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## Career in Swedish retail
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# Table of Contents

# Foreword

This report summarizes Career Development in the Retail Sector, a research project funded by The Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council and conducted at the University of Skövde. The project consisted of three parts: the compilation and analysis of existing data on retail careers, a survey conducted among 647 managers and co-workers in the retail sector, and interviews with 24 managers in the retail sector. This report is a translation of the final report in Swedish: Andersson, T., Kazemi, A. & Wickelgren, M. (2016) Karriärvägar i detaljhandeln, Forskningsrapport 2016:3, Handelsrådet, Stockholm.

This research project was extremely exciting and educational. Our curiosity as far as this project was initially sparked by, on the one hand, the rather negative descriptions of the retail sector as a transitory employment sector lacking in both development and career opportunities, and, on the other hand, the positive results we found in earlier studies of personnel management in the retail sector (*Personalledning i detaljhandeln*, Handelns Utvecklingsråd Rapportserie 2012:1). In those studies we learned that both managers and co-workers in retailing expressed high satisfaction with their work, their organisations, and their colleagues. The results of our research project confirm to some extent the image of the retail sector as a transitory employment sector; however, we do not automatically think of this image in negative terms. We prefer to think of the retail sector as an industry in which entry and transfer to other industries and careers are relatively easy. We see the cross-border characteristic of the retail sector as a positive factor in career development. We focused on subjective experiences of careers in retail – and there are important results for the industry to reflect upon when it comes to what is important for managers and co-workers in retail.

Our expectation is that various representatives from the Swedish retail sector will find this report of value in the on-going work of creating workplace environments where people have the opportunity to develop and to make careers. We see the development of retail employees and the development of retail organisations as interconnected and mutually influential. In fact, in the international context the Swedish retail sector is a pioneer in large part because of the uniquely collaborative nature of Swedish work life. Perhaps it is the view of the Swedish co-worker as a responsible and cooperative individual who wants to develop, and can develop, that explains the remarkable competitiveness of the Swedish retail sector.

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# Summary

- A career in retailing is to a large extent a boundaryless career. A career in retail does not limit the individual to a single organisation, to a single role/position, or to a hierarchical rung on the organisational ladder. Both co-workers and managers move quite easily among organisations *within* the same retail area, *between* different retail areas, and *in and out* of the retail sector.

- In the past, the description of retailing as a transitory employment sector has had a negative connotation. Yet this description can also have quite a positive connotation. For example, experience acquired in the retail sector can be very useful in other work sectors. Moreover, people working in retail are generally motivated by job security, a job that is possible to combine to leisure/family, and a job close to home. They are typically much less motivated by traditional career advancement opportunities, the exercise of power over others, and by the desire to make decisions.

- People working in retail have a rather limited interest in becoming managers in part because their major work motivators are not the motivators one usually associates with management career paths.

- Gender is a relatively weak distinguishing variable in terms of retail careers, but there are some statistically significant – yet small – differences in the work characteristics of men and women in retail. For example, women in retail prioritize work-life balance, the proximity of workplace to home, and outside interests more than men in retail. These priorities have a limiting effect on their opportunities to accept managerial positions and to follow traditional, upward career paths.

- There are more women than men working in the retail sector today, but a larger percentage of men in management positions. However, this cannot be explained by differences between the motivations of men and women to become managers or in their attitudes towards their own managerial capabilities. The explanation lies in other, more indirect factors such as the expectations of today's managers.

- Women generally earn less than men in the retail sector. This inequality is especially evident when differences in work responsibilities exist (e.g., specialized areas, sub-branches, management tasks).

- There is some general scepticism among employees in the retail sector as far as the extent to which their employers are willing to commit to their well-being and development. This finding has important practical implications when employees sense a lack of employer commitment to them.

- People outside retail sector generally have a more negative picture of the retail sector than the people within the sector. People in the retail sector are relatively satisfied and think their work is varied and interesting.

- The number of women at the lower management levels (at the store-level) is increasing. Because of this trend, which is expected to continue, in the relatively near future there may be as many female managers as male managers at this level. However, at the upper management levels in retail, there are more than ten men for every woman and no indications of change.

- Job security is the most important career anchor for retail employees in Sweden. This finding has very important practical implications because job security is typically not associated with employment in the retail sector. It is a factor that can be an important consideration for retailers.

# 1 Introduction

Retailing of various kinds in Sweden is a very important industry. In 2013 the retail sector accounted for nearly 600 billion Swedish crowns and employed over 250 000 people. In many ways the future of the Swedish economy depends on the retail sector that represents the largest share of the country's viable and growing service industry. A recent report on European competitiveness pointed to Sweden as a role model in terms of productivity, not only in Europe but also in the world (McKinsey & Co., 2010). Andersson et al. (2011) and Wickelgren et al. (2012) highlighted various positive aspects of the Swedish retail sector such as co-workers' satisfaction with their work and with their managers.

Nevertheless, the retail sector in Sweden faces several challenges. One important challenge is the need to continuously attract, employ, and retain skilled personnel. Swedish store managers and other retail executives have stated that personnel issues such as recruitment and careers are key challenges in the retail sector (Wickelgren et al., 2012). Danilov and Hellgren (2010), for example, have pointed to the hiring problems in the retail sector and have expressed the concern that careers in retailing have not been adequately researched, especially in the Swedish context. In international comparisons, Swedish retailing is quite different than retailing in other countries. Therefore one cannot automatically assume that the findings from international research on retailing are applicable to Swedish retailing. For this reason, much more research on the Swedish retail sector is needed.

A career in the retail sector is a challenge in the sense that the sector is often described as a transitory employment sector (Isaksson & Bellaagh, 1999; Ljunggren Lönnberg, 2006; Danilov & Hellgren, 2010). Store managers and retail trade experts confirm this impression and add that the retail sector has huge challenges with offering co-workers possibilities in the form of guided career development. At the same time, there are many good examples in which store managers and others describe their work activities prior to their current positions in the retail sector. They comment that they are very satisfied with their current work and positions (Wickelgren et al., 2012). Here is a paradox in the industry as far as the difficulties in offering career opportunities to employees and the employees' experiences of both their career and their work. There seems to be a considerable difference between the perception of the objective career (the actual change in position, salary, responsibility, etc.) and the perception of the subjective career that is more about people's attitude towards their work, their development, and their achievements. Clearly more research on the retail sector is needed that takes a broader approach in trying to understand both the objective career and the subjective career, and the relationships between them.

In terms of the objective description of a career in retail, a retail career can take many forms. However, the store manager's role is very central in retailing and involves many career steps. Like most other managerial roles, the store manager role has a long history of male domination. This situation calls attention to the gender dimension of careers in retail. Do men and women have the same opportunities to become store managers or to advance in retail in some other role? The major challenges of these managerial roles combined with the normal demands of modern family life make managerial positions in retailing an issue for discussion when career opportunities for men and women are in focus:

> *What I miss in today's daily food retailing is the daring to think in new ways.*
> *Today store managers' responsibilities are so demanding that it is difficult for*
> *them to combine work with a normal family life. I think that scares many women. I*

*think we need to re-think the content of manager positions in retail to attract female applicants.* [Translated from Swedish]

Lars Östberg, employer representative för Handelsanställdas förbund, on the boards of Axfood and Willys: Handelsnytt (2011-06-27)

Several large retail chains in the grocery industry have actively taken steps to try to increase the numbers of women in the positions of store managers. It is obvious that the issue of opportunities in retailing for women is an important one. However, it is unclear what practical results have been achieved. Therefore in our study we address career issues in the retail sector from the perspective of both women's and men's (perceived) potential career possibilities and limitations. In particular, we look at the role of the store manager as one possible career path for both groups.

The purpose of this study is to describe careers in the retail sector in Sweden in general and in particular to describe these careers in terms of the differences between men and women.

We structure our report as follows. To understand the concept of career, we first need to understand the retail sector as a workplace. We begin, therefore, with a brief description of previous research on the retail workplace, followed by a review of previous research on careers in retail. In both sections, we highlight the gender dimension. Thereafter we present our theoretical framework in which we explain the theoretical starting points for our study of careers in retail. With the presentation of this framework, we highlight the important factors in the theoretical models used and their relationship to each other. In the methods section, we describe the three sub-studies of this research project. The empirical section, which follows, is divided into three main parts. The initial part, which focuses on retail careers in Sweden, uses quantitative data from current reporting. The second part is a comprehensive results section that focuses on the study's survey findings. The third part, which presents some career stories from the retail sector, has a qualitative perspective in its illustrations and expanded discussion of the study's results. The report continues with an analytical section on the sub-studies using the theoretical framework. The report concludes with a summary of the study's main findings, comments on the study's practical implications, and suggestions for further research.

## 2   The retail workplace

To understand the concept of the career in retail it is important to understand the retail workplace that sets (or fails to set) career conditions. The international research on the retail workplace, which is very limited, presents the retail career rather defensively. The focus of this research is primarily on the problems of career in retail.

Retail as an industry is diversified. In a way it is almost impossible to describe it as a *single* sector. Retailing includes small, privately owned stores as well as some of the largest employers in the world. Moreover, there are huge differences in how companies sell their products and services. For example, some organisations require their employees to have complex levels of expertise and extensive knowledge (Gamble, 2006) while others require only very simple and standardized skills (Kirsch et al., 2000). In addition, some organisations offer positions with significant career potential while others offer only dead-end jobs with little or no chance to advance.

The international research on the retail sector focuses mainly on the difficult working conditions experienced by the sector's low-paid and low-skilled workers (e.g., Appelbaum & Schmitt, 2009; Bair & Bernstein, 2006; Ehrenreich, 2001; Kirsch et al., 2000). In general, such research describes the retail workplace as an unpleasant environment in which employees have a significantly greater risk of exploitation than people working in other industries (Lynch et al., 1999). The work conditions described are depressing:  poor job security, inconvenient and inflexible work schedules, split work shifts, uncertain hours, low wages, and part-time or temporary employment (Zeytinogly et al., 2004). Internationally, both managers and co-workers in retail receive comparatively lower wages than people in other industries. Furthermore, they have less variation in their tasks, and their job satisfaction and organisational commitment are lower (Rhoads et al., 2002). However, there are major differences in Sweden's retail sector compared to the international retail sector. Although the Swedish retail sector is also a low-wage sector, wages for retail workers are relatively higher than in most other countries (Andersson et al., 2011). Swedish retail workers also have greater job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Wickelgren et al., 2012).

Grugilis (2007) argues that the retail sector is characterized by constant cost-cutting that results in very defensive personnel strategies including low employee wages, low employee skills, low employee qualifications, little or no employee training/development, and few employee career opportunities. Because retail workers are viewed as low-paid production resources, wages should be as low as possible. Another idea that reinforces this attitude is that workers in the retail sector are often employed and evaluated in terms of their "aesthetic" features (Nickson et al., 2001, 2005; Pettinger, 2004; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007), which are often considered more important than their knowledge of the products for sale (Thompson et al., 2000). Thus employers evaluate the appeal of employees to customers on the basis of the employees' language, dress, values, behaviour, style, body size, and general appearance.

In summary, international research paints a bleak picture of the retail workplace. This is probably the main reason there is so little research on retail careers. However, although Sweden to some extent presents this same image of the retail sector, the picture of the Swedish retail workplace is certainly more positive than in most other countries (Wickelgren et al., 2012). Sweden has a long history of managerial decentralisation that promotes collaborative and trusting relationships in the workplace (Tengblad, 2003), and this work philosophy seems to have influenced the retail sector in Sweden more than the international

industry logic of retailing (Andersson *et al*., 2011). Yet, we don't know if these differences are the same when it comes to career.

# 3  Previous research on careers in the retail sector

Mobility in the Swedish labour market in general terms has increased over time (Helldahl, 2008). In part, this movement is both desired and necessary for industrial and economic development. As society changes, business conditions for Sweden's retail companies also change. New ideas and innovations, as well as new employee skills, are needed if the Swedish retail sector is to continue to offer attractive jobs and to operate in functional markets. A related issue is that managers and co-workers with these new skills may well have different expectations as far as their career and development opportunities. These expectations are important for the retail sector today and even more for the retail sector of the future.

Much of the international empirical research on retail careers is primarily set in the Anglo-Saxon context. It is no surprise that the starting point of this research is the challenge to career opportunities in the retail sector (e.g., Broadbridge, 1998, 2010b). Rather than describing the nature of retail careers, the aim in research seems to be to explain why career in retail is so limited. We note furthermore that the international research seems to conclude that a retail career is the same as a store manager position (e.g., Broadbridge, 1998, 2007, 2010a; Traves et al., 1997).

A career in an organisation is basically about a change in the relationship between the organisational and the individual initiated by one of the parties (the organisation's needs / the individual's motivations). Careers are manifested in a change in the exchange between the two parties (Andersson, 2005). In many countries, however, these initiatives in the retail sector do not derive from either individuals or organisations. Rather, governments initiate such changes in sectors characterized by low employee skills (Davison et al., 1998). From the international point of view, the retail sector does not regard employees' expertise as a competitive advantage. Instead of focusing on the development of retail employees, companies focus on employing people with the aforementioned "aesthetic" features (Baret, 2000). Furthermore, retail employees themselves do not see much opportunity for careers in retailing.

Trying to make a career in the retail sector is therefore not a particularly appealing endeavour (Broadbridge, 2003; Commins & Preston, 1997). For example, in explaining why students have negative or at best neutral expectations about retail careers, Broadbridge (2003) concludes that many students work part-time in retail jobs and thus experience the industry's worst side. They are influenced by what they see. Hart et al. (2007) suggest that employers / managers in retail do not want to invest in skills development for their employees despite their recognition that certain employee retail skills are needed. Therefore these negative images and obstacles need to be overcome by offering retail workers more job variety and more career opportunities.

In fact, many changes in the international retail sector are characterized by de-professionalization through rationalization and simplification of work processes rather than through employee development (Akehurst & Alexander, 1996; Sparks, 1996; Grugulis et al., 2004). In Sweden, however, we find different trends. For example, the performance of, and responsibility for, rather simple tasks in retailing have been expanded to include planning and quality evaluation (Andersson et al., 2011). The question arises, then, is whether such changes can influence the perception of retail careers in Sweden.

In some cases, the image of the retail sector is worse than it actually is. In fact, some international research presents a more positive image, with descriptions of possibilities for

retail careers. Knight et al. (2006) discuss how emotional satisfaction with the work is central to the motivation for making a career in retail. This is a broader perspective than is often taken in the discussion of careers: a career includes emotional satisfaction with what you do. Their research, which also shows that involvement in the workplace has a positive influence on a career in retail, reinforces results by Darden et al. (1989). This is particularly interesting because employees in the Swedish retail sector, who are quite involved with their work and generally committed to their employer, may take more responsibility than their international colleagues (Andersson et al., 2011). Furthermore Broadbridge and Parsons (2005) find that women in retail view career success differently than men. For women, career success is less about status and income and more about satisfaction, autonomy, and self-realization. In other words, men are more concerned with career success in objective terms whereas women are more concerned with career success in subjective terms.

In terms of gender differences and career, several studies illustrate different aspects of gender and career in the Swedish context although not explicitly in the retail sector (e.g., Eriksson, 2000; Kanter, 1977; Linghag, 2009; Renemark, 2007). Bergman and Ivarsson (2010) address the challenge of employees' demands related to their employers, family, and customers. These researchers find that the difficulty women face in combining work and family is an additional reason for employers to review the position of female employees. International research shows that women in particular suffer when trying to establish a work-life balance (Backett-Milburn et al., 2008). The long work hours that often conflict with family time are especially difficult for women who often have more home responsibilities than men (Broadbridge, 1999). On the whole, the retail sector is "gendered" in many ways - in terms of tasks, professional structures, and the genders of customer groups (Petinger, 2005). Gender is the socially constructed sex that involves expectations and roles rather than biological differences (West and Zimmerman, 1987). There are also clear links between gender and organizing (Acker, 1992) that may affect women's career opportunities.

