Female Leaders

-How networks influence women aspiring to become leaders

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Abstract

According to Ibeh et al (2008) organizations with women in top management positions tend to excel financially, but if we look at recent statistics women are strongly underrepresented in those positions. In Sweden, 5 of the 291 stock market companies have a female CEO (www.skane.se, 2011). I started to wonder how this could still be a problem, when we are an equal society in many other ways. I found in my first search for literature that female networks were not as researched about as male networks which made this area both difficult to find other research in but even more important to conduct. My hopes are that this thesis will bring more interest into this field of research and have a positive impact on the development of more female leaders.

What I try to find the answer to in this thesis is how female networks influence women aspiring to become leaders and how these networks could work more as supportive networks.

I conducted my research by having 5 interviews with female leaders that has been successful. We had long discussions about what made them successful and how their female networks works. I have also used a great deal of literature, both literature that has done similar interviews in order to support my arguments but also literature in the subject Networks. I used an actor’s view, which means that I tried to understand what these women have experienced and tried to give them a fair picture.

I found that there is a big difference between informal and professional networks and that woman were more likely to grade informal networks higher. Informal networks could be very unsupportive to women’s careers. In these informal networks I found that women tended to push each other to become “good girls” and do everything perfectly which could be conceived as very stressful and become an obstacle when women tries to excel in their career. In order to dismantle yourself from the wishes of the group that you need to be perfect I found that a high self esteem was something crucial that all of my interviewed women seemed to have. In order to “fight” the female laws that women are learned that they should follow you need to believe in yourself.

The implications I found that can be done in this area is that women need to grade professional networks higher, we need to bring our profession into our informal networks and we also need to be supportive inside our informal networks in order to change this statistics. Since people are very dependent on having good relationships with other people, we are likely to listen to each others criticism. This change is not done in one day, and therefore we also need more research within this area.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

I have been studying leadership and management for some years at the University and whenever we discuss leaders or leadership topic in class, we most likely refer to “him”. You would presume that young student’s of today in a management program would know that leader’s can be female. As a woman with ambitions to become a leader one day I get scared when I, myself notice that I presume that a leader is male. But maybe it is not that strange that we have this leadership stereotype, after all we are formed by our surroundings. If we look at the surroundings, I find that 96% of the leaders in stock market noted companies in Sweden were male in 2006 (www.par.se). And in management positions, 68% were male in 2008 (Statistics Sweden, 2010). This sort of statistics makes me wonder if it is even possible for a woman to become a leader? I tried to find some information about why this situation has occurred and I think it is suitable to start with the definition of leadership:

Kort (2008) says that there are many different definitions of leadership but that they have one thing in common; they all say that a leader is someone who gets other people to do something. So far, I can see no reason why women could not get people to do things. But if we then look at the meaning ascribed to being a leader, Billing and Alvesson (2000) say that the world of management is strongly dominated by men and that leadership is constructed in masculine terms. This is one of the reasons why it is hard for women to get into the high leading positions.

Another explanation is history, women has had the traditional role of taking care of the family while the husband paid for living expenses. But a lot of things have happened since then and according to Statistics in Sweden (2006) 80% of the women aged 20-64 was working in 2005, which shows that these roles are not a part of our norm today.

Wahl (2003) say that you cannot explain women’s inferior roles with that they are women but rather with that women get treated as women. With this, she means that women get treated in an organization according to what women have been decided to mean. This means that the historical role of a woman has a significant role in explaining why we lack women in managerial positions.

Wahl (2003) say that there is a connection between the conditions that women have in their workplace, their families and in their careers and this influence how women act. This action then perceives as female traits and this also influence women’s roles in the workplace (Wahl, 2003).

Therefore it is interesting to look at the conditions that have started this spiral that make women underrepresented in managerial posts.
When we look at the historical role of a woman we usually start by explaining the household work since women for a long time had the roles of a housewife. But how does the traditional role of a housewife influence modern women of today? Elsworthy (1999) writes that women still makes 80-90% of the chores at home. If women still make so much of the chores in their families it seems natural that it will be harder to contribute as much at work. And having the responsibility of these chores of course influence women, Wahl (2003) mentions that women’s stress level are at the top when they are about to leave their work when men’s highest stress level is when they get to work. Wahl (2003) also say that the women that are in high positions are more stressed than men that have the same position. This could be explained by the amount of housework that women do. Wahl (2003) saw that there was a difference when a man is married and a woman is married. If the man is married he usually has a woman that takes care of the housework but if a woman is married and has the same position she still has to take care of the housework. Then you do not find it hard to believe that women are more stressed even if they have the same leading positions and family situation as men. In Statistics Sweden (2006) you can see the same trend, women combine paid work with housework and child care while men combine paid work with economical, political and union engagement. But why do women still have this classical role of a woman when women are conquering other historical beliefs about women?

First of all, I believe that this is something that is changing, something that Wahl (2003) also notes when she does her research. She notes that the younger couples divide the housework more equal and this is hopefully an upcoming trend. But there is also another trend, according to Björk (2009) that women want to be the perfect housewife. Women want to cook, bake cookies and make our own jam again. There is, as you can see a change in both directions which makes you wonder how this will influence the number of women in managerial positions? And why do we for example want to become great housewives again, in the same time as we want to make a career? Is this an example of women trying to be “a good-girl”? Do women want to be everything – the perfect mother, the perfect wife, the perfect leader? One of Molin (2004)’s advices to future female leaders is to stop thinking that you have to be “the good girl” all the time and realize that you do not have to have a perfect home, be 100% loyal to your work etc. But something even more interesting is discussing why women believe that they have to be a good-girl. According to Arhén (1996) women influence each other to be a good-girl and that this influences the lack of female leaders in managerial positions today.

When the lack of female leaders is discussed, men often get the blame by not letting women into their supportive networks or by having an un-equal distribute of the housework chores at home. But what have formed the belief in women that they need to be perfect and do everything themselves? Is it only men or the historical roles of women or are there other conditions?
Cross and Armstrong (2008) says that it is important with supportive networks in order to see a progression in your career and that it is even more important to women. This make networks a significant factor in the objective of getting more women into the managerial positions. But if women influence each other to become perfect at everything (Arhén, 1996) is these networks supporting females in their career or making it to another stressful part of their mental picture of their perfect self?

1.2 Research Topic

I believe that there is one condition that among others influences this development that has been overlooked in the research area and it is how women influence each other. It is also important to highlight networks and the possibility that male networks work supportive and that female network does the opposite.

As we can see, there is a lack of women in leading positions and there are a lot of conditions that has formed this situation. Something that is discussed a lot when you speak about these conditions is history and traditions within the leadership topic. But I believe that something that could be even more interesting to research about is how women’s relationships with other women have influenced this development. Networks and relationships are important to both women and men but I choose to focus on female relationships since the research area about male networks are strongly developed already. Male networks are often seen as something positive and something that helps their careers but from the literature I have read about female relationship, women’s networks seem to more often have a negative impact on women’s careers even thou women’s networks are very important according to Wahl (2003). But why are not female networks as supportive as male networks?

According to Arhén (1996) women are generally very dependent on deep and close relationships in order to feel good. Arhén (1996) say that women are brought up and grow in a close interaction with other people while men are raised to be self confident and autonomous grown-ups. Arhén and Zaar (1997) say that it is perceived in the male world as positive to be alone, independent and strong which are traits that we have ascribed as important in the role of a leader. Women, on the contrary perceive it as a threat to be alone (Arhén and Zaar, 1997). Molin (2004) has some advices to future female leaders, and her first advice is that you should be prepared to be alone and that this is a big obstacle for a woman. Could maybe women’s relationships with others and the fear to be alone being one of the reasons why women miss out on the leading positions? Do women value relationships higher then their career? Arhén and Zaar (1997) also say that they have met several of women that have turned leading positions down, since they knew that a friend and colleague also wanted the same position and they valued the relationship with that person more important than the position.
My research topic is the conditions that exist in order for women to get managerial positions and I am focusing on how women’s relationships with other women influence their careers. This topic includes a lot, what colleagues say, but also mothers, sisters, friends, mother-in-laws etc. Masui (2004) tell us about Lilian Fossum (personal director at Electrolux) for example and she say that she was born to be “a good girl” rather than being a leader. Her parents were eager that she should have a good education but they also thought that she should stop working as soon as she got children (Masui, 2004). My personal experience has a lot in common with this. Women close to me want me to do something with my life, but not too much. They want me study for example, but now when I am about to graduate they want me to settle down with a job that I am overqualified to do, in order to prioritize my family. On the contrary, they do not have any problems with my boyfriend leaving on military missions. Now I wonder if it is only me and Lilian Fossum or if this is one of the great conditions that have formed our managerial positions today to be so male oriented. According to Masui (2004) there are lots of other women that have had the same reactions that I feel, which make me think that this is a common condition.

1.3 Research Questions

- How does women’s relationship with other women influence the lack of women in leading positions?
- How can women’s relationship with other women be a positive influence on the development of more women in leading positions?

1.4 Objectives

My objectives are to understand why women are underrepresented in managerial positions - in order to enhance a positive impact on this development. I also want to contribute to the research area “female networks” since there are not much research done in this area, especially when you compare it to male networks. Usually when you look at gender and the lack of women in leading positions men gets the blame and therefore I find it interesting to look at it through another angle (without giving anyone the blame but simply trying to understand). I believe that another value that my research could bring is a change among female networks and if I find that female networks are not as supportive as male networks we could also start making a change. My goal is of course that more women get leading positions and I hope that this research could help this development further. My hopes are that this research will help networks to become more supportive and help women accomplish their dreams.
2. Methodology

2.1 Qualitative approach

I have used a qualitative approach conducting this research. Practicing research with a qualitative approach means that you focus on words rather than numbers when you conduct your research (Bryman and Bell, 2005). A qualitative approach is sometimes describes as an interpretative approach which means that the focus lays on understanding a social reality using people’s interpretations. It is sometimes also described as a part of constructivism which means that you do not believe that there is a reality “out there” but that our social reality is a result from the interaction among people (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Since I did this research with the intention to understand why there are so few female’s among the higher leading positions and I have done this by speaking to different female leaders, my research is highly qualitative and since I believe that we construct a reality together with other people, the qualitative approach is the only choice for me.

When you do qualitative research you do not use a standardized set of questions when doing interviews but you believe that you can not know from the beginning of the interview what kind of questions that will be important (Svensson and Starrin, 1996). When I met with the persons that I interviewed I developed the interview during the meeting and this resulted in that I asked different things and also developed my questions during the interviews. In order to get a deep understanding I had to ask different things in order to not misinterpret their words.

I have also been taking into account the criticism to qualitative research; it is too subjective, there are problems with replication, there are problems with generalizations and there is not enough transparency (Bryman and Bell, 2005). I acknowledge all of these problems but I still think that using a qualitative approach is the most appropriate way to conduct this research.

2.2 Actor’s View

I have used an Actor’s view when I conducted this research. In the Actor’s view, your vision is to focus on subjective elements and everyday-conceptions (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994). I believe that this made the Actor’s view suitable to my study area since I had dialogues with other actor’s about how their everyday-life relationships have influenced their leadership. This also means that I asked them to act rather subjective and therefore the other two views were not useful in this research.

In the Actor’s view you see research as a process and you will most likely change your methods during the work progress since you will choose which methods that is useful when it is needed (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2008). This means that I started by planning a method but I was open to changes when I found new ways or possibilities. It could mean that I did some dialogues, then read some theory and then got back and spoke to the same person again. In the Actor’s view, creating
knowledge is an ongoing process and Arbnor & Bjerke (1994) say that it is important to the researcher to step back sometimes and become an observer and let the other person be the actor. My understanding most likely also developed further every time I had a dialogue (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994) and therefore my methods when I had my dialogue both differed and developed.

In an actor’s view you are not trying to explain “how it is” but rather create new knowledge from your own understanding (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2008). Therefore, I did not intend to give a holistic explanation of how it works with all women but rather tried to create an understanding of how the people I spoke to experienced that their relationships with women has influenced them. Arbnor and Bjerke (2008) say that metaphors and symbols is a useful way to create understanding and therefore I intended to use myself of this method when I had my dialogues with other actor’s. It could be by asking; “How would you describe your mother in a metaphoric way speaking about food?” By doing this I might be able to understand them better and they might understand their picture of their mother better as well, by putting other words on it.

The Actor’s view was also suitable in this research since I spoke to this people about their interpretations of other women’s actions. The Actor’s view is about interpreting others action, and this also defines someone’s action (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994). This is also a way of seeing people as actors, since I did not think that we are passive but that we rather create our own world. I have tried to understand their picture of how other people have influenced them to create their world and this made me an actor myself (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994).

2.3 The process

My process when doing this research was in compliance with the most important steps in a qualitative research, according to Bryman and Bell (2005). This means that first you start by formulating a problem. In my case, I started to look at female leadership and choose to focus on their relationships with other women and how this has affected the lack of women in leading positions. When this is done, you choose relevant places and research persons (Bryman and Bell, 2005). I choose Stockholm as my interviewing destination and thought that it was suitable to my topic to interview female leaders. My selection is documented further down. After this, you collect relevant data, interpret the data, specify your problem formulation, gather more data and then come to a result and a conclusion (Bryman and Bell, 2005). I believe that this process was suitable to my research since it allowed me to go back and forth when collecting and interpreting both empirical and theoretical data and I believe that this process made it possible to me to develop my understanding better.
2.4 Interviews

2.4.1 Dialogues

When I started to look at ways of interviewing Carlsson (1991)’s description of the unstructured interview as a conversation with a purpose caught my attention. This way of interviewing was the relaxed way I was looking for. I decided to use dialogues when doing my interviews, as described by Arbnor and Bjerke (1994) but I also used the term interviews since dialogues is a form of qualitative interviews and this term is also used in other literature.

