Investigating Managerial Research Methods

A Study on how the Choice of Method when Investigating Managerial Work may Affect the Outcomes

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Abstract

Many researchers have tried to map what managers do at work and when doing this, different methods have been used. We have chosen four works on the subject, reviewed them and analysed them to see if there is any connection between the method chosen and the obtained results. We have also performed an empirical investigation with a bank manager in Uppsala, using both the diary method with an follow-up and interview method to see which one is to prefer in that situation and why.

The theoretical analysis showed that there indeed seems to be a probability for obtaining a certain type of results by choosing a special method. Keeping diaries result in exact but superficial and brief descriptions while interviews go deeper into the area of understanding a certain act or behaviour. Observational methods give the researcher the possibility to become engrossed in whichever area he/she finds most interesting by monitoring what the manager does. At the same time the researcher is not dependent on manager’s own ability to describe the work that is performed. Finally, responding to a beeper and reporting the current activity may lead to a more incoherent picture of managerial work, but does otherwise give the same kind of results as a diary.

Due to the occurrence of more or less delicate issues in manager-client relations within the area of banking, observational methods are not to prefer. Neither is the beeper method, since it can be considered bothersome. The diary method and the interview are better. Which is the best depends on the purpose of the study as well as the opportunities of the manager to participate.
1 Introduction

Management studies became the interest of researchers as the industrial revolution came about. Early schools from this time had a very rational view of a manager and dealt mostly with what directions they thought managers should turn their attention to. (Mintzberg 1973 p. 10.)

Some of the schools that were founded at this time tried to label the activities of managers into separate categories to get a picture of what the work actually consisted of. One example of this is POSDCORB, an acronym standing for planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting that was built on managerial functions originally founded by Henri Fayol in 1916. (Mintzberg 1973 p. 9.) There are however doubts if acronyms like POSDCORB really describe managerial work – Carlson claims that descriptions such as those made by Fayol, Gulick and many others are too general and indeed describe very poorly what a manager really does. (Carlson 1964 p. 21.) The existences of inconsistent opinions among managerial researchers indicate that this subject must be further explored.

It’s not easy to measure what a manager really does. When reviewing literature on managerial work, one finds that a variety of methods have been used. Originating from social sciences, methods such as surveys, experimental research and archival research have been frequently used to generate data. The problem is that none of these methods seems to be particularly well suited to study managers. (Hannaway 1989 p. 36.) We agree that this seems to be true for experimental and archival research, and have mainly directed our attention towards other methods, which have been used in the literature we treated for this study.

2 Problem Formulation

Despite acronyms like POSDCORB described above, and other extensive research on the area of managerial work, our point of view is that it is still not clear what managers actually do when working. After having reviewed the literature on the subject, we think that what is written about managerial work is more concerned with what managers should be like and how they should act and not about what they are like and what they do. Since we are interested in how managerial work can be depicted as it is, and not as it should be, we will direct our attention to the problem of choosing the most appropriate method/methods for the study in question.
3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to study whether the method chosen to investigate the activities of a manager affects the result, which the researcher finds. We aim to analyse the four works described in section 5, review the relevant methods in these cases and to conduct an empirical study with a local manager to try to get an idea of which is to prefer in that particular situation.

4 Line of Approach

The four works by the authors will be reviewed in section 6. In the next section, the different methods that are used will be presented and explained. The works will be analysed and compared with each other in chronological order, in section 8, to see which method yielded which results.

We will thereafter continue with the empirical investigation. Here, a description of the investigation, as well as results and analysis will be presented. Finally, a discussion and a conclusion will follow.

5 Delimitations

The literature chosen to be reviewed in this thesis consists of the following works: Sune Carlson’s Företagsledare i arbete from 1964, Rosemary Stewart’s Managers and Their Jobs from 1967, Henry Mintzberg’s The Nature of Managerial Work from 1973, and Jane Hannaway’s Managers Managing, the Workings of an Administrative System from 1989. The three works mentioned firstly are classical works, constituting the foundation on which present research on managerial work has been built. Even though they were written quite some time ago, we have gotten the impression that they are still valid, quoted and used for educational purposes and that is why we chose them. The last work has been chosen for its interesting approach and straight answers and because we think that it can contribute with important information. It also deals with an interesting method, which we are very keen on comparing with the others.
For the empirical investigation, we limited ourselves to search for only bank managers since it lies in our own personal interest, as students majoring in economics, to investigate this area. For practical reasons we only contacted bank managers in the Uppsala and Stockholm region.

6 Investigations

By investigations we, in this section, refer to the four studies that have been conducted by Carlson, Stewart, Mintzberg and Hannaway. The investigations will be presented below in chronological order. For each researcher, we will first summarize information about the study itself in order to compare and analyse them at a later stage. A presentation of the results follows after the presentation of each investigation.

6.1 Carlson

The purpose of Carlson’s investigation was to describe the work of a manager using a description built on observations (Carlson 1964 p. 29). We do not believe that Carlson meant that he would monitor each manager, but that he intended to investigate them using a method of choice. Both diary studies, where the manager writes down everything that he/she does, and interviews were used (Ibid. p. 34). Ten managers participated in the study but only the results of the nine Swedish managers were analysed (Ibid. p. 29). These nine managers were all CEO:S with university degrees and they represented nine different companies in different industries (Ibid. p. 48-49). The investigation lasted four weeks per manager in all cases but one (Ibid. p.45). The reason for the anomaly is unknown to us.

The nine managers were investigated using information on five areas. These were (Ibid. p. 28-29):

- The location of the work
- The relations between people and departments in the companies
- Communication techniques
- The character of matters they engaged in
- What actions the managers took in different situations.

The location of the activities was used to indirectly find information on what the manager may have been doing (if the manager had spent his/her entire day in the office, one could
conclude that he/she hadn’t made any rounds). The relations were investigated to see with whom the manager interacted, and the choice of communication technique was used to see how well the manager communicated with others. The character of matters that the managers engaged in was used to investigate which areas they turned their attention to, and the actions were studied to see what activities the managers engaged in. (Ibid. p. 29-33.)

The investigation involved companies that Carlson in most cases had established relations with a long time ago. This gave him the benefit of knowing whom he was dealing with. The data for the survey was gathered using different methods, varying with the type of data that was to be collected. The secretary, the managers’ personal assistant and the janitor participated in collecting some of the data, whereas other kinds of data were collected in written form from the managers themselves. Yet other parts were acquired through thorough interviews with the managers or people surrounding them. (Ibid. p. 34.)

To see where the managers in Carlson’s investigation performed their work, the secretaries filled in forms with information on what amounts of time the manager spent in the different places. The form was filled in three times a day. In cases where the secretaries were unable to answer the questions, they received help from other employees or the manager himself. As expected it was almost impossible to get information on work hours outside the office as well as personal contacts which the manager engaged in at other places. It was also difficult to get a complete picture of, for instance, telephone calls. (Ibid. p. 34-38.)

Relations between people and departments as well as the communication techniques, were categorized in direct and indirect contacts (information received from a third party). Some of the information on this was found in the diary material collected for the purpose of identifying where the manager spent his time. Additional information was found in written reports from committees, meeting etc which the manager frequently participated in. Information on what communication technique that was used in which situation, was collected from interviews with the manager, the secretary and people in the telephone exchange. (Ibid. p. 39.)

