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UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF TOP MANAGERS: A SHADOWING STUDY OF CANADIAN HEALTHCARE CEOs

by

BART MORLEY JOHNSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL

DECEMBER 2013

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It would not have been possible to complete this thesis if not for the generosity and encouragement of my first supervisor, Professor Davide Nicolini. He has provided me with guidance and unwavering support from beginning to end. I could not have asked for a better supervisor. Since inception I have learned a great deal from him and can say that it has been an absolute privilege to work with him on this exciting project. I am also greatly indebted to my second supervisors, Professor Jacky Swan, who has helped me develop and clarify my research throughout this research study, and Professor Trish Reay who supported my ethics proposal and academic endeavors while I was a visiting student at the University of Alberta. With specific regards to Paper #1 I would like to thank Dr. Maja Korica, whose valuable insights and expertise helped me refine and develop the paper. More generally, I would like to thank Warwick Business School and the Innovation, Knowledge and Organisational Research Unit (IKON) for sponsoring this project and my colleagues at WBS who provided me with invaluable advice, support, and encouragement, which helped sustain my efforts to complete this thesis.

Outside of the academic world, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family and friends for challenging my assumptions and injecting me with a passion to seek answers and learn for its own sake. In particular, I would like to thank my wife, Reia Johnson, whose sharp thinking always kept me on my toes. If not for her companionship and role as a critical sounding board, I am certain that I would not be where I am today. I love you Reia, and appreciate the sacrifices that

you have made for me over the years.

With specific regards to the empirical investigation I would also like to acknowledge and show my appreciation for all those who helped me with recruiting the executives who participated in this study, especially Brenda Canitz, who let me trial the shadowing method prior to entering the field. Finally, I want to thank the participants in the four healthcare organizations who agreed to be shadowed for a period of three weeks each. The fact that these busy managers regularly work 50-70 hours a week, and were still able to find time to participate in this study, and help answer any questions that arose about the nature of their work was absolutely incredible. Without their patience and commitment to learning and education this thesis would not have been possible.

An exciting an interesting project, this PhD research has provided me with a new respect for what managers around the world do, day in and day out. Someday I hope to obtain the skills and expertise required to join the ranks of the executive managers who shared their time with me in this study.

-Bart Johnson, December 2013

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates three research questions about the nature of managerial work: (1) What do we know about the nature of managerial work?; (2) To what extent is the work of top managers in the public and private sectors different?; and (3) What are the ethical implications of using the shadowing method to study top managers? These three research questions are presented in three research papers.

The first paper titled *Historical developments in research on managerial work: A critical overview* is a comprehensive literature review, which outlines how research on managing has evolved theoretically, methodologically, and empirically since inception. Identifying a number of gaps in the literature, this paper suggests that much could be gained if contemporary notions of practice are brought into the study of managerial work and increased attention were paid to the sociomaterial, situated, and gendered nature of managerial work.

The second paper in this thesis, *Is managing in the public and private sectors really 'different'? A comparative study of managerial work activities* is based on the results of an observational study in which four Canadian healthcare CEOs were shadowed for a period of 12 weeks (488 hours). Using a set of structured categories set out by Mintzberg (1973) this paper examines the extent to which managerial work is similar and different in the public and private sectors by comparing results to an investigation conducted in the private sector. Through an analysis of work type, hours, location, activities, and contact patterns, this paper finds that there are relatively few differences between the work activities of public and private managers at the top manager level. Implications for future research, managerial practice, recruitment, education, and training are theorized.

The third paper in this thesis, *Ethical issues and dilemmas in shadowing research: Lessons from the field of managerial work*, explores ethical situations that were encountered in this study. Informing research ethics and methodology literature, this paper outlines and critically evaluates the ethical process followed in this study of top managers. Dividing the ethics process into two phases, those addressed by ethics committees (procedural ethics) and those that revealed themselves in the field (ethics in practice), this paper illustrates that while useful, procedural ethics committees are unable to establish ethical practice in and of themselves. In response, this paper poses a number of suggestions as to how ethical practice can be attained through reflexivity and contingency planning.

As a collection of three independent, yet interrelated papers on the nature of managerial work, this thesis contributes to management theory, management practice, and the methodological study of management by: (1) Providing researchers with a new plateau from which managerial work can be studied and theorized; (2) Presenting fresh empirical data and conceptualizations on what top managers do in practice; and (3) Offering insights as to how managerial work can be ethically and practically investigated.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces and provides background information on the field of managerial work studies, the topical area of focus in this thesis. Additionally, this chapter explains: (1) why there is a need for research on managerial work (the research opportunity); (2) what motivated me to study managerial work; (3) which research questions are addressed in this thesis; (4) what the significance of this thesis is; and (5) how this thesis is structured (three papers).

BACKGROUND

"Management plays a very important part in the government of undertakings: of all undertakings large or small, industrial, commercial, political, religious or any other."

 -Henri Fayol, 1916/1949, p. xxi

Recognized as a major determinant in the success of organizations, and society more generally (Drucker, 1954; Zahra, 2003), management scholars have long asked the question: what do managers do? Among the first to write on this topic were Gulick and Urwick (1937) who coined the popular acronym POSDCORB and argued that managers perform seven main functions: planning, organizing, staffing, directing,

coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. More than 75 years after POSDCORB was conceptualized, a number of scholars maintain that it is as relevant to management practice today as it was the day that it was written (Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Fells, 2000; Lamond, 2005). However, there continues to be much debate whether functional depictions of management, as described by early scholars such as Fayol (1916/1949) and Gulick and Urwick (1937), adequately captures the essence of managing.

Since the early 1950's there have been a number of researchers and management gurus who have vehemently argued against detached theoretically laden conceptualizations of management. To make their point, authors such as Sune Carlson (1951), Melville Dalton (1959), Leonard Sayles (1964), Rosemary Stewart (1967), and Henry Mintzberg (1973) conducted intensive empirical investigations to find out what it is that managers *really* do. Through their examinations, these authors found that the practice of management is much more complicated than it had been normatively described in earlier accounts. Famously reflecting on his empirical examination of four executive managers in situ, Henry Mintzberg exclaimed, "If you ask a manager what he does, he will tell you that he plans, organizes, co-ordinates and controls. Then watch what he does. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to these four words" (Mintzberg, 1975, 49). He notoriously described his results as being distinctly different from early theorists, referring to their work in an artistic metaphor as a "cubist abstract", contending that complex nature of managerial work requires detail description, similar to that of a "renaissance painting".

Established out of feelings of discontent, the field of managerial work studies was a significant departure from mainstream management theory. More than 60 years after the first empirical study of managerial work was conducted (see Carlson, 1951) the field continues to be a stand-alone topic, recognized as being distinct in terms of its unique focus on empirics and practice, research object of investigation (individual managers), and types of methodologies employed (mainly observation) (Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000). The distinctive nature of the managerial work tradition has allowed the field to stand out, and make unique contributions to knowledge over the years. However, like the old Japanese proverb states, the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. Practically speaking, this is to say that rather than being recognized as being unique, research on managerial work has been heavily criticized as being overly descriptive and atheoretical (Fondas and Stewart, 1994) causing it to fall stagnant as a stand-alone topic of investigation. As a result, researchers have tended to focus their efforts on mainstream management topics and theories in the areas of leadership and decision making, which are but components of managerial work and only provide partial answers to the larger question 'what do managers do?' (Hales, 1986; Mintzberg, 2009). While this has presented problems for the field as a whole, it has resulted in an opportunity to make significant contributions to management theory and practice.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING MANAGERIAL WORK

"We know more about the motives, habits, and most intimate arcane of the primitive [sic] people of New Guinea or elsewhere, than we do of the denizens of the executive suites in Unilever House."

-Lewis and Stewart (1958, p. 17), cited in Mintzberg (2009, p. 1)

Despite a sizeable collection of studies on managerial work, the notion that relatively little is known about the actual work of managers, a view expressed by Lewis and Stewart (1958) more than half a century ago, unfortunately continues to hold true (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Tengblad, 2012). Reflecting on the state of scholarship, Mintzberg (2009), argued that a sizeable gap in 'management' literature has persisted over the years, and in fact, is larger now than ever, as too few scholars endeavor to address the anthropological question of what managers really do. He argues that while much has been written on how management should be, little has been written on how management really is.

Stefan Tengblad, an active researcher in the field of managerial work (2002, 2004, 2006, 2012), similarly identified significant knowledge gaps in his book *The Work of Managers* (2012). Like Mintzberg (and many others), he argued that there is "an urgent need to establish a strong research tradition based in the realities of managerial work" (p. 7). Analogously, Emilo Matthaei (2010, p. 3) emphasized the importance of research on managing, asking scholars and practitioners a series of rhetorical questions:

> [How can] the impact of management education, corporate governance, information systems, and globalization accurately be measured?; … [How] academic scholars [can] teach managers in executive education programs?; [How] politicians [can] discuss corporate governance rules and regulations for executives[?]; and how … information scientists [can] design efficient information systems at the apex of organizations [if we do not know what managers really do]?

While he does not provide an answer to these questions, and instead goes on to explain the nature of his investigation, the obvious, unspoken, answer is that theories, policies and educational curriculum should be developed based on evidence. However, the reality is that with too few scholars investigating what managers actually do in practice; by necessity we continue to base decisions on normative claims rather than empirical evidence.

In an attempt to assist educators and other professionals better ground decisions in empirical evidence, this thesis responds to the calls for research on managing (see Barley and Kunda, 2001; Mintzberg, 2009; Stewart, 2008; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010), and aims to provide a clearer picture of what it is that managers do in practice. To do so, this thesis explores fundamental characteristics, contents, and demands of managerial work in a broad, general sense. While it touches on specific aspects of managing such as leadership, strategy, and decision-making, it does so without going into exhaustive detail. The intent in taking a holistic view of managing is to inspire researchers and practitioners to more frequently ask and address the question, 'what do managers do', and search to discover more precise answers about managerial practice. In taking this approach, this thesis is particularly concerned with what top managers, in the public sector, do in practice.

Understanding the work of top managers is considered to be especially important to the field of managerial work as top managers have established and efficient work practices, act as models, mentors, and teachers to less experienced managers, and have recognized links with organizational performance (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Luthans et al., 1993; Chang, et al., 2010). It has thus been argued that understanding what top managers do, and improving management at the highest level, is more important than at other levels as it has a greater impact on organizational success and effectiveness (Luthans et al., 1993). Additionally, examining top managers to better understand 'managerial work' (rather than middle or line managers) enables the study of *all* the activities and practices performed by managers, without question, as theoretical debates surrounding 'who are managers?' and 'what makes work managerial?' do not need to be engaged (See Grey, 1999). In this thesis this is achieved by using Rosemary Stewart's (1976, p. 4) definition of a 'manager' to guide discussions, which is "anyone above a certain level, roughly above foreman whether … in control of staff or not." Thus, 'managerial work' in this thesis refers to the everyday work activities and practices of that group of people who occupy jobs in organizations that are considered to be 'managerial' based on hierarchical position. While this definition is somewhat broad, leaving room for interpretation as to whether or not the work of first-line, and some middle managers is 'managerial', there is little contending that top managers are 'managers'.

Along similar lines, there are important reasons for understanding the work of public sector managers. Specifically, that while little is known about what managers do in general (as stated Lewis and Stewart (1958) and Mintzberg (2009)

earlier in this section), this knowledge gap is especially pronounced in the public sector, where there have been comparably fewer studies conducted on managerial work (Matthaei, 2010). This is of particular concern as management in the public sector is often theorized as being distinctly different from the private sector along terms such as complexity, permeability, and stability (Dargie, 1998a, Boyne, 2002) while some theories of 'managerial work' and 'what managers do' (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973) do not treat managerial work as 'distinct'. Issues relating to this knowledge gap (that it is largely unknown what public managers do) are compounded by the fact the provision of essential public services (such as healthcare and education) are becoming ever more costly to deliver. In response to rising costs management reforms are often enacted, reforms that are based on outdated information and theories about what public sector manager's really do.

PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS TO STUDY MANAGERIAL WORK

There are a number of experiences that influenced and guided my pursuit of this PhD in management and led me to the research questions that are examined in this thesis. Before proceeding any further I would like to provide some background information on the experiences that motivated me to study what managers do to help readers understand some of the decisions that were made in the development and deployment of this study.

Unbeknownst to me, my journey towards a PhD focused on managerial work began when I enrolled in an M.B.A. program at the University of Victoria. Hoping

to build on my background in public policy I enrolled in business school hoping to transition from a researcher to an administrator. Looking for a venue to apply my knowledge and skills, I applied to a number of internships and was fortunate to secure a position as a policy analyst at the British Columbia Ministry of Health Services. As part of orientation my supervisor thought that a good way to quickly understand the issues and processes of the department would be to shadow her for my first week on the job. In addition to getting a flavor for the type of work that was conducted she was interested in understanding, from my perspective, how management at the Ministry of Health operated in relation to what I had learned about management in business school. Keeping this in mind during my orientation, I was surprised with what I observed. In my opinion, there was a definite disconnect between what I observed and what I had been taught about management in business school. Specifically, managing was much more complicated than the application of the functional subject areas in which I was educated and was difficult to describe in traditional terms (e.g. planning, organizing, staffing, and budgeting). Wanting to learn more about managerial practice, I continued to shadow my supervisor when I could, with the ultimate goal of working at the Ministry of Health after my internship. However, with the economy in recession at this time it was just not possible. Instead, I sought to further advance my management training and find out more about managerial work through the pursuit of a PhD in management.

Searching for a doctoral program that aligned with my interest in general management, I came across Warwick Business School (WBS) and the work of Professor Davide Nicolini. Following a number of meetings, I drafted and submitted

a research proposal that focused on understanding how managers use different types of information for decision-making. Successful in my application, I began to examine literature on the intersect between information use and managerial decision-making. It was through this explorative process that I encountered the work of Sune Carlson, Rosemary Stewart, and Henry Mintzberg (and many others), and the broader research field of managerial work (where information use is a recognized component of managerial work). Given that I had come across, what I conceived as a gap between theory and practice when I was working at the Ministry of Health, I quickly became enthralled with the study of managerial work. After a series of supervisory meetings discussing the topic, Professor Nicolini encouraged me to conduct a literature review on what had been written on the nature of managerial work. Deviating from my original proposal I intently proceeded to conduct a review on 'managerial work' attempting to answer the question: *What do we know about managerial work?* (The first research question examined in this thesis).

This review uncovered a number of opportunities for future research in the field of managerial work (which are discussed in the body of this thesis). However, given my recent work experience, one finding that stood out to me was that relatively little had been written on the nature of managerial work in the public sector. Aiming to contribute to managerial work literature in the area of public sector management, I engaged with former public sector colleagues at the British Columbia Ministry of Health to discuss where opportunities may exist. From these engagements, the question 'what skills and experience do you need to possess to become a public sector manager, relative to a private sector manager?' was developed, which,

following further engagement with the literature, was broadened to: *To what extent is the work of top managers in the public and private sectors different?* (The second research question examined in this thesis). To respond to this research question, the shadowing method was selected for use in this study. Encountering a number of ethically challenging experiences employing the shadowing method in this investigation, I was motivated to improve the experience for others who may be interested in using the method in organization and management studies. To this end, I decided to explore the question: *What are the ethical implications of using the shadowing method to study top managers?* (The third and final research question examined in this thesis).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To garner a better understanding of what managers do this thesis examines three distinct research questions on managerial work:

1. *What do we know about the nature of managerial work?*
2. *To what extent is the work of top managers in the public and private sectors different?*
3. *What are the ethical implications of using the shadowing method to study top managers?*

The first research question in this thesis provides an overview of research on managerial work, setting the stage for the empirical investigation, which consisted of interviewing and shadowing four public sector CEOs in the Canadian healthcare

industry for a period of 12 weeks -- three weeks per manager (For detailed information on the processes employed in this study see **Chapter Two: Methodology**). The second research question developed out of a gap identified in the literature review (that relatively little research has been conducted on the nature of managerial work in the public sector), and the third developed from my field experience collecting and analyzing the shadowing data. Additional information pertaining to why these research questions required investigation, and how this thesis addresses these questions are discussed in turn.

Research Question #1: What do we know about the nature of managerial work?

Since Sune Carlson (1951) published the first systematic study on managing, there have been a sizeable number of empirical studies conducted on the nature of managerial work. However, up until the mid 1980's there had been relatively little reflection on research patterns, themes, and methods in the nascent field of managerial work-studies. Recognizing that there was a need to take stock of research on the nature of management, five major reviews were published on the topic in the 1980's: (1) Willmott (1984) critically examined selected conceptual and empirical research on managing; (2) Martinko and Gardner (1985) reviewed structured observation as a method for studying work; (3) Hales (1986) critically identified disputes of managerial work and behavior literature; (4) Willmott (1987) critiqued work studies from an institutional analysis perspective; and (5) Stewart (1989) discussed the criticisms, achievements, limitations, and ways forward for managerial

work research. Recounting what had been written on the nature of managing, these reviews were both broad (e.g. Hales, 1986), and narrow in focus (e.g. Martinko and Gardner, 1985) putting forth a number of ideas on how to strengthen the field of managerial work.

In a fashion similar to the scholars who identified a need for reflection in the 1980's, a cursory review of literature on the nature of managing revealed that while there had been some reflection on the state of managerial work in empirical examinations of managing (Watson, 1994/2001; Tengblad, 2006), it has been more than 20 years since the last major review of literature on managerial work (Hales, 1986; Stewart, 1989). In an attempt to provide a new plateau from which scholars can work from, this thesis documents the evolution of theoretical, methodological, and empirical trends in the field of managerial work since inception (1950-2010) (See **Paper #1**). Taking a systematic approach, a combination of 96 books and journal articles are critically discussed, with a number of emergent themes and ways forward identified. The themes identified in the review are then explored in later chapters in this thesis.

Research Question #2: To what extent is the work of top managers in the public and private sectors different?

The literature review identified a number of opportunities for future research. One notable omission in the literature was an empirical engagement with managers working in the public and not for profit sectors. Of the 72 empirical articles

examined in the review, only 12 articles reported on work practices of public sector managers, with half of those articles focusing exclusively on the working lives of educational administrators (e.g. principals, superintendents, and university chancellors). This narrow focus left many areas of public sector management in the scholarly dark. Furthermore, like earlier reviews of managerial work literature, nearly all of the investigations into the work of public and non-profit managers were based in the 1980's. The review found that the topical lag in the literature that began in the early 80s' following an article published by Lau et al. (1980), which contended that work in the public and private sectors was fundamentally similar. While further investigation revealed that this supposition was questioned and discussed at length among organizational theorists (See Smith and Perry, 1985), empirically it was found to be left relatively unchallenged until the late 90s' when Dargie (1998a) questioned the universality of managerial work. Observing the work of four public sector CEOs, Dargie (1998a) found evidence that contextual and political differences make public sector management distinct from that in the private sector. In response to ambivalence in the literature, this thesis attempts to determine whether managerial work is in fact, distinctly different between the public and private sectors. To this end, four public sector managers in the Canadian healthcare sector were shadowed for a period of 12 weeks (three weeks per manager), information on their work activities and practices was carefully recorded and coded using Mintzberg's (1973) categories, and the results were compared to those of Tengblad (2006), the most recent study using Mintzberg's categories to examine managerial work at the top manager level. Tengblad (2006) was selected for comparison to this study rather than

investigating private managers in addition to public managers that were shadowed due to access, time, and resource constraints. Possible explanations for similarities and differences are explored, implications of these findings are discussed, and future directions for research are proposed (See **Paper #2**).

Research Question #3: What are the ethical implications of using the shadowing method to study top managers?

Another finding uncovered in the literature review was that the shadowing method has been employed more than any other research method in investigations of managerial work. Selected for use in this investigation of top managerial work, a significant amount of time and effort was spent trying to unearth the day-to-day practicalities of how to conduct a shadowing study. This involved reviewing methodological literature on shadowing and observational research work practices more broadly (McDonald, 2005; Czarniawska, 2007), developing a detailed research proposal that outlined the practices and techniques that would be employed in this project (which was subsequently submitted to five individual research ethics boards, one at the University of Alberta, and one at each site where data was collected), and then working with research ethics boards to recognize opportunities for harm which were overlooked in the initial proposal, and responding to concerns by developing strategies for prevention and mitigation. This process revealed a number of potential issues, resulted in multiple amendments to my research plan, and the development of several mitigation strategies. However, despite this seemingly rigorous preparation

process, upon entering the field, I nonetheless encountered a number of ethical issues and dilemmas that were not discussed in the literature on shadowing or brought up in the ethical review process. Discovering that ethical issues and dilemmas related to shadowing research are rarely and inadequately discussed in research ethics and methods literature, this paper responds by narratively discussing the ethical journey taken in this investigation of top managerial work. This involves critically and reflexively describing the ethical issues and dilemmas that were encountered in this shadowing study and presenting a number of ways to improve ethical practice (see **Paper #3**).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THESIS

This thesis has theoretical, methodological, and practical significance. The three papers and conclusion in this thesis will reiterate different versions of these contributions and build on different nuances of these contributions. However, I have nevertheless decided to include a number of points to position this dissertation up front.

First off, documenting major theoretical developments in the field of managerial work-studies, this thesis maps a new research direction for future development of management theory. This thesis also contributes to longstanding theoretical debates on the changing nature or managerial work (Drucker, 1988; Kanter, 1989; Zuboff, 1988) and distinctions between public and private sector management with the presentation of new empirical evidence on what contemporary managers in the public sector "do" in practice (Allison, 1979; Meier and O'Toole,

2011). Second, this thesis contributes to the practice of management by outlining the activities and actions that top managers in the public sector perform on a daily basis. This new empirical evidence is especially important for managerial education and training. Finally, this thesis makes a methodological contribution by illustrating how the use of the shadowing method and other observational methodologies more generally, can impact participants and researchers alike in investigations of managerial work. Through reflexivity, this thesis provides researchers with a number of practical suggestions as to how ethical implications of can be mitigated and ethical practice can be obtained.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Unlike a conventional 80,000-word thesis (which is generally comprised of an introductory chapter, literature review chapter, chapter on research methodology, series of results chapters (2-3), and a conclusion chapter), this thesis consists of three separate papers that are aiming to be of publishable quality and are between 8,000-10,000 words each (Robins and Kanowski, 2008; Sundaram and Marsden, 2011; University of Warwick, 2013). These papers are each free standing, however they are all thematically focused on the topic of managerial work and tied together with (1) an introductory chapter that provides an overview of the field of study; (2) a chapter on the research methodology employed in this study; (3) a chapter that introduces the three papers and their presentation and publication status; and (4) a conclusion chapter, which summarizes the contribution of this thesis and provides suggestions

for future research (see the University of Toronto, 2004 and Sundaram and Marsden, 2011 for more information on multi-paper dissertations).

In total, this thesis is comprised of seven chapters, including this introductory chapter. It proceeds as follows. The second chapter in this thesis outlines the research methodology associated with the empirical study of managerial work. It begins by providing a brief overview of research design, and proceeds to discuss the process of selecting methods for use in this study of managerial work, namely the shadowing method (also referred to as semi-structured observation in this thesis), semi-structured interviews, ethnographic interviews, and secondary sources. This chapter then proceeds to explain research processes relating to gaining access to participants and organizations, research ethics, data collection and analysis processes, and finally, issues associated with the validity and reliability of the data that was collected.

Immediately following the methodological chapter is a short chapter that briefly introduces the three papers that comprise the body of this thesis. Included is an overview of the research aims and objectives of the individual papers, the presentation history of the papers, publication status of the papers, and a summary of reviewer and editor remarks.

Flowing from the summary chapter is the first of the three-papers that comprise this dissertation, a literature review on managerial work. This paper titled, *Historical developments in research on managerial work: A critical overview*, comprehensively and systematically reviews theoretical, methodological, and empirical trends in the field of managerial work, providing this thesis with contextual information upon which the remaining chapters of this thesis are based.

The fifth chapter in this thesis is the second of the three research papers that comprise the dissertation. This paper titled, *Is managing in the public and private sectors really 'different'? A comparative study of managerial work activities,* explores the extent to which managing in the public and private sectors is different. This paper begins by providing an overview of the existing debate between scholars who contend that managing is fundamentally similar in the public and private sectors and those who argue that it is distinctly different. It then proceeds to describe the nature of the study, and then presents the empirical results, which are compared to earlier studies that were conducted in the private sector (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006). It concludes with an overview of implications and suggestions for future research.

The third and final paper of this dissertation titled, *Ethical issues and dilemmas in shadowing research: Lessons from the field of managerial work*, focuses on the research methodology employed in this investigation. Based on twelve weeks of shadowing Canadian healthcare CEOs, ethical issues and dilemmas associated with using the shadowing method to study managers are outlined. Dividing the ethics process into two phases, those addressed by ethics committees (procedural ethics) and those that revealed themselves in the field (ethics in practice), issues and dilemmas relating to sampling, informed consent, researcher roles, objectivity, participant discomforts, the impact of research on participants, confidentiality, and anonymity are investigated. A number of questions are posed and a number of suggestions offered as to how ethical practice can be attained in the field.

The seventh and final chapter concludes by considering the collective implications of this thesis, a compilation of papers on managerial work. After outlining the findings and contributions this thesis, limitations are discussed. This thesis closes with recommendations for further research in managerial work.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter provides an overview of the research design, methodology, and research processes employed in this investigation into the work of managers. This chapter begins by outlining the research design employed in this study. It then proceeds to explain the process of selecting research methods for use in this PhD project. This chapter then goes on to discuss the specific processes that were employed to collect and analyze the data. This includes an overview of criteria for selecting participants, the process taken for gaining access, a summary of participants and the organizations that participated in this investigation, detailed descriptions of the data collection and analysis processes, with accompanying challenges that were addressed, and the ethical processes followed in this study. This chapter concludes with a description of issues surrounding the validity and reliability of the research. It should be noted that much of what is discussed in this section is reflected in the three papers. However, issues are discussed in more detail, and at a much greater length in this section of this thesis, which help clarify any questions regarding methodology, and process that could not be expressed in the papers due to length restrictions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To understand what top managers do in the public sector and determine the extent to which managerial work is similar and different between the public and private sectors, this research takes a case study approach. There were two main factors that led to the selection of a case study approach in this research. The first consideration was case studies' ability to capture empirical data on "contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Robson, 1993, p. 51)"[1]. The second factor was case studies capacity to generate theory through "replication and extension among individual cases (Eisenhardt, 1991)." This research design was considered to be particularly appropriate for this research as it examines the work activities of managers in their natural work environment with the aim of understanding, through replication and extension of earlier studies on managerial work (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006), what public sector managers do relative to their private sector counterparts.

While case studies are generally recognized as taking many different forms, with little standardization on how to conduct case studies (Robson, 1993), 'case studies' in managerial work research typically refers to the work of an individual manager. The majority of studies take a multi-case study approach (see Yin, 2003). In a fashion similar to earlier studies (Kurke and Aldrich, 1983; Dargie, 1998a), this study takes a multi-case study approach, examining the work of four Canadian

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[1] Although 'case studies' have different connotations in different disciplines and are applied differently in different research traditions (Gillham, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), in both positivist and naturalistic bounds case studies are recognized as: being focused on a single phenomenon which is studied in real world settings, and being concerned with understanding how the phenomenon under study relates to the setting in which it is being observed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1995).

healthcare CEOs using the shadowing method. Each CEO who was shadowed comprises one case study. The case studies were conducted sequentially between September 2011 and May 2012 with all of the data being collected in one site until moving onto the next. Data from the four cases was then consolidated for comparison with earlier studies of managerial work (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the field of managerial work, a wide array of both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been employed. However, there are seven main methods that have been extensively utilized by researchers studying what managers do (see Akella, 2006; Mintzberg, 1973; Matthaei, 2010). These include: shadowing (unstructured observation and structured / semi-structured observation), interviews, secondary source analysis, diaries and logs, critical incident and sequence of episodes tests, and questionnaires and surveys. While any of these methods can be appropriately used to answer research questions on managerial work, some methods are more appropriate than others to answer specific types of research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). To ensure that the research methodology selected for this study was capable of capturing data on what top managers do in practice with the aim of determining the extent to which managerial work is similar or different in the public and private sectors, the seven major research methods used to study managerial work were reviewed. **Table 1** briefly describes the results of the review, which are outlined in more detail in the following subsections. Specifically, this section

describes the major strengths, weaknesses and appropriate applications of each of these seven research methods, the rationale for the selection of methods employed in this study.

TABLE 1: Strengths, weaknesses, appropriate applications, and use of research methods to study managerial work

Method	Examples	Main Weakness(es)	Main Strength(s)	Appropriate use	Use in this study / Rationale
Shadowing: Unstructured observation	Dalton, 1959; Wolcott, 1973; Watson, 1994	• Time consuming and resource intensive; • Not systematic or replicable; • Gaining access can be challenging	• Able to explore new dimensions of phenomenon (Inductive by design); • Takes contextual elements into consideration; • Direct exposure to reality	• To understand the most complex and least understood aspects of managing	*No* – The primary purpose of this research was to compare managerial work in the public and private sectors, which required the use of some structured categories for comparative purposes.
Shadowing: Structured and semi-structured observation*	Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010	• Time consuming and resource intensive; • Not as inductive as unstructured observation; • Interpreting some activities can be difficult; • Gaining access can be challenging	• Systematic and replicatable; • Able to explore new dimensions of phenomenon; • Direct exposure to reality	• To examine content and characteristics of managerial work in context	*Yes* – Four CEOs were 'shadowed' for a period of 12 weeks (3 weeks per manager) during which semi-structured observations were recorded. Structured data was collected and analyzed using Mintzberg's (1973) categories to compare managerial work across sectors.
Interviews*	Stewart, 1976; Hales, 2005; Matthaei, 2010	• Limited ability to replicate findings; • Difficulties with interpretation, consistency and reliability of results (based on perceptions); • Participants may withhold or falsify data	• Able to clarify (answer arising questions) • Collect background information that may not be observable	• To examine perceptions and cognitive reasoning of managers	*Yes* – A total of four semi-structured interviews were used to collect background data on the managers; Ethnographic interviews were utilized on a daily basis to supplement shadowing data (for clarification / describing unobservable work).
Secondary Sources*	Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Lubatkin et al., 1997; Hales, 2002	• Data is often unavailable or incomplete; • Limited ability to control quality of data	• Requires little time and resource investment from researcher; • Large sample sizes are possible	• To study managers who are not available (limited access to primary data)	*Yes* – Copies of the manager's calendars were used to guide the shadowing process; Meeting agendas and other background documents were used to assist in the coding of managerial time allocation.
Diaries and Logs	Carlson, 1951; Stewart, 1967; Tengblad, 2002	• Little induction (not useful in understanding new dimensions); • Difficulties with interpretation, consistency and reliability of results (based on perceptions); • Researchers may misrepresent intentions of participants; • Little motivation (and/or time) to complete forms	• Requires little time and resource investment from researcher; • Large sample sizes are possible; • Able to capture perceptions	• To study managerial activities that are not directly observable • To capture information on how managers perceive their work	*No* – While diaries and logs are often used to supplement data that is not directly observable in studies of managerial work, the managers in this study expressed that they did not have time to complete the logs given their schedules. The managers in this study engaged in verbal debriefing sessions, which took the form of ethnographic interviews.
Activity Sampling	Kelly, 1964; Hannaway, 1989; Hales and Tamangani, 1996	• Limited in ability to understand context; • Little induction (not useful in understanding new dimensions); • Interpreting some activities can be difficult	• Direct exposure to reality; • Systematic and replicable; • Large sample sizes are possible	• To examine observable aspects of different jobs and activities	*No* – There were few recent studies that utilized this method in the field of managerial work making comparisons across sectors difficult.
Questionnaires and Surveys	Hemphill, 1959; Lubatkin and Powell, 1998; Merz and Sauber, 1995	• Respondent my misinterpret questions; • Low motivation to complete (low response rates)	• Requires little time and resource investment from researcher; • Able to replicate study for comparison (systematic); • Large sample sizes are possible	• To test hypotheses and study variables of managerial work	*No* – This study aimed to collect data on what managers do in practice, which is not possible to ascertain using questionnaires and surveys as there is no direct exposure to reality.

Sources: Adapted from Akella (2006), Easterby-Smith (1991), Matthaei (2010), and Mintzberg (1973)

*Denotes methods that were employed in this study

Shadowing

The shadowing method is the most highly used research methodology in studies of managerial work (See Matthaei, 2010). Described as the process in which researchers follow target individuals from the beginning of the workday (or possibly even before), until they leave the office to go home, shadowing in managerial work studies involves the collection of data on times and content of meetings, conversations with individuals, body language and mood, and managerial practices (McDonald, 2005). Shadowing can take a number of different forms and can be conducted in situations where researchers learn about the activities and practices of participants under study in their natural setting by observing and participating in activities (participant observation) (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). However, in the field of managerial work there are few studies that employ participant observation (See Dalton, 1959; Watson, 1994 for two notable exceptions), with the vast majority of shadowing studies being of the non-participant observer variety (researchers observing phenomenon without actively engaging in activities). Of those studies that employ non-participant observation to study managerial work, few are stationary (see Samra-Fredricks, 2000 for an exception) with most involving researchers actively following managers throughout their workday. As such, 'shadowing' in this thesis refers to the process in which managerial work is observed 'on the move'. Within this classification there are two different types of shadowing: unstructured and structured / semi-structured observations (Czarniawska, 2007).

- *Unstructured Observation*: On the one end of the observational spectrum is unstructured observation, which, depending on the length of study, is often

referred to as ethnography. Unstructured observation involves a researcher entering the field with general ideas of what may be salient, but not a specific aim, which allows researchers to be purely inductive, with no artificial constraints or established structures. Further, it allows researchers to deeply explore different aspects of work given long time frames (Mintzberg, 1973). As such, research in the field of managerial work using unstructured observation has yielded powerful results as they have been able to capture the complexity of managerial work in a level of depth and understanding that other methods have been unable to achieve (Myers, 1999). For example, examining managerial decision-making, Dalton (1959) found that there were inconsistencies between how managers said they were making decisions, and how they were actually making decisions in practice, a finding that Dalton explained could only be revealed by studying managers "in situ".

The ability to study managerial work inductively without constraint does come at a cost however, and that is the researcher's time. As a result of the time-intensive nature of observational studies in general, and specifically ethnographic studies, which generally last from a number of weeks to a number of years in length, there have been few studies that have used unstructured observation to study managerial work (Dalton, 1959; Noel, 1989; Watson, 1994; Wolcott, 1973; Silverman and Jones, 1976 are notable exceptions). Further, there is also concern over comprehensiveness, as it is possible that researchers may miss important aspects of managerial work by focusing on aspects of the job that capture their attention, rather than

examining managing holistically (Watson, 1994). As the focus was not solely to capture information about managerial phenomenon, but also to compare managerial work in the public and private sectors, which required the use of some structured categories for comparative purposes, unstructured observation was not employed in this study.

- *Structured / semi-structured observation*:* Developed by Henry Mintzberg (1970) to examine how managers spend their time, Mintzberg combined characteristics of questionnaires with that of observation and coined the term 'structured observation'. According to Mintzberg (1970), researchers using this method develop structured categories as they observe behavior, so that rather than being influenced by standing literature, are able to develop categories based on their own experiences. One of the major benefits of structured observation was the ability of researchers to "record anecdotal information and to collect anecdotal materials" in addition to categorizing events (Mintzberg, 1970, p. 90). Interestingly, Mintzberg's categorization process has been described as an example of grounded theory (Czarniawska, 2007). However, few studies that have used structured observation, at least within the work activity school, have developed grounded categories. Rather, researchers have applied the structured categories developed by Mintzberg (1973) to examine managerial work in different contexts (See Arman et al., 2009; Pearson and Chatterjee, 2003; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010). Thus, initially described as a grounded theory approach by Mintzberg (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), structured observation has taken on

a different meaning in the work activity school of replication and extension with few new categories of analysis being developed.

Suggesting that the term '*structured* observation' is a reason for few new categories being developed as it inherently down plays the method's ability to be inductive, flexible, and capture novel aspects of managing, the application of Mintzberg's structured observation as "a method that couples the flexibility of open-ended observation with the discipline of seeking certain types of structured data" (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 231) has often been referred to as *semi-structured observation* (See Arman et al., 2012; Noordegraaf, 2000). It is argued that this nomenclature suggests that the method is strictly deductive, rigid and inflexible, and is thus capable of recording trivial, mundane and difficult to articulate aspects of managing (unstructured activities), as well as the frequency and duration of activities (structured activities – based on Mintzberg, 1973).

In this study semi-structured observations were conducted, which are referred to under the broad category of 'shadowing'. As it has been previously noted, this type of data collection was selected as it made it possible to systematically compare results with earlier studies (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006) (See data collection processes for more information).

Interviews

One might assume that asking managers what they do would be the simplest way to find out the nature of their managerial work. However, in studies of managerial work, this has not been the case as research has found that managers are poor estimators of how they spend their time and engage in activities (Burns, 1954). Mintzberg (1973) argues that asking managers what they do in interviews is to make managers researchers tasked with translating complex realities into meaningful abstraction, a task in which there is no empirical evidences that indicates they can do effectively. This is also argued by Barley and Kunda, (2001, p. 84) who suggest that "most people cannot talk about the specifics of what they do outside of the context of actually doing it … In fact, people are likely to misreport with whom they interact over the course of a day."

Nevertheless, when combined with other methods, interviews have proven to be effective in providing in-depth understanding of managerial behaviors, being capable of capturing perceptions of manager jobs (Marshall and Stewart, 1981), and cognitive reasoning for managerial actions. Interviews have accordingly been extensively used in the areas of managerial decision-making and the development of managerial work roles (Butterfield et al., 2005; Matthaei, 2010; Rodham, 2000). In this study, two types of interviews were selected to supplement data collected using the shadowing method: semi-structured interviews and ethnographic interviews (See data collection processes for more information).

Secondary Sources*

Within managerial work literature, secondary sources have been used to supplement primary data sources such as observation or interviews, as when used by itself the researcher is unable to know what is missing from secondary sources examined. Examining whether post-bureaucratic changes have altered managerial work, Hales (2002) for example, used documentary evidence from meeting agendas and minutes, annual reports, market-testing reports, sales reports, and customer-service reports to supplement interview data. Unlike the other methods described, secondary sources are unobtrusive and thus effective for providing information on managers who are unavailable or unwilling to engage in more direct forms of research. Notably, whilst rare, there have been managerial work articles written that rely purely on secondary sources (See Dopson and Stewart, 1990 for a prominent example). However, these studies generally examine one aspect or managing, drawing correlations between factors such as compensation and work roles (Dopson and Stewart, 1990), and rely heavily on empirical evidence from other studies.

