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Career, Care and Time: Women top managers in the intersections of age, gender, and work/family

Abstract: This chapter addresses the intersections of age, gender, and work/family relations, and how these intersections relate to careers, care, and the structuring of time more generally in the lives of women in high managerial positions. We examine how women top managers in different ages perceive their work/care relations. These questions closely relate to individual life stages and phases of career and care responsibilities, as well as the aged/gendered societal and organisational expectations of the “ideal worker” and the “ideal carer”. We draw the analysis from three sets of interview data in order to examine the perceptions of care responsibilities as well as aged/gendered managerial work in the context of work/non-work and long term career prospects.

Introduction

The focus of this chapter¹ is on the intersections of age, gender, and work/family relations, and how these intersections relate to careers, care, and the structuring of time more generally in the lives of women in high managerial positions. Age, age-related issues, and their intersections with other social divisions are central in working life, and in how work, careers, organisations in and around work are constructed. Yet they still remain relatively neglected in studies of work, and even more so in studies of organisations (Niemistö et. al. 2016). Age, as biological or chronological, or indeed social, is something everyone seems to ‘possess’, but the social experience and perception of age is constantly changing and intersecting with other social divisions and experiences. Age has also been analysed as cognitive age based on subjective feelings of age (Barak and Schiffman 1980), or as socially constructed cultural age that impacts on consuming and marketing (Suokannas 2011). Fineman argues (2011: 2) that age is an essential element and dimension of organising, even a powerful ‘master discourse’. Moore (2009: 656) highlights that age is socially, historically and culturally specific and impacts on (older) women’s working life experiences and career development.

The intersection of age and care can be significant in the construction of shifting life situations and life stages, and their understanding. The gendering of care also means that these situations and stages are often doubly anchored in the experience of both work (as career stage) and home in lives of women, both on a day-to-day basis, and over the life course. More specifically, in this chapter we address how women top managers experience different life stages through time and care demands in their aged and gendered career phases. The trends towards and culture of long-hours, ‘presenteeism’ (Cooper 1998), demanding and ‘greedy’ organisations (Coser 1974), and relative inflexible work patterns are all crucial parts of the dominant western(ised) or globalized work culture in managerial positions.

Furthermore, the well-established, and still persisting, career models of management positions are built on (masculine) assumptions of an ‘ideal worker’ or ‘ideal manager’ (Whyte 1956;

Kanter 1977; Acker 1990; Collinson and Hearn 1994; Wajcman 1998; Williams 2000; Tienari et al. 2010). This can easily negatively affect the career development of womenⁱⁱ, in part because of these perceptions, but also because women still take care of the majority of care responsibilities in households (Hearn et al. 2008; Hearn and Niemistö 2012; Jyrkinen and McKie 2012). For example, according to a large study by Statistics Finland 2009-2010 on time used for work and housework in Finland, a country ranked as less gender unequal than most, women's whole working hours (work and housework) per week was 41 hours, and that of men 38 hours. Women use 3.5 hours and men 2.5 hours per day to housework; women in particular for care of children, cooking and dishes and washing (68%); men for maintenance and repair at home (63%) (Pääkkönen 2013). Significant greater gender differences are to be found elsewhere in many European countries (*The Role of Men in Gender Equality* 2013). The nature of the support of the possible partner and other family members, as well as various close friends, is still key to women in management positions (Heikkinen et al. 2014; Heikkinen 2015). It is in this social context that we are interested in how women in top management experience their work and 'non-work' in their careers, and the blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work through variable gendered control of time and care responsibilities.

In making sense of the individual stories of women managers and the emerging patterns across countries, we have found it useful to locate their managerial careers as embedded within several broad social fields or 'scapes'. Thus the analysis of individual women's managerial experiences of work and life builds on theoretical frameworks of scapes, as developed by Arjun Appadurai (1996) to grasp the new global cultural economy. Such "scapes" (emphasising fluidity of and across spaces) include ethnoscares, technoscares, financescares, ideoscares, and mediascares. In this paper, we focus on three further scapes, namely, careerscares, organisational carescares, and timescares, which we now introduce.