Some international research describes the gender aspects of a career in retail in relationship to the traditional view of careers. Most of this research is linked to the position of the store manager. Research conducted in the Anglo-Saxon context tries to explain why more men than women are store managers despite the fact that more women than men are employed in the retail sector (Broadbridge, 2003). The main explanation is that store managers are hired and promoted on the basis of traditional male norms (Broadbridge, 1998) even though the store manager role varies a lot depending on many factors (Hernant et al., 2007). The use of such rigid hiring and promotion stereotypes can thus affect retail stores' competitiveness significantly. A study of senior retail managers revealed, among other things, that men at senior managerial levels acquired social capital and used network technologies in a more strategic and instrumental way to advance their careers than women did. While women rather used their networks for support and for dealing with macho cultures (Broadbridge, 2010b). In another study of the reasons women in the UK do not become store managers Traves et al. (1997) found the following possible explanations: promotion processes (informal), networking, lasting images of managerial work as something "manly", and lack of mentoring.

Overall, women who become store managers face both choices and constraints (Broadbridge, 2010a). Their choices are constrained by various restrictions that mean these choices are not necessarily their real preferences. Above all, career choices have consequences for family life in many ways. Again, the question arises is whether these conditions are relevant for the retail sector in Sweden given the difference in the retail workplace in Sweden compared to the international retail workplace (Andersson et al., 2011).

To further women's careers as store managers Maxwell et al. (2007) claim that "impression management" must decrease as career denominator compared to today. At present, promotion in retail seems to depend on people's ability to work long hours. Greater flexibility in work hours and other work arrangements as well as better access to training and development are needed for both men and women (Maxwell *et al*., 2007)

However, many researchers believe that Generation Y (people born between 1977 and 1994) will fundamentally change the retail sector because of their resistance to the current personnel policies developed in the Anglo-Saxon context (Broadbridge, 2010a). Based on psychological contract theory, it is clear that the Generation Y members expect frequent and widespread access to development, which is hardly characteristic of today's retail sector (Hurst & Good, 2009). Furthermore, Generation Y members expect varied and challenging work, continuous feedback, and flexible solutions that promote a reasonable balance between work life and family life. Generation Y members also expects fast-track management careers (Broadbridge et al., 2007). Kim et al. (2009) even argue that retailers face a paradigm shift from passive employees who embrace the status quo to active employees who create their work and their roles. Perhaps this change will be less evident in Sweden given that many of these changes and attitudes are already institutionalized in Swedish work life, also in the retail sector (Andersson et al., 2011).

# 4  Theoretical framework

Researchers have various definitions of career. For example, some researchers refer to a position within a *single* organisation with specific reference to an individual's upward progression in the organisational hierarchy (Glaser, 1968). Other researchers refer to the movement among *different* organisations or professions (Hughes, 1958; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984; Lindgren et al., 2001). Based on these definitions, one can wonder whether a career is associated with a particular position or a particular sector (e.g., the role of the store manager or of the retail worker). Arthur et al. (1989:8) advocate a broad interpretation of the concept of career, which they define as follows: "[…] *the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time*".  This definition is the starting point of this study because it encompasses different ways of making a career without defining a specific occupation, organisation, or progression in the hierarchy. Above all, this definition emphasizes that a career is a process that occurs over a period of time.

In a changing world, the traditional view of careers, which usually implies career advancement in the same organisation, has increasingly less relevance (DeFilippi & Arthur, 1996; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). A term coined to capture the current (and likely future) meaning of career is boundaryless career. This term connotes a vision of the career that includes the individual's movement between organisations and professions in addition to the changes in the individual's position at the same organisation (i.e., the vertical career path) (DeFilippi & Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan et al., 1998; Peiperl et al., 2002).

An individual's career that is the result of employment in multiple companies / industries is an increasingly common phenomenon. For many reasons that are related to various situations and various relationships, people leave their current employers and accept employment with other employers. People voluntarily leave work positions for, among other things, dissatisfaction with their work and with their work relationships, disagreements about goals and values, or the opportunity to find more interesting and rewarding employment elsewhere (Sullivan et al., 1998). People who leave their current positions because they find their values are inconsistent with those of their employers illustrate that careers are integrated with identities, that is, "who I want to be and become at work" (Andersson, 2005).

In previous research this link between identity and career has mainly been explored using the concept of career anchors, which basically refer to the values people think are important for their work (Schein, 1993, 1996). A career anchor is rooted in a self-perception that the individual is unwilling to give up. It is therefore a very important influence on people's career choices and career strategies.

Sometimes people change jobs because their identity evolves at a different pace and in a different way than that found in their workplace or than that of their employer (Andersson, 2005, 2010, 2012). Identities are thereby related to matching and exchange between the individual and the organisation. A procedural view of the individual and of the organisation, where both are in constant motion / development, leads to an emerging exchange between them as well. Career development can thereby be the result of personal strategies as well as of organisational strategies, so it is important to understand the exchange between them.

The concept psychological contract is very useful in this context because it explains how exchanges between these two parties are based in expectations, perceptions, and informal obligations (Rousseau, 1995). The psychological contract, as the informal complement to the

employment contract, specifies which contributions employees are willing to make to the organisation in exchange for certain rewards. The psychological contract, which can change over time, relates to employees' experience of the subjective / internal career. Furthermore, there is the objective / external career that relates to the actual work advancement (vertically / horizontally) or to changes in compensation, responsibility, and the like. The objective / external career and the subjective / internal career are, of course, linked in some way with each other. An objective career step also probably changes the subjective experience of a career. However, the two are not identical. Traditionally, the career, as a concept, has been strongly linked to the objective / external career, resulting in the impression that the career is something very specific and "real" (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). However, in recent years researchers have shown more interest in the subjective / internal career. Because the subjective/internal career is much difficult to capture, more research on this is needed.

A career is generally an individual-centric concept based in personal motivations and driving forces. A broader view of careers can also include involvement with groups, the workplace, and the organisation (Andersson et al., 2013). In this respect, a career develops in the workplace where the individual's responsibilities, initiative, and other factors increase the sense of social community and organisational commitment derived from trusting relationships between managers and co-workers as well as among the co-workers themselves. Leadership in such circumstances is based more in the collective initiative (Andersson & Tengblad, 2015) that promotes the development of careers without necessary linkages to managerial positions.

We rely on a broad interpretation of the career in our study in which we connect various theories and models that capture the individual aspect of career (motivation, belief in individual ability, subjective career success, etc.). We link these theories and models to the actual organisation and to alternative career paths. To capture the relationship with the organisation, we use the psychological contract. We also use scales to measure gender attitudes in order to explain differences among male and female retail employees that are relevant for our study.

*Figure 1. Theoretical framework*
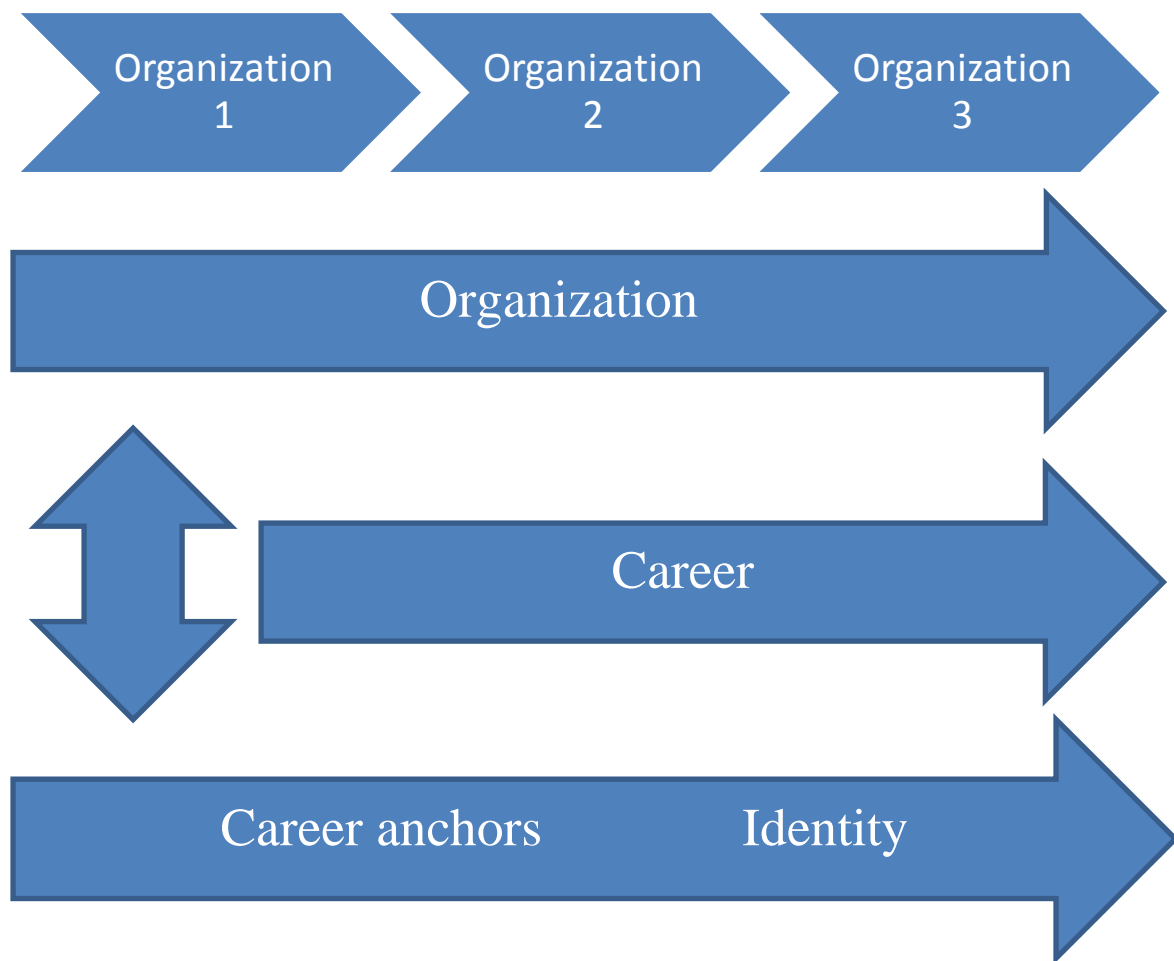


Figure 1 illustrates our theoretical framework. A career is depicted as a process involving the exchanges over time between the organisation (or several different organisations) and the individual. This exchange can be understood with the use of the psychological contract. The individual's strategies in the exchange can be understood based on an identity in which career anchors are key elements. The subjective career, which deals with individual's experience of exchanges over time, is strongly linked to identity, while the objective career is linked to the actual exchange between the individual and the organisation over time.

# 5 Method

## 5.1 Three sub-studies

In an attempt to understand and to explain the concept of career and also to validate our explanations of career in retailing we used both qualitative and quantitative methods in our study. Although the study consisted of three sub-studies, they have neither been sequential nor separated, but they have complemented and enriched each other. Two sub-studies used a quantitative data collection method, and one sub-study used a qualitative data collection method, as follows:

1. Compilation of secondary data: quantified already collected information on career and mobility,
2. Compilation of primary data from a quantitatively-oriented survey, and
3. Compilation of primary data from qualitative interviews.

We briefly describe the three sub-studies next. Thereafter we present the data collection for these sub-studies in greater detail.

*Sub-study 1. Collection of quantified, current information on careers in the Swedish retail sector*
Our ambition was to compile data on various actors' careers in the Swedish retail sector. Our sources were *Statistiska centralbyrån* (SCB), *Handelns utredningsinstitut* (HUI), *Handelsanställdas förbund*, and various Swedish business and retail companies. Although we located a large quantity of secondary data, we did not find much career-specific data. We found data that were useful in understanding conditions needed for careers, but little data applicable to actual careers. We did, however, benefit greatly from the report, *Handeln i Sverige*, published by the HUI. The data most relevant to careers came from the SCB databases. These data mainly concern the numbers/percentages of managers in business and the change over time (in aggregated statistics). A particular strength of these data is that they allowed us to analyse differences between men and women. However, these data were for Swedish wholesale and retail industry as a whole, with no breakdown on the retail sector. Nevertheless, we obtained information relevant for our purposes such as data on numbers/percentages of managers, different employment roles, changes over time, and the differences between men and women in the context of our overall study.

*Sub-study 2. Quantitative survey of careers in the Swedish retail sector*
Because Sub-study 1 did not provide much data other than contextual data and an aggregate view of objective careers over time, we conducted Sub-study 2 to learn more about careers in Swedish retailing. This investigation was more extensive than we had originally planned. Our major focus then became the description of the subjective experiences of career among employees in the Swedish retail sector. We return to this discussion in a later section of this report.

*Sub-study 3. Qualitative research that illustrates the concept of careers*
In order to illustrate how careers in the retail sector develop, we conducted qualitative interviews with 24 store managers. These interviews resulted in a description of careers in the retail sector in practice – both in the past and in the present. We limited our interviews to store managers who had typically worked for several years in the retail sector (as employees as well as managers). People usually qualify for store manager positions through their previous employment as sales people. Therefore store managers can explain how careers in the retail

sector evolve (and have evolved). In addition, our interviews could also show if and how organisations actively create and support career opportunities in the retail sector. The interviews were also important for use in constructing our survey questionnaire.

## 5.2 Data collection

We used the following data collection methods: analysis of secondary registry data, a quantitative survey, and personal interviews.

### 5.2.1 Description of the survey and the study's variables

The survey consisted of 111 questions categorized into nine areas. The nine areas, in order, are described next.

1. *Work-related self-efficacy* was measured with seven questions (Higgins, 2002; Khapova et al., 2007). Work-related self-efficacy refers to the trust individuals have in their ability to manage their work assignments, including the demands for particular results. The greater people's work-related self-efficacy, the more likely that they can perform their work tasks well. Previous studies of people with high work-related self-efficacy show that these people are more inclined to choose more challenging tasks than people with lower work-related self-efficacy (Bandura, 2009).

2. *Career anchors,* which deal with the areas/values people think are important in their work, were measured with 15 questions (see Schein, 1993, 1996, for a discussion of career anchors). The career literature usually distinguishes between external career and internal career (e.g., Derr & Laurent, 1989). External career relates to factors outside the individual's control such as the actual work limitations and possibilities and the organisation's formal work steps and roles that determine its culture and rewards system. The external career, which is consistent with traditional career definitions, consists of elements that are visible to others such as titles, functions, and various perquisites. Unlike the external career, the individual owns the internal career because it consists essentially of the individual's work expectations and experiences. The internal career reflects people's definition of success and their work preferences. Thus internal career differs from individual to individual, even in the same profession, the same organisation, or the same department.

The internal career is linked to what Schein (1993) calls the career anchor, which connotes the combination of abilities, needs, and values that "anchor" the individual along a specific career path. An individual's career anchor (s), which is rooted in a stable self-perception, is the result of personal work life experiences. Career anchors formed during the individual's early work life are assumed to influence later choices in professional life. Schein (1993) lists eight career anchors: managerial competence, technical / functional competence, security, autonomy and independence, entrepreneurial creativity, pure challenge, service/dedication, and lifestyle integration. These career anchors guided us in the design of our survey questions. We also added questions concerning work opportunities for good salaries, status, pride, and the sense of social connection and fellowship. However, we excluded autonomy / independence, which is one of Schein's career anchors, because we think that activities in the retail sector are generally tightly controlled and do not allow for a great deal of independence. Therefore, autonomy was not relevant in our study as a career anchor that could differentiate between the respondents.