According to Jacobsen (1993) there is three structures in an interview; description of facts (what year they graduated, started their job etc.), argumentation and stories. I focused on the two last structures since I wanted to hear more about certain situations and stories concerning the subject.

Conducting a dialogue means that everybody has the same terms for being in the dialogue, you talk, listen, act, register, ask questions, observe and discuss (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994). The difference from me and the other actor’s in my dialogues was that I was also going to interpret the conversation, register and gather data. I used dialogues by talking to different female managers in order to understand the problem better. I believe that dialogues is the best way to gain understanding in this subject since an honest dialogue is the best way to get honest answers from the other actor’s. There are some problems with having an honest dialogue, however, but I believe that I succeeded which means that I could be a good actor of knowledge according to Arbnor & Bjerke (1994). It is important in a dialogue to enter it without knowing, or believing that you already know the answer and leaving the dialogue with the feeling that you have grown your capacity (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994). I tried to accomplish this by working on my stereotypes and I also tried to make the dialogues feel as normal and comfortable as possible. I preferred to have my dialogue in a café or something else that was relaxed. I believe that the surrounding is important and if it would have been set as a business meeting, they would maybe not have shared as much with me. According to Arbnor and Bjerke (1994) it is also important to interpret the body language of the other actor and this is something that I also tried to keep in mind while doing my dialogues.

According to Arbnor and Bjerke (2008) conducting a dialogue means that you are aware that you will influence the interaction with the persons that you talk with. If I would have called it a structured interview, it would have implied that I thought that I could simply gather the other person’s ideas. I do not think that this is possible, since I lead the person into certain subjects and used certain words and questions anyway it was better, I think, to be open with my subjectivity. I believe that this is the most suitable way when doing my research since my research is about how women relationships with other women has influenced the lack of female leaders in higher positions.
today. Since I am myself a woman I am from the start being subjective in this area. I believe that having dialogues are extra suitable in this research since the knowledge that I want to know is to understand how women has influenced each to the situation we have today with a little amount of female business managers. I gained this understanding, by having dialogues with 5 women that works at different organizations. I spoke to them about how people reacted when they took their job, how they make their home-life and work function together, what their friend’s do, what their moms did when they grew up etc. By this I did not intend to give a “truth” to the academic world, rather just create an understanding based on the people I talked to and my understanding of this.

Bjerke (2007) states that there are some things that you should be aware of in a dialogue, first it is that both of the actor’s brings along an interpretative baggage when they enter the dialogue. It is also important to remember that there is no best interpretation but that my interpretation could be good if I am aware of the ground which my interpretations is based (Bjerke, 2007). I have worked with the assumptions that I already have, and I was aware of that the literature I was reading, for example, influenced the dialogues I had.

There are also some requirements for a successful researcher in a dialogue and according to Bjerke (2007) you should be knowledgeable, clear, sensitive, critical and remembering. I believe that these qualities are something that I developed during the process but there are some things that I could do before the interviews as well. I read a lot of literature in the topic which made me knowledgeable but it is important to not try to show of, but simply know what you are talking about. I also tested my ability to be clear everyday since most of my friends and family did not know the subject I was studying and I discussed my work with them. When you are being sensitive you are listening active and trying to sense the important parts of the dialogue and develop them further. I believe that this was very important in my subject since the other actor’s sometimes told me very personal things. I believe that I would have had problems being critical since the dialogues sometimes became very personal, but that is something I worked on. I did not impression that remembering was a problem since this subject really interested me.

According to Arbnor & Bjerke (1994) there are 4 different ways you can conduct dialogues; informal discussions, personal interviews, interviews by the phone and seminars. I mostly used the first 3 ones. I did not think that seminars were very suitable since I believe that people tend to agree with the group and do not tell me their subjective beliefs. And since I wanted to hear their subjective reality that could mean that I would miss out and it could prevent me from understanding. I tried to have most of my dialogues face-to-face but I had to do some of them over the phone since face-to-face meetings included a lot of travelling. There is also one interview that I have done over e-mail
since the person did not have that much time but I still wanted to hear her opinions in this subject and this compromise worked out very good.

2.4.2 Selection
I based my selection on two lists of leaders in Sweden. One is called “Sveriges topptalanger” and was in Veckans Affärer (J:son Halth, 2011) and the other is called “Framtidens Kvinnliga Ledare 2010” (www.framtidenskvinnligaledare.se). I choose these two lists since I believed that they granted me a high quality of leaders that has been able to make a good career. From these lists I have selected mainly leaders that are based in Stockholm, since I wanted to have the possibility of a face-to-face meeting. You might ask why I choose to base my research on successful leaders and that it would be more appropriate to interview all of the women that have not succeeded. I choose to interview women seen as successful since I believe that they must have faced the obstacles that exist for women when becoming a leader and that they are more likely to have noticed these obstacles. If you, as a woman, have stayed in the comfort zone within our “female laws” discussed later you have probably not noticed what happens if you break free from these networks. Interviewing successful female leaders also gave me the possibility to see what you needed to do in order to break free from these female laws, what made these women different from the women that has not succeeded.

Jacobsen (1993) say that the interview starts from the first contact you have with the respondent and that everything you make will influence the respondent. I started by trying to contact some of the women by phone but when I had no luck I started to send out e-mails instead and I soon noted that this way was much more efficient. After that, almost all of my contact with the respondents has been over the e-mail before my interviews.

I did not start my research by stating how many I would be interviewing because, according to Thomsson (2010), you should keep doing interviews until you feel a satisfaction with your material and that it will be enough to ground your thesis on. I felt a satisfaction when I had interviewed 5 women.

2.4.3 Questions
Jacobsen (1993) say that the first difference you can define between questions is open and closed questions. In an open question you open up for the respondent to direct where you are going, but in a closed question you ask for a short and direct reply. I used open questions but I also tried to guide the interviewed through the questions into subjects I found interesting in my research. But I was open for new directions that the interview might take and that are what made these sorts of interviews so interesting.
Svensson and Starrin (1996) says that there is at least two ways to ask open questions in a qualitative interview, one is called “The Grand Tour” and there is where you ask the respondent to reconstruct a meaningful part of an experience or questions were you focus on the subjective experience of the respondent. I used both of these types of questions. I asked “The Grand Tour” questions when I asked them to tell me about how they became leaders and about their career but I also asked them about their interpretations from their relationships with other women, for example.

Svensson and Starrin (1996) also say that it could contribute to the dialogue if you share your own experience in the subject, since it will encourage the other person to keep sharing their personal experiences. Therefore, I told the respondents my own experiences when accordingly in the dialogue in order to make them understand the subject but also make them feel comfortable (I believe that it is hard to have a personal dialogue when it is only one person sharing in the conversation).

2.4.4 Structure
When conducting my dialogues I had a semi-open structure. Having a semi-open structure means that you have a list with themes that you want to touch in the dialogue and you can add or take away questions during the dialogue (Bryman and Bell, 2005). I believe that this was the most appropriate structure to my dialogues since I did have a picture from the beginning of what I wanted to ask but that picture evolved through the interaction with the other actors and therefore I wanted to keep the dialogues open to structural changes. According to Lantz (2007) you ask very open questions and also follow up the subjects that the respondent may bring to the interview. I believe that this was the best structure since I wanted to keep developing my own understanding in the subject and when having too strict questions about what to talk about it does not enable this new understanding.

According to Kylén (1994) you use an interview guide when doing a semi-open structured interview. An interview guide is a set of questions and subjects that you take with you to the interview in order to keep yourself to the subject (Kylén, 1994). According to Kylén (1994) you can show the interview guide to the respondent in the beginning of the interview in order to make the respondent focus on the subject. I used an interview guide that stated my subjects, in order to not forget or get on side tracks when interviewing which was helpful.

2.4.5 Surrounding
First of all, Jacobsen (1993) says that you have to take into account the practical implications the choice of place to interview will have to the respondent. Therefore I let the respondents set the place to meet in order to make it as convenient as possible to them. I told them that I preferred a café and then let them decide which café and where in Stockholm. Thomsson (2010) also say that it is very important to make the respondent feel comfortable and that you often feel comfortable on your own territory. That is the second reason why I let the respondents decide where to meet.
made it clear in my first contact with them that I am not familiar with Stockholm and that they should set a place. My presumption is that they set places where they felt comfortable.

Bryman and Bell (2005) say that the problem of finding a quiet and calm place to conduct your interviews is something that is hard to a researcher. They also say that you should take notion before you agree to have an interview in someone’s workspace since there are several of things there that could disturb the interview.

I agreed to meet one of the female leaders in her office at KTH but I had to choose from meeting her there or meeting her at all. I decided that I rather had the possibility to meet her at her office than not being able to include her in my research. My other dialogues took place in most of the cases in a café and I choose this surrounding since I wanted it to feel relaxed and intimate. Since I did not know these women from the beginning and were going to ask them to speak about personal thoughts I thought that the surrounding could help the dialogues in a positive way by feeling relaxed.

I also conducted one interview over telephone and one over e-mail. I know that this made the e-mail far away from a dialogue but since I am speaking about top female leaders that sometimes do not have that much spare time I had to make some sacrifice. This was because of cost and time saving.

Kylén (1994) also say that you should consider how long time the interview should be. According to Kylén (1994) a short interview is 5-20 min and then you only have time to cover a narrow subject. An interview that goes on for 40-60 minutes is deeper and you have time to focus on the interesting parts. When I contacted my respondents I said that the interview would take 1-2 hours and the reason for me to expand the time is because I did not want the respondents to feel stressed and look at their watch when being interviewed. Some of them only had one hour to spare and I agreed to that as well.

Thomsson (2010) also made me think about voice recording. Thomsson (2010) say that most people feel uncomfortable with being voice recorded and this is something that you have to take into account. I decided to not use voice recording because of this and I felt that the interviews moved more smoothly when I had to write it down. This also made it possible for the interviewed to look at my notes in order to not be misunderstood.

Structure of the thesis

I decided to join the empirical chapter and the analyzing chapter into one chapter since I believed that it would be duplication if I would have divided it into two chapters. I also decided to attach the interviews in appendix in their full extent since I want to give the reader the possibility to see a fuller
picture of each of these interesting women if they want and have the possibility to draw their own conclusions. If the reader find these interviews interesting I also advice the reader to loom at Arhén (1996) and Masui (2008)’s books, since you can find similar interviews in their research.

2.5 Secondary data

2.5.1 Use of secondary data
I choose to use literature that has done similar research as I did and in this way I could use this literature to support my arguments. In my discussion you can for example see some results of Arhén’s research. Since I only interviewed 5 women I believe that having other research that is more quantitative supporting and showing the same things as my research did support my thoughts and gives my conclusion a higher quality. Therefore some of this research is used as empirical data together we the empirical data gathered by me.

2.5.2 Selection
The base of my secondary data is on networks and I decided to not use that much leadership data since this was mostly a network based problem. I also decided to use literature that contains interviews with other women which makes my understanding greater when I conducted my interviews. I could easier see patterns through this literature.

2.6 Quality of the research
Instead of using traditional measures as validity, reliability and objectivity I choose to use an alternative measure that, according to Bryman and Bell (2005) could be more appropriate when doing qualitative research.

2.6.1 Trustworthiness
- **Credibility**

This terms meaning is how acceptable my explanation of our social constructed reality is to the audience. This implies, for example, that I should verify my interpretations with the persons that I have based my research on (Bryman and Bell, 2005). If they agree with my interpretations, it makes it more credible to the audience. I did, after a dialogue, show the person what I had documented from our meeting and if the person disagreed with my interpretations, we discussed it over again and I tried to make new interpretations that the person found more accurate.

- **Transferability**
This term is about how well your research can be transferred to other contexts (Bryman and Bell, 2005). As I see it, my research could be used to some extent as an example of conditions to why women are underrepresented in leading positions.

- **Dependability**

In order to secure the dependability of my thesis, I have in detail described my problem, the process, my research methods etc. This makes it possible to others to investigate whether there is a high quality in my research.

- **Confirmability**

This means if I have acted in good faith and that my personal beliefs have not been consciously been put forward in the thesis (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Even thou it is impossible to be objective I have tried to keep an open mind and question my ideas during the research process.

2.6.2 **Authenticity**

- **A fair picture**

I believe that my research gives the leaders that I have interviewed a fair picture. But if I compare it with all women, then I am assured that I have not delivered a fair picture, this would, however be impossible to make if you are conducting qualitative research.

- **Ontological authenticity**

This term involves whether the persons that I have spoken to has been helped to understand their social situation better through my research (Bryman and Bell, 2005). I believe that some of the person have understood their social situation better through our discussions and I think that some of my questions might made them see things in their social environment that they have not seen before.

- **Pedagogical authenticity**

I do not know if the actors in this research have got a better picture of how other persons in their environment perceives things, but they might gained some understanding about other women in their social environment.

- **Catalytic authenticity**
My research has not made the people that I have had dialogues with been able to change their situation, since that is not the goal with this research. The goal would be more to getting other women to get positions as them.

- **Tactic authenticity**

This means if the actors in my dialogues have got better opportunities to make the changes needed (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Since this problem is not something that they can change by their own, I would say no but they have the possibility to speak with other women and pass this message on and in that way they have been given the possibility to change.
3. Literature Review

3.1 Background to the subject

3.1.1 Importance of female leaders

Many might ask why it is important to do research about female leadership and why we need more female leaders. According to Ibeh et al (2008) companies with women in top management positions tend to excel financially. Ibeh et al (2008) also claims that big companies are losing out in the competition when it comes to diversity in the top management when they so little female talent and perspective at the top. According to Arhén (1996) female leadership are not in general terms different than men’s but that women have a different way of interacting with people. Women likes to interact circular and they prefer network organizations. Women also put more effort into having a good internal communication (Arhén, 1996). When companies do not have any women at the top they loose out on all of these good characteristics of women.