Career and careerscares

Conceptualisations of career have often been limited in their assumptions about work, gender and time (Hearn, 1977). The linear, strongly upwards directing and uninterrupted career model has been widely criticised by gender scholars, partly because many women's career paths do not often follow this pattern (see Hall 2002; Mainiero and Sullivan 2005; Burke 2007). Cohen et al. (2004, p. 409) assert that:

a career is not conceptualised as a form or structure that an individual temporarily inhabits, constraining or enabling her in her journey. Rather, it is constituted by the actor herself, in interaction with others, as she moves through time and space. However, this is not to suggest that individuals have a free rein as to how they enact their careers ... It is an iterative and on-going process, involving at times the reproduction of existing structures and at times their transformation.

Careers, in this context women's careers, can be usefully elucidated through the concept of 'careerscares' (McKie et al. 2013). Careerscares refer to changing landscapes of women's careers through time and different responsibilities of care; the concept of careerscares highlights broad temporal and spatial dimensions, patterns and rhythms in women's careers. It offers an analytical framework to examine gendered structures and processes in people's lives, and how people move through these experiences, drawing upon memories, experiences and speculations about working life and work-life interfaces. These are not linear processes, but multi-faceted and interlinked to rhythms of personal, family and care dimensions that change with age. Careerscares build on the understanding that our imaginary landscapes are, above

all, gendered, but also permeated with other differences and inequalities including social class, ethnicity and age.

Care and organisation carescapes

Care is highly gendered (Tronto 1993; McKie et al. 2008). As already mentioned, women still carry the majority of care responsibilities in households. Although women in top positions tend to have fewer children than their men counterparts (Hearn et al. 2008), they easily carry the ‘double-burden’ (see, for instance, Still and Timms 1998; Bittman and Wajcman 2000), as they in different life stages care for children but also for their own parents and those of the spouse, maybe even other elderly relatives, friends, own spouse, and grandchildren.

The social relations of care, home and work represent some of the most fundamental aspects of gender relations in the society (Orloff 1993; Hearn et al. 2006: 117). There is often a gap between research on macro-level policies for work and care, and policies and practices at the organisational level (Lewis 2006: 387). Even if our study does not include an analysis of ‘contrasts of contexts’ (Esping-Andersen 2009), we acknowledge some differences in care ideologies between the (Western) countries that our case respondents come from, and these affect the way individual women and men perceive their ability to ‘do gender’ in their careers and at home. In examining these issues, ‘organisation carescapes’ is an analytical tool for ‘the identification and critical exploration of the topic of ‘care’ in a range of work place and related contexts’ (McKie et al. 2008: 8). Within different organisation carescapes there are multiple and multi-faceted ways in which employee policies and practices can support and/or control workers.

Time and timescapes

There are many forms of time and temporal forms: time ticks remorselessly for us all, everyday and through every moment. Time passes by, and at times one might feel that issues in the past should have been done differently, or one should have done more. What do I do at the moment – or should I be doing something else? Time is precious, and in some senses limited. Time is central in the intersections of work and non-work, as well as in the balancing act between these spheres, still often presented as separate from each other (Nippert-Eng 1996). Often, discourses around the balancing act are gender-blind, and construct it as taking place at the individual level, focusing on ‘individual choice’ to allocate time and effort from work to something else, such as care responsibilities or ‘life’ in general, and thus neglecting gendered and other organisational constraints (Lewis et al. 2006: 363-366). The concept of ‘timescapes’ (Adam 1998) broadens common understandings of time as linear, clock-time and calendar time towards the time experienced when we reflect on past, present and future at one and the same time; our time perspectives are gendered and marked by, amongst other things, our age, relationship, familial status, and social situation and characteristics.

Method

Our data consists of eight interviews with women in top management positions in Australia, Finland, Ireland, and the UK/Scotland. Our sample is gathered from three different data sets from research projects that examined the work-life balance of knowledge workers and managers in large B2B-organisationsⁱⁱⁱ, work/family reconciliation policies in organisations^{iv}, and age and gender in women managers’ careers^v. We revisit these data sets of interview data in order to examine the perceptions of care responsibilities, as well as aged/gendered managerial work in the context of work/non-work and long term career prospects. The interviews have included very similar themes, yet the exact questions have been somewhat

different. When choosing to include cases from different countries, our aim has not been to do a comparison between the countries, but rather to elaborate the chosen data – eight case studies – through existing knowledge on gender and leadership. We introduce these women more in detail in Table 1 (attached in the end of this article version). All the names are pseudonyms.

