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Shattering the glass ceiling in academia:

- A Comparative study of the differences in how women advance and reach leadership positions in the academic world in Sweden vs. women in the US.

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Abstract

This study tried to emphasize the differences between Sweden and the US when it comes to women's career advancement to leading positions within the academic world. The differences between the countries were examined by studying women in leadership positions in universities in both countries. The three main research questions that this study was supposed to answer were:

- What are the different barriers women in leadership positions in the academic world encounter when advancing in Sweden and the US?
- How high is the importance of and different ways of networking, necessity of past experience, primary obstacles and other qualities or factors for career advancement in Sweden and the US?
- What stimulates and inspires a woman in Sweden versus a woman in the US to make career advancements to leading positions in academia?

The main method that was used in this study was interviews and comparison of the answers from the interviews with earlier research and theories within the subject. Seven women with some kind of leading position within academia were interviewed; three in Sweden and four in USA.

The results showed that the main differences and similarities in factors between the participants in Sweden and the participants in the US were (1) balancing family and work, (2) sex discrimination, (3) working conditions and promotions, (4) networking and mentorship and the last unexpected factor was (5) culture. The last factor, the cultural factor, was not processed in this study because this factor was a result of our research and was not researched about prior to the interviews. To conclude, the results showed that gender equality is higher in Sweden according to the responds of the participants.

Key words: Women, Globalization, Leadership, Academia, Culture, Sweden, USA & Career Advancement.

Preface and Acknowledgements

Prior to this study, gender equality was a very small issue to us. Both of us live in Sweden which is one of the top ten gender equal countries. After studying in the United States of America, we discovered major differences, previous unknown to us. Gender equality and leadership are some of our biggest interests today and many people are involved in giving birth to these interests.

We want to start with thanking Kristianstad University and Chatham University for giving us the opportunity to study abroad and discover what we want to dedicate our future research to. Also, we want to thank all the lecturers at Kristianstad University who contributed to our knowledge.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The study of leadership is one of the most common studies in modern times. Leadership can be defined in many ways (Northouse, 2011). The most common definition is that leadership is the process where one person, or sometimes a small group of people influence a group of people to do something in a certain way or reach a common outcome or task (Klenke, 1996; Northouse, 2011). In all kinds of organizations, leaders and leadership are necessary for the functioning of the organization (Klenke, 1996).

Historically, the key words of leadership have been power, authority, knowledge and men. Although there have been many great women leaders throughout history, they are excessively outnumbered by the many great men (Klenke, 1996). Women have been under-represented at the top leadership level for a long time and it is only in the last few decades that gender equality has become a public interest (Klenke, 1996). It is known that men usually made career advancement, coming closer to the top, faster and more often than women. Men are described as natural leaders, not based on their real qualities while women are not characterized as managerial in the first place (Dennis & Kunkel, 2004). This former belief that women are unfit for leadership has changed and is still changing throughout the world and it is letting us re-think our idea of leadership. Lately, women in different parts of the world have entered the traditionally male areas of leadership such as business and politics and the number of women leaders is increasing. In northern Europe, women are taking positions such as presidents, prime ministers and party leaders. In the USA, women are running for office and American women today are very involved in politics which was unlikely before the 70's (Klenke, 1996). Despite that there has been a major increase in the number of women in the workforce, there are still not many women that are CEOs of large organizations or members of boards of directors' in private sector organizations. Women are more likely to have leadership positions in state, public and community based firms than in private corporations (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009). Yet, research has shown that women are at least as effective as men in leadership (Bass, Avolio & Atwater, 1996). A study from 2011 where higher level leaders, both men and women, were asked to rate if they thought their male or female colleagues were more effective in certain areas, it was revealed that women were seen as more effective in all areas (Zenger Folkman Inc., 2012). In recent studies, it has also been proven, with many contradictions, that companies that are run by women are on average 10 percent more profitable than companies that are run by men (Kotiranta, Kovalainen & Rouvinen, 2008; CFOworld, 2012). Boards

which focus on gender equality, work better with implementation and measurement of corporate strategy (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009).

In Sweden, the share of women's career advancement has risen the past years in many sectors such as the political and governmental sector but the progress has been somewhat slower in the US (Womenintheworld, 2013). This raises the question whether there are significant differences in how to get to the top for a woman in Sweden versus a woman in the US. Only 17 % of the US Congress is made up of women while in Sweden, 45% of the members of the parliament are women (Womenintheworld, 2013; SCB, 2012). This shows that despite the fact that women are well-represented in many sectors in the US, it does not reflect in their politics. From such a country as developed as the US one would expect more progression toward gender equality in the most important sector concerning leadership. The Norwegian government has a requirement of at least 40 percent women on boards of publicly held firms and other less developed countries, such as for example Rwanda, have also recognized the necessity of having women in leadership positions (Womenintheworld, 2013). This makes it difficult for us to understand why the US still has not caught up with gender equality when it comes to politics, while being one of the most developed countries in the world according to, for example, the Human Development Index (Listverse, 2012). The 2010 Global Gender Gap Report indicates that Sweden is in the top five amongst 134 countries when it comes to gender equality while the US is in the nineteenth place and this is the first time that the US makes it to top twenty in the report's five years-history (Huff post world, 2010).

There are many influencing factors that determine the way a woman make career advancements such as how she networks and her previous experience. This study is trying to find out where these factors might differ between women's career advancements in Sweden compared to women in the US. Examples of other factors that might differ between women in the US and women in Sweden can be characteristics, educations, roles and more. Since the countries are almost on the same level when it comes to development (Listverse, 2012), it would be interesting to study how these factors affect women's career advancement in Sweden compared to the US. Why are there so many differences between the career advancement women make in the US compared to in Sweden? Can it be that it is so deeply implemented in the American culture that leaders must be men for organizations to be affective or is it women that have to change their ways of advancements?

1.2. Problematization

Women have traditionally made less investment in education and work experience than men due to factors such as lower pay, less rewards, training and promotion (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009). These factors used to be a valid explanation for the lack of women leaders but in modern times in many places around the world, women are graduating from higher level educations almost equal numbers to men and in some places they even outnumber the men. In Sweden for example, women represent 60% of the students in universities (HSV, 2012). In the US, the share of female students in the private, public and private not-for-profit sector remains between 56%-60% (Forbes, 2012).

What is interesting here is that in academia, there are no exceptions; females are underrepresented in leading positions in academia as well. Even universities are run by more men than women, despite the fact that there are more female students than male. The amount of women that receive higher education statuses such as PhD's are rising but the women at higher academia leadership levels are underrepresented (Kloot, 2004). We find this very interesting because to us, it should be natural that in an educational sector and when there are more female students than men, gender equality should be a priority. It should be the first sector where female leaders should be equally represented as male leaders if one consider the fact that the members, in forms of students, are represented of over 50% women in both Sweden and in the US.