A second diary investigation was conducted in order to study which the matters that managers tended to, were. A questionnaire, which each manager carried around at all times, was used when gathering the data. The form had seven subtitles: date, time, telephone calls, location, contacted person, description of the question and action, in which the managers had to mark the appropriate sections. The forms were collected twice a day. In contrast to the previous parts of the investigation, this one gave information only on the managers’ opinions on their own work – not on what they actually did. (Ibid. p. 41-42.)
To complete the investigation and get answers to all remaining questions, an extensive series of interviews was performed. The managers as well as their secretaries and other employees with important insight were interviewed. The interviews contained both specific (closed) questions and a part in which the interviewee could express him/her self more freely (open questions). (Ibid. p. 44.)

6.1.1 Results

The investigation showed that an average manager spent 56% of his/her time within the company, 36% at other locations and 8% at home during the investigation. This categorization was made in spite of difficulties in deciding what was actually work and what was not (for example lunch and reading professional journals etc). Differences were found depending on which manager that was investigated. Top managers spent more time outside the company, just like managers in big cities spent more time at conferences compared to provincial managers. (Carlson 1964 p. 56-58.) The investigation also showed that managers were frequently interrupted, with an overwhelming majority of activities not lasting longer than seven minutes before interruption (Ibid. p. 65).

Regarding communication techniques, the investigation showed that managers spent very little time writing letter and dictating (Ibid. p. 77). It also showed that oral communication during non-planned meetings/encounters was of great importance and that written communication became more important with increasing company size (Ibid. p. 81).

An analysis of contacts and communication with the surrounding environment showed which people the manager interacted with. A communication scheme was made. It contained lines that showed the different communication types that were used between the interacting people. Carlson also found out that the amount of time spent interacting outside the company varied much with the type of manager in question. Bank managers spent very little time outside their companies since clients were expected to come to them. Another conclusion was that managers had little contact with suppliers and clients. (Ibid. p. 77-78.)

Regarding internal communication, it was more difficult to draw conclusions since all companies seemed to define their meetings in different ways. However, temporary meetings with employees seemed to be of great importance. (Ibid. p. 81.) Two of the nine managers had even consciously planned the design of the headquarters after the type of communication they desired (Ibid. p. 90). Some managers preferred to keep in touch with employees during work time only, others wanted to bond even more and therefore socialized with employees even
after working hours (Ibid. p. 81). Managers had subordinates coming to their offices for between two and five hours every day, the kind and duration of the visits varied (Ibid. p. 87.)

The categorization of the matters to which the managers directed their attention is by far too complicated to present here. We only summarize that the matters depended on which type of manager that was investigated and that the results varied much. (Ibid. p. 87.) Unfortunately the data on the actions, which the managers took with respect to the matters, was incomplete and too limited to draw any conclusions from (Ibid. p. 102).

Finally, Carlson commented that before conducting the research he though of managers as conductors leading the company, but in the end he thought of managers as puppets where hundreds of people were pulling the strings. (Ibid. p. 46.)

6.2 Stewart

The purpose of Stewart’s investigation was to describe the variation in managerial jobs using a description built on diary studies. 160 middle and senior managers from three organizations participated in this study that lasted for four weeks. (Stewart 1988 p. 11.) In her study, Stewart limited herself not to describe the nature of activities that took less than 5 minutes to perform. For these, she only registered their frequency and not the time they took. (Ibid. p. 15-16.)

Stewart proposed that one should try to find answers to the seven questions below to find out what a manager does. In her own study, she focused on questions 2-4. (Ibid. p. 9.)

1. How specialised is the job?
2. What kind of contact does the job involve?
3. What form do most of the contacts have?
4. What type of work pattern does the job tend to implement?
5. What kind of decisions does the job involve?
6. What are the main types of communication?
7. How much variety, and what kinds of variations, are provided by the job?

In the development process of the diary, that was going to be used in the four-week investigation, Stewart used 160 junior, middle, and senior managers to find the most appropriate design. Not only did these mangers write down “everything” that they did every day of the week for nine weeks, but they also met up once a week to evaluate the questions in
the diary and propose a new design for it. They therefore provided information on nine different diaries. After this evaluation period of nine weeks, the new and improved diary was provided to the middle and senior managers for a period of four weeks. In the end of that month the managers came back with their final points of view about the diary. (Ibid. p. 8-9.)

To reassure that the right data was gathered, Stewart used a complementary question form. In this particular case, the questions involved answering what the three most time-consuming activities during the day were and how frequently a manager documented what was happening around him. (Ibid. p. 9.) She also asked if the week was abnormal or not. Managers who for example answered that their week did not represent their everyday-work were excluded from the experiment. (Ibid. p. 10.)

6.2.1 Results

Stewart’s results showed that the typical manager on the middle and senior levels, out of the 160 that were in the survey-group, worked approximately 42.25 hours a week. During this time, everything from office-work to work at home was included. Taking into account the activities that took less than five minutes to perform, it can be said that a usual working-week of a manager is about 43-44 hours. (Stewart 1967 p. 15-16.)

On average, 32% of the work time was found to be spent on activities that were performed by the manager alone and not in cooperation with other people. This time seemed to vary largely depending on the stage of the managers’ careers. Top managers spent less time alone compared to general managers. (Ibid. p. 35.)

Managerial work was found to be highly fragmented, but Stewart failed to find any evidence that this was dependent on the type of manager. The most important thing was that the same area of expertise was investigated and therefore she came to the conclusion that the difference depended on the managers’ planning skills. (Ibid. p. 52-53.)

Stewart fed in the data from the 160 managers in a special computer program that categorized the different managers into homogenous groups. The final number of groups became five as the third original group generated groups 3-5. (Ibid. p. 77.) They were:

- **Group 1, The Emissaries.** This group characterizes managers who are the face outward of the company. Much time is spent outside the company meeting people. This kind of manager works long hours to travel and make new contacts. The work of
this manager is less fragmented than that of managers in group number 3, 4 and 5. (Ibid. p. 79.)

- **Group 2, The Writers.** These are managers with a specific knowledge; they usually work alone and have a short work week. Most of the time is spent on activities that don’t involve participation of other people. This can possibly lead to less concern for others and a better possibility to plan ahead, requiring less work time. (Ibid. p. 83-84.)

- **Group 3, The Discussers.** This type of manager spends more than an “average amount of time” in discussions with other people, trying to find solutions to problems. This group can be called the horizontal group because of the time managers spend interacting with co-workers (people reporting to the same boss). They spend less time interacting with people they are in charge of. (Ibid. p. 89.)

- **Group 4, The Trouble-shooters.** These managers have the most fragmented work time and jump frequently between situations to handle crises. A failure to solve the problem immediately has larger consequences for these managers and their groups compared with other groups. (Ibid. p. 92.)

- **Group 5, The Committee-manager.** This person bears many similarities with the characteristics possessed by managers in groups 3 and 4, but this manager spends even more time in group-meetings and almost never with just one other person. This is the man that knows everybody and everything inside the company. (Ibid. p. 95-96.)

Lastly, Stewart came up with main characteristics that applied to most of the managers in her study. The majority of them were involved in fragmented work, preferred exchange of information through informal meetings, valued networks of contacts, and learned from the mistakes of others and themselves. (Ibid. p. 114-117.)

### 6.3 Mintzberg

The purpose of Mintzberg’s investigation was to describe the reason for why a manager acted as he/she did in a particular situation. Before the main study started, Mintzberg studied the managers for a whole month, gathering information on which places they visited, the duration of the visits and which people were present. This data was then stored so that it could be compared to the data that was going to be collected during the real study. Mintzberg also collected information on the organization to gain a deeper knowledge about the managers’ surroundings and what kind of work activities they handled during the days. Finally,
information on the managers themselves, such as background, personality, working hours etc, was collected. (Mintzberg 1973 p. 232.)

