Breaking through the Ceiling

Studying the Impact of Mentorships on Female Career Development
Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how mentorships can impact women’s career development. Previous research shows that there is an inequality gap between men and women on management positions and the aim for this research paper is to see if mentorships could help close this gap and make the top-level management more gender equal.

The Swedish banking industry is interesting to research due to its overall equality in the organisation, but extreme inequality in the top of the hierarchy. Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the EU but are still struggling to eliminate structural discrimination from their organisations. Mentorships has through previous studies shown to be a helpful tool for women to progress in their careers and increase gender balance in workplaces.

To be able to answer the research questions and fulfil the purpose of this research a qualitative research approach was applied. Five semi-structured interviews was held in order to gather empirical data. The participants were women in managerial positions within one of Sweden’s largest banks. Because of a confidentiality agreement, the name of the bank will not be revealed but rather be referred to as The Bank.

The findings of this research show that both formal and informal mentorships can be used as a tool for women to progress in their career. Mentorships give women the support they need to believe in their own worth, they also get access to new parts of organisations that before has been unattainable for them and get an insight in the political games within an organisation.
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1 Introduction

In this chapter, the relevance of the research topic is presented. Followed by the research problem, purpose and research questions. This to give the reader an in-depth presentation of the main problem.

1.1 Background

Today, there are less than half as many women as men in leadership positions within the corporate sector in the European Union. The reasons for this gender gap in decision-making positions, such as in politics and business, are many and complex. One of the major causes for the underrepresentation of women are traditional stereotypes and gender roles, but also the lack of support for women (European Commission, 2016). In the corporate sector in the EU, only 23.3 % of board members of the largest publicly listed companies are women. That share has increased with an average of 2.1 % per year over a time period of five and a half years. Yet, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender balance (European Commission, 2016).

The struggle for equality is an interesting issue and it is challenging the culture aspect and norms in society and improvement of gender equality at top level include more progress at the very top of organisations (Statistic Central Bureau, 2018). Sweden is one of the top ten countries within equality in the EU and is in the leading edge of having female board members, with 36.1 % women in corporate boards. This is due to good education policies, where gender equality is one of the cornerstones of the education system (Swedish Institute, 2018). This research will focus on Sweden since it is an interesting country when it comes to equality between the genders in organisations, where equality is a primary focus, but it is still not achieved.

The history of gender balance and equality in Sweden goes back to the 1800s, but women only received the right to vote in the political election in the year 1919. One industry in Sweden where it has been a dominant masculine environment is the banking industry, although changes have been taking place and is currently ongoing (Allbright, 2018). The banking industry is one of the industries that are dominated by women in terms of employees, yet, at management level, the majority are men (Acker, 2006).

The inequality between the genders within organisations can generate from structural discrimination. Research provides potential solutions for how to reduce the inequality gap between genders in management positions, where mentorships could be an effective tool in
order to encourage women to climb further up the career ladder (Burke, 2007). In an organisational context, mentorship is largely recognised as a positive support structure for extended learning and personal career development (Hägg & Politis, 2017).

1.2 Research problem

According to Burke (2007), previous studies show that there is no direct solution to increase female managers or decrease the gap between the genders. However, there are things that could be done to reduce the gap and create a more gender-balanced future.

Existing research has been done by focusing on different contexts, however, not on the banking industry in Sweden. Therefore, this research focuses on women in one of the largest banks in Sweden through a singular case study, revealing why they do not have the same career opportunities as men and how mentors can be used to improve their possibilities to reach managerial positions. This particular research gap is interesting to look at because of the gender equality in lower levels of The Bank and the inequality in the top of the hierarchy. Even though Sweden is one of the most equal countries when it comes to gender, women in Sweden still do not have the same opportunities as men. Women earn less, hold fewer positions of power, and are not being treated equally in the workplace (SCB, 2018). Hence, a country as equal as Sweden is still not doing enough for women and their career development opportunities.

Structural discrimination is a problem in most organisations, where the organisational culture do not provide everyone with the same opportunities and misbehavioural actions can take place (Pincus, 1996). This study will examine situations where entire organisations are built to give people different opportunities depending on their gender, and how they could work to prevent it, and by that improve female career development. It is of great importance for organisations to achieve equality since it contributes to better performance of women, who feel fairly treated and appreciated. It is also important for the company culture to have an equal distribution from top to bottom, to give multiple perspectives, a better understanding of different kinds of people, and increased organisational performance (Tuson, n.d.).

The different kind of mentorship structures, formal and informal, have in the last 20 years been researched to see how they can impact career development (Burke, 2007). Both the mentors and the mentees have shown positive outcomes from mentorships, including a higher feeling of satisfaction, increased visibility, and mobility in their careers. As organisations continue to
focus on the adaptability of their employees and the effectiveness in organisations, mentorships are great to help the employees become part of the companies faster (Burke, 2007).

The inequality between the genders is not only a problem in organisations but also in society. It is an important topic to research since the statistics clearly show there are still major inequality issues between the genders (SCB, 2018). The aim is to illustrate the inequality in the workplace and letting women learn from this study in order to improve their own career development. This study is assumed to be interesting for women who are interested in reaching top management positions in male dominated industries, to see if a mentor can be a useful development tool for them.

1.3 Purpose
To examine the gap between what theory states and what the reality looks like, the purpose of this study is to analyse the structural discrimination in organisations and if female’s career development can be influenced by mentors. The intention is to gather information from female’s, who have or have had managerial positions, about their career process and their experiences of mentorships that influence their careers.

The intention is to find this by analysing:

1. Female managers at The Bank’s career development and the characteristics of their mentorship experience.

2. The existing literature and theories within mentorship that influence female career development.
1.4 Research questions

To contribute to the research found on female career development, the aim is to identify if mentors can help women to overcome the structural discrimination that women experience, especially women on high management positions. Therefore, our research aims to answer the following research questions:

*RQ1: How do mentorships help female managers overcome structural discrimination?*

*RQ2: Which mentorship structure appears to be most influential for female career development?*
1.5 Definitions

Career - A career is defined as the series of occupations a person performs during one’s life (Super, 1980; Greenhaus, Callahan & Godschalk, 2000).

Career development - “An ongoing process by which individuals’ progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes and tasks” (Greenhaus et al., 2000).

Female career development - Defined as the difference in how men and women climb the career ladder, where women should have the same possibilities as men in ambitions and abilities and by sharing the child and home responsibilities with their partner (Burke, 2007).

Formal mentoring - A structured mentoring relationship based on a specific business objective, with a series of processes designed to create effective and measured for a specified amount of time.

Glass ceiling - The glass ceiling is defined as an invisible barrier, which prevents women from climbing the corporate ladder (Lyness & Thompson, 2000).

Informal mentoring - A loosely structured mentoring relationship based on more emotional commitment such as friendship, personal or professional respect from each to the other. It may develop into a long-term relationship.

Mentor - A mentor can be those individuals who can help one person to develop and individuals who one can learn from, either by observing their methods or copying their behaviour (Gentile, 2012).

Structural discrimination - This refers to the policies of dominant group institutions and the behaviour of the individuals who implement this and control the institutions, which are neutral in intent but have a harmful effect on minority groups (Adams, et al., 2000).

Management level - Defined as both the middle and top management level within an organisation.
2 Literature review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background to the topic and the central concepts. Theories are presented to give the reader a deeper understanding of Structural Discrimination and Career Development, followed by the Female Career Development process and the Importance of Mentors.