Then why do not women get the top management positions? According to Cross and Armstrong (2008) there are 3 possible reasons to why women are under-represented in senior management positions.

1. Women lack the human capital (skills and expertise).
2. Women lack social capital (access to relevant networks).
3. Different factors are required to develop to higher positions than to lower and women develop fewer of these than men and therefore do not get that far in their career.

My main focus will be in the second reason in this thesis and I will not only question if women lack access to relevant networks but if the networks that they do access might even have a negative impact on their career. If you look at Ibeh et al (2008) statement that companies with women in top management positions excel financially I have a hard time believing that women lack human capital in order to become a leader. If women would have lacked the skills needed to become leaders, they would probably not make a positive impact on companies finances when they do have a management position. I believe that the combination of reason number 2 and 3 is very interesting and that these influence each other. If, for example, women only access to networks were certain factors gets developed and these factors are usually required to lower positions.

3.1.2 Statistics of female leaders today

In order to understand the importance of the subject we need to know where women are represented and to what extent. Cross and Armstrong (2008) say that there has been a significant
increase in women in the labor force the past 30 years but that women still have a small percentage of the senior executive positions.

If we look at the development Ibeh et al (2008) say that recent statistics shows that women account for less than 2% of the Fortune 500 CEO’s, 14% of the Fortune 500 directors, 8% of the board directors and 5% of the top managers of the biggest west European companies. If you look at patterns in the rest of the world, it is about the same. In Australian ASX 200 companies 8% are female managers, 11% of UK’s FTSE 100 directors are female and only 3.4% of the FTSE 100 women were in executive positions (Ibeh et al, 2008). According to Cross and Armstrong (2008) there has even been a 1% fall in the number of director positions held by women in the FTSE 100 list. If you look at Swedish statistics it tells the same story, 4% of the noted on the stock companies had a female CEO in 2006 (www.par.se, 2011). If we look at the development of female CEO’s in noted on the stock companies there has been in total 32 female CEO’s in the past 100 years while there has been 1890 male CEO’s (Dunér and Andersson, 2011). At the moment there are 5 female CEO’s of the 291 noted on the stock companies in Sweden (www.skane.se, 2011), which is a decrease since it was 6 not too long ago (Dunér and Andersson, 2011). A manager is in 72% of the Swedish companies’ male. Ibeh et al (2008) also see the same picture when they say that there has almost been no change in the percentage of female senior level executives in the last decade.

3.1.3 Influences to the development of the statistics

How did we get to this statistics then? If we start by looking at the historical role of women, women was the ones that built the homes to their families and you used to believe that women were intellectual inferior to men (Austin, 2002). According to Holmqvist (2011) this picture is still present since the female gender stands for private life and home while the male gender stands for the official and working life. We still live after the norms that we created a long time ago and we have ascribed women the quality of caring about others and women has always been the ones that has kept people together with their social networks (Holmqvist, 2011). Holmqvist (2011) says that these gender roles are old but that it is comfortable to keep using them even if our world is now different. You might ask why we still carry these norms with us and according to Arhén (1996) our history and our norms stay as a part of our society since parents tend to raise their children as they were raised. If a child grows up in an environment where he or she sees her/his mother, grand-mother and the lady next-door having an inferior role in relation to their husbands or men in general the child tend to believe that this is the norm (Arhén, 1996).

What has our history taught women then? According to Arhén (1996) women has learned that it is being less female to be separated from other people, take initiatives or be self-defined. All of this is characteristics that we usually ascribe being a leader (Arhén, 1996). Our history and the role of
women gives the message to girls that they should not be independent, seek for adventures or be interested in their own persona. Instead, they should be caring to the point where they know what other people want before they even know it themselves and they should also be strongly connected to others (Arhén, 1996). These “female laws” are passed down through our generations and our society and sets the norm of how women should be and act.

This is not the only way that our history has influenced how women act today. According to Arhén (1996) female groups are usually flat and everybody is on the same level and has the same value. If someone tries to become the leader of the group the group will push this try down because a woman that believes that she is on the top of the hierarchy are excluded from the female community (Arhén, 1996). This is ascribed as one of the reasons to why women do not become leaders to the same extent as men. If a woman would become a leader she feels worried about leaving or being left by her female friends (Arhén, 1996).

We should also look at the picture conveyed by our society in order to understand our “female laws”. Arrhenius (1999) says that if we look at the debate in our society there is a concern about the Swedish woman. According to Arrhenius (1999) the Swedish woman is pictured in the debate as selfish, irresponsible and not caring about her children. According to Arrhenius (1999) women should, in order to feel good about them, distance themselves from their career and focus on their family – you are either a mother or a career woman. The motherly woman of the two is also often more liked by other women in their surroundings (Arrhenius, 1999). This is, among other reasons, are some of the explanations to why women are underrepresented in managerial positions. I now choose to focus on how women’s relationship with others influences this development.

3.2 Networks

3.2.1 Difference between male and female networks

First of all, both men and women have deep needs to have relationships and contact with other people (Söderqvist Tralau, 2009). This is the foundation of networks. According to Cross and Armstrong (2008) networking plays an important role for both men and women in organizations in order to get a support to future career development. But Linehan and Scullion (2008) say that it is most important to women since there are greater barriers of advancement when it comes to women. There are also some difference among men and women and how they network. First of all, women are less likely to develop close mentoring and networking relationships (Linehan and Scullion, 2008). One reason could be that men have identified through their collective learning process that networks are important in order to see a progression in their careers (Cross and Armstrong, 2008). “Old boys clubs” has therefore been created and these are also acknowledged as one of the greatest
barriers to see a progression in their career by women and it is well established that women are excluded from these networks (Cross and Armstrong, 2008). This is a reason to why women need to be included in these networks even more and they need it in order to access the top level management in organizations (Cross and Armstrong, 2008). You can see a big difference between men and women if you look at whom they are in contact with. According to Cross and Armstrong (2008) men in the same position as women have more contact with key decision makers, which is an advantage when you want to see a progression in your career.

But it is not only women being excluded from networks by men; another reason to why women are not included in these networks is that women have less time to network. According to Linehan and Scullion (2008) the uneven distribution of household work entails that women have a “second shift” when they get home from work and this makes it harder or impossible to have time to involve in networks. It is a fact, according to Linehan and Scullion (2008) that men spend more time networking after work through different activities and that women have to improve their visibility in these networks.

There are also differences when we look at what men and women think that their networks around them expects from them. According to Branden (2000) women and men have different burdens that we have gained through our socialization. Women think that they can not be selfish and that they should be caring. Men, on the other hand, feel like they need to perform and never complain (Branden, 2000). This is something that influences how women and men choose to network. This is showed by women and men’s reaction in situations where they have to compete or situations were there is a risk that you will get criticized. According to Austin (2002) women’s reaction is less positive then men’s in these competitive situations. Austin (2002) also shows another example were you can see how our socialization has influenced how women act; according to Austin (2002) women are quiet in group situations and this influence women’s ability to advance to leading positions in a negative way. But this is not the only instinct that holds women back, according to Austin (2002) women’s lower competitive instinct is one of the reasons to why women get outnumbered in the competition to leading positions. If you look at the mayor difference of how women and men interact in organizations, women wants to contribute to the overall good in the company while men compete (Austin, 2002). This makes people in the organization not notice as much of women’s individual work as men’s and therefore men get the leading position (Austin, 2002).

When you look at how women network, they often socialize in flat organizations (Lann, 1996). One important difference to make is that Lann does not say that women work in flat organizations, but they socialize in flat organizations. This means that women usually interact on the same level even if
they are in different places in the hierarchy. It is also said by Söderqvist Tralau (2009) that flat
organizations make peoples performances go down because they do not know what their
responsibilities are. There is also differences when you look at what men and women wants to
accomplish in organizations, women wants to accomplish harmony within a group or a network and
therefore power positions scares women (Austin, 2002). In a female group the women within it
wants everyone to accept the decision and therefore female groups base their group strategy by
listening, never talk when someone else is talking, never say the same thing twice, keeping the
language simple, never taking more place then anyone other in the group and always making your
standpoints clear (Drake and Solberg, 1996). An explanation to this behavior could be that women
have a higher tendency to care about their relationships at work, while men compete more at work
(Arhén, 2005). According to Arhén (2005) women more often say “we” while men more often say
“I”. Men and women also have different views when it comes to achieving results, women are more
motivated to work for the best of the group and not the individual (Arhén, 2005). All of this is seen
as obstacles, by Arhén (2005), when women aspire to be leaders.

3.2.2 Professional networks
When you look at professional networks, I choose to call the networks were the purpose is to help
your career professional. According to Cross and Armstrong (2008) informal learning within in a
community through social interaction is crucial in order to become a leader and therefore these
professional networks are an important factor to success. In these professional networks you learn
as a by-product from another activity (Cross and Armstrong, 2008). An example of a professional
network is “old boy’s club” and these networks are said to have a negative impact on women’s
career progression. But why do not women get to be a part of these networks? According to
Linehan and Scullion (2008) networks in many organizations are seen as “old boy’s clubs” and
women have been largely excluded from these networks since they are originally composed by men.
These “old boy’s clubs” could be a primary reason to why women are not encouraged and even
disregarded to seek top management positions (Linehan and Scullion, 2008). If we look at networks
today, fresh research tells us that old boy’s networks are still strong in most organizations in Europe
and therefore still works as a barrier to women when they try to see some progression in their career
(Linehan and Scullion, 2008).

3.2.3 Informal networks
There is a difference between the professional and the informal networks, according to Lann (1996)
the informal networks that women usually have, as sewing circles or girl’s night out, are not there to
change anything but simply to acknowledge each other. According to Lann (1996) women are very
good at social contacts and Arhén (1996) says that women are in general very depended on deep and
close relationships with other women for their well-being. By being a part of these informal
networks instead of professional networks, women are missing out on networks were change is something that is positive (Lann, 1996). Women expect social support and friendship from other women (Drake and Solberg, 1996) and not mainly career progression.

There is also research saying that women grade informal contacts outside work as their most important contacts (Wahl, 2003). Wahl (2003) also say that the importance of female friendship gains importance through the years. According to Wahl (2003) the women in her research felt a sisterhood with other women after they got children which also made these relationships more important. According to Christakis and Fowler (2010) these informal relationships influence every aspect of our daily life; as whom we will get married to, how much we will earn or how fat we will be. We influence each other in these networks and if one of the persons in a network or a group develops an unhealthy behavior the other persons are more likely to develop the same behavior. According to Christakis and Fowler (2010) a norm is developed in this way in a group or network and is then seen as the normal behavior.

If we look at how women’s informal networks are developed we could start by looking at the connections with her parents. According to Arhén (1996) women are developed with strong connections to others, and in particular to the mother. Arhén (1996) says that there is something called a mother-daughter symbiosis which is a mutual reliant from both the mother and the daughter. If you come from a family were you were in symbiosis with you mother you are more likely to develop close connections to other women in the future and these connections contribute to holding you back in your career progression and personal development (Arhén, 1996). According to Arhén (1996) women feels guilty when they grow up because they want to separate from their mothers and they often feel like they have to choose – either she exists alone or she is trapped in a net of strong connections to other people. But it does not stop with the mother; women that have strong connections to their mothers often develop strong connections to other women when they are adults. These groups of women hold the women within it back in order to get a feeling of a strong group (Arhén, 1996). In these groups, no one should stand out from the rest and everybody should be on a fair level (Arhén, 1996). In fear of being alone, women in these groups are too afraid to be independent and go their own way. The contact with other women is so important so they are afraid that they will be rejected from the group if they go their own way, and “stands out” (Arhén, 1996). According to Arhén (1996) these informal networks with other women is one of the reasons to why women say no to managerial positions – the risk is too high that they will not be included in the female community anymore and that is a risk that they do not want to take.
3.3 Influence of networks

3.3.1 Being a “good-girl”

According to Arhén (2005) women are extremely depended on being liked by others and having good relationships with everyone. If we start with the first relationship that women have it is usually with her parents. According to Austin (2002) women usually identify with their mothers and if you start to have a totally different lifestyle than your mother it is the same as saying that the things that she sacrificed had no value. Austin (2002) says that the attempt to be loyal and not upset your mother is one of the reasons to why women do not make careers in the same amount as men. But if you make a career, anyway, you could notice a change in your mother’s actions. According to Arhén (1996) mothers that used to be housewives question themselves and what they have done with their lives when they see their daughters being both a CEO and a mother. The mothers then defend their choices by making sure that their daughters finish their female duties perfectly (Arhén, 1996). A daughter would notice this by getting comments from her mother about how she does her laundry, cleaning, takes care of her children or her husband. This adds pressure to a working woman (Arhén, 1996) since it gives her a feeling that she needs to be perfect at everything. According to Arhén (1996) it is not only the mother that gives women this pressure but also fellow sisters reinforce these guilt’s. It is however important to remember that this does not count for all women; if we look at the interviewed in the next chapter you will notice a big difference for example. Nevertheless, it is important to show how depended women could be on their female group of friends and how this could influence them. It is, according to Arhén (1996) common in female groups to give criticism in subtle ways, by saying that it is the best of the children for example. According to Wahl (2003) our society expects from female leaders to be super humans in order to succeed and live. An example of how our society influences each other is Claesson (2006)’s book “mamma@home”, Claesson (2006) claims that Swedish people spend too little time with their children and this influence their children in a negative way. Opinions like this certainly affect working women.