In the main study, Mintzberg used one week of structured observation to study five experienced chief executives of medium to large organizations as they performed their duties (Ibid. p. 237). He categorized each event during or shortly after the observation. (Ibid. p. 231-232). This research technique limited the number of managers that could be observed and the ones participating in the study were therefore carefully selected so that they could represent the rest (Ibid. p 240).

Mintzberg studied the managers for the chosen period of time to make sure that all possible activities were represented to validate the study (Ibid. p. 258). Possible problems in data collection stemmed from the inability to completely follow certain activities such as a telephone conversation and that it was not possible to follow the managers’ activities in his home. The last aspect was therefore totally left outside the scope of the study. Also, activities away from the organization such as meetings in other organizations were not investigated just like meetings which the researcher for one or another reason could not attend to. (Ibid. p. 268-269.)

Mintzberg did not think his presence influenced which activities the manager chose to do during the day since many activities are either planned in advance or not at all, such as meetings and telephone calls. However, Mintzberg admitted that the way in which the activity was performed might have been altered. (Ibid. p. 270.)

6.3.1 Results

After observing and having analysed every mail and all contacts that the manager dealt with, Mintzberg identified ten managerial roles that he concluded were present within all managers (Mintzberg 1973 p. 55).

- **Figurehead.** This manager performs activities that can be considered as symbolic duties of a legal and social nature, but they do seldom have any real relevance to the job of managing. There is no significant information processing or decision-making involved. (Ibid. p. 58.)

- **Leader.** This is the person that everybody looks up to. He/she is the one who creates the atmosphere that the employees work in. (Ibid. p. 60.)
- **Liaison.** This role builds on the relationship that the manager has with persons that he/she exchanges information with. This is usually someone outside the company or at least in a different department. (Ibid. p. 63.)

- **Monitor.** This manager has the role of an information-seeker that will enable him/her to understand what is happening around him/her (Ibid. p.67).

- **Disseminator.** This characteristic leads to that the manager gathers external information and distributes it within his/her own organization. This information is then passed on to people that are in need of it to solve problems. (Ibid. p. 71.)

- **Spokesman.** Instead of gathering information and distributing it within the organization, the Spokesman collects information from inside the organization and provides it to the external environment. (Ibid. p. 75.)

- **Entrepreneur.** This role acts as a decider and initiator (Ibid. p. 78).

- **Disturbance handler.** This role deals with situations that are partially outside the control of the managers. These situations are in some cases undesired and must be fixed as soon as possible. (Ibid. p. 82.)

- **Resource allocator.** This property of the manager makes sure that the resources are used in the most efficient way (Ibid. p. 85).

- **Negotiator.** When an organization finds itself in a non-routine situation this role is activated in the manager (Ibid. p. 90).

Mintzberg stated that these ten roles apply to all kinds of managers irrespective of level, since all the managers have in common that they share similar types of responsibilities. The manager cannot affect the existence of the ten roles, but how these roles are uttered can of course differ. (Ibid. p. 54.)

After discovering the different roles, Mintzberg began a search for how the ten roles could constitute different managerial job types. His search gave rise to eight hypothetical managerial types.

- **The Contact Man.** This manager is very charismatic – he/she is the face outwards of the company. Besides creating new and improved relationships for the company, he/she is also the one who finds the new trends and market demands. The two primary roles of this kind of manager are **Liaison** and **Figurehead.** (Ibid. p. 127.)

- **The Political Manager.** This role bears similarities with **The Contact Man** but applies to a higher level in the organization. Instead of having informal meetings, this person
meets with senior managers at other companies. The two primary roles of this kind of manager are Spokesman and Negotiator. (Ibid.)

- **The Entrepreneur.** This role appears when a manager is active in a small and/or growing company and not in a large one. The two primary roles of this kind of manager are the Entrepreneur and Negotiator. (Ibid. p. 128.)

- **The Insider.** If the company described in the previous managerial type grows to a larger one, the Entrepreneur will automatically transform into the Insider. This is someone who tries to improve the efficiency of the workers and the company itself. The two primary roles of this kind of manager are the Resource Allocator and the Leader. (Ibid.)

- **The Real-Time Manager.** This manager is very similar to the Insider, but is even more flexible. This type of manager can both arise in small companies and large ones that are in dynamic, competitive, and high-pressured environments. The primary role of this kind of manager is a Disturbance handler. (Ibid. p. 129.)

- **The Team Manager.** If we go up one step in the qualification ladder we will find this kind of a manager. This manager trains people to solve problems occurring in the organization in groups or by themselves. The primary role of this kind of manager is a Leader. (Ibid.)

- **The Expert Manager.** If a group of Team Managers is created, there has to be someone guiding them in a way that smoothens their work. This kind of manager gathers information and helps the managers to decide what to do in different situations. The two primary roles of this kind of manager are the Monitor and the Spokesman. (Ibid.)

- **The New Manager.** This manager is a person that concentrates on Liaison and Monitors what is happening around him. He/she is always trying to find the right time to take the final step and elucidate what kind of a manager he/she really is. This is done by stressing the Entrepreneur role at the beginning, and then by finding a suitable managerial character for him/herself and settle down. (Ibid.)

### 6.4 Hannaway

Hannaway’s study aimed at “going beyond other diary and observational studies and providing insight into the system as a whole”, using a method that minimized methodological problems and allowed for large sample sizes. Hannaway wanted to describe how the structure
and processes of managerial work fitted together. (Hannaway 1989 p. 43-45.) She was also interested in investigating managers in a broader sense and not just one special category of them (Ibid. p. 149).

The method of choice was the beeper method that will be described shortly. The investigation included 52 managers at different levels within a school district and went on for a six-week period. The managers were superintendents, program directors, and administrators or supervisors carrying out liaison activities with the schools. (Ibid. p. 149-150.) Managers first had to fill in a form with information about themselves and as well give names of people they worked often with. Hannaway then performed her main investigation in which managers responded at random “beep” signals. As the managers heard the sound, they had to answer ten questions about what type of task they were involved in, the content focus (for example “personnel”), the ideal task performer, the special focus of the task, the expected disposition of the task and the initiator of the activity. (Ibid. p. 45.) At these occasions, managers also had to answer subjective questions reflecting their task uncertainty. The managers were asked about the frequency, novelty and importance of the task. By not asking about the purpose of the activity (which is sometimes not possible to isolate or know in advance) or engaging in discussions on new or old activities but simply reporting time spent on each activity, Hannaway expected to avoid many problems. (Ibid. p. 46.)

6.4.1 Results

Many managers had problems describing the reason to, or the purpose of, many of their activities since these were in many cases not known to the manager. Their work seemed to be process-driven and could not easily be split up into discrete actions. It was also found to be difficult for managers to answer questions about their expectations on the future. (Hannaway 1989 p. 46.) Managers gave the impression of being demand-driven and socially active, they were very busy and interruptions in their work were common. The average manager spent 68% of his/her time with activities that were directed at them by someone else, but did not seem to put up much resistance against this. Their behaviour was mainly reactive and many managers preferred to wait for something to happen before taking actions. (Hannaway 1989 p. 52.)

Managerial work was found to be highly interactive - over 63% of their time was spent in meetings, conversations, phone calls etc (Hannaway 1989 p. 61). The interaction was either motivated by payoffs associated with the interaction itself or it was intrinsic satisfaction.
stemming from learning new things etc. In some cases, interaction was viewed as a means of increasing one’s own power by stockpiling information. (Hannaway 1989 p. 62-63.)