2.1 Discrimination

To have the same opportunity independently of one’s gender is considered to be a human right, however, this is not the situation in most organisations. Discrimination is described to be unfair and negative actions meant to limit or repudiate the equal treatment of individuals and groups of people (Allport, 1954). According to Macarie and Moldovan (2012), discrimination is “the process of differentiation among people based on characteristics that are not adequate or relevant for the activity for which the differentiation is made”. It can also be seen as the practice of unfair treatment of different groups of people (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d). There are two sides to discrimination, the first one as mentioned, the negative aspects, but it can be positive for some individuals, as when it comes to in-group biases. Meaning that discrimination can lead to greater opportunities for one group, rather than a loss for another (Stainback, 2015).

2.1.1 Structural discrimination

Employment opportunities, treatment, and experiences are not universal across workplaces, the organisational context is what makes it possible for differentiation between social groups (Stainback, 2015). Structural and cultural discrimination are possible to identify in society, these occurrences begins in the organisations and shape our society, it is also in the organisations they can be changed (Stainback, 2015; Reskin, 2003). Routines, practices and procedures contribute to consequences for how equality and discrimination are a part of an organisation. When these are taken for granted and stay unquestioned, it can most likely lead to an unhealthy organisational culture and shape individuals’ habits and actions (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).
According to Fiske (2002), cognitive biases refers to “how information is processed and how errors in judgement may emerge from this normal functioning of the brain”. Research has shown that in the context of employment discrimination, cognitive biases can skew decision-makers in an organisation to treat employees unfairly. The categories made up in the mind when being biased does not only work as social distinctions between different groups but hold cultural meaning about the worth of the different groups and their competences (Ridgeway, 1997).

2.1.2 Structural gender discrimination

Structural gender discrimination refers to the policies implemented by the dominant gender and the individuals who have to follow them (Pincus, 1996). The organisation itself has no intention of being discriminatory with their policies, however, the effect of acting upon them will turn out in such ways. These types of policies become legitimised because they seem to be gender neutral, while they actually formalise men’s privilege at the workplace (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). This is confirmed by Bobbitt-Zeher (2011), stating that the issue with structural discrimination is that it is built on gender stereotypes, affecting male and female workers differently. The policies being set in an organisation may seem gender neutral from the outside, however, many of them are often written by the dominant gender and will therefore, have another effect on the minority groups in the workplace (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

According to Burstein (1989), women working in male-dominated workplaces will be more vulnerable to gender discrimination. The reason is that men want to preserve their privileged positions in these situations and continue being the strongest gender. Structural gender discrimination is one of the hardest discriminations to work against since there is no bad intention behind the discrimination and it is often not illegal (Pincus, 1996). To many people this means continuing with business as they always have, which is the common rationalisation of expected or standard practice (Gentile, 2012). To act against structural discrimination requires changing the organisation's core values and the fundamental principles of how a company do things (Stainback, 2015).

Player et al. (2019), states that leadership potential is valued higher than leadership performance, still, only for men. Leadership potential is used to identify future leaders, while performance indicators only are looking at how well a candidate is performing their current job,
not a future one. Employers regard potentials as a more desirable trait than performance and experience, since this show possibility for advancement outside of the current position. Player et al. (2019) show that women focus more on their previous experience rather on future possibilities, giving men an advantage when searching for career opportunities since men focus on their potential in a new job. The genders are also assessed in recruitments on these different qualities, women on performance and men on potential.

2.2 Female Career Development

The subject of female career development has been discussed and evolved over a long time period. To increase knowledge about the behaviour of women who are making a career, there has been both theoretical and empirical research made over the past decades (Betz, 2005). Larwood and Gutek (1987) point out that there should be a separate study to women’s career development, since it predicts that the career issues women face differ from those of men.

2.2.1 The definition of Female Career Development

The career development of women is more complex than men’s, due to the obstacles’ women can face when advancing in the career (Broadbridge & Fielden, 2015). Therefore, Super (1980) explains the necessity for a separate theory for women’s career development. Career interruptions are much more common in women’s careers compared to men due to pregnancy and childcare. This could lead to women prioritising family with the possible expense of their careers (Cambois, Garrouste & Pailhé, 2017). The factor of work-life balance limits the career development for women, not necessarily only by their employer but also from their own changed priorities.

2.2.2 History of Female Career Development

The historical development of women's careers has gone from not accepting women to work outside of the home, to women being CEOs of large corporations. Traditionally women were responsible for the household and the kids, while men were working in order to provide for the family. This distribution of responsibility could explain why there are fewer women on higher positions within organisations. Both Zytowski, (1969) and McMahon & Patton, (2006) explain that women’s careers include gender roles, occupational roles, marriage, motherhood and homemaking and not only their jobs. Furthermore, for those women who have made careers,
the focus has been on completing a specific task rather than getting a long-term benefit from their career-oriented behaviour (Marshall, 1994; Hennig & Jardim, 1978).

2.2.3 Career development theories

The meaning of career varies between each individual and many different factors influence the development of each career. The definition by Super (1980) says that a career is the combination of roles during a person's lifetime, sometimes simultaneously, is as significant now as it was then. Super’s career development theory holds the idea of developing the self-concept, which changes over time and evolves as a result of experience. From this perspective, career development is lifelong and not only seen as the period when one is working (Super, 1963). Furthermore, Gallos (1989) suggests that focus should be on women’s developmental needs under their working years. Hence, a mentor could be a helpful tool to encourage and guide the self-development process.

Career development has traditionally been seen as the progression a person makes from a low-level job to a high-level position within an organisation. The traditional idea of a career is to advance within one company, however, in recent times these ideas include a career portfolio with many career moves (Heery & Noon, 2008). The traditional idea, that career development equates promotions and an increase in salary, origins from the concept of reinventing career development (Hanson, 1994), but that is not necessarily the reality today. Making a lateral career move, meaning a change of work tasks and department but still retaining the same level in the hierarchy without an increase in salary, can still be seen as a step of development in one's career (Heery & Noon, 2008).

Super (1980) acknowledged the need for a special theory for women examining their occupational issues and career patterns. Continuously, Astin (1984) established a model of career development that included men and women. Her model explained the work-related behaviour of men and women by showing that: “Work motivation is the same for men and women, but they make different choices because their early socialization experiences and their structural opportunities are different” (Astin, 1984).
2.2.4 Factors influencing women’s career development

There are both positive and negative factors that can influence women’s career development. If women would have knowledge about them, it would probably be easier to include or avoid them in their career progress. The factors influencing the career development of women will be presented as positive and negative factors based on theories.

2.2.4.1 Positive factors

O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) found that having role models and mentors have a great influence on the development of their careers. The rejection of traditional attitudes towards women's roles together with high self-esteem has a positive effect on the development in their careers, for example, women dare to apply for higher positions (Betz, 1994).

Three important skills found to be beneficial is hard work, positive attitude and great communication skills (Brownell, 1994). The age of women is shown to have an impact on their careers, with a higher age they are seen as more experienced, which possibly makes the surroundings trust them more (Tharenou, Latimer & Conroy, 1994). Adding to that, the marital status of women has been linked with the ability to excel in their careers (Chusmir, 1982; Lambert, 1990; Schwartz, 1989).

2.2.4.2 Negative factors

In general, women face more difficulties and barriers compared to men when progressing through the hierarchy (Broadbridge & Fielden, 2015). The barriers include “Early-gender role orientation, employment inequalities and family responsibilities” (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Adding to that is societal norms, age-old gender roles and differing economic roles (ILO, 2015).