3. Perceptions of *managerial work*, in general, in the retail were tapped with three questions.

4. *Development possibilities* in current workplace were measured with four questions.

5. *Psychological contract,* which deals with unstated requirements and unwritten rules for the employer and the employee, was measured with 15 questions (Isaksson & Bellaagh, 2005; see also Rousseau, 1995). The concept of the psychological contract underlies the psychological implications of the employment relationship (Guest & Conway, 2002). A psychological contract has a more dynamic character than a legal contract because it is influenced by reorganisations and other changes in work assignments, responsibilities, and authority. The purpose of the psychological contract is to stabilize relationships in the workplace. Implicitly, it informs people of what is allowed, of what can be expected in exchanges with others, and of the degree of security existing in these relationships.

6. *Subjective career*, which deals with how satisfied people are with various indicators of career success and career experience, and was measured with 15 questions (see Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008, for a multi-dimensional model of career success). The career literature usually differentiates between subjective career success (career satisfaction) and objective career success (e.g., salary). Meta-analyses reveal that the same factors do not explain variations in subjective and objective career success. For example, Ng et al. (2005) reported that background factors such as gender, age, and social position predict objective career success but not subjective career success.

7. *Change of workplace/employer* was measured with six questions (Kazemi, 2015).

8. *Background data* was collected by 17 questions (e.g., questions about gender, age, years worked in retailing, current position, monthly salary).

9. *Psychological attitudes towards gender,* which (among other things*)* concern the expectations of men and women in today's society and the factors considered masculine or feminine, was measured with 29 questions. The questions tapped modern sexism (Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2000), ambivalent sexism (consisting of benevolent and hostile attitudes towards women; Glick & Fiske, 1996), and ambivalence towards men (consisting of benevolent and hostile attitudes towards men; Glick & Fiske, 1999). Fifteen of these 29 attitude questions on gender were taken from the cited sources; the report's authors constructed the other 14 questions.

The survey question areas capture both the depth and breadth of subjective conceptions (through questions on gender attitudes, the psychological contract, work-related self-efficacy, and career success) as well as objective conditions (through questions on background) that are directly or indirectly linked to the career concept. In this way both individual and contextual factors were taken into account.

We pilot-tested our survey in order to evaluate its length, the time required to answer all questions, respondents' comprehension of the questions, and the degree of the sensitivity of the questions. From the sensitivity perspective, we were especially concerned about the questions on psychological attitudes towards gender. The pilot group consisted of research colleagues and members of the project's reference group. As a result of this pilot test, we reformulated a number of questions and deleted others in order to simplify the questionnaire.

Managers and co-workers in the retail sector participated in our survey. The plan was to assemble a group of participants from a wide geographic distribution of (large) urban / rural areas. Because one of our goals was to focus on the careers of men and women in the retail sector, we also tried to collecting data from both men and women. Ultimately our group, consisting of approximately 69 % women and 31 % men, was a fairly accurate representation of the gender distribution in the retail sector. As far as numbers of participants is concerned, the two sub-groups were large enough for statistical comparisons. We used quota sampling rather than random sampling because we were interested in identifying participants who matched our predetermined sub-groups. Through our association with *Handelsanställdas förbund* we were able to target and contact a number of retail stores and store chains. Quota sampling thus gave us results that were as reliable as the results we might have obtained had we used random sampling (Holmberg & Petersson, 1980).

### 5.2.2    Description of the sample

The participants in the survey consisted of 647 managers and co-workers from 192 stores and store chains in the retail sector. Nearly 66 % of the participants reported their stores had up to 15 employees, 83,6 % of the participants reported their stores were members of chains, and 636 participants reported their gender. Of this last category, 68,7 % of the participants were women and 31,3 % were men. 95 % of the participants were in the age group between 18 to 57 years, of which 32,2 % were in the age group between 28 and 37 years. On average, the participants had worked in the retail sector for nearly 12 years. The average number of years worked at their current workplaces was 7,5 years. Nearly 61 % of the participants reported that they had completed high school, and 16 % reported that had completed a university degree.

84,7 % of the participants reported they had work positions of indeterminate length. 71,6 % of the participants reported they lived with another person. 24,4% of the participants were single, and the rest were in relationships but lived apart. 55,9 % of the participants had no children living at home and 42,9 % had 1 to 3 children living at home. 89,4 % of the participants were born in Sweden, 6.8 % were born in another European country, and 3,7 % were born outside Europe. Table 1 presents the positions of the participants in the survey according to their gender.

The participants' average monthly (before tax) salary based on full-time employment was 23 824 Swedish crowns for women (N = 367) and 25 763 Swedish crowns for men (N = 176). This difference was statistically significant, $t(271,549) = -3.71$, $p < .001$. There were 62 non-responses on salary. Furthermore, 33 participants entered unreasonably low salaries for full-time employment in the retail sector. The explanation is probably that they failed to make the conversion of their part-time salaries to full-time salaries. These cases were excluded from subsequent data analyses.

It is of interest to compare the males and females in terms of for how long they had worked in the retail sector and at their current workplace. As Table 2 shows, no significant differences existed in this regard. This is an interesting finding in relation to the statistically significant differences in monthly salaries for males and females.

*Table 1. Which of the following alternatives best describes your current position?*

| Position | Gender | |
|---|---|---|
| | Female | Male |
| Store sales personnel | 238 54,5% | 76 38,6% |
| Warehouse employee | 24 5,5% | 32 16,2% |
| Department manager | 60 13,7% | 27 13,7% |
| Company-wide function – employee (e.g., finance, HR, IT, purchasing) | 11 2,5% | 2 1,0% |
| Store manager | **32** 7,3% | **28** 14,2% |
| Other managerial position (including assistant store manager) | **26** 5,9% | **12** 6,1% |
| Company-wide function – manager (e. g., finance, HR, IT, purchasing) | **8** 1,8% | **2** 1,0% |
| Warehouse manager | **1** 0,2% | **2** 1,0% |
| Other | 37 8,5% | 16 8,1% |
| Total | 437 | 197 |

*Note.* The percentages relate to the total number of participants within each gender category.

*Table 2. Other comparisons between men and women*

| | | N | M | S | *t* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How long have you worked in the retail sector. State the number of years. | Women | 434 | 12,1 | 9,3 | |
| | Men | 196 | 11,4 | 9,2 | 0,87 |
| How long have you worked at your current workplace? State the number of years. | Women | 430 | 7,6 | 6,7 | |
| | Men | 198 | 7,2 | 7,4 | 0,54 |

### 5.2.3 Interviews

We conducted 24 interviews (10 women and 14 men). In the interviews we focused on the interviewees' careers by asking them to narrate their career stories with particular emphasis on how they reasoned about their careers. In the sample of interviews, we have had a fairly even distribution between men and women, the spread between the different sub- sectors in the retail sector, geographic locations of the stores (as well as big city / small town) and that they should have worked a number of years in the retailing sector. The interviews were conducted at the interviewees' workplaces and lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were transcribed and analysed based on their recurrent themes. Our main objective was to use these career stories as the means to understand and illustrate careers in the retail sector. As the interviewees were store managers who had started as ordinary sales staff, we were able to obtain a good understanding of the career steps they had taken as they moved into managerial positions. All survey participants and all interviewees were assured of their anonymity.

# 6 Careers in the Swedish retail sector in numbers

Where no other source is noted, this section is based primarily on publicly available information from SCB.

## 6.1 Education level, ages, and salaries in the retail sector

There are good opportunities for acquiring contextual data useful for analysing careers in the retail sector. Here we present data on the educational levels, ages, and pay of people working in the retail sector as well as trends in recent years.

About two-thirds of all people working in the Swedish retail sector have secondary education as their highest level of completed education. The remaining third have either a maximum of lower secondary education or tertiary education-- somewhat more of the latter than the former. Women's educational level in the retail sector differs only a little from that of men in the retail sector. The small difference is that women have a slightly higher general level of education than men in percentage terms. During the most recent five years, the education level of people in the retail sector has risen steadily. The percentage of people who do not have secondary education is decreasing each year, while the percentage of university graduates is increasing each year.

As far as age distribution, a majority of the people working in the Swedish retail sector are relatively young. The explanation may be that younger people are more capable of handling the high tempo and physical demands found in retailing.

*Diagram 1. Age distribution of people in the Swedish retail sector (2010–2013) in thousands by age category*
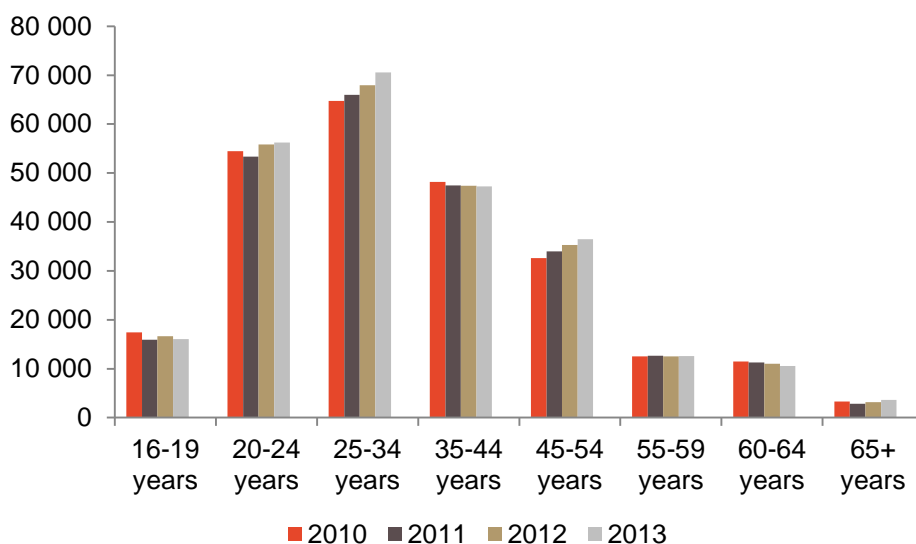


*Source: SCB.*

The age category of 25–34 years is the largest group. If we summarize the age categories, we see that 56 % of all people working in the Swedish retail sector are 34 years old or younger.

As far as pay for people working in retail we see little difference between salaries for men and women in the area of food /grocery retailing. Based on the SCB data published in recent years, we see that women's salaries as a percentage of men's salaries are between 98 % and 102 %, depending on the year. However, at stores that do not sell food /groceries, women

received 91 % to 96 % of men's salaries in the years 2005 to 2014. Women managers (who hold about one-third of the retail managerial positions in Sweden) received salaries that were 87 % of men's salaries in 2014. The trend that emerges is that the more uniform (standardized) the work is, the more equitable the salaries for women and men are. The assumption is that when managerial duties are more complex, with greater specialization and more sub-branches to oversee, the greater the difference between the salaries of women and men. This trend is applicable to other industry sectors besides the retail sector.

## 6.2    Careers in Swedish retailing in numbers

In describing the careers of women and men in Swedish retailing, using available statistics, we have questions about the concept of ''career''. Our understanding of the concept is central to our understanding of the statistical data. Previously in this report, when we problematized the career concept, we found differences in the understanding of what it means to "make a career" in general and in retailing in particular. The typical retail workplace is a store, and the majority of such stores are quite small. This fact presents special conditions for the exploration of careers using the aggregated numerical data from statistical reports.

We have also noted that the individual retail employee's perception of a career does not necessarily coincide with the vertical career advancement found in a typical organisational hierarchy. Such examples of vertical career paths certainly exist in retail, but really only at large retailers that have many stores and units plus a fully developed organisation structure at the regional and central levels. Thus the examples of vertical careers in the Swedish retail sector are relatively less common than the examples of other types of career trajectories.

SCB is an excellent source for reliable, quantitative data that are useful for describing/analysing various conditions and phenomena in Sweden. This is also true for data on the retail sector. The SCB data on Swedish work life, including data on the retail sector, can give us a broad basis for understanding the vertical ascent to managerial positions. The SCB data can also present the quantitative changes in the number of men and women who hold certain clearly defined positions (including managerial positions) in the retail sector. We can follow these changes over time and, at the same time, make comparisons relative to the number of women and men in managerial positions.

However, there are limitations as to what the SCB data can tell us about current careers in retailing. For example, the SCB data cannot provide information on horizontal career advancement, career steps related to job content, or responsibilities and authority of people not in managerial positions. Nor can the SCB data tell us about the number of major Swedish retailers that have developed their own career paths. The explanation is that such companies have their unique career paths with different names for positions and different relationships on the career ladder. SCB also lacks generally accepted definitions of a career, of career steps, and of career progression positions. SCB's quantitative data are, however, useful in the analysis of existing careers and existing management positions. Furthermore, SCB's data are very useful for their male-female categorizations in the Swedish labour market.

Of the more than half a million people who work in the Swedish retail sector, about 55 % are women and 45 % are men. The definition of a gender neutral distribution (of women to men) is when the distribution lies within a range of 40 % to 60 %. The retail sector is well represented in Swedish work life. According to SCB's list of the country's most common occupations, sales people for specialty stores are in third place with a total of 104 724 people employed, of which women account for 62 % and men 38 %. Sales people for grocery stores

are in tenth place with 74 396 people employed, of whom 67 % are women and 33 % are men. These data are from SCB's most recent available summary (year 2013).

SCB reports that the Swedish retail sector in 2013 had almost 50 000 managers. If we compare this number to the total number of people in the entire sector, then about 1 in 10 people working in retail are managers. Of these 50 000 managers, 32 % were women and 68 % were men.

*Diagram 2. Percentages of women (red) and men (blue) of all managers in Swedish retail in 2013*
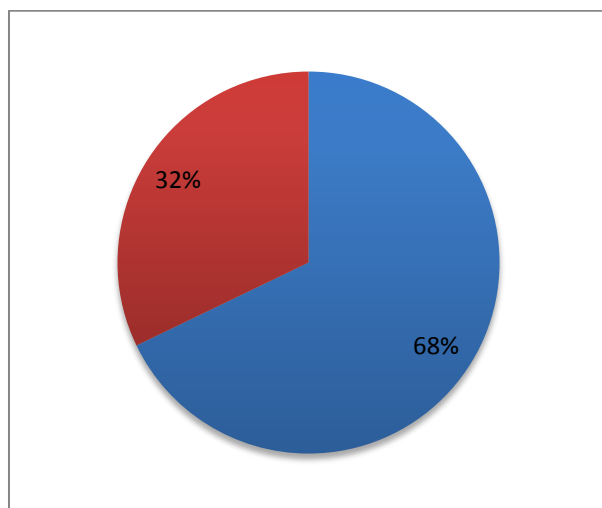


In recent years, the overall percentage of female managers in the Swedish retail sector has increased steadily by about one percentage point a year -- from 27 % in 2008 to 32 % in 2013. The categories of management positions in business held by women and men reveal some interesting developments. SCB collects and compiles data on four managerial categories: CEOs and other company leaders, activities and operational managers, specific function managers, and small enterprise managers. The percentages of women and men in the third and fourth categories are very close to the average for all management categories: 31 % women and 69 % men. Small enterprise managers are of various kinds, depending on the size of the enterprise or the size of the workplace. Specialist managers are mainly responsible for departments and other business areas outside the core business line (e.g., managers of finance, quality, logistics, personnel, planning, purchasing, and safety).

 Activities or operational managers are responsible for all or part of an organisation's core business (e.g., small and large store managers, department managers, or other managers who deal directly with inventories, customers, and sales). In Sweden this category has experienced the largest change as far as the numbers of women and men managers over time. In 2008, women's share of this category was 34 %; in 2013 women's share of this category was 45 %.

