



Lonely at the top

Gendered media elites in Sweden

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ABSTRACT

The Nordic countries are often noted for their high level of gender equality. The media sector is no exception and it is true that almost 50 percent of Swedish journalists are female. However, female presence at the senior level of media organizations remains much lower. This article analyses the Swedish media elite from a gender perspective. It is based on a survey study among all top-level managers (the Swedish national institutional elites) in seven different social fields and interprets the results by drawing upon Bourdieu's theories on habitus, capital and field and Toril Moi's 'appropriation' of Bourdieu (in the essay 'Appropriating Bourdieu', in *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*). Differences and similarities between men and women in the media elite are identified and analysed, including differences regarding social background and the amount and type of capital they have accumulated when reaching the top. The main conclusion is that the acquisition of social capital is of major significance to counterbalance the negative capital of femaleness in reaching a senior management position in the media.

KEY WORDS ■ gender and media elites ■ gender and media organizations ■ gender and power ■ media field ■ Sweden

Introduction

The Nordic countries are often noted for their high level of gender equality. The media sector is no exception, and it is true that almost 50 percent of Swedish journalists are female (Djerf-Pierre, 2003). However, the female presence at the top management level of media organizations – the media elite – is still much lower. In Sweden, only 26 percent of the elite positions in the media were held by women in the year 2001 (see Table A1). There are, however, significant differences in gender representation among different social fields. In politics women held 44 percent of all elite positions, whereas in the corporate sector only 5 percent of the top-level managers were female.

The close connection between masculinity and social power is certainly no news for a feminist scholar. For all of us living in a male-dominated society as we all do around the world, the fact that there are fewer women than men holding powerful positions is hardly surprising. Pointing out this fact does not, however, enhance our knowledge of how this pattern evolved or how it is reproduced. What are the mechanisms that put these men into power and have tended to shut out women? And what is required of the few women who manage to reach the top, compared to their male colleagues? The research question for this article revolves around an understanding of the mechanisms that produce these gender structures of the media elite. How can we identify the gender logic of the media field? This article analyses the Swedish media elite from a gender perspective. It departs from a survey study of 3000 top-level managers¹ in seven different social fields conducted in 2001. The survey contained questions about career patterns, recruitment, social background, education, mentors and networks, as well as opinions on gender equality and gender policy. I have interpreted the results by drawing upon Bourdieu's theories on habitus, capital and field and Toril Moi's (1999) appropriation of Bourdieu (in the essay 'Appropriating Bourdieu', in *What is a Woman? And other Essays*). Identified and analysed are some of the differences and similarities between men and women in the media elite, such as differences regarding social background and in the amount and type of capital they have accumulated when reaching the top. I use this comparison as a basis for a discussion on the mechanisms that exclude and include certain groups from positions of power and for generating an understanding of the workings of gender in the game of power.

Gendered elites

Elite theory and male dominance

The basic theme of this article is power, particularly gender differences in the access to the most powerful positions in society. In all societies there are groups controlling the institutional positions where decisions of national scope and impact are made. These groups are usually defined as elites or power elites (Mills, 1956; SOU, 1990: 301–17; Christiansen et al., 2001: 11–29). In the following, the elite refer to the people holding the most important institutionally based positions of power in society. Other definitions are certainly possible as are other methods of identifying powerful people or groups, such as the reputations method (people who are reputed to be powerful) or by studying the active participants in actual decision-making processes. For the

purpose of this study, however, the institutional definition of elites captures the essential elements of elites. Employing the institutional definition, the 'media elite' includes all presidents/managing directors, general managers, programming directors, chief editors and managing editors of the major radio and television companies, newspapers (local and metropolitan) and magazines (organizational, popular and specialist) with the largest circulation/audience as well as all major media and publishing companies (including the internet) in Sweden in 2001.

Power and management, both as concepts and in practice, are often associated with maleness and masculinity (Collinson and Hearn, 1996: 1–24) and, more specifically, with the particular hegemonic masculinity of modern industrialized societies (Connell, 1995: Chs 3, 8 and 9). Conventional managerial language as well as journalistic reporting generally convey a masculine discourse that tends to characterize managers and executives as 'hard men, virile swashbuckling and flamboyant entrepreneurs who were reasserting a macho management style that insisted on the divine rights of managers to manage' (Collinson and Hearn, 1996: 3).

Extensive research on power elites can be found in the international literature, starting with C. Wright Mills' (1956) classical study of the American power elite in the 1950s. More recent research includes several important studies on elites in the Nordic countries (Pettersson et al., 1996; Østerud et al., 1999; Christiansen et al., 2001). However, there are very few studies of the media which draw on elite theory. Lichter et al.'s (1986) book *The Media Elite* is one exception. Lichter and his associates analysed the social background and ideology of the journalists of America's leading national media. The empirical material was not only a questionnaire; journalists were also subjected to psychological tests, aimed at uncovering the attitudes of America's new 'power brokers'.

As for Lichter et al., the social composition of the elite is of prime interest to elite research and much effort has been put into unveiling the social mechanisms that produce and reproduce the power elite. Classical elite theory usually departs from three assumptions about the social characteristics of the power elite (Pettersson et al., 1996: 56ff.). The first is *exclusiveness*. The elite is supposed to be characterized by its strong ability to reproduce itself; to exclude persons with abilities and experiences of 'ordinary people'; and to secure material gain and good living conditions for itself. The second assumption about the elite is *unity*. The power elite is supposed to be tied together by strong networks of informal contacts and personal friendship with few or no connections to 'ordinary people'. The third feature of elites is *concordance*: the power elite shares a common view of the world and a common ideology, which is discordant with that of 'ordinary people'.