Research has shown that universities need to use the skills and abilities of both men and women in order to be efficient. At the same time, a common problem that has been identified especially for women is that women on top leadership positions in the academic world tend to leave their positions for other jobs for different reasons. This enhances doubts and can make universities choose men to these positions based on the need of stability (Kloot, 2004). Research has shown that only an average of 12% of women in their third year of PHD's want a career within academia. Men have an average of only 21% but the difference is that 78% of the first year female PHD students do plan a career in academia while men are only around 60% (Rice, 2012). Women lose interest in staying in the academia the further they advance due to many reasons. Rice (2012) explains three of them. One reason is that women see a greater sacrifice in order to succeed in academia compared to men. Another reason is that both men and women face the problem of finding funds for their research projects, but larger number of women sees academic careers unnecessarily competitive. The third reason is that women have a greater negative attitude towards the future employment and the competitiveness in the academic world

compared to men. Although half of the students that defend their doctoral thesis and hold PhD's are women, only around 20% of professors in Sweden are women (MDH, 2011; Catalyst, 2012; SULF, 2010). In US, this is very similar; women that hold full professors title are only around 23% (Chronicle, 2011). In Sweden, the presidents of the universities already exceed 43% (HSV, 2008). Meanwhile, the presidents of universities in the US consist of only 23% women (Forbes, 2009). On the lower levels of the academia both in the US and in Sweden, women are very under-represented, with the numbers of professors being around 20% in both countries (MDH, 2011; Catalyst, 2012; SULF, 2010; Chronicle, 2011). Women represent over 75% of the US's school teachers (from all levels before university level) but when it comes to universities, it is massively less (Forbes, 2009). The "leaky pipeline", which means that women fall out of the academia the higher they advance, is very more visible in the US than in Sweden (Forbes, 2009; HSV, 2008).

There are different reasons for the great lack of women in high positions within academia. Lower salary, appointment at lower rank, slower rate of promotion, lower recognition through awards, and not being retained are some of the gender-based obstacles (Kloot, 2004; Busch-Vishniac et al., 2008). Women in academia often face the problem of building a family and make career advancement at the same time (Lee, 2011). It would be much harder for women to be in a tenured track job if they have young children compared to men in the same position (Lee, 2011). Another reason why it is more difficult for women to grow in the academic world and reach the top positions is because women are rarely recruited to the starting administrative positions and therefore, they cannot climb to higher positions. Other reasons are that high leading positions put high expectations on the leaders. Leaders should be available to work at any time and they will need their spouses to replace their professional and personal roles which make it less attractive for women (Busch-Vishniac et al., 2008). Women leaders in universities are not well recognized or well respected by their colleagues or others in the university if they do not have top level leadership positions, even though they are still some kind of leaders (SULF, 2012). For example, if they are not deans or department chairs but still well recognized nationally or internationally, it is because they made it happen themselves without the help or support from either departmental or university resources (Busch-Vishniac et al., 2008). It is much harder for a newly-hired woman to make connections and build networks with other colleagues while it is easy for men since almost all the other colleagues are men as well (Dominici et al., 2009).

Although there is previous research about women leaders in academia, this subject is still rough and needs to be more examined. Many researchers, as seen above, have explained different reasons for the lack of women in leading positions. Despite this, there are not many researchers that explain why there also is a lack of women in leading positions in academia, when academia is a very gender equal place. Both in Sweden and in the US, there are more female than male students and the percentage is similar in both countries. This study will examine selected women in leading positions in academia in the two countries and similarities and differences will be identified.

1.3. Research questions

- What are the different barriers women in leadership positions in the academic world encounter when advancing in Sweden and the US?
- How high is the importance of and different ways of networking, necessity of past experience, primary obstacles and other qualities or factors for career advancement in Sweden and the US?
- What stimulates and inspires a woman in Sweden versus a woman in the US to make career advancements to leading positions in academia?

2. Method

In this chapter, we will explain what approach has been chosen to answer the research questions in this study and why. The chapter starts with explaining the qualitative approach and how it is relevant to this study. Thereafter, the choice of data collection method and selection of participants will be explained. Definitions of words and limitations will be presented next and to sum up, the credibility of the study will be discussed.

The research process

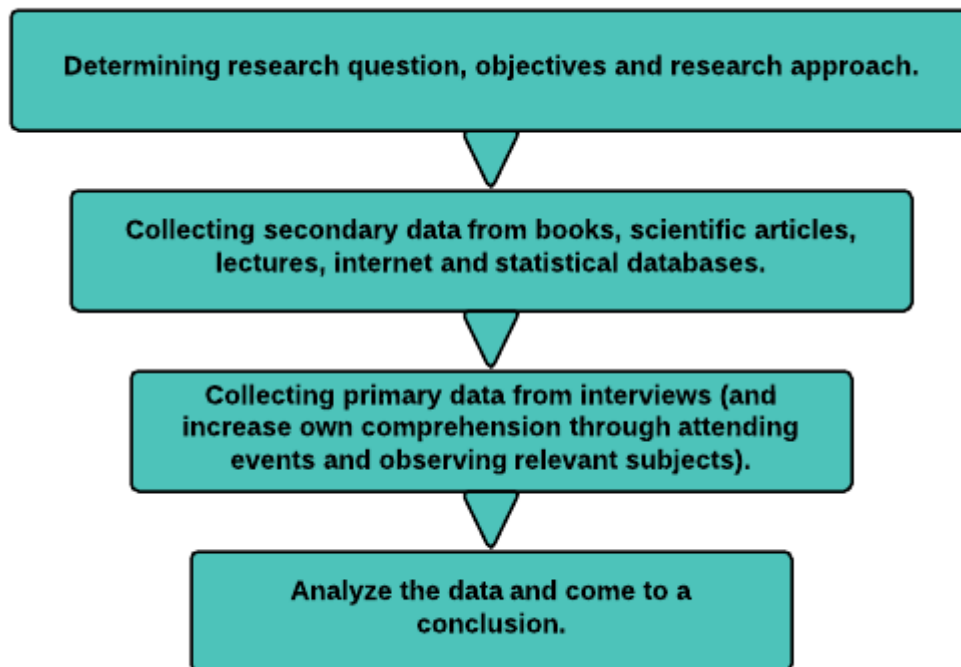


Chart 2-1 Research process

2.1. Research approach

There are two different types of research methods; quantitative and qualitative. The choice of method should be based on factors such as what kind of research problem is to be investigated, what the objectives of the study are and what data is available (Dow, 2002). This research will have an empirical-holistic approach of knowledge. The approach that will be used is abductive, meaning both inductive and deductive. It will be mainly inductive because of different factors such as the small amount of investigated objects, the lack of clear pre-determined hypotheses and the high degree of uncertainty (Jacobsen, 2002). The study will still include some kind of deductive reasoning meaning that there are some theories that this study will attempt to confirm. A qualitative method has been presented to gain a deeper understanding about the differences when it comes to women trying to advance and reach leading positions in academia in Sweden compared to the US.

The quantitative method is used to measure and explain the research problem and it requires larger amounts of data collections. The results of the analysis are often statistical and measurable (Jacobsen, 2002). Through different ways of collecting data, often in a smaller amount due to time limitations of qualitative data collection methods, one can get a deeper understanding with the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach has very little statistics and mathematics and is more suitable when trying to understand rather than trying to explain (Andersen, 1998). Qualitative research and methods are better when it is not decided in advance what kinds of answers one are looking for (Denscombe, 2009).

The primary question in this research is to find out the main drivers or factors that affect women's career advancement to leadership levels in academia in Sweden compared to the US. This research will also cover the sub-queries such as how gender inequality, family, networking, past experience and qualities would make a difference in career advancement for women in Sweden and the US. To be able to answer the questions as good as possible, qualitative methods are used.

This method will be backed up with secondary data such as scientific articles, literature and prior research in this specific area. Statistics of women leadership in the different countries and comparison of progress over the years will also be used. This is to know what there is to investigate and what theories already exist. In addition to this, several events and meetings were attended in the US in order to get a greater comprehension about how women are seen in leading positions in the US. This is not used in our empirical study; the events, meetings and

discussions were used to increase our understanding of why the American women we interviewed answered in certain ways. Since both the authors are from Sweden and unfamiliar with the US compared to Sweden, the events and observations help. These methods are also qualitative.