*Diagram 3. Number of operational managers (men and women) 2008-2013*
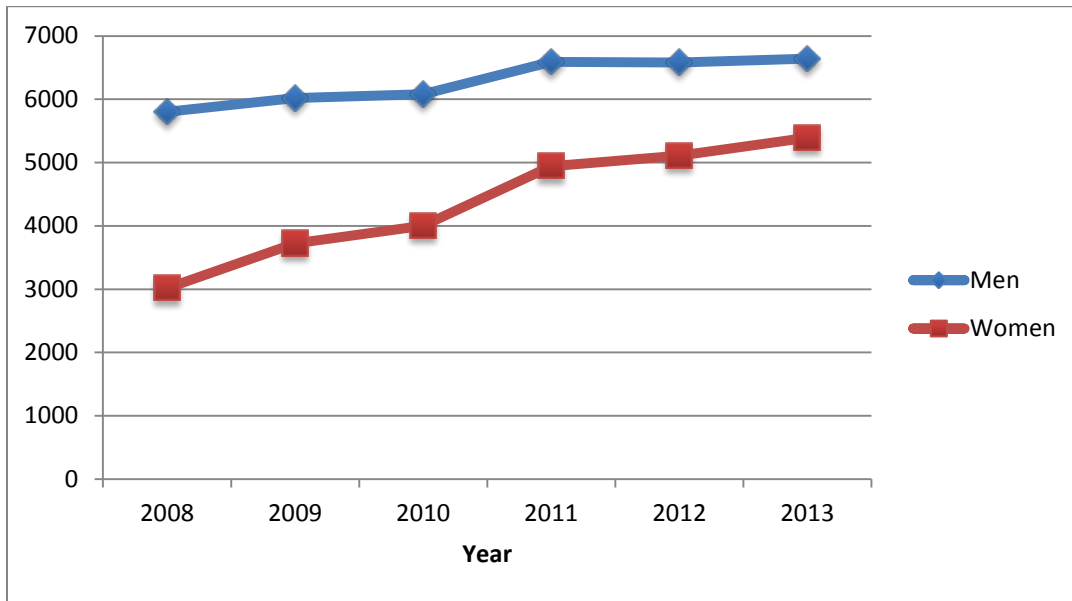


It is in the category of store managers and other activities / operations managers that the percentage of women has increased most significantly in the Swedish retail sector. This change has occurred in a relatively short time. However, it seems there has been very little change in the hierarchical top manager positions in retailing. Of Sweden's nearly 4 700 CEOs in the retail sector only 9 % are women. This number has not changed significantly in recent years.

*Diagram 4. Percentages of women (red) and men (blue) as Swedish retail CEOs in 2013*
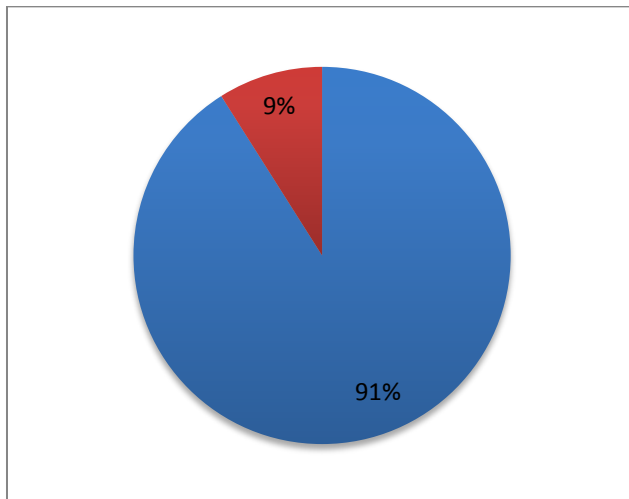
# 7 Survey results

In this section we present the results of our survey. The nine subject areas are initially reviewed with descriptive statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, and the percentage of participants who selected one of the top two responses from either the 5-point scale or the 7-point scale (i.e., 4 and 5; 6 and 7). We supplement these descriptions with independent t-tests, especially for gender (the women and men comparisons) and for generations/ages (Generation Y and Generation X comparisons). We also describe our results when we used managers and co-workers as independent variables and the survey questions as dependent variables at the item level. Descriptive data and t-tests are reported at item level and the correlations are reported at the index level.

## 7.1 Work-related self-efficacy

The answers to all questions were at the top, or near the top, of the 7-point scale. This result can generally be regarded as positive, since work-related self-efficacy is associated with good work performance. The question on decisions on career choices had the lowest rating and the question on the ability to do good work had the highest rating. See Table 3.

*Table 3. Work-related self-efficacy*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 6 or 7 on the 7-point scale

| Questions | M | S | 6 and 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. When I make career decisions, I am confident they are good ones. | 4,5 | 1,6 | 30,3 |
| 2. I believe that I can do what I need to do in order to make my career successful. | 5,7 | 1,5 | 66,4 |
| 3. I am confident in my ability to grow and improve professionally. | 5,8 | 1,4 | 68,2 |
| 4. I seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my career. | 6,1 | 1,1 | 77,6 |
| 5. I am confident in my ability to perform well at work. | 6,3 | 0.9 | 84,1 |
| 6. I believe I can cope with stressful situations at work. | 5,8 | 1,3 | 66,3 |
| 7. I am confident in my ability to handle social relationships at work. | 5,7 | 1,2 | 60,3 |

*Note.* 1 = Do not agree at all; 7 = Completely agree

## 7.2 Career anchors

Except for status, the average weighted responses on career anchors were at the upper end of the scale with the majority of the responses at 5. Interestingly, the responses differed clearly between pride and status (in our sample, r = .24). Slightly more than 71 % of the participants said it was very important to have a job that allows you to feel pride, whereas only about 11% thought it was important to have status. A job that allows a person to exert influence over others was ranked as important by almost 29 % of the participants.

More than 70 % of the participants ranked career anchors as important, with the following anchors in descending order of importance: job security, consistency with personal values, good social relationships, professional development, lifestyle integration, the possibility to remain in the same location. See Table 4.

*Table 4. Career anchors*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

| Questions | M | S | 6 and 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **How important is it that your work …** | | | |
| 1. offers good salary development possibilities? | 5,5 | 1,3 | 52,6 |
| 2. offers the possibility for professional development? | 6,0 | 1,2 | 72,7 |
| 3. offers the possibility for helping other people? | 5,7 | 1,4 | 60,6 |
| 4. agrees with your personal values? | 6,0 | 1,1 | 74,7 |
| 5. offers status? | 3,6 | 1,7 | 11,6 |
| 6. offers the possibility to feel pride? | 6,0 | 1,1 | 71,5 |
| 7. offers the possibility for new challenges and the struggle to succeed? | 5,3 | 1,5 | 48,7 |
| 8. offers the possibility for taking responsibility for others? | 5,0 | 1,5 | 41,3 |
| 9. offers the possibility to exert influence over others? | 4,5 | 1,7 | 28,8 |
| 10. offers the possibility to make decisions? | 5,4 | 1,4 | 50,8 |
| 11. offers the possibility to feel assured of job security? | 6,5 | 0.9 | 85,0 |
| 12. allows you to avoid relocation? | 5,9 | 1,6 | 70,8 |
| 13. offers the possibility for new ideas, creations, and initiative in how activities are conducted? | 5,7 | 1,2 | 60,7 |
| 14. offers the possibility to combine personal leisure activities/ family and a career? | 6,0 | 1,3 | 71,6 |
| 15. offers the possibility for a good social connection? | 6,0 | 1,1 | 73,7 |

*Note.* 1 = Not at all important; 7 = Very important.

## 7.3 Managerial work in the retail sector

There were relatively low ratings on all items in this area. However, the responses to the questions in this subject area are nevertheless of interest, which suggests that mean values are not so representative. Only 19 % of the co-workers (i.e., non-managers) responded that it was likely they would be promoted to a managerial position within the next five years. Only around 28 % of these participants rated the manager position as an attractive position while scarcely 29 % wanted a managerial position in the retail sector. One reasonable conclusion from these results is that it appears it may be rather difficult to promote people from within to such manager positions. Furthermore, it is also possible, given the participants' negative view of manager positions, that they are disinclined to seek such positions because they find such positions unattractive. The bivariate correlation between the likelihood of becoming a manager and the attractiveness of the manager position was r = .53 **. This means that the more likely an individual is to become a manager, the more attractive that position becomes. It is noteworthy that this relationship is not causal.

Another interesting observation is that there was a fairly good agreement in the responses about managerial positions and the results from the area of career anchors. For example, slightly fewer than 12 % of the participants thought status was important, and slightly fewer than 29 % thought the ability to exert influence over others was important. Both of these issues are associated with managerial positions. This response pattern is consistent with the relatively low ratings on the attractiveness of such positions. See Table 5.

*Table 5. Managerial work in the retail sector*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

| Questions | M | S | 6 and 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Think about the work of a manager. How attractive is that job for you in the retail sector? | 4,3 | 2,0 | 27,8 |
| 2. How likely do you think your chances are of becoming a manager in the retail sector within five years? | 3,6 | 2,1 | 19,0 |
| 3. To what extent do you desire a manager's job in the retail sector? | 4,0 | 2,1 | 28,7 |

*Note.* 1 = Not at all attractive/not at all likely/ to a small extent; 7 = Very attractive/very likely/to a great extent.
The responses are based on n=535–537 where an alternative response was "am now a manager" (n=109).

## 7.4    Development possibilities in the current workplace

The participants were not very positive about their possibilities for development at their current workplaces. For example, only about 17 % (some of whom were managers) thought such possibilities existed. Only 24 % thought these possibilities were important to their careers. An interesting observation was that the importance of careers was positively associated with the attractiveness of the manager position in the retail sector ($r = .61$ **). Thus, the more important a career to the participants, the more attractive they view manager positions. In response to a question on the variety of their work tasks, slightly more than 40 % of the participants responded that they found their work varied greatly. See Table 6.

*Table 6. Development possibilities in the current workplace*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

| Questions | M | S | 6 and 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How varied do you think your work tasks are? | 4,8 | 1,8 | 40,5 |
| 2. To what extent do you think your current work offers possibilities for career development? | 3,6 | 1,9 | 17,0 |
| 3. What are your development possibilities in your current workplace? | 3,6 | 1,9 | 17,3 |
| 4. How important is a career to you? | 4,2 | 1,8 | 24,6 |

*Note.* 1 = rather limited /to a small extent/very few/not at all important; 7 = very/to a large extent/very large/very important.

## 7.5    The psychological contract

The 15 questions in this subject area are directed towards the psychological contract previously described in this report. The focus of these questions was the extent to which the participants' employers kept their promises to their employees. Specifically, the questions focused on the employees' particular expectations and experiences in their employment relationships. See Table 7.

The mean values in Table 7 indicate the participants' perceptions of whether their employers kept their promises/commitments. The promises/commitments were also totalled in order to obtain a general indication of the psychological contract range for each participant (see Isaksson & Bellaagh, 2005). This last-mentioned measure is used in the correlation analysis reported at the end of the Results section of this report.

Table 7 reveals generally low means for most of the 15 questions with the exception of three questions in which their means are between 4,1 and 4,3. Offers of career opportunities, which was a key issue in this project, had the lowest mean (m = 2,9).

*Table 7. The psychological contract*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 4 and 5 on the 5-point scale.

| Questions | M | S | 4 and 5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Think about your relationship with your current employer. To what extent has your employer promised (or committed) that …** | | | |
| 1. you will have interesting work? | 3,2 | 1,7 | 29,3 |
| 2. you will have relative job security? | 4,1 | 1,7 | 53,4 |
| 3. you will have a reasonable salary for the work you do? | 3,8 | 1,6 | 40,5 |
| 4. you will have challenging work? | 3,5 | 1,7 | 34,2 |
| 5. you will be allowed to participate in decision-making? | 3,4 | 1,8 | 31,8 |
| 6. you will be offered career possibilities? | 2,9 | 1,7 | 20,2 |
| 7. you will have a pleasant work environment? | 3,9 | 1,7 | 43,5 |
| 8. you will be treated fairly by managers and other leaders? | 3,6 | 1,8 | 30,6 |
| 9. you will have flexibility so that your work role adapts to your other life roles? | 3,5 | 1,8 | 37,6 |
| 10. you will have the possibility to work together in a satisfying manner? | 3,9 | 1,7 | 45,0 |
| 11. you will have the possibility to grow and develop at work? | 3,4 | 1,7 | 31,3 |
| 12. you will have a safe and secure work environment? | 4,1 | 1,6 | 48,4 |
| 13. you can improve your future possibilities in the labour market? | 3,1 | 1,8 | 27,1 |
| 14. you will have a workplace free from violence and harassment? | 4,3 | 1,8 | 59,0 |
| 15. you will receive help with problems you have outside the workplace? | 3,2 | 1,9 | 29,9 |

*Note*. Response choices: 0 = No, that is, no promise and no commitment made; 1 = Yes, but the promise has not been kept; 2 = Yes, but the promise has been kept to a very small extent; 3 = Yes, the promise has been kept (up to half); 4 = Yes, the promise has been kept to significant extent; 5 = Yes, the promise has been completely kept.

A review of the responses to the 15 questions on the employer commitments to a psychological contract with employees was quite revealing (not illustrated in Table 7) The least common employer commitment (in which the response was "0"; that is, "no promise and no commitment made") was the commitment to help employees with problems they have outside the workplace (34,3 % reported "0"). Offers of career opportunities was the second least common employer commitment (34,1 % reported "0"). The five most common commitments were, in descending order: a safe and secure working environment (11,8 % at"0"); a pleasant work environment (14,2 % at "0"); a work environment free from violence and harassment (14,4 % at "0"); the possibility to work together in a satisfying manner (15.2 % at "0"); and a reasonable salary for the work performed (16,7 % at "0").

## 7.6 Career experience

Table 8 lists the15 questions that deal with subjective career, that is, the participants' satisfaction with their career experience (including their career success).

The participants were most negative in their responses to the questions related to their salaries, their promotion possibilities, and the future employment of their children in the retail sector. Only 14,2 % of the participants were so satisfied with the retail sector that they would highly recommend that their children seek employment in the sector.

Table 8, in general, shows moderately high ratings for the questions on career experience. It appears that the employee problems, although not entirely absent, related to a retail career in Sweden are fewer than those in many other countries. The question with the most positive response dealt with employees' satisfaction with their own work and tasks. This result may reflect somewhat of a self-serving bias because people may be more likely to be satisfied with the results of their own efforts rather than with the results for which others are responsible.

*Table 8. Career experience*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

| Questions | M | S | 6 and 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How satisfied are you with the goals you have achieved in your work life? | 4,6 | 1,7 | 32,1 |
| 2. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to influence your work? | 4,2 | 1,9 | 29,5 |
| 3. How satisfied are you with your choice of work? | 4,8 | 1,8 | 40,3 |
| 4. How satisfied are you with what you have achieved in your professional life? | 4,9 | 1,7 | 41,1 |
| 5. How satisfied are you with your job security? | 5,0 | 1,9 | 50,4 |
| 6. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to combine personal leisure activities/family and career? | 4,2 | 1,9 | 27,6 |
| 7. How satisfied are you with the appreciation you receive for your work? | 4,0 | 2,0 | 28,2 |
| 8. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your employer? | 4,4 | 2,0 | 37,6 |
| 9. How satisfied are you with your own work and the tasks you perform? | 5,7 | 1,1 | 64,1 |
| 10. How satisfied are you with current work? | 4,7 | 1,8 | 38,5 |
| 11. How satisfied are you with your salary? | 3,9 | 1,7 | 18,0 |
| 12. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to influence you salary? | 3,0 | 1,8 | 10,9 |
| 13. How satisfied are you with your possibilities for promotion? | 3,4 | 1,9 | 15,5 |
| 14. How satisfied are you with your current work assignments? | 4,7 | 1,7 | 37,3 |
| 15. To what extent would you like your children to work in your line of work? | 3,4 | 1,9 | 14,2 |

*Note.* 1 = Not at all satisfied/to a small extent; 7 = Very satisfied/to a large extent.

