

MEN ARE ALWAYS SUITABLE?
A PAPER ON THE VARYING PREREQUISITES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
DIVERSITY FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

In the paper some Swedish organisations' decisions and efforts to implement gender-diversity are presented and discussed. The organisations are all in the retail sector. The reasons for aiming at diversity are different: on the highest level, it is a need of competence and modernisation. People with a university education are therefore recruited, including women. On the middle level, modernisation was also needed. As women dominated the organisation, men were sought after. On the lowest level, women and men are supposed to break the sex/gender segregation on the shop floor.

Everyone in the organisations supported the ideas, at least they said so. Despite that, little happened. In the article this resistance is described and analysed. It can be understood with the

help of organisational gender orders, meaning that the outcomes of diversity strategies are dependent on the gendered power structure inside and outside the organisations.

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INTRODUCTION, AIM AND DISPOSITION

Diversity seems to be a word with high priority both on the political and organisational agenda all over Europe - maybe over the whole western world. The word and the concept can include many types of diversity. The most often mentioned seem to be race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability, but others like family structure, sexual orientation, occupational level and regional orientation are sometimes included (Barber&Daly 1996, Kossek &Lobel 1996). As a rule the talk about diversity is made in a positive way without the mistrust and even anger often attached to equality between women and men and affirmative action. Despite that it is not an overstatement to maintain that the rhetoric about diversity is in sharp contrast to the social and political worries and violence surrounding immigrants in some localities and to the expanding violence against women as well as in contrast with the expanding wage-gap between women and men. The year 1999 was a dreary one for the women of the world says a Swedish member of the EU-parliament (Cecilia Malmström) with responsibility for equality between woman and men. This article is written in the light of this social reality. Discussions of diversity are often made for and on the organisational level-- which is adequate-- as what can be seen as a backlash for women or minorities in the world or in a country is an aggregation of what takes place in all organisations. This means that in a time of backlash we may, however, find successful diversity-strategies in some organisations.

In this paper, I will present and discuss some Swedish organisations' decisions and implementation of gender-diversity. The organisations are all in the retail sector. Sweden can be an interesting

example as the country often scores highly on the UN equality-list (UN statistics). The sector of the study, retailing, is important and large in most ways. The turn over is high and the employees are many. To let sex/gender represent diversity is interesting as the involved categories, women and men, both have been on the labour market for a long time and so have the discussions concerning the nature of women's and men's competencies, qualifications and jobs. Talk about the importance of decreasing the gender segregation both on the labour market and in organisations has also been heard before even if the terminology used was not the same as the one used now. Whether diversity means a qualitative change, not just a change of words, will be discussed further on.

The aim of the article is to present three Swedish organisations trying to implement a diversity-strategy concerning sex/gender in their units. The organisations are working in the retail sector and the strategy concerned different hierarchical levels. In the first case diversity was a part of a trainee-program meaning that women were expected to be leaders. In the second case increased diversity meant more men as first line managers in this female-labelled company. The third case concerned the ground level aiming at women and men breaking the line of sex-segregation as part of a competence-program. To know many different work tasks and to be able to answer questions on all articles for sale was a part of a new image of the company. Work rotation was a mean to reach that goal and work rotation was a condition for wider competence.

The results are, in brief, not too impressive. Despite the intention of management to reduce sex segregation it is still at hand. Why that is so cannot be given a short and clear-cut answer. Each case can just be understood in its context and with its actors. In the article a discussion showing that is offered. The article follows this disposition:

The concept sex and gender are presented in a Swedish diversity context. The Swedish labour market and retail sector is presented after that as this is the reality in which the organisations work, creates and are created. The three cases studies follows. The cases are discussed and analysed with focus on the pre-requisites and obstacles for diversity in practise and on if, and how, the concept is also relevant for gender.

SEX, GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Some decades ago feminist researchers introduced the concept gender to emphasise that the importance of biological sex is constructed in society and thereby varying over time, space, class etc. The meaning of masculinity is not the same at one time as in another, not the same for young men as for old men, not the same in one profession as in another etc. One of the consequences is

that presence of many women does not automatically mean that women are dominant. The difference between biology, sex, and social sex, gender, is one of the truths presented by the early wave of feminist research that has spread to the social sciences and even to the public. Although it is now discussed and problematised, it has been very useful. "The division between sex and gender has over and over again proved to be a good pedagogical tool," writes the Swedish political scientist Maud Eduards (199x). I agree and will in this article stick to this simple distinction between sex and gender and emphasise that quantitative dominance, high numbers, does not always mean importance from a qualitative perspective (compare Alvesson 1997).

The complexity of the importance of sex and gender is obvious in organisational contexts. The literature and research on gender and organisations is growing. Gender constructs and is constructed in organisations in a complicated interplay between gender and other organisational principles. The construction processes have been described through different concepts like gender labelling and the situation with concepts like gender order or gender regime. The gender order is an important part of the organisational culture. I will come back to this theme at the end of the article when the outcome of the diversity strategies in the three cases is discussed. It can not be understood without gender.

The quantitative-qualitative aspect is sometimes emphasised in discussions on how to look upon diversity although from different perspectives and with varying intensity. In the introduction to the well known book, *Diversity Management*, (1994) the editors, Ellen Ernst Kossek and Sharon A. Lobel writes (page 2) "group memberships can affect employees' attitudes and behaviours in the workplace as well as influence his or her ability to work well with other organisational members". As a rule the writings and discussions around diversity are very positive. It is often presented as an "all are winners"-concept. Cultural diversity is said to give competitive advantages referring to different arguments: the cost argument, the resource-acquisition argument, marketing argument, creativity argument, problem-solving argument and system flexibility argument (Heneman, Waldeck and Cushnie 1994 p. 78) These argument are well known from campaigns against the sex-segregation in working life - most often stating that more women in organisations and work-sites dominated by men is good due to all these arguments (Alvesson& Billing 1997, Hagberg et.al.1 995). The arguments and the campaigns for less sex-segregation have been led both by politicians and by organisations/employers themselves. The success is, however, modest which can be seen from the next paragraph.

THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

The Swedish labour market is usually described, as one of the world's most sex segregated - but it can also be described as remarkably symmetrical. The latter can be claimed on the basis of the fact that almost as many women as men can be found in gainful employment. The public sector can be described as women's world, more than 60% of women work there, and the private as the men's, almost 70% of them are to be found there (Statistiska Meddelanden AM 12 SM 9701). Work duties and occupational areas also illustrate the segregation. Among the largest occupations on the Swedish labour market only a few are symmetrical. (The official dividing line for equality is that both sexes are within the interval 40-60%.) The six largest occupations, and eight of the ten at the top, are strongly dominated by women. One of them, the second largest, is salesmen/-women in the retail trade, where women constitute 74% of the work force (Folk- och Bostadsräkningen 1990, Section 5. Table 9, p. 1).

Segregation on the labour market seems to be declining, albeit very slowly (Jonung 1997). Through historically focused studies we know that occupations can and do change sex. The most usual is a change from male-dominated to female-dominated but the opposite occurs also (Sommestad 1992). Sex segregation on the Swedish labour market is also vertical. This can be illustrated in different ways. One is that women's share of the work force within one sector, one branch, or one occupation does not correspond with their share among those holding leading positions (Kvinnor och män på toppen 1997). Women's wages are lower than men's wages. The wage differences are in part easy to understand and explain. Different work times, with regard to both length and time of day, influence the size of the wage. The tasks' demands for education and competence likewise vary. Education and earlier work-life experience influence the wage. Over time, sex characteristics in the last-named respects have come to be more and more similar. This has influenced the wage gap in an equalising direction (Edin and Richardsson 1997). Besides that, when all rational reasons for wage differences have been removed, one difference, that which can only be explained as sex discrimination, nevertheless remains (Löfström 1989; SOU 1993:7; SOU 1997:136). Women's and men's knowledge and skills are valued differently. "A special phenomenon is that the occupations and sectors with large shares of women tend to have low wages." (SOU 1997:136 p.13. See also Le Grand in the same anthology.)

Wages do not simply exist. They are determined through decisions often made by way of some sort of negotiations. How these are carried out varies between sectors and levels, as do the different

wage-influencing components. In order to come close to these we need, to borrow Persson's and Wadensjö's conclusion (SOU 1997:137) "...know more about how wages are decided on the workplace level". The same is true for how the distribution of the different work tasks within the work force is handled, that is how sex-segregation is constructed over and over again both on the firm level and on the organisational level. To resist that and implement gender diversity in occupations/spaces/times etc has over and over again turned out to be very problematic—something which is confirmed in the cases presented below.

RETAILING

The case companies are in retail trading. The Swedish retail trade displays both similarities to and differences from the retail trade in many other countries (compare Broadbridge's 1995 and 1997 discussion on UK. See also reports from the Servemploi project 1999). To the similarities belong, naturally, that retail trade has a geographical spread corresponding to that of the population. Further, the retail trade has a considerable turnover. It is thereby one of the most important sectors in terms of national economy. A notable part, 20%, of the Swedish business stock consists of retailing companies (Statistisk Årsbok 1995, Table 296). Retailing has in recent decades gone through an extensive restructuring that is in many respects bound up with other societal changes. A measure of the speed of this change is that in 1960 20,000 full-assortment food stores have been reduced to a tenth (Supermarket 6, 1997; Tufveson, 1996). The technical development in the stores is today extensive, albeit not always visible to the consumers. The Swedish retail trade is in an international perspective relatively concentrated. Three large blocks, of which the co-operative KF is one, dominate the daily-ware commerce, and the other two are private. The case workplaces are parts of two of these three blocks.

The Employees and Wages

Retailing is a large and important employer in Sweden. Today's problems for those engaged within retailing are unemployment, the "never-ending" question of time disposition, and violence. The first-named, unemployment is not worse than within other blocks on the Swedish labour market. The time question, the business hours and their affect on the work hours and the disposition of these work hours, has been discussed for decades, foremost between employers and employees but also with contributions from local and national politicians. In spite of the opposition from the Commercial Employees' Union (Handelsanställdas Förbund, HF) the business-hour law was

cancelled on January 1, 1972. Thereby it was "okay" to compete with these hours. This led to a sharply increased demand for part-time employees. The share of full-time employees was in 1977 down to 32% as compared with the 75% who worked full-time ten years earlier (data from the Commercial Employees' Union). Also in these respects there are similarities with other countries although Swedish employees are to a greater extent unionised even when they are not working full-time (compare Penn & Wirth 1993). Violence, the third problem mentioned above, is considered to be relatively new in the branch. It affects mainly those who work alone evenings and nights.

