-.123(**)	.234(**)	.401(**)	.166(**)	.119(**)	.077(**)	.072(**)	1						
9 Labour Supply	-.101(**)	.152(**)	.199(**)	.150(**)	.111(**)	.110(**)	.093(**)	.161(**)	1					
10 Weekly working hours	-.093(**)	.053(**)	-.118(**)	-.046(**)	.024	-.005	.004	-.239(**)	-.039(*)	1				
11 Stay prof. à jour	-.248(**)	.225(**)	.204(**)	.129(**)	.095(**)	.119(**)	.085(**)	.113(**)	.153(**)	.068(**)	1			
12 Work/life Balance	-.179(**)	.224(**)	.109(**)	.199(**)	.168(**)	.157(**)	.254(**)	.006	.116(**)	.218(**)	.238(**)	1		
13 Age	.067(**)	.011	-.038(*)	.013	.043(*)	.044(*)	.035(*)	.007	-.047(**)	-.014	-.093(**)	-.022	1	
14 Gender	-.086(**)	.081(**)	.175(**)	.033	-.043(*)	-.079(**)	-.106(**)	.158(**)	-.018	-.182(**)	.009	-.007	-.113(**)	1

*p<.05; **p<.01

Appendix E

Multicollinearity: Correlation matrix of the independent variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Set own schedule	Corr	1							
	Sig								
	N	3142							
2 Average working hours	Corr	-,053(**)	1						
	Sig	,003							
	N	3123	3131						
3 Financial resources	Corr	,385(**)	,118(**)	1					
	Sig	,000	,000						
	N	3101	3089	3107					
4 Professional advice from colleagues	Corr	,160(**)	,046(**)	,264(**)	1				
	Sig	,000	,010	,000					
	N	3131	3119	3098	3138				
5 Hire people if necessary	Corr	,234(**)	,239(**)	,401(**)	,166(**)	1			
	Sig	,000	,000	,000	,000				
	N	3122	3109	3090	3119	3128			
6 Labour supply	Corr	,152(**)	,039(*)	,199(**)	,150(**)	,161(**)	1		
	Sig	,000	,029	,000	,000	,000			
	N	3099	3087	3065	3098	3090	3106		
7 Personal support from superior	Corr	,154(**)	-,024	,203(**)	,268(**)	,119(**)	,111(**)	1	
	Sig	,000	,188	,000	,000	,000	,000		
	N	2942	2931	2908	2938	2928	2913	2948	
8 Colleagues to trust and confide in	Corr	,110(**)	,005	,104(**)	,292(**)	,077(**)	,110(**)	,381(**)	1
	Sig	,000	,788	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	3112	3100	3078	3112	3100	3081	2933	3119
9 Support from family/ friends	Corr	,098(**)	-,004	,078(**)	,212(**)	,072(**)	,093(**)	,165(**)	,239(**)
	Sig	,000	,818	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	3088	3076	3057	3086	3076	3055	2906	3072

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Appendix F

Descriptive statistics The finance sector

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Men	217	79,8	79,8	79,8
	Women	55	20,2	20,2	100,0
	Total	272	100,0	100,0	

Age

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Age	272	24	66	46,96	7,920
Valid N (listwise)	272				

Appendix G: The managers interviewed in the qualitative part of the study

Respondent number	Gender	Age
1	Male	32 years
2	Female	32 years
3	Male	42 years
4	Female	44 years
5	Male	36 years
6	Male	57 years
7	Male	60 years
8	Male	48 years
9	Male	63 years
10	Female	55 years