The most observed barrier is the glass ceiling which prevents women for climbing further on the corporate ladder (Lyness & Thompson, 2000). It is very difficult to measure how often this occurs in organisations today, mostly because it usually happen without people knowing that they are acting in a way that hinder women. Goodman, Fields and Blum (2003) explain that women apply to lower management positions and avoid the higher management positions. Therefore, it is difficult for the decision-makers to help the progression of women. The effect of the glass ceiling is supposed to be most noticeable on middle management level in organisations (Naff, 1994; Schneer & Reitman, 1995).
In the ILO report (2015), several barriers that hinder women’s career advancement was listed to display the most commonly appearing obstacles women face on their career paths. The first barrier is that women have more family responsibilities than men. The lack of possibilities to balance work-life demands with family-life is one of the major obstacles and has a negative impact on women's career development (Mattis, 1994; Brownell, 1994). This goes hand in hand with the lack of flexible work solutions which is the second barrier. Inflexibility in the working schedule and lack of solutions to enable women to keep working when their life situation changes are issues that would improve the possibilities for women to continue their career after starting a family. This is an ongoing change, at least by looking at parental leave in Sweden where the situation is becoming more and more equal (Försäkringskassan, 2018). Another barrier, listed in the report, is that many organisations have a masculine corporate culture, this is difficult to change since it is controlled by the organisation. The next barrier is that there are very few role models for women to look up to and use as motivation for their own career progress. The lack of role models has shown to be a major barrier in the progress of advancement in the career and makes women to rather stay at the position they are at (Coughlan, 2002; Wirth, 2004). The final barrier is the inherent gender bias in recruitment and promotion that is happening in organisations today. This is an issue that organisations needs to be aware of if their aim is to become more gender equal.

### 2.2.5 How to overcome female career obstacles

It is often argued that women have the same possibilities as men to advance up the corporate ladder, particularly if women are entering the same occupations and are similar to men in ambitions and abilities. Women are assumed to have successful careers by following the male model and by sharing child and home responsibilities with their partner (Burke, 2007). Although the mentioned negative factors, create obstacles for women to advance in the organisation, there are specific actions to empower women and minimise the gap between women and men at managerial positions, one of them is mentorship relationships (Ragins, Cotton & Murphy, 1999).
2.3 Mentorships

As described by Kram (1983), a mentorship is an interference where a more experienced person takes on the role of guiding a not as experienced person in the organisation. Which is similar to Gentile’s (2012) definition of a mentor, simply a mentor can be individuals one can learn from. A mentorship can be of importance for the purpose of career development at the beginning of a career, and also in the midcareer period (Kram, 1983). The purpose of the mentorship relation is to create opportunities to discuss personal or business-related issues with a focus on the mentee’s personal development and learning (Hägg & Politis, 2017).

2.3.1 Sponsors

In a mentoring model the mentoring function is a part of many relationships, where sponsors is one of them, as described by Hunt and Michael (1983). A sponsor, compared to a mentor, is an individual who are able to affect another person’s career by promoting them for new positions in the organisation, this by sharing their own network (Hunt & Michael, 1983). Similarities can be found in the career model by Dalton, Thompson and Price (1977) where both mentorships and sponsorships are included as a primary person who is responsible for helping a mentee achieve higher professional positions.

2.3.2 Formal and informal mentoring relationship

In this study there are two different types of mentorships discussed, the formal and the informal mentorship. According to Burke (2007), an informal mentoring relationship develops on an ad hoc basis, which refers to a relationship that is not planned beforehand and happens for a specific purpose. One of the crucial differences between these two mentoring relationships is that informal mentorships develop spontaneously, since it is unstructured, compared to formal mentorships that develops with organisational interference, usually by matching a mentor with a mentee. According to Ragins et al. (1999), there is little research showing if formal or informal relationships even differs in the functions the mentor contributes with. Although, formal and informal mentorships differ in the form they are structured and the length of the relationship. Many organisations estimate that formal mentorships are as efficient as informal mentorships and offer their employees formal relationships as a replacement for the informal (Ragins et al., 1999). Sponsors on the other hand are not divided into different types, compared to mentors (Hunt & Michael, 1983).
2.3.3 The importance of mentors

Entering the learning development relationship with a mentor provides opportunities, actions, and social capital, satisfying needs of the mentee. Since the purpose of the mentorship is to deliver career- and psychological functions, this could be coaching, friendship or a role model to look up to. All of these help the mentee to establish a role in the organisation and prepare for advancement. Kram (1983) describes the phases of the mentoring relationship, as changes in the individual’s needs that causes the relationship to move forward to the next phase. As well as when the mentees increase of confidence and the growing need for independence, the relationship will enter the separation phase and the mentorship might end (Kram, 1983).

Further, Ragins et al. (1999) state that formal mentoring programs are being implemented with success in many organisations and it is estimated that a third of major companies have a formal mentoring program. The increasing amount of formal mentoring relationships in organisations has particular more relevance for women than men. This because women face major barriers to develop informal mentoring relationships compared to men and will, therefore, be more acceptable to search for a formal relationship, as a replacement for an informal relationship (Ragins et al., 1999). Many organisations target women for formal mentoring programs as an attempt to help women to develop in their career, advance in the organisation and break through the glass ceiling (Catalyst, 1993). Both mentors and sponsors are useful career development tools, especially for women. The difference of the two is their area of responsibility, a mentor is more responsible for the personal growth and the sponsor for the career development (Hunt & Michael, 1983).

2.3.4 Mentoring women in organisations

As research suggests mentoring is a great career development tool, and even more for women. Numerous studies have shown that women using mentorships experience greater self-esteem and confidence, leading them to make more career advancements and getting high-level managerial roles (Ragins, 2002). One of the reasons to this was researched by both Kram (1985) and Vance and Olsen (2002), who came to the conclusion that women got access to politics and information through their mentors that had previously been unobtainable for them.

Previous research indicate that female networks are another type of career development tool, although Mullen (1994) confirms that mentorship benefits both parties involved in the
relationship, which makes it difficult to separate mentorships and networks to see their differences. Networks are the process of developing and maintaining relationships and it can be informal or formal, just like mentorships (Davidson & Burke, 2000). A female network usually offer information with job opportunities and meetings with business contacts where one could come in contact with mentors. The network can be seen as a broader group of contacts with a personal social capital where friends and family are included, compared to mentorships that do not evaluate a person's social capital (Lin, 2002). Networks are considered to be more helpful and useful when people do not expect anything from them. Compared to mentorships where a person seeks the opportunity of personal growth and the next step in their careers, which makes mentorships a more effective tool for career development, according to Davidson and Burke (2000).

2.3.4.1 Gender of the mentor
Early research shows that there could be a difference in the outcome or the relationship depending on the gender of the mentor since sexual concerns and expectations could restrict role perceptions in cross-gender mentorships (Kram, 1985). However, research done by Ragins and McFarlin (1990) made it clear that there is no significance influence on the mentor roles and the outcome of the mentorship by either the mentor or the mentees gender. Differences that could be seen were that the relationship outside of the workplace differs. In cross-gender mentorships the participants were less likely to engage in activities outside of the workplace compared to in same-gender mentorships. Additionally, a woman having a female mentor is more likely to see her as a role model than a male mentee is (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990).