The 8 interviewees cover different ages/generations of women managers: in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. We have chosen two female top managers from each age/generation group, and these ‘pairs’ are always from different countries. The work they do is relatively similar – managing and leading as knowledge intensive work – although the sectors of their work vary from service sector to accounting, banking and B2B. We wanted to include women with no children and up to even three children, the latter which is relatively atypical for women managers in any country. We develop our method of analysis from earlier work (Jyrkinen and McKie 2012) using Crompton’s (2001) approach to comparative research with biographical matching. Instead of generalisations on, or even stereotyping of, countries, their legislation, policies, and ‘contrasts of contexts’ (Esping-Andersen 2009), we consider the similarities between women in top management through their individual stories. We focus our analysis on the hurdles and opportunities, seen within the contexts of power relations that are embedded in the lives and careers of the interviewees, with examinations of: first, age, careers, and care; and then the relations of time, work, and ‘non-work’.

Care, careers, and age

Issues around age, time and care are much present in women managers’ everyday life as well as in their actual working life activities and duties. Women in top managerial jobs tend to have less children than their men colleagues. For instance, in a study on women and men top managers by Hearn et al. (2008) men had ‘average sized’ families or bigger families. In that Finnish study where most worked in international companies, men top managers often had ‘housewives’ or their spouses worked only part-time (Hearn et al. 2016). The situation was the same for male top managers in the project examining work-life balance of knowledge workers and managers in large B2B-organisations, from which some data is used in this chapter (ibid.). Women top managers were more often single or divorced and had often only one child or no children (Hearn et al. 2008). Interestingly, in our dataset, we have female managers with more than one child – two of eight respondents had 3 children, which can be considered a fairly large family. On the other hand, the female top managers in our data that had children also had, at least a relatively supportive, spouse, even if the spouses also pursue a career. Thus, these women could be thought of as ‘mother-managers’, with particular responsibilities and demands, in something of a contrast to ‘father managers’ who tend not to participate much in care (Hearn and Niemistö 2012).

The women managers interviewed told us about day-to-day scheduling, but also about their planning for a longer-term career steps that often interlinked with aspects of care. Timing is key in both. For example, in an Irish dual-career family, day-to-day balancing was resolved by dividing parental shifts with children and having a nanny. This meant that the mother, Diane, a top manager in her 40s, left to work early, before the children wake up. The father ate breakfast with them, but he came home late in the evening, after the children had gone to bed. Diane came home from work in time to spend a couple of hours with the children, and continued working after the children had gone to sleep. *“I’ll be a mom for a few hours”*, she said.

Care responsibilities can often lead to situations when one needs to work over evenings and weekends. Women managers with children often have their share of care work and they might, for example, need to pick up their children from day-care at a certain time but then continue working again later in the evening as well as putting in hours from weekends, holidays and other supposedly leisure times. This juggling with time between care and work is relatively present in our data set. A Finnish top manager, Fiona, reflected back upon a time when her children were small, some 15-20 years ago. In order to leave work early enough to pick them up from day-care and spend time with them, she needed to work evenings and weekends to 'keep up' and avoid being 'mummy tracked' (Benschop and Dooreward 1998). She explained that she needed to work extra hard, not to give anyone any excuses for to not to consider her 'manager material'. Fiona justified her way of living up less to the dominant corporate 'presenteeism' (Cooper 1998) by stating: "*Surely, surely I did as much as they did*". And, finally, she did end up being a top manager, with two adult children today.

Care responsibilities do not really end after the few first years of a child; children grow older but they still need care and attention, something that takes time every day. Special situations, like illness or a crisis of some kind, can happen at any time, both for young children and little older ones. And other close one grow older and might need more care and attention. For instance, the Finnish care leave system is relatively well developed in comparison to the other countries represented in our study. However, the Finnish system concentrates on the very first years of a child. These parental leaves are stipulated in the national legislation, which has led to work organisations being relatively passive and reactive in creating organisation level flexibilities for employees in later work/care reconciliation needs of different kinds (Niemistö 2011).