Managerial interactions were found to have three characteristics; they were mainly oral, generated by other managers and involved more than one other person. Managers spent less than two percent of their time reading materials sent by other managers. 68% of the time was spent in oral conversations involving other managers and of these activities were only 43% self-initiated. 30% of the interaction time was spent in meetings with at least five individuals – something that accounted for 20% of the total managerial time in the whole system. (Ibid. p 72-75.) In this study, managers were found to spend on average 15% of their total time initiating interactions (Ibid. p 79).

About 66% of the average manager’s time was spent with activities having a routine character with differences depending on at what level the manager was active. Upper-level managers were more involved in non-routine activities (44%) compared to lower-level managers (28%). The investigation also showed that routine activities were about three times as likely to be referred to the manager as to be initiated by him/herself. (Ibid. p. 100.) Managers also rated approximately 26% of their work as “more important” than what they “usually” do and about nine percent to be of less importance. Upper-level managers had higher rates on both measures while lower-level managers had lower values on both. (Hannaway 1989 p. 109.)

6.5 Summary Table

We have summarized some of the information we found in the four works and made a schedule so that the studies can be compared more easily.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the study</th>
<th>Carlson</th>
<th>Stewart</th>
<th>Mintzberg</th>
<th>Hannaway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe managerial work by observational techniques</td>
<td>Investigate variation in managerial jobs</td>
<td>Why a manager did as he/she did when solving a problem</td>
<td>Picture of how system parts fit together and describe individual managerial behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of method used</td>
<td>Diary and interviews</td>
<td>Diary study</td>
<td>Structured observation</td>
<td>Beeper method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation to results</td>
<td>Percent and descriptions</td>
<td>Percent, descriptions, five roles</td>
<td>Ten managerial roles, eight job types</td>
<td>Percent and descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of managers</td>
<td>9 (10*)</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of managers</td>
<td>CEO’s</td>
<td>Middle and senior managers</td>
<td>CEO’s</td>
<td>Superintendents, program directors and supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of investigation</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The table shows the summarized information on the investigations performed by four researchers. *Carlson’s study included ten managers but the analysis was only concerned with nine of them.
7 Methods

After having dealt with the four investigations, we were interested in finding out more about the specific methods that had been used. This was also a necessary step to be able to draw conclusions about the relations between methods and results.

The survey description is presented first since it is a generic term including more than one method. The methods from the four works are then described in chronological order, starting with Carlson’s methods, then Stewart’s and so on.

7.1 Surveys

Regardless of what kind of survey the researcher is to perform – interviews, questionnaires or some other form - there are some important aspects that must be kept in mind. Surveys usually provide useful information on the manager’s perception on his/her own work, but it is uncertain how well these methods actually describe the work itself. (Hannaway 1989 p. 36.) Despite this, one can identify some advantages offered by this method - large amounts of data can for instance be collected in a fairly economic way. However, one of the major disadvantages lays in the poor ability of managers to judge their own work. (Mintzberg 1973 p. 222.) Other disadvantages lie in the separation of categories previous to the execution of the activities, and the manager’s disability to estimate the amount of time they spend doing these activities. (Hannaway 1989 p. 36).

One must also keep in mind that one managerial activity is often hard to distinguish from another (Ibid. p. 37). Due to frequent interruptions in work, it is almost impossible to demand that managers should remember all activities during one day and furthermore that they should estimate the time for each. This is considered especially hard for non-standard activities. (Ibid. p. 38.)

It is important that both the researcher and the subjects agree on what the meanings of the different questions and categories are. It’s important not to use descriptions that may include almost all aspects of managerial work, like for instance “planning”, since these give poor information on what the manager really does. (Ibid. p. 40.) This issue was also raised by Mintzberg (Mintzberg 1973 p. 10).

When it comes to time estimations for activities, research has shown that managers often estimate the effort they put down instead of the amount of time (Hannaway 1989 p. 38). Expectations on the managerial role also influence the manager’s view about his/her own
work. Time spent on things that managers think they should be involved in is often overestimated. (Ibid. p. 38.)

We will not express our opinion on this technique since it describes several different methods. Our opinions on interviews can be found in the end of section 7.2 and our opinion on questioners can be found in section 7.3.

7.2 Interviews

Interviewing is an activity that demands a lot of work from the researcher, both before, during and after its conduction. To minimize the stress (and risk for mistakes) for both parties, the researcher must be thoroughly prepared. (Bryman & Bell 2003 p. 122.) Questions that are unambiguous, double-barrelled, too general, too specific, too technical etc should be avoided (Ibid. p. 164-165).

Most interviews involve both so-called filter questions and real questions. The filter questions are used to find the most relevant subjects in the survey. The real questions are connected to the area which the researcher is interested in and it is important that these questions are asked in the right way. One of the first things to decide with an interview is whether to use closed or open questions. (Ibid. p. 124.) Closed questions yield results that are easier to process and compare, but they may also hinder the respondent to express his/her real opinions if these are not covered by the questions (Ibid. p. 158-159). Open questions cover a broader scope, give a deeper understanding and give the subject an opportunity to answer in his/her own words. The disadvantages are that the answers to open questions take much time and effort to analyse. The researcher has to know the area of investigation well and be prepared for surprises. One way to minimize the risk of misinterpretations is to record the conversation. (Stewart 1967, p. 12.)

Our expectation on this method is that it will primarily give information on what managers think they should be doing, rather than on what they actually do. Since the researcher has no possibility to confirm the information that the manager gives, it is impossible for him/her to know if some aspects are exaggerated compared to others. We also expect this method to yield more descriptive information on the manager’s behaviour since there is a possibility to ask counter questions if something is not fully understood. We also think interviews can be used as a good complement to all of the other methods that are presented in this thesis.
7.3 The Diary Method

Diaries are a form of recording more or less every activity that the manager does, by letting him/her write down everything that goes on as it happens. This method is well adapted for situations where the researcher is interested in exact information about a specific behaviour. (Hannaway 1989, p. 42.)

The diaries can be either pre-coded or have a more non-structured format in which the manager writes down whatever he/she likes. When using pre-coded forms, the researcher in advance must be sure of which categories to use. It can be very difficult to know that the manager interprets the questions as the researcher wants him/her to, and good communication is essential. Risks of miscoding the received answers can be reduced by for example explaining to the subjects what the experiment is all about. (Mintzberg 1973 p 223-224.)

The advantage with the diary method is that the researcher doesn’t have to rely on the ability of the manager to recall all actions and estimate the time spent on each. Data is collected as managers operate in their natural environment and bias is avoided since the manager writes down what is going on “right now” and doesn’t summarize. This removes the risk of ignoring some parts of the work and leaving out activities that are difficult to categorize. Disadvantages lie in that short-duration activities may be underreported. (Hannaway 1989 p. 42.) Another disadvantage is that this method collects a lot of data on the characteristics of the managerial work, but hardly anything on why (Mintzberg 1973 p. 24).

We expected good results from this method since we considered this to be a very careful way of investigating the manager’s activities. We understand that the results are dependent on the manager’s ability to fill in the forms correctly, but we believe that good communication is enough to ensure this. Furthermore, we expect that a follow-up interview will be necessary to make clarifications.

7.4 Structured Observation

Structured observation is a method that shares many similarities with the diary method, but the writing is in this case done by the observer (Hannaway 1989 p. 42). This eliminates the problems concerned with the interpretation of questions and the writing in the forms. Activity categories are chosen as the observer monitors the manager performing the act, or shortly thereafter. (Mintzberg 1973 p. 227-228.) Research has shown that the observer influence in
this method is not significant except for sometimes in the beginning of the study (Mintzberg 1973 p. 226 and Hannaway 1989 p. 42).