One form of secondary source that has emerged as being particularly useful in the study of managerial work is *calendars*. Adopted in three recent studies of managerial work (Bandiera et al., 2011; Robinson and Shimizu, 2006; Matthaei, 2010), calendars have been used to illustrate scheduled time distributions, work locations, and stakeholder relationships. Three different types of secondary sources were collected in this study to supplement shadowing data. These included printed

copies of the manager's electronic calendars, meeting agendas, and other background documents (See data collection processes for more information).

Diaries and Logs

Recognized as a means of capturing accounts of experiences as they happen over extended periods of time, in a relatively unobtrusive manner (Hargie and Tourish, 2009), diaries and logs have been used extensively by managerial work researchers (Carlson, 1951; Kotter, 1982; Stewart, 1967; Tengblad, 2002). Diaries are generally distributed to participants in a semi-structured survey sheet in studies of managerial work; however, depending on the forms and sample, they are capable of recording quantitative and/or qualitative information (Easterby-Smith et al., 1993). Within managerial work studies, diaries have generally been used to record work content, perceived work priories, and analyses of contacts (Stewart, 1967).

Diaries and logs have been noted as particularly effective in recording information about "subjective experiences, cognitions, behaviors and social interactions linked to a temporal framework" (Thiele, et al., 2002, p. 3). Being self-recorded, diaries and logs have often been used to supplement observational data as they are capable of providing an insider frame of reference, capturing the thoughts or intentions of participants (Arman, et al., 2009; Stewart, 1965). However, as a result of being self-reported, diaries and logs are only capable of capturing interpretations and perceptions of managerial work. Another concern is that managers may not have time to reflect on their work or complete the diaries given the pace and density of

work (Stewart, 1967). This was a particular problem in this study as the managers expressed concerns that they did not have the time in their workday to complete diaries and rather would prefer to engage in verbal debriefing sessions. As such, diaries and logs were not used to capture data on topics such as perceived priories and interpretations in this study.

Activity Sampling

While still using observation, activity sampling attempts to make the process of observing behavior more scientific. According to Kelly (1964), this is achieved through momentary observations of work activities at randomly selected times. Kelly (1964, p. 278) argues that taking this approach is beneficial as it allows researchers to observe several managers at once, can take place over a period of days, weeks, or months to reduce variations, and measurements can be made with "a pre-assigned degree of accuracy" which are easier to analyze. However, as with other types of studies using observation, it is also recognized that the participant under study may alter their behavior at the sight of the researcher and does not allow for the collection of much detailed information. As a result, few studies have been conducted using activity sampling. Studies that have used activity sampling to study managerial work have used the method as a supplement, rather than the primary data collection source (See Hannaway, 1989 and Hales and Tamangani, 1996). With few studies using activity sampling, comparison of work activities and practices with earlier research

would have been difficult. As this was an aim of this study, activity sampling was not selected for use.

Questionnaires and Surveys

Within the field of managerial work studies researchers have used questionnaires and surveys primarily for testing hypotheses and theories. Lubatkin and colleagues (1997) for example, tested the universalist hypotheses of managerial work set out by Mintzberg (1973) by surveying 500 managers in developing countries. In another illustration, Merz and Sauber (1995) analyzed more than 500 questionnaires to test four hypotheses about the impact of contingencies such as the environment and entrepreneurial orientation on the work of managers in small firms.

Questionnaires and surveys are unique in managerial work research with regards to the sheer number of managers examined in studies, with some studies collecting responses which generally range from a few hundred to more than 1000 managers (Allan, 1981; Kraut et al., 1989). As a result, questionnaires and surveys are capable of producing results that are more generalizable than the other methodologies used to study work. However, to achieve such numbers there are pre-designed categories and questions, which limit the ability of these methods to make new discoveries.

As the purpose of this study was to determine what managers do in practice, rather than capture what they perceive they do, questionnaires and surveys were not considered to be an appropriate research method for this study. To answer the

research question what do managers do, it was determined that there needed to be direct exposure to reality.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The following section outlines the processes and criteria that were developed and deployed in this investigation. This includes an overview of the criteria for selecting participants, the process in which access was gained, setting in which the research took place, and research practices that were employed (collection and analysis) with accompanying challenges and mitigation strategies.

Criteria for selecting participants

In this study, a number of screening criteria was established which needed to be met for participants to be considered: (1) Participants had to presently hold the job title Chief Executive Officer (CEO); (2) Participants had to be employed by a Canadian healthcare region; and (3) The healthcare region in which the participants were employed had to be considered 'large' by Canadian standards (overseeing the work of more than 5000 employees) (Sarkis et al., 2010).

There are a number of reasons why these criteria were established such as time and resource constraints, and arguments that understanding the work of top managers is more important than at other levels to improve organizational success and effectiveness (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Luthans et al., 1993; Chang, et al., 2010). However, the principal reason for this criterion was developed was for

comparative purposes. Specifically, so that data collected could be systematically compared along two different lines:

(1) *With earlier research on managing*. The focus of studies has been on the work of top managers in large organizations (See Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Kotter, 1982; Kurke and Aldrich, 1983; Tengblad, 2006). Examining the work of Canadian healthcare CEOs allows for comparative research to be conducted in a different time (era) and different context (the public sector) (Hales, 1986; Tengblad, 2002).

(2) *To a publicly funded (NIHR) research study.* Running concurrent to this doctoral research project was a study led by Professor Davide Nicolini titled "The organizational practices of knowledge mobilisation at top manager level in the NHS", which examined the work activities and practices of CEOs of NHS Trusts in the United Kingdom. With the aim of collaborating with Professor Nicolini to write a series of comparative research papers on managerial work and practice, this research examined managers at the same level, in the same industry, in a different country with a similar healthcare system so that future comparisons would be possible. Canada was also selected for access purposes, as I had experience and contacts in the Canadian healthcare system. Notably, while Professor Nicolini's concurrent study influenced the study design and sample of this PhD project, the international comparative component of this research is in addition to the three papers that are presented in this dissertation (they are not included in this thesis).

Gaining access

Gaining access to shadow top managers (CEOs) for a period of three weeks was considered to be a potential barrier to this research project as it demanded a considerable amount of commitment from professionals who are notoriously private and short on time (Kotter, 1982; Vie, 2010). McDonald (2005, p. 458) notes that although shadowing does not "interrupt the normal work activities of managers and take up their time" (cited in Luthans et al., 1985, p. 256), as a method, it is unconventional and due to security and confidentiality concerns, managers who might gladly consent to an interview, may feel uncomfortable with a researcher (with whom they have no past relationship) recording detailed information on their relationships and work activities. Such challenges have been presented in similar studies. For example, Noel (1989) sought to recruit three CEOs and shadow them for a period of one month each. In his recruitment process, he had over 20 requests turned down by CEOs who felt that the presence of a researcher would be too obtrusive and time consuming.

To overcome this potential pitfall, and in line with other observational studies of work (Vie, 2010), personal and professional networks were utilized to make first contact. With prior experience working in the Canadian healthcare industry, this was done by supplying senior colleagues (executive directors or higher) with my CV, a general information sheet about the study, and a letter of invitation. These individuals then drafted a short email, which included a brief description as to the purpose of the study, an explanation as to my relationship with the manager, and my contact information so that CEOs contacted could respond directly to the request via

email if they were interested in participating in the study. Using this approach, 10 CEOs who fit the criteria for this study were contacted, three of which responded to the email. Following a 30-45 minute consultation in which I met with the CEOs and explained the requirements, benefits, and risks of the study, two of the three CEOs agreed to participate in this study. Aiming to obtain a sample of four CEOs, I then contacted 8 more CEOs via public email accounts, with whom I had no associated contact with which yielded no interested participants. I then returned to the CEOs who had agreed to participate in the study and asked them if they knew of any Canadian healthcare CEOs who may be interested and receptive to participating in this study, a method known as 'snowballing'. Following a brief discussion as to who may be a suitable participant in terms of their organization and background, the CEOs forwarded my information package to some of their peers, yielding one more CEO who after a consultation meeting agreed to participate in the study.

Research setting

This research was conducted in the four healthcare regions in the Canadian healthcare sector. In Canada's universal[2] publicly-funded healthcare system, the responsibility of delivering health services rests, by and large, in the hands of regional health authorities. These organizations work at an arm's length from provincial governments, as they receive funding with policy directions, but not operational directives (See Philippon and Braithwaite (2008) for more information

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[2] Healthcare is "universal", in that it is provided to all Canadian citizens via public funds. While there are some services that are private (those which have to be paid for out of pocket or through private insurance), all services that are considered to be "medically necessary" are publicly financed (Health Canada, 2011).

on the operations of the Canadian Health System). **Figure 1** illustrates the administrative structure of the Canadian Health System.

FIGURE 1: Structure of Canadian Health System

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                        │    Public Sector    │
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              ┌────────────────────┴────────────────────┐
    ┌─────────┴──────────┐                    ┌──────────┴──────────┐
    │ Federal Government  │                    │ Provincial Government│
    │ (e.g. Health Canada,│                    │ (e.g. Ministry of   │
    │ Department of       │                    │ Health, Ministry of │
    │ Finance)            │                    │ Finance)            │
    └─────────┬──────────┘                    └──────────┬──────────┘
    ┌─────────┴──────────┐                    ┌──────────┴──────────┐
    │ Non-Profits Financed│                    │ Regional Health     │
    │ by Federal          │                    │ Authorities         │
    │ Government (e.g.     │                    │ (Manages all        │
    │ CIHI, CPSI)         │                    │ hospitals and care  │
    └────────────────────┘                    │ facilities in the   │
                                               │ region)             │
                                               └──────────┬──────────┘
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                                               │ Independent         │
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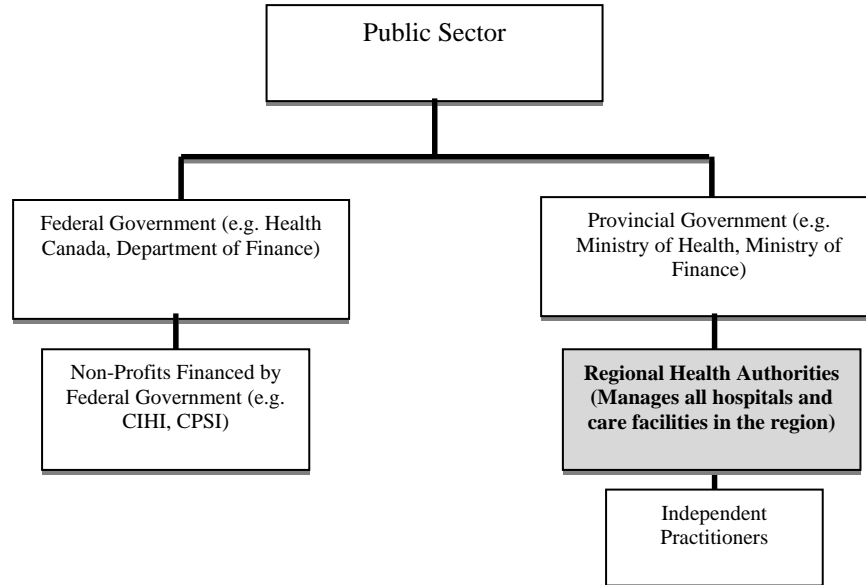
The participants and their organizations

In line with the selection criteria, each manager under study was the CEO of a large regional healthcare organization that employed between 5,000 and 20,000 employees. In all instances the managers under study operated large geographic health regions and managed multiple facilities in both urban and rural settings. In total, the managers under study and their respective organizations were responsible for managing the delivery of health services for a population base of more than 2.5 million Canadians, and managing a collective budget of approximately $4.7 billion

(CAD). Below is a brief summary of the participants' backgrounds and some summary information about their organizations.

- *CEO 1* is a Medical Doctor by training who has been directly involved in administration for approximately 15 years following completion of a Master's of Healthcare Administration. CEO 1 was recently appointed to the role of Chief Executive and sits on a number of federal and provincial commissions.

- *CEO 2* holds a Bachelor's and Master's in Business Administration and has been a healthcare administrator for more than 20 years. As the CEO for more than 5 years, CEO 2 is responsible for managing more than 15 care facilities and is one step-removed from government reporting to another larger health authority.

- *CEO 3* is a Registered Nurse by training who also holds a Master's in Public Health. This CEO manages a largely rural, geographically dispersed healthcare organization, and has been the CEO for more than 5 years.

- *CEO 4* holds a Master's in Business Administration and has more than 35 years of healthcare administration experience on two continents. CEO 4 has close ties with local universities, also holding the title of adjunct professor. CEO 4 has been at the helm of this organization for close to 10 years.

DATA COLLECTION

With the aim of determining what managers do, and a specific focus on comparing managerial work across the public and private sectors, the shadowing method (semi-

structured) was selected for use in this study, along with semi-structured interviews, ethnographic interviews, and secondary sources. The selection of multiple research methods increases consistency between data sources and reduce the prospect of the data being misinterpreted (Scandura and Williams, 2000; Stake, 2000). The following section outlines the processes that were employed in this research study focusing on the shadowing method. An overview of how interviews and secondary sources supplemented the shadowing data is also provided.

Shadowing

In total, four CEOs were 'shadowed' for a period of 12 weeks (3 weeks per manager) for a collective period of time totaling 488 hours. Managers were 'shadowed' sequentially for a period of 15 workdays from the moment they arrived at the office, boardroom, or other agreed upon location, until they left to drive home to their families or hotel room (when they are on the road). A shadowing period of three weeks was selected for use in this study to ensure that specific managerial activities were not over or understated, such as board meetings and leadership committees, which would often span 1-2 days in length. For example, in one of the organizations under study, board meetings occur every two months, but last for approximately 2.5 days (20 hours). If only one week was selected, which has been the norm in managerial work literature (Mintzberg, 1973; Kurke and Aldrich, 1983; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010), and that was the week with board meetings, the interactions with board members would not be representative of typical work. The observations were

spread out throughout 2011-2012 in 1-3 week chunks to represent executive work over the calendar year.

During the shadowing period, information on how managers conducted themselves while they were working at their desk, on their phones, chairing and attending meetings, presenting at symposia, discussing business over food and entertainment, and engaging in work-related social activities was recorded on a tablet computer (ipad). When permitted, managers in this study were even shadowed when they travelled via personal or corporate vehicle, taxi, and airplane to work outside of their resident offices within and/or external to their resident town/city. Given the long hours worked by CEOs (regularly 12+ hours a day) this often meant sharing breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the company of the CEO. As the managers often pushed meals aside due to unexpected meetings, phone calls, or critical emails that needed immediate responses, it became common practice to bring an energy bar to 'shadow' the managers so that recording the work activities and practices was not compromised. Closely following CEOs wherever they went, on more than one occasion, I inadvertently followed them into the restroom. However, this only happened at maximum, once per site, and after an awkward moment or two, the participant under study proceeded to inform me when they would go to the restroom. In these cases, I would wait for their return either in the hallway, office, or other meeting space.

In terms of the field notes themselves, they were written chronologically and included information on the following:

- The frequency of managerial activities (e.g. deskwork, email reading / writing, meeting, etc.);

- The location of managerial activities (e.g. the CEO's office, boardroom, subordinate office, etc.);

- Who the CEO met with (e.g. member(s) of executive team, consultants, directors, etc.). In situations where individuals' job titles were not presented, (such as large meetings), the number of meeting attendees was recorded;

- The purpose of meetings (e.g. to give information, respond to requests, schedule meeting, facilitate a negotiation, review a document, etc.);

- The content of activities (e.g. what was being discussed in meetings – investment decisions, government policies, performance targets, human resource issues, politics, etc.); and

- Mundane descriptive information about how the CEO interacted interpersonally with different actors and technology.

As it has been stated throughout this thesis, a primary focus of this study was to compare managerial work between the public and private sectors. With earlier studies developing a number of structured categories for work activities (Mintzberg, 1973 and Tengblad, 2006), a structured template or log was considered to collect comparative data (See Stewart (1965) and Tengblad (2002) for examples of logs used to collect data on managerial work). However, as the aim of this research was also to generate new insights on managerial work, the field notes were written in a similar fashion to the structured observation method, as was initially described by

Henry Mintzberg (1970, 1973). Accordingly, the structured information listed above formed a skeleton, which was built on with descriptions of interesting events, interactions, and practices that were described in detail. With a focus on work activities, a new activity was recorded at "any point at which there was a change in the basic participants and/or the medium (a meeting, a telephone call, desk work, a tour) (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 271)."

The focus of the field notes were on the work activities of the executive manager under study, and not on the individual person. Accordingly, personal activities that occurred throughout the workday were noted but not attended (e.g. lunch with the CEO's wife, personal phone calls, or other interactions that the participant considered to be personal). However, networking and other business activities that were quasi-related to the organization were recorded (e.g. chamber of commerce meetings, rotary club meetings, etc.). Descriptions of the work of other actors, such as board members and executives, were conducted for the sole purpose of contextualizing situations. In total more than 400 pages of typed field notes were collected.

Ethnographic interviews

Used in hand with the shadowing method, ethnographic interviews were used in this study as a means of clarifying information on activities and practices that was observed (Fontana and Frey, 2000). On occasion, questions were asked in the moment during meetings. However, they were generally noted, written down and

presented to the individuals under study in between meetings or at the end of the day. In addition to clarifying details, ethnographic interviews were used in an exploratory fashion to reveal descriptive, highly contextualized responses that other more traditional interview approaches often fail to capture (e.g. structured interviews) (Westby, 2003). In this capacity, a variety of descriptive questions were used which are outlined by Spradley (1979). These included: "grand tour questions," which are used to encourage discussion about broad experiences, "mini-tour questions," which encourage discussions about a specific event or activity, "example questions," which are more specific and go into more detail than "tour" questions, and "experience questions," which usually follow-up mini-tour questions.

Semi structured interviews

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect background data on the target organizations and primary participants under study (e.g. managerial work styles, managerial roles, professional background, and communication technology usage). A total of four semi-structured interviews were conducted (30-45 minutes, each) with the primary participants under study (CEOs). The interviews took place in advance of the shadowing and were conducted in person (when possible), and over the phone. Although a semi-structured interview guide was used (Bryman, 2008; Kvale, 1996), not all questions were prepared ahead of time; in fact most are created during the interview allowing for flexibility and adaptability.

Secondary sources

Three types of secondary sources were collected in this study to supplement data collected from shadowing and ethnographic interviews. These included printed copies of the manager's electronic calendars, meeting agendas, and other background documents:

- *Printed calendars*: Copies of the managers' electronic calendars were collected at multiple points during the shadowing process. First, the calendars for the entire shadowing period were collected on the first day of shadowing. Based on this initial print out of the calendars, discussions were held with the manager under study regarding which meetings could be attended, which needed to have permission sought by superiors, and which could not be attended for confidentiality or other reasons. Second, as calendars would often be updated throughout the day and week by executive assistants, calendars were collected at the beginning of every work day, which were used as a more refined guide of when and where meetings would occur, and also at the end of the three week period. Information collected in the calendars allowed for the quantification of planned and unplanned meetings. Furthermore, they illustrated the ever changing and unpredictable nature of managerial work.

- *Meeting agendas:* Agendas were collected and used to assist with coding as time allocations for meeting activities. This information was especially useful in establishing how much time was spent giving information, receiving

information, reviewing information, strategizing and negotiating as the meeting agendas clearly indicated when the CEO was presenting (and for how long), and whether meeting times were allocated for informational purposes, review, decision, or approval. Deviations from the schedules were noted, although they were generally minute given the busy schedules of executives.

- *Other background documents*: A number of other documents were collected which provided background information on the individuals under study and their respective organizations. These included biographies and documents such as strategic and operational plans.

Challenges with data collection

In this study, there were a number of instances where data collection was particularly challenging. These included situations where managers were on the move (e.g. between meetings), on the phone (especially the mobile phone), interfacing with technology, and circumstances when work was not directly observable (e.g. meetings that could not be attended for various reasons and circumstances where the managers were working from home or elsewhere). Other difficulties related to data collection include physical and mental exhaustion associated with the shadowing method and the possibility of having an observer effect. These difficulties are discussed in turn alongside ways in which these challenges were circumvented using ethnographic inquiry and secondary sources.

The mobile manager

The managers under study often had hectic schedules and frequently had to attend meetings at multiple locations throughout the workday. Meetings occurred either within their organization, which required walking to another office or boardroom or external to their organization which generally involved travelling via automobile (and on occasion taking air transportation). Provided that their schedule was quite busy, they often travelled in the company of colleagues at the executive and director level and engaged in discussions that were of a strategic and political nature. When walking to meetings, I would, on occasion, be able to walk closely behind the executives and record what was being discussed. However, although being mobile is recognized as the main advantage of shadowing over stationary observation (Czarniawska, 2007), more often than not, the executives would walk too quickly to record the information and I would not be able to comprehend what was being discussed. Alternatively, I found it difficult to walk and type on my tablet computer, which was found to be more challenging than recording information on a notepad when on the move. There was one manager in particular who would consistently rise from their desk and speed walk down the hall with little notice, I would get up and ensue although by the time I collected myself the manager had disappeared into an office, or the washroom, and closed the door. In such situations I would have to return to their office for them to return. I would then follow up with them upon their return to record what had transpired while I was absent. Likewise, when travelling in vehicles or via air transportation I would not be able to see what type of work the

managers were conducting unless I was seated next to them, which was rare. I would similarly have to follow up with them upon arrival or another convenient time for the manager. These occurrences are methodologically described as ethnographic interviews.

Phone calls

One known challenge of recording telephone conversations as an observer is that you can only hear one end of the conversation. Fortunately the executives would often use the speakerphone function on their phones when making calls from their office and participating in conference calls, which would allow them to multitask and permit me to listen in on two-way telephone conversations (for ethical implications of doing this see Paper #2). However, when engaging in phone calls that occurred outside of the office on their mobile phones (and occasionally inside their office), it was not possible to hear either one or both ends of the conversation as the managers would often seek out privacy by taking refuge in an open office, quickly walking down a hallway or outside, or asking for privacy (as was illustrated in the sample field note excerpt). In these situations, I would follow up with the manager when I could catch up to them and enquire who they spoke with as well as a brief summary/overview of the issues that were discussed). Expressed as a challenge cited by Mintzberg (1973, p. 269) it was known before hand and discussed with the managers in advance and in many situations, no prompting was required and the

managers would report a synopsis of their conversation automatically. This was especially prevalent in the second and third weeks of the case studies.

Engaging with technology

The emergence of computers in the workplace has gradually altered the way managerial work is conducted, and especially how managers communicate (Barley et al., 2011; Gratton, 2011) (also see **Paper #2**). However, capturing how managers engage with technology is difficult to record using observational methods. This has been emphasized by Barley and Kunda (2001, p. 85) who wrote, "Particularly challenging is the question of how to study work that entails few physical or interpersonal acts, or work whose physical traces are ephemeral. Consider, for instance, the act of working on a computer, where traces of activity appear and disappear in a matter of seconds." In response to this challenge, Barley and Kunda argue for new methods to be employed to study managerial engagements with technology, such as installing software programs to track electronic activity or videotaping managers conducting deskwork. This study did not take this route as its focus was broader than the interplay between technology and managerial work and doing so would have presented a number of additional ethical and technological hurdles. Instead, this study relied on traditional methods to record how managers used technology. In particular, a one week trial shadowing period was conducted with an executive manager which revealed that to observe how managers interact with technology, the researcher can not merely be in the presence of the manager

(e.g. same room), but needs to be situated in a vantage point where they can see the computer screen or tablet (ipad) contents that the manager is working on. Recognizing a way forward before the study commenced, the goal of capturing how managers used technology in their daily work was discussed with the executive managers on the first day of shadowing and appropriate seating arrangements were subsequently arranged in their office and in meetings. In meetings, this would often require me to sit next to the executive under study. However, this was not always possible, especially at high profile meetings such as board meetings and public hearings where there were planned seating arrangements. In these situations, I would have to sit in the audience section or along the back wall of the room. In these instances, I would ask the managers what they were working on while they were in the meeting either during breaks for day meetings, after the meeting, or at the end of the day as I could capture the length of time that they were engaged with technology (e.g. 5 minutes on tablet computer, 10 minutes on laptop, etc.) and the medium, but not the application used. This was especially important for engagements with smart phones, as the screens were often too small for an observer to see. However, in three of the four cases the managers informed me that they only use their smartphone to monitor emails and make phone calls, and would let me know if they used it for something else which simplified the recording process.

Unobservable work

While the majority of managerial work was directly observable (488 hours; 72% of total managerial work hours) there were two types of work which were not directly observable in this study:

(1) Meetings which was considered to be confidential by either the manager under study or other attendees (54 hours; 7.9 % of total managerial work hours). There were three types of meetings that typically could not be observed: meetings regarding sensitive human resources issues such as disciplinary meetings or trade union negotiations, 'in-camera' board meetings (off the record), and meetings external to the organization upon which attendees had denied requests on behalf of the manager under study for my attendance (e.g. meetings with politicians). Interestingly, the CEOs under study had few objections about exposing me to strategic issues, which included sensitive discussions about high-profile reports as they indicated that such discussions were an important component of managerial work, but often asked that the content of the discussions not be recorded or reported.

(2) Work that was conducted from a location that was not accessible to the researcher (e.g. private residence, hotel accommodation, or meetings that required extensive travel) (138 hours; 20.1% of total managerial work hours).

In both of these situations, the managers under study were asked to note the work that had been conducted in my absence and would report back to me the next

time that we came into contact with one another (e.g. after the confidential meeting, or the morning after work had been conducted in the evening from home).

In some instances, when long meetings would be missed and there was an opening in the manager' schedule, they would report to me verbally over the phone from their mobile. Logs were developed to capture this information (Similar to Stewart, 1965; Tengblad, 2002), however, the managers in this study thought that filling in the logs was "too much", and instead consented to verbally report this information.[3] To mitigate limitations associated with asking managers what they did and how they spent their time (See Burns 1957; Stewart, 1967), secondary documents from missed meetings (such as agendas and other handouts) were collected with the permission of the manager and the study, and assistance of the manager's executive assistant.

Complex meetings

Throughout the shadowing period, there were a number of meetings that required a considerable amount of contextual information to understand the issues being discussed, as they were part of an ongoing series of meetings. Two examples of such meetings are monthly or bi-monthly meetings with executive leadership teams and board meetings. Being a non-participant observer, I instructed the manager's not to change their behavior on my account; however, on occasion they would nonetheless try to provide some additional context for my benefit. This occurred most frequently

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[3] The use of ethnographic interviews rather than diaries or logs is a notable difference between Tengblad (2006, p. 1457) and this study. In Tengblad's study "the participants were asked to keep notes when they worked from home, during weekends, and when no observer was present."

when issues would be tabled for a number of hours (e.g. a meeting about a potential reorganization and a meeting about investing in technology for electronic medical records). Similar to Mintzberg (1973) only highly structured data could be collected in these situations. However, secondary documents such as agendas and meeting packages were used to assist in interpreting discussions. In some instances the amount of contextual information was significant. For example in one of the cases I was provided with a 269 page-meeting package for a board of directors meeting.

Finally, to further assist in understanding some of the events that transpired during complex meetings and work that I was unable to observe, at least 10-15 minutes were dedicated at the end of the day to answer questions that had been documented over the course of the day. This generally occurred between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. although as one CEO expressed in an interview "There is no such thing as a typical work day, every day is different." After work discussions would often extend upwards to half an hour, permitting that there were no more meetings, as the CEOs seemingly enjoyed reflecting on the events that had transpired throughout the day. These conversations were generally two-way with the CEO frequently inquiring about my perceptions as a researcher about their management style and their organizational policies and procedures relative to other workplaces.

The exhaustive nature of the shadowing method

Cited as a disadvantage of the shadowing method (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005), the physically and intellectually demanding nature of the shadowing method

played a definite role in the type of data collected throughout the study period. As Mintzberg (1973, p. 270) noted in his observational study: "Recording turned out to be a hectic, full time job. There was an immense amount of data to be collected, and it frequently came in short, dense bursts. In effect, the researcher is tied to the schedule of the manager, which is often a hectic one." Requiring constant attention and a commitment to detail I would often find myself growing tired throughout the working day and end up becoming increasingly selective in the type of information that is recorded (also see Vie, 2009). Especially after 8 or more hours of observation, the field notes would tend to focus more on the functional activities that were performed with less contextual information being captured and substantially fewer quotes as they required considerable effort to capture and contextualize. This was also the case as the days and weeks wore on in each individual case study, as experiences that were recorded in detail in the early days of observation (e.g. one on one reporting meetings with executive meetings) became routine. In these situations only attributes considered to be new or novel to the specific encounter were recorded so that energy could be saved recognizing that there was a need for pacing oneself. One approach that was taken to mitigate the intellectually exhaustive nature of the data collection was to use supporting documents such as agendas and briefing notes. These were collected were noted in the field notes so that they could later be referred to during data analysis.

An observer effect?

In observational studies researcher reactivity (a.k.a. the Hawthorne effect) is generally considered to be a concern as it poses a potential threat to the validity of the research (Das, 1983; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). According to some scholars the mere presence of a researcher "will influence the behavior of those being studied, making it impossible for ethnographers to ever really document social phenomenon in any accurate, let alone objective way" (Monahan and Fisher, 2010, p. 357). However, the majority of researchers maintain their presence does not have a substantive effect on behavior in studies of managers 'in situ'. It is contended that while participants may be able to alter their style for a short period they are unable to change the basic events of their week such as scheduled meetings, telephone calls, or work practices (McDonald, 2005). Nonetheless, there have been some recognized effects. For example, it has been suggested that fewer unscheduled meetings may take place given the researcher's presence (Mintzberg, 1973), which was found to be the case in this study. In a conversation with a vice president, he informed me that on the morning of my first day he poked his head in the office to ask the CEO a question and when he saw me sitting close to the CEO, he thought that the CEO was in a meeting and returned to his office. However, once the executive leadership team (the CEO's direct reports with whom the CEO interacted with in unscheduled meetings on a regular basis) became aware of my presence this quickly became a non-issue and I was treated as a fly on the wall (in all cases this awkwardness only lasted a day or two).

With regards to scheduled meetings I would often catch glances from people who appeared self-conscious about the presence of an outsider, especially when this was the first time they had come into contact with me. However, given the need to carry on with 'business as usual' such glances would generally only occur in the early stages of the meeting or when managers would act in a seemingly undesirable fashion by raising their voice, engaging in arguments, or swearing. In any event, any adjustments that took place did not appear to impact the purpose of meetings or the activities and practices performed by the managers. Reflecting on the observer effect in an ethnographic interview one of the CEOs said, "my executive team was a little bit apprehensive at first, but after the first couple of encounters with you I noticed a return back to 'normal'". In a similar discussion with another CEO they said, "I have not noticed anything out of the ordinary … we are all professionals here and if anyone has something to say that they do not want you to hear I am sure that they will let you know". Finally, although not an observer effect, per se, it was noted that the most uncomfortable time for the executives was observing them while they worked at their desk (also see Vie, 2009). One executive who spent a considerable amount of time working on a research project, indicated that he would prefer it if I worked out of another office as he was just going to be working from his desk for relatively lengthy periods of time. I obliged and worked out of a vacant office that was down the hall to give him privacy to work. Information on the artifacts that the managers worked on was not captured (e.g. documents) unless the artifacts were being developed for upcoming meetings that I was to attend, in which case drafts

were provided to me at the meeting. In all cases extensive debriefing sessions occurred on the work that was being conducted in my absence.

DATA ANALYSIS

A major challenge in conducting qualitative research is interpreting and making sense of large amounts of data to communicate essential findings. Jorgensen (1989) describes the qualitative data analysis process as being similar to putting together a jigsaw puzzle, referring to it as a complex process of disassembling collected data into smaller more manageable chunks, sorting data into classes, types, sequences, patterns, or processes for the purpose of reassembling the data in a "meaningful or comprehensible fashion" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 107). This was certainly the challenge in this study as more than 400 pages of field notes were written over the course of twelve-weeks (September 2011 to May 2012). The tedious process of analyzing and coding the data commenced immediately following the data collection period in May 2012.

This data analysis process proceeded in two distinct phases (Stake, 1995). The first phase consisted of within case analyses of the observations, interviews, and secondary data collected in each site. Based on the analysis of data collected in each site an analytic report was developed which included a breakdown of how the individual managers spent their time according to Mintzberg's categories. The managers were then given the opportunity to meet and discuss the results. Following the analysis of all four cases individually the results was then consolidated

to identify common characteristics, patterns, and explain similarities and differences between the cases.

In both phases of analysis data was coded using Mintzberg's (1973) taxonomy in Microsoft Excel so that the results of this study could be systematically compared to Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006), a recent replication of Mintzberg's (1973) seminal study (See Hales, 1986 for a notable call for systematic comparisons of managerial work). To ensure that the coding procedure employed was consistent with both Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006), the definitions of activities described in Mintzberg's *The Nature of Managerial Work* (1973) were reviewed before entering the field and were applied throughout the coding process (see **Figure 2**).

FIGURE 2: Mintzberg's (1973) definitions of managerial work activities

Organizational work: Meetings that are considered non-managerial in nature, and required the specialized skills and knowledge of the managers to work on projects or initiatives.

Scheduling: Brief, informal contacts with people for purposes of scheduling time (telephone calls and meetings).

Ceremony: Examples include dropping in to greet a newly hired employee or saying farewell to a departing or retiring employee, handing out awards, speaking to groups of people external to the organization not directly related to business functions.

External board work: Time spent working as a board member for another organization than the one they are presently employed. In addition to the actual board meetings, this also includes occasional contact with co-directors to discuss issues facing the boards.

Requests and solicitations: Times when managers are approached by directors, peers, subordinates, suppliers, or other outsiders who make requests for status updates or action.

Tours: Times when manager leaves their office to greet someone in the hall or lobby, see something of interest, visit departments of the organization, or give tours of facilities.

Receiving information: Examples include receiving instant information updates, attending briefings and presentations, and responses to inquiries.

Giving information: Examples include giving instant information updates, giving advice, and speeches and presentations held by the manager.

Review: Contacts that are characterized by a clear two-way process of information flow. There are five different types of review sessions: *Deputy reviews*, in which close subordinates meet with their manager to discuss issues that they both feel, are current and important. These meetings occur regularly; *Functional reviews*, which usually involve a large number of people at scheduled meetings and are used to review one functional area of the organization (e.g. human resources, finance, etc.); *Contact reviews*, which are meetings with members of the managers professional network to discuss 'social milieu'; *Post meeting reviews*, which are sessions where the manager and another participant meet for only a few moments to review events of the meetings; and

Organizational board meetings, in which the manager meets with the board of directors to present a status report from his/her office, report on new business, and engage in discussion about issues and decisions.

Strategy: There are four types of strategy meetings: *Key decision meetings* where decisions are made about a specific organizational program, how to diagnose a particular problem or determine how to exploit an opportunity; *Crisis meetings* where a severe conflict is managed; *Operational planning meetings*, where budgeting, resource allocation, or target setting occurs; and *Strategic planning meetings* where general problems and new opportunities are discussed.

Negotiation: Times when managers would meet with outsiders to reach an agreement or when the manager would act as a mediator or arbitrator to settle a dispute.

Source: Adopted from Mintzberg (1973, p. 235-257)

Importantly, the application of Mintzberg's definitions does not mean there were no differences between the coding procedures adopted by Mintzberg (1973)[4] and Tengblad (2006) and those employed in this study. In fact there are a number of notable, albeit subtle differences. First off, Mintzberg recorded activities to the nearest tenth of an hour while activities in this study were rounded to the nearest five minutes. Activities lasting less than three minutes were noted in narrative but not recorded as separate activities (Mintzberg recorded all activities three minutes or less as lasting 0.02 hours). An example of an activity lasting less than three minutes from my field notes includes the following example where the CEO meets a consultant and returns to his office: "Just after 4 p.m. the CEO ended his bi-monthly (twice a month) one on one meeting with the CFO, requesting a finalized update on the budget spreadsheet for review. He then glanced at his calendar on his smartphone, got up and went out into the hall to meet a consultant who was waiting for his meeting at 4 p.m. He quickly shook the consultant's hand, said hello, and they both entered the CEO's office and sat at the round table where I was sitting." In this study all narrative interactions ranging from less than a minute to three minutes were coded as lasting one minute (see the challenges with data analysis section for more information). The decision to narratively note brief interactions and round activities to the nearest five minutes was deliberate, designed to improve consistency in the note taking and coding process. Although it was originally thought that activities would be recorded to the nearest minute (see Boisot and Liang, 1992 and Vie, 2010) a pre-study test case found this process to be overly exhausting, resulting in field

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[4] Unlike Mintzberg (1973), Tengblad (2006) did not outline the coding process in detail although it is inferred that it was closely followed for comparative purposes.

notes that were haphazard, overly fragmented and difficult to follow. Further, as this field study aimed to collect new insights as well as comparative data following managers with a stopwatch, as was the case in other studies that recorded activities to the nearest minute seemed overly restricting. That said, interactions with technology and telephone conversations were often short and disjointed, and thus were rounded to the nearest minute.

The second major difference relates to what was considered to be "deskwork" in this study. In his study Mintzberg (1973, p. 235) described deskwork as "time the manager spends at his desk, processing mail, scheduling activities, and communicating with his secretary." As computers did not yet play a role in the workplace, Mintzberg only distinguished deskwork from face-to-face interactions and telephone calls. Bringing Mintzberg's categories forward, deskwork in this study also includes any work that was conducted using technology (e.g. writing and reviewing documents, conducting research, and reading and composing emails). Recognizing that email, like telephone calls is a form of temporally distanced communication (Arman et al., 2012), new categories focusing on how the managers interfaced with technology were also developed (See **Paper #2**).

Finally, there were a number of other differences in the data analysis, which were the result of Tengblad (2006) adapting Mintzberg's original categories in his replication study. In order to make comparisons of managerial work across managerial work sectors (Tengblad, 2006) and over time (Mintzberg, 1973), the categories as expressed by Tengblad were used. The following are the differences

between Mintzberg's original study and comparative research presented in this study and by Tengblad (2006):

- There was no analysis of ingoing and outgoing mail;

- Results of whether meetings are planned or unplanned are not presented (only data on the amount of time spent in meetings is presented);

- There is no differentiation between different types of requests: status, action, and manager (only data on the length of time spent working on requests is presented);

- It is not indicated who initiated verbal contacts (only data on the length of time engaged in verbal contact is presented).