Women dominate, 70%, among the retail trade's employees and the men dominate among the wholesale trades. Within retailing the variations are, however, considerable. The extremes in this regard are the pharmacy and radio/tv commerce. Within the former the women make up 93.5% and within the latter only 18.4% (Statistisk Årsbok 1995, Table 208). The Commercial Employees' Union was in 1993 the Swedish Trade Union Confederation's (LO) fourth largest union and next largest with regard to female membership. Only the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union has more women among their members (Statistisk Årsbok 1995, Table 220). As is the case for Swedish working life in general, women's share of higher positions within commerce is lower than their total share of employment. That pattern seems to be the same in other countries (Traves et.al. 1997). Women's distribution over different positions and collective agreements was in the beginning of the 1990s as shown in the following table.

Table 1 here

Table 1 does not include the so-called white-collar workers. There the women's share on the highest levels is about 10 per cent and at the lowest about 80 per cent.

Commerce is, as in many other countries (Broadbridge 1995, 1997; Penn & Wirth 1993), depicted throughout as a low-wage area. The male workers' wages within commerce appear to be especially low. They earn on an average less than industry's women do. But they, commerce's men, receive naturally more than their female fellow workers. What can explain the differences in wages? Age and number of years in the occupation play a role. There is also a certain provision within the local collective negotiations that, according to the collective agreements, ought to be distributed on the basis of the criteria: responsibility in position, work results, experience, multiple skills, flexibility, and education. Besides these increments the agreement also names "individual compensations" that are motivated by "special work duties and situations of responsibility". Also this seems to be an

international phenomenon (Broadbridge 1995, 1997; Penn & Wirth 1993) as well as they are most often given to men.

Besides direct wages, there are within commerce, as well as elsewhere, so-called fringe benefits. In an investigation carried out recently (Granqvist 1997) it was stated that relatively more men than women have such benefits. Fringe benefits are not only related to sex but also to hierarchical level. "To he who has shall be given" could stand as caption for the policy that is practised. And this applies more to men than to women. This is then the retailing sector in which the investigated company and case workplaces are to be found. We shall become more closely acquainted with them in the coming section.

THE CASES

The three companies investigated all tried to increase the organisational diversity by making the share of men and women more equal on all levels - to decrease the vertical and hierarchical gender-segregation. I describe the background and inducements for the diversity-strategy, the implementation strategy, the outcome, and try to explain and analyse what happened.

Case one - trainees with an academic exam - the T(rainee)-case

The T-company is one of the biggest in the country with a diversified structure most often depicted as a retailer but it is also a wholesale dealer and an industrial producer of different products, mainly food and other daily wares. As a retailer it has many faces, both supermarkets in off centre localities and special centre stores. The company is old, around 100 years, and is regarded to be a co-operative although much has happened in the concern during the last twenty years: some of its units are joint stock companies and some units are run by franchisees, etc. The old history and the co-operative origins have nevertheless maintained an organisational identity glorifying "the men who started at the organisational bottom and ended at the top" (in Swedish: *den långa vägens män*). Consequently, people with a university degree are looked upon with suspicion and some ridicule - "they are very impractical". Of the employees 60% are women; on the three top levels their share is around 20%.

The last fifteen to twenty years have been hard for everyone in the relevant sectors, with reorganisation, restructuring, merging and/or outsourcing initiated to meet the hard competition. The case company has carried out cut downs within every area, which means layoffs on all levels

and deterioration of career possibilities. This was aggravated by the recruitment of managers from outside over recent years - a true innovation in this concern. The people from outside are recruited to get adequate competence and to modernise the concern and its image. The arguments are typical for diversity programs (Heneman et.al 1996). The trainee programme was introduced in 1983. That program can be seen as a true innovation and aiming at diversity mainly from an educational point of – introducing persons with a university education in the company. As we shall see, diversity also concerned gender although that not was planned but a consequence of the focus on competence. Ten persons were recruited for the first and each year after. From the beginning, the trainee period was three years but was later reduced to two. The programme offers two lines: one for retailing and production and one for economy-support system. In the advertisements for the programme it is stated that applicants should be between 22-30, have a university education and some experience from working life and be willing to move. "Are you prepared to take a responsibility for both people and economy? Do you enjoy working with people? Can you handle stress? Are you a generalist? Then you have a good chance to be successful in retailing which is our main sector." Each trainee is assigned a mentor, something very common in similar "apprentice" situations

Different salaries following a new segregation

I will start to describe what happened on the work-sites by a presentation of the wage-gap between men and women. Wages are good and clear criteria of the organisational culture and value system. Figures talk more than words. Information on the salaries is coming from the 58 trainees themselves answering a questionnaire. The quotas below are from them and from other interviewed managers in the company.

The men earned on average 8,000 Swedish crowns a month more than the women. This is around 1,000 ECU or 1,600 dollars. This is a "robust" statistical result concerning the importance of sex/gender. Other variables, also important but not to the same extent as sex/gender were leader position and region. How could it be that such a major difference evolved in so few years from a situation with approximately the same education, competence, and programme?

Most of the trainees, as well as people at the head office, were very surprised - men more so than women. More than one of the interviews mean that the gap has to do with men being more interested in their private economy and more aggressively negotiating for higher salaries - that they are (too) sure of themselves. The women's absence for parental leave is also mentioned as one rational reason for their lower salaries. That discrimination could be a factor is considered to be an

organisational reality since, as one of the men says, "one must remember that employers never pay higher salaries than they have to".

This economic picture has to be completed with fringe benefits which, especially on higher hierarchical levels, could be of considerable value. 46% of the men and 41% of the women states that they have fringe benefits - but these benefits can be of very different kinds. Of these having a car as a fringe benefit 70% are men. Men also mention computer equipment more often, 25% contra 19% of the women. Women more often mention free lunches, 25% contra 18% of the men. This result, that is that the men have more, and more valuable, fringe benefits is typical for Swedish companies (Granqvist 1997).