Self-reproduction – the self-perpetuating cycle that preserves the positions for certain groups while excluding others – is regarded as a prime feature of the elite. If the elite actually reproduces itself through such a process, this raises serious questions about the extent to which society can be described as democratic: in a democratic society, power and positions should not be reserved – neither formally nor through informal mechanisms – for just some people or groups. One basic question for elite research is if and how elite positions are open or closed for different groups in society.

When reviewing the elite theory literature, it soon becomes obvious that the elite is universally exclusive in one respect: it is *male*. Gender equality in the power elite has not been found anywhere although the discrimination of women varies among countries and between social fields within countries. Classical elite theory, however, rarely focuses on how these gender patterns are established and reproduced. The (old) classical literature, such as Mills (1956), departs from the presupposition that the power elites consist of men with supporting housewives. When women are mentioned in the literature, it is as wives connecting men and families through the institution of marriage, as sources of inheritance (as wives or daughters of powerful men) and as contributors to social networks and connections. In recent decades, the situation has changed and women around the world have started to move into spheres and positions that had previously (informally) been reserved for men. This is particularly the case in the political sector of the Nordic countries where female representation has increased extensively.

Previous elite studies, such as the Swedish royal commission on power in 1990 (SOU, 1990), state that women are heavily under-represented in elite positions in society but they rarely put much effort into analysing why this is the case. Some recent elite studies do, however, focus on gender. One is *Diversity in the Power Elite* (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1998), another is *Gendering Elites* (Vianello and Moore, 2000). What we can learn from these studies is that every social field is gendered, albeit in different ways. Vianello and Moore's comparison of female and male top leaders in politics and the business sector in 27 countries identified significant regional and national differences in the gender patterns of the elites. Their main conclusion is that the most important general differences between the genders could be found in social and educational background and in the leaders' private lives. Women leaders generally draw on greater social resources than men: a more privileged class background, higher educational level among relatives and a family culture in which mothers had a higher social and economic status. The authors conclude that

women's access to power cannot be understood as simply exceptional, nor as the result of individual efforts alone, but that women who attain top positions have available additional structural and cultural resources on which they can draw as

a replacement for the structural and cultural deficits implicit in their gender. (Vianello and Moore, 2000: 269)

The authors found fewer gender differences in attitudes and professional activities related to the leaders' power position. However, Vianello and Moore did not study media elites. Do women in the media elite also have to counterbalance femaleness by acquiring more or different resources than their male colleagues?

Gender as capital

In the process of developing a deeper understanding of the reproduction of power in society and in understanding how the media elite is constituted, Pierre Bourdieu's theories are particularly useful.² In the analysis offered here, the media will be perceived as a social field, where different agents use a range of strategies in attempting to gain access to the most powerful positions. A social field, according to Bourdieu, is a competitive system of social relations, which functions according to its own specific logic: it consists of objective relations between individuals or institutions competing for the same stakes. I will regard the media field as such a field of competitive social relations and at stake in the competition is maximum power and dominance within the media field. The aim is to control the field and the most powerful institutional positions are decisive in this game. Such a position is achieved by amassing the maximum amount of the specific kind of capital current in the field. Capital, according to Bourdieu, is not limited to economic assets. On the contrary, capital is everything that is deemed valuable or desirable in a particular field. Bourdieu differentiates between symbolic (status, prestige, legitimacy), economic (material assets) and social capital (family connections, formal and informal networks, private connections and liaisons, support from important individuals or groups). In order to accumulate the necessary capital and to seize control, different individuals use different strategies. The strategies are, however, not recognized as such. Instead, each field produces its particular *habitus*, which is an internalized set of tacit rules governing practices and strategies in the field.

The value of different forms of capital varies between fields, as does the particular habitus produced. Thus, different social fields may be characterized by different logics. If we perceive of the media as a field, it also produces a particular habitus and specific forms of capital. In my analysis I pay attention to many different forms of capital which can be used in the struggle for power in the media: professional, cultural, economic and social capital.

The individual habitus of a senior manager is formed in the process of life, and is shaped by different experiences of the general social field (through

upbringing, schooling, etc.) and also of more specific fields, professional and others (social and professional life, such as working in the media). Some is gained by inheritance (through class and family background) and some is acquired through the individual's own educational and professional choices and efforts. Although not all agents in the media field share exactly the same habitus, they must know and recognize the rules of the game and they must know what forms of capital are recognized in the specific field in question. As Moi concludes:

It does not follow, as far as I can see, that they will all play the game in the same way. The different positions of different players in the field will require different strategies. To the extent that different agents have different social backgrounds (they may come from different geographical regions, be of different class, gender, or race, and so on), their habitus cannot be identical. (Moi, 1999: 272)

Symbolic capital is probably the most important form of capital. Symbolic capital is what social groups recognize and accord value. It is a relational concept and what is symbolic capital varies between social fields. In the media field, many forms of symbolic capital can be assumed to be important but, in the analysis, I will focus on two general forms. The first is *professional capital*, which is the amount of professional experience a person has in the media field, the person's career pattern and previously held positions. The second is *cultural capital*, a specific subtype of symbolic capital that is very important in the work of Bourdieu. Cultural capital is culturally valued patterns of taste and consumption, acquired mainly through education but also through upbringing (which makes class background and gender very important in this respect). In the analysis I focus mainly on education and include both the level and type of education the media leader has acquired.