2.2. Qualitative method

Why quantitative methods have not been used in the study is because it is hard to get enough answers to make a measurable analysis with the current time limitation and complexity of the research problem (Jacobsen, 2002). Despite this, the goal of the study is not to find general patterns as the quantitative method would have presented. The goal is rather for this study to result in giving a richer comprehension of the phenomena which is why qualitative methods are more suitable anyway (Jacobsen, 2002; Andersen, 1998).

Our main qualitative tool is primary data such as deeper interviews, with open question where the subject will be able to evaluate the answers freely. Why this qualitative approach has been chosen is that through interviews one can see the leaders' perspective on leadership. One can also, in depth, discuss their perception of what they think can be the reasons for why, if there is a difference, women advance differently in Sweden compared to the US. This is important because you can see where the theory and empirical data match each other. The purpose of the interviews is to measure the credibility of the concept meaning to make the theoretical concepts empirically trustworthy and stable (Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul, 2011; Esiasson et al, 2007).

The questions we wanted to find answers to were:

- What are the different barriers women in leadership positions in the academic world encounter when advancing in Sweden and the US?
- How high is the importance of and different ways of networking, necessity of past experience, primary obstacles and other qualities or factors for career advancement in Sweden and the US?
- What stimulates and inspires a woman in Sweden versus a woman in the US to make career advancements to leading positions in academia?

The only good way to answer these is with deep interviews because the research questions are not clear questions that you can answer with yes or no. These questions require rich information that can only be retrieved by informal and deep interviews where the participants feel comfortable enough to share this information and have time to think through their answers.

If we would have done, for example, surveys, the answers would have been limited and the participants would not have been able to speak freely about past experiences and other things that come to their minds. Also, we wanted to have room for other factors to appear that we did not think of in advance of the interviews. This would also not have been possible if we would not have had deep interviews. An example is that if we would not have had deep and informal interviews, we would not have discovered that all participants agreed on that culture is the reason why many women in the United States still have an old-fashioned view of women in the workforce. The cultural factor was a result from many and long discussions with the participants. We got our questions answered due to our choice of method and therefore, the qualitative method that we chose was representative to answer our research questions.

The majority of the interviews were in person in order to increase the credibility of our study, since it is easier for the participants to speak, to share emotions and reveal sensitive subjects when interviewing them in real life (Wärneryd, 1990). This means that the research in this study takes place both in Sweden and in the US. At the same time as it is good to have personal interviews, the participants are analyzing the interviewer back which forces the interviewer to be very careful in order not to influence the participant to answer in a certain way (Jacobsen, 2002; Wärneryd, 1990). Some were over the phone which makes the interviewee more relaxed because they are not viewed but at the same time, they cannot see the facial expression of the interviewer. This can make them answer very restricted due to the fact that they cannot see signals and if what they are saying is acceptable or making sense (Denscombe, 2009; Dalen, 2008). The interviews were without time limit and they lasted between 30-60 minutes. To facilitate the collection of the empirical material, both recordings and notes were taken. We asked before each interview if we were allowed to record them and six out of seven accepted this. In order not to only jeopardize the credibility and trustworthiness, but also to maintain the participants' integrities, we chose not to write the names of the participants.

2.3. Selection

Mainly, women in leading positions in academia in Sweden and the US are objects for our qualitative research because this is the focus of the study. We want to investigate higher levels of leadership mainly in academia but also try to see connections between academia and the business world. The interviewees in this study work within the academia but most of them also have previous experience from the business world.

The selection of which universities we decided to choose our participants from had natural reasons. We had connections at three universities in Pittsburgh, USA and two universities in different parts of Sweden and we chose to use all connections. We tried to have a broader selection of represented universities in this study but it is hard to get hard-working women in leading position in academia to agree to personal interviews. The participants were still from different positions in the universities and the range was broad enough to make a qualitative study. Since we selected the participants mainly because of availability and through our networks, this kind of selection is a so called convenience selection (Denscombe, 2009). It is still a very strong convenience selection due to the high relevancy between the participants and our purpose.

The selection of participant was limited to women with some kind of leading position in the academia, with no other real limitation. It was not required, but preferred, that they had some kind of previous experience in the business world and the majority of the participants fulfilled this desire. The majority of the participants also had some kind of degree in business administration. Four employees in USA and three employees in Sweden who has some sort of leadership positions in the academic world were interviewed; all women. Six of the interviewees have been interviewed in person and one through the phone. The desired selection was four interviews in each country but the three interviews first made in Sweden were enough due to a few reasons. Firstly, both authors are very familiar with the Swedish culture; own experiences, even if few, increased the understanding. Second reason was that after looking through the three first interviews in Sweden, it was clear that the answers were very similar to each other. Final reason was that the time gained from not doing a fourth interview was more worth than hoping that the fourth interview would provide this study with much richer contents than it already had from the three first.

Through both of the interviewing methods used, the differences between women's career advancement and reaching leading positions in academia in Sweden and the US have been explored. All the interviewees will remain anonymous. These will be named:

- Swedish 1 – Program Director (small university)
- Swedish 2 – Prorector (deputy to rector) (small university)
- Swedish 3 – Vice president and prorector (deputy to rector) (large university)
- American 1 – Dean (large university)
- American 2 – Director of center for women's entrepreneurship (large university)
- American 3 – Associate director of center for women's entrepreneurship (large university)

- American 4 – Senior business advisor and program director (large university)

2.4. Interview guide

The way the template for the interview questions was made was simple. We tried to write questions that answer our research questions and objectives. The questions were not asked in that exact order or in that exact way; we only used these questions as key words in order to not stray away from the subject. Each interview was different from the other interviews and the questions were open or so called unstructured, in-depth interviews (Denscombe, 2009).

The areas that the questions evolve from are (1) Balancing family and work, (2) Sex discrimination, (3) Working conditions and promotions and (4) Networking and mentorship (see appendix 1).

2.5. Definitions and limitations

The definition of leadership in this study will be different kinds of high posts in academia such as for example department chairs, deans and program directors. It is hard to only study and interview people in top level leadership levels in the academic world. Even though this study is mainly focused on top leadership position, the research will be made on lower levels of leadership within the academia also because we want to find out what the reasons are for women to make or not to make career advancements to higher leadership levels within the academia. Therefore, it is important to have participants from different leadership levels in academia; both from lower levels as well as higher levels.

The comparison between women in leading positions in academia in Sweden and US will be difficult; it is hard to measure the importance of gender equality and diversity in big countries such as the US, because of regional differences. Some states might bring down the number of other states when you look at a national average, due to the non-acceptance of gender diversity in some states (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009).

We chose to research about four major areas mentioned before; (1) Balancing family and work, (2) Sex discrimination, (3) Working conditions and promotions and (4) Networking and mentorship. This was chosen because the relevant theories found mainly discussed these factors. We will discuss a fifth factor, (5) Culture, but this was not found in the theories and was discovered during the collection of empirical material and was not a pre-determined factor.

No relevant previous research was found about the culture of gender equality in academia in Sweden or in the US which is another reason for why this will only be presented in the results and not in the theoretical framework.

Since the method chosen is qualitative and the main approach is inductive or abductive, this study will not be able to be used to generalize women in leading positions in academia in Sweden and in the US. This study aims to create an understanding of the differences between why women advance in academia in the two countries and not to create or confirm a generalization.