Timing is not limited only to the work tasks and duties. If and when to have children and raise a family is a major issue, as Diane stated:

So they make it to partner [in the company] when they're maybe 30, and then they have their children. I didn't. I had all my children first, and then I came back in, and now I'm looking to make it to partnership and now I'm finding it very difficult and I'm competing against 30-year-old men, for the same job. So it's very different [*laugh*] (...) It's interesting 'cause I think that it's easier to be successful before you have children. So I think if I was to look back again, at when I was 21, I would say I should have, if you're very ambitious and you want to get to the top, I would say you have to work really really really hard, as fast as you can, and wait to have your children, and then have your children, then you stay on the platform. For a while, until you get your feet, and until you're ready to take off again... (Diane, 40s, Ireland)

Being pressed with time while balancing between care and career can also lead to physical and mental symptoms. Our Australian respondent, Emma, was in her 40s and had one child. She worked in the highest management level in a big knowledge-intensive business, and had struggled with severe symptoms of burnout especially in the phases when her career development intensified and she climbed up into the highest managerial ladder. To her disappointment, Emma then found out how the hierarchies also on the top took place. She felt difficult to impact on issues that she felt important: "I am a tiny little flea on the back of a beast." She wanted to make a change in her stressful and time-consuming career phase, but for economic reasons she felt that it was not possible yet.

Four years from now, because when I, in four years' time my daughter will finish school, and so, (since), (...) then my financial obligations, 'cause she goes to an expensive school, (will) (...), and so then I have bandwidth to make different financial decisions. (Emma, 40s, Australia)

In Emma's case, her careerscape had shifted from earlier smaller business leadership to a more intensive phase, which she found relatively frustrating and too stressful. But, as she had financial obligations because of her daughter's schooling, she planned to make the change in her career after a couple of years. Thus her caring responsibilities impacted strongly on her own career, even on her own well-being. Emma suffered even from physical symptoms caused by stress – she stated that she survived burnout, at least for a moment, through taking time for a holiday.

Now it is chronic stress, but at that moment it was at a peak. (...) I'm just keeping my head above water, I don't have an appetite to change the system, and I don't, I see limited capacity to do so. (...) Changing the structure of work, (...) (a bit), there's nothing I can do now to change the target that I haven't already done. I've already changed, don't pay me any more, here's my target. But now I just have to meet that target, and the only way to meet that target is to be very focused and, very, on the whole time. (Emma, 40s, Australia)

Ageing of parents and other significant people brought care responsibilities for many women's careerscapes in our data. A Scottish interviewee Rose who was in her 30's, married but did not have children, took up the care responsibilities of elderly family members in working life contexts:

I think the equal responsibilities – and that is equal consideration by organisations as there is preference of achievement to it – is considered to much more appropriate to be flexible if you have children I suppose to if you have elderly. (...) And I think it is part of ageism in society. We have the disregard for older people, which is unpleasant actually. (Rose, 30s, Scotland)

Rose highlighted the question of care of elderly family members, which is often not visibly present in organisations as day-to-day practices and employees' need for flexibilities more than established formal policies allow. Our sample's second interviewee in her 30s, Cecilia, had dramatically just before the interview received serious news on her father who had a major attack of illness and at that time was in hospital in intensive care. Cecilia was understandably very upset, but had decided to continue working, as she, on one hand, felt that there is not much that she can do for her father at the moment, and, on the other hand, she was uncomfortable not to be present in her workplace. In fact, Cecilia was very thankful for the CEO for his positive attitude towards her visits to the intensive care – with visits of a maximum of 15 minutes – during the afternoons.

At the moment he is lying there [in the intensive care]. We have such a lovely CEO that I have now agreed with him that I can visit there during the afternoons. ... They said [in the hospital] that this is a long process, perhaps within a year we will know the end results if he survives that long. Thus these [issues on care of elderly] can be very timely, and that my care help will be needed more and more. (Cecilia, 30s, Finland)

Cecilia's gratefulness for the CEO who allowed her to visit her father brings up the same aspects that Rose talked about: there are hierarchies also on the care for whom it is allowed to be given during one's working life. It seems that work/life relations are – somewhat and hopefully increasingly – addressed in organisational level policies and practices when it is on small children. But there are (even) bigger omissions when the question of care needs is outside of the 'nuclear family', such as parents or relatives.