Economic capital consists of material assets, wealth and property. In the analysis, it refers to (1) household income and (2) household property and wealth of the media leaders. Under this heading I also analyse another aspect of 'material assets and conditions' a person has access to, namely the family structure, children and specifically the access to what I have called 'reproductive support'. This concept refers to whether the individual herself is taking care of the reproductive aspects of life (childcare, housework) or if the person has a supporting housewife or househusband.

Social capital includes access to formal and informal networks, support from mentors and other forms of valuable social connections. In this study I analyse four aspects of social capital: (1) number and type of mentors, (2) number and type of informal contacts and networks, (3) the level of private contacts with other media leaders and (4) the level of support and encouragement from other people, family, friends, partners and superiors a leader has. Class background is associated with all the types of capital mentioned earlier.

Bourdieu generally recognizes homologies between fields, which means that class is a basis of the general social field and comes into play in all social sectors (Bourdieu, 1993: 44). In the analysis I examine family background and class under the heading of cultural capital, although class does have a bearing on almost all forms of capital mentioned earlier.

While the importance of class is well examined in Bourdieu's own research, the effects of gender have been given less attention. Bourdieu's work – see, for instance, *Masculine Domination* (2001[1998]) – is often focused on the traditional Kabyle society of Algeria in the 1950s and early 1960s, which he had studied extensively, but he was less attentive to the gender patterns of modern, western societies. But, as Bourdieu himself concludes, in modern society 'the major change has doubtless been that masculine domination no longer imposes itself with the transparency of something taken for granted' (2001[1998]: 88). To Bourdieu (2001[1998]: 93), gender is a specific symbolic capital, similar to class, which works in the general social field, that all members of different sex experience:

On the one hand, whatever their position in the social space, women have in common the fact that they are *separated from men by a negative symbolic coefficient* which, like skin color for blacks, or any other sign of membership of a stigmatized group, negatively affects everything that they are and do, and which is the source of a systematic set of homologous differences. (Emphasis in the original)

On the other hand, gender interacts with other social characteristics such as class and race (2001[1998]: 93):

On the other hand, despite the specific experiences which bring them together . . . women remain *separated from each other* by economic and cultural differences which affect, among other things, their objective and subjective ways of undergoing and suffering masculine domination – without, however, canceling out all that is linked to the diminution of symbolic capital entailed by being a woman. (Emphasis in the original)

In applying a gender perspective to Bourdieu's general theories on the reproduction of social power, I find Toril Moi's (1999) appropriation of Bourdieu very useful. Moi points out some important reasons as to why Bourdieu's theories are helpful for a feminist analysis of power. First of all, Bourdieu's perspective on gender is firmly non-essentialist. Sexual oppression is seen as an effect of symbolic violence and femininity is something imposed on female bodies in the process that constructs a person's habitus. Social power relations are inscribed on the body: 'our habitus is at once produced and expressed through our movements, gestures, facial expressions, manners, ways

of talking, and ways of looking at the world' (Moi, 1999: 282). According to Moi, Bourdieu allows us to move beyond the frontlines in current feminist debate: 'Sexual differences are neither essences nor simple signifiers, neither a matter of realism nor of nominalism, but as a matter of social practice. Sexual differences or sexual identities, then, cannot simply be deconstructed away' (Moi, 1999: 282).

A constructivist perspective on gender is hardly novel to feminist thinking but gender is also conceived of as a social and cultural variable, which allows us to move beyond the dichotomized thinking of 'male' and 'female'. Instead we may think of multiple masculinities and femininities, which are in accordance with current theories on gender and masculinities such as those of Connell (1995). It allows us to seize the immense variability of gender as a social factor. Gender is a combinatory social category, one that infiltrates every other category. According to Moi, Bourdieu does not study social class as a pure field; nor did he speak of class capital. Gender can be perceived of in the same way, i.e. as something that is part of the general social field, which underpins or structures all other fields (Moi, 1999: 289). Gender never appears in a pure field of its own:

[it] is always a socially variable entity, one which carries different amounts of symbolic capital in different contexts . . . We may nevertheless start from the assumption that under current social conditions and in most contexts maleness functions as a positive and femaleness functions as negative symbolic capital. (Moi, 1999: 291)

In the empirical analysis, I do precisely this. Following Bourdieu's line of thought, I think of gender as a specific form of capital, where female gender is often negative and male is positive capital. But I will also recognize – and this is a key theoretical point of departure for this study – that the negative gender capital can be countered by amassing other types of capital. According to Moi (1999: 293), 'the impact of femaleness as negative capital may be assumed to decline in direct proportion to the amount of other forms of symbolic capital amassed. And in the case of exceptionally high amounts of symbolic and economic capital femaleness plays a very small part indeed.' Taking this as a point of departure, it can be presupposed that if women in the media elite do possess more professional, cultural, economic or social capital of a particular type than their male counterpart, this may serve as an indicator of a specific form of capital that counterbalances the negative capital of femaleness. We may have identified the form of capital that is important for female top leaders when 'winning the game', that is to say, achieving an elite position in the media field.

Born to power?