## 7.7 Change of workplace/employer

Table 9 shows a relatively high percentage of the participants agreed they had thought about changing their workplace, their employer, and/or their work tasks. These ideas are interesting in relation to the questions on their degree of satisfaction with their careers and various aspects of their work.

Table 9 also shows a relatively low percentage of the participants who thought they would likely seek work in the retail sector if they decided to change their workplace. This result suggests indirectly something about their dissatisfaction with work in the retail sector. This was further confirmed by another question that was in the survey, i.e., "How satisfied are you with your current job? " and where only approximately 38 percent said they were very satisfied, but also that it was only about 14 percent said they would like their children to work in the retail sector at some time in the future.

*Table 9. Change of workplace/employer*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), and percentages for alternatives 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

| Questions | *M* | *S* | *6 and 7* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I plan to look for a new position in the coming year. | 4,1 | 2,4 | 38,9 |
| 2. I have thought about changing employers. | 4,9 | 2,3 | 53,1 |
| 3. It is likely that I will change my workplace in the near future. | 3,8 | 2,3 | 29,9 |
| 4. I have thought about changing my work tasks. | 4,6 | 2,3 | 43,6 |
| 5. If some day you think about changing workplaces, how likely is it that you will look for work in the retail sector? | 4,3 | 2,0 | 33,7 |

*Note.* 1 = Do not agree at all/not at all likely; 7 = Agree completely/very likely.

Table 10 is a list of reasons for making workplace changes. Each participant selected a principal reason from the list. As the table shows, better development possibilities, other work hours, and a higher salary were the reasons most selected.

*Table 10. Reasons for changing workplace*

*If some day you decide to change your workplace,*
*what is the main reason for making this change?*

| | Number | Per cent |
|---|---|---|
| Higher salary | 114 | 17,6 |
| Better dev. possibilities | 125 | 19,3 |
| Other work hours | 125 | 19,3 |
| Other work tasks | 80 | 12,4 |
| Another employer | 44 | 6,8 |
| Another manager | 33 | 5,1 |
| Other work colleagues | 8 | 1,2 |
| Family reasons | 46 | 7,1 |
| Other reasons | 69 | 10,7 |

## 7.8 Psychological attitude towards gender

Table 11 lists 29 questions about different psychological attitudes towards gender including, among other things, expectations about men and women in today's society and characteristics perceived as typically feminine or masculine.

Table 11, in general, shows low evaluations although, of course, some responses are above the midpoint of the scale and at least one response is quite high ("Better measures are needed to assure equality in the workplace"). This response suggests that the participants think men and women are to some extent treated differently in the workplace. The last column in Table 11 shows participants who largely or completely agreed that males and females differ in various respects.

*Table 11. Psychological attitude towards gender*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S,) and percentages for alternatives 4 and 5 on the 5-point scale.

| Questions | M | S | 4 and 5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Discrimination of women is no longer a problem in Sweden. **(MS)** | 2,3 | 1,2 | 16,8 |
| 2. I prefer a male boss to a female. (Classic sexism) | 2,0 | 1,2 | 8,9 |
| 3. Society treats men and women the same way. **(MS)** | 2,5 | 1,4 | 24,9 |
| 4. Better measures should be taken to achieve equality (between the sexes) in the workplace. **(MS)** | 3,8 | 1,2 | 60,5 |
| 5. I prefer a female boss to a male. | 2,4 | 1,2 | 11,6 |
| 6. Women should be cherished and protected by men. **(BS)** | 1,5 | 1,0 | 5,3 |
| 7. Men should be cherished and protected by women. | 1,5 | 0,9 | 3,5 |
| 8. Men are incomplete without women. **(BS)** | 2,2 | 1,4 | 18,8 |
| 9. Women are incomplete without men. | 2,1 | 1,4 | 15,3 |
| 10. Compared with men, women tend to have superior morals. **(BS)** | 2,1 | 1,2 | 11,5 |
| 11. Compared with women, men tend to have superior morals. | 1,8 | 1,0 | 2,3 |
| 12. Women try to use power to exert control over men. **(HS)** | 1,9 | 1,1 | 8,5 |
| 13. Men try to use power to exert control over women. | 2,4 | 1,3 | 18,8 |
| 14. Women exaggerate their work problems. **(HS)** | 2,2 | 1,2 | 17,6 |
| 15. Men exaggerate their work problems. | 2,1 | 1,1 | 8,9 |
| 16. When women, in fair competition with men, lose they usually complain about discrimination. **(HS)** | 2,6 | 1,3 | 22,7 |
| 17. When men, in fair competition with women, lose they usually complain about discrimination. | 2,6 | 1,3 | 22,7 |
| 18. Every woman needs a man to take care of her **(BM)** | 1,5 | 1,0 | 4,9 |
| 19. Every man needs a woman to take care of him. | 1,7 | 1,2 | 9,5 |
| 20. Men are more prone to risk danger to protect others. **(BM)** | 2,3 | 1,2 | 17,8 |
| 21. Women are more prone to risk danger to protect others. | 2,1 | 1,1 | 9,1 |
| 22. Men are more prone to take risks than women. **(BM)** | 2,8 | 1,3 | 34,0 |
| 23. Women are more prone to take risks than men. | 2,0 | 0,9 | 2,7 |
| 24. When men help women they usually try to show they are better than women. | 2,4 | 1,3 | 20,6 |
| 25. When women help men they usually try to show they are better than men. | 2,1 | 1,1 | 10,5 |
| 26. Men always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than women. **(HM)** | 2,8 | 1,3 | 30,9 |
| 27. Women always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than men. | 2,6 | 1,3 | 24,6 |
| 28. Ultimately, most men are like children. **(HM)** | 2,0 | 1,3 | 14,4 |
| 29. Ultimately, most women are like children. | 1,6 | 0,9 | 3,2 |

*Note.* 1 = Do not agree at all; 5 = Agree completely. The letter abbreviations after some questions stand for the following: MS (Modern Sexism), BS (Benevolent Sexism), HS (Hostile Sexism), BM (Benevolence towards Men), and HM (Hostility towards Men). One question is an indication of classical sexism, namely: "I prefer a male boss to a female" The report authors designed the other questions so as to reflect formulations of fundamental issues. Thus, if a question was about women it could be reformulated as the same question for men, and vice versa.

## 7.9 Comparisons between women and men

In our study gender proved to be a surprisingly weak variable in differentiating between men and women. This result differs from the international research showing that women's limited potential is the main hindrance to their careers in the retail sector. Our study, on the whole, shows few statistically significant differences between men and women related to their careers and work in retailing. Even those differences are relatively small in size although statistically significant.

The main difference we found was that the females, on average, scored higher than males on all career anchors where statistically significant gender differences were observed. We found this result especially in the question related to the avoidance of relocation for work. This reluctance to move may hinder the movement of women into managerial positions.

It is especially important to note that females and males evaluated career success and career experience equally. However, the women indicated they were more likely than the men to change to another job in retail if, at some point, they changed their workplace. This result suggests the women were more satisfied with retail work than the men. In addition, as far as work tasks were concerned, the women indicated they experienced more variation than the men.

No statistically significant differences were observed between men and women with regard to work-related self-efficacy, managerial positions in retail, and the psychological contract. Thus the mean values for the entire sample are representative for men and women on these issues.

We found differences between men and women related to modern sexism – women, on average, scored higher than the men. Moreover, to a small extent, the women (more than the men) reported that women are treated the same as men in the workplace. The women also scored lower on the question that asks if discrimination is no longer a problem in Sweden. Consequently, more than the men, the women thought "better measures are needed to assure equality in the workplace".

*Table 12. Comparisons between women and men*

Mean values (M) and t-values.

| Questions | Women | Men | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Work-related self-efficacy** | | | |
| No significant differences were observed between women and men. | | | |
| | | | |
| **Career anchors** | | | |
| *How important is it to you that your work ...* | | | |
| 3. offers the possibility for helping other people? | 5,8 | 5,5 | 2,25* |
| 4. agrees with your personal values? | 6,2 | 5,8 | 3,75*** |
| 6. offers the possibility to feel pride? | 6,1 | 5,8 | 2,52* |
| 11. offers the possibility to feel assured of you job security? | 6,6 | 6,2 | 4,50*** |
| 12. allows you to avoid relocation? | 6,1 | 5,6 | 3,85*** |
| 14. offers the possibility to combine personal leisure activities/family and career? | 6,1 | 5,8 | 2,54* |
| 15. offers the possibility for a good social connection? | 6,1 | 5,9 | 2,17* |
| | | | |
| **Managerial positions in the retail sector** | | | |
| No significant differences were observed between women and men. | | | |
| | | | |
| **Development possibilities in the current workplace** | | | |
| 1. How varied do your think your work tasks are? | 4,9 | 4,6 | 2,12* |
| | | | |
| **The psychological contract** | | | |
| No significant differences were observed between women and men. | | | |
| | | | |
| **Career experience** | | | |
| 12. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to influence your salary? | 2,9 | 3,2 | −2,40* |
| | | | |
| **Change of workplace/employer** | | | |
| 5. If some day you think about changing workplaces, how likely is it that you will look for work in the retail sector? | 4,3 | 2,0 | 33,7 |
| | | | |
| **Psychological attitude towards gender** | | | |
| 1. Discrimination of women is no longer a problem in Sweden. | 2,1 | 2,6 | −4,59*** |
| 3. Society treats men and women the same way. | 2,4 | 2,8 | −2,79** |
| 4. Better measures should be taken to achieve equality (between the sexes) in the workplace. | 3,9 | 3,5 | 3,89*** |
| 6. Women should be cherished and protected by men. | 1,5 | 1,7 | −2,19* |
| 7. Men should be cherished and protected by women. | 1,4 | 1,6 | −2,10* |
| 8. Men are incomplete without women. | 2,0 | 2,7 | −6,47*** |
| 9. Women are incomplete without men. | 1,9 | 2,6 | −6,54*** |
| 20. Men are more prone to risk danger to protect others. | 2,2 | 2,5 | −3,12** |
| 22. Men more prone to take risks than women. | 2,7 | 3,0 | −2,14* |
| 24. When men help women they usually try to show they are better than women. | 2,4 | 2,2 | 2,15* |
| 26. Men always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than women. | 2,9 | 2,5 | 3,29** |
| 27. Women always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than men. | 2,7 | 2,4 | 1,98* |

*Note.* The table only lists questions in which statistically significant differences between women and men were observed.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 13 lists a number of reasons men and women have for changing their workplace if it would be appropriate. The largest, and most interesting, difference is "better development possibilities" (women [17 %] < men [24 %]).

*Table 13. Reasons for change – men and women*

*If some day you decide to change your workplace, what is the main reason for making this change? A comparison between women and men.*

| | Gender | |
|---|---|---|
| **Reasons for change in workplace** | Women | Men |
| Higher salary | 72 16,5% | 40 20,2% |
| Better development possibilities | 74 17,0% | 48 24,2% |
| Other work hours | 91 20,9% | 33 16,7% |
| Other work tasks | 58 13,3% | 22 11,1% |
| Another employer | 34 7,8% | 9 4,5% |
| Another manager | 27 6,2% | 5 2,5% |
| Other work colleagues | 8 1,8% | 0 0,0% |
| Family reasons | 28 6,4% | 18 9,1% |
| Other reasons | 44 10,1% | 23 11,6% |
| Total | 436 | 198 |

*Note.* The percentages represent the percentages in relation to the total number of participants in each gender category.

## 7.10 Comparisons between Generations Y and X.

Table 14 shows the distribution between the two generations by age and gender.

*Table 14. Distribution by generation and by gender*

| | | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Women | Men |
| Generation | Generation Y (18–37 years) | 250 | 113 |
| | Generation X (38–67 years) | 185 | 86 |
| Total | | 435 | 199 |

Table 15 shows comparisons between the participants grouped by age into Generation Y or Generation X. The largest difference in mean values between the two generations was in managerial positions and development opportunities in the retail sector. We suggest two interpretations of the responses to the question on the importance of a career. First, Generation Y (the younger group) may take a different approach to careerism; or second, they may have a more long-term outlook about their future work.

Of the 15 questions related to career experience and success, statistically significant differences were observed in eight questions. Generation Y participants replied consistently that they were less satisfied with their careers than Generation X participants. However, an inverse response pattern was observed concerning change of workplace and employer. The Generation Y participants were more prone than the Generation X participants to change positions, work tasks, and employers.

*Table 15. Comparisons between generations Y and X*

Mean values and t-values.

| Questions | Y | X | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Work-related self-efficacy** | | | |
| No significant differences were observed between Generations Y and X. | | | |
| **Career anchors** | | | |
| *How important is it to you that your work …* | | | |
| 1. offers salary development possibilities? | 5,6 | 5,4 | 2,12* |
| 2. offers the possibility for professional development? | 6,2 | 5,8 | 3,55*** |
| 3. offers the possibility for helping other people? | 5,6 | 5,8 | −2,60** |
| 6. offers the possibility to feel pride? | 5,9 | 6,1 | −2,14* |
| 9. offers the possibility to exert influence over others? | 4,6 | 4,3 | 2,67** |
| 11. offers the possibility to feel assured of job security? | 6,6 | 6,4 | 2,14* |
| 12. allows you to avoid relocation? | 5,8 | 6,1 | −2,26* |
| **Managerial work in the retail sector** | | | |
| 1. Think about the work of a manager. How attractive is that job for you in the retail sector? | 4,3 | 2,0 | 27,8 |
| 2. How likely do you think your chances are of becoming a manager in the retail sector within five years? | 3,6 | 2,1 | 19,0 |
| 3. To what extent do you desire a manager's job in the retail sector? | 4,3 | 3,5 | 4,54*** |
| **Development possibilities in the current workplace** | | | |
| 1. How varied do you think your work tasks are? | 4,5 | 5,2 | −5,02*** |
| 4. How important is a career to you? | 4,6 | 3,7 | 6,66*** |
| **The psychological contract** | | | |
| Think about your relationship with your current employer. To what extent has your employer promised (or committed) that … | | | |
| 2. you will have relative job security? | 4,0 | 4,3 | −2,71** |
| **Career experience** | | | |
| 1. How satisfied are you with the goals you have achieved in your work life? | 4,4 | 4,8 | −3,19** |
| 2. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to influence your work? | 4,1 | 4,4 | −2,23* |
| 3. How satisfied are you with your choice of work? | 4,6 | 5,1 | −3,01** |
| 4. How satisfied are you with what you have achieved in your professional life? | 4,7 | 5,2 | −3,73*** |
| 5. How satisfied are you with your job security? | 4,8 | 5,2 | −3,11** |
| 9. How satisfied are you with your own work and the tasks you perform? | 5,7 | 5,8 | −2,03* |
| 10. How satisfied are you with current work? | 4,6 | 5,0 | −2,68** |
| 14. How satisfied are you with your current work assignments? | 4,5 | 4,9 | −2,46* |
| **Change of workplace/employer** | | | |
| 1. I plan to look for a new position in the coming year. | 4,6 | 3,6 | 5,06*** |
| 2. I have thought about changing employers. | 5,3 | 4,4 | 4,69*** |
| 3. It is likely I will change my workplace in the near future. | 4,2 | 3,2 | 5,37*** |
| 4. I have thought about changing my work tasks. | 4,9 | 4,1 | 4,80*** |

**Psychological attitude towards gender**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Discrimination of women is no longer a problem in Sweden. | 2,2 | 2,4 | −2,12* |
| 4. Better measures should be taken to achieve equality (between the sexes) in the workplace. | 3,9 | 3,6 | 2,64** |
| 5. I prefer a female boss to male. | 2,5 | 2,2 | 2,84* |
| 20. Men are more prone to risk danger to protect others. | 2,4 | 2,1 | 2,92** |
| 26. Men always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than women. | 2,7 | 2,9 | −2,26* |

*Note.* The table lists only questions in which statistically significant differences between people of Generation Y (18–37 years) and of Generation X (38–67 years) were observed.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

No statistically significant differences were observed between Generation Y and Generation X for work-related self-efficacy. This result was also true for the psychological contract except for the question on the employer's promise of job security -- the Generation Y participants indicated their employers had kept their promises to a significant extent although less than that reported by the Generation X participants. The differences, although statistically significant in 10 of the 15 questions on career anchors, were marginal between Generation Y and Generation X participants.