2.6. Credibility

Since all the participants in the study are currently appointed to some kind of high position within academia, they all hold knowledge within the area. Therefore, one can conclude that their answers are Credible. That most of them have been in academia for a longer time and at the same time have previous experience from the business world, it increases the credibility even more.

As said, we chose to keep the participants anonymous. This increases the credibility and trustworthiness because the participants can be more relaxed and feel safe that the information they give is not going to be connected to them. This leads to more honest and open answers (Dalen, 2008). At the same time, the downside can be that since they know they do not have to stand for what they say, they can beautify their answers as much as they want to. We still believe the material is more trustworthy this way because the participants are more comfortable in sharing sensitive experiences from their past which was one of the main goals of the interviews. Additionally, several events and meetings with relevant participants in academia were attended in the purpose of observation. This increases the credibility (Denscombe, 2009).

3. Theoretical Framework

In order to be able to analyze the differing factors and drivers for women's career advancements in academia in Sweden and in the US, a number of relevant previous studies have been chosen to help us understand the current situation about female leadership in academia in both countries. Some of the earlier studies and reports chosen in this study explain the different reasons for the lack of women in leading positions in general. There are not many previous studies that explain and compare the female underrepresentation in academia specifically in Sweden and in the US. The ones that do exist and can help to create a greater comprehension for female underrepresentation in academia will be presented in this chapter.

3.1. Why are women underrepresented in leading positions?

Many studies have resulted in different explanations for the lack of women in leading positions. For example, Burk and Mattis (2005) claim that research has shown that women usually take less credit for positive outcomes and do not take every possibility to advance as men do. Another explanation is that many women leaders, especially senior, do not focus on gender equality or see this issue as an important thing. They would rather take in the typical male role where focus is put more on e.g. shareholder value rather than focusing on relations and work environment (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009).

Other researchers discuss that even though the number of women leaders is rising, women are most likely to be given risky and precarious leadership positions. Research shows that companies that appointed women to their boards have had bad performance lately compared to those who hired men (Haslam & Ryan, 2005). There is a possibility that companies purposely hire women on the boards when they are performing poorly, due to the obvious need of change. Women are therefore appointed leadership positions different from those that men are appointed to. This theory is backed up by the evidence that companies make organizational changes more likely when they are performing badly than when they are stable (Haslam & Ryan, 2005). This brings out the fact that women who do eventually get pass the obstacles of career advancement still get more to struggle with than men, even after being given leadership positions.

Another study points out different reasons for why women do not easily reach the top leading positions such as for example the lack of experience for senior positions, poor career opportunities and gender-based stereotypes. Also, women leadership styles can be different from the leadership styles required at the top level. There is a possibility that talented business women choose entrepreneurial careers instead of making career advancements in corporations (Oakley,2000).

3.2. Studies about female underrepresentation in academia

Both in Sweden and in the US, women represent over 50% of the students in universities (Forbes, 2012; HSV, 2012). Therefore this sector should be more gender equal among the faculty too one would think. Despite this and as this study already revealed, women are underrepresented. Researchers explain this lack of women in leading positions in academia by giving different reasons.

3.2.1. Balancing family and work

A common issue being brought up mostly in American articles is that for women in academia, one of the biggest conflicts is the one between making a career or career advancement and having children/family at the same time. Women in academia are twice as likely as men in academia to be single. It is less likely for women to make career advancement after they have children while men will continue to grow in their careers after marriage and having children (Dominici et al., 2009; Lee, 2011). It is not as stressful for a man to have both a family and a career as it is for a woman. A woman usually cannot escape the responsibilities of child care and household demands (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2004).

Leading positions are less attractive to women than to men because it is a lot of responsibility and leaders must be available for work at any time. That is why most leaders depend on the spouse who can shoulder with domestic responsibilities. Most male leaders have spouses who do not work outside of the home. Since leaders have lots of responsibilities and expectations on them, it would make it less attractive for women because they cannot leave their families and other obligations for works as much as men can (Dominici et al., 2009).

The academia is more flexible than the business world (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2004). It may seem that balancing family and work with an academic career is easier than it is with a career in the business world due to the flexible schedule. Still, there are some difficulties such as never

ending work and the tight competition in the academic world, which makes it harder for women to find a balance between their career and their families (Bassett, 2005).

Not only are all these factors barriers for women's career advancements, J M Hoobler et al. (2011) explains a phenomenon they call the family-work conflict bias, where a manager automatically views a woman, just for being a woman, in a way that makes him concerned that her family will interfere with her work, regardless of her marital/family status. Even if women do overcome all the barriers mentioned earlier, just being a woman will still be a barrier because of the way she is viewed in.

3.2.2. Sex discrimination

Hanna Lönnerskog Nilsson, from the Council for Gender Equality in Higher Education at Umeå University in Sweden, talks about how women in the academic world get diminished and ignored (SULF, 2012). She points out that the fact that sex matters had come as a surprise to many of the women as they began their academic path. A recurring theme is the experience of being ridiculed, diminished and ignored. There are greater demands put on women compared to men (SULF, 2012). Many women claim that they are required to indicate better qualifications than men or be twice as good as men, to reach the same positions (Schlyter, 2004). They feel disadvantaged in terms of salary, resources, conditions and employment (SULF, 2012; Dominici et al., 2009).

Kloot (2004) has studied women leaders in academia mainly in Australia. He has identified four different reasons why women are not well represented in leadership which can be applied in most of the developed countries around the world. The first explanation is that women lack the qualifications and career experience needed for senior positions, but the author adds that this explanation is not sustainable and many studies has proved this theory wrong. A second explanation is institutional discrimination, where women are given lower salaries, smaller laboratories and are being excluded from internal labor markets. The third explanation is that women are less ambitious than men, but the evidence for this explanation is contradictory. The fourth explanation is that men and women are not perceived the same even if their leadership is the same, meaning that what women do is not seen as leadership, since managerial characteristics are often assigned to men. Kloot (2004) says that women can't win since if they adopt male-stereotypical behavior they are criticized adopting masculine models and if they don't they are being overtly feminine.

A study by Dryler (2006), shows that more men than women get higher academic jobs. This study is reliable since it follows up the same men and women through their respective careers. The study is based on data sets of graduated students from the university in 1995-1997, and those who got their PhD between 1980 and 1991. The report shows that more male PhD graduates become professors compared to female (Dryler, 2006).

3.2.3. Working conditions and promotions

In 2002, Johns Hopkins University provost Steven Knapp and president William Brody established the University Committee on the Status of Women to find out the root causes for underrepresentation of women in leading position in academia (Dominici et al., 2009). The participants of the study thought that the path to leadership is slower and often blocked for women. Administrative position in academia is a hierarchy. Academic administrator move up in this hierarchy and reach leading position but since there are less women recruited in administrative position, less women are able to progress and reach top level leadership. Women are more engaged in directing academic programs or leading research centers that they start which they often fund themselves. Participants also felt that women are underrepresented in department chairs and that it is vital to have them in department chairs (Dominici et al., 2009).

A study from 2005 shows that there is both a vertical and a horizontal gender segregation in the academic world. The author describes the vertical gender balance as a pyramid, the higher up you get on this pyramid, the fewer the women take place. Horizontal gender segregation means that in the academic world, one can identify male and female disciplines but there is still a clear female and male dominance in many areas (Husu, 2005).