Social background and education: cultural capital

The analysis I undertake here substantiates the claim that the media elite is socially exclusive: the elite often has a family background in the middle or upper middle classes (see Table A2). However, there are few gender differences in the media elite when it comes to social background. Both men and women tend to come from higher social strata and a significant number (1–2 percent) of them are also members of the Swedish aristocracy. Additionally, the elite of both genders often comes from families where the fathers and mothers held higher managerial positions. Interestingly, the position of the father does not differ between men and women, whereas the position of the mother does. Women leaders do, more often than men, have a mother who worked and who held higher managerial positions. Quite a few of the men in the media elite also had parents that work(ed) in the media, while this is not the case for the women. Access to the media field in general seems, to some degree, to be ‘hereditary’ for men but not for women in the elite.

The media field is characterized by a significant pattern of social and professional self-reproduction. Previous research on the social characteristics of the journalist corps in Sweden has shown that journalists in general differ socially from the Swedish population at large (Börjesson et al., 2001: 15). They are more highly educated, less than a third come from working-class families and most of them were born in cities. Comparative studies, such as *The Global Journalist* (Weaver, 1998), show that the social exclusiveness of journalists seems to be a global phenomenon, although some national differences in this respect can be noted. That the people working in the Swedish media are a socially exclusive group is, then, not very surprising. It is more interesting to note that female journalists differ in background from their male colleagues. The proportion with higher levels of education (college degree) and/or journalism school is much higher for women as is the proportion with a family background in the upper middle class. Higher education and a privileged class background do help women to get into journalism: these are necessary to gain access to the field which allows them to be players in the game of power in the first place. When we come to the elite level, these gender differences in cultural capital have disappeared (see Table A5). About 70 percent of the media elite have attended college or university and 50 percent have a three-year or longer university education. This means that there are no significant gender differences when it comes to class background and the level of education. That said, men more often than women have a specialization in economics and business administration and women have a journalism degree more often than men. This is,

however, partly due to the fact that men more often are found in positions of financial management and women are found in editorial positions (managing programming or content). Still, a special education in journalism seems to be somewhat helpful for women in countering negative gender capital.

The road to power

Professional capital: career patterns

Professional capital is a specific form of symbolic capital that is acquired by professional experience of the media field in general and particularly in holding managerial positions. There are considerable differences between the female and male elites when it comes to career patterns. First of all, the female elite is younger and has less experience at their present position than their male colleagues (see Tables A5 and A6). Almost 40 percent of the women have spent less than two years in their present position but only 20 percent of the men. The media field seems to be generally volatile, with frequent transitions in the top-level positions. Most of the elite persons have been in their position only for a couple of years. The women have also had fewer management and elite positions than the men have but generally both men and women have had few previous elite positions (1.4 versus 2.3). Most of the members of the elite have worked for quite a time as general reporters or producers, before they entered a managerial career. This means that the media field is not one where one accumulates professional capital by moving rapidly from one top-level position to another. It takes considerable time to accumulate enough capital to get access to a senior management position and a managerial career in the media seems to be something you start late in life. Few members of the elite seem to have been aiming at a managerial career from the start, although it seems to be more common for men than for women to do so.

Also, the women were older when they got their first managerial position and they have worked more years at lower-level positions than the men. But when they eventually get their first managerial position, the career actually moves quicker for women than for men. It takes only seven years (on average) for a woman to get an elite position after she gets her first managerial position, whereas it takes 10 years for men (Table A6). This result is consistent with Vianello and Moore's analysis of political and business leaders' careers. The most difficult part for female leaders seems to be to start a managerial career in the first place, i.e. to get the very first senior management position. Moving on in the career is actually easier.

The study also shows that men and women tend to get access to positions in different media sectors. In public service radio and television, women occupy 44 percent of the senior positions; in commercial radio and television, the figure is only 14 percent (see Table A3). Similarly, print media show vast differences. In local and metropolitan newspapers, only 17 percent are women, in the popular press 59 percent (this is the only sector in the whole study that actually was dominated by women). At the top level of the publishing companies and media corporations, 18 percent are women but if we exclude the publishing houses where the female presence is rather high, the figure drops to 7 percent, which is about the same as in the Swedish business elite. The types of position to which women gain access also differ (see Table A4). Women are rarely appointed managing directors (11 percent) but are quite often chief editors or programming directors (33 percent). This means that financial management positions are more difficult to reach for women than editorial management positions.

Lifestyles of the rich and famous?

Income and wealth: economic capital

There are some differences between men and women when it comes to economic assets. This average household income is somewhat higher for women than for men (1.3 million SEK compared to 1.2 million SEK in annual income). One possible reason is that it is much more common for women to be married to another manager than for men. Women in the media elite are quite frequently married to other members of the media elite or at least to persons who hold a management position in the media (see Table A7).

The level of household income is high, which means that elite positions in the media are very well paid. The average household income of the media sector is actually higher than in all other fields investigated, except for the business sector (2.7 million SEK). When it comes to property or family wealth, the men are considerably wealthier than women. The reason is partly a certain group of very wealthy men, who push up the mean for the whole group of men. Many of these are also owners of a large number of stocks or shares of the companies for which they are working. These men are usually found in financial managerial positions such as managing directors. The most obvious way in a market economy to get access to a position of power in the press is to buy shares in the paper – provided you have the money to do it. So economic capital does matter and women seem to have less than men.