The structured observation method has the same advantages as the diary method but in addition it is more flexible as categories for the activities are not predetermined (Mintzberg 1973 p. 227-228). The best results are obtained when the researcher already knows which the current categories of the work may be (Mintzberg 1973 p. 226). Disadvantages primarily lie in that the observer has to be present at all times. Possible exclusions from confidential activities will thus cause big problems. (Ibid. p. 228.) The fact that the researcher is only present during the time for the investigation and he/she may therefore have difficulties grasping the complexity of some situations is also a problem (Ibid. p. 226). Another disadvantage is the limited explanation to why certain behaviours occur, as in the case for the diary method (Ibid. p. 24).

In our eyes, this method seems to be very extensive and we get the impression that it requires much preparation and is very time consuming. We are also intimidated by the impression that the observer needs to be very experienced in order not to interfere with the investigation and to notice all the important aspects of the manager’s behaviour. We expect the results from this kind of study to be very reliable since the researcher is present and fully aware of how everything happens. We are also convinced that this creates a short-term disturbance in the working environment.

7.5 The Beeper Method

The beeper method is not really an established name of this method but rather a descriptive one. In this case, a beeper makes noises at random times and the manager has to report what he/she is doing when that happens. Like with the diary method, bias towards some activities is avoided and managers don’t have to recall every activity they’ve engaged in or the time they’ve spent doing it. In addition, activities that take only a short while to perform are not underreported, something that may be a problem with diaries. With this method, overrepresentation of activities that managers presume are more important is also avoided. Opinions on the work are also more easily collected this way, compared to letting managers summarize their work. The third important advantage is that this method allows the researcher to collect large amounts of data on several managers simultaneously. (Hannaway 1989 p. 48.) Hannaway did not mention any disadvantages with this method.
This method seems to be able to give non-biased information and we expect a rather reliable result, given that the investigation takes place during a long period of time so that the depicted work is really representative. However, we can at the same time see a problem with the fact that the manager has to start writing down a lot of information as the beeper makes a sound. We fear that this interruption may cause a lot of stress and frustration in case the signal comes at an inconvenient time, and that this will result in that the manager starts to be careless when filling in the diary.
8 Analysis of the Four Investigations

We will analyse the works separately to the extent that this is possible. The analyses of Stewart and Mintzberg can however be found in the same subsection since they share much in common and are difficult to separate. An analysis of the methods used will come last.

8.1 Carlson

Using the diary, Carlson found much information on the locations for the activities, on the areas that the managers directed their attentions to and on relations. The collected diary material was also, to a limited extent, used to map the relations. We find that these three areas just mentioned, indeed can be expected to be properly mapped with this method. We base this assumption on that we believe that it is easy for the manager to bring the diary along and note what he/she does wherever he/she goes. It is much harder to bring an observer along. It is probably also more difficult for a manager, during an interview, to remember everything. We also believe that investigating the areas which the managers turn their attention to, using a diary, gives the researcher a less biased description compared to using other methods. Investigating relations in this way is also a simple way to see a pattern of interactions, but we think that interviews are needed to give more information on the interactions. Carlson was probably of the same opinion since he decided to study the communication technique using interviews and not diaries.

The results from Carlson’s interviews showed that a lot of information on communication, relations and contacts could be well mapped through conversations and interviews with the manager. Examples of this are the frequency of visitors and the importance of good contact with employees. Neither Stewart, Mintzberg, nor Hannaway have come up with corresponding results, but Hannaway pointed out that managers very often interact with many people simultaneously and that they prefer to interact orally. We think that interviews in this case were an excellent way for Carlson to find out information that the other techniques were unable to collect. This includes both profound information on a subject that has been investigated with the other method, and areas that cannot be investigated using any other method.

The fact that Carlson saw the manager as a puppet, just like Hannaway did, indicates that managerial work includes dancing after someone else’s pipe irrespective of what level they are active at.
In this analysis, we have completely ignored that some information was found in old documents since it is not specified exactly which information that concerns.

### 8.2 Stewart and Mintzberg

We believe that Stewart excluded short-duration activities for the reason that it may take longer time to note the activity than to execute it, and that she thought it would be unrealistic to ask a manager to do that. When analysing Stewart’s research, we decided to consider what information she may have lost by excluding these activities. Our decision was based on Carlson’s study in which he found that oral communications and unplanned meeting were of great importance. We believe that Stewart not only missed out on telephone calls and mails, but more importantly on short and informal meetings that the managers may have engaged in. If she did not have this limitation on her study, we think that she would have presented more results of the type seen in Carlson’s and Hannaway’s investigations.

Like Hannaway, Stewart also found it difficult to generalize the work of a manager. Perhaps this is related to that both researchers investigated middle managers and that these may have more varied work activities compared to CEO:s.

In spite of all problems and difficulties, Stewart concluded that there were five managerial roles describing managerial activities. Some years later Mintzberg came up with eight managerial job types that bear striking resemblance with some of Stewart’s roles. The Contact man is very much like The Emissaries and The Discussers are very much alike The Contact man, The Political manager and The Entrepreneur. When analysing Stewart’s remaining three roles, we find it hard to believe that managers of today are of strictly one of these types and not combinations of them. In our own opinion, these three isolated roles fit better with the description of someone who is the “right hand” of the manager, or someone who is a specialist within a certain area of expertise.

When comparing these results with Mintzberg’s, it’s important to remember that Stewart did not study CEO:s as Mintzberg did. From the two descriptions of the managerial roles, we clearly think that this may have affected the outcomes. In Mintzberg’s study the three “extremes” were not present, we look upon this both as a refined way of picturing managers but also that roles describing CEO:s have different properties compared to those describing middle and senior managers. CEO:s seem to have clearer definitions of what they are supposed to do, and what they shouldn’t do. We believe that Mintzberg’s are very general and thereby applicable to many different CEO:s. Lastly, perhaps the observation technique used
by Mintzberg allowed for a more useful categorization as he actually witnessed exactly what managers did.

Unfortunately Mintzberg didn’t present any information where he actually described the activities he observed the managers perform. As stated earlier in this thesis, some of the categorization of managerial work suffers from being too general (for example when acronyms are used) to actually describe the work itself. In a way this applies to both Mintzberg’s and Stewart’s roles. Though they may describe the main characteristics of the manager, they don’t describe what he/she does.

8.3 Hannaway

When looking closer at the types of written information that the managers provided the researchers with, the information from the diaries made by Carlson and Stewart must be distinguished from Hannaway’s “beeper diary” since they come from two different methods. Notice that there are similarities between the results obtained with the diary and the beeper since it is the manager who fills in the information in both cases. These methods can therefore be said to report manager’s opinion on his/her own work.

Hannaway’s results are vaguer in a way, compared to the other three researchers’, in that she stresses that the purpose of one single managerial act hardly ever can be isolated since managerial work is process-driven and the manager seldom knows all information as things happen. This description may of course be influenced by the fact that Hannaway aimed to see in which way the aspects of managerial work were related and how the different processes fitted together. It can also depend on that she studied managers at all levels in a school district. We think that these managers engage in activities that someone else has started, or is taking over at a later stage - we believe that middle managers function as a link between employees and senior managers and that they have to serve both.