2.4 Reflection of the literature review
From the literature above, structural discrimination is a major issue for the inequality of genders at the workplace. Structural discrimination contributes to an unfair judgement of individuals based on more than just the qualities needed for the job at hand. Because of this issue, it is impossible for women to have the same opportunity as men in the workplace and to have the same career development. Having that said, the motivational factors are the same for men and women, as stated by Astin (1984). However, their early socialisation experiences and structural opportunities are not equal. Since these differences in female and male career developments exist and the theory clearly shows that they cannot be compared to one another, solutions for this must arise. Mentorships are a suitable tool for women to advance in the organisation and is
providing confidence to the women to strive for higher positions. However, mentorships are not the only way of helping women develop their careers, other options such as networks and sponsors are preferred by some researchers (Davidsson & Burke, 2000; Hunt & Michael, 1983). The research found a lack of case studies with real examples, as well as comparative studies of how different types mentorships and other career development tools work.
3 Methodology and method

In this chapter the methodology is being presented, including the research approach, philosophy and strategy of the study. Followed by the section of method, covering the data collection, the sampling method and data analysis. Lastly, the final section introduces the data quality concerning the ethical issues.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy of this paper is interpretivism, since a small sample is used in the qualitative data collection to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the topic through thoughts and reflections (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The main objective of this study is to understand how mentorships can influence a woman's career, and to connect different tools that could be useful in order to decrease the structural discrimination within an organisation. To understand this, interpretivism is used because it involves feelings and emotions to explain the behaviour in the organisation and mentorships. Positivism is therefore not used since the philosophy focus on a larger sample. A quantitative approach would not be suitable for this study since statistical data would not be able to reveal the underlying observations. Since the purpose of this study is to analyse the structural discrimination in organisations and if the development of female’s careers can be influenced by mentors, the qualitative approach provides the best opportunity to give explicit answers from the in-depth interviews, that later will be analysed (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.1.2 Research Approach

The different form of reasoning is deductive, inductive and abductive where the research approach connects theory and research (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Deductive reasoning is narrower and limiting, where one takes the rule and the explanation and derives the observation. Compared to inductive that is more open and exploratory, because the reasoning starts with the observation and then the rule followed by the explanation (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013; Saunders et al., 2012). This study has an abductive research approach since it starts with multiple understandings of the phenomena searching for the theory that would best explain the observations. The issue at hand was observed, then literature and theory was found to get a set of facts that later influenced the data collection and research design to find the best
interpretation of the phenomena. In contrast to inductive approach, where one match the data
with theory, abductive seeks to observe and then explain (Mentere & Ketokivi, 2013).

3.1.3 Research Strategy
A case study, which was chosen as the research strategy, was conducted with the purpose of
getting an in-depth understanding of the topic and its context through various techniques (Collis
& Hussey, 2014). Further, a single case study is being used which consist of in-depth
observation of the phenomenon, which is suitable for this research. According to Collis and
Hussey (2014), a case can be a particular business or group or workers, for this study it is a
selection of women at The Bank. In a case study strategy, triangulation is shown through
multiple data collection techniques within one study (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.2 Method
3.2.1 Data Collection
The data collection of this study was done through a literature search and primary data. The
literature review includes important concepts and a theoretical framework. The primary data is
represented by the empirical study, following an abductive research approach. The research
questions are going to be answered through the conducted interviews (Gill & Johnson, 2010).

The chosen technique for data collection is snowball sampling, where the authors utilised their
networks and their contacts to include people with experience. Before the interviews a mixture
of semi-structured and structured questions was planned, which leave space for developed
answers.

3.2.2 Literature Search
The literature review was gathered in order to provide an overview of the existing research
within the field of study. This enables mapping and possible identification of research gaps
(Saunders et al., 2012). The databases, keywords and date of publication can be seen in Table
1 below. Additionally, articles that were cited multiple times were chosen over articles cited
less times, and the most recent articles and theories was used over more dated ones. However,
since the topic is niched, no big amount of narrow research was found, low cited articles with
original data and dated articles had to be used in order to find gaps and future research areas.
The collected literature is a part of the triangulation in this research, this to use different sources of data to get a complete understanding of the phenomena. The literature has shown a gap in the research, which has been of importance to form the outline of the study.

<table>
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<td>Databases and search engines</td>
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<td>Language of publication</td>
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</table>

Table 1: Search parameters

3.2.3 Primary Data

The primary data was collected through five individual semi-structured interviews with selected women working at The Bank. Using this in-depth technique as the research method to gather primary data includes insights of the participants’ actions, thoughts, feeling and unsaid meanings in form of body language (Collis & Hussey, 2014), which this study aims to do. Semi-structured interviews are defined as non-standardised and belong to qualitative research interviews (King, 2004). This structure means that researchers follow themed listed questions including key questions that are aimed to be answered, although certain changes can be made. This, to open up for the possibility to ask follow-up questions when the participants reply more interesting than predicted or with a short answer that needs to be developed further. Follow-up questions was prepared in advance, but further additional questions could be added. This made it possible to adapt the process of the interview and retrieve information that would not have been possible with a strict structure. However, by having themes and key questions made it possible to make sure the interview stayed on track and minimised irrelevant information. By using this type, including discussion, it was most suitable to capture the information with an audio-recorder together with taking notes (Saunders et al., 2012).
3.2.4 Population and Sampling

This study is conducted through qualitative research by interviewing a selection of women working at The Bank. All participants in this research were located in Stockholm and the interviews were conducted over a one-month period. Participants did not receive any compensation for their participation in this study. However, the empirical findings and analysis will be presented to The Bank to enable future organisational development.

3.2.4.1 The Bank

The Bank is a large organisation and one of the leading banks in Sweden. This bank was chosen due to close contact with an employee at The Bank, which could help the authors find more interview subjects. As previously described the name of The Bank will be held confidential due to ethical aspects. This bank was chosen since it is a solid Swedish company, with many employees and offer good possibilities to climb the internal career ladder, which suits this study.

To find the potential participants for this study, three criteria were set. The first one was that the participants should be women with experience of managerial positions. This due to that questions regarding corporate culture and comparisons between men and women are included in the research. The second criteria was that they should have been working at The Bank for a long enough time to have changed position at least once. Meaning that they have experienced career development at The Bank and would be able to answer questions regarding the opportunities for women within The Bank. The last criteria were that the women needed to either have personal experiences of mentorships or have viewed the mentorship process closely. This in order to be able to answer questions about mentorships as a career development tools and how this is used at The Bank.

3.2.4.2 Womentor Almega

The mentorship program Womentor was established in 2006 and is a strategic initiative by IT and Telecom Industries in Almega, Sweden's leading employer organisation for the service sector. It is a tool to support companies in the IT and Telecoms sector in Sweden, with the mission to increase the proportion of women in management positions. Womentor focuses on nominating a woman in a management position to be a mentee in the programme for one year. What makes Womentor unique compared to other mentorship and leadership programme is that
it requires the company as a whole to actively participate in the process, not only the mentee (Womentor, n.d.). The acting CEO at Almega, Anne-Marie Fransson, were interviewed to share her insights from the programme. She has been active in the mentorship programme since the start and her knowledge contributed to this study by providing a deeper understanding of how a mentorship program can help women advance within the organisation.

3.2.5 Question Design and Formulation
There are three types of questions that are suitable for semi-structured interviews, they are divided into; (1) open, (2) probing, (3) specific and closed questions (Saunders et al., 2012). In the conducted interviews the majority of the questions were probing questions, since they are more direct with the aim of giving more information, however, all different types of questions were included. Probing questions were used with the aim to retrieve personal thoughts, beliefs and experiences in an in-depth manner. Specific questions were rarely used, only when short answers were needed. These types of questions were used if needed to get further understanding about the answer. Open questions were not suitable since they are too broad and would not provide the right understanding.

3.2.5.1 Pilot test
Before the data collection at The Bank, a pilot test interview was held with a woman outside The Bank’s organisation. The process and design of the questions was built from the literature search and tested in the pilot test. The purpose of the pilot test was for the authors to practice asking the questions in order to get an estimate duration of the interview and to generate feedback on how they were formulated. Possible suggestions for improvements was gathered from the pilot test as well from the participants when sending out the questions via email, in prior to the meeting. The feedback was an important aspect of the quality of the questions and how the questions responded to the literature review.