Living conditions: the 'reproductive support capital'

Wealth and property are not the only important aspects of the material living conditions of the elite. A working career often starts at the same stage in an individual's life when she or he is starting a family. A basic characteristic of managerial life is that much effort is required to succeed and move upward. Senior-level management has – at least traditionally – been associated with long working hours and the prioritization of the needs of the organization over personal needs. The professional life and personal/family lives are, however, always entwined. Without understanding the interactional and contextual nature of careers and taking the living conditions of men and women into account, it is impossible to understand how and why certain groups are excluded from certain positions.

Living conditions are one of the areas where the differences between women and men in the media elite are significant (see Table A7). Almost all of the men are living with a partner (92%) while this is true for only 74 percent of the women. Men also have children more often than women and when they do have children, they have a greater number of them. Few members of the elite are, however, living with small children (age 0–6), which is of course partly due to their age. Most leaders do not acquire an elite position until they are in their late 40s or 50s.

Traditional elite research pictured the elite as men with supporting housewives. In order to be able to have a career, one needs someone to take care of the reproductive work. This is one reason why it is important to regard the totality of the lives of the elites in the analysis. One aspect of this is how partnership/marriage and family life are organized, including having children, childcare, doing housework, etc. Different activities – such as paid work, housework and leisure activities – influence each other and partly receive their meaning from this interconnection.

The concept of career life forms can be used for the purpose of grasping the totality of the lives of the elites (Esseveld and Andersson, 2000: 190). The traditional-career life form refers to a leader with a partner as a non-working spouse; the mixed-career life form refers to a top-level manager with a partner who is working but not at a managerial position. The dual-career life form means that both partners have careers and management positions and single-career life form is when an elite person is living without a partner. A previous study on economic and political leaders in 27 countries has shown that, for men in Non-European industrialized countries and in Southern Europe, the traditional-career life form is dominant. In Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, the traditional-career life form is rare. Instead, the mixed-career life form is the most common (Esseveld and Andersson, 2000: 193). For female leaders,

however, regardless of region, the dual-career pattern dominates. That is to say, female top-level managers tend to be married to other top-level managers, while the opposite is true for male leaders. The female part of the Swedish media elite is similar to the economic and political leaders in other countries; they often tend to be married to other senior managers or media professionals. The men in the media elite tend to have mixed-career life forms, quite often with partners working part-time. The traditional-career life form is, however, almost non-existent in Sweden, even for men (Table A8).

Female media managers tend to do much more household work than men (see Table A7) – about 30 percent more. They also work longer hours at the office. Due to this, free time or leisure time is less for women than for men. Women also take on greater responsibility for the children. The questionnaire included questions on whether or not the leaders had been on paternal leave and for how long: 93 percent of the women with children and 59 percent of the men answered that they had been on paternal/maternal leave. It should be noted that the Swedish maternal/paternal benefits are very generous by international standards: the mother or the father may get a total of 12 months' paid absence per child. Of those who had been on leave, the average time off was 11 months per child for women and 2.8 months per child for men. This means that women leaders have carried much more responsibility for child-care than men have, previously in their careers. But it is important to note that male leaders in Sweden actually *do* take time off to mind their own children, which in an international comparative perspective probably is quite rare.

Vianello and Moore also came to the conclusion that female leaders have to make greater sacrifices in their private lives than equally situated men do (Vianello and Moore, 2000: 270). Women in senior positions typically carry a double burden of career and family/household duties. As we can see, this seems to be the case also for female media leaders in Sweden. These aspects of the material living conditions of the elite are, however, difficult to describe in terms of 'capital'. It is nonetheless important to pay attention to the significance of the access to 'reproductive support' – either by a partner or a paid household helper or child-minder (if a person has children). It is an important asset, if you are to reach the top. The conclusion is that men have access to more of this type of capital than women do.

Network elites: social capital

Mentors and networks

Bourdieu has been accused of not paying sufficient attention to the importance of social capital (Danielsen and Nordli Hansen, 1999). Social capital

is the power and advantages a person gains from networks or other personal or more intimate personal relations (Moi, 1999: 293). There are many different ways to accumulate social capital. Social background and class can be important, as you may gain some important connections by coming from the 'right' families. As we have seen, a majority of the media elite comes from higher social strata in society, something that may result in access to social capital per se. Marriage and intimate relations are also important in the struggle for power. As Moi (1999: 295) points out:

Social capital is above all a matter of personal relations. Since some personal relations are sexual and intimate as well as social, it follows that aspiring artists of both sexes risk squandering their artistic capital by loving unwisely. From a purely sociological point of view, outstanding female intellectuals have often loved very wisely: think of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, or indeed of Simone de Beauvoir.

As we can see from this study, female media leaders tend to make considered judgements when choosing their partners. It is much more common for a female elite person to be married to another senior manager, or even a senior media manager, than for men (see Table A8). In general, men acquire various forms of 'reproductive support' capital through marriage, whereas women gain professional and economic capital.