Challenges with data analysis

"Eggs can easily be measured and graded, but managerial activities frequently cannot"

> *-Mintzberg, 1973, p. 271*

Even with Mintzberg's taxonomy in place to help guide the data coding process there were a number of difficulties that were experienced coding the data. Below is a description of the challenges associated with data analyses, many of which were identified by Mintzberg (1973) in his original study, but nonetheless continue to plague researchers poised to examine managerial work via observational techniques. The challenges are paired accordingly with accompanying resolutions.

Defining what constitutes an 'activity'

The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) defines and activity as "the condition in which things are happening or being done." The Macmillan Dictionary (2012) similarly describes an activity as "things that people do". Both terms suggest that an activity can refer to almost any action that is taken for any reason. Mintzberg (1973) addressed this in his study by coding the work of managers into six activity categories: meetings (unscheduled and scheduled), tours, telephone calls, deskwork, and transportation. (p. 39). For comparative purposes these same categories were examined in this study, with one exception being that there was not a division between scheduled and unscheduled meetings as this distinction was not presented in Tengblad's comparative study (2006). These categories in of themselves were not problematic. However, coding when a 'new activity' occurred was a significant issue. Importantly, this issue presented itself in spite of the fact that Mintzberg established specific parameters as to when a new activity would occur. According to Mintzberg (1973, p. 271) a 'new activity' would begin at "any point at which there was a change in the basic participants / or the medium."

The following examples from this study illustrate how coding using Mintzberg's definition could be problematic in practice:

(1) A CEO goes on a tour of his office building to "be visible in his organization". During the tour the CEO interacts with 15 different individuals over a period of 30 minutes. In this circumstance the basic

number of participants changed roughly every two to three minutes. Is this 15 different activities or one activity?

(2) An executive manager is on his or her way to a meeting and pokes his or her head in the door of the CEO's office (which was open) while the CEO is on the computer. The manager says "Hello, I have something I want to discuss with you later, will you be free around 5 p.m.?" The CEO responds, "Yes, that will work for me, I plan to be in the office until around 6 p.m." The manager leaves and the interaction lasted all of 15 seconds. Is this an activity?

The inherent challenge in both of these situations is that 'activities' or 'encounters' were particularly short lived, lasting anywhere from fifteen seconds to two minutes in length. In response, and in line with Mintzberg's original study, the decision was made to round brief interactions to the minute as to reduce the burden of having to carefully record the time whenever the CEO under study picked up the phone, glanced at his blackberry, or said hello to someone in the hallway. Rather these instances were noted and coded accordingly. It was opined that doing otherwise would have reduced the observations to a counting exercise requiring the researcher to carry a stopwatch (see Boisot and Liang, 1992), which arguably could have negated the ability of the researcher to record interesting interactions focusing overtly on time, not context, function or purpose.

Coding meeting attendees

In Mintzberg's (1973) study he developed five categories of meeting participants: directors; peers; client, supplier, and associate; independent and other; and subordinates. However, this study found that these categories oversimplified who the CEO spent their time with and thus it was overly challenging to code individuals into these broad categories, which at times felt like fitting a square peg into a round hole. As such the categories first outlined by Mintzberg were expanded to include the following: senior government officials (individuals holding the title executive director or higher); junior government officials (those holding a positional title below executive director); elected politicians; superiors (directors); clinicians; clients, suppliers, and associates; peers; other professionals (consultants, academics and professional council), and a number of different types of subordinates (members of the executive team, executive advisors, executive assistants, and other subordinates). Expanding the categories also allowed this information to be coded in a new fashion, which unlike earlier studies did not add up to 100%. Rather this study recognized that managers were often in the company of a number of individuals at the same time (e.g. a meeting with clinicians, members of the CEOs executive team, and directors). In such meetings all three groups would be coded as attending.

Isolating the 'purpose' of the meeting

Perhaps the greatest challenge analyzing the data was determining a single purpose for meetings attended by the managers under study. This issue was first identified by Mintzberg (1973, p. 275) who found that meetings often had more than one purpose by design, meetings would frequently change directions over the course of the meeting (especially during long meetings), managers would often have to engage in one activity (e.g. give information) to arrive at another activity (e.g. strategic decision making), and managers regularly had an alternate agenda than was explicitly expressed when the meeting was scheduled. Since Mintzberg's original study this issue has been repeatedly expressed in the literature. In his replication study, Tengblad (2006, p. 1443) stated that he paid greater care and caution coding the 'purpose of contacts' than he did other dimensions, as determining the 'purpose' was not always explicit and relied on interpreting the data rather than "pure description". Further, examining the work activities of Chinese enterprise managers, Boisot and Liang (1992, p. 166) similarly found the task of determining meeting purpose to be arduous, stating "at times, problems were encountered in giving an unambiguous interpretation to some of the items recorded so that each was given only one classification, the categories created to receive them are not always mutually exclusive."

    In response to this challenge Mintzberg (1973, p. 276) developed a set of rules so that consistency could be maintained throughout the analysis process. According to Mintzberg (1973) he took all the steps that he could to ensure that the

meetings were logically classified. These rules were adapted in this study for comparative purposes. See below:

(1) Noting that scheduled meetings generally proceeded in three distinct phases – phase one which is comprised of pleasantries and gossip, phase two which addressed the core issue(s), and phase three in which included closing statements and action items, Mintzberg coded the entire meeting as consisting of the second phase. One exception to this rule was when discussions in phases one and three consumed a substantial amount of time, in which case they were coded as "review" sessions.

(2) The overt purpose of a meeting was coded (e.g. what was in the agenda) unless a covert meeting purpose was obvious.

(3) In meetings that had more than one purpose, the purpose that the researcher considered to be most dominant (or was followed up in an ethnographic interview if unclear) was coded to describe the meeting in its entirety.

(4) If a request was made and it was satisfied in the same meeting, the meeting would be coded as a "request". However, if they took place on different occasions the first meeting would be coded as a "request" and the follow up meeting(s) as "giving information" or "receiving information".

(5) When a meeting had multiple purposes (e.g. make requests, transmit information, and make strategic decisions), which seemed to be of equal importance and were focused on a specific functional area (e.g. human resources, finance, etc.) the meetings were coded as "review".

RESEARCH ETHICS

With the empirical portion of this study being conducted in Canada ethical approval was sought through the University of Alberta Human Research Ethics Review Process (HERO) where I was a visiting scholar in the Strategic Organization Department at the Alberta School of Business. The decision to pursue ethical approval through the University of Alberta, rather than the University of Warwick, was based on practicalities related to ethical codes of conduct, which vary internationally (See Bell and Bryman, 2007) and the strategic nature for data collection and recruitment. This was especially important in the recruitment of participants as the University of Alberta Faculty of Business is a highly regarded research center with robust ties to the Canadian healthcare industry. It was equally beneficial in the field, where it helped to establish credibility and rapport when explaining the research study to managers in meetings and other settings, many of whom had close ties with the University of Alberta and had worked with researchers from the institution in the past.

Pursuance of ethical approval at the University of Alberta commenced in May 2011 and was granted in August 2011[5] However, even with ethical approval from a recognized educational institution research could still not commence, as there was another level of ethical approval that had to be sought, which was at the

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[5] As it has been previously indicated, this doctoral research project ran independently, but in parallel to a publicly funded (NIHR) research study titled "The organizational practices of knowledge mobilisation at top manager level in the NHS", which was led by professor Davide Nicolini and received NRES ethical approval in November 2010 (I am a key investigator and collaborator). Provided that there was some intentional overlap between the two projects (for publication purposes), the ethical approval granted by the NRES was used to support the ethics application at the University of Alberta, which expedited the ethics process. However, as the NRES ethics proposal did not include an international component and focused specifically on one work activity (knowledge mobilization) the proposal was modified so that it was applicable to Canadian research sites and encapsulated additional aspects of this doctoral research that were not presented in the NRES proposal.

organizational level.   In each of the four healthcare organizations in which a participant was based, a delegated ethical review was conducted which involved customizing information sheets and consent forms to conform to the reporting requirements of the organization. Given that the study had already obtained ethical approval from ethics boards organizational reviews had a quick turnaround (2-5 weeks between August 2011 and March 2012), and did not result in any significant delays in the research.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Determining how to assess the quality of qualitative research is a challenge that is recognizable for researchers who have used qualitative methods or reviewed qualitative research (Northcote, 2012). This tribulation stems from the fact that quality constructs in scholarly research, namely *validity* and *reliability*, were originally developed, and are based within the positivistic or scientific research tradition (Bryman, 2008; Seale, 1999). The extent to which empirical results are *valid* (measured what it intended to measure) and *reliable* (replicable and repeatable) continue to be an accepted means of measuring quality within the positivistic epistemology (Kirk and Miller, 1986; Winter, 2000). However, validity and reliability, as they are traditionally defined within the scientific research tradition, are not considered to be adequate or applicable benchmarks of quality in interpretivistic research (Golafshani, 2003).

Arguing that quantitative and qualitative research operates in distinctly different research paradigms (Kuhn, 1970), a number of scholars have sought to develop alternative means of assessing the quality of qualitative research. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) were among the first to propose that traditional quality concepts be modified to better represent the distinctive nature of qualitative research. Crafting new interpretations for quantitative constructs such as *internal* and *external* validity the authors took initial strides in legitimizing differences between qualitative and quantitative research. Researchers have since built on their work and expanded reliability and validity concepts, creating a plethora of criteria that aims to evaluate the quality of qualitative research. In a review of interpretivist positions on validity, Altheide and Johnson (1994, p. 488), identified eight different indicators focused exclusively on validity, namely "successor validity, catalytic validity, interrogated validity, transgressive validity, imperial validity, simulacra/ironic validity, situated validity, and voluptuous validity". Seale (1999) similarly noted that a relatively large number of quality measures have been developed by qualitative researchers. He argued that an irrepressible urge among qualitative researchers to "generate criteria for judging good-quality studies (p. 43)", stems, at least in part, from struggles of social science researchers to convince skeptical audiences, such as research-funding bodies and academic journals that qualitative research is worth investigating and publishing.

Despite continued efforts to develop a universally accepted measurement tool for evaluating qualitative research, unlike quantitative research there is not a single recognized way in which the quality of qualitative research can be assessed (e.g.

validity and reliability). As Finlay (2006, p. 320) noted in a review of criteria for evaluating qualitative research "Over the last 20 years, many solutions to the conundrum of how to identify appropriate qualitative criteria have been developed". However, that said, there is one set of quality criterion developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which, more than the others (See Hammersley, 1992; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Madill et al., 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994) has been accepted as an appropriate measure of quality by social science researchers. In their seminal book, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985), Lincoln and Guba took a step away from positivist perspectives of quality, building their argument around the ontological premise that positivistic researchers assume that there is a "single tangible reality", while qualitative researchers assume that there are "multiple constructed realities", a difference in research philosophy, which needs to be reflected in quality criterion. Criticizing earlier criteriologists such as LeCompte and Goetz (1982) for depending on conventional positivistic axioms such as "naive realism and linear causality", Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that qualitative research be evaluated on an entirely different measure, namely its "trustworthiness". The authors established four aspects for evaluating the "trustworthiness" of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which were correspondingly paired with conventional criteria used in quantitative inquiries (See **Table 2**).

TABLE 2: Quantitative and Qualitative Criteria for Assessing Quality

Quantitative Criteria	Qualitative Criteria	Strategies for ensuring quality (Qualitative Research)
Internal validity	Credibility	• Prolonged engagement • Persistent observation • Triangulation • Peer debriefing • Negative case analysis • Referential adequacy • Member checks
External validity	Transferability	• Thick description
Reliability	Dependability	• Overlap methods • Inquiry audit
Objectivity	Confirmability	• Confirmability audit

Source: Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301-328) and Finlay (2006, p. 321)

To answer the question "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that that the findings are worth paying attention to, worth taking account out?" this thesis uses the criterion established by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290). While this thesis recognizes that there are a number of ways in which this can be determined in qualitative research the criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was selected for use in this research due to its level of acceptance and high level of use amongst social science researchers. As indicated by Finlay (2006, p. 320):

> Differences in emphasis [in criteria] tend to mirror commitments of different researchers. Taken as a whole, however, some measure of consensus or overlap is apparent. It is generally accepted that "research needs to be *'trustworthy'* (a term often used in place of 'validity' in the qualitative researcher's lexicon), in the sense of being able to demonstrate both *rigour* (process) and *relevance* (end product).

Accordingly, the following subsections outline the steps that were taken in this research to ensure that the results are "trustworthy" (See **Table 3** for an illustration of the techniques that were employed in this study).

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 296), credibility can be demonstrated in two ways. First, by carrying out the study "in such a way that the probability of the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced" and secondly, by "having them approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being constructed." The authors listed seven techniques that, when operationalized, would help researchers enhance the credibility of their investigations: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, preferential adequacy, and member checks. Below is brief explanation as to how selected techniques were employed:

- *Prolonged engagement*: Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301-302) describe prolonged engagement in a broad sense as "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes", requiring investigators to "be involved with a site sufficiently long to take account for distortions that might otherwise creep into the data". In this study the purpose was to develop an understanding of what managers do. As it has been previously indicated, to achieve this goal the managers were studied for a period of three weeks each (15 days). Although this investigation was not as intensive as ethnographies

on work (See Wolcott, 1973; Watson, 1994/2001), it should be noted that it 'tripled the recipe' of the majority of work studies (see Mintzberg, 1973; Kurke and Aldrich, 1983; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010) which tended to examine individual managers for one-week periods. In doing so, it improved the credibility score of this research by allowing an adequate amount of time to develop mutual trust and rapport, as the managers were somewhat reserved and protective of their conversations during the first days of observation. In effect, this limited perceptual distortions or observer effects (e.g. trying to please the investigator). Finally, it ensured that managerial work activities were not over and underrepresented in the data (e.g. board meetings).

- *Persistent observation*: Closely related to prolonged engagement, persistent observation is intended to ensure that trends and themes which are most relevant to the phenomenon, issue, or problem being investigated emerge and are captured in detail (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 304). In this study this was accomplished by observing the managers under study from the time they arrived at the office until they finished work at the end of the day for the entire study period. I also conducted the case studies in sequential order, leaving some time for reflection and elaboration between them. This allowed me to develop an in-depth understanding of the individual managers behaviors, which may not have been possible if the cases were conducted intermittently or overlapping.

- *Triangulation*: The aim of triangulation is to 'test' for consistency and is aimed at reducing the risk of 'systematic bias' (Patton, 2002). There are four

main methods of triangulation: sources, methods, investigators, and theories (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). However, in this study only source and methodological triangulation was conducted. As it has been indicated throughout this chapter this study relied primarily on observations derived through shadowing managers, however, they were supplemented with interviews (ethnographic and semi-structured) and a variety of secondary sources.

- *Peer debriefing*: According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 308) peer debriefing sessions help improve the credibility of qualitative research in three main ways: (1) Keeping researchers 'honest' by having experienced protagonists who are not directly involved in the research challenge any assumptions or inconsistencies that my exist (e.g. playing devil's advocate); (2) Identifying and diffusing possible biases, feelings, and emotions that may be visible and impacting the research; and (3) Helping researchers develop and test working hypotheses and proposed next steps (e.g. act as a critical sounding board). All three of these benefits were realized in this investigation through peer debriefing sessions, which transpired in a number of different formats. First, formal advisory meetings were held with my supervisors on a regular basis. Second, informal meetings took place with students and faculty at conferences and on campuses at the University of Warwick, Alberta, Victoria, and Saskatchewan. Finally, the research was presented to a panel of faculty at the University of Warwick as a formal requirement of the

doctoral program (completion review) and to an NHS Advisory panel (Knowledge Mobilisation) in the form of an invited presentation.

- *Referential adequacy*: This technique of improving credibility relates specifically to the publication of raw data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 313). As it was indicated earlier in this section, referential adequacy was not met in this study. There are a number of practical reasons for not including the raw data as part of this thesis. Firstly, the data would have to be surrounded to the archives with an agreement "not to use those materials to further the purposes of inquiry (p. 313)". Secondly, without contextual information (e.g. secondary documents, many of which are confidential) the raw data could be easily misinterpreted. Thirdly, and most importantly the transcripts and field notes include a great deal of confidential and identifiable information, which would be unethical to publish in its natural state. Manually removing such information from more than 400 pages of field notes would be a tedious, drawn out task that would be for "the practical minded or resource poor (p. 314)".

- *Member checks*: Referred to as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 314), member checks are the processes "whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholder groups from whom the data were originally collected." In this investigation, member checks occurred continuously and were ongoing in the form of ethnographic interviews, which sought clarification of observations, as well as information that was missing

(unobservable) to prevent any guesswork from occurring. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to test my ideas by reviewing the results of my observations with them in a formal debriefing session, in which feedback and corrections were provided. However, in a similar fashion to Vie (2009) it should be noted that feedback was minor, and upon presentation of the data to the managers in this study it was apparent that at best that they may have skimmed the data and in one case the CEO acknowledged that they did not have time to review the draft and wanted only a verbal discussion on the important "take-aways" of the research and to answer any further questions that I may have regarding the nature of their work.

Transferability

In quantitative studies, the transferability of research relates to the extent in which the results will hold true in other contexts, settings, and times (a.k.a. external validity). However, achieving external validity in qualitative studies is "in a strict sense, impossible" (p. 316), and according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the best that can be achieved via qualitative studies is the development of working hypotheses, with corresponding information that explains, in detail, contextual information, such as the time and place phenomena was examined. The authors maintain that little can be done beyond providing "thick descriptions" of what was researched (Geertz, 1973), stating that the onus of determining whether information can be transferred to other situations and contexts is up to those interested in making such a transfer. In

line with Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316), this research provides readers with detailed information about the research process that was taken, including descriptions of the participants and type of organizations under study (throughout this methodology chapter and the research papers, respectively), which creates a road map or "*data base* that makes transferability judgments possible". Further, this research engaged in analytical generalization (Firestone, 1993) by linking findings from this study to Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006).

Dependability

The third criterion for demonstrating trustworthiness of the research focuses on the extent in which the findings are consistent and repeatable. To improve the credibility of the research Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 318) suggest use of an *inquiry audit*, which involves a researcher whom is not directly involved in the research to examine the process and final product(s) developed from the research. In this study this criteria was satisfied in two ways. First, through feedback provided from conferences and privately held seminars, supervisory meetings, and anonymous reviewers as part of the publication process, and second, through association with credibility. As Lincoln and Guba, (1985, p. 316-317) suggest, "there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no creditability without dependability)". Thus, by illustrating the credibility of the research through the employment of a number of techniques the criterion of dependability is also met.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) fourth and final criterion is related to the extent in which the research findings are affected by the researcher's "biases, motivations, interests or perspectives" (p. 290). There is one main technique that can be used to help confirm that observations and interpretations of the research are indeed reflective, and that is a confirmability audit. However, as it was discussed in relation to referential adequacy, conducting an audit of the entire research process (including raw data), as is suggested practice by the author's, would result in a number of ethical issues relating to confidentiality and anonymity given the nature of the data collected. As such, this was not conducted as part of this study. Nevertheless, a number of steps were taken in ensuring the confirmability of the research. Firstly, this chapter has documented the key decisions and associated rationales relating to research design, data collection, and analysis, the majority of which have been explained and defended extensively as per requirements of the doctoral programme at Warwick Business School. Secondly, reflexive field notes were taken throughout the data collection process in which potential issues surrounding bias and other conflicts were recorded (as suggested by Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 319). Finally, based on the reflexive field notes, real and perceived impacts of using the shadowing method are discussed at length (See Paper #3).

In sum, using the quality criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which is considered by many to be the 'gold standard' in qualitative quality criteriology (Whittemore, et al., 2001) this sub-section has effectively illustrated that

readers of this thesis should be confident in the research findings. **Table 3** outlines

the extensive efforts that were made to ensure research quality in this study.

TABLE 3: 'Quality' techniques utilized in this research

Criteria	Technique	Deployment of technique in this study
Credibility	Prolonged engagement	• Twelve weeks of 'shadowing' (3 weeks per participant)
	Persistent observation	• Continuous observation (morning to evening) for periods of 1-3 weeks, with case studies taking place in sequential order
		• Using multiple methods: shadowing, semi-structured and ethnographic interviews, and secondary sources
	Triangulation	• Supervisory meetings, conferences, and other ad-hoc presentations
	Peer debriefing	• Ethnographic interviews and formal presentations of preliminary results to participants for verification and feedback
	Member checks	
Transferability	Thick description	• Inclusion of in depth contextual information on participants and organizations; Detailed descriptions of research design and processes employed
Dependability	Inquiry audit	• Audit trail via review processes as per publication processes and presentations at conferences; Through realization of 'credibility' criterion
Confirmability	Confirmability audit	• Documentation of key decisions regarding design, data collection, and analysis; Explanation of processes as per doctoral programme and extensive supervision; Keeping a reflexive journal

Source: Categories adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301-328) and Finlay (2006, p. 321)

CONCLUSION

Exploring how the research methodologies were selected and deployed in this

empirical investigation of managerial work, this chapter makes three distinct

contributions to this thesis. First, via a review of methods commonly used to

investigate managerial work, this chapter illustrated how certain research methods are more appropriate than others to extract information on different aspects of 'managing' (e.g. Fto test hypotheses and measure variables, examine perceptions and cognitions, and examine characteristics of work). In doing so the review effectively demonstrated that a multi-method approach harnessing shadowing, ethnographic and semi-structured interviews, and secondary sources is particularly well suited to capture information on managerial activities and practices that was capable of: (1) Answering the question 'what contemporary manager's *really* do?'; and (2) Collecting data that could be compared to earlier studies on managerial work.

Second, charting the research processes used in this examination -from the selection of the study design, participants, and organizations through to the procedures used to collect and analyze the data- this chapter presents researchers with a methodological roadmap that can be followed, replicated and enhanced in future studies. Of particular significance are the challenges that were encountered and subsequently overcome in the data collection and analysis processes. With regards to collecting data there were seven main issues that were experienced: (1) The exhaustive nature of the shadowing method to study managers; (2) The observer or Hawthorne effect; (3) Recording data in complex meetings; (4) Accounting for work which was not directly observable, and capturing work that occurred: (5) In transit; (6) On the phone; and (7) Via technology. Comparably fewer challenges were experienced when analyzing the data. However they were significant as they impacted the interpretation and presentation of the information. These included: (1)

How to define an 'activity'; (2) How to code meeting attendees; and (3) How to isolate the 'purpose' of a meeting.

Third and finally, through explaining the processes that were employed in this study this chapter shows readers that the qualitative data presented in this paper is "trustworthy" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In particular, by employing a number of recognized techniques, namely prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, thick description, and an inquiry and confirmability audit this chapter has conveyed that the data is of a high quality. Put more simply, that it is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

CHAPTER THREE: SUMMARIES OF THE PAPERS

INTRODUCTION

As this thesis is comprised of three distinct research questions on the topic of managerial work that are presented in three stand alone papers, it is important to provide an overview of the contents and interrelatedness of the papers before proceeding with them independently (See Bevort (2012) for another example of a three-paper thesis using this structure). To this end, this short chapter briefly summarizes the presentation history and publication status of the three papers (See **Table 4**), outlines the essential elements of each of the three papers, and discusses some of the comments and suggestions that have been provided from journal editors and anonymous reviewers in the review process.

Table 4: Overview of presentations and publications

Title	Presentations and Publication Status
Paper #1: Historical developments in research on managerial work: A critical overview	Versions of the paper were presented at the Journal of Management Studies conference on the evolution and future of management (March 26-28, 2012) and the Academy of Management conference (August 3-7, 2012). This paper has also been reviewed by three anonymous reviews at *International Journal of Management Reviews* and has been offered the opportunity to revise and resubmit for possible publication.
Paper #2: Is managing in the public and private sectors really 'different'? A comparative study of managerial work activities	This paper has been reviewed by three anonymous reviewers at *Public Administration* and has been offered the opportunity to revise and resubmit for possible publication.
Paper #3: Ethical issues and dilemmas in shadowing research: Lessons from the field of managerial work	This paper has been reviewed by three anonymous reviewers, revised, and resubmitted for possible publication in *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management.*

PAPER #1

Historical developments in research on managerial work - A critical overview

The aim of this paper is to document how research in the field of managerial work has developed methodologically, theoretically, and empirically since Sune Carlson's *Executive Behaviour* (1951) to develop a new plateau from which managerial work can be taught and theorized. The empirical study conducted on managerial work, the results of which are presented in Paper #2, developed out of a gap presented in this paper. This gap was that there has been relatively little investigation into the work activities of public sector managers.

Drafts of this paper have been presented at two conferences (*Journal of Management Studies* and *Academy of Management*), and the version of the paper included in this dissertation has received a revise and resubmit from the *International Journal of Management Reviews*. Reviewers of the draft included in this thesis have acknowledged that previous literature reviews trying to encompass the whole research field of managerial (e.g. Hales, 1986; Stewart, 1989) are getting old, and that this paper and this paper fills a gap in the literature by taking stock of how the field has developed since inception. With regards to further development, the reviewers indicated that the systematic approach taken in this review has resulted in some literature on managerial work being excluded from the paper (notably from the field of Critical Management Studies), and that the paper could benefit from more theorization (in the discussion section). Suggestions from the review are being

carefully considered and the present draft of the paper is being revised in collaboration with the co-authors, Dr. Maja Korica and Professor Davide Nicolini.

PAPER #2

Is managing in the public and private sectors really 'different'? A comparative study of managerial work activities

Developed out of a gap in managerial work research that was uncovered in the literature review (Paper #1), this empirical paper presents structured data on the work activities of four top managers (CEOs). Through replication of data collection and analysis practices set out by Mintzberg (1973), empirical data collected using the shadowing method in the Canadian public sector is compared to a similar study conducted in the Swedish private sector (Tengblad, 2006) with the aim of determining the extent to which managerial work is similar and different between the public and private sectors.

This paper has been submitted to *Public Administration*, reviewed by three anonymous reviewers and offered the opportunity to revise and resubmit. Reviewers of this paper have indicated that "plenty of interesting material" and that this paper "adds to the substantial literature on public private management by examining the content of managerial work (an area where little empirical research on the topic exists". The reviewers offered a number of ways in which this paper could be strengthened. Some of the notable suggestions include: providing information on how national and socio-cultural factors could explain similarities and differences

between Swedish and Canadian managers; providing further emphasis on why understanding differences between the public private sector is important; stipulating how the analysis was conducted; and injecting more theory into the article.

PAPER #3

Ethical issues and dilemmas in shadowing research - Lessons from the field of managerial work

This paper focuses on the ethical issues and dilemmas that were encountered during a 12-week field study, which captured data on the work activities and practices of Canadian healthcare CEOs. Contributing to literature on research ethics, this paper aims to provide researchers considering using the shadowing method with insight into some of the issues they may encounter 'in situ', and provide them with suggestions as to how ethical practice can be attained.

This paper has been submitted to a special issue on shadowing in *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management,* reviewed by three anonymous reviewers, and been given the opportunity to revise and resubmit with minor revisions. This article has been revised and the present version has been resubmitted to the journal.

CHAPTER FOUR (PAPER #1): HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RESEARCH ON MANAGERIAL WORK - A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

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[6] The breakdown of work for this paper is as follows: Bart Johnson contributed 70%. His work consisted of writing the first complete draft of the paper and conducting major revisions in future versions of the paper for conference and journal submissions. Maja Korica contributed 20%. Her work consisted of expanding and refining ideas, and editing for conference and journal submissions. Davide Nicolini contributed 10% in this paper, providing strategic oversight, guidance, and suggestions for revisions.

ABSTRACT

Based on a comprehensive review of literature, the paper examines how the research on the nature of managing has evolved methodologically, theoretically, and empirically over the last 60+ years. We find that the study of managerial work has been characterized by a number of recurrent 'flavours' with regards to both the objectives and the approaches adopted in the inquiry, as well as by methodological 'ebbs-and-flows' movement that shaped, to a considerable extent, the nature and focus of the research. As a result, the field as a whole has fallen into a kind of analytical and empirical rut, with the same themes and approaches continually reoccurring. The ebb and flow pattern also produced a lamentable analytical narrowing so that a number of areas have remained systematically under-researched. After examining some of these notable areas, we offer a number of reflections on possible ways forward in the field. Specifically, that much could be gained if contemporary notions of practice are brought into the study of managerial work and increased attention were paid to the sociomaterial, situated, and gendered nature of managerial work.

Keywords: Executives, Literature review, Managerial work, Research methods

INTRODUCTION

Studying managerial work is crucial for the advancement of organization studies. There are at least three reasons for this. First of all, understanding 'what managers do' is critical for management education and training, as curricula are established around ideas (and ideally empirical evidence) about managerial work (Mintzberg, 1975; Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000). Secondly, investigations into the work of managers are vital for the development and progression of management and organization theory (Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Barley and Kunda, 2001). Finally, research on what managers do is potentially useful for *managerial practice* as it offers to existing managers opportunities for reflection and resources on how to improve their own work. However, despite these known benefits, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the topic in past decades. Furthermore, more than twenty years has passed since the last comprehensive review[7] was conducted (Hales, 1986; Stewart, 1989). As a result, the field of managerial work as it presently stands lacks a solid foundation upon which research ideas can be based and further developed (Boote and Beile, 2005). In his most recent book on managerial work, Mintzberg (2009) made a similar point, arguing that notable gaps in our insights on managing as a practice persist, which must be analyzed, considered and addressed lest our understanding of what managers do unforgivably slips into (further) disrepair. Put more simply, we must look to the past to see the future.

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[7] A number of reviews have been written on the topic of managing, however they have focused on niche topics such as the distinctiveness of managerial work as a field (Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000), managing in small firms (Floren, 2006), or managing in international contexts (Andersson and Floren, 2008), with none comprehensively examining the field of managerial work as a whole.

The aim of this paper is thus to provide the field with a much needed comprehensive overview of the scholarly literature on managerial work from pre-1950 to 2010. In doing so, we seek to present a plateau to work from, by consolidating research on managerial work, establishing thematic and empirical connections between disparate literatures, and identifying promising research opportunities. Importantly, in doing so, we will also respond to a key, but largely overlooked call to 'bring work back in' to organizational studies (Barley and Kunda, 2001), by reflecting on the promise of practice-based approaches to the study of managerial work. We thus proceed as follows. First, we begin by describing the research methodology. We then discuss the results of the review, by period, highlighting notable empirical, theoretical, and methodological themes. Based on this overview, we finish by making analytical conclusions relevant to the future development of the field.

METHODOLOGY

To adequately capture the complexity of the managerial work literature, a systematic review methodology was selected. We followed three distinct stages, as outlined by Tranfield et al (2003). In the first stage of the systematic process (planning), the objectives of the research were identified and key data sources were selected. In line with other comprehensive reviews of this kind (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010), we selected peer reviewed journal articles as the primary data source. Books and book chapters were also included, while unpublished articles, working papers, conference proceedings and dissertations were excluded. To

carry out the search we used three databases: Business Source Premier, ABI/Inform, and the Thomson ISI Web of Knowledge Social Sciences Division.

The second stage of the review (execution) proceeded by developing a number of keyword search terms based on combinations of five words with 'managerial': 'work', 'behavior', 'jobs', 'practices', 'roles' and 'activities'.[8] To minimize the number of preliminary articles, generic terms such as 'managing' and 'management' were excluded from the search terms, as when included the search yielded more than 20,000 articles. When the search terms were inputted into the selected databases in May 2011, this generated more than 2100 titles. Based on extensive discussions, we determined that the focus of the review was to understand managerial practices, not underlying motivations for behavior or factors driving different management styles. Thus, to reduce the number of articles in line with our particular research focus, titles that emphasized values, motivation, cognition, leadership, ethics, or work-life balance were excluded. On these criteria alone, the number of articles was reduced to 246. In instances when there was doubt regarding relevancy, we skimmed the abstract. Where it was difficult to understand the subject, approach, findings and conclusions of studies due to absent or elliptic abstracts, we reviewed the introduction and conclusion sections, and separated the articles into three lists based on relevance. List 'A' included studies that were definitely relevant; list 'B' was composed of studies that were possibly relevant; and list 'C' included studies that were clearly not relevant to the scope of the review. There were 84 articles in list 'A', 101 in list 'B' and 61 in list 'C'.

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[8] The particular search terms used were as follows: managerial work; managerial behavior; managerial roles; managerial jobs; managerial activities; managerial practices; work activities; what managers do; nature of managerial work. Individual searches also included the following limitations: #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9; limit all searches to English.

Following this separation, we independently reviewed the full text versions of the remaining 185 articles from lists 'A' and 'B'. Based on discussions regarding articles' relative contribution to the field, as well as overall quality, we were able to eliminate 72 articles, the majority of which were published in tier III journals and had low citation patterns. We placed the remaining papers into a number of categories divided by study type (*empirical* and *non-empirical*: review, industry, theory), and contextual focus to undergo further screening. Where we found that a number of papers produced similar findings, the article with the greatest number of recorded citations was included, bringing the total to 92 articles. To ensure that no relevant articles were accidentally excluded, a backward and forward snowballing method was applied to the reference lists of articles under full review (Bakker, 2010). This process revealed some important literature undetected in the original search, either because they appeared as book chapters, were published before the databases' first year of inclusion, or for some other, unaccounted for reason. This process added 4 articles to the 92 originally identified. In all, this brought the sample number of papers to 96. These articles, organized by type, are listed in **Figure 3**.

FIGURE 3: Classification of managerial work literature by study type and contextual focus
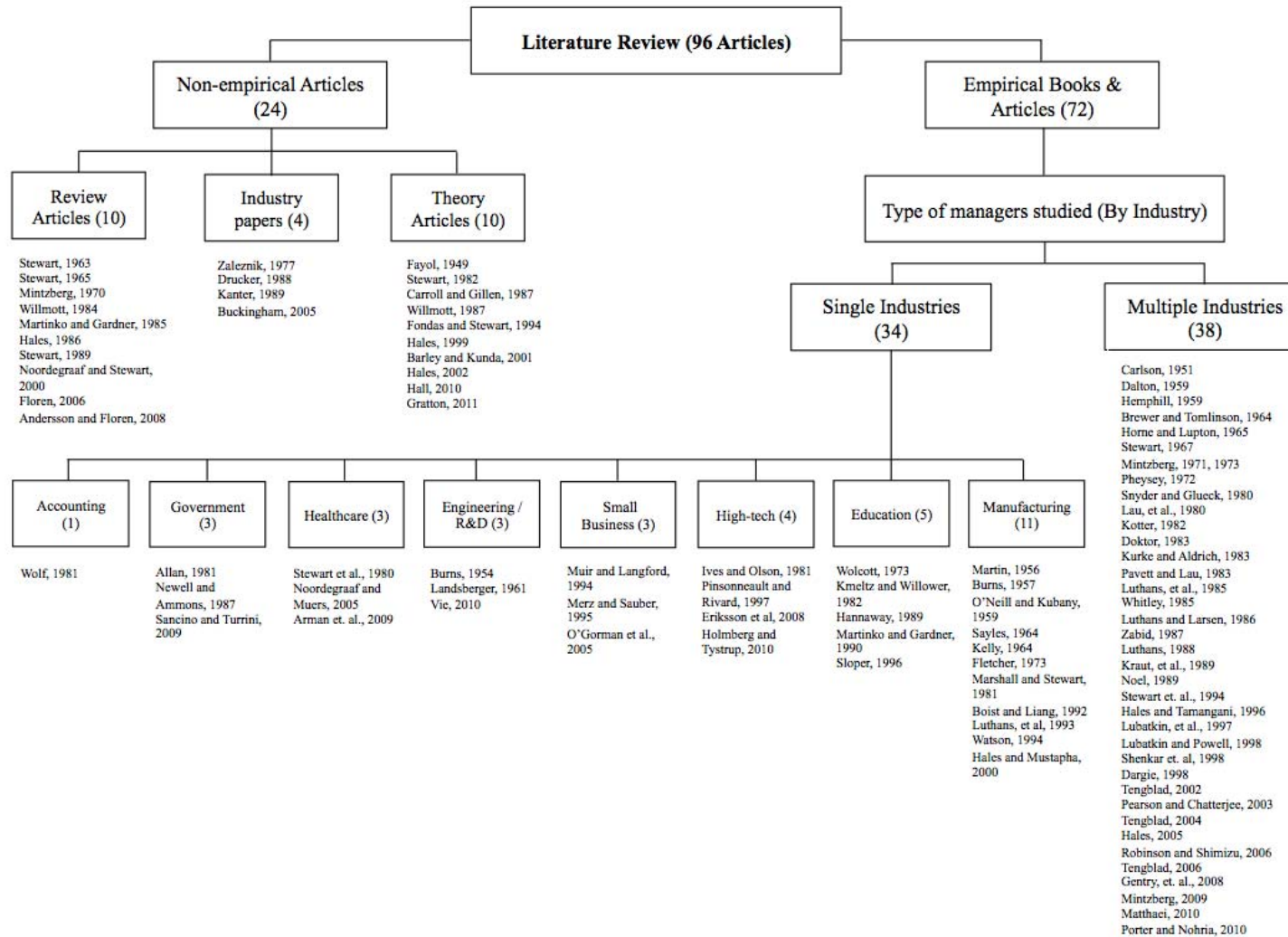
FINDINGS

The following sections succinctly describe the results of this review. Focusing on how managerial work literature has developed over the last 60 years, each of the subsequent sections emphasizes a number of themes and 'flavours', including: utilization and effect of different research methodologies; empirical similarities and differences in managerial practice across different eras, levels, and industries; and how managerial work as a body of theoretical insight has developed.

Pre-1950: The practice of managing as theory

Our first review period is a period of theory. In particular, most of the work before the 1950s is notable for being less interested in describing managerial work than in theorising it. A typical example is Henri Fayol, often referred as the "father of modern management", and one of the first to attempt to capture the essence of managerial work. Importantly however, his work was based on personal observations as a mining director rather than academic research. In *General and Industrial Management* (1916/1949), he described the act of managing as consisting of five functions: forecasting and planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling. Gulick and Urwick (1937) later expanded Fayol's managerial functions to seven and popularized them by coining the acronym POSDCORB[9].

     The work of these early management theorists was heavily criticised for lacking an empirical base and for ignoring a number of important aspects of

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[9] The functions as described by Gulick and Urwick (1937) include planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting,

actual work. March and Simon (1959), for example, suggested that these theories failed to properly address motivational assumptions, ignored intra-organizational conflicts and their impact on behavior, and gave insufficient attention to the role of cognition in work. Stewart (1963) in turn suggested that early theories fail to allow for the diversity of management roles and contexts, contending that different industries and different types of managers require different functions. More recently, Brunsson (1982) described their normative claims as overly simplistic, speculative, and descriptive.