3.2.5.2 The interviews
The first step to gather the primary data was to research who and why the chosen participants would be interviewed. Invitations was sent out via email and a physical meeting was planned. A background questionnaire was sent out to the participants before the interview, this to get personal information about them and learn about their previous work experience (Appendix 1). Questions were asked to see if they had experiences of mentorships, and the answers were
useful for the authors before the meeting, further, the final questions were sent to the participants one week before the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company: The Bank</th>
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<tr>
<th>Company: Womentor Almega</th>
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* xx.xx.xxxx describes the date when interview was held (dd.mm.yyyy).
**0:00:00 express the number of hours, minutes and seconds of how long the interview lasted (h:mm:ss).

Table 2: Interviews at The Bank

The interview questions were structured into different themes following the structure of the research (Appendix 2). All interviews were held face-to-face, and the length was on average 60 minutes. To avoid misinterpretation, the chosen language was Swedish, expect for one that was held in English on demand from the participant. Swedish was used since it is the mother tongue for both and would therefore allow for richer and developed answers. The anonymity of the interviews also created a more comfortable situation for the participants, by making sure they could discuss sensitive topics and share personal experiences.

Fransson did not ask to be anonymous in the interview that was held over Skype in Swedish. The goal was to achieve insights of the mentorship program and not a personal experience of having a mentor, therefore the duration of the interview was shorter than with the managers.
3.2.6 Data analysis
A challenge the researchers can face when using interviews as the method of data collection is the large amount of data. This was handled by the interviews were transcribed, read through carefully and written into summaries with the most important information, this to make the data more manageable. The summaries were translated from Swedish into English to make it easier to analyse, therefore understandings could differ due to translation. However, this was the most suitable approach considering the time frame and data collection (Saunders et al., 2012). During the analysis process, the primary data has been compared to the theories within the literature review in order to find similarities and differences.

Content analysis was used in order to find the important information and useful data in the transcripts. This type of analysis includes a procedure of finding similarities and differences through categorisation of the data for purposes of classification and summarisation. The basic idea of this analysis is to identify the data that is informative for the study, and to sort out the important message that can be hidden in the mass within each interview, that later can help answer the research question. The categories were used throughout the study to keep the flow of information coherent. To illustrate the findings, quotes from the women were included together with the early findings in theory. By using the list by Hancock (2002) all steps necessary for a qualitative content was met (Appendix 4).

3.2.7 Data Quality
During the preparation and process of collecting the data, certain issues had to be avoided (Saunders et al., 2012). When conducting a qualitative research, it is important to consider triangulation, reliability, bias, validity and ethical issues.

3.2.7.1 Triangulation
Triangulation refers to the use of different sources of data to get a complete understanding of a phenomena (Patton, 1999). The triangulation is used to test validity through different perspectives (Carter et al., 2014). Five interviews were conducted to get insight from women who have made a career development. Additionally, triangulation was made with Fransson with the aim to get a perspective from a person within the business of mentorships.
The interviews are seen as individual cases but together they are seen as one large case. Therefore, each interview case could be compared to the others to identify similarities and differences between them. Triangulation was also created when these cases were compared to the literature found in the research, and to Fransson’s answers. When doing this, multiple perspectives has been sought to give the most accurate view of the phenomenon of research and to produce a reliable and valid study.

3.2.7.2 Reliability
Reliability refers to the accuracy and precision of the measurement and absence of differences in the results if the research was to be repeated (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In a qualitative study reliability is a lot harder to accomplish than in a quantitative study. Reliability has been attempted to be achieved through consistency within the employed analytical procedures. This research is using the same questionnaire for all participants, the same methodology and method throughout the study, and the same analysis tools for all interviews. Bias could be seen as a threat to reliability, which is addressed in the following section (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.2.7.3 Bias
In order to avoid both the interviewer and the participants biases, preparation was necessary. The preparation included researching the issue of biases and how they can affect the interview process. The action of sending out the questionnaires in advance can be seen as a way for the women to give biased answers because they can prepare their answers and not say the first thing that comes to mind. However, sending out the questions will contribute to more in depth and thoughtful information about their experience which is what this study is seeking. This was also done so the participants knew that the main questions were not changed depending on their answers. All participants got asked the same questions, with some alterations in back-up questions. The questions were checked and approved of from the tutor and the contact person at The Bank.

The interviewer was aware to avoid asking leading questions, which could lead to biased answers. During the interviews all three authors were present, this to avoid researcher bias. To show attentive listening, the interviewer was made sure not to interrupt the respondent.
3.2.7.4 Validity

Validity seeks that the authors of the study has gained access to the interviewee’s experiences and knowledge and has the capacity to infer meaning. Validity can be achieved by using multiple sources of data (Saunders et al., 2012), which is the literature search and primary data in this study. A review of the gathered literature was helpful in order to develop a framework for the interviews and further analysis. The follow up questions was used when needed in order to make sure that the answers provided was connected to the question (Creswell, 2009). Validity is met when the research question is valid for the wanted outcome, methodology, design, sampling and data analysis, which all are appropriate and valid for the research. Additionally, result and conclusion need to be valid for the context (Leung, 2015) This has been attempted to be met throughout the entire thesis and is included in the method and methodology section.

3.2.7.5 Generalisability

Generalisability is the extension of the study for a larger sample and is an issue that is being raised often when using qualitative research. A small sample is being used in this study, due to the interpretivist approach, in comparison to quantitative studies that are using larger samples. Generalisability concerns whether the findings are applicable to bigger samples or not, rather than that qualitative studies are less generalisable than quantitative studies (Collis & Hussey, 2014). If the interviews would have been made in a different country or industry, that could generate a wider research result providing a generalisation opportunity to provide more reliable results.

3.2.7.6 Ethical Issues

It is of great importance to be honest and truthful when doing research (Collis & Hussey, 2014). To secure that this study was conducted in an ethical way, guidelines were set up beforehand. Confidentiality is very important for the quality of the study (Adams et al., 2000), since the data could be reflected back to the company and the participants. It was therefore decided together with The Bank how the participants’ personal information and the company were to be treated. Since the sample of this study are women working at high-level positions discussing their background and the company they are currently working at, it was decided to be held confidential. This to make sure the women would feel confident sharing their experiences and also so that the company would not be the focus of the research.
According to the law of GDPR, The General Data Protection Regulation (Datinspektionen, n.d) other measures had to be taken as well to secure the privacy of the participants and The Bank. Each interview had a minimum of two audio recordings in addition to notes taken to secure an accurate data collection (Saunders et al., 2012). All the recordings were stored at a safe hard drive, the women were named 1-5, and only a code key held physically by the authors could identify which manager is which. As soon as the transcripts was finalised, the recordings were deleted. The rest of the gathered data (email account, calendar bookings, etc) is promised to be deleted as soon as the thesis has passed opposition. All this has been decided between the authors of this paper, the data protection officer at JIBS (Jönköping International Business School), and the course responsible, and the information has been sent out to the participants (Appendix 3). The option to have signed a non-disclosure agreement was suggested from the authors but was not necessary from the participants or the company’s side.

The questions to be answered at the interviews were sent out to the contact person of The Bank prior to the questions being sent out to the participants. Some questions were asked to be deleted due to the non-disclosure of the company. Therefore, the authors do not have the participants answers on these questions, even though previous research in these subjects are mentioned in the report.
4 Empirical findings

This section covers the empirical findings of the primary research. In the following sections, participants are called M1, M2, M3, M4 and M5 to keep them anonymous. M stands for manager and the number stands for each interviewee.