There are also other opinions about this. Already in 1986 Barbara Berger notes that women should be aware of something that she calls the “superwoman trap” were women try to be everything at once. A woman should be the perfect wife, the perfect mother, the perfect daughter, the perfect career woman and the perfect friend (Berger, 1986). She should also have a perfect house that is always perfectly cleaned. Her food should be well-prepared and healthy and the woman herself should be thin and sexy (Berger, 1986). According to Berger (1986) this trap is the source of stress among many women and that many women almost extinguish themselves when trying to make everyone else feel good.
Söderqvist Tralau (2009) says that this chase to achieve a high status, to be a good girl, is ruining us since we get stressed, unhappy and filled with jealousy of people that have more status, or is better than us. Söderqvist Tralau (2009) also acknowledges an interesting factor. In Sweden you get a higher status if you do everything yourself, which means that you should not have a maid for example. You should be able to have a well paid job and still take care of your home and family perfectly. You also gain more status if you have long and healthy relationships with your friends (Söderqvist Tralau, 2009). I will later discuss how this status could affect us in our professional lives.

3.3.2 Self-esteem

Something that is acknowledged as important when becoming a leader is self esteem; Drake and Solberg (1996) say that it is a crucial factor. Branden (2000) says that self-esteem is the tendency to acknowledge yourself as capable to handle the basic challenges in life and consider yourself as worthy of happiness. This contains of two parts, one where you estimate your own trust in yourself to make good decisions and the other part is having self respect (Branden, 2000). There is a difference between men and women when it comes to having self-esteem. According to Austin (2002) men often overrate themselves while women underrate themselves or are realistic when they evaluate themselves. Drake and Solberg (1996) also saw a difference in women’s self-esteem when they got higher in their career – the higher women get in the academic world, the smaller their self-esteem gets.

It is even more important to women than men to have a high self-esteem when it comes to becoming a leader. Branden (2000) says that since women are challenging the traditional gender role by working in a male dominated area having a good self-esteem is crucial. Without a good self-esteem it is impossible to challenge thousands of years old stereotypes (Branden, 2000). Martinez Aleman (2000) also says that this self-esteem is connected to others because women articulate the self and develop their identities in relationships with other women. Having good relationships with other women is therefore important in order to have a high self-esteem.

According to Branden (2000) a person with high self-esteem seeks challenges and the stimuli that demanding goals can give. A person with a low self-esteem reach for something that is familiar and simple (Branden, 2000). When it comes to handling setbacks or negative inputs from others it does not stop the woman with a high self-esteem (Branden, 2000). According to Branden (2000) the higher self-esteem that we have, more likely are we to be more ambitious and open and honest in our communication. We are also more likely to have relationships that do not hurt ourselves or others (Branden, 2000).
3.4 Summary

What are then the main aspects that you should remember from this chapter? First of all, it is important to bring in mind how underrepresented women are in management positions today. Women account for less than 2% of the Fortune 500 CEO’s (Ibeh et al, 2008). When I researched why women are underrepresented in managerial positions this were some of the reasons I found:

- Women stand for the private life and were the ones that built our homes (Austin, 2002). Women still have the quality of caring and are expected from our society to take care of the people around them (Holmkvist, 2011).
- It is through our socialization learned that it is being less feminine to be separated from others, take initiatives and be self-defined (Arhén, 1996). These are all traits that are usually ascribed to leaders.
- Women often interact in flat groups and if someone tries to become the leader or excel in her own career she could be rejected from the group, therefore she might not even try in fear of being left by the group (Arhén, 1996).
- Women do not have the same supportive networks that men has (Cross and Armstrong, 2008) and according to Linehan and Scullion (2008) one reason to this is because women have less time to network outside work.
- According to Branden (2000) men are more competitive than women, and this makes women often quiet in group situations for example (Austin, 2002). Women have a higher tendency to care more about their relationships at work which makes women work more for the best of the group than the best of the individual (Arhén, 2005) which is another example of why women are often being less competitive.
- It is crucial to be a part of professional networks in order to become a leader (Cross and Armstrong, 2008) and these professional networks are originally and often still composed by men (Linehan and Scullion, 2008).
- Women are often depended on deep and close relationships with other for the best of their well-being (Arhén, 1996) and women often grade their social contacts outside work as their most important contacts (Wahl, 2003).
- Women are often developed with strong connections to others and these relationships could hold women back in their career progression (Arhén, 1996).
- Our society has developed a surge for women to be perfect at everything, Berger (1986) noted this already back in 1986 when she says that there is a “superwoman trap” were women tries to be perfect at everything and look after everyone which is the source of many women’s stressful lives.
• Women often underrate themselves (Austin, 2002) which could be an important factor since having a high self-esteem is crucial in order to become a leader according to Drake and Solberg (1996).
4. Discussion and empirical data

Here, I will only present fragments from my interviews that I found important when conducting this research. The interviews are attached in the appendix in their full extent in order to give the reader the possibility to read about these interesting women.

4.1 The slow development of female leaders

People may say that it is a slow process and that we will get more female leaders in the future when our society has gotten used to the change. But if we look at the statistics, I can see that this development has slowed down. The number of female CEO’s on the stock market has even decreased from 6 to 5 (www.par.se, www.skane.se, 2011). I believe that this is a good indication of how the development is going – it is standing still. The importance is not, however, to acknowledge this as a problem but to make a change.

Victoria Appelqvist (Appendix 1, interview 1) say that she thinks that the main reason to why women do not get that far in their career is because they are not willing to do the sacrifices that you have to make. This is, however not ascribed as one of the reasons by for example Cross and Armstrong (2008) who says that there are three reasons to why women are underrepresented in management positions; lack of skills and expertise, lack of access to relevant networks and factors that are important to develop to higher positions. I do not believe that the first reason is plausible, especially when you look at Ibeh et al (2008)’s statistics that says that companies that has women in the top management tend to excel financially. However, I start to wonder if the lack of access to relevant networks is the biggest obstacle that women have to conquer in order to become leaders and if this also affects which factors that women develop. My question is if women would have had access to more professional networks, would they have developed more of the factors needed in order to become a leader? And in that case, what sort of factors do women develop in their networks today? In order to answer these questions I believe that it is important to look at the difference between informal and professional networks in order to gain a greater understanding.

4.2 Networks

We network every day without thinking about it. According to Christakis and Fowler (2010) our relationships with other people influence every aspect of our lives which makes networks an important factor to look at when we try to understand why women are underrepresented in managerial positions. Networks are a broad subject and I decided that I had to make a clear difference between informal and professional networks in order to bring justice to the subject.
4.2.1 Professional networks

When I look at the literature and my interviews I see a clear pattern. All of the interviewed says that they do not feel like they have been held back in their professional life. I even got to go to a professional network for female founders and CEO’s in Stockholm and here I saw great support for those women. What I then started to question is whether we support female leaders in business life but that our informal networks hold us back? Another interesting idea is that these networks were closed networks and I noticed in the event that everybody attending (except me) was already successful and I also noticed that they were not very interested in mingling with me, and I made the conclusion that it was because I was not successful yet. It seemed as they were too focused on business and whom they could do business with. This is, however, only a personal reflection.

If we start by looking at the professional networks of today, they are still mainly composed by men (Linehan and Scullion, 2008). Some even say that this makes it hard for women to get into these networks. This is something that Linda Krondahl (Appendix 1, interview 2) would agree on. Linda said: “I believe that one of the biggest reasons why women are not leaders in the same amount as men is because they are not in the sauna, making the big businesses happen” (Appendix 1, interview 2). This is one of the typical professional networks that Cross and Armstrong (2008) writes about. Cross and Armstrong (2008) say that the learning process within a network is important and that it is a by-product from some other activity. Therefore it is important to have an activity involved in the process when having a professional network, it does not have to be the sauna, Anna Omstedt-Lindgren is the founder of a female network for founders and CEO’s that is called “Pokerface”. She started this network when she noticed that women got excluded from professional networks and realized that women needed their own network (Appendix 1, interview 4). At Pokerface they meet and start to mingle and talk business, afterwards they all play poker which is the main activity. Here, Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) has managed to have an activity based network and Anna also mentions that women often meet with being a network as the main activity while men meet doing other activities. Maybe these by-products of other activities are more important than expected and needed in order to create a supportive professional network.

Even if this female network seemed very supportive for its members, I still question if these women would have gained more support if they would have been included in a male professional network instead of creating a female. According to Cross and Armstrong (2008) women should get included in male networks in order to increase their visibility and since these male networks also has been acknowledged as one of the biggest reasons why women gets excluded from management positions today it is important that women gets to be a part of these male professional networks. If you are not there when the big decisions are made, you get excluded.
The majority of the interviewed feels like they have been helped by other women in their career and that they help other women in their careers. The interviewed say that they help other women since it is easier for them to hire talented women than men. This is probably the same reason to why women have gotten excluded from male networks for a long time; men choose men. Therefore, I find this information frustrating. I would have liked these successful women to see men and women as equals and grade their talent based on their competence and not their gender. It is not strange that these women say that it is easier to hire women, however, since our society has formed us to make a big difference between our genders. Most of the interviewed women acknowledge that it is important to have both men and women in the company which makes me believe that this action is something that they try to fight themselves. Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) is one of them and she says that it is important to have both genders in the company. If you look at female and male differences, men are said to be more competitive while women are said to care more about the overall good in the company (Austin, 2002). I believe that it is important to have both of these angles in order to have a successful company and therefore it is important to have an equal company. Even if this might sound as stereotypes they are good indications of how men and women act today. If this is the picture, or mental model we send out in our society today, women and men will more likely ascribe themselves these traits, since it is expected from them. If we for example say that women should not be competitive women are less likely to be competitive since they are formed in the belief that they are not competitive.

If we should get back to how women support each other, Victoria Appelqvist (appendix 1, interview 1) say that her two female bosses have always helped her in her career. More of the interviewed tells me the same story with supportive female bosses and when I started to see this pattern I made a difference between professional and informal networks. It seems to me like women helps each other in their career, if they are working together. But the question is if these business relationships are highly rated by women? According to Wahl (2003) women often grade relationships outside work as their most important relationships and have according to Austin (2002) not much time to meet people from work after a finished workday. Is the problem not that there is not supportive women in women’s professional life but that women choose to be with their informal networks instead? I believe that the research shows that this could be one reason that supports the slow development of female leadership.

Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) says that men network all the time when doing other activities as playing poker or golf but that woman often gets excluded from this since they have to hurry home and take care of their family. She believes that women have to be present at these events and increase their visibility with men. These get together’s are probably the “old boy’s clubs” that Linehan and Scullion (2008) writes about. Linehan and Scullion (2008) say that these
clubs are still strong in most organizations and works as a barrier for women to get into high management positions. Therefore, I believe that Anna has noted an important factor. Women need to value these networks higher and choose to be a part and take the time of needed in order to excel in their career. Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) has a good example of what could happen if you are not a part of these networks; she says that a friend worked at a company were she was the only woman. When they had to lay someone of it got to be her simply because she always rushed home to her children when the men in the company got together to play golf or do some other activity. This is confirmed by Linehan and Scullion (2008) who say that an uneven distribution of household work makes it hard or impossible for women to have time over to network when they have been working all day. I believe that it is not only household work that influence this, I believe that the fact that women grade relationships outside work higher (Wahl, 2003) makes women choose to for example meet with their female friends instead of trying to be a part of these male networks.

Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) says that the few women that exist in her academic area support each other since they are so few. Arhén (1996) say that women are depended on close relationships with other women in order to feel good and that could be one reason to why Danica feels like she and other women in her area support each other. Since they are depended on deep relationships with other women and they are the only women there, they need to support each other to keep their place. This could also be the reason to why all of the interviewed feels like they have been supported by other women in their careers; these women have wanted and needed other women to support themselves in the company.

4.2.2 Informal networks
Since women grade informal contacts outside work as their most important contacts (Wahl, 2003) I believe that informal networks also have the biggest influence on women. According to Christakis and Fowler (2010) our informal network of friends influences everything in our daily life which makes it possible for me to draw the conclusion that women’s careers are highly dependent on these networks. According to Christakis and Fowler (2010) a norm is developed within these networks and is then seen as the normal behavior. If someone gets fat for example there is also a higher risk that the rest of the network will get fat. Then if the majority of the group settles with a lower ranked career this will also be seen as the norm and will make it hard for others to make a career.

How do then my interviewed leaders get influenced in their networks? Victoria Appelqvist (Appendix 1, interview 1) said for example that her female friends always ask her how she can sacrifice so much for her work while her male friends congratulate her for her achievements. Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) say that this could be because when a woman hear that
someone else has achieved something in their career they say something bad about her, like “I have heard that she is a bit dumb”. When a man hears about someone else achievements they instead get motivated and want to achieve it themselves, Anna even feels like her male friends are competing with her (Appendix 1, interview 4). According to Arhén (2005) women are extremely depended on being liked by others and these sorts of comments influence what they feel themselves about their choices of lifestyle. When Victoria’s friends question her choices in life it probably makes Victoria question them herself too. It is also said by Arhén (2005) that men are more likely to compete with each other while women more want to develop harmony within a group. This could be an explanation to why Victoria’s male friends wants to compete with her while her female friends just tells her the problem with her new job. Her female friends could be afraid of someone destroying the group by succeeding in her career (Arhén, 1996).

According to Lann (1996) women miss out on networks were change is something positive when they choose to be a part of informal networks that could be destructive. The sorts of comments as the ones above could have a negative effect on a woman and become destructive. If a woman, that is said to be highly dependent on close relationships with others (Arhén, 1996) often hear that her choices in life is wrong she might start to believe that it is true and then miss out on the opportunities that you could gain by being a part of a supportive professional networks were change is something positive.