Unsurprisingly, not all authors have been as critical. Fifty years after POSDCORB was first described, Carroll and Gillen (1987, p. 48) re-examined its applicability, concluding that "the classical functions still represent the most useful way of conceptualizing the manager's job, especially for management education…" (see also Watson, 1994, p. 35-36). O'Gorman and colleagues (2005) defended POSDCORB from past criticisms, contending that traditional (functional) views of managerial work are complementary to contemporary theories, in the sense that they provide a "macro view" of managerial work. Hales (1986, p. 110) similarly contested that classical theories of management have simply been misunderstood in the sense that they were never intended to be hypotheses about individual behaviours of managers, but rather theories of general management.

While the verdict on early theories of managerial activity is still open, it is undeniable that these works set an important historical precedent. In particular, they suggested that in this field, the simple creation of abstract categories amounts to theorization. At the same time, they implied that generalised and normative conclusions on the nature and "essence" of (good) managerial work

could be derived from personal experience, rather than systematic research. As we shall see, these two contentious assumptions continued to characterise the study of managerial work for a long time to come.

1950-1960: Innovation and discovery in management studies

In this nascent field of managerial work studies, a major shift occurred when Carlson (1951) published *Executive Behaviour*, the first empirical account of managerial work. Taking a novel approach to the study of managerial activity, Carlson sought to find general behavioural patterns and common relationships, rather than focusing on developing normative rules of how executives should behave. To achieve this objective, he used self-recorded diaries to acquire information on work locations, contacts, communication patterns, activities and decisions made by 8 Swedish CEOs. One of the most significant findings was that managers were rarely alone and had little time for sustained thinking. In a period of 35 days under study, Carlson found only 12 times where executives worked undisturbed for intervals greater than 23 minutes. Consequently, the CEOs had to work either at home, very early, or very late to be productive on tasks that required sustained concentration. Importantly, the description of work fragmentation and constant interruptions ran contrary to previous holistic management theories, and was later validated by a number of studies (Burns, 1957; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973). With regard to the development of the field, Carlson's study effectively brought an empirical sensibility into the study of managerial work, thus offering a crucial alternative to the normative and impressionistic approach of his predecessors. While the normative literature

remained vibrant, giving rise to a popular management industry that continues to prosper, Carlson's *Executive Behaviour* inaugurated a thriving empiricist movement that underwent a particularly rich period in the years following its publication. As Hales (1986) identified in his review up to 1985, the 1950s were the most active period of empirical research, followed by the 1960s and 1970s.

In particular, two main types of empirical studies emerged in the 1950s that followed in the footsteps of Carlson: those using diaries and those relying on observation. The most prominent examples of each were Burns (1954, 1957) and Dalton (1959).

Burns' work (1954; 1957) was particularly notable for confirming that managers spent much of their time dealing with issues not directly related to output and production. These findings supported the need to study managers to improve efficiency, which was a key analytical theme in the 1950s. In *Executive Behaviour*, Carlson (1951, p. 114) had, for example, written that the practical interest of his study was to "save executive time", and in effect, determine the most efficient way to accomplish a given task in the shortest possible time. Burns (1954) was also the first scholar to study communication patterns, discovering that communication did not simply flow vertically in an organization, but also laterally, a finding that ran against classical, normative theories of management.

Dalton's work was equally innovative and ground-breaking. Based on more than 10 years of covert interviewing and participant observation, Dalton (1959) published *Men Who Manage*, one of the most detailed accounts of how managers operate. Focusing closely on how the gap between formal roles designated by the organizational chart and informal roles assumed by individuals affects work, Dalton went a step further than Carlson, by not only describing

managing as being messy, but by giving detailed accounts of managers' informal, self-protective, and apparently irrational behaviours. In a nuanced analysis, Dalton explained how cliques formed in organizations, and how they manifested themselves in power struggles, across both official and unofficial interactions. In discussing organizational politics, Dalton exposed some of the everyday realities of organizational work, and zoomed in on an area of managing rarely considered in later literature. In addition to focusing on organizational politics, *Men who Manage* was also unique in its methodological approach, being the only piece of ethnographic research conducted in the 1950s, and one of a handful in the history of the literature. While observational techniques were often employed to capture the dynamic nature of managing (e.g. Jasinski, 1956; Martin, 1956; O'Neill and Kubany, 1959), early studies were generally conducted according to the style and methods of time-and-motion studies, and were interested in recording 'quick facts' and testing hypothesis with inferential statistics, rather than understanding and representing the lived reality of everyday managerial work.

Finally, a third approach to the study of managerial work during this period was introduced by Hemphill (1959), who was the first researcher to use a questionnaire to understand managerial work. Based on an astonishing 575-item questionnaire completed by 93 upper, middle, and lower level managers, Hemphill concluded that while there are certainly differences across levels, all managers participate in similar activities. His study was particularly important for two reasons. First, it illustrated that there are distinct differences in managerial work across different levels, and second, that questionnaires were a viable (if inherently limited) means to study work. While only few scholars followed

Hemphill's example in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Pheysey, 1972), questionnaires became a popular method to study managing in 1980s and 1990s.

1960-1970: Understanding managing through normal science

In a series of scholarly engagements echoing Kuhn's 'normal science', management researchers in the 1960s took stock of what had been done, most notably by Carlson (1951) and Burns (1954, 1957), and sought to advance the field by exploring the applicability of those findings at the executive level, to middle and lower level managers.

During this consolidation period, research consisted, to a notable degree, of more of the same: diary and observational studies, with a focus on recording the activities performed by managers. As such, investigations were fundamentally qualitative. However, with comparably few management scholars employing qualitative methods during this time, researchers sought a closer 'fit' to the then scientific community by utilizing key components of quantitative research, such as large sample sizes, in an attempt to increase generalizability (see Sayles, 1964; Horne and Lupton, 1965; Stewart, 1967). Embodying the drive to make qualitative work research more 'scientific', Kelly (1964), for instance, introduced activity sampling[10] as a method to study work.

This era also saw some of the first efforts to expand managerial work research beyond boardrooms and c-suites, with a number of significant contributions related to the work of early career and mid-level managers (see Landsberger 1961; Kelly, 1964; Horne and Lupton, 1965; Sayles, 1964; Stewart,

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[10] Developed by L.H.C. Tippett, Activity Sampling or Ratio Delay Technique breaks behavior down into categories and collects a large number of momentary observations at randomly selected times.

1963, 1967). Using earlier studies as benchmarks (e.g. Carlson, 1951; Guest, 1956), many of these investigations found that managerial work activities, functions, and communication patterns were fundamentally similar across managerial levels, validating the findings from the 1950s. However, the comparisons conducted were crude and rudimentary, and were later called into question by Stewart (1967), who was the first to examine differences as well as similarities between managerial jobs. In a diary-based study examining how 160 middle managers spent their time, Stewart (1967) identified five different types of managers: emissaries, writers, discussers, troubleshooters, and committee members. Through developing these categories, Stewart illustrated that there was in fact a great deal of variation in managerial jobs, with a subsequent impact on how managers spend their time (see also Stewart, 1976)[11].

1970-1980: Dispelling myths? Mintzberg Inc.

The essence of managerial work literature in the 1970s can be succinctly captured in two words: Henry Mintzberg. Focusing on exploring a gap between theory and practice, folklore and fact, Mintzberg (1970, 1971, 1973, 1975/1990) used structured observation to record the work activities of five CEOs to discover what managers 'really' do. Taking a firm position that previous work on managing was too theoretical and disconnected from realities of managing, Mintzberg attempted to unite rich empirical work with management theory. To make this connection, he formulated 10 managerial roles (see **Figure 4** below) and made 13 theoretical

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[11] Rather than classifying managers by rank (senior, middle, junior) or function, Stewart (1976, p. 46-7) developed a task-orientated typology of managerial behavior that categorized managers into four categories based on their position and pattern of activities (e.g. system maintenance, system administration, project, and mixed).

propositions to describe the work of managers, both of which had a major scholarly impact.

FIGURE 4: Mintzberg's 10 Managerial Roles

Interpersonal roles	Informational roles	Decisional roles
• Figurehead	• Monitor	• Entrepreneur
• Leader	• Disseminator	• Disturbance Handler
• Liaison	• Spokesman	• Resource Allocator
		• Negotiator

Source: Mintzberg (1973, p. 92-93)

In addition to his famous role categories and propositions, Mintzberg drew a number of broad conclusions about managing, namely that it consisted of large quantities of work, conducted at an relentless pace; was characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation; was highly interactive, with managers spending much of their time in meetings; and was conducted with a strong emphasis and reliance on verbal, rather than written communication. Interestingly, most of what Mintzberg presented in his study had been found in earlier accounts by authors like Carlson (1951), Burns (1954, 1957), Sayles (1964), and Stewart (1967), for instance that managerial work was fast-paced, fragmented, and reliant on face-to-face communication. Despite this, *The Nature of Managerial Work* has been referenced more than all the other managerial work publications combined. While there are a number of reasons for this, the principal likely reason is Mintzberg's devotion to managerial characteristics. We found that prior research had made claims about general work patterns (e.g. fragmentation), but statements were singular or coupled, and not presented as focal points, given that they were usually secondary to time audits (Copeman et al., 1963). Mintzberg instead brought together propositions about managerial work and placed them front and center in his research. Combining ostensible rigor and depth to develop a

common set of characteristics, two aspects traditionally at opposite ends of the managerial work spectrum (e.g. see the contrast between Guest, 1956 and Dalton, 1959), *The Nature of Managerial Work* became the go-to reference for future work on managing.

Adding to its popularity was Mintzberg's application of his field study to his theory of managerial roles. Unlike normative characterizations of managing (e.g. POSDCORB), which were criticized as being speculative, Mintzberg's role theory was based on five weeks of structured observation, making the exercise ostensibly measurable and repeatable. The testability of his role theory was especially significant, not only because it followed the emerging cannons of positivist science, but also because Kurke and Aldrich (1983) conducted a replication study and found strikingly similar results, which effectively crystallized the applicability of Mintzberg's role categories and propositions. We return to the effect this had in the discussion section.

Despite Mintzberg's unavoidable prominence, there were a number of other scholars who made significant contributions in this era. Methodologically speaking, perhaps none were more significant than Wolcott (1973), who focused on answering a similar question to Mintzberg, namely 'what do school principals actually do'. Making his mark by adopting a richly ethnographic approach, Wolcott shadowed a school principal ("Ed") for a period of two years, providing readers with an in-depth understanding of the nuances of everyday administrative work. Most notably, unlike other work researchers who spent substantially shorter periods in the field (e.g. 1-2 days to 1 week), Wolcott's two-year stay meant that he was able to capture culturally-governed patterns of behavior. To Wolcott, the value of such a long immersion was expressed in the intimate

familiarity it enabled for the reader, allowing the reader to "understand how he might act if he were in the role of the principal" (p. xi).

1980-1990: Specialization and critical reviews

Departing from now-traditional studies, which focused on answering broad questions like 'what do managers do', researchers in the 1980s sought to explore more focused questions, such as the role of planning (Snyder and Glueck, 1980) and impact of perceptions (Marshall and Stewart, 1981) on work. Despite considerable subsequent diversity, we found that the managerial literature during this period could usefully be segmented along four distinct topic lines.

Managing in a global context: With global markets becoming increasingly important to organizations' balance sheets, a number of western companies looked abroad to expand their operations. However, as expansion plans unfolded, it quickly became apparent that there were some profound cultural differences in business practices, and that these had yet to be investigated. In fact, prior to the 1980s, there had been almost no studies on managerial work practices outside of Europe or the United States (see **Table 5**). In attempts to address this shortcoming, authors like Doktor (1983, 1990) and Zabid (1987) conducted studies in Asia, which were followed by a number of studies focusing on explaining cultural differences in work in the 1990s and 2000s. For instance, Doktor (1983) conducted the first study on how culture affects managerial work, surveying 326 managers to determine how Japanese CEOs spent their time as opposed to their American counterparts. He found that American CEOs spent much of their time in short-duration management activities (<9 minutes), while

Japanese CEOs spent it engaged in longer activities, especially when interacting with others (41% of their time in activities <1 hour). He concluded that differences were due to the fact that the work of Asian CEOs, more so than American CEOs, necessitated "a sensitivity to human relations", which meant they often played the important role of social leaders (Doktor, 1990, p. 54).

Managerial work and performance: Exploring the link between managerial activities and performance (success and effectiveness), a number of work researchers took the existing scholarly interest in exploring 'what do managers do' a step further. In particular, Kotter's (1982) *The General Managers* was the most renowned in examining how work behavior impacts performance. He found that network building was the most important factor in achieving goals, while interpersonal skills was the most important trait of effective managers, as it helped them develop networks of co-operative relationships, which aided the successful implementation of their agendas. Luthans and colleagues (1985), in turn, sought to answer a slightly different question, namely 'what do successful managers really do'? Using trained observers to record the activities of 52 managers, the authors used regression analysis to suggest that two activities had statistically significant effects on success [12]: "interacting with outsiders" and "socializing/politicking". Finding that his results echoed Kotter's (1982), Luthans (1988) went on to examine whether there were any behavioral differences between *successful* managers (those quickly promoted), and *effective* managers (those leading high-performing teams). Interestingly, he found that effectiveness came from managers engaging in human resource management and communication activities, while the biggest key to successful managers was

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[12] Success in this instance was based on Hall's (1976: 260) managerial success index (MSI), which links a particular manager's age to his or her organizational rank.

networking. Surprisingly, networking was the least important activity of effective managers.

Changes in managerial work?: The climate of increasing competition that surrounded organizational life in the 1980s led authors like Drucker (1988) and Kanter (1989) to speculate whether the ongoing technological and societal changes would be echoed in the nature of managerial work. While Drucker famously emphasized the increasing centrality of information and knowledge, with the need to reframe managerial work around these two objects, Kanter (1989) predicted that organizations would undergo a transformation to become flatter, more flexible, less hierarchical, and more knowledge-based, all of which would lead to a 'new managerial work'. However, such scholars resigned themselves to the 'fact' that only time could tell whether the ongoing transformation would alter the way work was conducted. Therefore, research on whether or not changes had occurred remained dormant until well into the 2000s.

Reviews: Since Carlson's (1951) field-defining contribution, research on managing had been empirically driven, with few scholars concerning themselves with reflection on research patterns, themes, or methods outside the contexts of their own distinct contributions. However, with an increasing number of studies in the post-Mintzberg era, several researchers moved to the critical task of analyzing what had been done, in order to move the field forward. In particular, five major reviews were published in this period (Willmott, 1984; Martinko and Gardner, 1985; Hales, 1986; Willmott, 1987; Stewart, 1989).[13] Of these reviews, Hales (1986) was the most vocal, arguing for more systematic research, and contending that a lack of a common focus had resulted in haphazard categories

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[13] Here we exclude Tengblad and Vie's highly proficient review in Tengblad's (2012) edited volume on managerial work, as it was published after 2010, which is the cut off date for our review.

and no real way for researchers to compare or contrast findings. Stewart (1989: 4) concurred, and attempted to make distinctions between "managerial work", "managerial jobs", and "managerial behavior", suggesting that the term "managerial job" is less ambiguous than "managerial work" or "managerial behavior". However, with an increasingly high level of diversity in the use of terms, inconsistency regarding the definitions used remains highly prevalent in contemporary literature. Hales' second observation was that prior research had generally focused on answering mostly descriptive questions (what do managers do? how they spend their time? with whom?), calling instead for more theory-laden research. Since his remarks, however, little theoretical development has actually been accomplished.

1990-2000: Managing around the world

In line with emerging awareness of globalization, research in the 1990s continued to focus on understanding how culture impacts work, and how managers can become more efficient. With China quickly becoming one of world's most important markets, a number of researchers focused on better understanding managerial work in the Far East. Boisot and Liang (1992) were among the first to explore the work of Chinese managers, replicating Mintzberg's (1973) study in China. Consistent with earlier studies (Doktor, 1983, 1990), they found that the communication patterns of Chinese managers were more personalized than their American counterparts. Shenkar and colleagues (1998) followed suit, and explored differences between "eastern" and "western" management, finding that though important, "cultural milieu" was not the sole factor affecting role structure,

noting instead the effect of political, economic, social, and enterprise-level variables. Furthermore, recognizing a "narrow map" of empirical research focused almost exclusively on Anglo-American managers (see **Table 5**), the authors urged researchers to investigate managerial work in other developing countries.

TABLE 5: Countries represented in empirical studies (1950-2010)

	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	Total
United States	4	2	3	15	2	3	30
United Kingdom	2	5	1	2	4	1	15
Sweden	1	-	-	-	-	5	6
Canada	-	-	-	2	1	1	4
Japan	-	-	-	1	-	2	3
Malaysia	-	-	-	1	-	2	3
China	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Germany	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
Hungary	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Netherlands	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Australia	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Brunei	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
France	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
India	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Ireland	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Italy	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Norway	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Russia	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Senegal	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Tanzania	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Thailand	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Zimbabwe	-	-	-	-	1	-	1

Note: There is no Pre-1950s category in this table as there were no empirical studies on managing prior to 1951

In addition to contributing to the work literature in the area of effectiveness and success, as detailed earlier, Luthans and colleagues' research is important in another sense, namely that it signified the beginning of a shift in the methods used by work researchers. In particular, beginning with their studies in the 1980s, a rise in methods not native to the 'managerial work school' accompanied a noticeable drift away from qualitative to more quantitative

techniques, particularly by U.S. researchers. Along with Luthans et al's (1985, 1993) use of regression to explain the work behaviors of managers, another example was Lubatkin and colleagues (1997), who used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test whether the nature of managerial work was universally similar in developing and developed countries.

Another important methodological contribution during this period, which echoes the generally messy and concurrent methodological flows characterizing most eras, was made by Watson (1994/2001), who followed in Wolcott's (1973) footsteps by adopting an ethnographic approach. In particular, Watson spent a year observing the work of middle managers in a large manufacturing and development facility. Through close examination of the everyday work behaviors, he shed light on important managerial issues, such as how managers act to shape their careers. For example, Watson found that managers pushed new, fashionable management ideas, which were not necessarily in the best interest of the organization, in an attempt to build a reputation and grow their careers. In taking such an approach, Watson was able to gain an understanding of not only what managers do, but also why they took specific actions, a key focus which Hales (1999) argued had been largely under-studied in the literature.

2000-2010: The return of the study of work?

After several decades of research focusing on topics such as the impact of culture, the application of work roles to different contexts, and the effect of work behaviors on success and effectiveness, research in the 2000s began to re-examine the question that started it all: what do managers do? Renewed interest

in answering this foundational question was driven by two converging factors. First, Barley and Kunda (2001) published "Bringing work back in", which effectively illustrated how work-based studies had provided an empirical base for organizational theory, and suggested that it was through marginalizing and ignoring detailed work studies that the development of organizational theory had been hampered. Second, following twenty plus years of innovation and economic development, work researchers recognized that it was now possible to examine how work might or might not be different from earlier accounts.

Hales (2002) was among the first to respond to claims that changes in organizational forms (e.g. bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic) had resulted in profound changes in patterns of managerial work. Offering conceptual and empirical evidence, Hales (2002) argued that some claims were not substantiated, stating that even where organizations have initiated structural changes, managers are still preoccupied with monitoring work processes in their individual units, and continued to be held personally responsible for their performance. What was emerging was thus something akin to 'bureaucracy-lite', rather than post-bureaucracy. Claims that organizational changes have not significantly altered managerial work were later put to the test by Tengblad (2006), who examined the work practices of 4 Swedish CEOs and compared the findings to Mintzberg's (1973). While Tengblad acknowledged that their findings were remarkably similar, there were some major differences that began to support the emergence of a so-called 'new managerial work'. Of specific importance were findings that executive work is not fragmented and interrupted, and that managers in no way showed that they preferred brevity and interruptions in their work (the second and third of Mintzberg's propositions). In fact, Tengblad found that the CEOs in his

study were rather insulated, with secretaries acting as "buffers" allowing them to focus on their work. He also noted that there had been substantial increases in the workload and hours of CEOs compared to Mintzberg's study. For example, he found that there was significantly more time spent in transit (travel time), meetings featured more people (mainly subordinates), and that CEOs gave more information to others. He also found a substantial decrease in the amount of desk work (referred to as administrative work), meetings with clients, suppliers and associates, and dealing with requests. This led Tengblad (2006, p. 1452-3) to crucially conclude that such changes were more than "cosmetic fads", and could be indicative of a shift from administrative management to institutional leadership.

Notably, by using calendar analysis and interviews to study German CEOs, Matthaei (2010) found support for some of the changes Tengblad (2006) described, most significantly that deskwork had been increasingly replaced with work on the weekend and in transit. Similarly, Vie (2010) sought to assess the effects, if any, of such 'post-bureaucratic' changes, but at a middle manager level. Basing his study on Tengblad's (2006) promising evidence, he shadowed four R&D managers for a week. Unlike Tengblad however, Vie (2010) did not make claims that post-bureaucratic shifts occurred, at least not at the middle manager level, as the managers in his study continued to show a preoccupation with administrative tasks, a condition that, according to post-bureaucratic theorists, needs to be absent to claim that a shift had occurred (Drucker, 1988; Kanter, 1989; Zuboff, 1988). This led Vie (2010: 193) to call for "a re-evaluation of the post-bureaucracy concept", at least at the middle manager level, noting profound differences between the work of middle and top-level managers. Echoing

Stewart's classic arguments in favor of the need to recognize context, he urged scholars to stop treating managers at different levels as essentially the same. While such a distinction may appear obvious, we found that Kraut et al. (1989/2005) produced the first and only article that explicitly emphasized differences between first-level, middle, and executive managers, arguing that it is important to acknowledge such distinctions (for a summary of continuities and changes in managerial work (1950-2010) see **Table 6**).

Interestingly, rather than differentiating work by managerial levels, research in the 2000s emphasized differences based on organizational size. Observing 10 small, entrepreneurial CEOs in Ireland, O'Gorman and colleagues (2005) found that small business managers spent significantly less time in scheduled meetings (25%, compared to Mintzberg's 59%), and engaged in substantially more activities (29-49 per day, compared to 16-28, respectively) than managers in larger firms, suggesting that work in small firms spans different managerial levels (lower, middle, and upper), with small business managers spending much more time focused on operational issues (see also Muir and Langford, 1994). This finding was supported by Floren and colleagues (2008), who found that small business managers desire more control over their respective organizations, delegate less work to subordinates, and consequently need a more diverse set of skills than managers in larger organizations (Floren, 2006; Andersson and Floren, 2008).

TABLE 6: Continuities and change in managerial work (1950-2010)

Continuities in managerial work (all levels)	
Communication	Managers prefer verbal media; Most of time spent in face-to-face communication (Burns, 1954; Mintzberg, 1973; Luthans and Larsen, 1986; Tengblad, 2006)
Meetings	Telephone and unscheduled meetings are generally brief (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
	Scheduled meetings consume more of managers time than any other activity (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
Information	Mail is treated as cursory (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
Tours	Tours can be valuable, but managers spend little time doing them (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
Preferences	Managers gravitate towards live action (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006; Mattheai, 2010)
Responsibilities	Large volumes of work is conducted at an unrelenting pace (Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
	Managers deal with a great deal of ambiguity (Dalton, 1959; Hales and Tamangani, 1996; Hales, 2002; 2005)
	Managers spend little time with their superiors (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
Alone time	Managers have little alone time (Carlson, 1951; Mattheai, 2010)

Continuities in managerial work (middle management)	
Desk work	Middle managers engage in a similar amount of "desk work" (Martinko and Gardner, 1990; Stewart et al., 1994; Vie, 2010)
Fragmentation	Interruptions and work fragmentation is commonplace (Mintzberg, 1973; Floren, 2006; Vie, 2010)
Hours	Managers work the same number of hours / week (Horne and Lupton, 1965; Stewart et al., 1994; Vie, 2010)

Continuities in managerial work (lower level management)	
Travel	Lower level managers travel very little (Arman et al., 2009)
Fragmentation	Work is fragmented and interrupted (Arman et al., 2009)

Changes in managerial work (all levels)	
Communication / Decision making	Shift away from command and control style of decision making to more dialogue oriented communication (Martinko and Gardner, 1990; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010)
Meetings	More participants attend meetings (Mintzberg, 1973; Arman et al., 2009; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010)
	More time is spent with subordinates and less with "outsiders" (Arman et al., 2009; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010)
Information	Managers give more information (Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010)
	More time is spent on information (reading / review) (Martinko and Gardner, 1990; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010)

Changes in managerial work (executive level management)	
Travel	There is increased travel (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006; Mattheai, 2010)
Fragmentation	There are less interruptions and fragmentation at the executive level (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006)
Hours	Executives work longer hours (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006; Mattheai, 2010)
Desk work	Less desk work at executive level (Tengblad, 2006)

Changes in managerial work (middle management)	
Meetings	Managers engage in more scheduled meetings (Horne and Lupton, 1965; Hales and Mustapha, 2000; Vie, 2010)
Travel	There is increased travel (Martinko and Gardner, 1990; Vie, 2010)

Changes in managerial work (lower level management)	
Responsibilities	The supervisory, planning, and monitoring activities of lower level managers has been enlarged (Hales, 2005)

TABLE 7: Thematic focus and trends (by period)

Period	Thematic Focus	Aim and Orientation	Principal Methodologies Employed*	Key References
Pre-1950	Development and categorization of managerial functions	Ideal types; Normative Intent; Descriptive and Anecdotal	(1) Personal Experience	Fayol, 1916; Gulick and Urwick, 1937
1950-1960	Recognition of behavioral patterns and common relationships; Embellishment of the notion that management is often 'messy'	Time audits of executives; communication patterns; organizational politics; Methods innovation to capture management in action	(1) Self-recorded diaries; (2) Participant observation (3) Surveys	Carlson, 1957; Burns, 1954, 1957; Dalton, 1959; Hemphill, 1959
1960-1970	Identification of different priorities and work patterns among middle and lower level managers	Consolidation of research; Differences in managerial work; Quantitative appearance of qualitative studies; Generalizability of results; organizational politics	(1) Self-recording diaries; (2) Participant observation; (3) Activity sampling	Sayles, 1965; Horne and Lupton, 1965; Stewart, 1967
1970-1980	Development of universal roles and behaviors of mangers at the executive level	Theory development (roles and propositions); Thick description of work behaviors	(1) Structured observation; (2) Diaries; (3) Ethnography;	Mintzberg, 1971, 1973; Wolcott, 1973; Stewart, 1976
1980-1990	Specialization of work studies -Managing in a global world; Networking and managerial success; IT and changing work in organizations; Critical reviews	Test Mintzberg's roles and propositions; Impact of culture on behavior; Improving performance through the study of managerial activities	(1) Structured observation; (2) Surveys; (3) Interviews	Kotter, 1982; Hales, 1986; Kanter, 1989; Stewart, 1989
1990-2000	International management practices; work practices and performance; comparative research	Establish universality of Mintzberg's work practices in developing countries; Determine what makes managers 'effective'; Determine cultural differences	(1) Surveys; (2) Structured observation with quantitative analysis; (3) Diaries; (4) Interviews; (5) Ethnography	Boisot and Liang, 1992; Luthans et al., 1993; Stewart et al., 1994; Watson, 1994;
2000-2010	Post-bureaucratic change in organizations; Entrepreneurship and work behavior	Establish changes in work practices since 70s'; Determine differences in work activities of managers in small and large organizations	(1) Structured observation; (2) Surveys (4) Calendar Analysis	Barley and Kunda, 2001; Hales, 2002; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010

*Methodologies are listed in terms of relative contribution to the given era (number of times used / articles)

DISCUSSION

In conducting a comprehensive review of the literature over the last 60 years, we found that empirical research on managing has been focused on investigating only a few major research themes. As seen in **Table 7**, these themes and questions colonised the attention and effort of researchers over a long period of time, who limited their focus to a handful of important, yet very descriptive (and repetitive) research questions: What do managers do? How they spend their time? With whom? We reflect more substantively on these by turning to the question of analytical trends, and to the three critical features in this body of work that we observed in our review.

Theme #1: Ebbs and flows in managerial work research

Firstly, the development of the field has been characterised by a series of ebb and flow-like periods, in which methodological swings have crucially echoed, and in real ways shaped, the theoretical story recounted earlier. A number of ebbs and flows are discussed below via the most notable examples of scholarly work from each period. These represent a sort of eternal return (of the same), but they are also marked by a very interesting cyclical shifting of the focus of empirical engagement. Accordingly, periods when the collective concern was for "zooming in" on the details of work were followed by times when an opposite "zooming out" attitude prevailed (Nicolini, 2009).

The first period of 'zooming in' began with Carlson's (1951) *Executive Behavior*, setting into motion an empirical basis for studies to follow, as well as the first methodological 'flow', namely a strong reliance on qualitative research

methods (see **Table 8**). Founding the field of work studies with qualitative methodologies, Carlson (1951) illustrated that a qualitative approach was effective in the documentation of managerial work practices. Recognized as being well-suited to capturing the idiosyncrasies work, studies harnessing qualitative methods thus quickly became dominant, accounting for 43-86% (per period) of all empirical studies reviewed (1950-2010). We found this to be an unusually high number for management research, a field that has generally been dominated by positivistic methods of inquiry (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

TABLE 8: Managerial work articles (by type)

Study Type	1940's (n=1)	1950's (n=7)	1960's (n=8)	1970's (n=7)	1980's (n=30)	1990's (n=16)	2000's (n=27)
Non-Empirical	100%	-	25%	33%	29%	13%	30%
Empirical	-	100%	75%	67%	71%	87%	70%
Quantitative	-	29%	17%	14%	36%	57%	26%
Qualitative	-	71%	83%	86%	64%	43%	74%
		'Zooming in'			'Zooming out'		'Zooming in'

The methodological focus of work studies notably began to shift in the 1980s, with researchers 'zooming out' by taking largely quantitative approaches. While there were few examples of early quantitative studies (e.g. Hemphill, 1959; Pheysey, 1972), quantitative data collection techniques and tools (e.g. regression and ANOVA) became increasingly popular as researchers turned to testing hypotheses and propositions. Ease of use and convenience were also factors, with the arrival of computers into the research 'game' (see Van Maanen, 1998). Importantly, although studies of work practices were considered unique in many respects, for instance with regard to the research object under study (e.g. focusing on micro-level analyses of individual managers) (Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000), many researchers were unable to resist the temptation to utilize new easy-to-use tools of analysis, turning to large-scale surveys and quantitative analysis (see

Newell and Ammons, 1987; Pavett and Lau, 1983; Whitley, 1985). Consequently, while the number of qualitative studies maintained a slight dominance throughout the 1980s, the 1990s saw a shift to work studies employing quantitative methods, especially surveys (see Lubatkin et al., 1997; Merz and Sauber, 1995; Shenkar et al., 1998; see **Table 8**).

This ebb in qualitative work research, which continued well into the 2000s, crucially had a significant impact on the field's development. Most markedly, the foundational question of what managers did in practice was left largely unanswered, as quantitative studies relied on managers' perceptions of their work, which earlier studies had shown to be if not inaccurate, then at least limited (see Burns, 1954, p. 96). This knowledge gap was exacerbated further by the fact that qualitative studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s relied strongly on interview-based accounts, rather than observations. As Barley and Kunda (2001, p. 81) also argued, studies were consequently not collecting "the kind of data needed for making grounded inferences about the changing nature of work and work practices". In other words, the focus on 'big pictures' drawn from 'big numbers' resulted in the loss of valuable granularity as to the everyday natures of managerial work (see Combs, 2010). What also became apparent when observing these swings was an absence of comprehensive understanding regarding how technology was affecting work practices. While the dawn of the 'information age' had clearly impacted how research was being conducted, as we saw above, this did not extend into empirical work exploring the link between work and its engagement(s) with IT. Paradoxically, though the thematic 'flavour' of understanding managerial work in developing nations addressed a long-standing

gap in the field, the subsequent lull in research conducted in Anglo-American countries in the 1990s further exasperated this issue.

Importantly, the methodological pendulum began to swing back towards the use of qualitative research methods at the turn of the millennium, with structured observation taking over from surveys as the prominent research method. However, as there had been few observational studies conducted in the preceding decades (1980-2000), observational studies seemed to pick up where they left off in the 1980s, using Mintzberg's work as a measuring stick to determine whether there had been substantial changes in managerial work practices (Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010). Thus, while managerial work was returning to its qualitative roots, it was not with the same resolve or at least the same analytical *tabula rasa*, as studies were bound by pre-defined and highly ingrained categories. The result was research that was deductive rather than inductive, with little theoretical development as a consequence. This has had an interesting effect on future development, as we found that theoretical development has been strongly linked with methodologies used, more specifically, with in-depth, inductive, qualitative studies. Thus, much of the theory development occurred in the early years (1950-1980) via only a small number of contributions, reflecting the emerging fact that there have been few notable studies in recent years that have used open, inductive coding. Instead, there has been a series of one-shot quantitative studies focused on determining whether existing theories apply in additional contexts (e.g. Shenkar et al., 1998). As a consequence, research in this area has been described as overly explanatory and atheoretical (Fondas and Stewart, 1994; Hales, 1986). Our findings support such assessments, as 75% of the articles we reviewed were empirical. This is a

substantially higher number when compared to other research fields, which typically have substantially more theoretical contributions (e.g. Crossan and Apaydin [2010] found that only 52% of articles on organizational innovation were empirical). As we demonstrated in our overview above, the ultimate consequence of such methodological and thematic ebbs and flows has been a relatively inconsistent development of the field as a whole, in which theories were developed early on and then put on ice for 20 years, as the overall methodological focus and thus 'norm' shifted away.

Theme #2: Work studies as management's onion

In our historical account of work research, we noted that in the (relative) beginning of the field, managers were studied to understand managing. In other words, they were approached more or less in a general sense, examining the time and content of their work (Burns, 1954; Carlson, 1951; Stewart, 1976). However, from the 1980s onwards, the field moved its collective gaze towards a more and more narrow object of scholarly attention. Consequently, areas of managerial work, such as leadership (Porter and Nohria, 2010), decision-making (Langley et al., 1995), and information use (Hall, 2010) not only came to the front stage of scholarship, but in doing so also relegated managerial work as a distinct topic to scholarly backwaters. Crucially, this argument isn't new. For instance, Lau et al. (1980) noticed a number of studies increasingly focusing on leadership, rather than managing. Defending the study of management in its purest form, the authors argued that leadership studies failed to acknowledge many aspects of management, such as decision-making, resource allocation, and negotiation,

which are discussed in research on managerial work (see also Bryman, 2004). However, despite such admonitions, the number of publications on leadership (and other areas) continued on a path of immense growth, while little has comparatively been written on the work of managers. For instance, via a simple search of the ISI web of knowledge, we found that that over the past 30 years (1980-2010) there were more than 64,000 articles written on the topic of leadership, while during that same period only 5,000 articles were written on managerial work. Furthermore, even studies written on work have sometimes focused on leadership. For example, Holmberg and Tyrstrup (2010) conducted a study of work practices of middle managers in Sweden, but maintained a focus on "leadership" (see also Porter and Nohria, 2010). Leadership is not the only research field that has 'zoomed in' at the expense of other aspects of managerial work, although it is certainly the most visible.

Crucially, the biggest consequence of this picking and choosing of which aspects of managerial work are studied is a patchy and inconsistent view of what managers do, as few have attempted the exceedingly difficult process of putting the pieces back together (for notable recent exception, see Tengblad, 2012). In other words, rarely are managers studied to understand work practices in their own right, or even to understand in a general sense what it is that they do. As one prominent exception, Mintzberg (2009) alluded to exactly this point, suggesting that although recent literature has provided some interesting insights on managing, accounts have failed to fully capture the content or essence of managerial work. Yet despite such prominent calls to reverse this process of analytical slicing before the metaphorical onion is entirely gone, the scholarly

process of engaging with piecing it all back together has been slow and left to too few to attempt.

Theme #3: Mintzberg's legacy or curse?

Credited with re-visioning the study of work, Mintzberg's (1973) *The Nature of Managerial Work* has been widely regarded as the most significant contribution to the field since publication. In attempts to emulate his success (and with the effect of confirming it), a large number of researchers subsequently used Mintzberg's roles and propositions to study managerial work in different contexts, via his chosen method of structured observation. While this has resulted in a considerable number of articles published on "managing", it has also led to a narrowing of collective focus, as scholars have simply replicated and compared studies to his work. This phenomenon, while no fault of Mintzberg himself, has nevertheless created an empirical and theoretical rut. This becomes evident when one considers publication records. In particular, we found that 12/55 or 22% of articles published following Mintzberg (1973) focused directly on testing the application of his roles or propositions. Given also the size of the field, this strikes us as an unusually high and rather unhelpful number. Crucially, we are not the first to notice or lament this. Stewart (1982, p. 11) argued that to move the field forward, we should "move on from Mintzberg's (1973) roles and propositions about managerial work". Even Mintzberg (1990, p. 170) commented on this issue, expressing that his greatest disappointment with the field is that there have been few "new efforts", with "the vast majority [of new studies seeking] to replicate earlier research".

Even though there has been a trend of withdrawal in the 2000s (3/19 or 16% of empirical studies used Mintzberg's work as a research 'crutch'), there has nevertheless been a lasting effect of more than two decades of reliance. In particular, we found that even when authors such as Akella (2006) and Matthaei (2010) worked to develop new roles to better reflect the work of contemporary managers, Mintzberg's roles continued to act as a reference point overshadowing newer developments. Indeed, the very analytical concern with the development of these "new roles", which remains evident in contemporary accounts, indicates that the field, to a significant extent, continues to echo an essentially Mintzbergian template of research and analysis.

Similarly, it can also be argued that Mintzberg's popularization of structured observation as a method to investigate work has been limiting. More specifically, we found that 23/55 or 42% of studies post-1973 used structured observation. We do not wish to suggest that this by itself is a bad thing, as there are a number of known benefits of using the method, such as its ability to record activities in numerical form, which is particularly useful for comparative purposes. However, this benefit also stands as a substantial weakness, as much of what is considered managerial work research has been reduced to a task-oriented counting exercise. This is particularly evident in how researchers describe their "observations". For example, Boist and Liang (1992) recorded that "[managers were followed] with a stop watch for a period of 6 days each in 1987. All activities were work related and each recording took place from the director's time of arrival at the place of work in the morning until his return home in the evening". However, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest, as O'Gorman et al. (2005) also do, that the number of occasions or amount of time that managers

devote to an activity does not necessarily reflect its importance.