4.1 Gender discrimination in the banking industry

When asking the participants regarding their perception of The Bank and the females working there, it was soon realised that some phenomenon’s where experienced by several of them, while other answers were very different depending on their personal career development and background.

All females had experienced the glass ceiling either personally or by seeing someone else get hindered by it. This was seen to be a common experience in The Bank to different extents. “I have seen women being treated differently than men just because of their gender. In terms of salary, titles, what is okay not to deliver and what is expected from women. Women really need to deliver, they cannot bullshit but guys somehow are allowed to.” said M2, and this was confirmed by M1: “We are looking at women for their accomplishments, you have to have shown that you got all qualities needed a number of times in different situations. In men, on the other hand, you are looking for potential, and dare to take a chance.”

The glass ceiling was one of the reasons inequality was more common on the top management level in The Bank, which was also something all participant agreed on. They all saw that there was a better equality in the bottom of the hierarchy. As stated by M1: “The equality in The Bank looks very different depending on the management level. On the bottom level, we have a good representation of both genders. However, further up the hierarchy, equality gets worse. It can depend on many things but looking at the finance sector overall, there is an over-representation of men.” However, M2 and M4 both said they think that The Bank is better at gender equality in the workplace compared to other banks and companies in Sweden and in the world.

M1 and M2 expressed that there is a male norm in The Bank, where men get more respect than women. According to M4: “The talk from male managers about how they would have hired a woman if the competence would exist is bullshit. There is a lot of competent women, but they
do not get recognised. As a manager you must realise that you are biased. Women at The Bank are told to apply for positions but very few do it. This because they do not want to go through the humiliation of not getting a job that they are more than qualified for.” According to M3 and M4 the patriarchal structures in society are mirrored in The Bank, saying that the same gender issues we can see in our everyday life can also be experienced in the organisation. The lack of equal respect for women as for men has led to situations where men’s opinions are the only one listened to. M2 said “I would give an idea to the group and they would not listen and then I told my male friend and when he told the idea to the group, they loved it.” This situation was one of many stories told from the managers about how men get a different attention and more respect than women do.

All managers said that The Bank is attempting to give the same opportunities to men and women when it comes to career development, but in the end the gender has a major impact on who gets the job. M1 mentioned that the corporate culture in The Bank is quite different from what the management wants it to be, however, it is improving. She said, “We are working on this a lot, and we are very dependent on what the top management communicate and focus on. We are like children, where we do as the managers do. If they do it right, the organisation will follow.” Most managers said they feel that there is a change coming. The Bank is working to become a more including and equal organisation. As M4 pointed out: “Today The Bank does not give the same opportunities to women as to men, but there is a strong ambition to change that and we are starting to set up goals to reach, in order to change.”

4.2 Female Career Development

4.2.1 History and today

All five managers could clearly see that the distribution between the genders is more equal on the lower levels of the organisation and that men have the majority on top-level positions. M4 believed that The Bank, as a whole, has 50/50 distribution between the employees but they are not equally distributed throughout the organisation. Further, M5, who is working on the top-level, explained the situation as: “An extremely distorted distribution between women and men”.

The historical view of a career movement where the need to be further up in the hierarchy is dated and not as relevant today. Lateral career movements, to include in one's career portfolio,
could be seen as just as important moves as the upward moves. M4 explained that she has gone from management positions to lower positions: “In retro-perspective I have gained a lot from these moves, both in my career and salary wise”. When doing these moves, she got some confused reactions from her surrounding, according to her.

4.2.2 Influencing factors

The climate at the workplace is an important factor in order for women to feel welcome. At the Bank there has been a masculine culture which could have had an effect on the climate. M3, M4 and M5 described the climate at their department to be open and that they are using straightforward communication and there is an ongoing change. M4 clarified: “The openness in the culture has changed dramatically, for the better, in the last years.” She explained that people are now more open to direct feedback and the overall communication is more direct.

M3 stated that The Bank provides the same offer of flexible work hours to men and women, she said: “If you look at some of the offers, we provide, for example flexible working hours if you need time at home, the offer is always the same for men and women”. She explained the flaws with this: “If a woman does not work full time, she does not believe she should have a full-time contract. Compared to men who might not bother to change the contract”. Further, all the respondents agreed on that The Bank has as an intention to give the same career opportunities to men and women but at the same time highlights the fact that people have unconscious biases which can have an impact on who gets the career advancement opportunity. As M4 explained it: “My honest opinion is that it is not only talked about, but things are being done as well”.

4.3 Mentorships

4.3.1 The importance of mentors

All the interviewees was asked if they think mentorships are an important career development tool. M3 was the first who explained that a mentor can give a broader perspective and that extra push within the company, or when changing position: “My view of having a mentor is that it is good for personal growth, to give a broader perspective and advice.” The importance of mentors was even confirmed by Fransson who said that to have someone to discuss work-
related questions and issues with is very important for one's career, she added: “I think mentorships are a useful tool to climb the career ladder.”

4.3.2 Formal mentors

After asking about the importance of mentors, the aim was to find out which type of mentorship the participants have experience from. Fransson described that a formal mentorship program provides a good structure for the mentors and mentee involved in the program. The aim with Womentor’s mentoring program is to include the whole organisation and not only the individual, which is possible in a formal mentor program. The benefit of a structured formal mentor program according to Fransson is that it is actually taking place since the mentee gets assigned a mentor directly. When engaging in Womentor’s mentor program, the meetings are already scheduled and there is a model to work from. The matchmaking process of mentee and mentor is done carefully by Womentor, and it takes a long time to find the perfect fit, because it needs to work for both parties.

The result of the primary data was that all women had experience of mentors, except M3. Although, M3 had experience of organising mentorship programs through her position at The Bank, and her knowledge and insights contributed a lot to this research. Furthermore, M1 had a formal mentor at her first job and now have an informal mentor. M2 has had many mentors during a long time period, both informal and formal. This experience is similar to M4 that has had both a formal and an informal mentor. Compared to M5 that has only had informal mentors and never a formal one. All managers have different experiences of mentorship which provides different perspectives to this research.

It was through M4 that the authors got informed about the mentor program Womentor, since M4 was accepted to the first batch of the program. In the program M4 described that all the mentees were women and the mentors were both men and women, where M4 got matched with a male mentor from a different company but in the same industry. M1 described she was involved in a formal mentor program at her first job, where she got assigned a male mentor that later transformed and continued into an informal mentorship. She explained that he as a mentor helped her find her own way and how to relate to different things and situations. Furthermore, M2 described her formal mentorship where she got assigned a mentee 10 years ago, during a time period for six months to a year. After all these years they still have contact and every time the mentee changes job she discusses this with M2.
4.3.3 Informal mentors

When asked about informal mentors, four female managers have experience with informal mentors and three of them are using it right now. M2 described she do not view the mentorship as one mentor and one mentee, sometimes she is the mentor and sometimes the other person is the mentor and then they swap roles depending on the situation. To have several mentoring relationships is important to achieve many different perspectives, from a man or a woman, old or young, Swedish or foreigner, as M2 explained. On the other hand, M3 that have not had a mentor, explained this by: “I have never felt the need for it. I have a lot of other deep relationships where I can find support and personal growth, so the need for a mentor has not been necessary.”