Linda Krondahl and Karin Bodin (Appendix 1) says that they do not tell much about their work when they meet new people because they do not want to be seen as someone who brags about themselves and they usually do not talk about their work because they do not want the conversation to be all about them. Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) even says that she often introduce herself as a scientist at KTH instead of a professor. This could be seen as a try to not disrupt the group’s harmony by saying that she is better than anyone else. According to Arhén (1996) you should not stand out in the informal female group if you want to be accepted and even if these women do stand out they might not want to disrupt new relationships by making it clear that they are successful. According to Austin (2002) you do not notice women’s individual work as much as men’s and this could be one reason. Women might think that they can not tell people about their success without disrupting the harmony within the group and therefore they could also miss out on opportunities. If nobody knows that you are a professor in a special area and you do not tell them that you are, you could be standing next to another professor that could help you. In order to build supportive networks and take those into a business context these women need to feel the possibility to tell unknown women and men about what they do without the feeling that they brag. If they instead look at it as business they need to know the people in front of them in order to see if they can make business with them. Otherwise you could miss out on great opportunities.
When we were talking about female group hierarchy and its tendency to be flat Karin Bodin (Appendix 1, interview 3) brings up an interesting example. She was in a classroom with only women and they were going to move all of the things from one room to another. But they never came to a decision but everybody just stood there, and no one wanted to be the leader telling other peoples what to do. Karin thinks that this is a good example of women being afraid of not being liked by everyone. It is safer in these big female groups to not be the leader. I believe that this is a great example of how female groups could work when they work destructive. All of the women were afraid of what other women inside the group would think of them if they had the courage to stand out and tell people what to do. It also supports the argument given by Austin (2002) that women are claimed to be quite in group situations.

Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) says that if a woman stands out in a group she usually gets a lot of trash while it is ok if a man stands out in a group. Or as Karin Bodin puts it: “Women are afraid to take place and wave their hand in the classroom” (Appendix 1, interview 3). This could be because of the differences that are earlier mentioned. Women is said to not like when other women disrupt the harmony within in a group but men are said to be comfortable with competing with each other and therefore it is not strange to stand out in the group. If this statement is correct, it could explain why women are afraid of standing out in a group. According to Arhén (1996) women are depended on close relationships with other women in order to feel good and men are more competitive than women. Our society has formed us to be this way and with other words, we have formed ourselves to make these differences. Why is it still more ok for a man to stand out, be competitive and become a leader? I believe that it is as simply as Arhén (1996) puts it; we raise our children as we ourselves were raised and therefore old and comfortable norms are still working and these norms tells us for example that women should be caring and taking care of their private life.

Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) also says that it develops to a mental pressure and stress when a lot of people have opinions about her life and that this has increased since she got her two children. According to Arhén (1996) women tend to have opinions about each other in order to defend their own choices. If Anna Omstedt-Lindgren would for example meet a woman that has put more effort into having a family and not having a career she might feel uncomfortable next to Anna and shows this by giving Anna criticism in subtle ways which is said to be common among women (Arhén, 1996). Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) say that if you stand next to a woman that has a better career than you it gets awkward if you do not have any self-esteem. You could assume that a woman that feels like they need to defend their choices by putting someone else down has a low self-esteem.
Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) absolutely thinks that female groups are flat. Danica says that when you meet women you take yourself down or up in order to be on the same level. This is what I believe is one of the main reasons why female traditional networks does not have a positive impact on women’s careers. I believe that women take each other down to the same level in order to work as a traditional female network, as described by Arhén (1996) were women are on the same level and no one should stand out. If women, on the other hand would have been more competitive and showed how proud they are of what they did they could also use their networks better. Anna Omstedt-Lindgren puts it in words when she says: “If you do not tell people about what you do you do not know if you could use each other – I would like to know if I am talking to a doctor for example” (Appendix 1, interview 4).

It is not only our female friends that are a part of our informal networks. The day-care staff could, for example, influence us more than we would like. Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) says that she always does what the day-care staff tells her to (for example when they want her to come and pick her son up even if he is not sick) in fear of hearing them saying that she is a bad mother. I believe that this is one of the basic reasons to why women believe that they need to be perfect. They are too afraid of what other people will think of them if they are not a great mother, wife or colleagues. What if they tell you that you are a bad mother? Does it make it true just because the day care staff tells you that? Danica says that she believes that men does not take comments like that as hard, if someone tells them that they are a bad dad and they know that it is not true they do not think more about it.

### 4.3 Being a good girl

The question I ask myself is then why women get so influenced by all subtle comments. Why do so many women seem to believe that they need to be liked by everyone? Through literature and the debate in our society I have found that women trying to become “superwoman’s” are more common than you could imagine. Berger (1986) notes this early and she says that there is a superwoman trap where women try to be perfect at everything. This is also the source of stress among many women and one of the reasons to why women do not have time to network in the same amount as men (Berger, 1986). But why do women try to become superwoman’s? One explanation is that it is about status. Söderqvist Tralau (2009) says that you get a higher status in Sweden if you do everything yourself and that there are certain things you should have in order to gain status in the society. You should for example always have a cleaned home, but you should not have a maid that takes care of it. You should also have a great education, job, children, husband etc. If this develops to a mental picture of how you should be, it pressures you. Wahl (2003) says that our society expects from female leaders to be super humans in order to succeed and live. This status
model is something that our society has developed as something that you should be. And today, women is said to give each other subtle criticism if you do not reach up to the goals that you need in order to be a super woman. As Anna Omstedt-Lindgren simply puts it – we need to tell each other to buy your bread instead of asking if you did your own dough. Subtle comments about what you have done yourself for example are comments that I recognize myself getting from other women and these comments often make you feel like a bad woman. But as Anna Omstedt-Lindgren says: “We should not put time and effort into reaching goals that other people has set up for us” (Appendix 1, interview 4).

Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) says that the “Good Girl” syndrome does exist because women think that they need to prove that they are ok even if they are girls all the time. They need to be the perfect woman. Arhén (1996) acknowledge this problem among her interviewed as well, she often heard that people said about their children “I want my daughters to have the same opportunities in life as my son”. By saying this you also acknowledge the fact that you need to try harder as a girl in order to have the same opportunities. When it came to their male children they assumed that they had all opportunities in life. If girls grow up assuming that they need to be better and try harder in order to make it, it will pressure them and this could be the reason to why women is said to underestimate themselves (Austin, 2002) and believes that they need to be perfect at everything. If you believe that you do not have the same opportunities simply because you are a woman, of course you are going to underestimate yourself. Karin Bodin (Appendix 1, interview 3) says, on the other hand that men takes leading roles easier since they do not have as high demands on themselves as women has. This is probably something that is true in many cases, just because that woman enter their grown up life believing that they need to proof themselves and therefore creates demands.

Karin Bodin (Appendix 1, interview 3) notes another example of where you can see how we have built in a mental model in our society that woman needs to be perfect. Karin says that you cannot ask a woman about her age or her weight and she says that it is like a woman needs to be more perfect than a man and cannot weight 70 kilos. This is something interesting, that I have not thought of myself and I believe that Karin has a point in her argument.

Karin says: “Once I was called dominant by a teacher and the teacher would probably not call a boy dominant” (Appendix 1, interview 3). When you look at the “female laws” existing in our society you understand why Karin’s teacher reacted. Our society tells us that women should not be independent, seek for adventures or be interested in your own persona (Arhén, 1996). Being dominant is in my own opinion showing a high degree of independency. Karin’s teacher probably reacted since Karin’s behavior did not fit into the role ascribed women. By saying things like this, the teacher also
influences Karin to fit better into “the female role”. But this is not the only way that Karin has noticed how women treat each other or gets treated. Karin says that female jealousy absolutely exists and a good example of female jealousy is that when a woman steps out of a room the rest of the women says bad things about her. I believe that this is one of the reasons to why women keep wondering about what other people thinks about them. Because we know, to a great extent, that people talks about us when we have left the room.

Karin Bodin (Appendix 1, interview 3) say that one reason to why women are underrepresented is that they have not been allowed to be funny and that if you are allowed to be funny you are also aloud to make mistakes. Karin says that we have to forget to be a good-girl and be funny and make mistakes instead. I believe that the fear of making mistakes is grounded in the idea that you need to be perfect. Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) says: “Women have too high expectations on themselves and they always try to be perfect; it is important to remember that you cannot always be perfect or know the right answer”. If you think that it is ok to not be perfect all the time you also acknowledge that it is ok to make mistakes. I believe that our networks should be more forgiving and allow us making mistakes. But since women should not take initiatives or seek for adventures (Arhén, 1996) according to our society women should not make mistakes. Mistakes are often connected to failures (even if I do not believe that mistakes and failures needs to be negative) and Karin Bodin says that men do not take failures as hard as women and therefore it is easier for them to create networks since women thinks that they get examined all the time (Karin Bodin, Appendix 1, Interview 3). Karin Bodin also says: “The good-girl syndrome make women not dare to do anything in fear of failure”. Maybe this could be a reason to why women rate their relationships outside their work higher, maybe they feels like they are being examined when they go to a professional networks event and instead of going to a professional network decide to go to her friends outside work that she is familiar with.

Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) says that women only do what they are told to do in order to be a good girl but that they should tell everybody about their great ideas and not be afraid to make mistakes. Anna says that women do not tell people about their desires as much as men do and I believe that this is because of the fear of making mistakes. It could also be the presence of informal networks that influence this development; maybe they do not want to break from the group and stand out and therefore they only do what they are told. Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) says that women try to compete with themselves and be best at everything and that it is very easy to start thinking like this. Danica says: “Women are formed to very effective persons in order to reach up to our wishes to be perfect at everything”. I believe that Danica has a point there; it is something that is well-known that women are seen as persons that can do several things at once and maybe this is a way were you can see how women react to the demands of being a perfect good girl.
4.4 Importance of self-esteem

The majority of the interviewed say that you need to be tough and try not to listen to what everybody says in order to succeed (Appendix 1). I believe that this is a big part of your self esteem. You can clearly see through earlier sections of the thesis that you get to hear a lot of opinions about you from others. Victoria Appelqvist (Appendix 1, interview 1) says for example that her female friends ask her how she will have time for everything and question her choices in life. If Victoria would have listened to their advices she might have stepped down in her career and then she would probably not have succeeded in the same way as she has done. But it is hard to not listen to what everyone else says, and of course people has opinions. If we look at our “female laws” existing in our society, women should not be independent, seek for adventures or be interested in their own persona (Arhén, 1996). If a woman then fights these laws by making herself a career she will probably hear bad things about herself because this is not what our society expects from us.

According to Arrhenius (1999) the Swedish career woman is pictured in the debate as selfish, irresponsible and not caring about their children. This is very harsh words and it is probably harder than expected to distance you from this sort of statements. Even the women I met, that certainly showed me a high degree of self-esteem said that it was hard sometimes. Danica Kragic (Appendix 1, interview 5) said for example that she always did what the day care staff told her to do in fear of being called a bad mother otherwise. Arhén (1996) also saw in her research that a lot of women got these comments and often it concerned them being a perfect mother. Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) was one of the interviewed that said that you get more comments after you become a mother and you get to hear others opinions about everything you do or do not do. I believe that you need a high self esteem and confidence in yourself in order to shake these comments of and do what you intended to do.

What makes people having opinions about how these women decide to live their lives? I believe that it is something embedded deep down inside us like a mental picture of how women should be and if someone extracts themselves from the norm it is ok to judge and show your opinions. If we look at the role ascribed to women – someone that should take care of the private life (Holmqvist, 2011), should be connected to others, not take initiatives or be self-defined (Arhén, 1996). These are characteristics that are not usually ascribed a leader and therefore you understand that you need to be tough or have an extra skin, as the interviewed says (Appendix 1). On top of this, women is said to want to accomplish harmony within a group and are usually quiet in group situations (Austin, 2002). In order to break free from all of these and many more norms, I believe that you need to have a high self-esteem. If you do not believe that you can break free from the norm – who will? It is like Linda Krondahl say, “Why should not I speak up? I am the one that knows my company the best” (Appendix 1, interview 1). You need to believe it yourself and trust yourself.
When Karin Bodin says “It is not possible to be liked by everyone” (Appendix 1, interview 3) she also acknowledge that this is something that is hard to realize. When we look at differences between women and men we can see that women is said to have a higher tendency to care about their relationships at work (Arhén, 2005) while men are ascribed as being more competitive. As a leader, it is hard to be liked by everyone and this is also were your self esteem kicks in. I believe that when you have a higher self esteem it is more ok to not be liked by everyone but if you have a low self esteem you feel like you need everyone’s approval when making a decision. In order to be competitive as a woman and accept the fact that you are not going to be liked by everyone, you need to believe yourself that you are not being less feminine when you do it. The main problem is, after all, that we are afraid of not fitting into the norm that we have created of how we should be.

Karin Bodin says that it is important to remember that every decision does not fit everyone and that you will get too much consensus if you try to be accepted by everyone (Appendix 1, interview 3). This is a problem acknowledged by Drake and Solberg (1996) as well; when women interact within a group they want everyone within the group to accept the decision and no one should stand out and take the leading role. Karin Bodin (Appendix 1, interview 3) also feels that this is the difference – when it comes to men everybody wants to be the leader but women are afraid of extracting themselves from the group. Even if these statements of course do not stand for all women it is an indication of how women act since this is what our society expects from women. You simply need some extra skin, courage and self-esteem in order to become a leader as a woman since it is not seen as the norm. You might ask yourself then if women as a group have a lower self esteem than men. I do not believe that this is the whole true. As Austin (2002) says women often underrate them but I believe that this is because it is still seen in our society as that woman does not have the same possibilities as men. This sort of ideas in the society makes women believe that they do not have the same possibilities and I believe that it might affect women’s self esteem.

4.5 What made these women successful?

If all of the above is correct, what made these 5 women successful? When I look at their common ground I see a pattern. All of the interviewed said that their parents did not lay any big pressure on them but they always felt like they could do what they wanted to do and many of them also grew up on the countryside (Appendix 1). Karin Bodin (Appendix 1, interview 3) say that growing up on the countryside made it possible for her to make more male things since there was not that many things to do and this made her more secure and she saw more possibilities everywhere. This could be one explanation, if you live on the countryside you get to help with what needs to be done, no matter what gender you are. Arhén (1996) also saw the same correlation in her research, most of the female leaders in her research also grew up on the countryside which supports my argument that this could
be an important reason to why some women become leaders. Arhén (1996) also documented that all of the interviewed leaders grew up feeling that they would be loved, whatever they decided to do in their adult life. This was a correlation that I also saw among my interviewed leaders; all of them said that the drive to see a progress in their career came from them and not their parents.