Hannaway also pictured the manager more like a puppet. We think that this statement is stronger than the one mentioned by Carlson, since Hannaway found managers to be more reactive and less initiative than Carlson did. The reactiveness means that managers must be more aware of other people’s opinions. From Hannaway’s result that routine activities were directed at the managers instead of by them, we also believe that the ability to initiate actions is strongly related to the personal interest of the manager. Hence, we believe that conducting routine work activities lowers the interest of the manager for his work, which may lead to that he/she becomes more puppet-like. We draw this line of argument even further by hereby
relating Carlson’s comment on puppets with Hannaway’s. Since they both found that managers acted like puppets, we believe that routine work is also a part of the work of a CEO. Perhaps the beeper method with its random observations delivers a more incoherent picture of managerial work. Since the manager only gives information at these occasions, it may happen that the chosen moments do not represent the work of the manager and his/her “normal” activities. In Hannaway’s description of the investigation, it is not given how often the beeper made sounds. It is logical to expect that the more often the random signals come, the better managerial work as a whole can be described. The downside is of course that the shorter the time intervals between the beeps are, the less random the method appears to be and more frustration due to interruptions may arise.

Lastly, we note that Hannaway’s results on the reasons for why managers interact indicate that they seem to want to “climb the ladder”. We also think that a lot of managers don’t consciously think about this, and that it is thanks to their social skills that they get promoted to higher levels within the company.

### 8.4 Analysis of the Methods

It looks like diaries are good at providing the researcher with information on behaviours and preferred ways of interaction, but that interviews are needed to find out deeper lying information. This assumption is congruous with that more “superficial” types of information are obtained using diaries compared to interviews. Carlson, for instance, used a diary to see where the managers performed their work and which types of managers spend more time outside their companies. Stewart used her diary to, among other things, find information about which percentage of a manager’s time that is spent alone. This type of information is of course important, but does not necessarily transmit facts about what aspects the manager considers to be important, or what he/she values.

We expected the diary and beeper method to give similar types of results since both methods are very similar and both researchers investigated the same type of managers. In both cases, forms are distributed to the manager and they contain questions of the same type, it is the manager who fills in information on his/hers activities and there is no surveillance from the researcher which means that the researcher has to rely on the provided information. We also expect that it takes longer time to collect reliable data when using the beeper method. We did however not see any similarities between Stewart’s and Hannaway’s results. We think that
this probably also depends on that they decided to monitor two different aspects of managerial work.

If the researcher only wants to investigate fragmentation of managerial work, we believe that the choice of method is not crucial (since they all seem to lead to this result in various extents), but that the different methods may be more or less likely to report it. We believe that the manager, especially when filling in a diary, may refer to the work as consisting of two or more activities (instead of saying that the two, or more, different activities are actually a part of a bigger one) if he thinks that it is irrelevant or can save him time. All three researchers, but Mintzberg, found the result that managerial work was highly fragmented, and we believe that the reason for his failure in this matter is either that he wasn’t looking for it, or that he may have found it but since he only presented the ten roles, this information was lost.

8.5 Chronological consequences

Even if it was not mentioned in the purpose of this thesis we became interested in the relations of the works as we reviewed them. To us, it’s evident that when conducting research, one must see what other people in the field have done already. The authors discussed in this thesis have probably built their own research on the results of others and refined the methods to ones that can be used to better depict the reality that is studied. Carlson started out with a diary and an interview and Stewart may have found the diary results so interesting that she wanted to extend the study, investigating more managers and on a different level. Mintzberg may have been interested in making a more careful study where he observed the activities personally, and instead of relying on a diary he wanted to be there and see it with his own eyes. Mintzberg used a different method compared to Stewart, but came up with many results that reminded of hers, and we imagine that it’s partially thanks to Stewart that Mintzberg managed to draw the conclusions about the different managerial types. Hannaway explicitly said that she wanted to go beyond diary and observation studies and this clearly indicates that she built on previous studies. She then tried to improve the way of studying managerial work by using a technique with less methodological problems associated with it. The result of this became a beeper study where she most likely based some of her questions on previous diary studies.
10 The Empirical Investigation

After having read about the research of others and analysed their works, we became interested in doing our own research to convince us that the methods described really could be used to depict managerial work. As reported in section 5, we turned our attention to banks in the Uppsala and Stockholm region. After having made this choice, we excluded the beeper method from our selection since we thought that some managers may find it disturbing carrying around a beeper making random sounds during client sessions, telephone conferences etc.

We had three ideas, which we presented to the managers. The first was to use structured observation, a diary and an interview and compare the results from the three methods with each other. Due to secrecy regulations and time shortage, the managers rejected this idea. We then presented the second and third idea. The second was that the manager should fill in a diary and participate in a follow-up interview where the diary was discussed and clarifications made. After that we wanted to interview the manager about his duties. In this case we wanted to get information about the consistency between what the manager actually did and what he/she thought he/she was doing. The third alternative was to let both the manager and his secretary/close associate write one diary each about the manager’s activities. In this case we hoped to see the relations between what the managers really did, and what people close to him thought he did. A high correlation might indicate that the researcher might as well ask the associate about the manager, since the manager him/herself probably is very busy.

The managers did however not want to participate in these investigations either, since they were too busy. Our fourth and last alternative was to reduce the empirical study to a one-day-diary with a follow-up and an interview to compare the methods with each other. During the interview we wanted to ask the manager what he/she was doing the previous day to see if there were any biases towards some activities that were overemphasized compared with the diary. The follow-up interview on the diary was not part of the “real” interview and it was conducted after the interview with the manager had been finished. The reason for having the follow-up after the interview was to let the manager describe the day in question in his/her own words before we asked about details and clarifications that may refresh his/her memory.

Though it would be hard to draw conclusions from this minimal study, we hoped that we might be able to see indications if one method was more appropriate than the other in this particular case.
This last proposal was accepted by the company market manager and deputy office manager of SEB in Uppsala. Starting from the diaries used by Carlson and Stewart, we designed a diary in Swedish, and adapted the questions for our specific needs. We had seven fields that we expected the manager to fill in (Appendix 1). We wanted to conduct the interview before the follow-up interview on the diary to make sure that we didn’t assist the manager in remembering his day. For the interview, we chose open questions since we wanted to give the manager the opportunity to speak freely (Appendix 2). We asked the manager to recall all activities and estimate the time for each. We also asked what he thought about the methods we used, and about observations, voice-recording, video-recording and the beeper method. For the follow-up interview, we asked open questions about whether the day had been representative, about the manager’s experience of filling in the form and if he had remembered to fill in all activities. We also made sure we understood all of the information that the manager had provided us with.

We understand that only having one manager in the empirical study may be seen as a poor foundation to draw conclusions from. But since the empirical investigation is not the main purpose of this thesis, we instead see it as a good complement and hope to be able to draw some conclusions from it.

11 Results from the Empirical Investigation

The design of the diary and the information filled in by the manager are shown in Appendix 1. The design of and the results from the interview are found in Appendix 2.

11.1 The Diary Study

The diary gave us clear information on the activities, which the manager had been busy tending to during the day. Since we had explained the design of the diary in advance, there seemed to be no misinterpretations and we could conclude that the main activities during the day were meetings (in person or on the telephone), discussions with clients, mail answering and payments of various types.

The diary also showed that the manager was frequently interrupted. Apart from planned meetings, there were basically no times when the manager works undisturbed for more than 15 minutes. His work was highly fragmented and his activities involved seeking and giving assistance to others, as well as attending meetings and committees.
An overwhelming majority of the activities presented in the diary were spontaneous. Planned activities included almost only meetings while most of the contacts with people both within and outside the company were unplanned.