The participating trainees are still relatively young and in the beginning of their career. If the years following will be like the ones past the differences between the sexes will be even greater. The analysis shows that women's salaries are only slightly dependent on the number of years on the labour market while men's salaries rise over the years. The differences can be seen as a proof of the gender structuring processes operating in the organisation and of the expectations that the trainee programme strictly rewards competence are not fulfilled.

As mentioned above the large wage gap was met by surprise in the organisation and was lively discussed during the interviews. The differences were created after the trainee period when the trainees real work life starts. Both women and men have changed jobs more than once after their trainee period: 3.46 times for the men and 3.22 for the women. The reasons given for changes seem to be similar. To advance to a higher position is of course often important - mentioned by 23% of the men and 30% of the women. The trainees are very career-oriented persons. Higher salaries are also a frequent argument, around 20%: family reasons are given by around 10%. A pronounced wish to be given more responsibility seems to be a totally male incentive. Although, say interviewees, women as well as men, once given responsibilities women fulfil them in a more adequate way than men.

The factor, which triggers off job changes, is often a request from an employer - not to apply for a job. This especially is so in the case of the trainees still working with the company. Men are more often asked than women are 75% compared with 65%, of insiders. Outsiders shows the female trainees as great interest as the male. While it is not unusual to have to move to take a new job men answers for two thirds of the moves.

On this level it is not easy to compare different jobs, positions, and work tasks with each other, as they are not standardised. It seems however as though there are differences between the positions held by women and men. Women are store managers and project leaders while men are super

market managers, managers for a group of stores, and/or MDs for the production companies of the concern. A segregation following gender is taking place.

Summery. The aim of the trainee-program was to diversify the organisation and the arguments were strictly organisational and economic. The trainees represented something new on more than one aspect. They had been studying at the university - something very rare in this organisation dominated by a kind of working class heroism. Fifty percent of the group was also deviating, as they were women. Although this organisation always had many females among the employees they were as a rule steadily places at the bottom of the hierarchy. The trainees were expected to bring general and management competence to the organisation, flexibility and a kind of modernity. It has to be mentioned that gender was not a part of the trainee-diversity concept but on outcome of the truly gender-neutral preference for competence when the trainees were recruited.

From a quantitative perspective, and maybe also from a qualitative perspective, the trainee program succeeded in its diversity ambitions. Academics were recruited and most of them stayed in the organisation. The gender-dimension of the strategy however seems to be ambivalent as a new sex-segregation, but at a higher hierarchical level, is taking place. From the organisations point of view this means that the potential of the trainee-program not is fulfilled. From the female-trainees point of view it is also a relative failure. The women report that they are met with resistance or at least hesitation towards themselves as persons and as potential co-workers. This resistance is manifested by managers below top-management something well known from the feministic-organisational literature. We will come back to that at the end of the paper and close this section by concluding that diversity in one dimension does not automatically means diversity in another. In the case educational diversity was increasing but not gender diversity (equality between women and men).

Case two - more men in our shops (the MM-case)

When talking about diversity from gender perspectives it is often implied that women are the ones to be introduced in male-dominated areas. The same it is when equality between men and women is on the agenda. In a way it is understandable - it is easier to work for equality (or diversity) when it supposed to mean improvements for one group or individual than if it has to be realised through deterioration for one group or individual. As men are the privileged sex - equality most often focuses on the condition of women. As was shown above the Swedish labour market is segregated by sex. There are consequently sectors and organisations where more men coming into the

sector/organisation only can achieve diversity. The MM-company is such an organisation where gender diversity means more men.

The company studied, MM-company, is around one-hundred-year-old. During the years there have been different owners. The study presented took place during a period when the company was owned by a big Swedish industrial group (Eriksson et al., 1996; Frick et al., 1974). The original business concept was to distribute newspapers and magazines. Today the company consists of small stores, "Sweden's smallest department store", selling sweets, sandwiches, and flowers, dealing with coupons for horse racing and other pools, as well as with bus tickets. The early history, the central localisation's, and the close association to the big newspaper companies has given the company a dreary label. "People hardly know what it is; they believe that it is a public company (female manager in medium-sized city).

The company had some economically difficult years in the beginning of the 1990s. The losses were explained foremost by the receding tobacco and newspaper sales, the improved results by the broader assortment and by the fact that some shops were left to franchisees. Now approximately one half of the units are franchised. The company is in a process of cultural change. Selling should be "quick, convenient, friendly" and should be in good "close-at-hand" locations, that is, in places where many people pass by (the formulations are taken from the companies own brochure). The company is nevertheless not prepared to discard all that is "old and drear" but will invest in quality, not the cheapest pick-your-own sweets for example. All the employees do not interpret this as being clear-cut positive. So, we should not sell cheap? Now it's supposed to be costly to buy in our stores (laughter) (female manager in small town)

Employees

Those persons who are in charge of a shop/store are designated as "managers" or "shop managers". Those who function as intermediating links between the central office in Stockholm and the many small shops throughout the country are called "sales managers". It is with the sales managers that the shop managers have most contact. The sales managers regularly visit "their" shops. Other usual contact persons for the shop managers are those in the central office in Stockholm who are responsible for their district. At the head office are also persons responsible for products and contracts with suppliers.

In the typical shop two to five persons work - all or some of them part-time. Below can be seen the sex structure among the shop managers and saleswomen/men on January 1, 1997.

Employees

Women

Men

Shop managers	184	28
Salesmen/women	1068	178

(Source: The companies head office in September 1977)

As is apparent from the figures the absolute majority of the employees are women. The percentage of women shopmanagers is the same as the share of women among the selling personnel. Men dominate strongly on the highest levels.