Linda Krondahl (Appendix 1, interview 2) say that she was an individualist from the beginning and that she has never been a group person. Linda Krondahl sees herself as a daddy’s girl who had always been rather masculine and that she does not care about expectations like that she should be caring because she is a woman. When you look at typical descriptions of leadership these are typical traits ascribed a leader. When Linda Krondahl say that she has always been rather masculine, for example I believe that she means that she performs without complaining (Branden, 2000), are competitive and not afraid of power situations (Austin, 2002). When Linda says that she is not a group person she also acknowledge the problem ascribed to women when they are becoming leaders by Arhén (2005) who says that women are usually motivated to work for the best of the group and not the best of the individual.

Linda Krondahl (Appendix 1, interview 2) says that her group of friends are on the same level as her which make their hierarchy flat anyway, and she even question if the persons that did not make it to same level might have been dismantled from the group. According to Arhén (1996) female groups are flat and everybody has the same value within the group. It could be, as Linda says, that instead of leaving one female community because of her position, she created a new were everybody had similar positions.

All of the interviewed that has a partner has a partner that is very supportive in the household (Appendix 1). I believe that this fact has helped all of the interviewed to get as far in their career as they have done. According to Linehan and Seullion (2008) the uneven distribution of household work makes it harder or impossible for women to involve in networks. Therefore, this fact could have been contributing to the interviewed women’s success. They all seem to be a part of good professional networks and have understanding partners who helps them when they need to put more time and effort into their career.

All of the interviewed said that they did not feel like they had problems from a mother-daughter symbiosis. This is also contributing to the fact that these women has made a career and does not seem to have any feelings of guilt. According to Arhén (1996) women that have a strong connection to their mothers are more likely to develop strong connections to other women through their life. If these women do not feel like they had this symbiosis with their mother, they might not develop these strong relationships with other women in their adult life. And since these relationships often
become destructive according to Arhén (1996) it is positive to these women’s career if they have not been a part of these destructive groups.

I also noticed that all of the women that I met seemed very strong and had a high self esteem. I believe that it is important as a woman, fighting the traditional gender role to have a high self esteem. In order to succeed you need to be able to shake bad comments of and trust your own instinct. I believe that this is something that they all had in common. They all did what they wanted to do, no matter what other people said. Anna Omstedt-Lindgren (Appendix 1, interview 4) left for example a well paid job to start a new company which probably made many people question her decisions. But Anna still followed her own instinct and created her own success.
5. Conclusion

5.1 Theoretical contribution
My research indicates that networks influence the development of female leaders in a great amount. My focus has been mainly on informal networks and the research has shown that they are in a big extent unsupportive when it comes to developing female leaders. Therefore I draw the conclusion that networks, with emphasis on informal networks are one of the reasons to why women do not become leaders in a higher extent.

My research has shown that there is a great difference between informal and professional networks. When doing my interviews I noticed a great difference about how the women described their relationships outside and inside work. All of the interviewed felt like they had been helped in their career by other women professionally but also all of the women had examples of how your informal networks could do the opposite. This indicates that professional networks are supportive but that informal networks are the opposite when it comes to women becoming leaders. The research also showed that women often grade their informal networks higher than professional networks which could be a reason to why supportive professional networks is not enough. If women choose to meet their informal networks instead, it does not matter how supportive the professional networks are because their informal networks will still be the network that influence them the most.

I noted in my interviews that the interviewed kept telling me how important self-esteem is in order to succeed. My research indicates that this is one of the reasons to why these women became successful even if they had noted the unsupportive criticism I also found in the theoretical data, in their informal networks. They had, in comparison to a lot of other women in our society, the possibility to ignore whatever their informal networks told them because they have a high self esteem. I believe that this research has shown that you need a high self esteem in order to succeed today as a woman. Even successful women as the women I met got to hear comments and opinions from others about their choices in life and this is one way how you can see informal networks having a negative impact on women’s career. If these women would not have had a high self esteem and grown up believing that they could do anything my research indicates that these comments would have influenced them more in a negative way.

My research has shown that we have a strong culture of being “Good Girls” in our society. Women are raised in the belief that they need to be perfect at everything at once in order to be ok. Other researchers have seen that there is a “superwoman trap” were women believe that they need to do everything perfect and this sort of behavior is strongly contributing to the amount of stress that women might feel. This sort of picture is also maintained in our informal networks were women often are seen to push each other to maintain this mental model of how women should be. This is
one way in which informal networks does not support the development of female leaders. We have an old mental model of how a woman should be and we push this image on each other. The research implicates that when women give each other comments or criticism it is usually about how good mothers they are, good cooks, good employees – good girls. Therefore I found that the “good girl” culture is strongly grounded in our informal networks, for example I did not find that the women I interviewed felt as questioned in their work as in their private life.

5.2 Practical implications
In order to make any sorts of implications, we have to understand that this problem is not easy to solve. Our actions are rooted deep down in our culture and it is not one person that has to make a change in order to make an impact on the development. My research has shown that informal networks have a big negative impact on women’s careers and therefore I find this the place the place to start when making a change. Women should support each other in their informal networks and not criticize each other or each other’s decisions. This might sound as a huge change but I believe that it could be easy if people know how much this sort of behavior influences each other. This sort of implication always starts with one person. If one person start to support her female friends in her informal networks and welcome change into their informal networks it might help those women to accomplish what they dream of. Therefore this sort of practical implications is also one of the easiest. If everybody that reads this thesis starts to make notion of the little comments we give each other every day that makes our informal networks unsupportive we have started a trend that, with the indications of my research, could increase the number of female leaders.

I believe that women need to bring their profession into their informal networks in a higher extent. If nobody knows that you are a professor or a CEO in your network you might miss out on talents and chances. It needs to be ok to say that you are a CEO without feeling that you disrupt the harmony in the group. But how do you do this? I believe that it is like with the first practical implication, we just need to start. By saying that you are a CEO in a group simply shows that it is ok to say it and when you say it you make it ok to others to say it and then we make this behavior ok.

But it is not only informal networks that need to change. My research has shown that professional networks are not acknowledged as important as informal networks and those women often choose to meet with their informal networks instead of their professional networks. We do not only need to bring our profession into our informal networks but we also need to bring informality into our professional networks. Research has shown that men are seen to often meet with an activity involved which makes the network more informal, but that women are seen to meet more with the focus on networking which I believe makes these networks strongly professional.
Research has also shown that there is still strong gender thinking both among the interviewed and in our society. The interviewed said that they were most likely to hire female talents for example and they had also started a female network. You can also see the same pattern in the literature, you can in the theoretical chapter see a great deal of researchers stereotyping about gender. In order to draw the attention from the gender and focus on our competence, dividing talents into gender and creating a network only for women is in my opinion not the answer. Women should get into the “old boys clubs” in order to enhance their visibility and make the decision makers see them as “talents” and not mainly “female talents”.

My research has also noted that female networks are often seen as very unforgiving, and a lot of the interviewed said that they felt like they were being examined all the time. This belief that you can not make mistakes is connected to the belief that we need to be good girls, I believe and we need to make it ok to fail in our networks. The fear of failure makes people not do anything at all.

5.3 What more needs to be done?
I suggest that more research should be made in this area. I had a hard time gathering literature for this thesis and noted that a lot of the literature about networks was focused on what we call “old boy’s clubs” networks. Since these networks are seen as one of the main obstacles for women to get into managerial positions it is important to highlight how female networks work. I suggest that you should research among women that have not become leaders and try to see how their networks work. My hope is that with more research people will also look with new eyes on their surroundings and try to make a change.
6. References


7. Appendix 1, Interviews

7.1 Victoria Appelqvist.

27/2-2011, e-mail interview. Victoria is the associate marketing director of the Nordic section of Johnson & Johnson.

Victoria starts her e-mail by saying that female leadership really is interesting from many aspects. She has personally not felt like women stop other women or push other women back in their careers. She does not feel like she does it herself either. She also questions if this is because of luck or not? She says that one theory that she has is that it is because she has always been working in American companies during her career (Procter & Gamble, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson). In American companies it is mostly the result that counts no matter what gender or nationality you have. If you look at the Nordic management of Johnson & Johnson Consumer Nordic the entire key positions as the CEO, finance director and marketing director are owned by women. The thing that they have in common is that they are all smart, driven and very hard working women.

Victoria says that an important question for her during her years of working hard is the questioning that she faced private from her friends. They generally can’t understand why Victoria works as hard that she does and that Victoria has chosen to give up so much of her private life in order to work more. Something that Victoria finds interesting is that she has not been faced by these opinions by her male friends but only by her female friends. She also feels like her hard working male colleagues does not get questioned by her female friends in the same way as they question Victoria’s work.

Victoria then answer to what she thinks is one of the biggest reasons to why there are not many female leaders. She personally thinks that it is because women in a smaller extent want to invest the amount of time that is needed to become a leader on a high level. If you on top of that have a family it could probably get very difficult to get your working life and private life to fit together. If you look at people with a high position that has kids he or she almost without exclusion needs to have the other partner at home, full time. And in very few cases it is the man that takes the main responsibility at home. She also adds that the exception could be Annika Falkengren for example or Victoria’s CEO. Victoria also finds it less political correct for a woman to leave the main responsibility of the family to the man to get a career, as you per automatic become a bad
mother if you do it. Victoria has, as a contrary never seen or felt that you get questioned as a man if you leave the responsibility of the family to the woman in the family.

Then there is a male power structure in many companies that does not make it easier for women to get ahead. But Victoria thinks that when it comes down to it, it is important to not underestimate driving force, prioritize and the sacrifice that you have to make in the most cases if you want a leading position.

When I ask Victoria what her childhood has meant to her career she says that since she came from an academic home it was self-evident that she was going to study after high school. Her university studies then was the base of her career.

When I ask her if her relationship with her mother/grandmothers/sisters/mother-in-law has helped or not in her career she says “Neither nor”.

Victoria says that her friends are generally speaking with proud of her making her career but that she constantly gets questioned by her female friends when it comes to her decision of investing that much time into her work. She also feel like her male friends tend to compare themselves more to her like it is a competition, but her female friends does not work like that. Among her female friends she is exclusively seen as the career-woman which started as soon as she started to work after finishing the university. Then they based it entirely on that she worked that much harder than them and did more hours than them.

Victoria says that it is hard to get her private life and career work together. The higher she gets in the hierarchy the harder it becomes to get a balance between those two parts. She says that she honestly can’t see herself combining her present work with kids. In that case she would need a man that takes the main responsibility at home. But if she on the other hand gets kids, she would want to spend time with them and not as much time on her work as she does today.

The biggest downsides with having such a high leading position are according to Victoria that you lose a big part of your private life. This week, she has for example been coming home at 23 every night and still has to work the whole weekend. This does not leave a lot of time to her private life.

When it comes to supportive female relationships Victoria says that the two bosses that has lifted her up the most in her career is female and because of that Victoria cannot say that female’s drag
each other down. She also adds that she has not been looking at her bosses according to their
gender. The only common thing is that the women have made bigger sacrifices in their private
life in order to have a career. Some have for example left their husbands in their home country
and then moved to Sweden because of their career. Then they go back to their home country in
the weekends. You do not see that kind of sacrifices among men because their families usually
follow him.

7.2 Linda Krondahl.

Information: Linda is the CEO of Hination, a company that sells sun cellar chargers that works
to all of your electrical equipment. Linda is originally from Skåne, Sweden and studied in Lund
before she moved to Stockholm and started as a consultant. She has now run this company for
approximately 2 years.

When Linda grew up she says that she has been pushed by her parents to do things but that she
in the same time felt that she could go her own way. She says that she was very shy when she was
young but that her parents pushed her to take more place. When it came to her grades, she was
the one that pushed her. Linda is born in the countryside and she says that she was always a part
of what happened and never heard that she could not do anything because she was a girl. She
remembers for example that she and her sister put up wallpaper in the kitchen.

Linda believes that it is our slow system that has developed our reality of not having that many
female leaders. She thinks that it will take time before you can see a change. Linda also find it
strange that other countries such as Italy and France has better numbers when it comes to CEO
in noted on the stock companies compared to Sweden when Sweden is seen as a more equal
country than the other two.

Linda also believes that another reason is that there are not many women in the sauna and that
they simply are not a part of the network and therefore do not get the high positions.

Linda thinks that it is wrong that women cannot handle other women having a career but she
thinks herself that she had got a lot of support from women, both formal and informal. She
believes that women form their own networks.

When we talk about Linda’s female friends she says that they are happy for her but that you
cannot see them as often as before since she works so long hours. Linda says that she has lost
contact with several and also starts to ask herself whether she has lost contact with some people because of that she has higher positions than them. She does not give a clear answer, however, and says that if that is the case she has done it unconsciously. She does remember one friend that she had from home that was angry when she moved to Stockholm. This friend never studied herself and Linda thought that she was angry about the move but that it also could have been because the fact that Linda had started her career by studying and now continued.

Linda is from Kristianstad, Skåne and studied engineering – chemistry technique at LTH before she moved to Stockholm. She claims that old friends have disappeared out in the surface and that it could be because of her career.

Linda is engaged and lives together with her fiancé. She says that they cant get kids yet because of her work and that as a female leader you get kids very late. Linda claims that you have to be leader first and then get kids. She says that is a big difference between men and women, men can get kids during their career or in the same time as they try to become a leader. Linda says that her fiancé does not work as long hours and that it is good since if he had worked as much as her they might never see each other, since they might not work on the same times. She also says that they do not have the classical gender dividing the housework but that he maybe does more than her.

