

## Doing Leadership in Higher Education: The Gendering Process of Leader Identity Development

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### Abstract

How leadership is done in Higher Education is analysed through a longitudinal interview study among the heads of department at a Swedish university. The focus is directed towards the construction and reconstruction of leader identity from the time when the heads were novices up until four years later when they were more experienced. The main result is the emergence of a gendering process in the discourse on academic leadership. At the end of the leadership assignment period, male and female department heads did not ever share the same subject positions and leader identity was described in differing terms in subject positions held by women and men, respectively. Three common identity development processes emerged; a vague development process where a non-head of department identity was strong over time (men), a process towards a positive and clear manager identity (men), and a process towards a gender-focused and problem oriented leader identity (women).