A Finnish interviewee, Patricia who is in her 60s, also took up the question of care responsibilities that have impacted on her career in many phases. She told that when her parents were still alive, she needed to travel a lot to another city where they lived. In particular when her mother lived five years alone, Patricia needed to put a lot of priority on her care. Another aspect of care that Patricia needed then to balance her working life with was care of her adult son, who had been seriously injured a few years ago, and who constantly required a lot of attention:

When my son was seriously injured [specification of the injury], there is a need to monitor his interests, whether be those issues related to medical care or aspects of social security. (Patricia, 60s, Finland)

Care takes place also within organisations. Often women are also seen as natural caretakers within organisational life (Acker 1990; Hiillos 2008). This can mean a gendered division of labour within the organisation, or more informally, taking care of other, often younger or more junior, employees. Diane gave an example of this by telling about her availability even during holidays. For her, it was an unbearable thought that junior employees would feel stressed or uncertain while she is relaxing on vacation. She said:

They get nurtured and cared for a lot more [by me], yeah. I don't know if that's the mother in me or female or just innate, but yeah, that's not the culture. (Diane, 40s, Ireland)

For the women top managers, time and timing are much of the personal everyday struggle, which is embedded with 'caring' functions that can differ from that of men in corresponding positions. Gendered care outreaches often other family members and relatives from both sides of the relationship. This was the case also with Diane. After living and making a career abroad, Diane and her family returned home after her mother-in-law became terminally ill.

From the examples above, we can see how, at different times, different care needs restrict and affect women's careerscapes, their choices, advancements and the very concrete use of their time on a day-to-day basis. On the other hand, when the care needs shift, these women have developed their careers further, and actually reached the top positions, in spite of care responsibilities at certain times of their lives. In the lives of our respondents, care and careers have been temporarily intertwined in interesting and multi-faceted ways.

Time, work, and 'non-work life'

The use of time for work in top management raises other questions than those specifically related to care. What counts as work itself is a core question with embedded gender dimensions. This is not only a matter of paid versus unpaid work, but also what counts as work within employed work settings, managerial or otherwise. Patricia Yancey Martin, in her study on gendering practices and practicing of gender at work, claims that "men's superior power lets them claim that whatever they do is work", whereas women with less power are discouraged to challenge this (Martin 2003, p. 257). Martin continues (p. 258):

Ironically, men in my study engaged in practices that are routinely attributed (as stereotypes) to women more than men—wasting time talking to coworkers, pretending to like people they dislike, making decisions based on affect rather than “objective” evidence, and ignoring rules in favor of particularistic sentiments. Such behavior is criticized when done by women. For women workers to interpret men’s similar behavior as evidence that men “act like women,” or practice femininities, is likely too heretical a notion for women to even consider. When women coworkers socialize, they waste time; when men coworkers socialize, they advance their careers (Lipman-Blumen 1976).

Time used for socialising – such as wining and dining of customers – can be evaluated as important, but caring-related communications – such as listening to a stressed colleague – might not have a similar kind of ‘strategic value’ in organisations. In Martin’s (2001) research, (some) men had a tendency to prolong meetings to ‘peacock’ or to build up friendship and alliances with other men. Thus women felt frustrated and did not want to waste time for these kinds of activities at work, but, instead, were keen to accomplish their work tasks as quickly as possible. Socialising after work can increase collegiality, but demands offering one’s leisure time. It is obviously possible that in more informal get-togethers with colleagues and customers contacts and networks are built up. At the same time this enhances the aspects of homosociality in business (Lipman-Blumen 1976; Holgersson 2003). The issue of ‘being present’, though not in terms of building up the necessary homosocial linkages and the understanding of the time and career possibilities, comes up by the British interviewee Bridget in her 50s:

[*laughs*] No, it’s not equal. It’s, and you still see, people making hiring and promotion decisions, in their own image. Not saying these are bad people. And I’m sure they don’t even recognise what they’re doing but there is an unconscious bias, towards promoting or recruiting in your own image. Because it feels comfortable. There’s also an unconscious bias in terms of, giving people opportunities in the business. Stretch opportunities. [...] Especially in urgent matters that you need to [react] really quickly. The human nature kicks in and it’s easier to reach for, the people that you’ve worked with time and time again. To deploy quickly. Rather than to think, well hang on a minute, do I need a better balance in the team than I’ve currently got and, let me pause and think about people that I perhaps haven’t worked with. And they will often be women. Who will be sitting on the sidelines, and thinking, oh my goodness, “Fred” got another one of these opportunities, what am I doing wrong that I’m not getting any of these opportunities? It’s definitely not a level playing field. (Bridget, 50s, UK)