On a similar note, another well-known advantage of structured observation is its flexibility in developing new categories during data collection. However, when results are exclusively compared with previous findings, which is often the case with managerial work research, there is little if any room for flexibility in developing novel categories. For example, in examining the work of health care managers, Arman and colleagues (2009, p. 722) acknowledged the rigidity of structured observation, noting "the pre-structured categories used in this study were not inductive because changes would have made it problematic to compare with earlier studies". In other words, too often is this advantage discarded in favor of satisfying an analytical desire for comparability.

Finally, the last effect of Mintzberg's legacy (or curse) is the establishment of a precedent for researchers that one-week of observation, per manager, is sufficient to effectively document the nature of managerial work. In one example of this emerging field norm, Sancino and Turrini (2009) explained that "in accordance with Mintzberg (1971, 1973, p. 481) … we portray the managerial work of Italian city managers based on the time they allocate to different activities during *one week* of their working life [emphasis added]". However, it strikes us as obvious that limiting observation periods to a convenient, but largely arbitrary duration of one week also limits what can be learned. Most notably, if managers are studied for longer periods of time, as is the case with ethnographic engagements, patterns in terms of behavior can begin to take shape for the researcher. Furthermore, researchers would find themselves less likely to wonder whether or not they observed a 'typical' week or a 'typical' day, a concern that is often voiced as a limitation in existing studies.

Moving forward: Infusing theory through 'practice'

While the field of managerial work has played a central role in the development of management theory in a broad, general sense (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Carroll and Gillen, 1987), there has been relatively little new theory development within the area of managerial work studies. Unfortunately, this unique characteristic has come to have a negative effect on the field as a whole, as theoretical contributions have come to overshadow richly-descriptive, bottom-up empirical accounts in elite management journals. Being viewed as possessing less scholarly value (at least in terms of 'publishability') than research conducted in theory-laden fields such as leadership and decision-making, which are arguably but components of managing, the overtly empirical field of managerial work has yielded a weak crop of research in recent years (Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000). As we recounted in the discussion sections above, too much of what we are reading concerning managerial work is repetitions or slight reinventions of the analytical old.

Given this inherent link between theoretical developments and growth, the lack of theory (in a traditional sense), and general state of disarray (fragmentation) that the field has found itself in, the scholarly arena of managerial work has reached a critical point, one which requires a new direction for the show to go on, so to speak. In light of the great promise of attending empirically to everyday realities of practice in understanding managerial work, a new approach to theorizing managerial work that involves joining the 'practice turn' in organizational studies (Schatzki et al., 2001) represents a particularly apt analytical connection for a way forward. In other words, it is our suggestion that

'practice', both in its methodological and theoretical elements, could help breathe much-needed life into the field of managerial work studies.

As an emergent and increasing popular theoretical lens in organizational research, insights grouped under a deceptively uniform name of 'practice-based studies' have already been meaningfully engaged to explain complex phenomena such as management learning (Nicolini et al., 2003), accounting (Ahrens and Chapman, 2007), entrepreneurship (Johannisson, 2011), and in particular strategy, with a large and growing body of literature referred to as strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2006). Notably, the suggestion of its potential fit to nuanced scholarly explorations of managerial work is not new. Noordegraaf and Stewart (2000, p. 440), for example, contended that managerial work researchers need to recognize and explore the "social embeddedness of managerial behavior" if the field is to develop. To bring work back in to organization studies, Barley and Kunda (2001, p. 84) suggested that investigators explore the link between work and organizing in a way that allows them to "move from action to structure", while following the 'practice turn', Tengblad (2012) argued that managerial work *needs* practice theory, as it is the only existing means to explain the complex, ambiguous nature of the management phenomenon. Finally, Nicolini (2012, p. 240) similarly outlined how "[practice theory could be used to] increase our understanding of the fragmented, distributed, and fast-moving reality of late-modern post-bureaucratic organizations, enabling us to come to grips with phenomena such as distant work, virtual organization, multiple memberships, and other fluid ways of organizing that other more traditional theoretical and methodological toolkits are increasingly incapable of capturing".

We agree with these authors and join their call in an explicit fashion, suggesting that scholars would find great value in engaging with practice approaches to understand the work of managers in a more nuanced fashion, through the identification of complex inter-relations and doings making up every day work, and further exploration of relationships between objects and actors in practice. Making this 'turn' to practice does however necessitate making some rather substantial changes to how research is conducted in the field. Specifically, it means departing from certain types of research upon which the field has been built, namely studies that aim to describe work through the quantification of activities. Although these studies aim at explaining managerial work and practice, outside of enumerating individual activities they do little to explain the *essence* of what managerial work entails. As Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) suggest, without "the articulation of particular theoretical relationships that explain the dynamics of everyday activity, how these are generated, and how they operate within different contexts and over time", a set of managerial practices as mere activities does little to explain what managers do. In many ways, such engagements thus represent an impoverished view of what counts as management practice, the assumption being that studying practice is simply describing 'what people do'. This misses the bigger point we wish to make. Practices, as understood under the wider practice-based scholarly umbrella, are meaning-making, identity-forming, and order-producing activities that imply a number of mediational tools, a specific set of linguistic practices, and a community of peers (Nicolini, 2009, 2011). Studying daily practices without addressing their telos ('aim'), tools, rules, and the wider social and institutional context thus means only scratching the surface, and producing accounts that are necessarily lacking

in explanatory power. Consequently, to attend to managerial working practice meaningfully, empirical investigations must give equal attention to 'how' and 'why' managers do what they do (Hales, 1999). In other words, we should shift our empirical attentions away from quantitatively descriptive studies as a 'weak' approach to practice, and move toward 'strong' engagements: rich qualitative studies that are capable of explaining organizational actions and events "instead of simply registering them" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 13). Though we believe such 'strong' engagements hold great promise for positively setting the field of managerial work on a new path, there are nevertheless three specific areas that we feel are in particular need of further empirical attention. We briefly turn to these next.

Other avenues for future research

Although one of the implications of our findings was that research on managerial work has suffered from too much empirical 'slicing', we feel that there are still several areas where further research is possible and arguably necessary. Importantly, these also echo notable analytical themes of concern to practice scholars. While this may strike the reader as contrary to our arguments for more holistic studies on 'managing', we feel there is great benefit in exploring these if such engagements proceed in the analytically open-ended, practice-oriented, and in-depth empirical manner we've advocated. Thus, we submit that there are at least three empirical areas that the adoption of a practice-based approach brings forward, which represent promising opportunities for future research.

The situated nature of managerial work: One of the key insights joining together the diverse practice-based scholarly community is the need of attending closely to the context in and through which practices are accomplished (Miettinen et al., 2009). In relation to the managerial work literature, we notably found that few articles have investigated the managerial work in the public and not-for-profit sectors, which thus represent a fruitful empirical arena for further exploring work *in situ*. Furthermore, the majority of studies that were conducted occurred in the 1980s, well before prominent international efforts to reconstitute the public sector in the mold of the private under New Public Management (see Hood 1991, 1995). How such developments may have affected contemporary work practices of public sector managers is therefore a particularly intriguing question left to explore.

The gendered nature of work practices: Closely aligned to the practice-based approach's concern with context is its concern with attending to the characteristics of the organizational members accomplishing practices of interest. In other words, the approach recognizes that it is not only important to investigate *where* and *when* managerial work happens, but also *by whom*. This is notable in the context of the managerial work literature because although research has been conducted on nearly all types of managers, little conscious consideration has been given to *gender* (for a prominent exception see Kanter, 1977). Simply put, most empirical insights are based almost exclusively on the observed work of men. One possible reason for this gap is the fact that there are comparatively fewer female executives[14]. We do not see this as a viable excuse however for a lack of

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[14] Vinnicombe and colleagues (2010) found that women held only 12.5% of all directorships in UK FTSE 100 organizations, and only 16 of the UK FTSE 100 organizations had female executive directors.

empirical attention investigating how gender may, or may not, reveal itself in their daily work.

The sociomaterial nature of managerial work: Finally, the adoption of a practice lens encourages scholars to explore the material aspects of practice, namely the objects by which managerial work is accomplished (Nicolini et al., 2012; Orlikowski, 2007; Rafaeli and Pratt, 2006). In the context of the managerial work literature, taking such an approach would be particularly fruitful in relation to examining the role and impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs). This is because, despite suggestive comments that ICTs have altered the "everyday nature of work and the way we communicate" (Gratton, 2011, p. 27), studies examining the impact of technology on managerial work are surprisingly sparse (Pinsonneault and Rivard, 1998; Stewart, 2008). The challenge is that such examinations will require researchers to be methodologically innovative, as interactions with technology are often difficult to capture using traditional methods like observation (Barley and Kunda, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Reviewing what we know about the topic of managerial work, this paper has directly addressed the dearth of comprehensive reflections on the field as a whole and made a number of analytical conclusions and suggestions aimed at moving it forward in a meaningful way. Specifically, we identified three trends that emerged from the 90+ books and articles we reviewed. First, a series of methodological ebbs and flows since the 1950s has significantly impacted what

we *actually* know about managerial work and the overall evolution of the field, most notably due to the fact that theory development has been closely tied to in-depth, inductive, qualitative studies conducted. Given that too-few such empirical examinations occurred recently, we are left with a field in not only a superficially empirically known, but also a largely 'atheoretical' state. Secondly, managerial work, as a stand-alone topic of study, has been neglected since the 1970s, with many articles being labeled as 'managerial', but with their contents telling a different story altogether (Mintzberg, 2009, p. 3). In effect, what could be seen as but components of managerial work in a traditional sense -strategy, leadership, control, communication, culture, to name but a few- have come to increasingly speak on its behalf, with the effect of narrowing management scholarship to one of slices, rather than holistic topical engagements. Thirdly, despite Mintzberg's valuable contribution and continued calls for in-depth studies of *managing*, the field continues to suffer from the effects of what we term the 'Mintzberg curse', with a great proportion of studies being primarily concerned with comparing findings to his famed roles and propositions. As a result, we at times know more about how contemporary managerial practices stand up to Mintzberg's canonical representations of them, than we do about those practices' own distinct nuances.

Combined, these three analytical conclusions paint a picture of the field stuck in a 'rut', with a potentially bleak analytical and theoretical future if it continues to follow its present path. However, given the crucial role of managerial work research in developing a foundation from which management can be taught, theorized, and improved upon (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Mintzberg, 1975), it is important that the present, too-often-witnessed disconnect between scholarship and realities of practice when it comes

to managerial work is addressed. As Bechky (2011, p. 1157) succinctly warned, "because we do not directly examine what happens in social life, our images of organizations reflect our ignorance, resulting in abstract theories that privilege structure and contradict people's experiences". When it comes to managerial work and its evolution, relevance and possibilities as a scholarly field, such counsel is particularly relevant. To this end, we offer a number of suggestions. Our first and most notable of these is that managerial work studies join the 'practice turn' in organizational studies (Schatzki et al., 2001), contending that there remains great promise in managerial work researchers shifting from relying on existing theoretical insights (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973), regardless of how productive they might be, to practice-informed analytical investigations into the daily realities of managerial work (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini et al., 2003; Miettinen et al., 2009). In particular, we advocate a 'strong approach' to practice, which suggests that managers be studied using in-depth, open-ended qualitative methods such as ethnography and participant observation, capable of contributing both analytical and empirical granularity to our grounded theorizing (Nicolini, 2012). Examinations using such methods, for lengthy periods of time, have already resulted, in the few cases it has been done, in rich descriptions and insights, and has even begun to answer questions regarding why do managers behave the way that they do (see Hales, 1999, 2001). Like Watson (2011, p. 202-3) also argued, "we cannot really learn a lot about what 'actually happens' or about 'how things work' in organizations without doing the intensive type of close-observational or participative research that is central to ethnographic endeavor".

Our second recommendation is closely related to the first, and is intended to ensure the vitality of managerial work as a distinct field of study. To this end we suggest that researchers re-balance their analytical foci, and return to holistic investigations of management, ones that understand and empirically engage with topics like information science and leadership as part and parcel of a larger scholarly concern with working managerial practice. However, while we advocate a focus on exploring management in a general sense with a practice-based, holistic lens in mind, taking on a practice-based approach would, we feel, at the same time encourage deeper empirical exploration of three distinct themes. These are most notably *the situated nature of managerial work* (via research on public and not-for-profit sector managerial working realities), *the gendered nature of work practices* (via nuanced analyses of possible gender effects), and finally *the sociomaterial nature of managerial work* (via investigations of the practical uses of ICTs by managers and their possible effects). What remains crucial to emphasize is that while these might represent topical 'slices' of the kind we admonished elsewhere, they nevertheless imply an analytical focus on 'what' and 'how' everyday managerial practice *is,* rather than trying to blindly theorize what it *ought to be* in ignorance of the daily realities of managers and their practices. At a minimum, doing so will prevent the field from going full circle and arriving back at its normative, rational, functional starting point. In other words, it is in those executive suites and in direct, longer-term, analytically open-ended engagements with their occupants, that the future of managerial work scholarship can find its direction for a more valuable contribution. We hope that this paper has provided sufficient impetus and guidance for meaningful travel down this road.

CHAPTER FIVE (PAPER #2): IS MANAGING IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS REALLY 'DIFFERENT'? A COMPARTIVE STUDY OF MANAGERIAL WORK ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to find out the extent to which managerial work is similar and different in the public and private sectors. Using a set of structured categories set out by Mintzberg (1973), this paper investigates the managerial work activities of four Canadian Healthcare CEOs, comparing the results to Tengblad's (2006) study of private sector managers. Through an analysis of work type, hours, location, activities, and contact patterns this research finds that there are surprisingly few differences between the two studies, despite contextual and situational differences. Possible explanations for both similarities and differences are explored, implications of these findings are discussed, and future directions for research are proposed.

Keywords: Managerial Work; Public Sector Management; Healthcare Management; New Public Management; CEOs

INTRODUCTION

In public administration literature it has long been held that the work of public and private sector managers was fundamentally different (Allison 1979; Sayre, 1953). Distinctions between the public and private sector have even been referred to as one of the 'grand dichotomies' of western thought (Weintraub, 1997). However, the once 'clear-cut' differences that originated in economic and liberal theory have been called into question and criticized as being an over simplification of reality (Rainey 1997). This has become increasingly prominent with the emergence and promotion of 'New Public Management' (NPM) (Hood, 1991) as many public organizations have adopted and emulated private sector practices such as performance related pay and total quality management. Two contrasting views have subsequently emerged in public administration literature. On the one hand, there are a number of scholars who contend that the work of managers in the public and private sectors has 'converged' and thus, lessons from the private sector can be drawn and effectively applied in the public sector (Pollitt, 2001; Poole et al., 2006). Contrarily there are many others who maintain that managerial work in the public and private sectors has always been, and continues to be 'distinct', and it is therefore pointless and even counterproductive to seek out and implement practices and policies based in the private sector (Boyne et al., 1999; Nutt, 2006).

However, despite little empirical evidence supporting either side, and potentially significant political and societal implications associated with fundamentally changing the way business is conducted in the public sector, public organizations around the globe continue to adopt private sector models (Butterfield

et al., 2005; Andersson and Tengblad, 2009). In response researchers have recently begun to *re*-investigate the public-private dichotomy (Andersen, 2010; Boyne, 2002). Though, of the studies being conducted, unfortunately few focus on understanding the actual 'real' work behaviors and practices of public sector managers (Dargie, 1998a; Van Watt, 2003), with the majority of studies aimed at determining perceived differences in the work attitudes, motivations, and goals of public and private managers (Metcalfe, 1989; Rainey et al., 1995). Thus, little evidence is emerging as to whether or not there is a 'real' or perceived gap in managerial work, and leaving questions as to whether NPM initiatives are a good fit for public sector organizations or merely costly and disruptive.

A dearth of empirical research on differences in work practices is not a new phenomenon, with Buchanan (1975, p. 423) noting that while many claims have been made regarding differences between public and private sectors 'few have undertaken to establish an empirical basis for such claims.' This is particularly the case with managerial work research where a number of studies have been conducted on the work behaviors of private sector managers (see Matthaei, 2010), while few scholars have examined work in the public sphere. As a result, it remains largely unknown what public sector managers do in practice, yet alone what differences may or may not exist between public and private sector management. Further complicating matters has been conflicting descriptions of managerial work in the few studies that have been conducted (See Dargie, 1998a and Lau et al., 1980 for a contrast).

Endeavoring to counterbalance conflicting descriptions of managerial work, this paper contributes to the ongoing debate of 'distinctiveness' in public administration by focusing on the work activities of managers in the public and private sectors. Investigating the question: 'what do public sector manager's do', this paper aims to determine the extent to which managing is similar and different in the public and private sectors. To this end a set of structured categories set out by Henry Mintzberg (1973) are used to systematically compare the work activities of Canadian healthcare managers to a recent study of private sector managers in Sweden (Tengblad, 2006).

This article proceeds as follows. Succeeding a brief overview of research on the public-private distinction as it relates to managerial work, this paper goes on to discuss the research setting, sample, and methodology. Thereafter, the empirical results of this study are presented alongside those of Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006). This paper then discusses, analyzes, and interprets the results and concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings.

BACKGROUND: MANAGERIAL WORK IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS

With regards to the distinctiveness of work in the public sector there are two competing perspectives: the generic perspective and the public-private distinction perspective (Andersen 2010; Pesch, 2008). The major arguments and proponents of these two perspectives are discussed in turn.

The generic perspective

In public administration those who take a 'generic perspective' contend that there are no major differences between the work activities of public and private sectors managers. Authors from this camp argue that public and private organizations face similar challenges and constraints, and thus engage in similar managerial activities (Bozeman, 1987). The most recognizable proponent of the generic approach is Herbert Simon, who bases his argument in organizational theory, contending that public and private organizations should be studied conjointly because 'organizations' are a distinct social phenomenon (Also see Rainey, 1997). According to Simon and colleagues (1950/1970, p. 10) similarities between public and private organizations are greater than generally believed. They refer to variations in work as 'differences in degree rather than kind'. Chandler (1991) similarly argues that the divide between public and private management is overstated as managers in both sectors inhabit similar political worlds, are required to manage public opinion, and make decisions requiring an understanding of the social environment.

With specific regards to managerial work there are similarly a number of authors who contend that managerial work in the public and private sectors is akin (Mintzberg, 1973; Lau et al., 1980). The most famous representative taking this perspective is Henry Mintzberg. In his seminal book, *The Nature of Managerial Work* (1973), he proposed a contingency theory of managerial work, arguing that managerial behavior was influenced by four main contingencies: the environment, the job, the personality, and the situation. However, with specific regards to the environment, Mintzberg argued that there was little difference between the work of

managers in the public and private sectors. Maintaining that managers in the public sector perform the same activities and roles as those in the private sector, the farthest Mintzberg would go with regards to differences was to state that the managerial roles of *liaison, spokesman*, and *negotiator* were 'presumably more important' in the public sector. Emphasizing commonalities in managerial work Mintzberg suggested that the work of all types of managers is fundamentally similar. Lau and colleagues (1980) similarly argued that work is analogous in the public and private sectors. In a multi-method study of executives in the U.S. Navy, Lau and colleagues (1980, p. 519) argued that 'both public and private sector executives perform the same kind of activities, both in terms of complexity of job content and roles, and in terms of job characteristics.'

The public-private distinction perspective

In public administration literature there are a great number of scholars who argue that the work of managers in the public sector is markedly different from private sector managers (Rainey et al., 1995; Nutt, 2006). Within this perspective many different approaches have been taken (e.g. the economist approach, political approach, normative approach, and dimensional approach) (See Pesch, 2008). However, despite differences, authors from this camp generally base arguments on four environmental propositions (see Boyne, 2002):

- *Proposition 1: The public sector is more complex than the private sector*: It is argued that public organizations are required to engage with a larger number of stakeholders than private sector managers, as managers in the private sector serve

singular (linear) objectives (to make a profit), while managers in the public domain serve a variety of individual objectives (for the collective welfare of society) (see Ransom and Stewart 1989).

- *Proposition 2: External events have a greater impact on public sector organizations:* Authors argue that public organizations operate as 'open systems,' while private organizations can operate as 'closed systems' because private sector managers are not directly accountable to the public, and thus can ignore demands for consultation and input in policy development (Ring and Perry 1985).

- *Proposition 3: The environment of public agencies is less stable*: It is contended that planning cycles are shorter in the public sector (five years or less), as they are closely linked to political cycles, which has an adverse effect on managerial work.

- *Proposition 4: There are less competitive pressures in the public sector:* It is reasoned that unlike many private industries, there are few, if any rivals, who provide similar services as public organizations often hold a dominant position in the marketplace (e.g. healthcare and education), which impacts how work is carried out.

Alarmingly, while these claims, and others are often made about the uniqueness of managerial work in the public sector, there has been little empirical evidence to confirm or deny such claims. In a review of research on similarities and differences, Boyne (2002) found that there were only five empirical articles that investigated environmental differences (Baldwin, 1990; Chubb and Moe, 1988;

Coursey and Bozeman, 1990; Lachman, 1985; Kenny et al., 1987), all of which focused on answering proposition #2. Boyne did, however, find (weak) statistical support for proposition #2, which suggests that the public sector environment may be 'different'. But, the number of articles on differences between public and private work environments was small and all were published before 1990 in the era of 'old public administration' rather than that of 'new public management'. Boyne's research speaks to empty calls for empirical research to answer questions on the topic of distinctiveness (see Buchanan, 1975 for an example of a much earlier call).

With many authors postulating that there are inherent differences or distinctions in managerial work environments, few studies have sought to compare managerial work between the sectors (although many studies compared the work activities and practices of private sector managers in different industries, cultures, and organizational sizes - see Doktor, 1990 and Andersson and Floren, 2008 for prominent examples). Instead, managerial work studies with public sector focuses have tended to examine public management in its own right (Allan, 1981; Newell and Ammons, 1987; Sancino and Turrini, 2009). There have however been some exceptions. Notably, in a rare comparative examination, Dargie (1998a) rejected the generic concept of management and sought to determine *how* public sector context affects work behavior. Observing the work of four public sector CEOs, Dargie (1998a) found that managing was distinct in a number of ways. Specifically, she found that public sector managers spent more time in contact with internal contacts than external contacts and devoted less time to decision-making activities. Based on her observations, Dargie concluded that public sector chief executives did not

embody a number of Mintzberg's (1973) roles, namely that of *figurehead, leader, entrepreneur*, and *liaison* and suggested that new roles be developed that 'locates the public sector manager firmly in public sector context (p. 175).'

Without rejecting the possibility of there being a generic concept of management, this paper aims to extend the work conducted by Dargie (1998a) and determine, through careful comparative analysis, exactly how managerial work in the public and private sectors is similar and/or different.

RESEARCH SETTING

This research was conducted in four regional health authorities in the Canadian healthcare sector. In Canada's universal publicly funded healthcare system, the responsibility of delivering health services rests, by and large, in the hands of health authorities. These organizations work at an arm's length from provincial governments, receiving funding and broad-based policy directions, but not operational directives (See Philippon and Braithwaite, 2008). Charged with operating in the public's best interest and providing goods and services that have 'public characteristics', Canadian health regions meet criteria set out by Bozeman and Bretchneider (1994, p. 199) of a public organization. Although there are many other definitions and conceptualizations of 'publicness' this paper does not discuss or consider different conceptualizations.

SAMPLE

In line with the studies selected for comparison in this paper, namely Mintzberg (1973), which describes the work of five American CEOs who were shadowed for a period of 1 week each, and Tengblad (2006), which shadowed four Swedish CEOs to determine whether the nature of work had changed 30 years after Mintzberg's study, this study focuses specifically on the work of top managers (CEOs). In total, four Canadian healthcare CEOs were examined, all of which were at the helm of a large public organization. Employing 5,000 to 20,000 employees in each organization, the CEOs examined in this study were responsible for managing the delivery of health services for a population base of more than 2.5 million Canadians, and managing a collective budget of approximately $4.7 billion (CAD). All of the managers under study operated large geographic health regions and managed multiple facilities in both urban and rural settings. These organizations were strategically selected to represent the geographical diversity of Canada, which includes highly populated urban environments and sparsely populated rural areas.

Importantly, the small sample size that was employed in this study allowed for the collection of in-depth, detailed information on executive work, but came at the expense of generalizability. As such, it should be noted that there is no attempt to compare or generalize findings to the work of middle or lower level managers. However, the aim of this study is not to generalize findings across managerial levels or sectors, but rather to generate insights as to the work patterns and behaviors of top managers in the Canadian healthcare sector, relative to their private sector counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

When examining distinctions between the public and private sector, the vast majority of studies have relied on data and that from interviews and large-scale surveys and questionnaires (Boyne 2002; Rainey et al. 1995). While these methods have a number of known benefits, specifically with regards to generalizability and reliability, Rainey and Bozeman (2000) have suggested that widespread use of these tools has been problematic in examinations of public-private distinctions as *a priori* views (widely held untested assertions and foregone conclusions about distinctions), may inadvertently affect empirical results. Specifically, that managers asked to comparatively evaluate their work behaviors relative to their private or public sector colleagues may unknowingly construct a reality based on established views that work is distinct (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953), treating widely held views as truisms rather than answering their questions with an open mind.

In an attempt to minimize the impact of construct validity this study relies on qualitative research instruments that have been commonly associated with the managerial work research (Carlson, 1951; Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000). Tools used in this study include semi-structured observation and ethnographic interviews. The primary research method employed was semi-structured observation, which is referred to as 'shadowing' (Noordegraaf, 2000). This involved the researcher closely following managers throughout the working day from beginning to end, recording the frequency and duration of activities (structured activities based on Mintzberg's categories), as well as trivial, mundane and difficult to articulate aspects of managing (unstructured activities). To support the observed work of the managers from

shadowing, ethnographic interviews were conducted on a daily basis, generally at the end of the day or after important meetings. These interviews were used to answer any unresolved questions about the work of the managers that surfaced over the day such as the identity of those at the other end of phone conversations, the purpose and objective of meetings, and any underlying information about issues discussed (to give any unknown context).

The observations and interviews for this study were conducted between September 2011 and May 2012, and were spread out throughout the year in 1-3 week chunks to represent executive work over the calendar year. In total, this study describes more than 679 hours of executive work, of which 488 hours were directly observable (72%). There were of course, some work activities that were not directly observable, either due to concerns relating to confidentiality of issues (53.8 hours or 7.9% or work hours), or because work was conducted in a location not accessible to the researcher (137.5 hours or 20.1% of work hours). For example, in-camera meetings between the CEO and board of directors, times when the CEOs engaged in disciplinary action with colleagues, and work that was conducted from home or hotels. In these instances the managers were asked to take note of their activities, and then play them back to the researcher verbally, either through a phone call or in a debriefing session.

To ensure that comparisons are as accurate as possible, the data collection and analysis procedures outlined by Mintzberg (1973, p. 231-277) and applied by Tengblad (2006) in a replication of Mintzberg's initial investigation were closely followed. However, even so, there are some important contextual differences

between this investigation and the other two studies that impact the comparisons and are thus worth noting. First off, this study was conducted in a different country than both Mintzberg (1973) (United States) and Tengblad (2006) (Sweden). However, like earlier comparisons of managerial work this was not may seen as a significant factor as the managers in each study held the same positional title of Chief Executive Officer, a title which carries similar operational responsibilities in all of the counties under study (Doktor 1990; Tengblad 2006). Furthermore, managerial responsibilities are noted as being particularly similar in Sweden and Canada where, unlike the USA, CEOs generally do not serve as chairman of the board (Hossack, 2006). This was cited a notable difference between Tengblad's earlier comparison with Mintzberg (1973). Therefore, boards of directors in both Canada and Sweden are responsible for monitoring and policymaking functions, but have no right to interfere with current operations, which is the chief responsibility of the CEO (Tengblad, 2006). Secondly, although Tengblad's study of Swedish CEOs is the most recent comparative examination of managerial work at the top manager level, the fieldwork for his study was conducted more than 10 years prior to this examination (1998/1999). Nonetheless, this is similarly viewed as bearing little weight on the comparison, as evidence suggests that managerial work in the private sector has undergone few changes since Tengblad's study. In fact only one major change had been alluded to (although not explicitly examined) in the literature: a greater reliance on technology in the workplace (Barley et al., 2011; Gratton, 2011; Stewart, 2008). Thus, without disrupting the pre-defined categories developed by Mintzberg (1973),

additional categories were added in an attempt to capture technology use in the workplace and provide grounds for future comparisons.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

This section provides statistics from semi-structured observations, quantitatively capturing how public sector health managers spend their time relative to private sector managers (Tengblad, 2006). In a fashion strikingly similar to Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006) the results are presented as follows. They begin with a description of how the managers spend their time in a general sense (**Table 9**) with a novel emphasis on how technologies are used in their daily work (**Table 10**). They then proceed with descriptions of where managers conduct their work (**Table 11**), and how many people attend meetings with managers (**Table 12**). These results are again accompanied with a short discussion about engagement of technology in meetings (**Table 13**). The results then concludes with discussions about the purpose of meetings (**Table 14**) and who managers spend their time with in meetings (**Figure 5**).

TABLE 9: Working time averages (Percentage of total working time)

	Mintzberg (1973)	Tengblad (2006)	Johnson (2012)
1. Meetings	64.0%	63.5%	61.2%
2. Tours	2.0%	1.3%	2.3%
3. Telephone calls	6.0%	7.3%	5.2%
1-3. Total Verbal	*72.0%*	*72.3%*	*68.8%*
4. Desk Work (office)	-	-	7.2%
5. Desk work (home/hotel)	-	-	11.4%
6. Desk work (in transit)**	-	-	*5.3%*
4-6. Desk work total	*20.0%*	*12.8%*	*23.8%*
7. Transportation	8.0%	15.3%	12.7%
8. Average Working Time / Week	*45h24m*	*72h15m*	*56h34m*

Note: As this study found that a considerable amount of deskwork was conducted while in transit, deskwork while in transit (6), was double coded, with and the work total percentage for this study (1-7) adding up to more than 100%.
**Desk work (in transit) is calculated as a percentage of total time worked (in transit desk work / total working time)

Table 9 illustrates how managers spent their work time. This first table shows a number of similarities between Tengblad (2006) and this study, with the greatest difference being the amount of deskwork that is conducted. However, this difference is unlikely to be related to the work environment, but rather due to increased use of email as an information and communication tool, coming at the expense of telephone and face-to-face interactions. **Table 10** shows how the managers in this study engaged with different forms of technology for communication and information purposes. Of specific importance is the managers' use of email. On average the managers in this study spent an average of 43.1% (See Lines 2, 9, and 14) of their 'deskwork' on email, which amounts to 10.4% of their total work time, not including emails conducted while in meetings.

TABLE 10: Summary of technologies and applications used to conduct

"deskwork"

	Time (Minutes)	% Time*
1. Computer (Total 2-7)	*4730*	*47.7%*
2. Email	3510	35.4%
3. Spreadsheet	225	2.3%
4. PowerPoint	690	7.0%
5. Word Document (memo / paper)	550	5.5%
6. Browser / Search Engine	150	1.5%
7. Unknown	155	1.6%
8. Tablet (Total 9-12)	*115*	*1.2%*
9. Email	70	0.7%
10. Electronic document (editable)	45	0.5%
11. Browser	0	0.0%
12. Unknown	0	0.0%
13. Smartphone (14-17)	*815*	*8.2%*
14. Email	695	7.0%
15. SMS / BBM	40	0.4%
16. Browser	80	0.9%
17. Unknown	0	0.0%
18. Total (Non-computerized deskwork)	*4265*	*43.0%*
19. Total deskwork work (Incl. travel)	*9925*	*100.0%*

*Percentages are a percent of total deskwork (Line 19)

There have been a number of studies that have suggested that a shift in frequency in information and communication technology (ICT) use has occurred across work environments (Thomas et al. 2006; Barley et al., 2011). While Tengblad (2002) found that CEOs spent an average of 3% of their time working on emails, more recent studies have contrarily found that information and communication technologies are heavily used by managers (Thomas et al. 2006). For example, examining how managerial and non-managerial employees in a technology company communicate with email, Barley and colleagues (2011, p. 891) found that on average, 21% of work time was consumed with emails.

Another interesting variance, although minor, relates to time spent engaged in tours (2.3% of total time). In each of the four healthcare organizations studied, the CEO (along with a small team of top managers) made a point of visiting care

facilities on a regular basis. Tours were regarded as being highly important to the CEOs for staff engagement, as well as operations, promotion of programs, and problem solving. Stories collected while on tours were harnessed to influence boards of directors and politicians for investment and strategy decisions.

TABLE 11: Location of verbal contacts (Percentage of total working time)

	Mintzberg (1973)	Tengblad (2006)	Johnson (2012)
1. CEO office	39%	23%	15%
2. Other persons office / subordinate office	8%	4.0%	3%
3. Hall or facility/plant (hospital / Care facility)	1%	4.0%	4%
4. Conference or boardroom (inside organization)	14%	31.0%	26%
5. Away from organization	38%	39.0%	52%
6. Total time in verbal contact	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*

Table 11 describes where the managers spent their time in verbal contact. This table suggests that meetings over time (regardless of whether the organization was public or private) have shifted from being located primarily in the CEOs office to conference rooms and locations outside of the organization. This shift can be partially attributed to relative increases in meeting sizes (See **Table 12**). Interestingly, public sector managers, more so than their private counterparts, engaged in more meetings outside of their organization (>50%). Combined with the large amount of activities that were considered to be 'social activities' this suggests a shift away from administrative management towards institutional leadership that will be discussed at a greater length in the discussion section of this paper.

TABLE 12: Size of Meetings (Percent of total meeting time including tours)

	Mintzberg (1973)*	Tengblad (2006)	Johnson (2012)
1. one person	68%	20.8%	23.8%
2. two people	9%	8.5%	8.5%
3 three people	6%	11.2%	2.7%
4. four or more people	*17%*	*60.5%*	*65.0%*
*5. Total time in meetings**	*100%*	*100.0%*	*100.0%*

*Mintzberg (1973) is based on frequency of activities, not the duration.

Table 12 shows the number of people who attend meetings with the managers under study. Unlike Mintzberg (1973), this table illustrates the relative distribution of time spent in meetings. Mintzberg (1973) examined the number of meetings attended with the number of attendees, which failed to show how managers spent their time and favored one on one interaction as they were more frequent but took up less time. This is illustrated by Tengblad (2006), who used both measures, finding that 50% of meetings (interactions) were with one person, but only 20.8% of time spent in meetings was with one person. When compared to Tengblad's study on the basis of total time spent, this study shows that meeting sizes were slightly larger in this study. While scholars from the public-private distinction perspective would suggest that this increase reflects the great number of stakeholders that are engaged in decision-making processes in the public sector (proposition #1), there is little evidence to support that there are substantially more stakeholders in the private sector.

However, it should be noted that it was not rare for the CEO to attend meetings with 10-15 individuals. Interestingly, the managers under study often questioned the efficiency of meetings of this size. Noting their demanding schedules, the CEOs in this study often wondered if their presence was required at some of the larger meetings in which they provided relatively little to discussions, as such they

suggested that their time could often be better spent. Questioning the value of their attendance at large meetings, much more-so than smaller meetings, the managers would often engage in multitasking, as well as a new practice referred to as multi-communicating (Reinsh et al., 2009) in an attempt to use time more efficiently. Reinsh and colleagues (2009) suggest that multi-communicating as a practice has transcended from the emergence of multiple technologies in the workplace and has become common practice in some offices. According to the authors, multi-communication occurs when individuals use technology to participate in several interactions at the same time (e.g. phone and email; email and meeting; or even three interactions at once (p. 391). This practice occurred in a number of instances when the managers would corroborate on discussions over emails and present their ideas verbally to the group in an orchestrated fashion. In this study, the practice of multitasking and multi-communicating was apparent with the managers noting that business does not stop when they are meetings. This study found that while in meetings the managers spent an average of 2.7% on email, and a total of 12.6% of meeting time engaged with different types of technology (See **Table 13** below).

TABLE 13: Managerial time spent engaging technology in meetings

	Time (Minutes)	% Time*
1. Computer (Total 2-7)	*1964*	*7.6%*
2. Email	424	1.6%
3. Spreadsheet	318	1.2%
4. PowerPoint	292	1.1%
5. Word Document (memo / paper)	701	2.8%
6. Browser / Search Engine	45	0.2%
7. Unknown	184	0.7%
8. Tablet (Total 9-12)	*838*	*3.1%*
9. Email	299	1.1%
10. Electronic document (editable)	486	1.8%
11. Browser	21	0.1%
12. Unknown	32	0.1%
13. Smartphone (14-17)	*474*	*1.9%*
14. Email	411	1.7%
15. SMS / BBM	44	0.2%
16. Browser	19	0.1%
17. Unknown	0	0.0%
18. Total (during meetings)	*3276*	*12.6%*
19. Total time in meetings (minutes)	*25825*	*100.0%*

*Percentages were calculated as a percent of total time in meetings (Line 19)

Importantly, technology did not always act as a distraction for managers in meetings and was often harnessed to retrieve information that was not included in handouts, to review past communication transactions, and view electronic documents for discussion (e.g. spreadsheets). However, emails were generally conducted to deal with other issues occurring in the organization not related to the task at hand, providing evidence that work has, to an extent changed as a result, and not only in the public sector.

TABLE 14: Purpose of Meetings (Percentage of total meeting time including tours)

	Mintzberg (1973)	Tengblad (2006)	Johnson (2012)
1. Organizational work	2%	0%	1.8%
2. Scheduling	3%	1%	3.0%
3. Ceremony	12%	16%	6.2%
4. External Board Work	5%	4%	0.1%
1-4. Total Secondary	*22%*	*21%*	*11.0%*
*5-7. Requests and Solicitations**	*18%*	*8%*	*10.2%*
8. Tours	1%	2%	3.6%
9. Receiving Information	16%	22%	25.0%
10. Giving Information	8%	19%	19.0%
11. Review	16%	18%	17.3%
8-11. Total Informational	*41%*	*61%*	*64.9%*
12. Strategising	13%	7%	9.1%
13. Negotiation	8%	3%	4.8%
12-13. Total decision-making	*21%*	*10%*	*13.9%*

*Similar to Tengblad (2006) this study did not differentiate status requests, action requests, or manager requests.

Table 14 shows that the purpose of meetings, again closely mirroring Tengblad's (2006) private sector findings. Notably, both contemporary studies were significantly different from Mintzberg (1973), suggesting that while the purpose of meetings has evolved over time, it is not substantially different between the public and private sectors. Differences in information exchange are especially apparent with contemporary managers giving and receiving more information in meetings. In this study 64.9% of meetings were found to be for the purpose of routine information exchange, which was greater than Mintzberg (41%) and comparable to Tengblad (61%). Interestingly, the CEOs in this study self-described themselves as 'information brokers', highlighting the importance of informational roles to contemporary managers.