In this study, I have paid particular attention to the importance of mentors or persons who have been helpful or in other ways important to the person in her/his career. Vianello and Moore (2000: 89) showed that women had more mentors than men and that more women than men had female peers at work or male friends or colleagues as mentors. In the Swedish media elite, most people have had a 'mentor', i.e. a person who was particularly important or helpful when achieving the elite position the person has today (see Table A9). There are significant gender differences with regard to the access of mentors. Women tend to have more mentors than do men and they also have mentors of both sexes, whereas the men mostly have only male mentors. The most common type of mentor is a senior manager in the current organization or – as is the case in about 20 percent of the responses – a senior manager in another organization. One important difference between men and women is that women much more often have mentors that are other friends or relatives. But these mentors do not seem to replace other mentors. Instead, having a personal friend or relative as mentor is something that women have in excess of other mentors (that men also have). We also asked the media leaders about when they first met the person who became a mentor and it seems that family background is of no particular importance when acquiring mentors. Only 9 percent of the respondents indicated that they had met a mentor during childhood or before entering the university. The vast majority answered that they first had met at least one mentor at the current (75 per-

cent) or previous (35 percent) place of work. Very few also seem to have met at least one mentor at the university or college (8 percent).

The access to informal networks is equally important as mentors in the context of social capital. We therefore asked the male and female leaders if there are persons or networks that are important to them as informal channels of information or as partners for discussion. The gender pattern here is the same as for mentors (see Table A10). Women have more informal network persons and tend to have network persons of both sexes. Women also more often have friends, relatives or colleagues as informal network persons.

Another important aspect of social capital is the level of private association or socialization with other media leaders. From the study, we can see that socialization among top-level leaders is indeed very common (see Table A11). The gender differences in this respect are, however, small. Female leaders tend to socialize more often with top-level managers in radio and television but this is primarily due to their relative over-representation in that media sector. I have also analysed the amount of formal and informal contacts the media leaders have with other elite groups, in politics, culture, science, business, organizations, etc. I found no significant difference between men and women in this respect. The structure (pattern and intensity) of formal and informal professional contacts therefore seems to be specific to the field, not to gender.

The last aspect of social capital analysed is personal support; the ability to acquire, sustain and accumulate support from other agents, not so much within the field but outside it. This is a form of capital where women differ greatly from men. Women have generally experienced much more support from their parents, their partners, as well as from other family members and personal friends (Table A12) but they have also experienced much more support and encouragement from superiors at work than the men have.

Conclusion and discussion

Men and women in the media elite differ in several important respects when it comes to amassing professional, social, economic and cultural capital. Men tend to have mixed-career life forms, which entails greater access to various forms of personal reproductive support in their everyday life, while the women tend to be single or living in dual-career households, and a significant number are also married to other media managers. Women also work longer hours at the office and they spend more time doing housework. Taken together the living conditions are somewhat harsher for women than for men at the top.

However, the most important gender difference is found in the acquisition of social capital, where women in all aspects control more capital than men do. This seems to be of major significance to counterbalance the negative capital of femaleness in reaching a senior management position in the media. Extensive

informal networks, mentors, support from family, friends, colleagues and superiors are crucial if a woman is to be able to reach the top. One problem is that the questionnaire measures the subjective amount of networking and not the objective access to formal and informal networks. Maybe fewer men than women are prepared to acknowledge the encouragement of others in trying to achieve top positions? Or could it be that more women than men use the concept of 'networking' and acknowledge its importance, whereas networking for men is of unseen 'naturalized' importance? Further research, and other research methods, are needed to pinpoint this. The importance of social capital, informal networks and social support is however generally observed in the study. This gender pattern appears in all the elite groups, i.e. in politics, organizations (NGOs), government, culture, business, science and media. Women in the elite generally have substantially more social capital and, indeed, women in the media elite have most of all studied groups. It is fair to say that they are the most resourceful network elite in Swedish society. The same is true for the importance of the social structure of the birth family and of the mother as a role model. Female leaders of all elites in the study tend to have mothers who worked and who were quite often in managerial positions, while men have mothers who were housewives or if they did work they did not pursue their own careers. This is also the case for the media elite, where female leaders have the highest degree of working mothers of all elite groups (as do female politicians).

Another conclusion of this study is that the Swedish media elite is socially exclusive and that it does show signs of unity. This is equally true for both men and women. They move in the same social circles; intra-elite marriages are common; and close personal friendships are frequent.

The social exclusiveness of the media elite also entails male domination. Female access to different media sectors and positions do however vary widely. It is highest in the popular press and public service radio/TV, lowest in commercial radio/TV and in the media corporations (except for the publishing houses). Furthermore, financial management positions are more difficult for women to access than editorial management positions. These results take us further in understanding the gender logic of the media field. The media field is formed in the nexus between two fields of forces – politics and the market – but the stronger the commercial forces, the stronger the male domination. The popular press that is specifically geared at a female audience is the exception. This result is consistent with a more general pattern observed in the study: female leaders are elected, men anointed. In all elite groups, it is clear that positions that are acquired through various (open) electoral processes have a higher degree of female representation (as does the political field in general).³

This is a result that proves that the active gender and equality policies of the Swedish political system have positively influenced the media field and that

better gender representation in certain sectors of the media is partly a result of an activist gender policy. The public service companies are the most important example. They are under heavy political pressure to implement these policies and, since the mid-1970s, public service radio and television have been actively promoting gender equality at all levels of the organizations. Perceived in this way, politics does matter when it comes to gender representation, in the media and elsewhere.

The theoretical assumption underlying the research presented in this article is that all social fields of society are gendered, albeit in different ways. The analysis provides important knowledge of the basic structure of the Swedish media elite, which may contribute to the general knowledge of how gender works in the media field. The social background, the career patterns and the working conditions of the elite may differ both among different national contexts and within different social fields. Thus, a comparative perspective is necessary if we are to get a deeper understanding of the gendered nature of media organizations and explain why there are still so few women at the top in the media.