Time is precious and the sacrifices for career advancement are many. Bridget continued:

Definitely [need to do sacrifices]. Everything from, interrupted holidays, cancelled holidays. Through to... cancelled concerts or, theatre tickets or, that sort of thing. Yeah definitely there’s been sacrifices. And those are sacrifices that we have both, both my partner and I have had to make. (Bridget, 50s, UK)

Also Diane talked openly about the sacrifices she made in favour of work and, however lightly presented, how this affects her marriage:

[...] I don't switch off during my holiday which is a problem. No, I'm on my email and my phone all the time on holidays. It's grounds for divorce [*laugh*]. (Diane, 40s, Ireland)

The second Scottish interviewee, Melanie, a top manager in her 60s, pondered on her previous position in a business organisation and how it compared with her current job. She felt that in her earlier job she did not have any other life than work, and now the current work still has a tendency to be a bit similar:

I was going to be back to strategic decision, you know, policy, managing people and I really had to ask myself, do I want to do that. Because my role in the [company] naturally was really, really stressful ... And I remember [thinking about] that I would leave the [company] as much as I loved, I loved working for the [company], but I had no life outside ... I was working seven days a week, I was working on evenings... And I said to myself, what am I doing, what has my life become? (Melanie, 60s, Scotland)

Melanie continued about time that she spent to support her junior staff members, which she found to be important but also bringing a lot of satisfaction:

People need support, [and] if you dare to support then they are going to be there for you and they will give you more than just an obedience. (...) If I can help you with that problem you've got at home by taking some pressure off you. It is not always possible, but even just to know that if you need some time off that's fine, you can do that in confidence. Just finding ways to help people, because we have all got personal situations that we'll have to deal. (Melanie, 60s, Scotland)

Also Patricia brought up the importance of support of younger generation women, as she had noticed how easily one "hits one's head on the glass ceiling". Patricia, who had had many positions on corporate boards, took up the perspective of time and changes over time. She had given up from many positions in order to give space for younger talented people, but also to move on to other aspects of life in her current career phase.

Even though it is a relief to leave some tasks behind you, on the other hand one would never give up the experiences. And I find it extremely educating that one learns to give up some tasks, because when one has gotten used to use power and carry the responsibilities that are linked to it, then one needs to remember that hold on, this is not my position any more. Do not interfere too much, let people do their job in peace. (Patricia, 60s, Finland)

At the same time, younger women managers appreciated the time and support from their more senior colleagues or mentors. Rose explained enthusiastically about the motivation and knowledge creation that she had experienced to gain from networking with older women:

And what I enjoy is having access to older women in a network, because a lot of these women have children, but their children are older so they are not encountering those burdens of responsibility of looking after young children. And they've got experience of balancing their work and their life. They've had families, they are older now and they've got the business experience. (...) Women

who are a bit older and families are grown out, it is much more of what they can give and what they give back. (Rose, 30s, Scotland)

For Cecilia women mentors and senior colleagues had offered priceless support during her career:

Cecilia: I have gotten support from these colleagues, and I have to say that through their help I have been able to proceed to where I am now.

Interviewer: Have they been like mentors to you, unofficial or official?

Cecilia: Yes, mentor is a good word, and I just thought that there have been several during this journey. I had one person in [earlier job] and she has been certainly the most important mentor during 4-5 years. But there are also others who have been important to enable place for discussions and getting to know better what the tasks include, what is required and if one is read to move on to such positions. (...) They have been all older [women], each and every one, between 50 to 60 years of age. (Cecilia, 30s, Finland)

To summarise, time is certainly precious for women top managers because of the manifold caring roles at work and at home. In our eight interviews, women told about their multifaceted care roles that changed in different phases of their careers. Thus the careerscapes of these top managerial women are fluid, and reflect not only their own ambitions and wishes, but also often their family and non-work situations. In particular younger women managers appreciated highly the support and advice from other more senior women through times. On the other hand, women in more senior career phases were keen to support others, and at the same time there was a realisation that the passing of power and responsibility to others enables new paths of life for oneself and possibilities for more junior women.