Appendix H

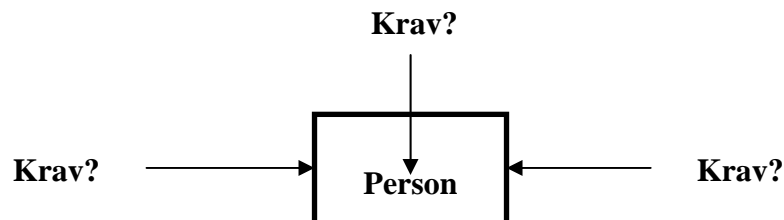
Example of intervjuguide

Del 1: Introduksjon/ innledning

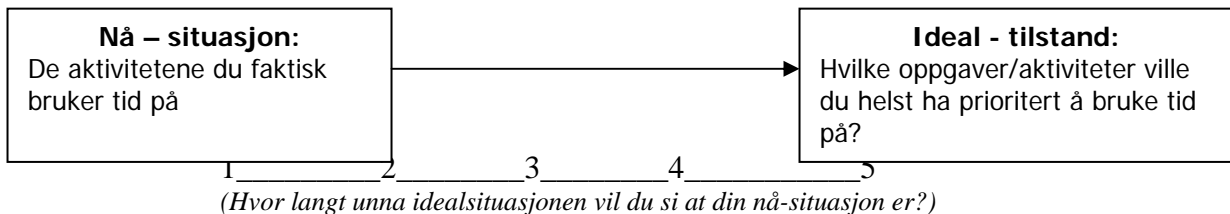
1. Navn
2. Alder
3. Utdanningsbakgrunn (lengde og type)
4. Arbeidserfaring fra denne bedriften og eventuelle andre bedrifter (lengde og innhold)
5. Familiesituasjon (barn, sivil status, eventuell partners stilling og gjennomsnittlige arbeidstid)

Omfang og innhold i jobben

6. Beskriv din nåværende lederstilling → beskriv hva du gjør/ har ansvar for (hvor mange har du personalansvar for?)
7. Hva vil du si at er selve *kjernen* i ditt arbeid?
(Og med *kjerne* mener jeg da de elementene eller delene av lederjobben din som du selv er nødt til å gjøre, som du verken kan delegere til andre eller unnlate å gjøre)
 - a. Hvor stor andel av arbeidstiden din vil du anslå går med til å utføre disse oppgavene (kjerneoppgaver)?
 - b. Hvor stor andel av tiden jobber du alene og hvor mye jobber du sammen med andre? (sammen med 1 person, 1-3 eller mer enn 3 personer?)
8. Hvor **klart definert** opplever du at denne kjernen (kravene) i jobben egentlig er?
 - a. **Hvor** opplever du at kravene kommer fra? (kunder, kollegaer, ledere, andre?)
 - b. Vil du si at de primært retter seg mot rollen din som leder eller mot deg som person? (begge deler? gir det mening for deg å skille dette?)



9. Tidsbruk - Objektivit mål: Hvor mange timer vil du anslå at du vanligvis jobber i løpet av en normal arbeidsuke?
- Er det store variasjoner i hvor mye du jobber? (hvorfor?)
 - Er du fornøyd med det antall timer du legger ned i jobben?
 - Mer generelt: Synes du at hvor mange timer ledere jobber er viktig i forhold til hvor god jobb de er i stand til å gjøre?
10. Kan du si litt om hvilke oppgaver/aktiviteter *utover selve kjernen* velger du å prioritere?
- Hvorfor prioriterer du nettopp disse?
 - Vil du si at de er resultat av *bevisste valg* eller opplever du ofte at det dukker opp ting som du bare *må* ta tak i? (det vi gjerne kaller ”brann slukking”)
 - Hvor stor andel av arbeidstiden din velger du selv hva du skal gjøre?
11. Er det oppgaver eller aktiviteter som du vet du *kunne* valgt å bruke mer tid på, men som du bevisst velger å la være?
- Hvilke oppgaver er i tilfellet det og hvordan tenker du omkring det?
12. Hvis du fritt kunne designe en ”idealtilstand” for din lederrolle – hvilke aktiviteter du ville prioritert å bruke tid på?
- Hvor stort avvik ville det være fra dagens tilstand?