Some minor differences between this study and Tengblad (2006) are with regards to scheduling, ceremonies, and external board work. With regards to

scheduling, this study found that managers spent 3% of their time engaged in scheduling activities while managers in Tengblad's study only spent 1% of their time. The CEO's in this study noted that there was a constant jockeying for meeting time by stakeholders, given hectic schedules and the fact that many of their meetings were fixed and not easily changed (e.g. leadership/executive committees). As such, in many cases meetings had to be scheduled 2-3 weeks in advance, and would often be rescheduled when firefighting was required to manage issues. The focus on scheduling is also evident in **Figure 5** (See below), which illustrates that CEOs are in their assistants company 11.8% of their working day.

A second contrast with both Tengblad (2006) was with regards to external board work. This study found that hardly any of the CEOs work time was focused on external boards. There are a number of reasons that can explain this difference. First, all of the CEOs sat on a number of committees and working groups on key issues that were relevant to their work such as patient safety, health research, and accreditation. Second, a significant amount of time was spent engaging with the board of directors, and in some cases multiple boards of directors, which made it difficult to sit on external boards due to time restrictions. Finally, given the public posts held by the CEOs' sitting on private external boards could be viewed as conflict of interest.

Finally, there was a relatively large difference in time spent engaged in ceremonies (defined by Tengblad (2006, p. 1448) as 'business dinners, inaugurations, and other social gatherings'). However, differences may be over embellished by differing interpretations as to what constitutes a 'ceremony'. Differing

interpretations poses a challenge in comparative studies of this kind, and was present in this study, as it was found that managers engaged in a number of social activities. In fact, this study found that 21% of all meetings were conducted in 'social settings' (over coffee, lunch, dinner, or an event). However, observing many of these meetings it became apparent that most of the 'business dinners / social activities' observed were for the *purpose* of giving and reviewing information on the environment for issues management, specifically set for negotiations on an issue, or for a decision to be made. As such, they were not considered to be 'ceremonies' but rather meetings that took place in social settings. Some examples of meetings that were considered to be ceremonial in this study were: out of office teambuilding activities, awards ceremonies, and banquets.

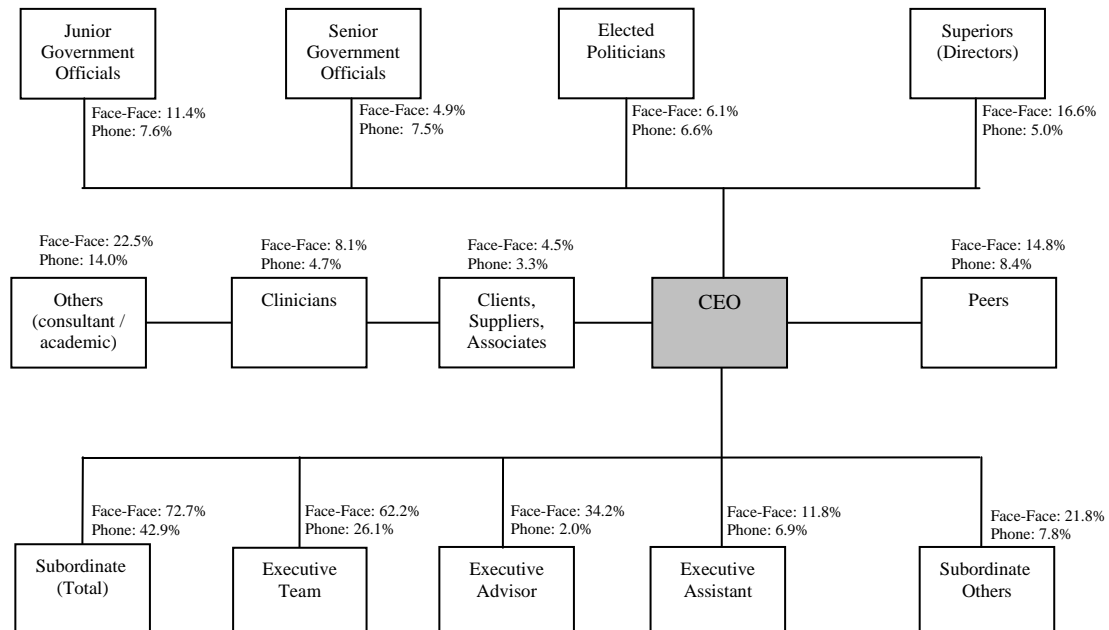**FIGURE 5: Who CEOs Share Time With**

Figure 8 describes who the CEOs spent their time with and who they communicated with in meetings, and over the phone. As the CEOs often met with multiple people, this table reports the percentage of time spent in meetings with the CEOs, relative to all the meetings attended. Given differences in the categories developed, results are not directly comparable to Tengblad (2006). However, there are a number of categories that are similar, namely, directors, peers, clients, suppliers, and associates, independents and others, and subordinates (Tengblad, 2006), in which there were a number of similarities between the two studies. For example, both of studies found that the bulk of the CEOs time was spent internally with subordinates. This study found that a total of 72.7% of meetings were with one or more subordinates, which is similar to Tengblad (69%). Another notable resemblance between this study and Tengblad (2006) was that the managers spent relatively little time with clients, suppliers, and associates, which runs counter to Mintzberg (1973), who found that managers spend 20% of their time in meetings with clients, suppliers, and associates.

The main difference between the results of this study, and those reported by Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006) is the amount of time spent with superiors (directors). Highlighting the importance of a good working relationship with the chairman of the board, the CEOs in this study met much more frequently with superiors than their private sector counterparts. While Tengblad (2006) found that 3% of meetings were with superiors (board members), this study found that 16.6% of meetings were with board members. Further, collaborating and engaging a large number of stakeholders, the managers also met frequently with members of the

bureaucracy (11.4%), including senior government officials such as the Deputy Minister of Health (4.9%), and elected politicians (6.1%).

This study found that there were a number of other notable contacts such as executive advisors, executive assistants, and clinicians (physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and allied health workers). Interestingly, the executive advisor was the sole individual who spent the most time with the CEO attending 34.2% of all meetings and was generally tasked with developing PowerPoint presentations and briefing notes for the CEO, and dealing with other administrative challenges such as responding to emails and formulating strategies. Working closely with the executive advisor and the CEO was the executive assistant, who spent 11.4% of meetings in the attendance of the CEO and was responsible for dealing with administrative issues such as recording minutes for meetings, and managing the CEO's often-overbooked calendar. Finally, the managers in this study spent 8.1% of the time in the company of clinicians, engaging in discussions surrounding quality, safety, policy, and contract issues, which reflects new roles of healthcare executives in relation to quality and clinical governance (Sausman, 2001). Interestingly there were similar contact patterns in person and over the phone.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the quantitative analysis in the results section of this paper, a qualitative evaluation of managerial activities was conducted to determine the extent in which managerial work in the public sector is similar and different to the work of managers in the private sphere. To this end, the application of Mintzberg's 13

propositions to this study were compared to those of Tengblad (2006). Based on the observation and interview data collected in this research, this study found support for seven of Mintzberg's propositions, which is one less than Tengblad's eight, but similar on all other accounts (See **Table 15** below).

TABLE 15: Applicability of Mintzberg's 13 Propositions to Healthcare CEOs

Mintzberg (1973)	Tengblad (2006)	Johnson (2012)
1. Managerial work consists of great quantities of work conducted at an unrelenting pace	Yes	Yes
2. Managerial work is fragmented and interruptions are commonplace	No	No
3. The manager prefers brevity and interruptions	No	No
4. The manager gravitates towards live action	Yes	Yes
5. The manager prefers verbal media	Yes	Yes
6. The manager gives mail a cursory treatment	Yes	Yes
7. Telephone and unscheduled meetings are mainly used for brief contacts between persons who know each other	Yes	Yes
8. The scheduled meetings consume more time of the manager than any other medium	Yes	Yes
9. Tours can give valuable information but the manager spends little time on them	Yes	Yes
10. External contacts generally consume one-third to one-half of the manager's contact time	No	No
11. Subordinates generally consume one-third to one-half of the manager's contact time	No	No
12. The manager spends relatively little time with superiors (board of directors)	Yes	No
13. The manager can exert control by extracting information, exercising leadership, and in many other ways*	-	-

*Similar to Tengblad (2006) proposition 13 was not considered for analysis, as it was deemed to be too vague.

The only notable difference between Tengblad's study and this study on public sector managers was with regards to proposition 12, which states that the manager spends little time with superiors. This study found that the Healthcare CEOs spent a considerable amount of time with members of their board of directors, especially the chairman (16.6% of total meeting time; 20.1% of telephone conversations), which was substantially greater than Tengblad's (3%) and Mintzberg's (7%).

Given the similarities of managerial work between the two studies, an important and unexpected finding of this study is that public or private managers do not work today as they always have. Contrary to Mintzberg (1973), this study found that seven of the eight 'differences' between Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006) were present in this study (See **Table 16**).

TABLE 16: Summary of Similarities and Differences: Tengblad and Johnson

Tengblad (2006)	Johnson (2012)
Substantial increase	-
Total work load	Yes
Time spent on transportation	Yes
Meetings with many participants	Yes
Meetings with subordinates	Yes
Giving of information	Yes
Substantial decrease	-
Deskwork	No
Meetings with clients, suppliers and associates	Yes
Work concerning requests and solicitations	Yes
Fragmentation (of time)	Yes

In fact, the only major difference between the work of managers in this study and Tengblad (2006) was the amount of 'deskwork' that was conducted by the managers. However, as it was previously stated, one possible explanation for this difference could be increased uses of information and communication technologies, and an increased reliance on email as a communication medium.

With regards to parallels, perhaps the most notable similarity was that managerial work at the top manager level was not fragmented and interrupted, as this finding runs contrary to a large number of studies. Rather, with the aid of executive assistants and executive associates to take calls, schedule appointments, and respond to low priority emails on behalf of the CEOs this study found that the work day was relatively organized, on time, and interruptions were quite rare. Tengblad (2006)

referred to administrative support as 'buffers' mitigating interruptions. Interruptions were rare in this study even in spite of the fact that all of the CEOs opted for an open door policy, which welcomed subordinates to ask questions and provide updates when the door was open. However, when the door was closed that indicated that the CEO was in a meeting or was working and did not want to be disturbed, in which case administrative assistants would act as gatekeepers. When subordinates had a timely issue to discuss with the CEO they would first see what the CEO was doing and whom they were meeting with to see if an interruption would be appropriate. Another reason for relatively little fragmentation and few interruptions was the fact that the CEOs often chose to work from home when they had a block of time with no meetings to ensure that there were no disturbances.

Due to the large number of similarities between this study and Tengblad (2006) this paper provides further evidence that there may be 'a new managerial work' at the top manager level. In particular, this study supports claims that a shift from administrative or 'traditional' management to institutional leadership has occurred in both the public and private sectors (Selznick, 1957; Tengblad, 2006). Tengblad argues that evidence for this shift includes higher levels of information giving, fewer requests and solicitations, and more time spent engaged in social activities, all of which were present in this examination of managers relative to Mintzberg's study.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It has been suggested that public and private sector management is fundamentally dissimilar and is distinct (Sayre, 1953). However, when it comes to managerial work, this study suggests that differences are over embellished in public administration and management literature. Comparing the work activities of public sector managers in the Canadian healthcare industry with a recent study of private sector managers in Sweden (Tengblad, 2006), this paper found that there were remarkable similarities, despite contextual differences such as culture and time. While a few distinctions were found between the two studies, such as managers in this public sector study spending more time spent with superiors, and spending less time engaged in external board work, on the whole, and contrary to Sayre (1953), managerial work, at least at the highest level, appears to be similar in most respects. In fact, this study found that the recent emergence of information and communication technologies in the workplace has greater effect on managerial work than sectoral differences.

The finding of similarities in the managerial work of public and private sector managers has significant implications for NPM, as it provides rare empirical evidence that suggests private sector models may be applicable to the public sector. While the results are too broad to determine which models may be a better fit than others, this finding has specific implications for human resources. Particularly managerial selection and development, as this study suggests that managerial work at the top manager level is, more or less, transferable across the public and private

sectors and requires similar skills (Gentry et al., 2008). As one of the CEOs in this study suggested, "public sector recruiters need to reduce emphases on public sector experience", proposing that public sector managers can easily step into management roles in the public sector due to parallels in administrative and managerial tasks and responsibilities.

That said, it is important to note that this research does not insinuate that differences do not exist between the public and private sectors as recent research has found differences in human resource practices and policies (Boyne et al., 1999), management of ethical issues (Berman et al., 1994), decision-making polices (Nutt, 2006), and management styles (Andersen, 2010; Shortell et al., 1990). This research does however suggest that, like Simon (1950/1970), differences are relatively minor and questions the 'distinctiveness' of managerial work between the public and private sectors. Particular concerns are raised over methodologies traditionally used to examine questions of distinctiveness, as public administration literature has, more or less, been conducted under the premise that there are differences using a small number of tools - generally interviews and surveys (See Boyne, 2002). While these methods are particularly effective for capturing perceptions, views, and cognitive reasoning of managers on a large scale (See Rainey et al., 1995), they are not known for their ability to capture content and characteristics of managerial work, which are important in determining the distinctiveness of sectors. Further, relying on perceptions and beliefs of managers, *a priori* views about public private distinctions can have an effect on responses, causing managers to establish differences where there may be none in practice (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000). Referring to the use of

interviews and surveys, Barley and Kunda (2001, p. 81) note that 'whether qualitatively or quantitatively oriented, most contemporary students of organizing employ methods that distance them from the kind of data needed to make grounded inferences about the changing nature of work and work practices.'

As a result, this study suggests that observational research be more frequently harnessed in public administration. Unlike other methodologies, there are no artificial constraints in observational research, which allows researchers to be inductive (Mintzberg, 1973). As Dargie (1998b, p. 71) pointed out, observation, although rarely applied in political science and public administration is 'a practical research technique that can help researchers understand and interpret what actors in the public sphere do.' This paper suggests a number of avenues for future research, a number of which could benefit from a fresh perspective that could be provided by harnessing observational methodologies.

First off, further research could be conducted investigating whether or not there are differences in public and private work environments, especially anecdotal claims with regards to complexity, instability, permeability, and competition (the four propositions of public sector work environments). While the literature tends to suggest that differences in work environments that were once easily observable have eroded or converged with the emergence and promotion of NPM initiatives (Fabian, 2010) there are few studies that investigate whether this has actually occurred. This is particularly alarming given the potential implications for management training and education. If this is in fact the case, questions over distinctions in teaching curriculum and separations in management education between business schools and

schools of public administration and public management could be made (See Chandler, 1991) as it has already been suggested that private organizations have much to learn from public organizations and vice-versa given new developments such as public-private partnerships (Savas, 2000). Along similar lines, another area of research that could be investigated is the implications of NPM initiatives on public organizations. As Butterfield and colleagues (2005, p. 329) recently noted, 'there has been surprisingly little research into the impact of New Public Management (NPM) initiatives.' Investigations on this front could examine managerial work roles, practices, processes and organizational forms (e.g. the creation of hybrids), and how shifts (if they are present) affect organizational performance and innovation in the public sphere. Finally, in a similar fashion to Tengblad (2006) this study suggests that a shift has occurred from administrative management to institutional leadership in the public sector. Given this apparent shift at the top manager level, research on the presence of institutional leadership and associated implications on organizational factors such as structure, innovation, and performance could be conducted at the top, middle, and lower management levels.

Importantly, these are but a few avenues that could be investigated. What is more essential than these individual avenues, however, is that further examinations be conducted on the public-private divide. Although this 'divide' has been referred to as one of the 'grand dichotomies' of western thought (Weintraub, 1997), this study, and others (See Andersen 2010; Boyne, 2002) have found that relatively little empirical research has been conducted which aims at understanding it. Overconceptualized and under examined, the field of public administration needs to

get beyond the mere fact that there are some differences between the sectors, even if they are, as this study found 'of degree rather than kind' (see Simon et al., 1950/1970) and begin to understand 'how' and 'why' management is different. Doing so will not only help us gain a better understanding and conceptualization of how public organizations operate relative to private organizations, but also aid in the development of made to measure reforms, NPM or otherwise, and likely performance gains.

CHAPTER SIX (PAPER #3): ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS IN SHADOWING RESEARCH - LESSONS FROM THE FIELD OF MANAGERIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores ethical issues and dilemmas associated with using the shadowing method that arose during a 12-week shadowing study that examined the work activities and practices of Canadian healthcare CEOs. Dividing the ethics process into two phases--those addressed by ethics committees (procedural ethics) and those that revealed themselves in the field (ethics in practice)--issues and dilemmas relating to sampling, informed consent, researcher roles, objectivity, participant discomforts, the impact of research on participants, confidentiality, and anonymity were investigated. This paper illustrates that while useful, procedural ethics committees are unable to establish ethical practice in and of themselves. In response, it suggests that the concept of reflexivity be applied to ethics to help researchers consider the implications of using the shadowing method, and develop a contingency for possible challenges, before they enter the field.

Keywords: Shadowing, Research Ethics, Managerial Work, Organizational Research Methods

INTRODUCTION

Despite widespread use of the shadowing method in management and organizational studies, relatively little research has been conducted on the method of shadowing in its own right (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005). While there has been some research surrounding definition, proposed benefits, challenges, and appropriate uses of the shadowing method, it has focused on understanding basic questions surrounding the 'what' and 'how' of shadowing. As a result, a number of the deeper aspects of shadowing have been left unexplored, especially those pertaining to implications of this method (Vasquez et al., 2012).

A dialogue surrounding ethical issues associated with the shadowing method is one area in particular that, despite having significant practical implications for researchers, has been left largely untouched by scholars (Baker, 2006). This gap in the literature is concerning as discussions of ethical issues and dilemmas in research have long been recognized as an important means of protecting both researchers and participants from potentially uncomfortable and harmful situations in qualitative research (Punch, 1994). Further, shadowing, more so than many other qualitative research methods, involves complex and extensive interfacing between researchers and participant(s) (McDonald, 2005). This fosters increased risks that unexpected ethical issues will arise while in the field (Robley, 1995).

In response to this gap and to recent calls for reflection on the implications of the shadowing method (Czarniawska, 2007; Gill, 2011; McDonald, 2005), this paper identifies and discusses ethical implications associated with its use. To do so, ethical issues and dilemmas that arose in a recent shadowing study which examined the

work activities and practices of top managers in the Canadian healthcare sector are discussed. This effort echoes Maurice Punch's (1994, p. 95) call for researchers to "stop and reflect on the political and ethical dimensions of what you are about to experience" before experiencing them in the field. Further, it aims to protect researchers and participants from possible harm by exposing ethical risks and pitfalls of using the understudied shadowing method.

This paper is organized as follows. First, there is a short discussion of the case study from which first-hand examples of ethical issues and dilemmas are drawn. Then, the ethical dimensions commonly associated with qualitative research are explained to provide a context for the discussion on shadowing (procedural and ethics in practice). Next, the formal institutional ethical processes that were followed in this study (Phase I) are described, and contrasted to the various ethics in practice issues that were encountered using shadowing in the case study (Phase II). The paper concludes with a discussion on ways forward, providing advice and insight to researchers who must respond to ethical issues and dilemmas when they arise in shadowing studies.

SHADOWING CANADIAN HEALTHCARE CEOs: A CASE STUDY

The shadowing method was first used to record the work activities of a foreman on a factory floor (Walker et al., 1956), and has since been widely applied across the social sciences. Its use has been especially prevalent in the field of managerial work-studies, where there is a distinct focus on the work of individual managers (Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000). In fact, since inception (Carlson, 1951), shadowing

has been used to examine the work of managers more than any other research method, including interviews, questionnaires, and diaries (Matthaei, 2010). Referred to as "the method that brings the researcher closest to everyday managerial work" (Arman et al., 2012, p. 315) a number of scholars have recently suggested that shadowing can play a leading role in the development of new management theories (Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010). Combined with calls to bring work 'back in' to organization studies through further examinations of what managers do in practice (Barley and Kunda, 2001), shadowing has become a "go to" methodology and the number of studies utilizing it has increased commensurately (Gilliat-Ray, 2011; Gill, 2011).

Within the literature on managerial work, there is however, an on-going debate regarding which of the two forms of shadowing, quantitative or qualitative shadowing is best suited to make theoretical contributions in the field of managerial work (See Walker et al., 1956 and Wolcott, 1973/2003 for a contrast). Straddling two methodological worlds, Arman and colleagues (2012) offer up an alternative, which involves refining the shadowing method by taking on some structure. According to the authors, 'semi-structured shadowing' involves "a researcher closely following a member of an organization over an extended period of time" (McDonald, 2005, p. 456), but is unique from traditional forms of shadowing as it requires the researcher to have a dual focus on the frequency and duration of activities (structured activities), as well as trivial, mundane and difficult to articulate aspects of managing (unstructured activities). The authors reason that by taking a semi-structured approach to shadowing, comparisons of managerial work across culture, level,

specialty, and time, are possible, which in turn enables researchers to either build on established theories of managerial work such as those developed by Stewart (1982) and Mintzberg (1973), or develop new theories.

Acknowledging the comparative benefits of taking a semi-structured approach, the original case study from which examples in this paper are drawn collected both qualitative and quantitative data. This method was considered to be particularly suitable to answer two distinctly diverse research questions on managerial work: (1) To what extent is managerial work in the public and private sectors similar and different? (which relied on structured data); and (2) How has the adoption of information and communication technologies affected managerial work at the highest level (which relied on unstructured data)? Adopting a semi-structured approach to answer these research questions, four Canadian healthcare CEOs (public sector) were shadowed for a period of three weeks each (15 working days). During this time virtually all of the work activities and interactions of the managers were recorded and coded into pre-defined categories (categories developed my Mintzberg, 1973). Importantly, an additional focus was placed on how managers used technology in which no pre-defined categories were used. In aggregate, 488 hours of managerial work were observed during 12 weeks of observation (observations took place between September 2011 and June 2012).

Throughout this in-depth examination of managers at work, a number of important insights on managerialism were revealed. However, in the process of discovering what managers really do, a number of ethical issues and dilemmas were encountered pertaining to use of the shadowing method. Matters confronted spanned

the entire research process, ranging from study design, to researcher-participant relationships, to writing up and publishing results, and are reflected on, in detail, throughout this paper. In discussions of the ethical issues and dilemmas encountered in my study distinctions between 'ethical issues', 'ethical problems', and 'ethical dilemmas' are not made. While there is some research which argues that these terms apply to different types of ethical situations (See Banks, 2001; Rothman, 2005) this paper uses the terms interchangeably, referring to ethical issues and dilemmas as conflict ridden situations that require difficult choices to be made as there are competing, highly prized values which cannot be completely satisfied (Cuban, 1991).

BACKGROUND: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The realm of qualitative research ethics is composed of two main components: (1) procedural ethics; and (2) ethics in practice (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Traditionally, these two ethical dimensions have been discussed independently of one another, with research focusing either on the roles of ethics committees (See Bell and Bryman, 2007; Jamrozik, 2004) or the ethical implications associated with field research (See Grinyer, 2001; Shaw, 2008). However, while distinct, these two dimensions of research ethics both contribute to ethical practice. Thus, following this brief overview, the unique contributions and relationship of procedural ethics and ethics in practice are discussed in concert, as part of a two-phase ethical process.

(1) Based on principles and processes developed from the Nuremberg Code (1947) and the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki (1964), procedural ethics were originally designed to prevent abuses in the area of biomedical

research (Alberti, 1995). They have since been extended to all areas of research involving human participants, including qualitative research of all kinds. Procedural ethics takes place in the early stages of the research process (before any primary data collection) and can be described as a formal process in which researchers seek approval from relevant ethics boards or committees to carry out their research. Aimed at protecting the well being of participants involved in research, the procedural ethics process involves researchers presenting ethics boards or committees with information that relates to the purpose of the research being conducted, methodologies employed, potential contribution, and associated risks. To minimize potential harm, procedural ethics boards and committees help researchers identify situations that may arise throughout the research process, which could result in harm (psychological, emotional, social, and financial), and when situations are identified, request researchers to develop strategies that eliminate or mitigate risks (Government of Canada, 2010).

(2) Unlike procedural ethics, which have deep roots in the scientific community, discussions surrounding ethics in practice are relatively new. Arguing that procedural ethics do not deal with, nor can they anticipate *all* ethical issues and dilemmas that are likely to occur in the field of qualitative research, Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 264) developed the term 'ethics in practice' to describe "the day-to-day ethical issues that arise in the doing of research" or "ethically important moments". Broadly speaking, these moments refer to unclear situations that arise in the field in which there are conflicting standards and stark choices that must be made between different options that may appear to have

equally gripping advantages and disadvantages. Ethically important moments or ethics in practice issues can be identified by ethics boards or committees in the procedural ethics stage, and mitigation strategies developed on how to respond to these moments, however, how such situations are to be handled is only hypothetical at the procedural ethics stage, as the research has not yet been undertaken. Ethics in practice on the other hand relate specifically to the actions that are taken by researchers 'in situ' as they encounter and address ethical issues in the field. Ethics in practice are therefore often referred to as 'fieldwork ethics' (Shaw, 2008).

Phase I: Procedural ethics – Process and initial concerns with the shadowing method

As a research project involving human participants under the auspices of an academic institution, the original case study, from which examples are based, was subject to an institutional ethics review before fieldwork of any sort could commence (Government of Canada, 2010). With a healthcare focus, additional safeguards were put in place. In all, five ethical reviews were conducted: one by the University of Alberta Human Research Ethics Review Process (HERO) where I was a visiting scholar working on my doctoral dissertation, and a delegated review in each of the four organizations where field research was conducted.

The focus of the reviews across these venues was consistent, which was to ensure that the research made a contribution to knowledge, that participation was voluntary, and the proposed research would not expose participants to unnecessary

harm (See Bell and Bryman (2007) for an overview of ethical principles included in major codes of conduct). To achieve this, the ethics committees required detailed information on: (1) *Study objectives and contribution*: An overview of purpose (research questions), design of study (methodology and procedures, including proposed locations), time commitments and time frame of study (for participants and researchers), proposed contributions to theory and practice, and the identification of any conflicts of interest (e.g. relationships, financial incentives); (2) *Informed consent*: Participant information as it pertained to recruitment (inclusion and exclusion criteria, sampling method, and determination of sample size), proposed risks and benefits of the research for participants (including mitigation strategies), details regarding how informed consent will be obtained (including what will happen in the event of a participant withdrawing); and (3) *Confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy:* Details regarding how confidentiality of personal data would be maintained, and how data will be recorded, stored (for how long), and accessed (by whom).

While questions relating to the above issues are general in nature, the ethics committees raised three issues that pertained specifically to the shadowing method. Below is a brief explanation of the issues that were raised and explanations as to how they were addressed.

Sampling

Similar to other shadowing studies, my study proposed the use of a small sample size (four top managers) (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010). As a qualitative

researcher, I did not consider a small sample size to be an issue for the ethics review, least of all because the objective of the research was not to make generalizations, but rather to generate new insights into the work behaviours of top managers. However, despite emphasizing this point, concerns were nonetheless expressed surrounding 'sampling biases'. Specifically, that the sample may not be representative of top managers in the health sector, and that the sample may be skewed in some form (e.g. towards managers who are available (less busy), or those more comfortable with academic research, possibly those with postgraduate education or research backgrounds). Considering that a key characteristic of qualitative research is that it generally relies on small numbers to study phenomenon in depth, and in detail (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and unlike quantitative research does not have hard and fast rules about sampling, I was both surprised and alarmed with the concerns. However, setting my reservations aside to move the project forward (as I believe many researches do in these situations) I chose to appease the review board. This was done by outlining an additional step in the research process in which the initial results of the study would be presented to groups of top managers (leadership teams in each of the organizations under study) to test the 'validity' of emerging findings. Making this revision I was successful in getting one step closer to data collection. However, the experience left me thinking whether ethics boards and committees are adequately versed in qualitative research methodologies (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010) and wondering how many qualitative research proposals have been inappropriately judged using quantitative quality constructs. I also wondered how the design of qualitative research studies is being impacted by similar concerns and

requests made by ethics boards and committees. While it was not the case in this study, is rich, descriptive data being sacrificed for larger samples?

Informed consent

Given that exposure to a diverse range of situations and people is a key attribute of shadowing studies, (McDonald, 2005), the issue of how informed consent would be taken and maintained throughout the study was considered to be a serious concern. This issue was addressed with the ethics committee on two separate fronts: (1) with the primary participant under study (shadowee); and (2) the individuals who came into contact with the shadowee in meetings and other occurrences:

(1) Shadowee: Before the research commenced (on the first day) it was proposed that a meeting would be conducted with a proposed shadowee. During this 30-45 minute meeting the details of the study would be thoroughly explained by going through the information sheet section by section. At the end of this meeting the manager would be asked to sign a consent form. However, similar to other studies of this kind it would also be communicated to the participant that the consent form was not an 'all access three-week pass' to observe their work, and that access would be verbally re-negotiated on a continuous basis (e.g. for each meeting and work session) (Czarniawska, 2007; Sin, 2005).

(2) Secondary observations: Upon recruitment of a shadowee (CEO), I indicated that written notification would be sent to all employees in the organization from the office of the CEO. This would explain that their CEO was participating in a

research project that involved shadowing, and that they may receive an invitation to be observed in a scheduled event, such as a meeting. This invitation would be accompanied by an information sheet about the study that indicated the potential benefits and risks of participating and made it clear that participation would be voluntary and that withdrawal from the study could occur at any time without giving a reason. The letter also included contact information, which would allow potential participants to ask questions in advance of participation. Thus, in the event of a planned internal meeting, participants would be able to provide informed consent by signing a consent form prior to its commencement. In the event of an unscheduled meeting, it was maintained that those involved would be informed of the study verbally, and written consent would be sought following the meeting at a convenient time and place (post-hoc). Finally, it was indicated that in the event of meetings with individuals external to the organization, a similar post-hoc process would be followed in which the study would be explained and consent would be sought immediately prior to or following the encounter.

Participant discomforts

Considering the extended period of time the managers would be shadowed (3 weeks each), it was suggested that there might be some uncomfortable situations and/or periods where the managers may want to be alone or not observed. To address this potential discomfort, the research ethics committees were assured that all requests

from managers that would ease the burden of the researcher's presence would be adhered to, and at all times private information heard or observed would be treated as confidential and not discussed in any of the findings.

Phase II: Ethics in practice – Issues, dilemmas, and more questions

Based on the answers provided to the ethics committees in Phase I, approval to conduct field research was granted. However, while the study was approved, once in the field I quickly came to realize that there were a number of unexpected ethical issues and dilemmas that arose which were not addressed in the formal ethics review process. Further, it became abundantly clear that some of the planned responses did not work in practice. Accordingly, the following section outlines the ethical issues and dilemmas that were encountered throughout the shadowing process, beginning with those that arose even before shadowing began and concluding with issues and dilemmas surrounding the publication of shadowing results. Examples from my experience are supplemented with examples from other contemporary studies (See **Table 17** for an overview of ethics in practice issues encountered).

TABLE 17: Ethical considerations before, during, and after data collection

Research stage	Ethical issues
'Pre-field'	Providing incentives for participation
'In situ'	Informed consent, deception, and covert research
	The role of the researcher and impact of interventions (participation in activities)
	Maintaining objectivity or 'going native'
	The impact of research on the individuals and organizations (intrusiveness and disruptions)
'Post-field'	Confidentiality
	Anonymity

Providing incentives for participation

Gaining access to observe the working lives of busy managers is a notable challenge in shadowing studies (Vie, 2010). Noel (1989), for example, sought to shadow three CEOs for a period of three weeks each, and despite using personal and professional networks had more than 20 requests turned down by CEOs who thought the shadowing method would be too intrusive. One way that has been known to improve the odds of participation is to provide incentives to participate. However, Lofland and Lofland (1995, p. 63) aptly ask: "Is it ethical to 'pay' people with trade-offs for access to their lives and minds?" According to the Nuremberg Code (1947), this type of recruitment is deemed to be unethical, as it states that no persuasion or pressure of any sort should be placed on participants (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). However, an argument has been made in recent years, which favors payments to participants as a means to reduce non-response bias, and increase the quality of the sample (See Groves and Peytcheva, 2008). Considering sampling issues, it has been contended that with the proper safeguards in place to ensure that there is not undue inducement (e.g. compensation which would alter decision making processes so that risks are not appropriately considered), it is possible to provide compensation to participants (Wendler et al., 2002). As a doctoral researcher, I did not have the means to provide financial compensation to managers, but instead offered non-monetary compensation in the form of a consulting report on the nature of their work. While it cannot be determined the extent to which that played in recruitment, using personal and professional networks ten CEOs were contacted, four of which agreed to participate in this study, a response rate which is much higher than Noel (1989).

Informed consent, deception, and covert research

While the process of obtaining informed consent was clearly presented in the ethical review process, it became apparent on my very first day of shadowing that the process developed was going to be challenging to implement in practice. Scenario 1 is an actual situation that I found myself in, which relates to achieving informed consent during formal and informal meetings.

Scenario 1: Arriving at the CEO's office at 7:30 a.m. on the first day of shadowing, pleasantries were quickly exchanged, and as discussed in our introductory meeting (in which informed consent was provided); we went over the events of the week. The CEO outlined which meetings I could attend and which were closed door. On this particular day a leadership meeting was scheduled from 8:00 a.m-5:00 p.m., and I was told that "nothing that was off limits." After the CEO finished some preparatory reading for the meeting we arrived late at 8:05 a.m. to 14 Vice-Presidents and other managers. After glancing at his watch the CEO told me to sit in the back row, while he sat down at the head of the table. Then, without introduction (and certainly not ethical approval to observe the meeting from other participants for research purposes) the CEO picked up the agenda for the meeting and began to address the first issue of the day. Over one hour passed and at 9:30 the meeting broke for a coffee break. At the break I approached the CEO and asked to be introduced and to hand out information sheets and consent forms to the managers. The CEO responded to me by saying "I will introduce you, but do not think it is necessary to obtain

consent to observe this meeting, you already have ethical approval from the ethics board and this project is endorsed by the office of the CEO." I mentioned that I required their consent for my research, and he grudgingly obliged and said that I should hand out the forms during the break. After collecting consent from those in attendance I thought I was in the clear for the day as far as consent went. However, immediately after the break a group of external consultants came into give a presentation, and after their presentation and a quick handshake left the premises. A dilemma immediately ensued: chase down the consultants to collect their consent or continue to shadow the CEO who continued to chair the meeting. I elected to remain with the CEO. Later, when I asked the CEO if he knew where I could find their contact information to collect consent he responded, "you shouldn't worry about it," and he proceeded with his work. I noted a slight frustration with my questions about consent and ethics and rather than create tension I carried on with my research without following up with their consent.

Throughout the days and weeks to follow there were a number of similar occurrences in which identifiable individuals quickly interacted with the CEO and would leave, without ever knowing that they were being involved in an academic research project. This was particularly prevalent in informal, unplanned meetings, which occurred in hallways, stairwells, in parking lots and preceding and following scheduled meetings. During these interactions there was often an exchange of rich information, which was often referenced in decision-making discussions at the top manager level. Following McDonald's (2005, p. 456-457) description of the shadowing, in which "researcher[s] will write an almost continuous set of field notes

… [record] times and contents of conversations … and as much of the running commentary of possible" I tentatively recorded detailed information of virtually all interactions. However, in doing so, a number of ethical issues came to mind (responses are discussed in turn, below): (1) Is this covert observation?; (2) If this research is covert, is this unethical?; and (3) Given the powerful position of the CEO is consent really voluntary, even if given?

(1) As is often the case with ethical issues, there is seldom one clear answer to any of these questions. This is certainly the situation with regards to whether or not this type of shadowing is in fact covert, as the person who was the focus of the shadowing was well informed of the study and had provided voluntary informed consent, while others interacting with the person under study, depending on their position were less informed (if internal, they would have received the blanket email from the office of the CEO) and possibly even completely in the dark (if external). Further complicating matters was the fact that, in some, but not all occasions the CEO would introduce me as a researcher observing managerial work. Given that there were instances in which there was no knowledge of my status as a researcher, it is difficult to argue that shadowing in organizational and management is completely overt, and thus should be considered quasi-covert. Similar issues have been noted in observational studies in which there are a large number of attendees, such as public events (Emerson et al., 2007). Acknowledging that obtaining informed consent can sometimes be problematic if not impossible, Grinyer (2001) suggests that although unreported in

observational studies, covert practices often inadvertently become an important part of overt studies.

(2) The question of whether covert and quasi-covert observations are necessarily unethical is equally complicated and has been the topic of significant debate (Bulmer, 1980). There has been great tension over the years between those who maintain that covert research is unethical on the grounds that it is deceptive, disrespectful, and harmful, and thus should not be used in investigations, and those who contrarily argue that covert observation is necessary to explore certain social phenomenon, and can produce valuable insights that are not be possible if done overtly (See Dalton, 1959 as a prominent example) (Oliver and Eales, 2008). Given concerns about the ethical implications of covert research, and challenges gaining ethical approval for studies, there has been little research that has used covert observation in an outright fashion (Bell and Bryman, 2007).

However, contemporary literature suggests that by taking a consequentialist approach, covert research can be done ethically. Angrosio and de Perez (2000) argue that in the case of covert research the concept of "proportionate reason" should be considered, which suggests that research is ethical if: (a) the means of research does not cause disproportionate harm; (b) the means selected for use do the least amount of harm that allows the research to be completed; and (c) ensures that the means used do not undermine the objectives and underlying purpose of the research. Considering such criteria, the use of shadowing without informed consent from all individuals should not be considered unethical. In fact, taking a consequentialist approach, seeking to obtain informed consent in the

fashion outlined in the ethical review (from all interactions), may in fact be less ethical than not collecting consent, as the often lengthy process could be highly disruptive to the work of the participants, and, in time-sensitive situations result in undue stress to the participant(s). Further, given the CEO's notable frustrations in this scenario, continuing to do so would likely have an adverse effect on the researcher-participant relationship (e.g. rapport), an issue that will be discussed in detail in a later portion of this paper.