Since there are obvious risks of misinterpretations and expressing things in a coded way to save time in the diary form, we had planned for a follow-up interview with the manager the next day. We asked the manager if he had experienced any problems with the diary and if the activities during the day represented his every day work. Fortunately, no problems regarding the diary had been experienced and the manager felt that he had written down all activities he had engaged in. The manager stated that no unusual events had taken place during the day and that there was not more stress than usually.

The diary provided much information in short time, it actually took less time to prepare and analyse than we thought. The reason for this was that we were familiar with this way of working after having read Carlson’s and Stewart’s works. By explaining it to the manager properly in advance we also minimized the risk for misinterpretations and the need for a follow-up interview.

11.2 The Interview

In the interview we wanted to evaluate the interview method and to compare the results we obtained in this way with those obtained using the diary. We therefore asked the manager to tell us what he had been doing the previous day, as detailed as he could remember. The manager was able to mention a few activities but had difficulties remembering in which order they occurred and how much time they required. He remembered the times for planned meetings and for their preparations, as well as events that were very different from his normal day, such as a long talk on the phone with a client regarding a contract that included some disagreements. These types of activities were put in approximately the right time intervals by filling in the time gaps between the meetings. One interesting thing was that the manager during the interview estimated one conversation to have taken approximately 30 minutes when it actually took 55. During this part of the interview, the manager also talked about how he dealt with clients.

Finally, we asked about information on what the manager thought about the four methods (the diary, interviews, structured observation and the beeper method) and voice/video recording, and which kind of methods he would prefer if he were to participate in a similar study at some other time. The manager said that he had nothing against using the diary or giving an interview and that he thought everything has worked well. He however thought the
diary was a bit too compact and left no room for expositions and therefore he preferred the interview where he could give more detailed information. In the future, he said that he would probably agree on a similar study but he did not believe that investigations where the beeper method or structured observation was used would be fruitful. This was mainly due to that it would be difficult for him to bring an observer along all the time, and because the beeper method would both be annoying and probably not even give a good description of the work. He did not think that using a video- or voice-recording would give representative results, at least not for the first days.

Regarding the interview method, we were pleasantly surprised that it didn’t take as much time as we had imagined. After just one hour of interviewing, we had enough information to draw conclusions on what the manager has done during the day.

12 Analysis of the Empirical Investigation
The analysis of the empirical study is presented in two parts where the diary study and the interview will be analysed separately.

12.1 The Diary Study
From the results in the follow-up interview, we concluded that the day could be considered as being representative.

The results from our diary study were in complete accordance with results from diary studies presented previously in this thesis. It resulted in rather exact information on what activities the manager engaged in, but it did not give any explanation to, or understanding for, them. However, we of course only saw those detailed events that the manager wrote down and it is impossible for us to know if there were more of them. The fact that the manager seemed to be very busy and that his work was very fragmented also supports the finding of the previous researchers.

The conclusion obtained by Carlson that bank managers’ work mostly in their own private offices cannot be supported by this diary study even though we can tell that our manager was in his office most of the time. This depends on both that the diary was only conducted during one day, and that the manager during the interview admitted that he spent approximately 50% of his time in his office and the rest “on the run”. Also, there is a great difference in that Carlson studied CEO:S and we didn’t.
We also concluded that the manager spent less than half of his time alone. This finding was supported by Stewart’s study of middle and senior managers where she found that these managers spend about one third of their time alone. Presumably, managers at this level spend about the same amount of time in interactions, irrespective of which area (banking etc) they are active in.

In accordance with Hannaway’s findings, the majority of the manager’s activities concerned routine work. New skills were required mainly when questions or problems occurred in conversations with customers or when the manager was assisting a colleague with something he was not very familiar with. It should be noted that both studies investigated middle managers and our guess is that managers of this type deal mostly with routine and every-day tasks while the top managers deal with strategic issues to a greater extent.

12.2 The Interview

The manager studied in this investigation had frequent contact with clients. During the interview he stated that this was often the case and that he though it was good. It helped him to relate to problems concerning clients that his employees may have. This fact is in contrast to Carlson’s findings where he says that the manager’s relations to customers and suppliers are usually limited. Perhaps this depends on that banking has changed over the past fifty years, or it can depend on that our manager was not a CEO, something that was the case in Carlson’s study.

The part of the interview where the manager described the client conversation which he had thought took approximately 30 minutes (but actually took 55) we relate to the conclusion by Hannaway, which says that time estimations are often estimations of effort instead. Perhaps the reason for the (possibly) small effort put down in this case was perhaps due to personal interest.

When it comes to remembering the small activities such as mailing and telephone calls, the manager could remember approximately how many they were but not when and for how long they lasted. On the other hand he had no problems remembering the non-standard activities during the day. This is something that totally contradicts what Hannaway claims where she says that non-planed activities should be much harder to remember than the routine work.

We understand the manager’s opinions on structured observation and the beeper method when taking into account the environment that he works in and the time we had available for the study. Besides having to deal with secrecy regulations, we also don’t think that our
investigation would have gained anything from using this method since out study wasn’t that through. If the researcher aims at conducting a larger and more careful study where the secrecy problems could be overcome, this would probably be a more attractive choice.

14 Discussion

The results of the works written by Carlson, Stewart, Mintzberg and Hannaway were related to the methods that were used and we noticed some connections. We want to stress that the conclusions drawn in this analysis stem only from the four works mentioned and that they do not necessarily apply when relating to other works with similar methods. Drawing that kind of conclusions goes far beyond the extent of this study. Other factors involved that also affect our analysis, are that the four works dealt with different numbers and kinds of managers (at different levels) and that the studies varied in extent. The managers also had different nationalities, something that may affect their way of working.

Our empirical investigation rests only on the diary of one single manager during one single day, followed by a one-hour interview the day after the diary was finished. Since we weren’t given the possibility to study the manager at work, we have no guarantee for that he actually performed the activities he said he did or that there weren’t more of them. This limits the reliability of the results in this section and to draw more trustworthy conclusions, one must conduct more thorough research. We also did not have any possibility to study the manager in advance, something that Carlson, Stewart and Mintzberg did. This may also affect our results.

The scope of this investigation has also caused us to, like example Mintzberg, disregard work related activities that are performed after the manager has left work.

15 Conclusion

From the work we have performed we can draw the conclusion that the choice of method influences the result the researcher is likely to come up with.

Interviews take time to prepare, but give the researcher a deep understanding for the manager’s activities. It also gives a broad picture of the work, given that the right questions are asked. The interviews will however not result in detailed information about the activities, such as telling when the manager did what. Neither will it give reliable information on informal meetings, telephone calls and similar activities. It is more probable to expect a rough estimation to be given than facts about their real extents.
Diary studies are a good choice for researchers who want to map activities of a manager as realistically as possible. The results from this method will show what the manager does at specific times, but in case the activity goes on for only a few seconds we doubt if it will ever be noted. A diary provides the researcher with more superficial information (compared to an interview) and does not deliver explanations to the activities or reveal anything about the context in which they occur. This is, in combination with the fact that clarifications often have to be made, the main reasons for why a follow-up interview is both necessary and sometimes crucial.

What observational studies show is more difficult to say since it is the researcher him/herself who decides which information to collect. The researcher can choose to focus on detailed issues or a broader picture, or try to do both. It is, on the other hand, reasonable to expect a more “honest” result (compared to all other methods described here) as it is the researcher who does all the reporting. This method probably also delivers a complete picture of managerial work during the period of observation, since all aspects can be noted.