- Hvis det er relativt stor avstand mellom idealsituasjonen og nåsituasjonen – er det noe du opplever som problematisk?
- Hva må til for at du skal kunne redusere avstanden (dvs bruke tiden din på/prioritere de aktivitetene/oppgavene du helst vil)?
– hva kan du gjøre selv og hva trenger du fra andre for å få til?

Begrensninger: Hvilke faktorer bør man ta hensyn til?

Nå har vi snakket en del om hvilke oppgaver og aktiviteter du som leder velger å prioritere å bruke tid på (og hvilke du lar være å bruke tid på!) Du har jo sagt en del om dette allerede, men kan du utdype litt hvordan du tenker omkring hvilke *forhold eller faktorer du opplever som viktige å ta hensyn til* når du skal prioritere tidsbruken din mellom ulike aktiviteter eller oppgaver.

13. Kan du beskrive *hvilke forhold (hvem eller hva) du føler du bør ta mest hensyn til* når du prioriterer din egen tidsbruk?

(Stikkord: krav til effektivitet/produktivitet, kundens forventninger, medarbeideres forventninger f eks om å være tilgjengelig, interne rutiner (møter etc), ...)

14. Men i praksis – vil du si at det er de samme faktorene du ender opp med å *faktisk ta hensyn til* når du prioriterer tidsbuk?

15. Du nevnte innledningsvis at du har ... barn og en partner som jobber mye/lite. Opplever du at familiesituasjonen din påvirker dine muligheter til å disponere arbeidstiden din? - I tilfelle hvordan og i hvilken grad?

16. Det snakkes i våre dager ofte om såkalte *"tidstyver"* - hva forbinder du med det uttrykket?

Det jeg tenker på med uttrykket tidstyv i denne omgang er hendelser, situasjoner, forhold, eller andre faktorer som tar mer av tiden din enn du planlegger at det skal.

(NB! Ikke les opp hele – kun til tips!)

Eksempler på tidtyver: telefon/mail, avbrytelser; uanmeldt besøk, møter – planlagte eller spontane, kriser/plutselige problemer, rotete pult og kontor, ineffektiv delegering, forsøk på å gjøre for mye på en gang, urealistiske tidsoverslag, manglende evne til å si "nei", legge seg for mye opp i detaljarbeid (gjør alt selv), prat med kollegaer eller andre, papirarbeid, lesing eller skriving av rapporter, reising, venting)

17. *Er dette noe du også opplever? - Hva er i tilfellet dine "verste" tidstyver?*

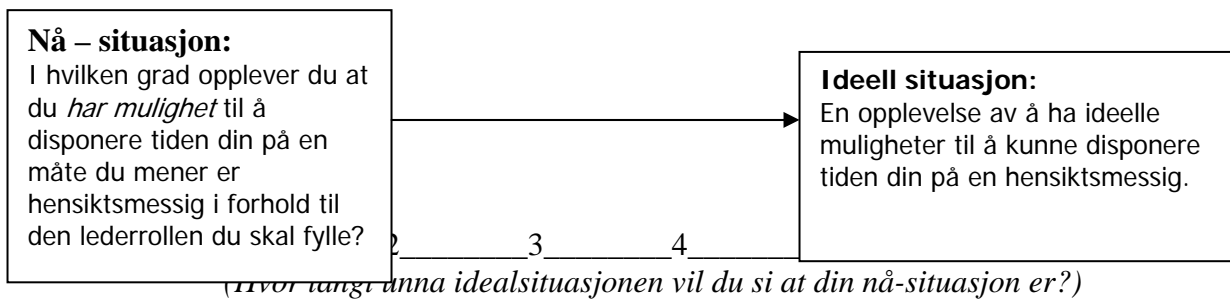
18. Hva gjør du for å hankses du med disse "tidstyvene"?

- a. *Har du noen egne "lure knep" eller strategier du bruker for å oppnå bedre tidsmestring? Hva består dine strategier av?*
- b. *Har du utviklet disse basert på egne erfaringer? Lært av andre?*

Handlingsrom / Valg: Hvordan skaffe seg handlingsrom?