The owners have initiated an active equal-opportunity policy, which had many similarities with what is heard in the diversity discourse, within the company. The work follows an established plan (which is an obligation by the law), the aim of which is said to be to contribute to "competence and flexibility" for the company's best. The female dominance in the company means that "More men in our shops" is one of the goals, which have been set up on the short term. It is presumed that more men will lead to a higher status for the branch. That this is important is emphasised by the employees. They can in different ways verify the low status which retailing has and perhaps especially this part of the sector

Shop-managers The shop managers have on average been employed in the company ten years, the women longer than the men, on average twelve and eight years respectively. Even among the salespersons the men have shorter periods of employment, that is, they generally stay in the company a shorter time. The shop managers have often, almost always, worked in one of the companies shops before they have become managers.

Part-time work is within the company, as within the retail trade in general, very common. Even the managers work part-time. While only 20 per cent of the female managers work more than 40 hours per week this applies to almost 60 per cent of the men. The work performance varies both with the units' size and with the region. In these respects there occurs a considerable covariance, that is, the largest units are in the largest localities.

The shop managers have many responsibilities and work-tasks. No one can on a full-time basis devote oneself to managing - the units are too small. The managers, especially the women, serve during a major part of their working time as cashier.

The number of employees is normally between one and five even if there are stores which have close to thirty employees. The number of employees is determined by the allocation of personnel hours decided by the company's head office. The distribution of the available hours over weeks, days and employees is decided by the local shop manager, sometimes after discussions with the

work mates. Decisions covering the purchase of inventory may be taken by the shop manager up to some thousand Swedish crowns (8 crowns=1ECU). The managers may not introduce new products and have to use the ?????.....by the head office contracted suppliers. All this gives a very restricted picture.

The shop-managers' incomes consist of hourly wages with a manager-bonus. Some of the managers have, however, monthly wages something which is judged as an advantage. The men earn more than the women. Sex is significant as an explanation of the wage differences (Sundin 1998 - appendix). To the question "Do you consider yourself to be manager of the shop?" all the men and 92 per cent of the women answered "Yes". Almost 60 per cent of the women indicate that the work tasks are simply divided equally among the employees. The same attitude has slightly more than 40 per cent of the men but a fourth of them mean that it is they who should determine the division.

Problems easily spring up, foremost with regard to time allocation. An upper limit is, as mentioned above, given by the head-office. The employees' strongest wish is most often increased working time - they want to earn more and they do not want to work alone. They think that there is a need for double staffing. This opinion is often shared by the shop managers but they do not have the authority to do anything about it.

The company's sales managers are the most often referred to discussion partners by all shop managers - both women and men. The respondents turn to the head office less often. In this respect, the men are more active than the women. "I usually ask the office for help," says one of the men. The men seem to "direct their eyes" and strategy upward while the women see themselves as one in the group and are satisfied with talking to the sales-manager when he comes by.

The female and male managers were asked their opinions on their own and their colleagues' leadership. In summary, the following differences of opinions can be substantiated: both sexes see their own ways of working as more positive than does the opposite sex, in particular, women believe that men do not want to work subordinate to women, similarly men believe that women do not want to work subordinate to men, both women and men, but especially women, believe that men have closer contacts with and are supported by their superiors, especially the men mean that the female managers have problems with combining family obligations with work and that they have lower ambitions, and lack self-confidence. The differences in opinion indicate that shop managers, both women and men, believe that there is a difference between the way women and men work in a management position. A compound question formulated in this way also received

strong support. More than half of the men and circa a third of the women "Agree absolutely" with that statement and almost 70 per cent are on the positive end of the scale. It should, however, also be noted that almost 10 per cent of the women and more than 15 per cent of the men strongly repudiate the statement.

The sales managers who regularly meet managers in action are convinced that there are differences between women and men at work as managers. " ... but it is difficult to put a finger on it." One difference is that men clearly express their wish to take responsibility for larger shops. They are also more demanding in relation to the sales managers. They "require" for their shops and themselves while the women "offer suggestions". It is especially the older female shop managers that disguise their wishes as suggestions.

Summary: As hopefully is clear from the description, the reasons for diversity through the recruitment of men were a little bit unclear. The most frequent answer to the question "Why do you want more men" were "well - it is nicer" (the same is often said when it is women who are the underrepresented group). Sometimes it was also mentioned that men could work by themselves at late evenings and nights and not feel uncomfortable about it. As also is shown that the diversity-strategy in this case was not that successful. The number and share of men did not rise substantially. The reason for that is, according to the men themselves, that the salaries are too low. The few men, however, succeeded in changing the working conditions—that is an important part of the culture, at least for themselves. They challenged the hierarchical structure - but that challenge was not met by resistance but by support both from managers and other employees (women).

The third case – work rotation with troubles – the WR-(work-rotation) case

The investigated company belongs to one of the three groups, which dominate Swedish commerce in everyday commodities. In its internal history, the beginning is usually placed in the Swedish provinces and the 1960s. The first decades were characterised by expansion and shifting owner interests. At the end of the 1980s the present owner, a large Swedish company with diversified operations, bought it.

The investigated company is a wholly-owned subsidiary. The company presents itself as a chain with slightly under 100 stores localised in 50 places throughout the country. The total number of employees is over 3,000. The stores are all wholly-owned joint-stock limited companies with the

store superintendent as managing director (MD). A regional level intermediates between the stores and the head office.