With regard to the participants' psychological attitudes towards gender, statistically significant differences were observed in five of the 29 questions. The differences were marginal, and focused on modern sexism and on benevolent and hostile attitudes towards men in particular.

Table 16 lists a number of the participants' reasons for changing workplace if some day that decision is taken. The largest difference between the two generations was "better development possibilities" – more Generation Y participants would change jobs in the expectation of improving their positions/careers than Generation X participants. Differences between the two generations were also found in "other work tasks" (Y> X), "another manager "(Y <X), and "family reasons" (Y <X).

*Table 16. Reasons for change – generation Y and X*
*If some day you decide to change your workplace, what is the main reason for making this change? A comparison between Generation Y (18–37 years) and Generation X (38–67 years).*

| | Generation | |
|---|---|---|
| | Generation Y (18–37 years) | Generation X (38–67 years) |
| Higher salary | 60 16,3% | 53 19,3% |
| Better development possibilities | 93 25,3% | 32 11,7% |
| Other work hours | 66 18,0% | 59 21,5% |
| Other work tasks | 54 14,7% | 26 9,5% |
| Another employer | 26 7,1% | 18 6,6% |
| Another manager | 12 3,3% | 21 7,7% |
| Other work colleagues | 6 1,6% | 2 0,7% |
| Family reasons | 18 4,9% | 27 9,9% |
| Other reasons | 32 8,7% | 36 13,1% |
| Total | 367 | 274 |

## 7.11 Comparisons between managers and co-workers in the retail sector

Our survey revealed the differences between managers and co-workers in the retail sector were relatively small. No statistically significant differences were observed between managers and co-workers concerning their ability to manage work stress and work relationships. These findings somewhat contradict the generally accepted idea that managers are better able than co-workers to manage stress and relationships at work. Furthermore, lifestyle integration ("the ability to combine personal leisure activities /family and a career") was equally important to the managers and co-workers.

In contrast, we observed statistically significant differences between managers and co-workers for all questions related to "the psychological contract". This was also true for "career experience". However, the difference is of particular interest for the following question: "To what extent would you like your children to work in your line of work?" Based on the managers' positive responses on other issues, it might be expected that they would like their children to work in a sector that they generally are satisfied with.

As expected, the managers were less supportive than the co-workers about changing their workplace, their employer, and their work tasks.

The differences between managers and co-workers were much more evident concerning attitudes towards gender. In brief, the managers reported to be less sexist than the co-workers.

*Table 17. Comparisons between managers and co-workers in trade*

Mean values (M) and t-values.

| Questions | Mgr. | Co-worker | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Work-related self-efficacy** | | | |
| 1. When I make career decisions, I am confident they are good ones. | 4,8 | 4,5 | 2,12* |
| 2. I believe that I can do what I need to do in order to make my career successful. | 6,2 | 5,6 | 5,25*** |
| 3. I am confident in my ability to grow and improve professionally. | 6,2 | 5,7 | 4,79*** |
| **Career anchors** | | | |
| *How important is it for you that your work …* | | | |
| 1. offers salary development possibilities? | 5,2 | 5,5 | −2,35* |
| 7. offers the possibility for new challenges and the struggle to succeed? | 5,7 | 5,1 | 4,19** |
| 8. offers the possibility for taking responsibility for others? | 5,6 | 4,9 | 4,86*** |
| 9. offers the possibility to exert influence over others? | 4,9 | 4,4 | 2,72** |
| 10. offers the possibility to make decisions? | 6,1 | 5,2 | 7,39*** |
| 11. offers the possibility to feel assured of job security? | 6,0 | 6,6 | −4,63*** |
| 12. allows you to avoid relocation? | 5,4 | 6,0 | −3,10** |
| 13. offers the possibility for new ideas, creations, and initiatives in how activities are conducted? | 6,0 | 5,7 | 2,44* |
| 15. offers the possibility for a good social connection? | 5,8 | 6,1 | −2,25* |
| **Development possibilities in the current workplace** | | | |
| 1. How varied do you think your work tasks are? | 6,0 | 4,6 | 10,76*** |
| 2. To what extent do you think your current work offers possibilities for career development? | 4,5 | 3,4 | 5.66*** |
| 3. What are your development possibilities in your current workplace? | 4,5 | 3,5 | 5,0*** |
| **The psychological contract** | | | |
| *Think about your relationship with your current employer. To what extent has your employer promised (or committed) that …* | | | |
| 1. you will have interesting work. | 3,9 | 3,1 | 4,29*** |
| 2. you will have relative job security? | 4,6 | 4,0 | 3,22** |
| 3. you will have a reasonable salary for the work that you do? | 4,1 | 3,7 | 2,36* |
| 4. you will have challenging work? | 4,4 | 3,3 | 6,29*** |
| 5. you will be allowed to participate in decision-making? | 4,7 | 3,1 | 9,11*** |
| 6. you will be offered career possibilities? | 4,0 | 2,7 | 7,90*** |
| 7. you will have a pleasant work environment? | 4,5 | 3,7 | 4,60*** |
| 8. you will be treated fairly by managers and other leaders? | 4,6 | 3,4 | 7,12*** |
| 9. you will have flexibility so that your work role adapts to your other life roles? | 4,2 | 3,4 | 4,31*** |
| 10. you will have the possibility to work together in a satisfying manner? | 4,5 | 3,8 | 4,32*** |
| 11. you will have the possibility to grow and develop at work? | 4,6 | 3,2 | 8,31*** |
| 12. you will have a safe and secure work environment? | 4,8 | 3,9 | 6,05*** |
| 13. you can improve your future possibilities in the labour market? | 4,0 | 3,0 | 5,18*** |
| 14. you will have a work environment free from violence and harassment? | 4,9 | 4,2 | 4,06*** |
| 15. you will have help with problems you have outside the workplace? | 3,7 | 3,1 | 3,32** |
| **Career experience** | | | |
| 1. How satisfied are you with the goals you have achieved in your work life? | 5,9 | 4,3 | 11,49*** |
| 2. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to influence your work? | 6,0 | 3,9 | 16,14*** |
| 3. How satisfied are you with your choice of work? | 5,9 | 4,6 | 9,43*** |
| 4. How satisfied are you with what you have achieved in your professional life? | 6,0 | 4,7 | 9,74*** |
| 5. How satisfied are you with your job security? | 5,9 | 4,8 | 6,13*** |
| 6. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to combine personal leisure activities/family and career? | 4,9 | 4,1 | 4,04*** |
| 7. How satisfied are you with the appreciation you receive for your work? | 5,2 | 3,7 | 8,77*** |
| 8. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your employer? | 5,8 | 4,2 | 10,15*** |
| 9. How satisfied are you with your own work and the tasks you perform? | 5,9 | 5,7 | 2,23* |
| 10. How satisfied are you with your current work? | 5,9 | 4,5 | 10,71*** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11. How satisfied are you with your salary? | 4,5 | 3,8 | 4,08*** |
| 12. How satisfied are you with your possibilities to influence your salary? | 4,3 | 2,7 | 7,34*** |
| 13. How satisfied are you with your possibilities for promotion? | 4,9 | 3,1 | 9,62*** |
| 14. How satisfied are you with current work assignments? | 5,7 | 4,8 | 8,96*** |
| 15. To what extent would you like your children to work in your line of work? | 4,0 | 3,3 | 3,74*** |

**Change of workplace/employer**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I plan to look for a new position in the coming year. | 2,6 | 4,5 | −7,98*** |
| 2. I have thought about changing employers. | 3,6 | 5,2 | −6,36*** |
| 3. It is likely I will change my workplace in the near future. | 2,6 | 4,0 | −6,22*** |
| 4. I have thought about changing my work tasks. | 3,5 | 4,8 | −5,27*** |

**Psychological attitude towards gender**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Better measures should be taken to achieve equality (between the sexes) in the workplace. | 3,3 | 3,9 | −4,61*** |
| 5. I prefer a female boss to a male. | 2,1 | 2,4 | −2,83** |
| 6. Women should be cherished and protected by men. | 1,2 | 1,6 | −5,89*** |
| 7. Men should be cherished and protected by women. | 1,2 | 1,6 | −4,60*** |
| 11. Compared with women, men have superior morals. | 1,6 | 1,9 | −2,85** |
| 12. Women try to use power to exert control over men. | 1,7 | 2,0 | −2,60** |
| 13. Men try to use power to exert control over women. | 1,9 | 2,5 | −4,04*** |
| 16. When women, in fair competition with men, lose they usually complain about discrimination. | 2,3 | 2,6 | −2,06* |
| 18. Every woman needs a man to take care of her. | 1,3 | 1,5 | −2,76** |
| 19. Every man needs a woman to take care of him. | 1,5 | 1,7 | −2,67** |
| 20. Men are more prone to risk danger to protect others. | 2,0 | 2,3 | −2,77** |
| 23. Women are more prone to take risks than men. | 1,8 | 2,0 | −2,11* |
| 24. When men help women they usually try to show they are better than women. | 2,1 | 2,4 | −2,31* |
| 26. Men always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than women. | 2,4 | 2,9 | −3,05** |
| 27. Women always have to struggle to achieve more power in society than men | 2,2 | 2,7 | −3,30** |
| 28. Ultimately, most men are like children. | 1,6 | 2,1 | −4,14*** |
| 29. Ultimately, most women are like children. | 1,4 | 1,7 | −2,85** |

*Note.* The table lists only questions in which statistically significant differences between managers and co-workers in the retail sector were observed.

$*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001$

## 7.12 Correlation analysis

We are primarily interested in correlating the variables in the study with career experience (subjective career success), monthly salaries (objective career success), development possibilities, the manager's job, and the change of workplace / employer. We call these outcome variables although bivariate analysis does not distinguish between variable types in terms of cause and effect. Our report primarily focuses on descriptions and comments on the relationships between these outcome variables and the study's other variables as presented in Table 18.

The importance of making a career was positively correlated with the development possibilities, managerial position, and the change of workplace / employer. All correlations except the relationship with managerial position were weak. The importance of making a career had no correlation with either subjective or objective career success. This finding was somewhat counterintuitive because many people think the more individuals are satisfied with their careers and salaries, the more important a career is to them.

Work-related self-efficacy had a medium-strong positive correlation with subjective career success, development possibilities, and the manager's job, and a weak correlation with monthly salary. Thus the more confidence people have in their own abilities, the higher they

score on the outcome variables. Work-related self-efficacy was also negatively correlated with the change of workplace / employer, which means that the greater the confidence individuals have in their abilities, the less likely they are to change jobs. This correlation, however, was weak.

Power (a type of career anchor) was positively correlated with career experience (subjective career success), development possibilities, monthly salary, and managerial position in retailing. The strongest correlation was between power and managerial position, which is understandable because people who value power at work are more attracted to managerial positions. Power was, however, weakly and negatively correlated with the change of workplace / employer, which means that the more people appreciate the opportunity to exert power and influence at work, the less inclined they are to take new jobs where they may have less power and influence.

Two other career anchors - development and congruence and lifestyle integration - showed other correlations with outcome variables. Lifestyle integration was negative, although weakly, correlated with the monthly salary and the manager's job. This result is logical considering that people who value the smooth combination of salaried work with personal leisure activities/family may be less interested in managerial positions that decrease personal time even though the compensation may be equal. Development and congruence correlated only with managerial position.

Among the sexism scales, there were primarily "modern sexism" and "hostility toward men" which correlated with the outcome variables. All statistically significant correlations were weak. Modern sexism was positively correlated with career experience (subjective career success), development possibilities, and managerial position, and negatively correlated with the change of workplace / employer. Furthermore, the greater an individual's hostile attitudes toward men (suggesting than men have more negative characteristics than women), the lower the correlation with career experience, development possibilities, and monthly salary. The correlation with the change of workplace / employer was the reverse -- that is, this correlation was positive, which means that people with hostile attitudes towards men were more prone to change their workplace /employer.

The psychological contract, which may be considered a variable that has a more relational character than some other variables such as work-related self-efficacy, career anchors, and sexist attitudes, correlated with all outcome variables. The psychological contract was positively correlated with monthly salary, managerial position, development possibilities, and career experience (subjective career success). The correlations with the latter two outcome variables were strong.

*Table 18.*

Mean values (M), Standard deviations (S), reliability coefficients, and bivariate correlations for the study variables.

| Variable | *M* | *S* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Bivariate correlations |
| 1. Importance of career | 4,2 | 1,8 | **–** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Work-rel. self-efficacy | 5,7 | 0,9 | .23 | **.83** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Career experience/subj. car. | 4,4 | 1,3 | .01 | .42 | **.93** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Dev. possibilities | 4,0 | 1,6 | .18 | .36 | .74 | **.82** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Power | 4,6 | 1,2 | .55 | .35 | .23 | .29 | **.77** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Dev. and congruence | 5,9 | 0,9 | .42 | .38 | .07 | .13 | .50 | **.70** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Lifestyle integration | 6,0 | 1,1 | −.11 | .02 | −.04 | −.05 | .02 | .14 | **.36** | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Managerial position | 4,0 | 1,8 | .61 | .36 | .20 | .38 | .52 | .34 | −10 | **.84** | | | | | | | | |
| 9. Chg. of workplace/employer | 4,4 | 2,1 | .09 | −.18 | −.64 | −.49 | −.09 | .04 | .06 | −.01 | **.90** | | | | | | | |
| 10. Psychological contract | 53,9 | 19,6 | .16 | .27 | .73 | .64 | .28 | .09 | −.06 | .27 | −.45 | **.95** | | | | | | |
| 11. Modern sexism | 2,4 | 0,9 | .06 | .14 | .20 | .13 | .18 | −.02 | −.16 | .09 | −.15 | .14 | **.58** | | | | | |
| 12. Benevolent sexism | 1,9 | 0,9 | .05 | −.00 | .01 | .01 | .08 | −.02 | .01 | .04 | .03 | .04 | .16 | **.60** | | | | |
| 13. Hostile sexism | 2,2 | 0,9 | .03 | −.02 | −.03 | −.04 | .07 | −.06 | −.03 | .07 | .04 | −.01 | .28 | .47 | **.74** | | | |
| 14. Benevolence toward men | 2,2 | 0,9 | .08 | .02 | −.04 | −.03 | .11 | −.07 | .02 | .10 | .04 | −.03 | .23 | .60 | .57 | **.65** | | |
| 15. Hostility toward men | 2,4 | 1,0 | −.01 | −.11 | −.17 | −.13 | .06 | −02 | .11 | −.04 | .13 | −.11 | −.08 | .41 | .39 | .42 | **.73** | |
| 16. Monthly salary | 24479 | 5270 | −.03 | .11 | .32 | .24 | .10 | .06 | −.11 | .00 | −.25 | .21 | .12 | −.08 | −.13 | −.13 | −.16 | **–** |

*Note.* The first variable "Importance of career" was measured by one question; hence the lack of a reliability coefficient. All correlations r > .08 are statistically significant. Correlations equal to or greater than r = .14 are significant at <0,001. Reliability coefficients are reported along the diagonal in the table in the form of the so-called Cronbach's alpha value. A value equal to or greater than .70 is generally considered satisfactory. To evaluate the magnitude or strength of correlations guidelines in Cohen (1988) were followed: weak connection (.1–.3), medium strong (.3–.5), strong (>.5).