Som vi har snakket en en del om nå er det mange krav og begrensninger man må forholde seg til som leder. Men det finnes selvfølgelig også mange ulike måter å forholde seg til både krav og begrensninger på og en del har du jo allerede fortalt om – men jeg vil avslutningsvis gjerne høre litt om mer om hvordan du tenker omkring dette.

19. I hvor stor grad opplever du at *har mulighet* til å disponere din egen arbeidstid på en måte du er fornøyd med?
20. I hvor stor grad opplever du at du faktisk disponerer din egen arbeidstid på en hensiktsmessig måte?
21. Dersom du opplever at du har mulighet til å disponere arbeidstiden din på en hensiktsmessig måte men likevel ikke opplever at du faktisk gjør det (avvik), hvor stort vil du si dette avviket er?
- hva mener du er den viktigste grunnen til dette avviket?
 - Hva mener du skal til for å kunne redusere eller fjerne dette avviket?

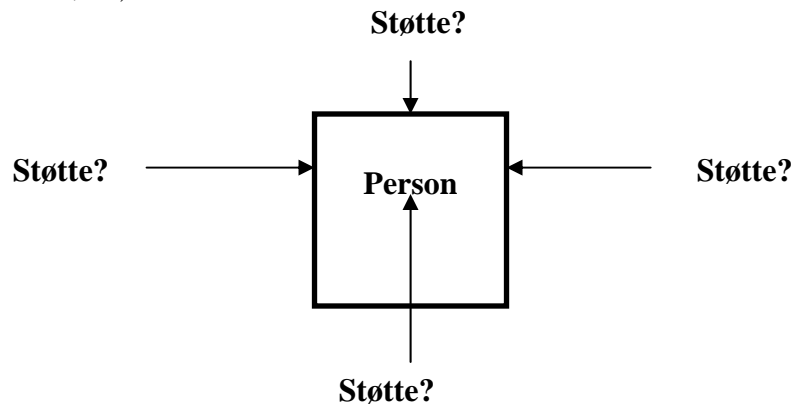


22. Hvor tilfreds er du med de mulighetene du har til selv å kunne påvirke hvordan du disponerer arbeidstiden din?
- Hvis du er (u)tilfreds – hvorfor? (hvorfor ikke?)
23. Hvis det varierer hvor fornøyd du er med mulighetene du har til å disponere egen tid:
- Hva er ytterpunktene dine?
 - Hvor ofte befinner du deg på ytterpunktene og hvor ofte er det på det jevne - går det an å snakke om "en typisk dag" - hvordan ser den ut?
 - Hvordan vil du beskrive konteksten eller situasjonen omkring deg når du er minst tilfreds med mulighetene dine til å påvirke din egen tidsbruk?
24. Hva gjør du for å skaffe deg den mengden "slack" (eller det handlingsrom) du må ha for å være fornøyd med mulighetene til å disponere din egen tid? (Stikkord: delegere, gjemme seg bort, avvise noe(n), prioritere bort, jobbe mer, komprimere arbeidsoppgaver, etc?)
- Har du bevisste strategier eller metoder du anvender – eller finner du løsninger på utfordringene etter hvert som de dukker opp?

25. Du nevnte innledningsvis at du også har jobbet for bedrift X tidligere, opplevde du andre muligheter for tidsmestring der? Hva var det i tilfellet som gjorde mulighetene der annerledes enn her du er nå?

Støtte fra andre kan være svært viktig for å skaffe det handlingsrommet man trenger som leder. Vi kan se dette på samme måte som vi så på hvor kravene til deg som leder kom fra:

26. Hvem opplever du å få støtte fra?
a. Hva består støtten av?(stikkord: sosial støtte, praktisk støtte, emosjonell støtte)



27. Er det andre forhold vi ikke har vært inne på så langt som du mener er relevante å ta opp i sammenheng med det vi har diskutert?

Takk for hjelpen!!