The stores must adopt the established business concept that embraces a quality profile with manual service for certain product groups and adequate staffing. This policy necessitates, in order to be successful, that the employees are well informed and motivated. This applies to all within the company, in the head office, as well as out in the individual stores. Work rotation is an important part of this quality ambition. The establishment of a profit-sharing system can also be seen as an element in this effort, as can regular price fixing. In the stores only two levels are left: the store managers and the rest of the employees. The company is characterised by a strong leadership, a strong culture built on its provincial origin, and entrepreneurship, which is stimulated by the stores' independence and the profit-sharing system which includes all the employees (Johansson et al. 1996).

The employees Women dominate the company. Men make up not quite 30% of the employees, proportionately more in the higher-level positions. The six stores, which were the primary focus of the investigation, have among their employees the same, or somewhat lower, share of men as in the national average. Of the country's roughly 90 stores a handful have (at the time of the investigation seven) a female store manager. That two of these are included in the investigation means a clear overrepresentation. This was not planned but is a consequence of the other criteria for selection, foremost the store size and localisation. The smallest of the case stores has 15 employees and the largest 80. The latter is one of the country's absolutely largest stores. The data below refer to circumstances in these investigated stores.

The employees in the provinces are on an average older than 40 years. The youngest are to be found within the metropolitan areas. It is also there that the length of employment is shortest. In an investigated store situated in a Stockholm suburb the men have on an average been employed for 6.6 years while their colleagues in a smaller city in southern Sweden have been on their post for almost 20 years. These are the extremes in these respects. With only one exception, the women have longer lengths of employment than the men do. Part-time work, common in retailing, is widespread among the employees whom we have studied. The variations are significant. The employees, both women and men, in the Stockholm area have the longest workday and there the discrepancy in working time between the sexes is also smallest. On an average the women's wages are 91.5% of the men's, which means SEK 6 per hour. The lowest women's wage per hour is 85.6%

of the men's. The obtained actual wage per hour has a statistically significant correlation with sex: men are paid better than women are. That there does not, and cannot, exist wage differences because of sex is a common belief in the company both among employees and managers.

Division of labour along gender lines

The declared quality profile demands relatively many employees "on the floor" and manual counters. Paired with the need to minimise costs and risks for occupational injuries this means that work rotation is constantly emphasised. There exists however a certain contradiction between rotation and these ambitions of specialist competence. The quality level demands a high special competence with regard to products and their handling. This is accomplished mainly by assigning the responsibility for certain product groups, work moments, and functions to the employees.

With regard to the areas of responsibility and the work duties, there exists a distinct division of work that can often also be manifested in sex/gender terms. Certain tasks are typical female and others typical male. The most distinct example of the former is cashier work and of the latter butcher. 95% of the cashiers are women. The men working there, the 5% are very young. 87% of the butchers are men. It is not possible to tell how the sex-segregation in the meat-area works in practise.

The areas of responsibility and work duties place different demands on the employees. The demands that are most often specified, and that can determine to whom the different tasks are to be given (and eventually the thereto accompanying increment) are

- * physical strength
- * special competence and/or education /training
- * "feeling and seeing"
- * endure difficult environments, for example cold storage

Handling the meat is the task most often said to require physical strength. The conclusion drawn is then that a chap is needed. "If there are two equally good candidates (a man and a woman) I would all the same choose the man, since it is a heavier, a very heavy job." (Store manager. Man) The demand for physical strength can however be applied also elsewhere in the store. Many types of products demand heavy lifts: fruits and vegetables, newspapers, non-perishables - just about everything. This is noted by several of the interviewees. One female employee says about the "weight argument": "Dairy is not heavier, actually, than it is on non-perishables, or to lift detergent cartons and such, or pet foods and the like. I mean that they are all just as heavy, actually. The only

difference then is that it is colder, but then we have our jackets. The chaps have to put on theirs too. So it is quite strange."

The demand for special competence is discussed foremost with regard to the meat counter and the quartering of the carcasses. To be butcher requires training and there are women, also in the investigated stores, who are trained butchers. Of the chart above it is apparent that there are women who are responsible for handling the meat.

Fruit and vegetables are one of the sections which demand "feeling and seeing". Feeling and seeing is assumed to be foremost a female gift: "They see better if something is turning bad" (Employee. Woman). The fourth demand above, to cope with difficult work conditions, refers most often to refrigeration and freezing, it is cold so to say. This is assumed to be less harmful to men than to women. "It goes against me to demand that a gal go into the freezer to get something." (Store manager. Man).

The task, which is absolutely female, is the cashier work. One does it, according to the predominant conceptions, not because one is especially proficient at it but because one is not so good at anything else. This can hardly be seen as especially meritorious and as such is not either highly evaluated. The management sees all of these dimensions as a problem. The cashier is central for the stores' success. A sulky and slow cashier can discourage many customers. The cashiers have to handle much money. The work leads quite often to occupational injuries. All the same it is classed as being at the bottom of the informal hierarchy. Inasmuch as this classing is also given some support in the formal evaluation, the company's and the store managers' attitude can more probably be characterised as being ambivalent.

Work rotation

Work rotation was, as has been mentioned repeatedly earlier, given high priority by the management for a number of different reasons. It succeeded only partially. Especially two duties, in practice often ended up outside of the rotation even if they were included in the schedule: butchering and cashier work, that is, the most strongly gender-labelled duties in the stores. The reasons given for this failure in rotation were however contradictory.