It is not difficult to make the sweeping statement that gender is socially constructed. The difficulty lies in determining how and what the specific consequences of particular gender construction patterns are in specific social conditions and fields. Future research would benefit from probing more deeply into Bourdieu's micro-theory of power. In-depth studies of particular cases or individuals would help us know more about what femininity and masculinity actually mean and do in different media contexts in different countries. This would, however, require another methodology such as observations and interviews in the ethnographic tradition. We could also benefit from developing closer links with the extensive research on critical organizational and management research that focuses on gender and power within organizations, in the tradition of Rosabeth Moss Kanter's path-breaking study *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1993[1977]). This kind of research highlights, among other things, the importance of looking at the inter-relations between work, career and family when trying to understand why women still find it hard to reach the top. These issues have been discussed briefly in the section on career life forms in this article but they need further investigation. Career life forms are, however, difficult to conceptualize in terms of capital, unless having a supportive partner who takes care of the reproductive aspects of life is to be considered reproductive support capital that men often have and women seldom do. The analysis also points out the crucial importance of social capital if a woman is to be able to make it to the top. It is evident that these types of capital are important in grasping the gendered nature of the media elite, as well as of elites and the social reproduction of power in general.

Appendix: Tables

Table A1 Men and women in elite positions in different social fields (percentage)

	Culture	Politics	Media	Business	Organizations, NGOs	Science	Government agencies	All
Women	33	44	26	5	25	29	30	26
Men	67	56	74	95	75	71	70	74
Sum	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of positions	332	567	341	749	469	310	575	3343

Comments: The table includes all top-level executive positions in seven different fields. The media sample included all presidents/managing directors, general managers, programming directors, chief editors and managing editors of the radio and television companies, newspapers and magazines (organizational, popular and specialist) with the largest circulation/audience as well as all major media and publishing companies (including internet) in Sweden 2001. The reason that the number of positions in the media field is fewer in Table A1 than in Tables A2 and A3 is that in Table A1 all positions are coded as belonging to only one field. Positions such as managing directors of large media companies are then classified as belonging to the business field. Positions as directors of publishing companies are classified as belonging to the field of culture, and some positions in the different organizations of the media sector are classified as belonging to the field of organizations. In Table A2 (and in the subsequent Tables A3–A12) these positions are included in the media sample.

Table A2 Social background of women and men in the media elite (percentage)

	Upper middle-class family background	Aristocracy by birth	Working- class family background	Father had higher managerial position	Mother had higher managerial position	Father working in the media sector	Mother working in the media sector	Mother housewife	Grew up in the area of Stockholm
Women	57	2	12	32	14	0	0	20	34
Men	58	1	18	32	7	6	3	32	32

Comments: The number of responses varies between 42–50 for women and 121–155 for men. Class background is mainly based on the father's position at the peak of his career. Upper class is defined as high-level white-collar positions or owners of private companies and large landowners. The area of Stockholm also includes communities close to the city of Stockholm. Stockholm is the capital city of Sweden. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A3 Men and women in elite positions in different media sectors (percentage)

	Public service radio/TV	Commercial radio/TV	Newspapers	Organizational press	Popular press	Specialist press	Media and publishing companies	Other	All
Women	44	14	17	28	59	17	18	22	25
Men	56	86	83	72	41	83	82	78	75
Sum	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of positions	50	28	127	29	39	29	78	23	403

Comments: Newspapers includes both metropolitan press and local press. Media and publishing companies also includes internet producing companies. The category Other includes other positions of power in the media field, such as the Chairman of the Journalists Association, The Publicists Club, the Union of Journalists, The Association of Newspaper Publishers, The Press Council, The Broadcasting Commission, and the Press Ombudsman. See also Table A1.

Table A4 Men and women in different types of elite positions (percentage)

	Managing directors	Chief editors, programming directors	Other senior management positions	All
Women	11	33	31	25
Men	89	67	69	75
Sum	100	100	100	100
Number of positions	132	165	106	403

Comments: See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A5 Age and education of women and men in the media elite (mean, percentage)

	Age (mean)	Older than 55 years (%)	Level of education: has at least three years of college or university (%)	Specialization of education: journalism (%)	Specialization of education: business (%)
Women	47	24	47	36	10
Men	50	34	51	13	27

Comments: The number of responses varies between 42–50 for women and 121–155 for men. See also Tables A1 and A2.

Table A6 Career patterns of women and men in the media elite (mean, percentage)

	Number of managerial positions during career (mean)	Number of elite positions during career (mean)	Time on present elite position (mean, years)	Age when getting first managerial position (mean)	Age when getting first elite position (mean)	Time spent at non-managerial positions (mean, years)	Less than 2 years at present elite position (%)	More than 10 years at present elite position (%)
Women	3.2	1.4	3.8	35	42	13.2	36	6
Men	4.4	2.3	6.2	31	41	10.8	20	24

Comments: The table refers to the person's whole career, from the first job to the present elite position. The numbers of managerial positions are all such positions during the person's whole career and therefore also include elite positions. The number of responses varies between 38–49 for women and 96–153 for men. See also Tables A1 and A2.