(3) As per scenario 1, informed consent forms were handed out and collected from the attendees in the leadership meeting (and many other meetings). Interestingly, no individuals declined consent to participate in the study, although there were occasions where I was asked to step out of room so the parties could discuss sensitive information (this mainly related to employee performance issues). While it appeared that I was accepted through mere association with the CEO, as there was little pushback, I began to question whether consent was really voluntary, as permission to observe meetings was granted by the individual in the more powerful position (the CEO). This was particularly the case when the CEO would introduce me to individuals he was meeting with as "a researcher that will be observing their work." As their superior is telling them that they will be observed, even if they are uncomfortable and decline to provide consent, it is reasonable to believe that there would be social and professional implications in doing so. Although this power relationship was favorable as a large number of situations could be observed, there were times when I could feel a sense a level of discomfort on behalf of some of the meeting attendees. This would often

become apparent when tone changes occurred in discussions, participants began to awkwardly fidget, or when glares or glances would be directed towards me. In situations where discomfort was noted, I would refrain from taking field notes to try to ease their discomfort and limit the amount of disruption my observation was causing. Depending on the perceived level of discomfort, I would ask if the participant(s) would like to have some time to discuss private issues, and excuse myself from the room for a pre-determined amount of time. Following the meeting summary notes would then be written to limit gaps in my field notes (See Sin (2005) for additional information relating to seeking and achieving informed consent in practice).

The role of the researcher and impact of interventions

There are four different types of observation: complete participant (covert, full participation), complete participant (overt, full participation), partial participant (overt, minimum participation), and complete observer or non-participant observer (overt, virtually no participation) (Brewer, 2000). Shadowing is considered to be a form of non-participant observation in which the researchers' solitary objective is to observe and record, not to actively participate in work-activities (Czarniawska, 2007). Shadowing a school principal for a year Wolcott (1973/2003, p. 8) described his role as being "a scientific observer, participating by his presence but at the same time usually allowed to do what observers do rather than expected to perform as others perform." Engstrom (2010) suggests that researchers instruct participants to act as

though they were invisible, and Lareau (2003, p. 9) humorously asked participants to treat them "as the family dog." While it is generally preferred to be 'invisible', there were a number of situations in which I was called upon by CEOs and other managers to participate in discussions and take on other tasks. Scenario 2, below, highlights some of the situations that were experienced in this case study and discusses possible ethical implications of engaging and not engaging such situations.

Scenario 2: Over a week into shadowing one of the CEOs I attended a leadership meeting, similar to that described in scenario 1, in which vice presidents and other executive officers discussed organizational strategy, planning, and operational issues. One topic of discussion was a possible reorganization. The leadership team was reviewing a consulting report with different possibilities, a report that I was provided and had reviewed for context purposes. With the CEO having knowledge of my background in organizational behavior and strategy, I was called on in the meeting for my professional opinion, and asked to discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of the different structures (e.g. matrix, functional, etc.). Although I had the capacity to respond to the question I was uneasy doing so as I was not sure whether or not it was my role to do so as a researcher. Over the shadowing period other managers made similar requests. Perhaps the most demanding request was from a CEO who asked me to review and make revisions to a paper he had written for submission to a journal, noting that his schedule was too demanding to do so. Other requests were more mundane such as driving the CEOs to meetings, so that they could make phone calls and work on the road. While I obliged to most requests,

two questions flooded my mind (responses to follow in turn): (1) If I do not comply with requests will this affect my rapport and access? And how?; (2) Is it ethical if I see a need to help and do not respond to it directly (also posed in Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p. 63)?

(1) In shadowing studies, having good rapport with participants is very important given the length of time that the researcher and subject spend together (Gill, 2011). Considering the significant time commitment the CEOs had to make to participate in the research study, I thought that it was sensible to respond to reasonable requests and help out when I could. Also, I felt that declining to respond to requests would likely impact my relationship with the CEOs and possibly result in restricted access to meetings. As such, I considered using my expertise to provide advice from time to time was part of the cost of admission. Czarniawska (2007, p. 55) suggests that "one's mere physical presence and human decency requires participation", however, at times I felt as though I was taking on a role of an executive assistant more so than that of a researcher.

(2) While I decided that I would help out when requested, I did not consider it a requirement to provide input when I was not addressed directly. As a non-participant observer I tried to remain in the background as much as possible and observe issues rather than engage issues to determine how managers approached problem solving. If I engaged, in essence I was affecting the behavior I was recording and being subsumed into the environment I was studying.

Maintaining objectivity or 'going native'

When shadowing occurs for extended periods of time, as was the case in my study of managerial work, there is a risk of 'going native' or 'rogue.' 'Going native' using the shadowing method is similar to that described in literature on participant observation in the sense that objectivity and focus can be lost. However, being a non-participant observer, there is a significantly lower risk of the researcher adopting the identity of a full participant in the organization under study (Jorgensen, 1989). Despite the fact that the risk of going native in the fullest sense is quite low, the risk of losing objectivity in shadowing studies can be quite high, as shadowing requires a close relationship with one or a few participants, who also act as experiential gatekeepers. Engstrom (2010, p. 55) highlighted the need to have a close relationship with participants in his shadowing study of private eye investigators, stating:

> If the researcher tries to remain distant she or he cannot work to build rapport with the subjects he or she observes. This increases the possibility that the shadowee will restrict access to certain activities or, worse, come to resent the presence of the researcher. The latter is especially likely in situations where the researcher is "studying up."

However, recognizing risks associated with going native, Engstrom suggested that researchers not be overzealous about becoming friends with participants, as observing from a distance can make it easier to "keep the activities and conversations directed toward the practices of interest (p. 56)." In this study of managerial work, considerable efforts were made to develop good rapport and lasting relationships so that there was a possibility for follow up research. Because I maintained good

rapport throughout the study, the access I was granted to meetings was excellent (I was able to observe 72% of all work time with the managers under study). On occasion, the participants would even vouch for my attendance at meetings with superiors. However, the same strong relationship that I had with the participants which was great for access, proved to be problematic in the writing up phase, as I knew that the CEOs had been given the impression that I was on their side, and they necessarily expected to be portrayed in a positive light. Further, observing 12 weeks of managerial work I was able to record some of the good, the bad, and the ugly aspects of business and management. In a similar study, Tengblad (2012) described some unseemly managerial behaviors such as embarrassment, insensitive humor, rage, and belligerence (p. 239-240). Reading his account I wondered what my CEOs would think if they were portrayed in this manner – Would they feel a sense of betrayal? I also wondered if doing so would spoil the field for others hoping to use observational techniques in healthcare organizations (Punch, 1994)?; On this note, do I have an ethical responsibility to future researchers?; and finally, how critical is too critical?

The impact of research on the individuals and organizations (intrusiveness and disruptions)

While nonparticipation observation as a research technique has been described as a "non-intrusive method for collecting data" (Davis, 2004, p. 327), relative to other methods, it can certainly be both intrusive and disruptive to participants. In my

study of top managers at least half an hour of every day was devoted to clarifying observations, and there were a number of intrusive moments. One such example of intrusiveness was when I was shadowing a female CEO down the hallway; she stopped, turned to me and said "I am going to go to the bathroom now, would you mind waiting outside?" While this was more of a one-off, other situations that were commonplace would involve the CEO leaving a meeting to answer a phone call. I would follow and receive comments to the effect that "This is my spouse, it is private" or "this is confidential". Other common responses were, "I am afraid I do not have time to discuss this issue now, please make note of it and I will try to find some time later to chat." Although the CEOs in my study were good sports and would answer questions that I had regarding background information and information on meetings and other work that I was unable to observe, this is not always the case, as there are ample situations where managers become upset with the disruptive, intrusive, time consuming nature of being a participant in a shadowing study (See Abolafia, 1998 and Czarniawska, 2007). Engstrom (2010, p. 55) painfully described this issue in his study, stating that while one of the participants was excited about the research, as time wore on became increasingly irritated with his presence. Engstrom eventually withdrew from shadowing that participant, citing that the tension was too great and "not worth the emotional toll." Recognizing the impact that shadowing can have on both the researcher and the participant, in my study I strove to be as observant and responsive as possible, giving up the opportunity to observe some situations for better rapport with the managers. I constantly asked myself – is it ethical to probe and prod the manager … did they sign

up for this? How will my actions affect our relationship? Commenting on the sometimes disruptive nature of shadowing, and the need, on occasion to give managers space, Arman and colleagues (2012) recommend that shadowing be complemented with additional empirical materials such as diaries, interviews, and various secondary sources to help fill in any empirical gaps.

Confidentiality

Closely related to the issue of informed consent is one of confidentiality. When shadowing, I was frequently exposed to sensitive information and situations, many of which were internal to the organization and some of which were of a personal nature. On occasion, individuals would explicitly tell me that certain information was confidential and not to be shared. Accordingly, I would be sure to cease taking notes and document the occurrence. However, when it was not explicitly stated it would often became unclear to me as a researcher what was reportable and what was not (even if pseudonyized). Following up with managers it became apparent that this was equally unclear to the managers that were being shadowed, with managers often querying "are you documenting this … you are not going to report this are you?" This point was also raised by Shaw (2008, p. 404) who argues:

In 'traditional' research – experiments, surveys, structured interviews – it is probably relatively clear to the participant when the researcher is 'working' and when she is having 'time out'. The participants are likely to assume that when they are in informal settings, or their words and actions are not being overtly recorded, the researcher is having time out. But this is not likely to be the case in much qualitative research, where the participants face the consequent risk of involuntary disclosure, and unwittingly the researcher becomes a covert investigator.

Realizing the potential implications of divulging private or sensitive information in published literature, this situation was mitigated by agreeing to provide the primary participants (CEOs) with the opportunity to provide feedback to draft papers prior to submission to journals. Further, discussions that were explicitly stated as 'private' were not recorded in any fashion.

Anonymity

Four Canadian healthcare CEOs were shadowed out of a total population of approximately 90 healthcare CEOs, nationwide in my study. While anonymity was promised in the ethical review, an issue arose when I shadowed one of the CEOs to a meeting in which other CEOs who had agreed to be shadowed at a later date were in attendance. Thus, it became apparent who would comprise the sample in my research project. After the meeting the CEO who was presently being shadowed said, "So, I see that you will be shadowing X and Y, it will be interesting to see how I measure up against them." Similar comments were made by other CEOs, and I was even asked point blank, on more than one occasion, how management styles differed

between the CEOs I had shadowed, and whether the other CEOs worked similar hours, and faced similar challenges.

A multiplicity of issues resulted when anonymity was eroded in this study, which may not be rare when shadowing small populations. The first immediate issue was how to respond to such enquiries about other participants in the study. Is it ethical to make any comments about the work of other managers? Will this affect rapport with the CEO presently being studied? The second issue is with the publishability of results with anonymity being particularly hard to maintain, as even with pseudonyms and other codes, the CEOs may be able to decipher who the individual participants are. With the cat out of the box, so to speak, I felt that the best way to manage the situation on the spot was to be open with regards to who I would be shadowing but keep details about the individual CEOs positive and vague to maintain rapport. When probed for details my response would side step the issues and relate to challenges making conclusions based on data that was not yet coded.

DISCUSSION

This paper illustrates that while procedural ethics boards and committees assist in the identification of some foreseeable ethical issues and dilemmas, by themselves they are unable to address the complexity of all the ethical issues and dilemmas that can emerge in studies harnessing the shadowing method. This finding is by no means new in the social sciences, with a large number of authors arguing that procedural ethics committees, by design, are limited in their ability to address complex ethical issues that arise in qualitative research studies. While some scholars merely contend

that the constant shifting of focus and unpredictable nature of qualitative research requires many ethical issues and dilemmas to be resolved "by appeals to the conscience of the researcher" (Robley, 1995, p. 45), others, such as Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 268-73) argue that ethics committees are incapable of ensuring ethical practice. According to the authors:

> [R]esearch ethics committees satisfy an obvious need to protect the basic rights and safety of research participants from obvious forms of abuse … [they] offer researchers an ethics "checklist" by reminding the researcher to consider such issues as the potential risks to participants, the balancing of the benefits of the research against those risks, the steps needed to ensure confidentiality of data, and the inclusion of consent forms … [However,] their role is necessarily limited. Research ethics committees cannot help when you are in the field and difficult, unexpected situations arise, when you are forced to make immediate decisions about ethical concerns, or when information is revealed that suggests you or your participants are at risk.

This somewhat detached relationship between procedural ethics committees who approve research protocols and ethical practice raises a number of important questions for researchers and ethics committees alike: If researchers deviate from the approved ethical review process in qualitative research (as was the case in my study of managerial work) is the research still considered to be ethical?; Does it matter if harm did not occur in the study?; and What if following the ethical protocol would do more harm than not following the ethical protocol? Such questions are especially relevant for shadowing researchers, given that deviations are extremely likely to occur when complex protocols are developed regarding consent and researcher-

participant relationships. As Czarniawska (2007, p. 58), points out, the very nature of shadowing "requires constant attention and continuous ethical decisions."

Kellner (2002) suggests that in such situations where ethical protocols or procedures and moral requirements conflict, the latter *must* prevail. However, there are no clear answers to these questions, or agreement among researchers. Nevertheless, there is relative agreement that serious harm can occur when ethical issues are mismanaged in the field (Punch, 1995). Attending to this point, a number of authors have suggested that the concept of reflexivity could play an important role in establishing ethical practice. Traditionally considered to be a means of ensuring rigor in qualitative research through self-scrutiny and "continual evaluation of subjective responses, inter-subjective dynamics, and the research process itself" (Finlay, 2002, p. 532), scholars argue that the concept reflexivity can easily be extended to consider ethical dimensions. According to authors such as Robley (1995) and McGraw and colleagues (2000), ethical reflexivity means that researchers thoroughly consider how their research could impact participants before any field research is conducted, which includes a review of the literature on the ethical implications of using that method and the development of contingency plans for any situations at can be envisaged. As Punch (1995) suggested in his review on political and ethical implications in qualitative research, researchers need critically reflect on the ethical dimensions of the research they are about to conduct before they "get the seats of their pants dirty by *real* research" (Burgess, 1982, p. 6).

This recommendation carries considerable weight in literature on ethics, and has been widely accepted. However, it remains to be challenging to be reflexive in

practice, as there is not a well-established body of knowledge on practice-based

research ethics, especially when under-researched methods such as shadowing are

utilized (McDonald, 2005). As such, in an important first step towards reflexivity,

this paper documented and dissected a range of ethical issues and dilemmas, some of

which were foreseeable and some which were not foreseeable. When using the

shadowing method in my study of CEOs there were a number of ethical questions

that arose (See **Figure 6** below), which may be helpful to researchers considering

using the shadowing method:

FIGURE 6: Questions to consider when using the shadowing method

- How will you ensure that your sample is representative with small samples?
- Will you provide incentives to increase the response rate? How will you ensure ethical integrity is maintained?
- How will you obtain informed consent (what process will you follow)? How will you deal with issues where consent cannot be given (e.g. informal conversations)?
- Is it ethical to record information that was recorded without informed consent (covert or quasi-covert)? If information is recorded covertly, how will you deal with it in your analysis and write up?
- If shadowing powerful individuals, is consent from individuals who interact with that individual really voluntary? Is there a way to mitigate this issue?
- Provided the necessity for close relationships, how will you obtain and maintain rapport without losing objectivity?
- How will the research affect the participants (personally and professionally)? How intrusive is too intrusive?
- What is off the record, and truly confidential?
- With small samples how will anonymity be maintained? How will you respond if a breach occurs?

Importantly, there is no one correct answer to any of these questions, and issues will

likely vary from project to project. That said, a number of lessons were drawn from

this study, which may be useful to researchers who intend to use the shadowing

research method (see **Figure 7**). (For information on practical advice for designing

shadowing studies and conducting shadowing fieldwork see Arman et al., 2012 and

McDonald, 2005).

FIGURE 7: 'Shadowing' advice for researchers, by topic

- *Sampling*: To improve the likelihood that the sample of managers shadowed is representative of the larger population, present initial results to groups of managers (leadership teams). Feedback from the groups will help identify possible inconsistencies or unique characteristics. Another, more controversial way to increase the response rate of individuals is to provide incentives, monetary or in the form of knowledge (e.g. consulting reports).
- *Informed consent*: Develop a process for obtaining informed consent that involves spreading information throughout the organization in which the shadowing will be based. Be aware that even with the best of intentions in place, it is likely that there will be some level of covert or semi-covert observation that will occur. Thus, a contingency plan should be created to respond to such situations before they occur (e.g. Will you follow the participant or seek consent?; What will you do if it is disruptive?).
- *Discomforts*: To deal with discomforts you will have to work with the individual you are shadowing to develop an understanding of their tolerance. However, it is perhaps more important to do this with individuals that you come across while shadowing the primary participant, and with whom you do not have a working relationship. Recognizing that participants may require privacy from time to time it is a good idea to supplement shadowing with other methods such as diaries, interviews, and secondary data to fill in empirical gaps.
- *Confidentiality and anonymity*: Determining what is 'off the record' is challenging, especially when coding data often occurs months after the data was collected. One way to ensure that confidential issues are not presented publicly is to present draft papers to the individuals who were shadowed. In this review process they will also be able to indicate whether or not the data, even when pseudonized, is too identifiable for their comfort.
- *Defining the role of the shadow, preventing going native, and avoiding becoming intrusive*: To manage these issues it is important to clearly define what your role will be as a researcher (set ground rules so to speak). Setting boundaries from the beginning will manage any expectations that the participants may have going into the study. With specific regard to intrusiveness, it is important that the amount of commitment required of participants or lack of privacy involved in a shadowing study is not understated.

CONCLUSION

Attending to a notable gap in the methodological literature, this paper discussed a

number of ethical implications associated with the shadowing method. Outlining

ethical issues and dilemmas that were foreseeable in the research design phase, as

well as a number of ethics in practice issues that only became apparent in the field,

this paper has demonstrated that procedural ethics committees are not capable, in and of themselves of ensuring ethics in practice. Recognizing a disconnect between ethical theory and practice that is related primarily to the researcher-participant relationship, this paper argues that researchers planning on harnessing the shadowing method need to be reflexive of their practices and explore a breadth of ethical issues that spans well beyond the prepatory work that is required for procedural ethics committees. This is particularly important as Guillemin and Gillam (2004), and many others, argue that it is often the case that researchers develop standard answers to gain ethical approval to conduct studies without much reflection on the implications of different research methods, and consider procedural ethics as a mere hurdle that needs to be passed before research can commence.

That said, thorough ethical reviews conducted by review boards and committees familiar with the methodologies employed in the research study at hand can certainly help researchers identify and respond to issues that may not have been considered, informing ethical practice in the field. However, as it has not been my experience that ethical review boards and committees are particularly well informed of some of the ethical issues surrounding the shadowing method, this paper takes an important first step towards achieving ethical practice, providing researchers and ethical review boards and committees with a number of questions for consideration and suggested practices for those who intend to use the shadowing method. It is hoped, that this paper will encourage other researchers who harness the shadowing method, and other observational methodologies more generally (e.g. participant observation and ethnography), to similarly describe their trials and tribulations in a

critical manner. Documenting and examining ethically challenging situations, such as those discussed in this paper, will help reflective researchers make informed decisions with regards to the ethical conduct of their field practices and inform the procedural ethics process by providing ethical boards and committees with published accounts of researcher experiences, which will assist them in the identification of situations that may result in harm. In turn this should lead to enhanced reflexivity, the development and deployment of strategies to mitigate or eliminate risks, fewer surprises for researchers in the field, and ultimately ethical practice.

Importantly, this paper is not the first to make such a call, as a number of other forums have been established which aim to increase awareness of ethical issues in research, such as *The Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* (since 2006) and *Research Ethics* (since 2012). These forums discuss ethical issues such as researcher perspectives, emerging issues, and new regulations. However, these forums, by design are highly specialized and remain to be few and far between. To help researchers reflexivity consider the implications of their practices, research discussing the ethical implications and considerations of using unique research methods such as shadowing needs to be visible in mainstream journals, in articles and books that do not focus exclusively on research methods. Bringing ethical issues and dilemmas to from the depths of organization and management research to the forefront will be beneficial to participants and researchers alike. Specifically, reflexive behaviors will help researchers prevent and reduce awkward, uncomfortable, and potentially harmful situations from occurring in the field, and

reduce the chance of research that offers significant knowledge gains from being blindly abandoned based on fears of reprisal or rejection at the procedural level.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The final chapter of this thesis discusses the key findings, contributions, and limitations of this collection of papers on managerial work. It proceeds as follows: (1) It begins with a summary of what I did, alongside principal findings, and contributions; (2) It then outlines limitations of this thesis; (3) Implications associated with research philosophy in managerial work research are then discussed. Particular attention is given to what an interpretive perspective contributes to the field of managerial work; (4) Lessons derived from this thesis relevant to managerial practice are presented; and (5) Finally, this thesis concludes with a number of suggestions for future research.

DISCUSSION

Revisiting the research questions

The aim of this thesis was to develop a better understanding of 'what it is that managers do'. To do so, this thesis posed three distinct research questions in three research papers, namely: What do we know about the nature of managerial work?; To what extent is the work of top managers in the public and private sectors different?; and What are the ethical implications of using the shadowing method to

study top managers? The methodologies employed to investigate these three research questions are outlined below, along with accompanying findings and contributions.

Overview of research findings and contributions

To take stock of the present state of managerial work research, and answer the question '*What do we know about the nature of managerial work?*' a systematic literature review of was conducted (See **Paper #1**). Examining research that has been conducted over the last 60+ years, this thesis documented trends in empirical findings and major theoretical developments in the field of managerial work-studies from the work of Henri Fayol (1916) to the work of Stephan Tengblad (2012). Doing so, this investigation revealed that while a great number of scholars have asked the question 'what manager's do', *what* has been queried about 'managing' and *how* managerial phenomenon has been examined has varied greatly, which in turn has affected theory development. This thesis found that what began as a field that aimed to identify and understand managerial practices and activities through inductive, open ended examination (Carlson, 1951; Sayles, 1964; Stewart, 1967) has, by and large, developed into a field which examines nuanced aspects or facets of managing, such as leadership, planning, strategy, and decision making – which are arguably but components of managerial work. As a result, a great deal is now known about a few specific components of 'managing', while little remains known about other aspects of managing. Further, a lack of (recent) studies in the area of

managerial work has muddied the waters as to how different aspects, activities, and practices of managing fit together and relate to one another.

Finding that waning theory development (Fondas and Stewart, 1994; Hales, 1986) has coincided with a methodological swing away from inductive open ended studies to the use of more quantitative research methods, a renewed focus on the study of managerial work practices in-situ, is suggested as an effective means of bringing work back in to organizational studies (Barley and Kunda, 2001). This is specifically emphasized as observational studies in managerial work studies have been recognized as generating theory by building and extending existing theories of managerial work (such as Mintzberg's role theory), and linking empirics with new theory (such as those that apply emerging theories such as practice theory). In addition to this general call for theory generating research, the review of the literature argued that the field of managerial work would benefit from research that examined situated, gendered, and sociomaterial aspects of managerial work.

With an understanding of research areas that could benefit from further investigation, this thesis proceeded to investigate situated and sociomaterial aspects of managerial work through an examination of similarities and differences between the work activities of managers in the public and private sectors (See **Paper #2**). To investigate the question '*To what extent is the work of top managers in the public and private sectors different?,* twelve weeks of observational data was collected in the Canadian public sector (healthcare industry), systematically coded using a set of managerial work categories developed by Mintzberg (1973), and compared to a study of private sector managers (Tengblad, 2006). Through a comparison of work

type, hours, location, activities, and contact patterns this thesis found that despite contextual differences including culture and time, there were surprisingly few differences between managerial work in the two studies.

This comparison of work activities at the top manager level contributes to the ongoing theoretical debate on whether work is fundamentally different in the public and private sectors (Allison, 1979; Sayre, 1953), providing evidence to suggest that Mintzberg was right to propose that, at least to a degree, there are some components of managerial work that are 'universal' (See Lubatkin et al., 1997). Specifically, that manager's at the top manager level, in large organizations, enact similar roles and engage in similar proportions of activities regardless of culture, sector, or industry (Bechky, 2006). While further investigation is warranted regarding the public-private divide, this finding raises practical questions regarding (1) the transferability of managerial work competencies across sectors, which has specific implications for the recruitment of managers at all levels; and (2) the divide between public administration and management in educational institutions, which raises the additional question of whether there needs to be separate colleges, courses, and curriculum for public and private managers if managers actually perform the same activities and practices.

Another notable finding in this comparison was that eleven of the thirteen changes in managerial work found between Mintzberg (1973) and Tengblad (2006) held true in this study. Exploring this theoretical discussion on the changing nature of managerial work (Drucker, 1988; Kanter, 1989), this thesis provides additional evidence that suggests that a change in managerial work has occurred over time

(since Mintzberg, 1973). Although this move does not insinuate that a drastically different or "new" managerial work has emerged, it does suggest that evolutionary changes are occurring in managerial work. In essence, this thesis suggests that contemporary managerial work is fundamentally similar to managerial work as described by foundational scholars (Carlson, 1951; Sayles, 1964; Mintzberg, 1973) in the sense that there is a core set of practices and priorities that remain constant (e.g. a reliance on meetings). However, over time a few new practices and priorities have gradually gained ground to replace older activities and practices. For example, this study suggests that with the emergence of information and communication technologies in the workplace, managerial communication patterns have undergone a shift away from the telephone and face-to-face meetings, towards the use of email.

An additional contribution to theory that emerged from this study is new conceptualizations of managerial work, which reflect changes in managerial work that have occurred. Perhaps the most visible re-conceptualization is what it means to conduct 'deskwork'. Once described as time spent at a desk processing mail, scheduling activities, and communicating with administrative support (Mintzberg, 1973), 'deskwork' in this study has been re-conceptualized for contemporary management to include work that is conducted using technology (e.g. writing and reviewing documents, conducting research, and reading and composing emails). Using mobile devices such as smart phones, tablets, and laptops deskwork can occur almost anywhere and does not even need to involve a desk at all. It is notable this is re-conceptualization is one reason why managers in this study were found to engage in more 'deskwork', seemingly at the expense of communication.

Flowing from the empirical examination of public sector managers, the third paper in this thesis explored the question '*What are the ethical implications of using the shadowing method to study top managers?*' (See **Paper #3**). Based on twelve weeks of shadowing this thesis illustrated, through detailed examples, how shadowing can impact managers, researchers, and the results of shadowing studies. Through a discussion of the ethical implications of shadowing managers throughout the research process, this thesis highlights a clear gap between ethical theory and practice. In particular, it shows that while useful, procedural ethics processes as they presently stand are not capable of ensuring that there is ethical practice as qualitative researchers are forced to "solve their problems individually and on site", and take any moral or ethical dilemmas encountered stride (Punch, 1994). This was found to be the case in spite of the fact that this research was conducted in the health sector, where there are seemingly strict(er) ethical guidelines and procedures that need to be adhered. This thesis is in itself a response to this gap, aiming to increase awareness of potential pitfalls. However, it argues that to attain ethical practice, researchers harnessing qualitative research methods such as shadowing similarly need to be critical of the practical implications of their research practices on participants, and reflexively explore a breadth of ethical issues that spans well beyond the prepatory work required to attain ethical approval from procedural ethics committees.

Limitations of the thesis

Although this thesis has made a number of notable contributions to the field of managerial work-studies, the research compiled in this thesis is limited in a number of ways. Limitations are general, relating to the thesis as compilation of three papers, as well as specific, relating to idiosyncrasies (e.g. methodology, content, structure, etc.) in each of the three papers. Limitations relating to different attributes of the thesis are discussed below, in turn.

- *Paper-based thesis route:* Opting to structure this thesis in the form of three papers that were to be considered 'of publishable quality', rather than a traditional thesis, content and style expectations of journals needed to be considered in the development of each of the three papers. As such, the papers that comprise this thesis not only had to be linked to one another to form a coherent thematic thesis, but also to established research and debates in each of the respective journals. Notably, there was occasional conflict between what was written for the purpose of possible publication in a targeted journal, and linkages between the three papers. For example, the first paper in this thesis (See **Chapter 3**) reviewed literature on managerial work and argued for interpretive perspectives in managerial work research. However, to determine the extent to which managerial work between the public and private sectors were different (See **Chapter 4**), a realist vista was adopted, and relatively limited space was dedicated to discuss an interpretive view of my findings (See p. 223-245 for more information on the impact of

- *Theoretical development*: While this thesis makes contributions to management theory (as discussed earlier in this chapter), this thesis is more descriptive than it is theoretical. In line with the majority of research on managerial work (Hales, 1986; Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000) the overarching focus of this thesis is on understanding and describing *what* managers do, not, *how* or *why* they do what they do. Importantly, focusing on the question of *what* managers do allowed for the comparison of managerial work activities across sectors, and in doing so, make a number of practical contributions to management. However, doing so through a replication of Mintzberg (1973) meant that incremental contributions to "old 'normal' knowledge" were made (e.g. to existing theoretical debates), but that new theory was not generated. This is a well-documented effect of taking a semi-structured 'Mintzberg' approach to shadowing (Arman et al., 2012).

- *Researcher bias*: The themes and findings that were presented in this thesis are based on the author's interpretation of the literature and observations. Other researchers reviewing the same literature, and observing the same activities, may uncover a different set of themes and findings than those presented in this thesis (Mertens, 2010).

- *Review methodology*: A systematic approach to the literature review (**Paper #1**) was adopted in this thesis for three main reasons: (1) It is replicable; (2) It is considered to be relatively objective (reduced selection bias); and (3) The scope of the investigation could easily be focused on specific aspects of managerial work such as 'activities', 'roles', and 'practices' (See Petticrew and Roberts, 2008 for an overview of reasons to select a systematic methodology). The latter was considered to be particularly important in this investigation as a cursory review of the literature revealed that the field of 'managerial work' had become incredibly diverse in recent years. However, taking a systematic approach, some areas of the literature were not included in the review. Research on managerial work in the fields of critical management studies and corporate governance are a few areas that could have been included, if a different approach was chosen (e.g. a narrative approach). Complicating the inclusion of additional areas of study into the review for a broad topic such managerial work were author guidelines in academic journals.

- *Organizational structure*: While there are a number of ways to organize a review (**Paper #1**) such as classic studies organization (a discussion of research considered to be significant to an area of study), topical or thematic organization (sections ordered by recurring or noteworthy topics concepts or theories), and inverted pyramid organization (discussion of particular literature from broad to specific in focus), this review organized the literature chronologically (Boyne, 2009). Chronological ordering was selected for use

in this review as it is recognized as being particularly useful in circumstances where the literature has evolved over long periods of time (Carnwell and Daly, 2001). However, by focusing on the evolution of the literature over time, particular findings and themes about managerial work emerged, which may have been different if an alternative organizational structure had been harnessed.

- *Comparative research*: To determine the extent to which managers in the public and private sectors are similar and different, the initial intent was to examine a cohort of both public and private managers in the same industry, in the same country, to ensure that data collection and analysis practices were consistent across all cases in both the public and private sectors (e.g. interpretation and categorization of managerial activities and practices). However, resource requirements did not permit such as study. Rather, to compare managerial work across sectors the decision was made to investigate the work activities of public managers in the Canadian healthcare industry, and carefully compare the results of the study to earlier studies of managers in the private sector (Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2006) (**Paper #2**). A number of actions were taken to minimize possible inconsistencies in data collection and analysis procedures (see **Chapter 2** for information on specific procedures that were employed in this study), many of which consisted of closely following the procedures outlined by Mintzberg (1973). However, despite following established processes and procedures, there are a number of limitations associated with this type of comparative research.

o *Data collection*: While the same research methods were employed (shadowing) across the studies compared, and the primary focus was to understand 'what managers do', variation in the focus of data being collected may persist. As Emerson and colleagues (1995, p. 2) explain in a discussion of practicalities surrounding observational techniques, researchers engaging in observation "cannot take in everything … [and] in conjunction with those in the setting, develop certain perspectives by engaging in some activities and relationships rather than others". This is particularly likely in this comparison of managerial work as both Tengblad and I explicitly expressed additional interests in our investigations. Tengblad (2002) indicated that in addition to comparing managerial work to Minzberg (1973) he also wanted to understand how managerial work had changed since Sune Carlson's (1951) investigation of Swedish executives. Similarly, I expressed a secondary focus on understanding how information technology affects managerial work. These concentrations impact the amount of attention given to certain activities and practices, and thus the field notes collected, as while researcher resources are relatively scarce (e.g. attention) there are a number of different areas of management that could be examined in greater detail (e.g. decision making, leadership styles, etc.). Supplementary interests and variances in field notes were not a major concern however, as the primary focus of all studies compared was

explicitly on the recording and measurement of managerial work activities.

o *Coding*: There may be some variability in the codes that were assigned to managerial work activities between the three studies being compared. Even though definitions of managerial work activities developed by Mintzberg (1973, p. 235-257) were used to guide coding and analysis in both Tengblad (2006), and this investigation, the definitions provided by Mintzberg are open to interpretation. As such, there were some circumstances where I (and presumably Tengblad and Mintzberg as well) had to make judgment calls as to which category best described the activity observed (a decision which other researchers may have made differently). These were relatively rare though, and thus not a major concern. Culture is another factor which could have affected the interpretation and coding of observations, as researchers conducting each of the independent studies are from different cultural backgrounds (Stefan Tengblad is Swedish, Henry Mintzberg is American, and I am Canadian). Words captured, and symbols and deeds observed may appear similar, but actually have different meanings in different cultural contexts.

o *Generalization/Transferability*: Although this research aimed to explore similarities and differences between public and private sector managers, it only investigated four public sector CEOs in the Canadian healthcare industry, which notably, is only one type of manager in one industry[15].

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[15] The public sector in Canada, as in most countries around the world, is incredibly diverse. The Canadian federal government alone (which excludes employees who work for provincial governments, crown corporations, the military, and RCMP) employs

Thus the experiences and results described in this study are clearly placed in the context of the Canadian healthcare sector and therefore, may not be reflective of managerial work in other public and not-for-profit organizations. Likewise, the results of Tengblad (2006) are clearly placed in the context of the Swedish private sector, which limits the generalizability of his results. However, while there may be some cultural differences between the managerial practices employed in Sweden and Canada (see Tse et al., 1988), which could have an impact on the results, cultural differences between European and North American managers had not been considered to be a significant factor in earlier comparisons (Tengblad, 2006; Vie, 2010). Furthermore, with regards to generalizability this study examined the work of top managers and makes no claims of generalizability to managers at different organizational levels (e.g. middle or lower level managers).

- *Situated study context*: This research took place in the Canadian public sector, more specifically, the Canadian healthcare industry. As such, ethical issues encountered which illustrate a gap between procedural ethics and ethics in practice are situated in the Canadian healthcare sector where ethical approvals were granted (**Paper #3**). Since there are different ethical procedures in other countries and industries, many of the issues and dilemmas discussed may not apply. Similarly, with regards to the objects under study (top managers), many of the experiences and dilemmas relate to power

more than 450,000 individuals, who work in departments, agencies, boards, and commissions which range from national defense to copyright protection (White and Green, 2006).

dynamics both between the researcher and manager under study, and between other individuals internal and external to the organization where the manager under study was employed. Accordingly, many of the implications may not be applicable when the shadowing method is applied at the lower and middle manager levels.

Research philosophy and the study of managerial work

As it was noted in the limitations section, while this thesis called for interpretive research and utilized observational methods that are coherent with an interpretive approach, this thesis conjured a realist vista on the managerial work observed. In response to the absent presence of interpretive research in this dissertation, the following sub-sections discuss what it would mean to take interpretive approach to study managerial work (as it was ultimately not conducted), what an interpretive reading of my data could look like, and what an interpretive reading of my data could contribute to current theories of managerial work. To further illustrate what an interpretive study could look like, and contribute, this section is followed by a presentation of interpretive research from this investigation that is relevant to current and future management practice.

What it would mean to take an interpretive approach[16] to managerial work research

Like the majority of research on managerial work, this thesis focused on answering the research question 'what do managers do? To answer this question, a series of 'who', 'what', and 'how many' questions were posed (i.e. who do managers meet with? what do managers discuss in meetings? how many times are managers interrupted?). These archetypes of questions (who, what, and how many) are typical of a positivist approach, where the aim is to determine cause and affect relationships and generalize findings (Smith, 2006; Yin, 2003). In this thesis this was the case, where observational data was used to determine the effect of the public sector work environments on managerial work activities.

Operating under a different set of philosophical assumptions the focus of the research would have been distinctly different if an interpretive approach were taken (See **Table 18** for a summary of philosophical distinctions between positivist and interpretive approaches). Central to explaining differences in focus is the ontological belief that research efforts should be concerned with "revealing multiple realities as opposed to searching for one objective reality" (Guest et al., 2013). With the assumption that there are multiple realities, as opposed to one natural world of 'facts', research that takes an interpretive approach is able to capture and describe subjective views, and multiple perspectives of phenomenon under investigation (Prasad and Prasd, 2002; Sandberg, 2005).

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[16] *Note*: Interpretive research is much more diverse than it is portrayed in this thesis as it is described at a very high level. A number of different approaches to interpretivism can be adopted including: post-structuralism, experimentalism, and critical theory. For more information about interpretivism and these perspectives see Denzin and Lincoln (2011).

Table 18: Philosophical assumptions for positivist and interpretive approaches

Assumptions	Positivist	Interpretive
Ontological		
Nature of reality	Objective, tangible Single Fragmentable Divisible	Socially constructed Multiple Holistic Contextual
Nature of social beings	Deterministic Reactive	Voluntaristic Proactive
Axiological		
Overriding goal	"Explanation" via subsumption under general laws, prediction	"Understanding" based on Vestehen
Epistemological		
Knowledge generated	Nomothetic Time-free Context-independent	Idiographic Time-bound Context-dependent
View of causality	Real causes exist	Multiple, simultaneous shaping
Research relationship	Dualism, separation Privileged point of observation	Interactive, cooperative No privileged point of observation

Source: Ozanne and Anderson (1988, p. 509).

Not bound by the positivist belief that there is a single objective reality, interpretive research can therefore take the field beyond questions surrounding the 'who's' and 'what's' of management, to examine time-bound and context-dependent questions such as 'why' managers do what they do and 'how' they do what they do. To examine such questions, interpretive research would stick close to the "character of to data" encountered, and uses words, as opposed to numbers, for analysis. With words as data, interpretive researchers look for meanings and sources of meanings – a process which is highly context specific (Yanow, 2007, p. 407). The concern of interpretive research is thus, not to establish specific relationships among components of phenomenon (explanation), as was the case in this study, but rather to probe into different unexplored aspects of phenomenon to develop understanding. As

Chua (1986) points out, the intent of interpretive research is "to understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon … to increase understanding of the phenomenon within cultural and contextual situations" (p. 5).