The index variable "Psychological contract" can be seen as a general indicator of the psychological contract's scale that was formed by summing the number of promises (response alternative 0 excluded). The total score for every respondent reflects to what extent the respondent thinks the employer has kept its promise to the respondent. The maximum number of points was 75 (15 claims x the highest response alternative 5) and the minimum was 15 (15 x 1).

Power, development and congruence, and lifestyle integration were various kinds of career anchors formed after they were identified as independent components following a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation made for all 15 claims that were included in the questions related to career anchors. Power was formed as a mean index of the following statements: " the possibility for taking responsibility for others", " the opportunity to exert influence over others", "offers status", and " allowed to participate in decision-making." Development and congruence was formed as a mean index of the following statements: "good salary development possibilities", "possibilities for professional development", "agrees with your personal values", and " the possibility to feel pride." Lifestyle integration was formed as a mean index of the following statements: "avoids relocation", and "combines personal leisure activities/family and career".

Questions included in other mean indices are as follows: Work-related self-efficacy (Table 3), Managerial work in the retail sector (Table 5), Development possibilities in the current workplace (Table 6), Career experience (Table 8), and Change of workplace/employer (Table 9). Selected items from sexism scales are listed in Table 11.

# 8    Career narratives

To complement our survey data we also obtained data (i.e., stories) in interviews with various store managers in the retail sector. Our interest in interviewing these people was to obtain their accounts of their careers, with particular emphasis on their career paths at the companies that employ (or employed) them. We conducted 24 interviews, mostly at the stores where the interviewees worked. We selected store managers for our interviews because, as key people in the retail sector, they usually supervise co-workers and also have experience as co-workers themselves. While other titles than "store manager" are sometimes used for the position, whatever the title, the position is one of importance and distinction in the retail sector.

The 24 interviews were with 11 women and 13 men. The interviewees were employed in various areas of the retail sector: household goods, clothing, food / groceries, toys, consumer electronics, books and stationery, and building products.

## 8.1    The path to managerial work: the boundaryless career

The commonality in the retail sector is the store. Typically, a retail store is rather small and employs only a few employees who fall into two distinct categories: the store manager and the sales people. In such stores, career possibilities seem limited. From our interviews, however, we gained a more nuanced picture of how store managers achieve their supervisory positions. Before their promotion to store managers, they usually have had a variety of relevant experiences from working in various operational areas of stores. It is also very common that store managers have previously worked at several different companies. One can say that the store manager's career path is more like a slalom race than a straight, downhill race.

> Example 1:
>
> *Interviewer:* Can you describe your path to the position manager at this store?
>
> *Store manager [woman]:* I am a self-employed. I was a florist. Although I have worked with project management for a number of years, I come mainly from retail where my family was active. Then I ended up at another store owned by [current company] after recruitment as a store manager. Now I am at [the store], which is a larger store. [...] I've always been something of an informal leader in many situations. Very early in life I learned to stand on my own two feet. I have been very involved in sports so I am very goal-oriented. It can be a troublesome situation if people are promoted to store managers only because they are very good sales people. Store management can be a little tough if you do not take charge. You have to know that the store manager's role is a much lonelier role than that of the salesperson.

These comments reveal that store managers' may have worked in multiple industries before achieving the store manager position. It is the ability to lead that seems more important for the role of store manager than their extensive retail experience.

Example 2:

*Interviewer:* Can you describe your path to your present role?

*Store manager [man]:* The path … I worked at a slaughterhouse. My father was a meat guy … and I worked there, too. Then I became absorbed in the profession … quite quickly. After I learned dismembering, I became a teacher for five years at a meat factory. I taught people how to dismember carcasses., down to the smallest detail ... with different species.  And then I got to know the store and the people ... and they said, "You shouldn't work in a factory – you should be working in a store." After I thought about this, I saw I had more to give. So I got a lot more education.... I jumped on it all. I studied marketing ... basically at Umeå University. The company paid for everything. Then I was actually headhunted by [company (groceries)]. When I was done with the training I received an offer from [company name] to promote [their] stores. I jumped at this opportunity and managed a few [grocery] stores in [name of city] centre.

At that point, when I had worked for so long in the food trade, I wanted to do something else ... before it was too late to change. Then I thought ... [another company name / (housewares)] seemed like a stable, solid Swedish company. Then my wife saw an ad for a store manager. They planned to open the store in [name of another city]. I applied for the position and was hired. And that's it. [...] Now I have been in the [city] for four years ...   in my world I'm changing all the time ...  I work to improve myself and I constantly see new angles in retail. I thrive everywhere. It is fantastic. I have enjoyed all my work. I stop when I like. Then I get a new challenge. This keeps me alert. Therefore, I ended here in [location]. I think a lot about running the store. I am not so interested in higher positions at the regional level, etc. because the required travel would not fit my family situation. I want to come home every day. So I made my choice ... I am best suited to managing a store within commuting distance of my home.

These comments show that a career may be based in experiences from several different occupations at several different companies. This store manager states he learned various skills as part of his development from working in several areas of the meat industry.

Examples 1 and 2 demonstrate the diversity of career paths in the retail sector despite (at least, on paper) the relatively few different roles. The examples also show the transitory nature of employment in the retail sector in which entry and exit are possible without major career problems. We emphasize that these two interviewees regard this condition as simply the nature of the retail sector in which people bring skills and knowledge acquired in other positions at other companies. Above all, what is important in retailing is the ability to meet all kinds of people.

One interesting observation is that neither of these two store managers showed any particular enthusiasm about the products their stores sell. They were not uninterested in their products, but their focus was really on selling, producing results, and working with people. It would be an exaggeration to say they are indifferent to their products, but it is clear their attitude towards their products is somewhat lukewarm. Thus they probably could easily change stores, areas of the retail sector, and employers if other career opportunities arose. They stated that they looked for job applicants who had an interest in selling, and that interest was more important than product knowledge as far as a hiring criterion.

As we previously noted, the two main roles in a (small) store are the store manager role and the sales people role. The exact nature of these two roles may vary by retailer. However, there are many opportunities to create roles that lie developmentally between the store manager and the sales person. Many retailers design such intermediary roles in order to offer their employees more challenging and interesting tasks. It is also typical for retailers to systematize planned career paths.

## 8.2    The planned career path: the organisation's perspective

The larger companies / chains usually have developed internal career paths that are communicated to employees. Such companies want to create a visible career path that takes advantage of their employees' career ambitions. Such planned careers path can also attract job applicants who are looking for ways to advance their careers. However, it is clear that the retail sector generally specifies traditional, hierarchical steps for career advancement. In Examples 3 and 4 (below), we see that companies think they develop based on the growth of their employees.

Example 3:

*Supervisory individual at a large company [woman]:* You begin in the store as a sales person. There is a clear career path at [company]. Then the sales person can be a *resource* in the next step, and a *vision merchandiser* in the following step. These two roles prepare the employee for the store manager's role. A resource not only works on the floor with all tasks, but further tasks are added such as open the store in the morning, tally the cash registers, help prioritize responsibilities throughout the day, and direct the staff to where they are most needed. This is a little more responsibility than that of a sales person. The resource may also have special responsibility for the store entrance displays. Sales at the store entrance are measured and tracked.

The next role - the vision merchandiser - is still an active sales person on the floor who has the added responsibility for arranging attractive display windows and organising other activities such as sales follow-up studies, ad campaigns, and ad monitoring. A vision merchandiser also provides feedback to the sales people on their job performance.

The next role is the store manager, usually preceded by a period as assistant store manager. A store manager should work at least six months as an assistant store manager before taking the higher position.

These comments show us how a company creates its career path for employees by clearly planning the steps required for becoming a store manager. The resource has more responsibility than a sales person, and the vision merchandiser has more responsibility than a resource. In fact, the vision merchandiser has some of the responsibilities that personnel managers traditionally have in some organisations.

Example 4:

*Store manager [man]*: We have one store manager, one responsible for sales, and one responsible for logistics in every store. We also have a sales support person and a merchandiser, who has the responsibility for making everything look good in the store with correct placement of products. We also have a management team and sales people. Actually, everyone is a sales person except for the store manager. Because everyone has the same merchant status basically, there are roles to build on. [...] But I also sell. I love sales. I make my priority selling, whatever the time of day when I can meet real customers. Otherwise, I think I would lose my sense of reality and be unable to give feedback to my employees. [...]

We have a system for the allocation of responsibilities. If the store manager is absent, the sales manager has responsibility for the store. After that, we have [in descending order] the sales support person, the logician, the merchandiser, and so on. At all times, everyone knows who has the main store responsibility.

These comments show that in addition to the two main employee categories (store manager and sales people) there are other positions at large retailers. However, the sales people can have other tasks than just selling. The retailer in this example has even created a "ranking order" (i.e., a hierarchy) for the people employed in its internal operations. This order is achieved by clearly specifying the various roles and by establishing the order of descending responsibility for the store in the absence of the store manager.

## 8.3   Education has become more central over time

One of the major themes in interviews is the contrast in the career paths of store managers in the past and in the present. The interviewees in this study established their store manager careers generally without significant formal training at companies or education at universities. They made their careers primarily based on achievements in their daily work that drew the attention of their own managers. They gradually assumed more responsibilities as they were promoted to assistant store managers and then to store managers. The promotion to assistant store manager (which may also be labelled the deputy manager) was a clear indication they were on the path to becoming a store manager.

These career path descriptions by the store managers we interviewed contrast clearly with the descriptions of the career paths for store managers today. A number of large retailers now offer formal career paths. Even some smaller retailers have developed internal career paths. These career paths include formal training (internal or external), university or college programmes, and company management training programmes. For example, the University of Skövde was the first university in Sweden to establish a multi-year store management programme at the university level.  Students entered the University of Skövde's first store management programme in the fall term of 2005.

Example 5:

*Store manager[man]*: I started as an intern. Then I got a sales position. Then I became an assistant store manager for [geographic region] where the store was. Then my boss asked if I wanted the assistant manager position. I took the

position, and then temporarily replaced a woman on maternity leave at [place]. This was only for half a year. Then the store manager position became available, and I took that job, which I still have today. I have been here six and a half years. Nowadays, there are store manager education / training courses. Sometimes we have trainees in the larger stores. The idea is that they will become store managers some day. However, that is not how it was for me. Then it was self-training. There were some courses available, but these were mostly courses on selling. There were no management courses.

## 8.4    The career as a process: identify and career anchors

The interviewed store managers mentioned several times that personal reasons influenced their career choices. They explained, for example, why they have remained in a particular location and have not sought employment elsewhere even though relocation may have meant career advancement. Several interviewees stated that a store manager's career depends, in part, on family circumstances. For instance, the store manager in Example 2, who wants to come home every day, was inclined to refuse a promotion because it meant more travel. The following example is also illustrative of the same reasoning.

Example 6:
*Interviewer:* What is the next step in your career?

*Store manager [man]*: It would mean becoming a regional manager or a manager in a large store. But I don't want that. I would rather have a life outside of work … […] As I see it, managing a larger store means more work. Perhaps not everyone sees it that way, but that is the way I see it. […] My family and children need my time as well.

For most people in the retail sector, the customer is extremely important. A focus on the customer is central to success in retailing. The interviewees frequently made this statement about customers in connection with their explicitly stated desire to provide very good customer service.

Example 7:

*Cashier in a large store [woman]*: We have introduced self-scanning in the store. Thus we do not need as many staff in the checkout line because the customer does part of the job. However, we have not reduced the number of hours for the staff. No one is without a job because we have redirected some staff to the floor where they can assist customers. Thus we have raised the level of service in the store. We have a much better work environment now. Instead of just waiting around ... hour after hour, you are talking to the customers. It's more social. One may ask if everything has gone well. I think so. We have more time to talk with our customers ... at the scanning checkout. This is important in our small town. This is a supermarket, but we are still a convenience store ... for many in the neighbouring residential area. Many of our customers visit the store one or more times a day. Therefore talking to the customer is a very important aspect of our service.

The interviewed managers expressed their commitment to the customer experience. They want to understand what the customers want when they visit their stores. The managers are

also very concerned about the work environment for their staff. As in Example 7, in the next example we see the importance to the managers of work and a work environment that are consistent with their personal values.

Example 8:

*Assistant manager in a clothing store [woman]*: I love to help my customers. It is very important to me to see that a customer is happy and satisfied with clothes she chooses for some special event. I like helping with that choice. Last week, I helped a girl...   I think she lacked self-confidence ... we found clothes that suited her perfectly. The next day she came to the store to thank me. She was overjoyed because her school friends had told her how pretty she looked. It was a first for her. Helping a customer... that's what motivates me more than anything else in this job.

These comments show work and the willingness for development can be highly personalized. Customer service is not a neutral task. For the clothing sales woman, customer service is about being "Who I want to be".  Personal values are career anchors deeply rooted in individual identity. This identity of "Who I want to be" translates to "What would a person like me do in a situation like this?" It is a process that involves personal development in everyday existence.

# 9   Discussion

The use of our theoretical model allows us to acquire a comprehensive understanding of careers in the retail sector.

*Figure 2. Theoretical framework*
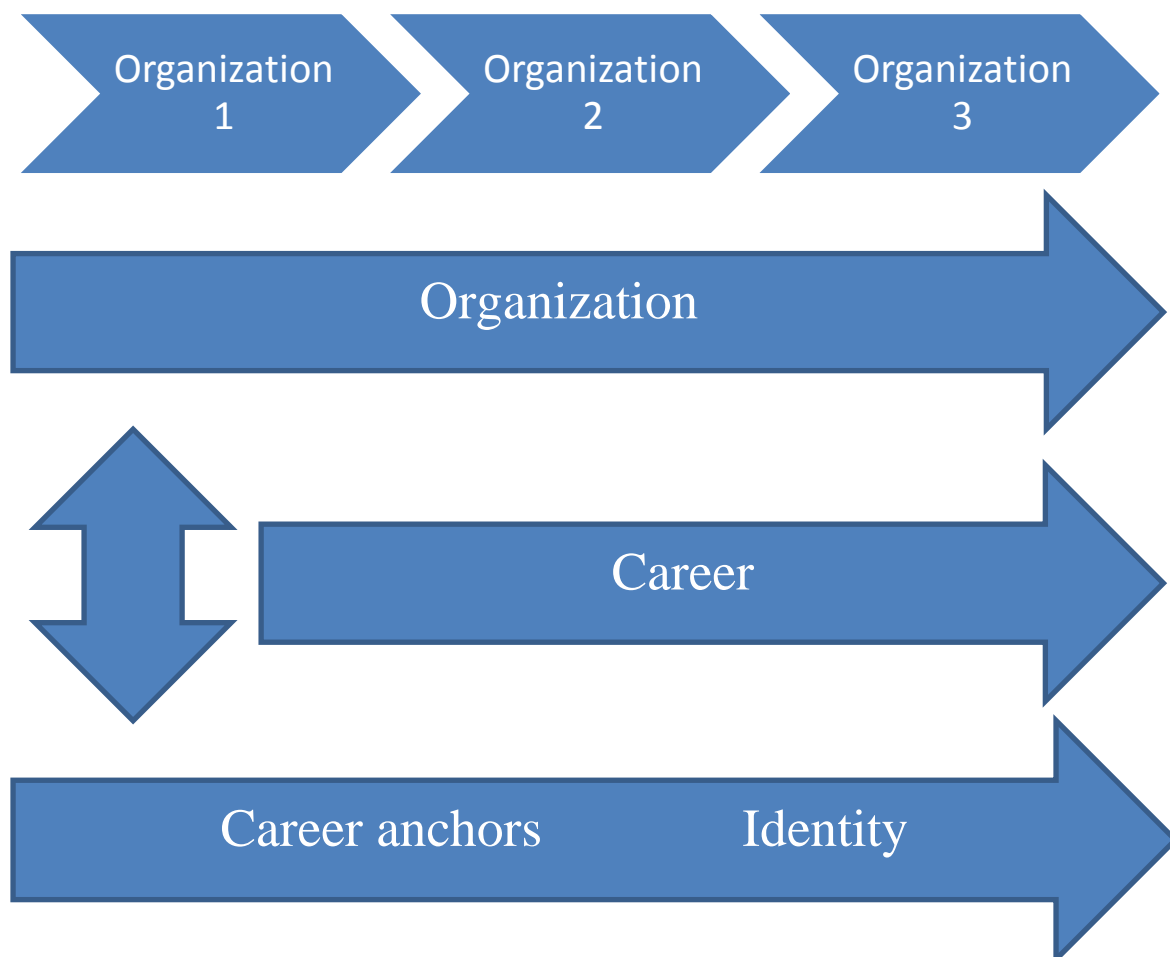


In previous studies researchers have described retailing as a kind of transitory employment sector. Our study confirms this description in many ways. Thus a retail career is not limited to an employee's vocational experience in a single organisation over time. Instead, a retail career, as depicted in Figure 2, is often an employee's work progress through more than a single organisation. Our interviews also reveal that a career in retailing is not limited to the employee's progress in particular areas such as clothing, toys, or food. An employee may make a career in retailing by moving among such areas or by periodic entry into and exit from retailing. The description of retailing as a transitory employment sector, however, may have negative connotations. We therefore prefer look at a career in retail as a boundaryless career. Given this perspective, the individual who has, or wants, a career in retailing is not tied to a single organisation, to a single area, to a single position, or even to the upward ascent through the organisational hierarchy (DeFilippi & Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan et al., 1998; Peiperl et al., 2002).