If more women held department chairs and academic deans, it can be more effective in making a change by promoting new approaches to recruitment and being equitable when it comes to promotion and tenure (Dominici et al., 2009). Despite this, women are even less represented among department chairs and academic deans than among full professors which raise the question about the main causes of gender equity in leading position in academia (Dominici et al., 2009).

Women have traditionally, which is not accurate anymore, less time invested in education and experience compared to their male counterparts and this affects the women's pay and ability to grow within the organization by being promoted.. Women also have higher demands on them to achieve board positions compared to men (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009). This means that

it is more likely for a female director to have a more advanced degree and previous experience than a male director.

3.2.4. Networking and mentorship

Networking is vital for the efficiency and success of academic women. It has also been shown that mentoring and networking relationships increases the retention of academic women and it is more likely that women stay and choose a career within academia if they have built relationships through networking and mentoring (Quinlan, 1999).

A Swedish study made by Knutsson from 2006 talks about how differences in women's networks compared to men's are one of the main reasons for women's underrepresentation at leading positions within academia. Another reason that Knutsson stresses is the fact that mentoring and role models are harder for women to find compared to men, due to the fact that many women would rather have female mentors and these are harder to find in higher leadership positions in academia. Women need more supportive and encouraging environments than they have today (Knutsson, 2006).

Another reason is that female leaders are not as well recognized as men and also they are not as rewarded as men. *Women are more often excluded from the informal network of intellectual leadership than men* (Dominici et al., 2009). Since the male members of the faculty build collegial relationships with men easier than they do with women, women that are new to the faculty have to fight on their own since most of the members in the faculty are men (Busch-Vishniac et al., 2008).

Studies have shown that there is higher retention of academic women with mentoring relationships than those without. Women with mentoring relationships also receive more grant income and higher level of promotion. By increasing mentoring and networking among academic women, a decrease in underrepresentation of women in senior positions can be seen (Gardiner et al., 2007).

3.3. Summary of relevant theories

In this chapter, different factors and drivers that affect women's career advancement in academia were examined, with the help of different studies done in this field. Studies show that Sweden is in a higher place compared to the US when it comes to gender equality. 43% of the presidents of universities in Sweden are women while it is only 23% female presidents of

universities in the US. This shows that studies chosen are relevant to each other and the statistical study backs up the first mention theory. When it comes to effectiveness of women in leading positions in the workplace, different studies show that women are more effective than men in all areas. Women are rated higher by both men and women leaders than men in all positions, even though it is preferred by workers to have a male supervisor rather than a female one. According to several studies, there are many reasons that cause the underrepresentation of women in leading positions. Women take less credit for positive outcome than men and they do not take advantage of every possible opportunity to advance compared to men. Other factors such as lack of experience and poor career opportunities can also lead to female underrepresentation at the top level. This underrepresentation is seen in the academic world as well.

Not all the studies in the theoretical framework were found in the responds from the interviews and some were only vaguely found. Four issues or factors why women are underrepresented in the academic world have been found in the empirical study. The following studies have been taken out of the theoretical framework due to the high relevancy to the results and will be compared in the next chapter with the results from the empirical study. The factors/issues are:

- First issue is balancing family and work. Studies show that gaining balance between family and work is one of the issues that women in academia face. Women are twice as likely as men to be single in the academic world. This issue makes it less attractive for women to pursue high leading positions since it is a lot of responsibilities at work and they have to take care of their family at the same time. Even though it may seem that it is easier for women to balance family and work in the academic world due to the flexible schedule, the never ending work and the tight competition make it tough for women to find balance between taking care of the family and make career advancement.
- The second issue that women in academia face is sex discrimination. Research shows that women get diminished and ignored in academic world. They feel disadvantaged in terms of salary, resources, conditions and employment. To be able to reach the same position, women should have better qualifications than men.
- The third issue is working conditions and promotions. Studies show that the path to leadership is slower and sometimes blocked for women. The path to leading positions in academia is hierarchical and since there are not so many women in the bottom of this

hierarchy, such as in administrative positions, the number of women that can advance and reach the top level leadership is very low.

- The fourth factor examined in this study is the importance of networking and mentorship for women in the academic world. Research shows that there is higher retention for academic women that are mentored. It is more likely for women to build a career or advance in academia if they have a strong network. One of the reasons why women are underrepresented in academia is that it is harder for women to find mentors or role models compared to men. It is harder for women to find mentors since they tend to have female mentors, which are hard to find in higher positions within academia.

4. Analysis

4.1. Results of empirical study

The empirical study is primarily based on interviews. There were around twenty pre-determined questions in all interviews but since the desire was for the interviewees to speak freely and participate in open interviews, the questions were not exactly the same throughout all interviews. The questions in appendix 1 were only used as a template for the interviews/discussions. All the answers from the interviews still covered the same area. In this chapter we will present the results from the interviews and connect them to the studies in the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter that are relevant to the responds from the interviews.

4.1.1. Balancing family and work

We had four questions that were relevant to the subject of raising children. In Sweden, the opinion was split amongst the interviewees but in the US, the majority felt the same way about raising children. When we asked the question whether they consider it being easier to develop and make career advancements if they do not have children, the majority of the women in the US had the same answer. Children do slow their careers down a lot and it is big choice to make if you want children if your primary goal is to be some kind of a leader. Both the Assistance Director and Dean of the university in the US said that they chose not to have children. They said that they had other reasons too but that the career was a great part of their decision. At the same time, American 3, the Assistance Director, said that “You get discriminated as a woman if you do not have children, as if you have to work harder than those who do have children”.

According to the interviewees in Sweden, having children might have slowed their careers down a little, but not enough to stop them from reaching their goals. Swedish 2 was the only one in Sweden who felt that having children stopped her from reaching her goals earlier but she still says that she is in the position she wants to be today. We asked Swedish 2 what she feels about the fact that 50% of Swedish PhD holders are women while only 20% of professors are female (MDH, 2011; Catalyst, 2012; SULF, 2010). She said it is because “children and family require women to take greater responsibilities and the work load of a professor is too demanding for a woman”. Swedish 3 do not have children but she thinks that it would not have affected her career at all if she would have chosen to have children. She believes that it is

possible in Sweden to balance family and work. Swedish 1 said that having children have not affected her career at all and that she had never felt that she could have done something else if it was not for the children. Their goals are still reachable. None of the interviewees in the US said that. American 1 said “I don’t know how they do it. I cannot imagine doing this and trying to raise any children at the same time”.

A research for AAUP, American Association of University Professors, from 2006, explains how it has been hard for women in the US to have a balanced life where they can make career advancements and at the same time juggling family responsibilities. They discuss how the issue has become more important in the past years and how the association has been trying to increase the gender equity when it comes to appointments and salary within the academia (AAUP, 2006). There were not many specifically similar articles from Sweden.

The women who did have children in the US said that they had to turn down some offers and not make all the career advancement that they could have made in order to have a balanced life. People in leading positions are required to travel for work more than others according to all the American interviewees. American 2, who has two children, said that she would definitely be at another place if it was not for the children and that she only is able to be a director now because her children are now grown up. American 4 said that her daughter definitely suffered from her being away constantly and that even if she did have to sacrifice family time, she still had to turn down many offers. All the American participants confirmed the theories of O’Laughlin and Bischoff (2004) and Lee (2011) about it being less likely for women to have a family and make career advancements at the same time.