In the organization, they are 2 women and 1 man and in the board they are 100% women. She does want to have a man in the board as well since men bring in another view and make it more complete. She thinks the same about age, nationality etc.

Linda sees herself as supportive to other women in their careers and that she shares her contacts, tips and experiences.

When Linda meets new women she usually tells them what she does but she does not tell them any details. Usually they ask her more than she tells and she simply tells them less just because she does not want the conversation to be all about her.

When she comes home to the village where she grew up she usually tone her down a little bit because she does not want to seem as someone who brags about herself. She does this no matter if it is a man or a woman in the village she is talking to.

Linda claims that she has never felt the symbiosis problem with her mum and thinks that she was closer to her dad during her childhood and did not really think that she was a group person. Linda says that she is an individualist and bitter. It is better to do it yourself even thou everybody had opinions do not listen to them. If you have developed this product for example, no one
knows it better then you. You cannot be best friends with everyone. But Linda also understands that it could be hard if everyone is on the same level and then one gets picked to become a leader for example. You have to be tough. Linda also says that she had a best friend in high school.

Already from the beginning Linda says that she had clear goals and wanted to decide herself. She thinks that when you look at your grades the “good-girls” gets better grades but that there are also some downsides with being a “good-girl”. Linda thinks that she was a good-girl herself and that she often got to take care of the more messy students, in order to make them become “good” as well. Linda also thinks that there is a connection between messy boys and good girls. The more messy boys there are the better are the girls, because the boys then take all the space in the classroom. She thinks this could mean more to you if you have a hard time in school since you then maybe not get the right amount of attention that you need in order to succeed. She believes that the messy boys get more help since you can hear them more. Since Linda was a bright student she often got to help the “messy boys” when she was ready or other students that had problems.

Linda thinks that the biggest downsides with being a leader is that you do not have enough time and that you always carry around your work in the back of your head. Linda says that her work always comes first and that she always reflects according to her work. It is something that you cannot shut off.

Linda finds it easier to relate to the term “daddy’s girl” more than the thought of being in symbiosis with her mum. Linda thinks that she discuss more and better with her dad than with her mum and that she always have been rather “manly” by not over thinking or thresh about her emotions. She thinks that she is a problem solver instead.

Her parents thinks that her company is very cool and thought that she worked too much before she started the company. Now they usually help her and support her financially since she has not been able to take out a salary yet. Her parents have never nagged about her getting married but Linda could imagine that it might be different when she gets children.

Linda thinks that when she gets children she will divide it 50/50 with her fiancé. Linda also could imagine that she can get some comments from her mother-in-law when they have kids. Linda now thinks that it would be better to get kids before you start to climb in your career but that she did not think like that in the past. Now she sees how hard it would be for her to leave for maternity leave and that it would have been easier in the past.
Linda also says that she has some good role models when it comes to balance work and family. In her board the women always were travelling a lot when their kids grew up and one of the women have the best contact with her teenage son and this makes Linda believe that it is possible and maybe even good to not be home too much. Linda also says that it is ok to have a nanny and that the kids do not have to be at home.

Linda has 2 siblings, one older brother and one younger sister. Her brother is 8 years older, he is a half-brother and a real do-er. He used to be a typical nuisance in the past. Linda says that they all three of them are very good at what they do and that could be because they do something that they all feel comfortable with and that they like. They are all also leaders in some ways, her brother is the leader of his department, her sister is a nurse and she is the one coordinating the police, fire department etc (trauma). Linda says that her sister never was a career woman but that she is the one always remembering birthdays.

Linda says that she herself never have felt any pressure that she has to be caring because she is a woman. Her mother has sometimes asked her to send a card to her cousin but Linda strictly tells her no. She says that she does not care about those expectations.

Linda says that she gets irritated when people are too sissy.

When Linda studied they were 50/50 men and women and she never has felt that people thinks it is strange that she is a female engineer, more the opposite. Linda thinks that she gets a lot of cred of being an engineer. However, she thinks that if she would have been a guy they might not ask her what she had been studying but that people usually ask her and when she tells them about her degree they usually listen more. She thinks that then they think that “ok, then she knows what she is talking about”. Then she can speak about engineering even thou she is a woman.

Linda thinks about her female friends and she says that all of them are on the same level as her. Then I say that “well, then it is flat anyway”. Linda starts to think and says that I am right and the ones that have not made a career might have been dismantled from the group.

Linda says that female jealousy probably exists but that she herself has been in branches were she has not been hit by it herself. Linda says that you have to pick your fights and that if she would have been more of an interacting person she would have seen more of it.

7.3 Karin Bodin.

15/3-2011, over the phone. Karin is the CEO of Polarbröd.
Karin is an educated journalist and graduated from Mittuniversity in Sweden. Karin is married and has 3 kids that are 8, 5 and 1 years old. Karin finds it hard to plan and make both her job and family work together but that she has a supportive man that helps her. Karin tries to not sleep away from home too often and only tries to do it one time per week. Karin’s husband is a freelancing journalist which makes it easier to get their family life to work since he can be at home a lot.

Karin has one older sister that also is one of the main owners of Polarbröd, her name is Anna. They grew up with both their mum and dad in a small society called Älvsbyn.

When I asked what her childhood has meant to her career Karin answered that it has given her a foundation of belief in her since her parents always were supportive. They have always pushed her to start her own company and wanted her to have the possibility to influence her own job.

Karin says that other women have helped her a lot in her career and that she has got a lot of support from her family. She says that she knows that female jealousy exists and that women do not always help each other in their careers but that she has not felt it herself. She says that sometimes women try to disrespect other women in different ways. Karin says that it is the problem in a group were they have some power. Karin finds men more forgiving to each other and that woman gets upset from a lot of things. You cannot ask o woman about her age or how much she weight for example because then she gets upset. Karin asks me “Why is that?” You are not allowed to ask but you can ask men. It is like women have to be more perfect than men and then you cannot weight 70 kilos.

Karin does not agree that there is something called “The good girl” and that this was something that existed when she went to school more. She remembers that one of her female teachers called her dominant and Karin thinks that you would probably not call a boy dominant in a classroom just because he took some place in the classroom. Karin says that there has always been a lot of space for her growing up in Älvsbyn. She says that it is easier to be a girl in Älvsbyn since a girl has had the opportunity to do more “male” things and there were more opportunities. If there only were 2 activities for example, it did not matter if you were a boy or a girl but you did what existed. Karin thinks that gender thinking is something that we get from our society and a lot of it from school. We do what is expected from us. But the school is only a small part of our lives. When you start to work, it does not mean that much anymore.
Karin says that she has gotten a lot of support from her female friends and she does not feel like someone in her surroundings feel like they are rivalries. She says that this could be because it is a family owned business and she gets positive support.

Karin says that the bad conscious that she feels when she leaves her kids at day care a long time comes from herself and not because people give her that bad conscious. Karin says that her mum understands her since she also was a career woman and she has taught Karin that it is important to have a job that is both fun and important. But there is a contrast; it is both fun and hard making a family and a job work together. Her family is often there and helps her when she needs someone to look after the kids. Karin became the CEO after she had her two first kids and she says that she had less demanding work assignments before she got her kids. Karin also says that it is maybe easier for her to make her family life and her work life balance since it is a family owned business. She can form her work with the family and make it fit into her family.

Karin says that the biggest downsides with having such a high position are that you are a bit locked. When she was younger she could travel 2 months in Asia if she wanted but that is impossible now. She also adds that it would be impossible anyway now since the kids need to go to school. She says that her life is more planned now and there are fewer opportunities to spontaneity. And it is hard to do everything which gives Karin a lot of stress and pressure.

Karin says that she maybe helps other women in their careers. She says that it is easier for her to see female competition and hire women. She is open to good women that want to work with them. Karin hopes that she is a good role model and that she thinks that it is good that you can combine having a family with a demanding job as a woman.

Karin says that the kids get a bigger role in our society. Now days their dads comes and pick them up from day care. Karin says that too much work has to be done in too little time, if everybody has to be involved in their children (both mum and dad’s) when is anyone going to work? Karin says that both men and women choose to get kids later in life in order to prioritize their career before. But Karin thinks that it would be better if you could do both in the same time. If you don’t have a family it gets to be an eccentric focus on the career and Karin does not think that the last 20 hours of an 80 hours week are very good. Karin says that it is important to not work all the time and that your family is a good reason to say no sometimes. She also adds that if you need 80 hours to do the work, you are probably not very good at doing it since you are very ineffective.
Karin thinks that female jealousy is a hidden term that absolutely exists. She says that she experienced it in high school but that she might be experiencing it now as well. She does not know what people talk about behind her back. Karin also thinks that it is often very hard words and that it would be better to say it out loud to the person than behind her back. She brings up Solsidan, a Swedish show were they gossiped a lot in the last episode about each other every time someone left the room. Karin thinks that this is a good example about how women act. She thinks that we can learn a lot from men that has a more straight forward communication pattern.

Karin has not noticed that anyone has gotten jealous of her being a CEO, she says that they are not so career focused so they do not care that much. Karin thinks that it might be different if they would have wanted the same thing.

Then we discussed the issue of not being a part of the group when you are a CEO and Karin says that you have to act in a different way since you are not at the same level as the rest of the company. She also says that you have to have your close friends outside work since it is hard to be a boss over your friends.

When we were talking about female group hierarchy and its tendency to be flat Karin brings up an example. She was in a classroom with only women and they were going to move all of the things from that room to another. But they never came to a decision but everybody just stood there, no one wanted to be the leader. She thinks that this is a good example of women being afraid of not being liked by everyone. It is safer in these big female groups to not be the leader.

Karin says that of course she wants to be liked by everyone but that it is not always possible. She says that you need some extra skin and that you cannot think too much about what other people think about you. She also says that she had a male colleague that could not stop thinking about what other people thought about him and therefore this is not entirely female.

Sometimes Karin also thinks about what people say when she is not around but that it is important to remember that every decision does not fit everybody but that they will get over it. Sometimes she also makes the wrong decision. Karin thinks that the risks with thinking this are that you will get too much consensus and that is not good. Karin says that male networks are more hierarchical, everybody wants to be the leader. Karin thinks that this is prestige thinking and that everyone wants to have a position. She feels that they want to look down at her and that men often push her hand extremely hard to show who’s in charge. She thinks that this is alpha male gibberish.
When Karin grew up she had more male friends than female friends since she had more in common with them. She says that it is something that the society has created that you need a best friend when you are a girl and that she noted this in day care; they said to her that it was important to her daughter to have a best female friend. But she also thinks that it can happen with men as well.

Generally speaking, Karin thinks that men take leading positions easier than women. This is mostly because they do not have as high demands as women on their selves. Women wants to be perfect and you cannot be perfect as a leader. Karin says that you should lose all of the demands that you have put on yourself. She says that it is our community that has developed these demands, we expect that men are going to lead and that women will follow for example. You see it on TV all the time for example. But women have to dare to do it anyway, even with all of their flaws.

Karin also thinks that one big reason to why there are not many women in leading positions is that it is a spiral, men choose men and since there are not many women now, there are not many that choose women. It is also because women do not dare to do it, they are afraid to take place and wave with her hand in the classroom. She also says that it is a problem that women have not been allowed to be funny; the funny guy has always been a guy. And if you are allowed to be funny you are also aloud to make mistakes. She says that if we could be funnier we would take mistakes easier. Because you cannot always be the good girl and we have to learn to start to laugh about it instead. But women do not dare to laugh about it.

Karin says that there is a long way to go in female networks and those women are often too serious. We expect to be examined in everything we do and therefore we always have to do it right. Men do not take failures as hard as women and it is easier for them to create real networks. Karin says that there are few female networks because they get too serious and that the female networks have been more about women that want to claim their importance.

Karin has an older sister that was always very nice to Karin and gave her tips. Now when they are older they help each other. She says that people often think that she is the oldest one since she is bossier and her sister is more analytical and reflecting.

Karin says that she mostly got pressure from herself and that her goal is not to work too much. Since it is her own company she can decide a lot herself. She does what she has time to do and she does the right things. She says that the company is organized in a way so that they work without her help underneath her. It happens that she works a lot sometimes but it is not
regularly. But she can see people who put some kind of honor in working a lot. Karin says that she does not want people to work too much in her company and she sometimes asks them to take a walk or whatever. Karin says that it is better with quality than working too much. She has even heard people say that they rationalize away their sleep and she thinks that it is a weird life if you only sleep 5 hours every night for example in order to have time for everything. You have to live as well! You need to reflect as well.

In Polarbröd they are 49% women and 51% men and Karin is very happy that they are that equal.

When Karin meets new, unknown women she usually does not speak about her job instantly since it often gets to such a long discussion. When she became a CEO she almost felt embarrassed, like it was only a show and that she was not really the CEO when she told people that. It felt like it was out powering her but that is something that she has outgrown and she does not feel that anymore.

7.4 Anna Omstedt-Lindgren.

Information: Anna is the CEO of Med Universe and she is also the founder and previous CEO of Tasteline and has also worked as a vice president of SvD digital media. She is also the founder of Pokerface, a business network for women. Anna has two kids (sons) and is married.

When Anna entered the room you could feel the atmosphere changing. Without even asking Anna started to talk about the topic and I felt from the start that this was something that she was very passionate about. Anna started by saying that just because you have made it yourself as a woman does not mean that everybody is equal and has equal opportunities. Anna also says that she thinks that it is important to bring men into this topic and not make it into a female interest. And Anna is very frustrated about that women are talking bullshit about men, that are not the way to go, she says.