Finally, the beeper method seems to result in somewhat incoherent pieces of information, which is maybe not so hard to understand since the method is based on random samples of managerial activities. On the positive side, we think that by using this method the observer may stumble on something that, in the beginning, was not intended to be studied. We also think that this method may be a better choice for investigating short-timed activities compared to diaries and interviews.

Regarding our empirical work, the diary gave us the specific information on managerial work that we were looking for but it did not assist us in explaining it. The interview was in many ways much more informative and provided us with expositions on the work, explanations and clarifications. In the particular situation of investigating a bank manager of the kind chosen in this study, we can draw the conclusion that it seems more advantageous to investigate his doings using a combination of the diary method with a follow-up and an interview. The interview clearly showed that the manager was unable to remember all his activities from the preceding day, especially activities that were not planned in advance. When using both methods, the diary can act as a memory teaser and the interview will contribute to a more detailed answer, revealing why it happened, in what context it happened as well as previous events and following events. We also discovered that it may be difficult to use both structured observation and the beeper method in investigations of this type since because of the delicacy in this environment.
References


Appendix 1. Summary of the Diary Filled in by the Bank Manager

The diary consisted of a form with six fields in which the manager had to fill in at each activity. The heading in the fields were:

- Time
- Description of activity
- Was the activity planned or spontaneous?
- Who initiated the activity? (post or similar)
- Who took part in the activity? (number of participants and posts)
- Did the situation demand new skills from you?
- Could anyone else have performed an equally satisfying work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description of activity</th>
<th>Was the activity planned or spontaneous?</th>
<th>Who initiated the activity? (post or similar)</th>
<th>Who took part in the activity? (number of participants and posts)</th>
<th>Did the situation demand new skills from you?</th>
<th>Could anyone else have performed an equally satisfying work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 1. This is a figure showing the design of the diary used in the empirical investigation.
These were the answers that Patrik Gozzi at SEB provided by filling in the diary:

8.24 Preparation for the department meeting, planned, initiated on Patrik’s own behalf. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

8.45 The department meeting started. This is a planned activity that happens once a week, initiated on Patrik’s behalf. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

9.34 Approval of a credit, spontaneous, initiated by a co-worker. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job if they had the authority to do that.

9.38 Answered some mails, spontaneous, initiated on Patrik’s own behalf. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but no one else could have done it.

9.47 A call to a customer with an invitation to meet, spontaneous, initiated on Patrik’s own behalf. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

9.49 Called SEB Finance with a problem about how to solve a loan-issue, planned, initiated by a customer. This is something that required new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

10.00 Credit-committee, planned, initiated by the district-manager. No data was provided whether this activity required new knowledge or not.

11.28 Credit-errands, spontaneous, initiated by the company-adviser. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

11.39 Payment of different bills, this was a planned activity but on a spontaneous time. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job if they had the same knowledge as he.

11.42 Payment of a foreign-bill by telephone, spontaneous on request of a customer. This is something that required new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job if they had the authority to do that.

11.55 Mailing to his assistant, spontaneous on request of a customer. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

12.00 Lunch with a customer, planned together with the director that he was going to meet. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but others couldn’t do the same job.

13.00 Feedback from a customer meeting, spontaneous on request of an adviser. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

13.14 Going through a credit-protocol, spontaneous on request of a colleague. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could perhaps have done the same job.

13.38 Answered the telephone, spontaneous. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

13.46 Helped with the profitability-calculation, spontaneous from an adviser. This is something that required new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

13.58 A meeting with one of the adviser’s customers, spontaneous on request of the customer. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

14.03 Calls a customer about an investment, spontaneous. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.
14.10 Helps a colleague with an investment, spontaneous on request of an adviser. This is something that required new knowledge from him and others could have done the same job.

14.18 A costumer wants to sell his product through SEB, spontaneous on a request from the costumer. This is something that required new knowledge from him and others could perhaps have done the same job.

14.26 Telephone-advisement about Euro-Card, spontaneous on a request from the costumer. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him and someone else could have done the same job, namely the costumer’s adviser.

14.32 Planning a meeting with a client, spontaneous on request of a capital-manager. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but others couldn’t have done the same job.

14.50 Received a mail about a credit-problem, spontaneous from the credit-division. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but others couldn’t have done the same job.

15.15 The manager was present at a credit-decision, spontaneous from an adviser and a salesperson from SEB Finance. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but others couldn’t have done the same job.

15.29 Call from a costumer about an appointment that there is no knowledge about, spontaneous on request of a costumer and telemarketing. This is something that required new knowledge from him but others couldn’t have done the same job.

15.50 Negotiation with a costumer about a loan-contract, planned. This is something that required new knowledge from him and others couldn’t have done the same job.

16.45 Cleaning the desk, spontaneous. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but others couldn’t have done the same job.

16.46-16.55 Credit-discussion, spontaneous from an adviser. This is something that didn’t require new knowledge from him but others couldn’t have done the same job.

At the follow-up interview, the following answers were provided by Patrik Gozzi:

- What is your experience from the diary experiment?
  I think it worked very well. The diary was easy to bring along a day like yesterday when I was only in my office. Other days, I am more on the move and that could have caused some problems.

- Was it easy to remember to fill in the form?
  It was very easy, I sat at my desk practically the whole day and the diary was next to me.

- Was this day like any other day for you or would you say that it differs?
  It was representative of my work here in the office. I spend approximately half of my time here and the second half at other locations and some evenings I come back in the evening to get some work done since there can be problems planning my days due to all spontaneous events. I use a calendar and a computer program to optimise my days by reminding me of when I should do what. Since I am both the company market manager and deputy office manager my activities can vary a lot from day to day depending on if everybody is here or not. Yesterday everyone was at his/her places, so there was nothing extraordinary.
Appendix 2. Interview with the Bank Manager

These were the answers that Patrik Gozzi at SEB provided us with during the interview.

- Could you describe your activities yesterday in chronological order and as detailed as possible?
  8.20 Preparation for the department meeting, starting the computer, preparing the documents.
  8.30 The department meeting started, results from different periods were related to each other; positive results which lead to individual talks (just because the department have a positive result it doesn’t mean that everybody in that department had contributors to it)
  9.30 Credit-issues were discussed with a colleague
  10.00 Credit-committee
  11.45 A client called to book an appointment
  12.00 Lunch with a manager from another company, exchange of experience were discussed
  13.00 Deskwork
  15.50 Negotiation with a client about a contract. The client wanted a better deal, because of his knowledge of the law he wanted to change the condition of the loan-contract.
  16.30 Sorted out different loan-contracts that needed to be send to his co-workers

The manager added that phone calls and mails had been received during the day but could not recollect their time or specific content. He was often involved with clients and there was nothing special about the calls that day. The manager pointed out that weekly, planned activities were the easiest ones to remember and that short-duration and spontaneous activities were harder to recall.

- Do you think this method is a good choice if one wants to find out what a manager does at work or would you suggest another one and in that case which? How do you feel about observations, voice-recording and video-recording?
  I personally prefer the interview, alternatively a diary followed by an interview since the diary gives no room for expositions. However, it takes some time to fill in the diary and maybe it would be easier if there were options that the manager could just mark. Also, it leaves little space to express my own opinions. Following me or a colleague around is probably not very wise in this environment either since many matters are more or less confidential. Maybe recording the day on tape or video would give a better result and be easier to conduct, but the behaviour would probably not be representative - at least not in the beginning.

- How would you feel using a method where you write down your activities every time you hear noise from a device?
  That would probably not work well in this business with many telephone interviews, client meetings and similar activities. It doesn’t sound too good since there must be a risk of registering an un-proportional amount of mail-answering or spontaneous/planed activities.