Although our survey cannot describe the processual aspect of retail career it can explain reasons for the boundaryless career in retailing. For example, even people who are confident they perform well at work (Khapova et al., 2007; Bandura, 2009) are doubtful whether their

career choices were well founded. This finding suggests that many people in the retail sector do not actively or consciously choose the retail career path. Our interviewees, many of whom said they entered retailing largely by chance, confirmed this finding. For instance, one interviewee stated: "I thought I would work here for a while and then do something else. But then the work was so exciting I just continued in the retail sector ". We found additional support for this finding when we asked our survey participants whether they had thought about changing jobs, workplaces, or employers. Few responses were ambivalent; most participants' responses were either "not at all likely" or "very likely". We conclude some people in retail are very content to stay where they are while others are very willing to consider other possibilities.

With our theoretical model (see Figure 2) as point of departure, entailing that career anchors (Schein, 1993, 1996) are important elements in retail sector employees' identity (Andersson, 2012) and thereby influence how employees relate to their work and to their employers (Rousseau, 1995), our survey results explain the lack of high motivation for the traditional manager career among retail employees. The strongest career anchors for retail employees are instead job security, consistency with personal values, a good social community, lifestyle integration, pride, and avoidance of relocation. These are hygiene factors: they create discontent if unsatisfied; but they don't mean higher motivation if increased if they are already satisfied.

This analysis explains why some retail employees are generally content with their positions, which is a confirmation of previous studies (Wickelgren et al., 2012). When careers in retail are evaluated using objective measures, the possibility of ascent up the organisational hierarchy with more responsibility and higher salaries is somewhat limited. Career motivators such as achieving professional status, exercising influence over others, and making decisions are far less important to employees in the retail sector than to employees in many other sectors. The hygiene factors identified in the previous paragraph are not often associated with the traditional management career in which people must be willing to change jobs, relocate, etc.

Another interesting result is that the career anchors for managers and co-workers in retailing do not differ significantly. Both groups are influenced by the same set of career anchors listed above. We think this observation should be of concern to retailers when they recruit new managers or promote their co-workers to managerial positions. Our interviewed managers confirmed this lack of managerial motivation. Many said they became managers by chance or coincidence. They had not actively pursued a manager position.

We also found a significant difference between the importance of pride in one's work and the importance of status in one's work. Slightly more than 71 % of the participants in our survey indicated it was "very important" to feel pride in their work while only 11 % said it was "very important" that work offered status. This finding supports the conclusion that the traditional view of the objective /external career has limited value for explaining retail employees' career paths. The subjective / internal career seems much more important to most such employees (see Derr & Laurent, 1989). Pride in one's work relates to the internal satisfaction with self that it is compatible with "Who I want to be" (my identity) while status relates to others' perceptions of one's position or standing. In our interviews it becomes obvious how important a perceived match between job and personal values are. Work is not just about neutral activities in retailing; work is about identity and about whom they want to be in relation to others (Andersson, 2012).

In the international literature on retail careers, one particular topic stands out – the limited opportunities for women in the retail sector. This topic has been researched more than any other topic in the retail sector. Clearly, this is a serious problem internationally. However, based on our research, we found that female/male as a distinguishing variable for careers in the Swedish retail sector is weaker than, for example, the distinguishing variables of age/ generation or manager /co-worker.

Although the differences are not large, we found some statistically significant differences in our data. For example, we found that a difference in compensation exists between men and women in the Swedish retail sector. There seems to be no other explanation than male/female for this difference. We found that career anchors (e.g., job security, lifestyle integration, avoidance of relocation), which are not typically relevant in the traditional career trajectory, influence most employees in the retail trade sector (both men and women). Although these career anchors (Schein, 1993, 1996) are important for all the survey participants, we found, based on our statistical analysis, they are more important to the female employees than to the male employees. As a result, it seems fair to conclude these more indirect reasons explain that fewer women than men take manager positions in the retail sector, since we found no statistically significant difference between men and women regarding more direct reasons as work-related self-efficacy or aspiration for a manager career. The explanation of fewer women as managers seem to be an indirect consequence of other priorities rather than deliberate choices, that is, more or less conscious restrictions (see Broadbridge, 2010a; Maxwell et al., 2007).

Some research conducted in Anglo-Saxon settings (e.g., Broadbridge et al., 2007; Hurst & Good, 2009; Kim et al., 2009) reveals significant differences between Generation X members and Generation Y members related to their perceptions of careers in the retail sector. Research fairly consistently shows that the younger generation (Generation Y) has higher demands for development possibilities and careers and has more interest in becoming managers. Our study confirms these findings. We found statistically significant differences between the two generations as far as the wish to attain a manager position and the expectation of possibilities to develop professionally. Members of Generation Y are also less satisfied with their current career experiences than members of Generation X.

On the whole, it appears that members of Generation Y are more interested in climbing up the organisation ladder and in acquiring status than members of Generation X. Our analysis shows that the members of Generation X are more interested in taking pride in their work and in working in environments consistent with their personal values. However, it is difficult to ensure if the difference is related to age or to generation. If the age difference is the explanation, it may be that the retail sector will be challenged to have to offer possibilities more like traditional organisational careers.

# 10 Conclusions

Our results show that employees in the retail sector are primarily driven by factors (i.e., career anchors) that are quite different from the motivating factors found in the traditional hierarchical career. These career anchors are mainly job security, lifestyle integration, and avoidance of relocation. Achieving status, influencing others, and making decisions are less interesting and less motivating to retail employees. Hence the traditional career trajectory is less visible and less influential in the retail sector.

Our results show that a more comprehensive, even alternative or extended, understanding of the retail career is needed. This understanding should recognize that retail employees value work that is consistent with their personal values and work that gives them the opportunity to provide services to others. Previous studies (e.g., Wickelgren et al., 2012) have also shown that retail employees in Sweden are generally positive about their work even though their career opportunities in the traditional sense are limited. They are motivated more by morality than by money. For careers in the retail sector in general, this may mean career development decoupled from changing work positions.

We found some statistically significant differences in our data between managers and co-workers. Traditional career factors (i.e., career anchors) motivate the managers more than the co-workers. These factors include the possibility to make decisions and to exert influence over others. Managers also want their work to be more challenging. However, both managers and co-workers think taking pride in one's work is more important achieving status.

The international research on the retail sector points to a problematic gender dimension where women managers and co-workers encounter many more work-related difficulties than men managers and co-workers. However, we found that gender is a weak distinguishing variable between the men and women of our study. Although we found some statistically significant differences, they are quite small.

Although these differences are small, they may nevertheless explain why women are underrepresented in the store manager role in Sweden. Attitudes and motivations that are traditionally thought of as not particularly career-enhancing were stronger among the women than among the men in our study. However, we found no statistically significant differences between men and women as far as their desire to become managers and their confidence that they could succeed as managers. We conclude the underrepresentation of women in the store manager role is less about choice and willingness and more about different priorities. Women prioritize work that harmonizes with family/personal activities, the social community, job security, etc. This is consistent with previous research (e.g., Broadbridge, 2010a; Maxwell et al., 2007). Thus women in the retail sector set limitations on their careers. To increase the number of women in retail management positions, certain structural changes are needed in the sector.

Another reason the women in our study are less likely to take manager positions is that they think their current work is more varied and more satisfying than the men in the study. Career advancement, up the organisational ladder, requires a willingness to change. People who are content are less likely to seek change (Andersson, 2005).

## 10.1 Practical recommendations

On the whole, the industry is relatively well aware of the problems related to careers in retailing. Although we are aware that steps are being taken to solve these problems, in this section we emphasize a number of issues that are less often discussed and addressed by industry representatives. We begin with issues related to the industry as a whole, and then continue with issues that relate more specifically to retail companies and stores.

The retail sector is often described as a transitory employment sector. The number of younger workers in the sector is relatively large compared to other sectors, and the difference in the number of temporary employment contracts is no less significant. All parties seem to agree that this is a negative situation. One may ask: Why aren't the positive aspects of this situation more emphasized and how a retail job contributes to personal development? Even if it is a transitory position such as something to do "on the side", perhaps while studying at the university, people certainly learn and develop from these experiences. Retailing, as a service industry, provides invaluable experience in dealing with people. This experience is at the heart of all work as well as life. Young people can learn an enormous amount by working, even temporarily, in the retail sector.

Today, in Sweden as elsewhere, the high rate of youth unemployment is an extremely important political and social issue. The retail sector is one of the few business sectors that employ young people in large numbers. This employment can offer young people good work experience for their future careers. The retail sector as a whole would do well to promote its contribution to solving the problem of youth unemployment.

More women than men are employed in the retail sector in Sweden (two-thirds of the employees are women). However, more men than women are store managers. At more senior levels, the difference is considerably larger. This situation is not the result of women's lack of confidence that they can handle managerial positions. We found no statistically significant differences between men and women as far as their work self-confidence. Instead, the explanation has to do with the reality that women prioritize certain work-related factors more than men do. If more women are to move into management positions in retailing, then the retail sector should address these structural limitations for women in retailing.

People outside the retail sector are more negative towards work and careers in the sector than the people inside the sector. Therefore, actors in the retail sector need to work to improve the image of their profession. Although there are negative aspects of the retail sector compared to other Swedish business sectors, in international comparison Swedish retail is outstanding and should be a role model. The retail sector in Sweden offers significantly better work places and thus more career opportunities than the retail sectors in other countries. Sweden has several well-known international retail corporations that enable also international careers. One idea these organisations promote is the value of the experience acquired by working in retail. Even though retailing is somewhat limited as far as offering career paths, the experience it provides leads to opportunities in other organisations and other sectors where career paths are more evident.

As far as practical implications for retail companies and stores, perhaps one of the most significant results of our study is that job security is the most important factor for career employees in the retail sector. At first glance, this finding may be associated with a rather defensive employee image: Don't they want more? We conclude, however, that this attitude is a reaction against the current conditions in retailing today. Job security is basically a hygiene

factor: without job security, we are dissatisfied; with job security, we have no interest in yet "more" security. This may be the major problem in relation to career in retail. Without job security, retail employees are less interested in other development possibilities. If retail employees had more job security, then they would probably be more interested in other things, such as development. Job security is consequently not an issue only for individual employees, but also for the employers in the retail sector.

However, temporary employment is not necessarily a negative situation if such employment is regarded as transitory employment. Besides the flexibility it offers, temporary work can provide experience useful for obtaining permanent future employment. Nevertheless, retail companies and stores need to find ways to provide job security for the employees who are interested in permanent employment.

People who work the retail sector have relatively low confidence in their employers' promises and commitments. In general, their expectations about future development, higher salaries, and career opportunities are low. This is an important finding for employers. When people have such low expectations, they are less inclined to work harder and be more productive. The employer-employee relationship is one characterized by a reciprocal and strategic exchange in which contributions of some kind are exchanged for rewards of some kind. An employer who increases employee job security and who offers employee development possibilities as well as influence will likely find its employees more willing to assume responsibility and to take initiative. Such employees will do more than is expected. The prerequisites for cooperative teamwork also improve (Andersson & Tengblad, 2015). The employees of employers who do not make such promises and commitments are unlikely "to go the extra mile".

Although our study established that female/male is a weak distinguishing variable in the Swedish retail careers, retail companies and stores should be sensitive to work-related gender problems among their employees. For example, close review is needed if there is a disparity in compensation between men and women and if there is a disparity in the number of management positions held by women and men.

Many major retail chains today are working very actively to increase their number of female managers. This is important work given that the retail sector employs far more women than men, and far more men than women have managerial positions. In Sweden, there are some positive results in this area. Today more women are now employed in (lower) managerial positions than previously, and their percentage of total managers is steadily increasing. If the current trend continues in Sweden, in the not-too-distant future there should be as many female managers as male managers. Yet at the upper managerial level, the situation is less positive. At that level, the ratio of men to women is 10 to 1.  The glass ceiling is quite evident in the retail sector. This is an area where improvement is definitely needed.

## 10.2   Suggestions for further research

As is typical of most research, our research raises as many new questions as it answers. Therefore we offer the following suggestions for further research.

We suggest that more research is needed into retailing from the family perspective. Such research would take an integrated work/private setting. We saw in our research that many people who work in retail think of their work as the "family's second job". This means that another family member, with the "family's first job", has a more traditional, career-oriented

job that pays a higher salary and requires more travel. People with the family's second job want more time for the family and the home. Therefore they agree to lower salaries and fewer career opportunities as acceptable trade-offs for part-time work and less commitment. Thus it would be interesting to analyse career from the family perspective in which different motivations exist in different life phases. The gender aspect is important for this research because more women than men tend to have "second jobs" in families.

A related research subject is parental leave. Although we did not address this subject in our research, it is reasonably and indirectly linked to career through the career anchor called lifestyle integration (see Schein, 1993).

Our study focuses on careers of retail employees examined through the lens of their personal perspectives and experiences. Using the concept of the psychological contract, we analysed the employer-employee relationship from the employees' point of view. Researchers might wish to take a relational view jointly investigate the implicit contract from both parties points of view. Areas of particular interest are then employers' HR strategies in the retail sector and the effect of these strategies on the retail manager and the retail co-worker perceptions.

We found that the subjective / internal career is more important for women than for men, and the objective / external career is more important for men than for women. Researchers might examine in more depth this subjective / internal career in order to learn how women envision career success. Given that more women than men are employed in the retail sector, the female idea of success is worthy of investigation. The results would likely have important practical implications for retail employers.

Lastly, it would be interesting for researchers to conduct comparative studies of the retail sectors in various countries. In our study of the Swedish retail sector, our comparison was limited to other research of the international retail sector, but we made no empirical comparisons between retailing in Sweden and other countries. We think comparative international research could also be fruitful. In particular, the gender perspective could be interesting. We have mainly described differences between men and women, but we have not really gone into gender, that is, the social construction of male/female. More detailed, qualitative studies would be needed to understand how gender is constructed in the retail sector.

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