Discussion

In this chapter we have highlighted some key intersections of age, gender, and work/family relations, in relation to care, careers, and the structuring of time more generally of women in high managerial positions. In spite of different contexts, nationalities and ethnicities, the striking similarity in our data is the interconnections of careers, life stages, care demands, and time. These following features were represented in the women's accounts as interconnecting with being in a top management position:

- the demanding responsibilities of management;
- limited control of one's own time;
- experience of lack of time for the work itself;
- fear of not keeping up with others in the competition;
- lack of time for life outside of work; and
- care responsibilities as a central part of life in different times and life stages.

All of these processes have taken place across time, throughout the years while climbing the corporate ladder, and indeed with ageing and changing age positionings. On the other hand, these women have also experienced strong societal demands and expectations related to the gendered views on aged womanhood, motherhood and care, and have also experienced the pressure from care demands outside of work – sometimes strongly affecting their career choices or life choices. Care, often invisibly, takes substantial chunks of time. This makes a combination, which adds to the workload and invisible stressing factors for many women top managers.

The interconnections of work and care can be understood and organised very differently, depending on the societal and organisational contexts, macro level care ideologies and welfare systems, and gender contracts. Thereby, it is crucial to address also organisational level policies and practices of more formal care responsibilities as well as the informal caring roles undertaken by many women. This can be seen as broader landscapes of care taking place both inside and outside of the organisation, as organisation carescapes, and also in individuals' relations to care.

The shifting times and places for care partly define and partly depend on, the careers of women. Societal expectations targeted towards women still expect them to carry the main responsibilities for care, even with significant variations in collective provision, time-use, and everyday practice across countries. On the other hand, the women studied have all accomplished a very successful career. The shifting times of intense care responsibilities and devoted career developments appear to construct the life stages of these women, for example, for some with the double demands of teenager children and ageing parents. Despite critiques of the notion and content of given 'life stages', in our data the life stages do not seem to depend so much on context, but seem to follow similar kinds of paths in the different countries, through the interrelations of careerscapes, carescapes and timescapes.

These questions and analyses are important for both theory and practice in at least five main ways. First, they add to our knowledge of how gendered age and aged gender affect organisations and organisational structures, processes and experiences. Second, they address the intersections of age, work-life, care, and careers of women managers, actual and potential. Third, these intersections affect how different aged groups of managers, in the pipeline for management positions, perceive their career prospects, and on the other hand, family prospects, as well as questions around work/family reconciliation. Fourth, intersections of age and gender themselves impact on how the care responsibilities for older people in working life are encountered, or avoided. Fifth, these questions closely relate to individual life-stages and phases of career and care responsibilities, as well as the aged/gendered societal and organisational expectations of the "ideal worker", the "ideal carer", and the "ideal manager". More broadly still, we see these matters as part of the development of theory and theorising on intersectional gender relations in and around organisations. In many instances, the current tendencies towards intersectional orientation in organisational theory, policy and practice has been focused on class, ethnicity, gender, and racialisation, and much less on age, ageing, and generation, less alone disability.

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ⁱⁱ We are aware that the categories of “woman” and “men” have their limitations – further genders exist too. The paper does not address questions of sexuality and heteronormativity (for instance, Butler 1990). Moreover, “leadership” and “top management”, at least in the country contexts studied, often embed whiteness, and a particular (western) tone. Intersectionality (see, for example, McCall 2005) of age, gender, ethnicity, social class and other social categories and positions is increasingly relevant in research on work, organisations and management and leadership. In building up our argument(s) and analysis, we have kept in mind these issues implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, although these are not the main focus of this article.

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^{iv} The data was gathered in 2009 by Charlotta Niemistö (2011) for her doctoral dissertation.

^v The data is from Marjut Jyrkinen’s Academy of Finland funded postdoctoral research 2008-2010 that examined the impact of gender and age in women managers’ careers.

Table 1. Interviewees

Name	Country	Position	Age	Marital status
Rose	Scotland/UK	senior manager in business	30s	married
Cecilia	Finland	HR manager in business	30s	co-habiting
Diane	Ireland	senior manager in business	40s	married
Emma	Australia	top manager in business	40s	married
Bridget	UK	top manager in business	50s	co-habiting
Fiona	Finland	top manager in business	50s	married
Melanie	Scotland/UK	top manager; CEO of NGO, earlier in business	60s	single (divorced)
Patricia	Finland	manager of own business; ex-leader of a company	60s	(re)married