The butchering is classified as being so qualified that only a few can do it. This is a simple and seemingly convincing explanation - on a closer look it turns out to be less clear-cut. Several of the trained female butchers want to practice their skills more than they are allowed to. But they also admit that it is a heavy, sometimes altogether too heavy, job. The next question must be: Why? There is equipment to facilitate the job but one of the interviewees meant that the male butchers do

not want any of it. "We pointed this out when we rebuilt, that we should install rails in the ceiling so that anyone would be able to move them (animal carcasses) over to the cutting bench. But they (the male butchers) thought this was unnecessary. So now they carry them themselves." (Employee. Woman). At such workplaces many women with butcher training may be allowed to practice their skills only "in a pinch". Such exclusive behaviour and consequences have no support in the management. Besides these arguments there are others that directly build on sex-stereotyping notions: "One can perhaps feel that this is a little more for the chaps".

With regard to the cashier work the explanations are both more and less clear-cut. Rotation with regard to the cashier work occurs only in emergency situations in five of the six investigated stores. It is often said that those who sit as cashier do not want to rotate; it is therefore their own fault that they are not integrated in the competence-heightening scheme at the workplaces. "I believe that one thrives well as cashier and one does not want to run about and handle and pick wares ... one seems to thrive as cashier." (Store manager. Man) Among the cashiers we interviewed there were none who said that she wanted to be cashier only - on the contrary those who gave us information wanted to learn other things and have some variety in their work. "I have fastened as cashier, and I don't feel that it is that enjoyable ... Today I am scheduled to sort the wares half of my time. But when the other cashier calls me I have to go there and then I'll be left sitting there ..." (Employee. Woman) Is there then any real opposition or is it an assumed opposition? This is impossible to determine since any expressed desire to solely work as cashier is contrary to the official company culture. In an analogous manner it is difficult to get anyone to herself say that they cannot even think about sitting as cashier. Such testimony comes solely from the store managers. "The (work rotation) does not function, because they do not want to learn the cashier routines. And as long as all are not willing to take part it cannot function. And one cannot force anyone either." (Store manager. Man) These types of testimonies give interesting information about opinions of the work, of different kinds of work, and of what is female and what is male. They do not however give any direct information about whether or not the employees really want to rotate.

In summary it can be said that the rotation's stopping at butcher work is explained by this being altogether too difficult to manage for the main part of the staff. This is surely so in the present situation. At the same time, an increased competence within the area should be central if management's strategy for the stores is to be realised, a strategy which explicitly builds on a qualitative assortment for which the meat counter is an important element. All who are trained to carry out that function are, however, not always allowed to practice their skills. It seems as though the male butchers exclude women from these tasks. This is a strategy that we recognise from

professionals' manner of guarding the own turf. With regard to the cashier work the mechanisms are completely different. Here it seems instead to be so that their fellow workers close the cashiers in their enclave. Exclusion and enclosure are correlated with the sex/gender of those responsible. COMPARISON AND ANALYSISAs presented above the three case-companies strategies for achieving diversity through less sex/gender segregation was only partly successful. In the first T-case diversity concerned mainly education and sex was an unforeseen consequence. To introduce academics was successful, although not without problems, and more women meant partly a new sex-segregation at management levels. This could be described as less inequality, as women had been absent at these levels, but I find the concept a new sex segregation more adequate. The explanation behind the sex-segregation is mainly a result of the recruitment policy in practise in the organisation. Open resistance also is reported.

In the second case, the More-men-company, the strategy also had little success not because of resistance from within but from the wanted men themselves. In the third case, the work-rotation company, the strategy was not motivated by equality but by strategy on the market demanding high all-round competence from all employees. This, in turn, meant that the existing sex-segregation had to disappear. Everyone, women and men, had to know how to work in all parts of the shops. This strategy could not be implemented in most shops. There was resistance both among men and women against working with some work-tasks. The managers most often choose not to bother and run the shop the best they could with the restricted work-rotation.

As can be seen the cases have both similarities and dissimilarities. I will start with the first the similarities. As all organisations these have cultures including gender orders with its gender labels on work-tasks, space, time etc. its images of masculinity and femininity and its rules for gender relations and the construction of identity (compare Acker 1990) In one organisation there can be more than one culture and more than one gender order at the same time. The variations are, as an example, dependent on hierarchical level, profession etc. Thurén (1996) qualifies the gender orders in three dimensions; scope, strength and hierarchy. With the first she means how many work-tasks, how many spaces etc have got a gender label and how many are gender neutral? With strength she means the importance of the label. When and how can it be overlooked? And the third, the hierarchy, what is the power-difference between the labels?

We can use her concepts to understand the cases better. As the gender orders are such an important part of the organisational culture it is never without problems to change them. There is from many different reasons resistance against changes. In the first case the organisational heroes were the men

working themselves from the bottom to the top. The trainees coming from the university were a provocation against that. They were resisted often through ridicule. "They are so impractical". The organisational culture also consists of a very traditional way of looking at men and women and a family-income although one-income-families hardly exist any more. The consequence is however that "it is very hard for women to make a career here". The opportunity structures are very different (Moss Kanter 1977, compare with Cockburn 1991, Tomlinson et.al. 1997). The resistance towards the

women are manifested in many ways. Mainly through a neglect of seeing them as competent persons valuable for the organisation. "In this organisation you shall be a man ... I have to change organisation to be looked upon as a professional woman not as a girl-trainee". This attitude from older managers was presented by Kvande-Rasmussen (1993) as cavaliers. Others are more hostile trying to fight the newcomers. They are called by Kvande-Rasmussen the competitors. Their reactions are maybe especially strong, as the organisation has had some difficult years with reductions in the number of employees. (compare Elmes&Connelly 1997).