4.1.2. Sex discrimination

Three questions were asked about differences between men and women in leading positions. The university in the US, where the majority of the research in the US in this study was made, has only mixed gender students on master’s level; all bachelor students are female. Therefore, the academic leaders that were interviewed claim that they probably have not encountered as many obstacles as academic leaders at mixed gender schools. Meanwhile, most of the interviewees had previous experience from mixed gender workplaces. All the interviewees in the US remember at least one point in their lives where they did not get a position when competing with a male counterpart, even though the qualifications was similar. At the same time, most of the interviewees in the US looked at this issue very mildly and American 4 was the only one that encountered this kind of discrimination more than once and saw it as big of an

issue as found in the literature. Dominici et al. (2009) and SULF (2012) claim that female leaders are not as well recognized as men and also that they are not as rewarded as men. Dominici et al. (2009) say that female leaders appear to be less respected by their colleagues because they do not have an assigned leadership position. Women are more often excluded from the informal network of intellectual leadership than men (Dominici et al., 2009). When asking the question “What differences have you experienced when it comes to treating men and women differently in the workplace?”, both in Sweden and the US, none of them had really felt big differences as the ones in previous studies presented in the theoretical framework. One of the reasons why the women that were interviewed in the US had not experienced this is because of it being a female university and that most of the faculty are women. The theory from SULF (2012) about women being ignored and diminished does not apply in our study when it comes to the interviewees’ current positions. Despite this, American 4 said that she quit her job at an organization once because they promoted an unqualified man instead of her just because of her being a woman. This was not in the academia. American 4 also pointed out at several times during the interview that women need to take more space and expose themselves in order to reach the same positions as men do. She said that women are at least as effective as men are, they just do not dare to show it. According to the studies from Zenger et al. (2012), women are viewed as more effective already.

American 2 thinks that it is easier for women to advance in academia than in the business world. She elaborates her answer with pointing out that the possibility of facing sex discrimination is higher in business world than academic world; for example that they in the business world might promote men over women just because they are men and not because they are more suitable for the position.

Even though Swedish 1 did notice that there always were more men surrounding her when it came to leading positions, she has not felt that she was treated differently because of her being a woman. Swedish 2, the prorector, said she did not feel any of this and have not noticed a difference in the way she was treated compared to men. She in fact said that she believes that when she reached her current position it was due to her being a woman and that even if there were men competing for the position, they all knew that a woman were going to get the position. At the same time, she thinks that this advantage was because the rector was male and they wanted to even out the top level faculty between genders. Swedish 3 said that she chose not to put energy on whether her being a woman will affect her career and she said that because of that attitude, she has not noticed any differences. Swedish 3 only mentioned advantages. She

said that women have many advantages for being women in academia and they are not smart if they do not take advantage of this. The theories in the theoretical framework from for example Schlyter (2004), Dominici (2009) and SULF (2012) that claim that women are treated differently in terms of salary, promotions, treatments and other, are not seen in the Swedish interviews.

4.1.3. Working conditions

When we asked about the salary, all the interviewees in both countries were satisfied. The most interesting part was that all the women in the US that were interviewed claimed that their salary was negotiated. They specifically pointed out that negotiations about salary are really important for a woman in the US. This was never mentioned by the interviewees in Sweden. Busch-Vishniac et al. (2008) claim that, amongst other factors, lower salary is one of the reasons for female underrepresentation in academia. This was never found in any of the interviews of the two countries. Kloot (2004) also says this as one of his four reasons for female underrepresentation in leading positions in academia. Kloot (2004) says that women receive lower salaries than men but when we asked the interviewees if they think or know that their male colleagues receive higher salary, they did not know and did not think so. Swedish 3 was the only one pointing out that she would probably have a higher salary for corresponding work in the business world but that her love for academia is greater than desire for money. Still, none of the participants mentioned nor confirmed gender differences in salaries.

Career advancement, something that all researchers in our theoretical framework claimed, is a slower process for women than men in leadership. The answers received by the female leaders were of different characteristics. Some said that they have never felt that being a woman has stopped them from advancing and some had specific past events about opportunities that they would have gotten if they were men. American 3 thinks that women can faster advance and have a higher chance to reach the top leading positions in academia due to more opportunities and better work environment. She also says that women have greater opportunities to be exposed and seen for their achievements in academia than they do in the business world. American 2 responds similarly to the question about in what sector she perceives career advancements to be easier and adds that “women get more credit for what they do in academia compared to their achievements in the corporate world”. A similar answer was given by Swedish 3.

Both Swedish 1 and Swedish 2 think that it is easier for women to advance in academia compared to the business world and that there are more opportunities for women in academia to advance. Swedish 1 also says that there is more freedom in academia. She has a more flexible work situation and can choose a way of doing the job that suits her best in academia compared to the business world where one has to follow orders and do things a certain way. Swedish 1 continues with saying that “for example if I do not have a meeting or a class to teach someday, I can work from home”. Bassett (2005) says that even though it is a good thing that the schedules are flexible, as Swedish 1 mentioned, difficulties such as never ending work to take home and the tight competition in the academic world still makes the academic career choice hard. This brings us to the next very big reason for why academia is pursued as an easier career choice for the participants; flexibility.

We asked the question whether the interviewees thought that there is a difference in being a leader in academia compared to being a leader in the business world. All participants in both countries pointed out the flexibility very clearly. Swedish 3 even mentioned the flexibility in academia as a fact and not a reflection. To work in academia is more flexible than working in the business world (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2004). All interviewees in both countries agreed. Those who did not have previous experience within the business world either chose it away because of the fact that they knew their life would be more balanced due to the flexibility, or because they had passion for working within academia. Those without previous experience in the business world all assumed that there is more flexibility in academia.

4.1.4. Networking and mentorship

All the interviewees in the US and in Sweden said that networking has been necessary to get them to the position they are at today, whether it was through networking they got their current position or not. In Sweden, none of the interviewees thought that networking is more important for women than for men but in the US, three out of four thought that networking is more important for women. American 1 says:

Networking is very important in this position and especially for a woman. Here in Pittsburgh, I am on the board of two non-profit organizations and that is a way for me to meet new people and make my network stronger.

American 4 was the only one that felt that the necessity of networking is as important for both men and women. American 3 had previous experience from working in Europe and said that she thinks it is a lot more important to network in the US than in Europe. American 2 says that

she works a lot with academic women, helping those who have an interest in entrepreneurship and networking/mentoring is an important part of what she tries to teach and expose these women to. She thinks it is vital for success. Networking is vital for the efficiency and success of academic women (Quinlan, 1999). By increasing mentoring and networking among academic women, a decrease in underrepresentation of women in senior positions can be seen (Gardiner et al., 2007). Both Swedish 2 and American 2 confirm these theories. Swedish 2 points out that in her position as prorector, she has to be somewhere and attend events constantly. She says that not only is it necessary due to her position but also that it is in this way she expands her networks and receive new opportunities.

All the respondents have had some kind of mentor at some point during their careers and they all answered shortly and directly that it is of great help to have mentors. Elaborations about this were never made; it was more of an obvious thing for all of them. All the studies about mentorship in the theoretical framework were confirmed.

4.1.5. Culture

When interviewing the women in the US, we found a factor which we did not plan on including in our pre-determined factors. All interviewees in the US mentioned at some point that the different factors such as having children, networking, and even just being a woman in general, that make women's career advancement harder in the US compared to Sweden, come down to one major reason; cultural differences between the countries. They all pointed out that gender inequality is well implemented in the American culture which is the reason to why it is harder for women to advance in the US. All the participants in the US were well aware about the higher gender equality in Sweden and in Europe. American 3, who is originally from Ireland, says that "the biggest obstacles I have ever encountered in the US are the cultural ones".

Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions is greatly used in leadership theories and studies. Hofstede's theory describes how the cultures of different nations affect values and behaviors of the members of the nations (Deresky, 2010). Although Hofstede's theory (2013) only measures factors of cultures on national level and not on individual level, his analysis can still explain why there is a difference in the career advancement of women in Sweden compared to the US. According to Hofstede's theory, individuality is higher in the US than in Sweden (Geert-Hofstede, 2013). American 2 explained her thoughts about cultural differences by saying:

Our culture was set up that women just did not have leadership positions and did not ask for it either; it was not set up that way originally. It seems that things

have been much more equal in Europe for a long time. Women are not given leadership positions in the US, we have to take them. I don't think women in the US get as much credit for initiatives as women do in Europe.

In some way, American 2 confirms Hofstede's theory about higher individuality, since she thinks that individual initiatives are not as awarded in the US as in Sweden. Since this factor was discovered in the US, the subject was not central in the Swedish interviews. Therefore, no real statements about cultural differences were found in the Swedish interviews.

4.2. Interpretation of results from the empirical study

4.2.1. Balancing family and work

One of the most major issues and reasons for why women are underrepresented in leading positions in academia in the US that was found in this study is the trouble of balancing work without neglecting the family. This issue is an international one, due to the tradition of a woman raising her children while the man is out working. It is well implemented in most of the cultures; in some more than others. The issue of balancing family and work was found for females in Sweden too and might be the biggest issue found in this study but only because female leaders in Sweden did not show that they have a lot of issues at all compared to the female leaders in the US. Comparing how big the issue is for the women we interviewed in Sweden versus the women we interviewed in the US, it seems bigger for the women in the US. When looking at the answers from the American interviews, one can see that women in the US, if they want to reach their full potential, have to make a choice; career or children. Both the Assistance Director and Dean of the university in the US said that they chose not to have children. They said that they had other reasons too but that the career was a great part of their decision. Not having children is also viewed on negatively according to two of the American participants. This shows that a woman in the US still is seen in a traditional manner; she should have children.

This study and analysis does not suggest that the problem does not exist for women in Sweden; it does. The problem will always haunt women due to the natural reason that only women can have children inside of them. Still, the difference between the situation for women in Sweden and women in the US is that in Sweden, they can still choose to have both a family and make a career, just that they have to struggle a little more. One explanation for this can be that maternity leave is a natural thing in Sweden but it seems, according to the interviewees in the US, that it is not self-evident to leave work to have children, especially not in leading positions. If interpreting all the answers from the American participants, it shows that the view of women having both children and having high leading positions is engraved with a traditional outlook in the American system; women shall not raise children and do a “man’s job”. This can be the reason why women are less appointed to high positions than men are in academia the US. The employer might be scared that if he hires a woman she might leave for maternity leave and the employer do not want to risk having to find someone new for the job soon again. It can also be that the employer has the traditional view of a woman being at home too. In Sweden, this view of a woman and being scared that the woman will leave to raise children has been fading away in the last years since men are equally allowed to have paternity leave. Therefore, in Sweden it

does not seem to matter as much as it does in the US whether the employee is a man or a woman.

In this study it was found when doing research that there are a lot more previous research about balancing family and career in the US than there is about Sweden. This can be interpreted in a way that the study also showed; it is not as big of an issue for Swedish women as it is for American women.

4.2.2. Sex discrimination

The differences between the results from the respondents in Sweden and in the US when it comes to treating men and women differently that were found were not many.

None of the Swedish participants pointed out specifically that they had been discriminated for being women; not as co-workers or leaders and not when getting appointed positions or making career advancements. This shows that none of the previous studies presented in the theoretical framework from Sweden could be proven in our study. None of them felt strongly diminished or less rewarded for being women.

When Swedish 2 talked about that she did not recall any moment where she has ever been discriminated, she mentioned that women instead had an advantage when it came to the appointment of her current position. Even though they in Sweden want to even out the genders in their faculty, the only reason the women had an advantage to get the prorektor spot was because the rector was male. Maybe it was because they just want it to look like they want to have it gender equal. Despite this, it cannot be stated that it is so because if the rector was to be female, men might also have had an advantage to that same spot. If you connect Swedish 2's statements with Swedish 3's, the results show that women in leading positions in academia in Sweden have more advantages than disadvantages. This can still not be made a generalization; it might be other factors that make them both feel the same way.

None of the American participants felt that they have been discriminated because of their gender in their current positions. Although, since the majority of the American participants work in a female university, it can make it a lot easier for them compared to those who work in a mixed gender workplace. However, all of the participants have experienced gender discrimination at some point in their past careers while working at a mixed gender workplace. This shows that although it might be less sex discrimination in a workplace with higher number

of female employees, the gender discrimination issue still exists today and makes it harder for women to advance in their careers. All participants said that they have never felt that their colleagues treat them differently or respect them less because of their gender. American 4 thinks that women should dare more and they have to expose themselves in order to advance, which means that women should take more credit for their accomplishments and take every possible opportunity to show their talent. This way, they can reach the positions they really deserve. American 4 once quit a job because she thought that they promoted an unqualified man over her and did not promote her because of her gender. One can see how gender discrimination can make women feel unappreciated and diminished, which can make them even give up their careers.

4.2.3. Working conditions

When it comes to comparing the working conditions in the two countries, we realized that all the participant were satisfied with their salaries. The only difference found was that all the American participants mentioned that negotiation of the salary is an important factor in the US. This shows that they are not completely satisfied with the initial salary offered by the employers. This factor was not mentioned among Swedish participants, which either shows that the initiative salary offered by employers is more proper in Sweden or maybe negotiations are improper in Sweden. One thing is clear; negotiations are more implemented in the American culture than in the Swedish culture.

After all the interviews, the results showed that it is easier for women to advance in the academic world than in the business world due to many reasons. More flexible schedules in the academic world as a factor was pointed out by all of them. This flexibility has helped them both to advance and succeed as leaders. Also, that there are more opportunities for women to advance in the academic world was something the majority of all participants agreed on. They get more credit for their accomplishments in academia then they may get if they work within the business world.

The results of this factor were that promotions were best achieved through hard work and next factor; networking.

4.2.4. Networking and mentorship

In the US, it seemed more important with networking than in Sweden when comparing the answers from the women in both countries. At the same time, none of the Swedish respondents

would have been in their current positions if it was not for their networks. It seems important in different ways.

Another factor that might influence women's career advancement is that the US seems to be more globally concerned whilst Sweden is more nationally focused. An example is that when hiring a woman into a leadership position in the US, they think about how she will be able to handle global networking and whether she will be able to be seen as powerful as a man would be seen when having international interactions, concerning the cultural differences and views of a woman as leader. In Sweden, it seems that more focus lies on equality, national sustainability and the public's interest. All interviewees in the US said that having a leading position includes a lot of travelling and being in male-dominant situations. This was not found amongst any of the interviewees in Sweden.

The best interpretation of the responds that can be made about networking is that it is important, regardless of in what country you are. That none of the participants would have been in their current positions if it was not for their networks says it all.

4.2.5. Culture

Individual initiatives are more expected of a woman in the US than of a woman in Sweden according to Hofstede's theory (2013) and this is also the common opinion of the respondents in the US. This can make the Swedish woman seem as a more ambitious woman and a potential leader while a woman doing the same things in the US is only doing what she is supposed to do and does not naturally mean that she should advance or have the right characteristics to be a leader.