In order to develop contextualized, deep understandings of complex phenomena such as managerial work, analytical methods used in positivistic research that harness statistical methods capable of analyzing large amounts of data to detect patterns and trends for generalization, are not considered to be appropriate for use (Weber, 2004). There is a distinct set of analytical methods are more suitable for interpretive research. Some of the more common forms of analysis that are appropriately used in interpretive research include: frame or value critical analysis, story-telling analysis, narrative analysis, dramaturgical analysis, and category analysis (Yanow, 2007). Via interpretive techniques such as these (and others)[17], interpretive researchers are able to contribute to our understanding of human, social, and cultural phenomena by capturing, describing, and discussing 'lived experiences' (Prasad and Prasad, 2002). This can have practical benefits for managers who can learn from described experiences and practices, and management research more generally, as the exploration of rarely explored contextualized facets of managerial work can contribute to theory development. This point is argued by Watson (2011, p. 214), who contends that the production and dissemination interpretive research could hold practical benefits for workers, managers, students, and policy makers, who could "make better-informed choices and decisions, from reading accessible,

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[17] Accoridng to Yanow (2007, p. 411) the following are interpretive methods of analysis: "action research (or participatory action research), case study analysis (either single or explicitly comparative), category analysis, content analysis (word-based, not incidence rate counts), conversational analysis, discourse analysis, dramaturgical analysis, ethnomethodology, frame (-reflective) analysis, genealogy, grounded theory, life histories, metaphor analysis, myth analysis, narrative analysis (of various sorts), poststructural analysis, science studies, semiotics, space analysis, story-telling analysis, and value-critical analysis".

contextualized, and 'grounded' accounts of 'how things work' in organizations and management".

However, interpretive research is not without its challenges. With information collected and analyzed being based on individual 'lived' experiences and personal recollections of events (as opposed to collective experiences derived from large numbers in positivistic research), information can be difficult to validate. In essence, researchers need to accept that what is being said and observed, is in fact, accurate. Further complicating matters is the fact that researchers collecting and analyzing information are in of themselves measurement instruments in interpretive studies (Yanow, 2007). This issue with interpretive research is outlined by Weber (2004, p. vii) who explains that in interpretive studies, "researchers interpret (measure) the phenomena they observe … [a] sense-making activity [that] clearly is affected by and affects their life-worlds". This is to say that research affects the objects and phenomenon under study, and the research objects under study similarly affect the researchers. There are however, a number of strategies that can be used to increase the validity of interpretive research, such as peer review (Schwandt, 2000; Sandberg, 2005) and the hermeneutic circle method (Palmer, 1972).

Another issue related to interpretive research is that unlike positivistic research, it can be difficult to generalize findings (Avgerou, 2002). While this is not the principal aim of interpretive research, generalization or 'transferability' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), is nonetheless considered by many to be a measure of quality. To enhance the 'transferability' of interpretive research despite being context-specific, Lincoln and Guba (1985) prescribe the use of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). This

technique has been shown to be effective in communicating findings (Vie, 2008), however, the extent to which the research is transferable via the use of thick description has to be determined by readers who must "reach a conclusion about whether the transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (p. 316). This is notably different from research taking a positivistic perspective, where context is abstracted from cases, and readers are not left to interpret results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Payne and Williams (2005) argue that a reliance on the use of thick description to generalize results from interpretive research can be problematic, as readers of interpretive research are often authors themselves, who have, and "continue to make sweeping claims" about the generalization of research (Payne and Williams, 2005, p. 310). In response to claims that generalizations from interpretive research are overextended and possibly even unfounded, it is suggested that interpretive researchers aim for 'moderated generalization' (Payne and Williams, 2005). According to Payne and Williams (2005), this consists of researchers avoiding excessive generalizing claims, or possible interpretation of excessive generalizing claims, by expressing modest claims in clear terms. They suggest that a mental map be created in interpretive research, which explicitly states the degrees of similarity and differences between "sites to which generalizations can, and cannot be extended" (p. 310).

Whilst rare, there are a few notable examples of research on managerial work that have taken an interpretive approach. Discussing some examples could provide insight into what an interpretive reading of the 12 weeks of observational data collected could look like and contribute to the field of managerial work studies. One notable example of managerial work research that has taken an interpretive approach is Tony Watson's book, *In search of management* (1994/2001). Observing the work behaviors of middle managers, Watson describes, in great detail, a number of issues that affect managerial work. This is done primarily through narrative vignettes that were recorded during his time at 'ZTC Ryland'. Using thick description, Watson describes not only what managers in his study did in certain situations, but also why they took action, and how they went about their daily work. Some of the questions that Watson explored in his book include: why managers were in manager positions?; how managers communicate using language, rhetoric, and stories?; and how managers motivate themselves and others? In doing so, a number of different managerial perspectives were presented through first-person accounts, illustrating that there were a number of different orientations to management, not one right way (see p. 74-84 for four different perspectives on managing).

Publications by Smith and Elliott (2012) and Bolton and Ditchburn (2012) in *Work, employment and society*, are additional examples of research that exemplifies an interpretive approach to the study of managerial work. To contextualize debates in the UK relating to the intensification and extensification of work, Smith and Elliot

(2012) vividly describe the experiences of a retail manager. The authors tell the

story of a manager ('Fiona') encountering long work hours, budget pressures, and

challenges with staffing in a rich narrative. Informal rules, norms, and expectations

not frequently addressed in the literature are described in a first person account.

Below is an excerpt from the article, which illustrates how this information is

conveyed:

> For me, being a manager in a retail store can be very hard at times, to
> be honest. Although nothing is ever actually written down in stone
> for us, if for example the back shift supervisor were to call off sick
> tonight, I would be expected to make arrangements to cover the store
> and, if not, cover it myself. They do have guidelines that you would
> work a maximum of 12 hours and that you shouldn't work any more
> than 45 hours in a working week, but I think you'll find in retail,
> generally, that most store managers will do about 60 hours a week, if
> not more. And there's always that underlying… not vocal, not
> written, but that underlying expectation of having to cover. Next
> week, for example, I'll probably have to be in six or seven days just
> because we're short staffed and there are no arrangements to pool.
> There is no central pool for the area, if someone is off sick, basically
> I have to fill all the missing jobs at the moment.

Bolton and Ditchburn (2012) similarly use first-person narrative to describe the

experience of a mining manager referred to as 'Jack'. In this case, the local dialect is

represented. Discussing organizational politics relating to promotion, Jack recounts

on his career trajectory:

> I became a Grade 1 deputy the quickest that anybody has ever been
> at Blackhall Colliery … I went on to be Grade 2 deputy. Then a few
> years later the boss came up and said, 'Yer going to be made an
> overman [(manager)]. Keep yer nose clean.' I said, 'Just a minute,
> what d'ye mean by keepin' me nose clean?' 'Just keep yer nose
> clean.' So, then, another feller come up and said, 'Ye're goin to be
> made an overman, keep yer nose clean.' So I asked him an' all,
> 'What does keep yer nose clean mean?' And then the penny dropped.
> 'Oh', I said, 'I've got ye now, haven't I? I've to do what I'm telt
> (told). I'm to become the yes man to the manager.' Well, there was

no way that was goin' to happen. I was a deputy and that's management – but it's management for the lads. That means deputies and overmen often rubbed up against senior management. It had to be that way 'cause them sittin' in the fancy offices don't know or forget what it's like down the pit. So I didn't get the overman's job at that time 'cause I wouldn't kowtow.

Embracing an interpretive approach to managerial work, authors such as those described in this section (Watson, 1994/2001; Bolton and Ditchburn, 2012; Smith and Elliot, 2012) openly and critically discuss topics such as interpersonal relations and institutional politics, areas of managerial work that are noted as being "conspicuously absent from management theory" (Willmott, 1984, p. 349). According to Willmott (1984) a gap in the literature exists from positivist-oriented research being conducted, which has represented managerial work as "a set of de-contextualized and de-politicized activities or roles" (p. 349). As a consequence, he opines that management is "widely (mis)represented and idealized as a technical, political neutral activity" (p. 350). Willmott (1987) argues that to round out the field, managerial work research needs to investigate political components of work and develop theory on how managerial work is accomplished by enactments, and reconstitutions of institutional rules and resources.

Applying an interpretive perspective to data collected in this doctoral investigation of managerial work, those areas of the literature described by Willmott (1984) as being largely missing from management theory could be explored. Doing so, the research would look and feel significantly different. For example, existing management theory could be treated differently. Rather than applying Mintzberg's theory of managerial work (i.e. categories and propositions) to compare managerial

work across sectors, an interpretive approach, not bound by an objectivist notion of reality, could have interrogated the images and ideals presented by Mintzberg (1973) and/or generated new images and ideals of work and organizing altogether. Authors such as Hales (1989) and Noordegraaf (2000) have taken steps to re-conceptualize managerial work. While still describing managerial work in categorical "ideal" terms, Hales (1989) makes a case that managerial work is characterized by 'planning', 'allocating', 'motivating', 'co-ordinating', and 'controlling'. Noordegraaf (2000) took a different approach, describing managerial work in terms of competencies (interpretive, institutional, and textual) and drivers of managerial work (i.e. big issues, heated issues, and small and cool issues).

Challenging existing theories, images, and ideals of management through an interpretive lens, new theoretical categories of managerial work activities and roles could have been developed. Importantly, with an interpretive approach, new categories and role descriptions would not need to be universally driven to apply to the work of 'most managers' (like Mintzberg, 1973), and could relate explicitly to managerial work in specific contexts, such as the public sector managers at different levels. Supported by examples of role-enactments and activities observed or reflected on, new categories and practices would then be grounded in "historical and contextual circumstances" (Willmott, 1984, p. 357). A grounded theory approach to the data, which was not taken in this research, could be one approach adopted to generate new theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to Suddaby (2006, p. 633) new theory can be achieved through the analysis of "the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings".

Another major difference that would be apparent if an interpretative approach were taken is the presentation of data. Rather than presenting the data collectively in broad categories such as 'strategizing' or 'decision-making', which removed context and examples from description in this thesis, the daily work practices of the managers under study could be presented using context-specific narratives that are contrarily, thick in description. Using rich narratives that were captured in this empirical investigation to describe the work of managers, 'meanings' behind actions and practices could then be investigated, and sensemaking processes could begin to be explored (see Pye (2005) for an example of a study that examines managerial sensemaking in an attempt to bring meaning and understanding to leadership). For example, rather than defining 'strategy' and examining how much time managers spent engaging in strategy, taking an interpretive approach it could be investigated what 'strategizing' means to managers, what is strategy as a practice / how do managers engage in strategy, and why managers spend time on strategy as they do. In other words, research taking an interpretive approach could take steps to explain why and how managers spend their time as they do, not just how they spend their time (Hales, 1999).

Importantly, there are hints of an interpretive approach in this thesis. For example, it has been discussed why managers spent more time on 'deskwork' in this investigation than they did in other studies. However, such discussions were marginal in this thesis. If an interpretive approach were taken, discussions would include more thick description, and be the focus of investigation.

To sum up, taking a realist approach to the study of managerial work, this thesis explored and developed some 'images' and 'ideals' of management (See Willmott, 1984). However, one implication of taking this perspective was elements of managerial work that are characteristic of an interpretive approach were rarely discussed or debated. Areas of managerial work that representative of an interpretive perspective, but not were not explored in detail in this thesis include: managerial work practices, managerial identity, discourse and managerial work, managerial sensemaking, managerial emotions, organizational culture, sociomateriality, gender relations in management, interpersonal relations, and organizational politics (macro and micro). Below, are a few questions that are representative of an interpretive approach to managerial work (with guiding references), that through further exploration and/or analysis of existing data, could contribute to theory development in the field of managerial work:

- How is the work of managers accomplished (how do managers do their work)? Is it different at the top manager level? If so, along what dimensions? (See Nicolini, 2012; Whittington, 2003, 2006)

- What identity work are managers involved in? How do managers want to appear? In which ways are historical conditions mirrored in managerial identity (what managers believe he/she should be)? (See Parker, 2000; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Kreiner et al., 2006; Watson, 2008)

- What discursive practices, rhetorical repertoires and forms of discourse do managers use in different situations, and how do they incorporate them in conversation? Where are these forms of discourse and rhetoric coming from? (See Watson, 1995; Heracleous and Hendry, 2000; Merilainen, 2004; Rouleau, 2005)

- What tools, artefacts and materials are involved in accomplishing the work of managers? Where are these tools, artefacts, and materials coming from? In which ways do they contribute (or detract) to the work of managers? (See Orlikowski, 2007; Rafaeli and Pratt, 2006; Nicolini et al., 2012)

- What is the web of relations within which managers operate? How do they understand this network? What is the effect of relationships on managerial work and identity? What "technologies of relationality" (e.g., meetings, one-to-one, one-to-many) are used by managers and to what effects? (See Kotter, 1982; Watson, 2000; Brass et al., 2004; Alvesson, 2012)

- How do managers make sense and provide sense to others? What forms sensemaking do they use and prefer? (See Schwandt, 2005; Luscher and Lewis, 2008)

- What kind of emotional labour is involved in managerial work? How do emotions impact what managers do? (See Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002; Vie, 2009, 2012)

- Is there a gender dimension in the work of managers? How is this handled in practice? (See Eriksson, et al., 2008; Kanter, 1977; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin, 1999)

- Are managers rational decision makers or is their job fundamentally political? What does it mean for managers to behave politically? How do power dynamics / relations impact the work of managers? (See Butcher and Clarke, 2003; Ferris et al., 2007; Knights and Willmott, 1999; Kim et al., 2005; Willmott, 1997)

To illustrate how questions such as these might have been addressed in this thesis if an interpretive perspective were taken, and how, through interpretive analysis, such discussions could contribute to theory in the field of managerial work, two field note transcripts captured in this study are critically discussed through an interpretive lens. Analysis of these two transcripts provides readers with an idea (sample) of what an interpretive approach to managerial work research entails and how an interpretive approach differs from the realist approach taken in this thesis.

Transcript 1: Resource Allocation Meeting

> 7:30 a.m. - The CEO arrives at an off-site boardroom, shakes hands with hospital administrators, and asks how they are doing. He then sits at the head of the table, and takes the agenda and proposal out of his bag and sets them in front of him, he quickly skims the documents; beside him is the VP of Finance, VP of Communications and the COO of his organization; small talk is made. Once everyone is seated one of the administrators closes the door and kicks off the meeting by

thanking the CEO and other executives for their time to meet with them and proceeds with a roundtable of introductions. The chair of the meeting (a department head) begins by providing an update on capital projects that are underway in the hospital, and argues that there is a "desperate need" for funding an expansion of cardiac services as cardiac services are operating "beyond capacity" with "increasing demand due to the aging population in the region". The chair of the meeting finishes by asking the CEO "what can the health region contribute?" The CEO responds by explaining that the project is important and certainly "on the radar" but that the province and the region are in an unfortunate fiscal situation, which is one of cost reduction. He explains the process of how funds are allocated from the provincial government and prioritized. He asks the CFO to elaborate how the funding is allocated (as a subject matter expert). After the CFO's explanation, the CEO states "money coming in has been going down over the past couple of years, which is an unfortunate reality as there are many projects worthy of investment, which could improve care delivery and outcomes … it is a time for tough decisions". He brings up examples of some projects that are long overdue, illustrating the dire need for investment in the area, and tough decisions that need to be made. After discussing options and timeframes, which are pushed back due to the budget, there is a growing tension occurring between the administrators and the physician leaders. However, the CEO remains calm, logically explaining the situation, never raising his voice. The physicians become passionate / upset, arguing that the level of care being delivered could be greatly improved with an expansion. Having to move the meeting forward to discuss other operational issues, the CEO promises to provide the administrators with additional information on the budget, to discuss it further in private, and to take the proposal from the physician administrators to the board for discussion. The meeting ends at 8:25 a.m. Immediately following the meeting the CEO tells the executives present to meet him in his office at 9:00 a.m. to debrief, and settle on some action items that strive to maintain positive relationships with this physician group.

Describing the work of a top manager for a period of one and a half hours, this field note transcript outlines, in detail, the actions of a top manager in a meeting with a group of physician administrators. Taking a realist approach, only a few

specific components of the transcript were included in this thesis. Specifically, the location of the meeting, size of the meeting, length of the meeting, managerial engagement with technology in meetings, and meeting attendees. Examining the data in this way, the work activities performed in this study were compared to earlier examinations of managerial work – contributing to existing theory and managerial practice on a macro level. However, there are also a number of insights about the nature of managerial work that could be drawn from the data collected if it were examined through an interpretive lens.

For example, transcript 1 provides insight into how power dynamics impact the work of managers, a topic that was not discussed in this thesis, but is important to the theorization of managerial work (Knights and Willmott, 1999; Kim et al., 2005; Willmott, 1997). This is present in the description of the managers in the room, by position. In the meeting the CEO sat at the head of the table, flanked by his executives, and at the other end of the table, the physician managers were situated. Creating an 'us' versus 'them' situation, the executive leadership team, guided by the CEO, worked as a united collective to carefully explain that there would be no funding for the physician group in the immediate future. The CEO led the discussion and was looked to for answers by the physicians. However, recognizing the depth of his knowledge on some of the issues, the CEO utilized the 'collective intelligence' (Heifetz and Donald, 1997) of his leadership team, deferring a few questions to his vice presidents in attendance, whom he openly acknowledged were more knowledgeable on specific issues. Interpersonally, this illustrates a high level of trust and dependence on his executive team. Further interpretive exploration into

executive relationships and dependencies could contribute to theories of trust and power in organizations (See Atkinson and Butcher, 2003). This delegation by the CEO also provides justification for the other executives attendance at the meeting (for knowledge support and balancing power, given the large number of physician stakeholder attendees), providing some rationale for why managers spend so much time in the company of their subordinates (managers in this study were found to spend 72.7% of their time in meetings with subordinates).

Power relations / dynamics are also visible in the managing of agendas. In this transcript the physician group chaired the meeting, however, the CEO pushed to move the agenda along to keep the meeting on track. The physicians obliged despite being passionate about the issue at hand. Additionally, following the meeting with the physicians, the CEO wanted to have a debriefing meeting with the other executives in attendance. While not in this transcript, a number of the executives were scheduled to attend other meetings at 9:00 a.m., but chose to delay those meetings to attend the meeting with his CEO. This suggests that the CEOs time and concerns were more important than those of his executive team. Interpretive analysis of follow-up meetings, such as the one scheduled after this difficult meeting, could be used to inform sensemaking theory (Pye, 2005; Luscher and Lewis, 2008) as managers in this study would meet to first make sense of what had transpired (what each of them heard) and then collectively develop strategic solutions.

Transcript 1 also highlights the highly political nature of managerial work in public sector organizations, another topic largely absent in the body of this thesis, and managerial work literature more generally (Willmott, 1984, 1987; Dargie, 1998;

Watson, 1994/2001). This transcript describes the somewhat constrained environment in which the healthcare CEO operates in -- having to depend on funds allocated from the provincial government for operations. In the transcript the CEO acted as a representative for the government agenda, a role not described by Mintzberg (1973), and thus not included in this thesis. The CEO enacted this role by explaining the funding process, responsibilities and limitations of the health authority, and rationale for decisions and projects underway. Notably, he did so carefully, without being overly critical or accusatory of the government, knowing that, as the CEO, he is appointed by the board of directors (and thus accountable to them), all of whom are appointed by the Minister of Health (See Philippon and Braithwaite, 2008). This transcript therefore illustrates the breath of the administrative reach of Canadian Healthcare CEOs, showing that public sector CEOs have obligations not only to staff and clients, but also to the public indirectly via the electorate. This is important to highlight for management theory, as the powers, obligations, and responsibilities of public sector CEOs are rarely described in managerial work literature, and are often overstated and occasionally misrepresented in the media. It thus raises questions relating to what the actual job of public sector CEOs is, and how much discretion public sector CEOs really have (perceived, symbolically, and actually).

Emotional aspects of managing are yet another area of managerial work that is evident in transcript 1, with the physicians being emotional about their program, and the CEO laboring to remain emotionally calm (detached) and rational (See Vie, 2009). While it would be easy escalate situations such as the one described in

transcript 1, it was rare to find a CEO lose his or her 'cool' in this study, despite being constantly 'under fire' from stakeholders. Interpretive discussions of how emotions (or a lack there of) impact managerial work could inform managerial identity (Knights and Willmott, 1999; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) and decision-making theories (Dane and Pratt, 2007; Gaudine and Thorne, 2001).

The emotional interaction in transcript 1 between the physicians and the CEO gives insight into the type of discourse and rhetoric that is used by managers in debates in the Canadian healthcare sector (Watson, 1995; Merilainen, 2004). The physician managers used language such as 'desperate need', 'beyond capacity', and 'increasing demand' to build their argument, while the CEO responded using terms such as 'on the radar', 'unfortunate reality', 'cost reduction' and 'a time for tough decisions', to calmly, sensitively, and respectfully respond to the physician request. To manage emotions and relationships, the CEO did not respond bluntly, stating that the physician group is 'better off than most', 'there is no money', and 'that they should not expect anything for a long time', although that was what was really being said if one reads between the lines. This example thus illustrates that 'how you say something' can be just as important, if not more important than as 'what is being said'.

Finally, managerial practices were evident in an interpretive reading of transcript 1, which were not presented in a realist interpretation of this data. For example, this transcript describes how the CEO acted towards attendees in the meeting. Immediately entering the room the CEO addressed each person individually -- shaking hands and making small talk (discussing topics such as the weather,

family, travel, sports, and other work projects/roles). The practice of shaking hands and exchanging pleasantries, as described in the transcript, was consistent amongst the Canadian healthcare managers in this study, would often last for a couple of minutes, and was frequently planned -- being built into meeting agendas. One way to expand on this theoretically would be to examine the meaning behind this practice, the signals it sends to others, and implications of engaging (and not engaging) in such practices on success and effectiveness (See Luthans et al., 1985).

Transcript 2: Strategy Development Meeting

> 8:00 a.m. A project manager comes to the CEO's office with the goal of refining a conceptual strategic model for primary care delivery in the health authority. Following an exchange of pleasantries the project manager begins the meeting by presenting work on the model that had been conducted to date. Trying to understand the workings of the model the CEO tries to understand what the project manager is explaining and draws a component of the model that is not making sense to her on the white board. Together they try to visualize how the model will fit with other components of the organization. At 8:15 a.m. they appear to hit a wall. The CEO says, "I think the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) may be able to help us with this, I will see if she is available". The CEO goes down the hall and knocks on the open door of the CNO, asking her if she has a minute. She obliges and returns with the CNO. Working as team the three systematically talk through the model, at 8:30 a.m. the CNO leaves to attend a meeting. Recognizing that the model will have an effect on operations, the CEO suggests that the Chief Operating Officer (COO) be brought into the development of the model. Again the CEO leaves the room and requests input from the COO, who is engaging in telephone call, but indicates that he will be down to have a look at the model in a few minutes. The CEO returns to the room and examines the white board for a few minutes processing how the model would work. The COO arrives at 8:40 a.m. and the CEO presents the model to him. The COO states "the model makes sense to me … this is exciting, the challenge

will be at the implementation stage, as getting buy-in from the physicians is always challenging". Everyone agrees. The CEO suggests that the model be presented at the next leadership meeting in two weeks, and that the project manager develop a draft engagement plan for discussion – "it will be a working meeting". The project manager agrees to have something prepared. The meeting finishes at 9:10. The CEO sits at the computer and begins to go through emails.

Similar to the transcript 1, this field note excerpt describes some of the CEOs actions in a meeting with other managers. As it was focused specifically on developing a strategy this meeting was accordingly coded as time spent 'strategizing' in this thesis (using a Mintzbergian approach to the data), contributing to the finding that public sector managers spend 9% of their time 'strategizing', and the conclusion made that managers in public and private sectors engage in similar activities. This finding explains how managers spend their time in a broad general sense, however, like a number of the findings in this thesis, it could be complemented by interpretive data that could provide insight into what manager's specifically do while they are in meetings, how they do what they do, and why they do what they do.

Taking an interpretive approach to this transcript, evidence of how managers in a Canadian healthcare organization work and develop strategies begins to emerge (Whittington, 2003, 2006). This particular transcript highlights the practice of engagement as a critical component in the development of strategy (also see Hoon, 2007). This is evidenced in the transcript by the CEO seeking input from two other senior managers (CNO and COO) in a relatively short meeting. Additionally, the COO pointed out the importance of engagement in the implementation phase of the project, suggesting that even the best of strategies can fail if there is not enough of

the 'right' engagement. Notably, the importance of engagement was also emphasized by other CEOs in this study. Another CEO stated that when you are contemplating making a final decision as CEO you need to ask yourself: "Have I consulted with all the people that this decision will impact? … There needs to be extensive consultation in healthcare because problems are extremely complex and impact a large number of people."

In healthcare leadership literature, 'engaging others' is often considered to be a core competency (See Jiang et al., 2008; Racette et al., 2013). However, while it is often stated why engagement is important using positivistic data, such as results of engagement programs, there is rarely interpretive data illustrates how engagement could or should occur, when, and in what context. Transcript 2 on the other hand provides some insight into how engagement in strategy development can occur in organizations and why it is important, through example. Transcript 2 also illustrates some of the informal interpersonal interactions that occur in managerial work, an area of work that was not expressly evident in most managerial work literature. For example, it shows how engagement can occur in the moment, on the fly, not always need to be planned (See Kotter, 1982). It also demonstrates, similar to transcript 1, how the power relations can impact work. On multiple occasions CEO requests (sometimes referred to as 'summoning') took others away from their daily work, despite their busy, often overbooked schedules.

Looking at vignettes such as transcript 2 in an interpretive light could also contribute to other theoretical debates, such as the established debate in the managerial work literature surrounding whether public sector management is more

complex than the private sector management (See Boyne, 2002). Metcalfe (1993, p. 174), for example, argues that more stakeholder engagement is required in the public sector as "government operates through networks of interdependent organizations rather than through independent organizations which simply pursue their own objectives". Through a discussion of specific managerial encounters in different contexts (i.e. public and private), a picture of engagement processes could begin to emerge, illustrating the complexity of engagement practices and relationships. Notably, while this thesis sought to explore differences between public and private management, complexity was not addressed as the data, when examined in a Mintzbergian fashion, did not allow for such analysis. The only data presented that could relate to complexity was the amount of time managers spent in meetings and with whom (number of people). However, taking an interpretive approach to the data from this study, a picture of what engagement looks like, and entails in the Canadian health sector could be developed.

Lessons for managerial practice

In this investigation there were a few activities and practices observed that were considered to be particularly relevant to managerial practice. These include approaches taken by top managers in this study with regards to managing information, managing unplanned change, motivating employees, and thinking critically. Importantly, discussing these practices sheds some light as to 'why managers did what they did' and 'how they did what they did' in this study. As these

practices were captured from the Canadian healthcare industry they are particularly

relevant for managers in the Canadian healthcare industry at the top manager level,

however, they may also be relevant for managers at other levels in other contexts.

- *Managing information overload.* While information is a manager's most

  valuable commodity in a knowledge economy, managers are bombarded with

  far more information than they can process (Hemp, 2009). Confronted with

  the issue of information overload the top managers in this study illustrated a

  strong preference for verbal information over written information. As one

  CEO stated in an interview:

> I simply don't have time to sit down and deal with emails
> for 1-2 hours a day. As a result I need to cherry pick. If I
> don't recognize the sender there is a good chance that I
> will not even open the email … my assistant will review
> all of the emails for me to make sure that I did not miss
> anything. I need to carefully choose how I spend my time.

Information overload via email was a problem expressed by all the managers

in this study, with a number of complaints regarding the time requirements

related to addressing email. Provided that a sizable portion of emails are often

from a small number of individuals (in this study this was primarily the

leadership/executive team), managers would often prefer to address emails

through meetings. This was done either through frequent 1:1 meetings with

subordinates during which time updates would be exchanged, or quick face-

face discussions where the manager under study would drop-in subordinate's

offices seeking clarification, or to provide guidance (answers to questions).

Managers in this study would often allocate time near the end of the day (4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.) when they would move from office to office giving and receiving information about the day's events. Notably, but not surprisingly, the managers would interact with the offices closest to them the most frequently face-face (See Peponis et al., 2007). The managers noted that communication was facilitated through the physical space in which they worked, and that it was natural and seamless when offices were a stone's throw away.

Another method that was employed by managers to cope with information overload was to be explicit about the kinds of questions that were posed by subordinates in emails. The managers in this study would often remind others to keep emails short (e.g. a line or two) and to be as specific (to the point) as possible. This would generally involve a statement in the form of a brief update or a couple of questions requiring clarification. If the manager felt that a substantial response was warranted they would take steps to schedule a meeting on the topic (either in person or over the phone), rather than engaging in long, time-consuming, back and forth email threads. Another reason for doing so was privacy and confidentiality, as verbal discussions, unlike email responses cannot be easily forwarded to others unbeknownst to the original author.

- *Responding to unplanned directional change.* CEOs hold a considerable amount of power and influence in organizations, however, it is important to remember that CEOs, like all managers, have a 'boss' or report to (the

chairman of the board, and board of directors more generally). They are also accountable to a large number of stakeholders. The latter is especially significant in the public sector and quasi-public sector, where funds are often allocated or 'earmarked' for certain projects and initiatives. With a reporting relationship to the board of directors, CEO autonomy is limited to the extent that decisions are politically acceptable to the board of directors. In this investigation, top managers were, on occasion, 'strongly advised' to take specific positions on policies and initiatives that were considered to be more 'political' (especially when events were in the media), than 'evidence based'. These 'forced' positions were not necessarily congruent with the executive's vision or strategic plan. However, reporting to the board of directors, the CEOs had an obligation to follow the direction of the board. When this occurred the CEOs indicated that they needed to carefully manage the expectations of their employees, particularly when considerable effort was taken to collect evidence for initiatives. The following practices were noted in this investigation:

o *Quick responses.* Managers would meet with those affected by changes in-person (if possible), as soon as possible, so that information is not received indirectly through the rumor mill. One CEO noted that "if time passes a story can fester and take on a life of its own" (also see Kimmel, 1995). The need to respond quickly to changes is one reason for the long hours put in by the managers in the study, as they would often work after hours to inform their subordinates of any changes / updates that they had

from meetings with the board chair or other notable stakeholders such as politicians.

o *Provide rationale for the change.* CEOs would provide justification for a change, even if it is not evidence based. In the public service, the role of the manager is to make decisions on behalf of the public, which was noted as not necessarily being "rational" or "logical" in all circumstances. When providing rationale the CEOs would take steps not to "step on anyone's toes" or shine a negative light on those responsible for the decision. One CEO emphasized this point saying that "nothing is more important than having good working relationships with your peers … if working relationships deteriorate it is time to find new colleagues or a new job".

o *Frame change as positive.* Although a directional change may have thrown a kink in a plan or goal, CEOs would emphasize any positive attributes in meetings. Framing would help shape the perspectives through which people view the world (see Hallahan, 1999). Top managers in this study appeared to be eternal optimists, viewing change as an "opportunity", "learning" and "challenge to overcome", rather than an "issue" or "problem". One method that was used to inspire others in times of change was to provide them with 'battle stories' of similar situations they experienced in their career, and an explanation of how they moved forward (an approach also used for motivating employees).

- *Motivating employees.* In this investigation top managers rarely made decisions on large issues; rather they would present others with options on ways forward and evidence (pros and cons) and let them decide on the direction as subject matter experts. This is a stark contrast from traditional views of a boss "calling the shots" (Senge, 1990). As one of the manager's stated in a discussion regarding decision making:

> I'm the boss … but only want to make decisions when the executives in their respective functions can not come to an agreement or make a decision on their own … if they can not make a decision I will certainly make one for them.

This particular manager expressed that this was different from previous CEOs who would frequently hold private meetings on weekends, make all the decisions, and provide managers with their marching orders on Monday morning. A different CEO suggested that empowering employees by giving them autonomy to make their own decisions was one of the most effective ways to motivate them, more effective even than monetary rewards. This CEO felt that one of his primary roles as a top manager was to provide members of his team with strategic options that were of interest to them, which aligned with the organizational vision. Another method that was used by managers in this investigation to motivate employees was by telling stories (Boyce, 1996). All of the managers shadowed were excellent storytellers, and through stories, the managers were able to articulate their vision by relating to employees at every level of the organization (referred to

as *inspirational motivation* – See Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006). Interestingly, the most powerful stories seemed to come, not from war stories in executive offices, but from stories that the CEOs would tell that were derived from interactions with front line employees (illustrating the importance of 'tours'). Stories from the front line seemed to 'ground managers', giving them purpose by illustrating how individuals are affected by policies and programs (positively and negatively). Managers in this study would frequently use stories as an 'icebreaker', especially when discussing topics that were sensitive (see Bate, 2004 for examples of stories that are similar in structure to those observed in this investigation).

- *Strategies for critical thinking.* Previous studies of managerial work found that mangers spent very little time alone, and were frequently interrupted. As a result, a number of studies found that managers have little time for long term planning or abstract formulation (Carlson, 1951, Mintzberg, 1973). Management itself is constantly associated with putting out fires, attending meetings, and responding to requests. The managers in this investigation were no different, all having demanding schedules. However, recognizing that providing direction to their respective organizations, the CEOs in this investigation used a number of strategies to free up time to 'think' and 'problem solve'. Despite this, one of the board chairs in the organizations under study insisted that the CEO should spend even more time "thinking, planning, and strategizing about the future" and less time in meetings. The

following are some of the practices that were used to escape to 'clear their minds':

o *Schedule 'private' time in your calendar.* One CEO said "if you do not book 'private' time, you will not have any … this is a lesson I had to learn the hard way and almost burned out early in my career". All of the managers in this study formally scheduled time for themselves, either in their office, at which time they would instruct their assistant(s) to act as buffers / gatekeepers (see Tengblad, 2006), or out of the office. One CEO made a habit of it booking Wednesday afternoons 'to reflect and plan'. This CEO emphasized that it was important to let it be known to the executive team, and let them know that it was okay to contact him in urgent situations. He also recognized that there were many instances when meetings would have to be booked to 'put out fires', but he tried to keep a 'private meeting' at least one afternoon a month, even declining important meetings for 'reflection'.

o *Work off-peak hours.* Although it may seem simple, the managers in this study indicated that heading into the office early and leaving early, or coming in late and staying late, when there were few people in the office, improved their ability to think through problems, without having to work more hours. Managers in this study often worked irregular hours (e.g. 7:00am-3:00pm or 9:30am-7:00pm).

o *Escape the office.* Social activities, either with or without colleagues, were expressed as being important in the thinking processes of managers. Some

of the activities that the managers in this study engaged in included: golfing, sailing, and spending time with families. One CEO regularly scheduled golf games with members of his executive team, which he felt was "therapeutic" and "surprisingly constructive". While there is a debate in the business world regarding the relationship between work and play, with some arguing that leisure is time "lost from 'real' work" and others arguing that it facilitates business (Dobni, 2012), the top managers in this study clearly fell into the latter category. However, being public sector managers they lamented over being seen engaging in leisure activities during standard work hours, even for work purposes, due to possible negative press.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this dissertation I have explored the question 'what managers do'. In the form of three papers, this thesis has documented what is known about the nature and study of managerial work (**Paper #1**), provided new empirical evidence about what managers do through a comparison of managerial work activities (**Paper #2**), and discussed ethical implications of studying managers using the shadowing method (**Paper #3**). Through this collection of papers, this thesis has made a number of contributions to the theorization of management, study of management, and practice of management, building a strong case for the study of managerial work as a distinct research field. However, despite the many benefits of managerial work research that have been

presented in this thesis, surprisingly few have taken on the task of studying managerial work in recent years.

The absence of managerial work research reflects a broader shift in organization theory, with most of the literature labeled 'management' being of a normative nature with little information about what managers actually do (Hales, 1999; Mintzberg, 2009). A number of reasons, justifications, and excuses have been cited for this absence ranging from studies investigating 'what do managers do' having an "air of naiveté, insolence, and even redundancy about it" (Hales, 1986, p. 88), to being uninteresting and 'unfashionable', doing little to enhance the academic status of researchers (Noordegraaf and Stewart, 2000; Stewart, 2008). Though, regardless of the reasons, the implications for organization studies have been significant, as the field of managerial work studies has long-played a central role in the development of management education curricula, the advancement of managerial practice, the progression of management theory, and closing the research-practice gap (Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Mintzberg, 1975/1990). As Mintzberg (1975/1990, p. 49) queried, without a proper, up to date, answer of what managers do "How can we teach management? [and] … How can we improve the practice of management at all?"

It is therefore promising to note that, in addition to the research presented in this dissertation, prominent authors such as Davide Nicolini (2012) and Stefan Tengblad (2012) have been working to bring managerial work back into organization studies through practice theory. However, such efforts remain to be too few and far between. Accordingly, in an attempt to spur more constructive research on the topic

of managerial work, this thesis concludes by echoing earlier calls for research that aims to uncover the nature of managerial work (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Mintzberg, 2009) and prescribing a number of ways to do so.

While a number of suggestions have been presented in each of the individual papers, there are three main suggestions for the field that may be particularly effective in restoring the luster of managerial work research. The first is that future examinations extend beyond the question of 'what managers do' to the 'why's' and 'how's' of management practice. Although this thesis took a traditional approach to the study of managerial work to explore differences in work across sectors, it has illustrated how taking an interpretive lens to study managerial work may hold benefits for the field. Specifically, that investigating questions relating to why managers engage in specific practices, and how they perform practices, could shed light on drivers of managerial work such as culture and politics.

The second suggestion is that more in-depth comparative research on managerial research be conducted. Stewart (1982, p. 11) made this point 30 years ago, arguing "much could be learned by careful comparative studies". Since then however, there have been few follow-up articles (notable exceptions being Luthans et al., 1993 and Stewart et al., 1994). There are a number of different avenues that could be taken in this regard (e.g. cultural / national, organizational size, industry specific –marketing, accounting, finance). However, building on this research, within country, direct comparisons of managerial work at the first-line, middle, and executive levels in public and private organizations could be particularly valuable. Exploring managing along these lines, and then later educating business students and

professionals about the job characteristics, activities, and skill requirements of different types of managers could help improve hiring selection procedures, thus improving organizational performance and effectiveness.

The third and final suggestion of this thesis is that future research better integrate theoretical debates about management into empirical investigations to generate theory in the area managerial work. As it has been stated throughout this thesis, the field of managerial work is often criticized for being too descriptive (Hales, 1986), a stereotype that the field needs put holes in to move forward. Two theoretical debates that were tangentially discussed in this thesis that could benefit from further exploration are: (1) whether managerial work at different levels are actually comprised of a distinctive set of activities and practices, or merely related to organizational hierarchy, power, and authority (See Grey, 1999); and (2) whether New Public Management (Hood, 1991, 1995) initiatives have real or perceived impacts on managerial practice.

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