According to M1, her informal mentor became a natural support at the workplace when she really needed it. She thought informal mentoring was great, since it is based on a genuine interest from the mentor. This was similar to M5, she got assigned her informal mentor through her previous boss and described it as: “I was asked what I needed to do my job as good as possible and I specifically said that I wanted him as a mentor. I wanted him because he was very different from me and I thought he could push me outside of my comfort zone.” Besides the current male mentor, she has now, M5 explained about her former informal mentor earlier in her career who was a woman. Her female mentor taught her how to combine good business with heart and this is something that M5 stands for today and is her driving force at work.

4.3.4 Comparison between formal and informal mentor

When mentorships were discussed with M1, she explained that she was satisfied with her first formal mentor that later developed to an informal mentorship. However, she stated that she does not believe in proper formal mentorships, she rather thinks a mentorship organised when needed for certain situations are more valuable, formal or not. For example, the need could be when you are new at a workplace and a greater network is needed, M1 explained: “The reason I do not believe in the formal mentorship programs is because it is difficult with the timing. That a program starts when it is really needed is very rare. In the end it is hard to customise the program after the mentees actual needs.” Fransson explained that she thinks it is equally important to have a formal as an informal mentor. Although, the benefit with an informal mentoring relationship is that it is during a longer time period. Fransson said: “Formal
mentoring relationships can also turn into informal ones after the structured period is over, and it is good to keep that relationship alive.” Compared to M4 who have been in both a formal and informal mentoring relationship, she described she got something out of both types. The biggest difference was that the informal mentorship was more unstructured, and it was more active when she needed it. M4 explained: “In that mentorship I could talk to my mentor about everything from my career to just chat, for me to understand the company and the organisation better.”

4.3.5 Mentoring women in organisations

According to M3, there are more women involved in mentoring programs than men, since there are fewer mentoring programs focusing only on men. This allegation was further confirmed by Fransson, she described that the results of Womentor has been positive, both for women and for men since the involved companies are working a lot more with equality. She added: “The changes we can see in the industry with this program is that the awareness about equality in the companies is more common, and important.” The companies involved in Womentor are making an effort after the program to hire more women, and to give them the advancement opportunities, Fransson described.

4.3.5.1 How men and women use mentors differently

One main section of the interviews was to discuss how men and women use mentors differently. M1 described that she thinks it is important to consider the reason for the mentorship, why it is needed, and what the desired result is. She further explained that she believes informal mentors are easier in a male dominated business, like the banking industry. This because men make friendly connections easier, with both women and other men, while women are treated more professional and polite. It is often done with good intentions, but it affects men and women’s relationships at work. As a result, men have more friendly informal connections at work, and women become more distant to the informal relationships. M3 confirmed that women use mentors more than men because men create professional relationships naturally, since men are more eager to get to know new people in order to build a network that could positively influence their career. M3 said: “Men build a different kind of relationship, they have an informal mentor but do not see this person as his mentor.” Men has not the same number of visible mentors, according to M5 who said: “I cannot really say that I know of a man that has a mentor. I strongly believe that men have other men who support them, but I do not think they call it a
mentorship.” She added that she attended a program within The Bank where she got a lot of valuable professional relations, that works as informal mentors, she continued by saying: “In that program I could see a clear group of men who had a very tight bond but I really do not think they would call it a mentorship.”

Additionally, the issue was brought up by M4 where she said she thinks men are much better at promoting each other, because this is something they have been taught since they were kids, she added: “I also believe that men have each other’s backs more often than women do. Maybe, that is why men do not feel the same urge to have a mentor. They already have someone to discuss ideas with and ask difficult questions to.” Further, the issue regarding mentors for women and men was discussed with Fransson, who stated: “With networks I mean informal mentors and that is a type of relationship. I don’t think women have the same type of networks and relationships with each other, and this is one reason there are fewer women on the top.” Fransson explained she could notice that men have more informal mentors and not so many formal ones, but the informal are not labelled as mentors, since it is in their close network. According to Fransson, during the mentor program at Womentor they observed companies that were recruiting a new CEO and they noticed that the new CEO hired people that he or she had been working with before, or who are within their networks. It is similar in the board, where networks are very important, which is one of the reasons there are fewer women on the top, Fransson explained.

4.3.5.2 Gender of the mentor

One of the questions asked was if the gender of the mentor was of importance for the female managers. The authors wanted to find out if the gender of the mentor could affect the mentee and if characteristics could be copied to the mentee’s behaviour. The result shows that the gender of the mentor was not of importance. M1 explained that she saw no difference in a male or female mentor, it was rather their personalities as individuals that was of importance. As M1 got experience of working with mentor programs at The Bank and organising them for others, she described that when selecting a mentor for a new colleague, it is necessary to find someone who is different from the mentee. Which is mentioned by M2 as well, she clarified: “I have had both, but with men you have an additional variable that is different. With a women you might have different backgrounds and so on but with men the gender is another variable.”
M5 said she has received different outcomes from her mentorships, the female mentor gave a lot of warmth and the relationship itself was more personal. Her male mentor on the other hand, who she also has a close relationship with today, had another purpose. According to her, the mentors helped her: “[…] I got a lot of guidance in the political game that is taking place at The Bank and you need to act according to. Further, I also received a lot of pushing and support to speak up and stand up for myself.”

4.3.6 Career advancement

All the four women who have had a mentor exclusively had positive experience of the mentorships which has contributed to their careers. M1 described that it was important to her to get a mentor at her first job, since she was new in the labour market after graduation and had a lot of question that the mentor was suitable to answer. She explained: “I have used mentors for different reasons depending on where in the career I have been, and how to navigate in different situations.” This answer was brought up by M2, who talked about the importance of her mentors and how crucial they have been for her career, she pointed out: “They have always given me perspectives of things, both from their point of view but also from mine and the way they know me. My mentors help me think a few steps ahead.”

According to M4, you can benefit from a mentorship wherever you are in your career, she described: “You want a mentor when you are new at a company or at a new position to as fast as possible learn how to do the job as good as possible.” All the women thought a mentor in the beginning of the career is of equally important as having one mid-career, but there are other tools for career advancement. M3 described that she has been working close to senior managers and been learning how they are acting and thinking, she explained: “It is a good experience just to listen to how other people think, and what to say and when. The observing part is the best learning I would say.”

4.3.6.1 Sponsors

When conducting the interviews a few of the participants shared their knowledge about sponsors, that is another type of career advancement tool. The subject of sponsors was discovered through one of the managers and was after that further researched in theory and included in the interview questions. M3 had most knowledge about sponsors and described the term as: “Sponsors in my definition is an individual that has the ability to affect other people’s
opportunities, by sharing their network. The sponsor use its own name for the other person that creates opportunities.” M2 explained that to have a person higher up in the organisation is very important, she said: “Sponsors help you to change your career path. They think of what works and does not work and they think a couple of steps ahead. They give you the inside information.”

M2 added that when she wants to make a career move in the organisation, she would not call her mentor, she would call her sponsor that have inside information and who knows what is happening in the organisation. M3 further described that people are not aware that they have a sponsor, a person that contribute to their career by promoting them for new jobs or people, similar to that there are people who are not aware that they are sponsors. M3 explained that The Bank are trying to develop and implement sponsors right now into the organisation. Since it is a new type of relationship it needs to be observed to see if it is a possibility and how they can operate with it. M3 further explained: “What we are working on now is to develop the sponsors ability to sponsor more people and different kinds of people, not from the same school, with the same background and experience.” This was also discussed with M5, she believes sponsors would be a good way to increase diversity in the organisation.

All the female managers were aware of sponsors, M4 shared she have been working with sponsors, people around her who are actively promoting her for new positions, for her to climb in her career. Interestingly, M4 said that all of these sponsors have been men, she continued by: “I would prefer to have a sponsor over a mentor today since that person can affect my career more direct.” Further, she said that she has been a sponsor by using her name to recommend people, she exclusively promotes young women who she believe has talent.