The Swedish participants did not mention culture as a difference and when we discussed that we are doing our research in the US as well to compare with Sweden, their reactions were not as the reactions one would expect to get if we were talking about a distant culture. They were all aware that Sweden is more gender equal to some extent but not to that extent where it is seen as a great cultural difference. When discussing the same thing with the American participants, as soon as we mentioned Sweden, they were all aware about the high gender equality and talked about Sweden with admire. One could say that it might not be as known for Swedish people as for American people how low gender equality can be in some sectors in the US compared to Sweden. Again, the cultural factor became central only after starting the

research in the US and was not the first factor that came to mind when having discussions in Sweden before going to the US.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

One of the goals with this study was to discover what differences exists, if any, between women's career advancement to leading positions within the academic world in Sweden compared to those in the US. This was mainly made through a qualitative approach; interviews. The results of the study are trustworthy due to comparison between the results of the study and previous research and theories. The results are also credible due to similar answers in the different countries and again, comparison with previous research.

There are different theories about why women are underrepresented in leading positions overall. Some claim that women are given more risky positions than men and are more likely to fail. Others say that lower salary, appointment at lower rank, slower rate of promotion and lower recognition through awards are reasons for why women are underrepresented. Despite this, many advantages of hiring women to higher positions have been found. These advantages are, amongst other, higher sustainability and higher profitability. Females might simply be underrepresented due to the fact that more men have been qualified for these positions and it is a habit for employers to look for men when hiring. Studies did in fact show that women seem more effective. The interesting thing is that the reason why women are underrepresented in leading positions in academia is less clear than why they are underrepresented in other sectors. This is because, as mentioned earlier, it should be natural that the faculty, on all levels in academia, should be represented by at least 50 percent women. If you look at students as members of universities, the members of universities consist of more than 50% women both in Sweden and in the US. At the same time in both countries, women in leading positions in universities are a lot less than 50%. How come the issue exists in both countries when it is as clear in both Sweden and in the US that women should be more represented, especially in the academic world?

The first thing that impregnated this study was that when analyzing all previous studies and research, everything pointed at Sweden being more gender equal than the US. When it comes to the participants in our study, that is selected women in leading positions in academia in Sweden and in the US, the Swedish women definitely experienced their environments more gender equal than the American participants. Not only did we notice it but the American respondents knew this about their culture and working environments beforehand. That gender equality is not as high in America as one would imagine such a developed country would be

was something all American participants pointed out; it was not a pattern that was exclusively discovered in this study.

What we found that all women had in common, in both countries, is the passion for academia. One of our research questions was that we wanted to answer was if there is a difference in what stimulates and inspires women in academia in Sweden and in the US. We found that everybody was stimulated by teaching, doing research or something else that they only could do in academia. In excess of this, some did it for the flexibility too, but only in addition to their passion for academia. Another factor that stimulated the majority of the women in both the US and in Sweden was that they find it easier to make career advancements in academia compared to the business world. This at the same time that they have the flexibility they feel they would not have in the business world if advancing.

One of the major findings in this study was that they all pointed at culture as the biggest issue for the difference in career advancements in academia. The American participants all said that all factors that differed between the countries that we pointed out were due to the great difference in culture between the countries. This was not one of the pre-determined factors in this study because the countries do not seem to be so different from each other when looking from the outside (if you overlook the difference in size of the countries). They are both developed countries and the original assumption of this study was that the cultures are very similar to each other. Apparently, this view is shared view the majority of the Swedish participants too. When discussing the American culture with the Swedish participants, they did not view America in a negative way when it comes to gender equality. Of course, Swedish people are well aware that Sweden is in the top five highest gender equal countries. Still, they did not really react in ways that told us that they think Sweden was so superior to the US. One can still not make this a generalization because this study is only based on seven interviews. Nevertheless, when discussing the same thing with the American participants, as soon as we mentioned Sweden, they were all aware about the high gender equality and talked about Sweden with admire. This shows that the issue is big enough for all American participants to know about the high gender equality in Sweden. A concluding example about the way some American can look at their own culture is that when attending a meeting, one of the participants of the event explained the American culture like this:

America is a very male-dominant country. We are talking about a country that for not so long ago was racist and held African-American people as slaves but still chose a black president, because he was a man, over a white woman.

Another research question was the importance of different factors and how these influence women's career advancements in the two countries. Networking was one factor this study only was supposed to introduce and examine. This factor became very central in the study and it was something 100% of the participants thought was important. The importance of this factor was revealed to be extremely high. Our question was how high the importance of some factors was and how it affected women's career advancement and to conclude the results and only according to the answers from the participants; women need to struggle more in academia the US compared to Sweden when it comes to balancing family and work; the way women are treated compared to men in academia the US compared to Sweden is not that different; advancements, working conditions and flexibility in academia in the US was very similar to Sweden except that American women seemed to still have more barriers to overcome when advancing compared to the Swedish participants and finally; networking and mentorship seemed a little more important in academia in the US compared to Sweden but it is still necessary in both countries when trying to advance.

There are a lot of things women can do in order to improve the ways they advance in their academic careers; both in Sweden and in the US. One thing that women in desire of advancing in academia need to improve and never stop doing is expanding their networks. Finding mentors, having role models and expanding networks are beneficial in all kinds of ways. All the previous studies and all the participants responds pointed at this as a vital factor in order to improve and break down the barriers women need to overcome today in academia; in both Sweden and in the US.

By answering our first research question, we also sum up the results. *“What are the different barriers for women's career advancements that women in the two countries encounter?”* was the question. All the factors mentioned above are in some ways barriers. For example, networking is harder for women which results in women having a harder time advancing to higher positions due to networking being vital for career advancements according to the participants in our study. The other very important factors are also all barriers that women encounter when advancing such as balancing family and work and the sex discrimination.

Lastly, one thing discussed with the respondents in the US was that women that are trying to reach leading positions in academia need to let go of the thoughts that they are going to be viewed negatively because of them being women. We asked ourselves in the beginning if leaders in the US need to be men for organizations to be effective in general or if women need

to change their ways. This study has already showed that women can be at least as effective and many studies showed that women are needed as a talent pool. This means that women need to change their ways of advancements. They have to stop looking at themselves as women and as a set of qualifications, regardless of gender. As Swedish 3 said - “it is what you do, not who you are”.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1:

Interview questions – template

- 1- Please introduce yourself.
- 2- How did you reach your current position?
- 3- What obstacles have you encountered as a woman in the workforce?
- 4- What differences have you experienced when it comes to treating men and women in a work place?
- 5- What difficulties have you experienced as a woman in a leading position?
- 6- What benefits have you experienced as a woman in a leading position?
- 7- Do your female/male colleagues accept/respect you as a leader?
- 8- As a leader, do you behave like a stereotypical male leader or female leader?
- 9- Compared to men, do you feel that is it easier or harder to reach top leading positions?
- 10- What kind of differences do you believe there is between being a leader in a corporate organization and in academia?
- 11- Can you tell us some concrete events about you past experience that has to do with being a female leader?
- 12- Is your job related to what you have studied in the university?
- 13- How important has networking been for you, in order to reach your current position? How do you look at networking?
- 14- Role model or mentor?
- 15- Do you have children? Has it affected your career? Do you think it is easier to make career advancements if you do not have children?
- 16- Is it easier to be a leader in a corporate organization or in the academic world if you have children?
- 17- Do you want to have a higher position or are you happy where you are now?
- 18- Are you satisfied with your salary?