Anna was a part of a network for CEO’s and founders of companies but since it consisted of 97% men, Anna started another network called “Pokerface” were female CEO’s and founders could network. They meet several times every year and talk business and then play poker. One of the important objectives is to also get together with the original network with more men. Anna said that she noticed that men network all the time when they play poker, golf etc. but that woman often chose not to participate and prioritize hurrying home to their family. Anna thinks
important that women also grow their networks. Anna says that women have to increase their visibility with men and be present at these events. Anna claims that it is impossible to compare female and male networks. Anna thinks that women usually talks about problems and challenges while men are more social. She also thinks that networking is activity oriented with men but network oriented with women. Usually women just get together to get together but men actually do something and Anna thinks that this is an important difference. Anna also thinks that the purpose should be business but that it usually ends up with a lot of discussions about their family when women interact. Anna thinks that women often do not believe that their career is interesting and therefore talk about their family instead.

Anna also finds a big difference when it comes to recognizing talented men and women. Men think that it is ok to look up to a man and although there may be envy, it usually results in a more competitive atmosphere. When a women is talented she may also draw a lot of attention to other features such as her looks, her family situation and her past. Anna believes that this is often a negative way to discuss women talents and women often contribute to talking behind other women’s backs. This is something that really irritates Anna and annoys her that we can’t be happy for each other. Anna also sees a problem when it comes to women’s sexuality. It is so easy for a woman to be sexy, you just have to put on a sexy dress, and then the crowd forgets to listen and only gossip about the dress instead. This usually never happens to men – how different can you be in a suit?

When I ask Anna if she feels like women have more opinions since she got kids, she answers “God Yes!” and that she gets taunts all the time since she got her two kids. Anna says that it is important to marry an equal man that you can share things with. Anna also thinks that it develops to a mental stress and pressure when a lot of women have opinions about her life. She can often think about whether they think that she is a bad mother etc. and Anna does not think that men thinks like this. If they hear someone implying that they are a bad father they just do not listen since they know that they are good fathers.

Anna also thinks that a lot of women think that they can not become leaders; “I know nothing about that” but that man never says that there is something that they can not do. Anna thinks that women are too harsh against themselves and that they know more than they think themselves.

Anna thinks that her upbringing means everything to her career; she had very supportive parents that have always believed in her. Anna has lived 8 years in Japan and since she studied in an
American school she thinks that this has had a big impact on Anna today. In the American school you got positive feedback if you were visible and out there. Because of cultural differences you learn to question your prejudices. She had also learned the importance of diversity when it comes to decisions.

Then we discussed the term “Good Girl”. Anna thinks that girls often are extremely loyal and always do their outmost to deliver on their assignments. They can get better at questioning their career development and how they can take different positions within a company rather than just doing what they are told. They do not say “I want to do it this way!” Women do not say their desires out loud in the same way as men do. A woman could for example say after another person in the organization gets a higher position that “I am more qualified than him, why did not I get it”. Anna says that usually that person have not even told the organization that she wants the position. Anna says that she longs for the day when she has a job interview with a girl that state exactly what she wants as for example “I want to become the CEO of this company within 10 years!”

Anna thinks that her family and career works good together and that she every year look at her life and see if there is something that she wants to change. When she worked at Svenska Dagbladet she felt trapped and that she was not allowed to be creative and even if she had a good salary she quit and started with MedUniverse instead. Anna says that she needs to have fun at her work and that she has to be creative and that was a piece of the puzzle that she gets more of being an entrepreneur.

Anna has one brother that is 100% biological and 2 half brothers. Anna is the oldest of them and that she has a good relationship to all of them. Anna does not think that their relationship or being the oldest sister has influences her that much.

Then we discuss female jealousy. Anna want to state that there is male jealousy as well but that male jealousy makes the other men want to have the same as the man they are jealous at. Anna believes that female jealousy brings women more down than up.

Anna also wants to state that even persons that are dedicated to this topic finds it hard to always be supportive and that they might say something that is against their beliefs. Anna thinks that it is important to remember that you should feel admire instead of jealousy when you meet powerful women. Instead of talking trash about each other you should say “I want to learn more from her!”
Anna thinks that women always have opinions about each other and that she admires men of not being as complicated as women. Anna thinks that women often twist themselves into a world of to do’s. Anna thinks that the new housewife trend is idiotic and that she sometimes makes a statement out of it. She had a small party not too long ago were she served a Caesar salad and then she just put a tube of Felix dressing on the table and of course she got some question’s about it and people often think that her food have to be home cooked and great since she is the founder of Tasteline. Anna thinks that it is important to tell each other “buy your bread” instead of asking if they made their own sour dough. This all adds up and pressures each other. Anna thinks that the main thing is that you meet, not that you have made the cake yourself. Anna says that the new thing now is that you should have 3 kids and Anna that has 2 often get comments as “You will understand when you have 3 kids”.

Anna says that should take away the noise of all of these “truth’s” and act accordingly to what you feel good about yourself. Do not put energy on trying to reach some goals that other people think that you have to reach. Anna does not want 3 kids for example. Anna says that this only leads to you being burnt-out. Do not do everything.

Anna says that she often tells people about her job and that she talks positive about it. Anna says that your self-confidence is crucial when becoming a leader. She also thinks that good parents are essential to building good self confidence. Anna does not feel that her parents were too commanding however and they did not really care when she started at Handels. Anna was choosing between that and being a gym teacher.

The gender balance in Anna’s company is 2 woman and 3 men. Anna says that it is easier for her to recruit women since they often understand each other in a different way. They are both complicated Anna says with a smile. But it is important to not think that women are better then men, Anna reminds me. We need both and it should be equal.

7.5  Danica Kragic.
16/3-2011, at her office at KTH, Stockholm.

Information: Danica is a professor of computer science and the vice Dean of School of Computer Science and Communication at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH). Danica is married and has one son.
When I was going to meet with Danica she was 15 min late because of her meetings being too close to each other. Danica said that this was an ordinary day for her. We met in Danica’s office at KTH at lunchtime.

Danica said that she thought a lot about female leadership and the influence of relationships after she had been talking to me but that she might not have felt it as much as other women. Danica says that she works in a male dominated world and that she never has had a woman above her. In an examination committee for example, when you apply for a new position you need to have one woman in the committee and one time a woman that had a much lower job examined Danica. This was because there was no one else and definitely no one over her in the hierarchy that was a woman.

Danica does research in robotics and there are not many women in the world that does that, but the women that are is very supportive. Danica has for example organized lunches etc. and invited women and been discussing career. Danica got her son when she was 37 years old and something that she uses to tell them is that they can get their kids earlier and that you do not have to have your PhD before you get kids, and that it maybe could be easier to get them before.

Danica does not feel like she is more negative against women than men but that she rather tries to make friends with women in her working place since you need a partner at your work that has got your back. A friend of her was for example the only woman in a workplace and when it was decided that someone had to be laid of it got to be her since all of the guys did a lot of things together and were partners with each other. She would have needed someone who talked good about her when they were discussing but they simply did not feel like they knew her since she always rushed home to her kids when they went golfing for example.

Danica claims that she does not think that much about gender but that she rather thinks in a person’s competence. Danica thinks that jealousy does exist but that it is defined by the group. You talk a lot about how big your projects are for example (like a 10 million project etc) and then you do not think that much about gender. It is not important in the discussion. Danica thinks that there are not enough women in her area in order to be jealous and hard against each other. They need to hold each other’s back. Danica has heard that friends have excluded each other when someone has made a career but she has not felt it herself. Danica thinks that sometimes it is not jealousy but just criticism that comes out wrong. But she does feel that the ones that Danica studied with does not want to hear about how good her career turned out to be but she
feels that she gets this reaction from both women and men. Danica thinks that this is more because of that they are colleges than some gender jealousy.

Yesterday Danica had a meeting with Ung Fakultet, with people that is in the beginning of their career. Danica says that she is honest with them that her life is not perfect. She works a lot and she feels like she gets more accepted if she not only talks about her career but that she talks about her family. When she is late to a meeting for example she maybe says that her son poop just when they left her house rather than that she just was in a meeting and had to stress. She says that people are nicer to her then.

Danica grew up in Croatia and she feels that she was treated as stupid when she was studying there since she was a girl. Danica says that it is different in Sweden and that she did not feel like a girl here. She felt more about the fact that she was a foreigner and that could have outshined the gender issue.

Danica has a younger sister that is 5 years younger than her and work in the US. Her sister got kids a lot earlier and Danica does not feel like they are big rivals since they were always so different. Danica says that her sister always demanded more acknowledgement than Danica which makes them not being jealous of each other. Danica says that she doesn’t need that much acknowledgement and therefore they do not develop a rivalry. Danica says that their parents did like every other parent did. They wanted her to go to school and Danica and her sister were always good in school. Her parents did not push her to do anything but the force came from Danica herself. Today, she says that she does not understand where she got that force from. Her parents never had any expectations. Danicas dad is a mechanic and her mum has university studies. Her mum was not positive when Danica was going to get her PhD because she knew that it would be stressful. Danica says that her mum wanted her to have a life outside the university as well and that it could have been because the importance of settling down and getting a family. But Danica thinks that it is mostly her mother’s fears of Danica not living her life to the fullest and that Danica would wake up after 10 years and question what she have done with her life. Danica tell me however, that 10 years have passed and that she feels that she has done a lot in her life. She has met so many people, even thou it is through her work and not much outside work. Danica thinks that she wins a lot on this and that it is not good to see the same face in your work all the time. You need new people, and new knowledge. In KTH it is ever changing, PhD students comes and goes and this is both fun and hard.
Danica absolutely think that female networks are flat. You are on the same level whatever education you have. When you meet someone, you take yourself down or up to the same level as that person.

Danica’s husband is also a scientist and this makes his understanding of Danica’s work greater. He understands that Danica has to travel and work a lot. She thinks that it is positive that they both work a lot and that it would have been a lot more hard if it would have been only one of them working that hard.

Danica says that all of the persons that can handle both their family and their work are a role model to Danica, because it is hard. She says that it is almost impossible to stop thinking about her work and this makes her more creative in getting the puzzle to work. Danica says that one of the positive sides with the academic life is that you can take your work with you home. When she was on maternity leave she sometimes had meeting in her home since you need to have time for your staff even if you are on maternity leave.

Danica feels like she does not say what she works with because she does not want to brag. Instead of saying that she is a professor she usually says that she is a scientist. This does not scare people and women of in the same way as being a professor.

Danica says that the biggest downsides with her work are that you have so much responsibility over things that you are not educated for. She is an administrator, HR, get money to her thing, make the group work well together, development discussions and above this a teacher. She also says that you have so many relationships and you have to have so many roles and that sometimes these roles goes in to one another and makes it awkward. It is not very hierarchal and you are not only a boss/employee but only sometimes. This makes it harder when you have to take on the boss-role with people that you are usually at the same level as. And it is not like she finds it hard to be a leader but it is easy to think too much and try to take everyone into consideration. You do not want anyone to be angry but it is important to remember that everything cannot be good and that sometimes you lose or do not know the answer. This is not about failure. Danica thinks that women thinks about this more than men and that we take failures harder. Mostly because we have higher expectations on us from the society and that we always try to be perfect.

When then discuss the “Good Girl” syndrome. Danica thinks that this syndrome exists because that girls need to proof that they are ok even if they are girls. They have to be extra good. It is all about confidence. If you do not have any self confidence and stand next to a woman that is more successful it gets awkward. If you have confidence you do not think of this. Sometimes Danica
thinks that when she meet a successful woman that she has a great family but then she reminds herself that she probably have a hard time as well but that is not something that shows, it is not a part of the polish. She probably have a hard time getting up in the morning as well sometimes and just lay in bed crying. Danica says that it is easy to think that “everybody is better” when you are having a down fall but that you should remind yourself that you do not know how that woman feel. And life works in cycles of up and down, that is natural.

Danica thinks that the “good girl” syndrome makes women not daring to do things in fear of failure and proving that they are not perfect. Danica says that there are so many aspects. Is the fear because they do not dare to take place or fear of failure? Fear of responsibilities? If a woman fail it is worse than if a men fails. If a man fails he just shakes it off and keeps on going.

Danica feels a lot that you have to be great at everything. Her son is autistic and mentally handicapped and he is a big part of her bad conscious. But she does the best that she can do and that is something that mum’s should remember. At home, she does all the cooking but this is mostly because she is more effective than her husband and she does not turn the kitchen into the same mess that he does, she says. Danica thinks that her mind works more effective, she can for example have a business meeting on skype in the same time as she feed her son. She thinks that women are formed to these effective persons because our wanting to be perfect. Danica thinks that we put this stress on ourselves and that it becomes a competition with ourselves. This thinking is always active and we have to form ourselves after our surroundings. Danica thinks that you should not feel embarrassed about not managing more than you do. You have to learn how to say no and to prioritize. If you don’t, it is just going to develop to more stress.

Danica thinks that the daycare staff gives her stress, for example. She had a conflict with them yesterday for example. At the smallest sign of a cold with the kids, the staff calls her and wants her to pick up her son. And since Danica is afraid of them saying that she is a bad mother she does it even thou he always have a running nose because of his asthma. And she always feels bad when she picks up him last because the staff always clean the daycare 30 minutes before they close and put away all of the toys. So, for the last 30 minutes her son just walks around not doing anything. Danica finds is strange that they do that and if she has a paid place for her son until 5, it should be toys at until 5.

Since Danica gave birth to her son she feels like she has gotten a lot of opinions about everything. And Danica does not like when people say one thing but another when she is not there. The rehabilitation staff told her for example that she should not change her job to a less
demanding one when she asked but Danica feels like they probably think that anyway. People also get higher expectations on her since she gave birth and they question her travelling in her work and ask her if she can’t travel less. Danica says that of course she would like to travel less, she does not like to go to Barcelona, straight to a meeting, sleep at a lonely hotel and then go home without even have seen Barcelona. And she also says that people does not see the travels she says no to, only the ones she makes. She also has a rule of not travelling too much.

Danica ends up the interview by saying that she feels that women have supported her in the career, or at least they have not been slowing it down, she adds.
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