Table A7 Living conditions of women and men in the media elite (mean, percentage)

	Married (or living with partner) (%)	Children (% having at least one child)	Number of children (mean, of those with children)	Living with children (age 0–18) (%)	Living with small children (age 0–6) (%)	Household income (mean, Mil. SEK)	Household property (mean, Mil. SEK)	Working hours per day (mean)	Hours spent on housework per day (mean)
Women	74	80	2.0	62	10	1.3	1.6	9.9	1.3
Men	92	92	2.3	57	14	1.2	47.2	9.7	1.0

Comments: Income refers to the total income of the family per year in million SEK. The number of responses varies between 38–50 for women and 124–154 for men. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A8 Position and field of partners of women and men in the media elite (percentage of those with partner)

	Partner working full time	Partner working part time	Partner not working	Partner working in media sector	Partner has higher managerial position
Women	90	3	7	33	25
Men	63	28	9	17	18

Comments: The table only includes answers from those with a partner. The number of responses is 36 for women and 132 for men. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A9 Mentors of women and men in the media elite (percentage mentioning at least one mentor of the type, mean)

	Number of mentors (mean)	Had mentor (% mentioning at least one mentor)	Had female mentor (% mentioning at least one)	Had male mentor (% mentioning at least one)	Mentor was higher level manager in same media organization (% mentioning at least one)	Mentor was higher level manager in other media organization (% mentioning at least one)	Mentor was friend or colleague in same media organization (% mentioning at least one)	Mentor was other friend or relative (% mentioning at least one)
Women	2.5	88	52	72	36	20	16	42
Men	1.9	75	26	70	34	22	22	26

Comments: The question was phrased: 'If you think back at your career, are there any persons that were particularly important to you in achieving the position you have today (mentors). Please describe these people's positions and functions. You can mention up to five persons'. A follow-up question also asked for the gender of the persons. The number of responses was 50 for women and 148 for men. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A10 Informal network persons of women and men in the media elite (percentage mentioning at least one person of the type, mean)

	Number of informal network persons (mean)	Has informal network person (% mentioning at least one)	Has female informal network person (% mentioning at least one)	Has male informal network person (% mentioning at least one)	Network person higher level manager in same organization (% mentioning at least one)	Network person higher level manager in other organization (% mentioning at least one)	Network person friend or colleague in same organization (% m. at least one)	Network person other friend or relative (% at least one)
Women	2.9	88	69	62	33	11	69	33
Men	2.4	75	29	69	18	26	53	23

Comments: The question was phrased: 'Are there today persons or networks that are important to your management work as informal information channels or partners for discussion. Please describe these people's positions and functions. You can mention up to five persons'. A follow-up question also asked for the gender of the persons. The number of responses was 45 for women and 143 for men. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A11 Socialization (private contacts) with other senior media managers (percentage having contact at least 'once a week')

	Socialization with senior level managers in radio and television	Socialization with senior level managers in the press
Women	39	42
Men	24	44

Comments: The question was phrased: 'How often do you socialize with top level representatives of the following institutions'. The response alternatives were: never, about once a year, about once a month, about once a week and daily. The number of responses was 43 for women and 132 for men. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Table A12 Female and male leaders' experience of encouragement from different agents in taking on elite positions (percentage saying 'very supportive')

	Father	Mother	Partner	Other family members	Personal friends	Superiors/ managers at work
Women	51	43	79	49	44	76
Men	20	14	42	17	24	51

Comments: The question was phrased: 'Some people are encouraged by people in their environment in trying to achieve top level positions. How encouraging have the following persons been when you decided to take on your current position'. The response alternatives were very supportive, somewhat supportive, neither/nor, not very supportive, not at all supportive. The number of responses varies between 35–42 for women and 105–127 for men. Those who have not got partners and whose parents are dead have not answered those particular questions. See also Tables A1 and A3.

Notes

- 1 The survey was conducted within the framework of the research program 'Gender and the Reproduction of Elites in a Comparative Perspective', headed by professor of history Anita Göransson, Department of Work Science, Göteborg University. The author is responsible for the study of the media elite. The survey was conducted March to June 2001: 3343 top-level institutional positions at seven different sectors (fields) – culture, politics, media, the private business sector, organizations (voluntary organizations, religious organizations, labor market organizations etc.), science and government agencies (bureaucracy) – were selected and questionnaires were sent to the people currently holding these positions. In total 58 percent of the elite persons in the survey answered the questionnaire, but the response rate varied between the different fields, from 43 percent in the business sector to 73 percent in the organizations. In the media sample 54 percent responded. Many of those who did not respond could not do so due to natural causes (long-term illness, being on leave for other personal or professional reasons, such as a long-term trip, parental leave etc.). In total, 14 percent of the media sample were unable to reply for these reasons. This means that 68 percent of the persons in the media sector who were available during the period the survey was conducted actually answered the questionnaire. The media sample included all presidents/managing directors, general managers, programming directors, chief editors and managing directors of the radio and television companies, newspapers and magazines (organizational, popular and specialist) with the largest circulation/audience as well as all major media and publishing companies (including the internet) in Sweden 2001. The research program is sponsored by the Riksbankens jubileumsfond [The Bicentenary Fund of the National Bank of Sweden].
- 2 There are many books and articles, both by Bourdieu himself and others, which describe Bourdieu's key concepts. For this article, I have used Mahar et al. (1990), Moi (1999), Broady (1991), as well as Bourdieu 1990, 1993 and 1998.
- 3 Göransson (ed.) forthcoming.

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