The third case, the work-rotation, has similarities with the T-one, as there was resistance in the organisation towards women coming into typical male-areas and from men having to do women's jobs. The jobs with the strongest male- and female-label were mostly resisted. The internal status hierarchy can explain strength of the resistance. The cashier work has the lowest status of all. The women working there are talked of as without knowledge and ambition. That these statements are not that evident is shown in many ways. Some persons (men) did avoid the cashier work through refusing to learn how to do it. They excluded themselves by refusing to learn. Knowledge was also a mean in the other end of the status hierarchy. Some women had a formal education as a butcher but were not given the chance to practise their skills. The male butchers refused to introduce equipment for carrying and lifting. The few moments demanding physical strength are thereby used as a proof that women can not do the job and so they are excluded from the whole sector. The strategy is presented as a fact that has nothing to do with equality –a rather common way of resisting decreasing sex-segregation in Swedish working life (compare Abrahamsson 2000 and Pettersson 1996). It could be seen as an example of how common sense reinforce dominance and marginality (Jacques 1997) and that members of the dominant group is likely to deny that the exclusion of members of the lower status groups has anything to do with social categories rather than ability (Elmes&Connally). This goes also for the T-case. Cashier work is extra sensitive as it is very visible. All the customers can see who is sitting there and some are commenting on it. This is a sign that the position in any organisation is inseparable from women's (and men's) position in

society (Mills 1997). The organisational isomorphism also includes gender. This is something described by the men going into the MM-company. They often feel that they are looked upon with condescension as they are working in one of these very well known shops. They hesitate to tell anyone. Their masculinity is threatened as they are working in this female-labelled company, a sign that for the individual it is not without problems to be part of the privileged group either. Management tries in different ways to make their life easier. As shown above they are given higher salaries and bigger stores. They are also allowed to break the organisational rules a sign of what Oseen (1997) reports - when you're a part of the majority you can act in a number of ways. In this case the unconventional strategies of the men was allowed as it could be understood as a part of the reformulation of the organisational culture. Women were, however, expected to go on in accordance with the stereotypes for women. When they act in an innovative way it is however not described that way but seen as something "natural" for women. It also has to be remembered that the women were not resisting the favouring of men although it meant that their chances of promotion were diminished. The women were aware of, and a part of, the gender-system in action. The gender order is, as mentioned above, a part of the organisational culture. To change the gender orders demands, consequently, a change in the organisational culture. The same is true for diversity. Change of culture has to include top-management both in talk and acts (Oseen 1997). In our three cases we can see that not all managers in the T-company believed in the new concept. They therefore did not act in accordance with the new strategy. This hidden, and sometimes also open, resistance did not come to the highest managers knowledge. Top-managers did not know what was going on. Even if the support of the highest managers is a prerequisite for success (see Cockburn 1991 and Hagberg et.al 1995) it is not enough. Organisational culture is also constructed at other levels. Some researchers state that the consequence of diversity strategies is not diversity but homogenisation - everyone has to behave as the norm-group (Marsden 1997). In the case studies presented this is not true in the MM-case explained by the fact that men are the diversity-group. As they are the norm of society they really can change the organisation. They may even mean a real pluralistic organisation as different strategies are allowed something which according to Elmes&Connelly (1997) seldom happens.

In other ways the result seem to be in accordance with the conclusions of Elmes & Connelly (1997) as the status differentials in the organisation saved and even expanded to areas before the introduction of the new strategies preserved for women. Successful diversity programs demands both enlargement, sensitivity and cultural audits (Kossek& Lobel 1996). The three case companies differ when it comes to that. The T-company really wanted cultural audits but - not in all aspects.

The second More-men-company understood and tried to change the culture with the help of the diversity strategy but has the old culture and the image to change. It is also a risk that they destroy what really has worked and been successful for so many years. The WR-company was very satisfied with the culture. Actually they wanted to strengthen the culture and the image. The strategy demanded a change of the gender segregation in practise. That this could cause trouble and resistance was not foreseen. As a rule management chose not to insist and "take what they got" so to say.

Roy Jacques (1997) states that gender research can be used to show what has been missing in diversity research. A part of that neglect seems to be the underestimation of resistance and the many forms of resistance. It also shows the importance of realising that both diversity and affirmative actions as a rule take place in existing organisations with established cultures and that organisational culture is constructed in and of the culture in society. Gender seems to have the longest tradition at least in Sweden with its until recently rather homogeneous population.

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The cases has been presented in a book *Män passar alltid? Nivå och organisationsspecifika processer med exempel från handeln*. SOU 1998:4. Stockholm: Fritzes. The methods used in the cases are presented more fully there than in this article.

The literature in this field is, nowadays, large. At conferences on organisations it is as rule track on gender and you even can find gender dimensions in papers presented under other headings.

The same is true for the big journals. A small number of the relevant literature will be mentioned in the papers last section.

The questionnaire was sent to the 81 persons recruited as trainees the years 1983-1990. 42 of them were women and 39 men. Some of them was interviewed and so was the person responsible for the trainee program. The empirical study was done during 1996/97. First an inquiry was sent out to all local shop/store managers and after one month a reminder. Later some of the missing persons were interviewed over the phone. The answering frequency was after that 70%. A number of shop managers and some sales managers have been interviewed besides answering the questionnaire.

Data from the case study company was gathered in 1997 and 1998. Six stores out of 90 were chosen from criteria concerning size and location. 300 persons worked in the six stores. The information concerned their background, economic compensation, working conditions etc. Proper interviews were made with more than 20 employees and some managers and union representatives.