With the participants answers and opinions about sponsor and mentors, the question of what would be the most effective tool for women was asked. M3 said she believes in sponsors more than mentors, continuing, she strongly believes in the combination of sponsorships and learning from observing, as she described her learning process previously. M2 explained that those who has helped her career the most are sponsors, a mentor has helped her to develop personally while sponsors has helped her change her career path. M5 motivated how she views mentors and sponsors differently, as it is easier for the sponsor to assess how well you fit a specific position, it is not always a mentor is able to see that. Her ending words about mentors and sponsors were: “It is not really possible to compare mentors and sponsors, both are important if you want to have a successful career and develop as a person.”
5 Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings from the interview. They are explained and analysed in-depth with the use of literature and theories. The analysis is structured according to the categories found in the data analysis.

5.1 Gender discrimination in the banking industry

The purpose of this study is to analyse the structural discrimination within organisations, if the development of female’s careers can be influenced by mentors and if different mentorship structures are better than other.

5.1.1 Equality

Burstein (1989) stated that when working in a male dominated workplace, women are more vulnerable to gender discrimination. Most of the managers discussed that the banking and finance industry is male dominated. This gives women a disadvantage when working in this sector, according to Burstein. All women had experienced the glass ceiling, either directly or through other women, including the discrimination related to the concept. Burstein explains that the reason for this is the dominant gender, in an organisation, want to keep its privileges and dominance. M5 explained, in the empirical findings, that she has seen this happen within the organisation where men employ men, however, women do the same thing. Hence, by working to get more women further up in the hierarchy, the effect will be a natural flow of more women in managerial positions.

However, all respondents experienced that there was a more equal gender balance in the bottom of the organisation. The Bank do not lack women for positions, but women do not get the opportunity or chooses not to take it because of the organisational culture. This issue was mentioned by all women to some extent, M1 and M3 stated that through an unconscious bias in The Bank that men were preferred or chosen before women. They believed that women were subconsciously unchosen for positions or career development. As Ridgeway (1997) explains, this unconscious bias will work as a differentiator between the genders, where their worth or competences are not valued as equal.

Lack of respect is another reason why women do not get the same opportunities as men, this was identified when M2 explained how she, in her entire career, has been discriminated because
she is female. The phenomenon she has experienced repeatedly was that she came up with ideas and solutions which was not listened to. This is a clear case of discrimination since Allport (1954) states that any action taken to limit the equal treatment of individuals is considered to be discriminatory.

Discrimination issues in the workplace are many, an example mentioned by M1 is that women are being assessed on their previous performance, while men are assessed on their future possibilities. According to Player et al. (2019), this is a common problem when recruiting. Women need to prove themselves over and over again, before being considered for a higher position, while men often can explain how their personal traits will be in their favour without proof of experience. Player et al. further states that: "It could be that women are implicitly required to show greater evidence of competence to overcome stereotypically negative performance expectations, particularly in male gender-typed job domains.” These biases makes it more difficult for women to advance in their careers since they do not get the same possibilities as men, independently of the qualities and experience they possess.

5.1.2 Corporate culture
Structural discrimination is often seen as “the way things are done around here” and it stays unquestioned for a very long time (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). M2 stated that it is difficult to make changes in The Bank, since things have been the same for a long period of time. She also said they are in a big need for a change, and The Bank needs people with a more open mindset. Gentile (2012) describes this as one of the rationalisations in an organisation named expected or standard practice. Employees in an organisation act the same way they always have, because everyone else are doing the same thing. It is an easy excuse to behaviours that normally is not appropriate. M4 has a different perspective, she states that a lot of the top-management positions has begun to communicate the need for change, which confirms M1’s belief that if the managers starts to show interest for change, the organisation will follow. As Gentile’s (2012) points out, when issues are being voiced and questioned, change can take place.

Mentioned by both M1 and M2, there is a male norm at The Bank. This norm according to Ridgeway & Cornell (2004) is the basis for structural discrimination. Gender neutral policies in an organisation with a male norm is difficult to reach, often they formalise men’s privilege in the workplace. The Bank does not formally make a difference between genders, so this norm
is very unconscious in the organisation according to M1. Pincus (1996) explains that, structural discrimination visualise in that manner, the organisation has no intention of being discriminatory, nevertheless, in a company with a male norm the women who are a minority will be affected differently than the dominant gender who created the structure. This expresses itself in a corporate culture where men are more respected than women. As mentioned above, M2 explained the issues of not being listened to and respected as a woman, even though what the participants thinks of the corporate culture to be skewed towards men unconsciously, there are still clear signs in the organisation that women are undermined.

5.2 Female Career Development

5.2.1 History and today
Women’s careers has changed drastically during the past decades, from taking care of the household to doing career in a similar ways to men. As stated in the findings, there are many reasons to why men have been and still take up the majority of the top-level positions within organisations, including The Bank. There are many factors to consider when analysing the causes of the unequal distributions between the genders. When asked if there are more women on lower-level positions within The Bank, M2 replied that she understands that the situation looks like this since women are absent from work for a longer period than men in connection to starting a family. It is therefore never a fair competition in terms of diversity since men get more time at work to excel in their careers. This connects to the historical idea of a career only being the achievements done at the workplace and not Heery and Noon’s (2008) explanation of career being the portfolio a person has including all the career moves. Hence, making a lateral career move should be seen in a more positive light than it is today. M4 is the one who has done these career moves, from a management position to lower positions. She explained that in the long-run it has only been positive for her, both for the positions she got after and for her increased salary. When seeing that lateral career moves can have long-term positive effect on women’s careers, it should be more encouraging for women to do these types of career moves. This, in order to dare to change position and not stay in the same place to avoid getting humiliated by not getting a higher position, which is happening at The Bank as pointed out by M4. These lateral moves could in long-term be positive for the company by keeping talent and knowledge within the company.
5.2.2 Factors influencing

5.2.2.1 Positive factors

All managers emphasise the importance of being able to stand up for yourself in order to be successful within the climate that exists at The Bank. Although, the climate and culture is going through changes. Which, M4 proved by stating that the culture has changed for the better in the recent year. M3, M4 and M5 further described the climate in their departments to be open by using straightforward communication. This is a positive change for everyone working at The Bank since a more open and direct communication minimises the risks of misunderstandings. When asked if they have adapted in order to fit into the culture of The Bank, all managers could say that they had in one way or another. This shows that being able to adapt to new surroundings in an organisation could help your career development. M5 profess the guidance of her mentor in the political game to be one of the things she got most from her mentorship. Hence, a mentor can help develop a woman’s career in more ways than earlier researched has observed.

The statement by Tharenou et al. (1994), that the age of a woman has an impact on their careers has been discussed throughout this research. It is partly self-explanatory that age has a positive effect for both men and women when reaching higher positions, but it is difficult to prove since with a rising age you acquire more experience and have had more time to develop your career. A woman's marital status is connected to her excelling in her career, according to Chusmir (1982), Lambert, (1990) and Schwartz (1989). Four out of the five women is above 45 years of age which could be a factor for the position they obtain today based on the previous stated theory. Although, at The Bank the fifth manager (M5) was the youngest of the participants but also the manager on the highest position which contradicts the earlier theory.

5.2.2.2 Negative factors

One of the negative factors in women’s career progressions is related to the absence that occurs when starting a family, including pregnancy, childbirth and childcare (Cambois, Garrouste & Pailhè, 2017). Since the aim is not to find out how The Bank handles these kind of interruptions in female careers, a part of the structural discrimination, and the participants did not want to answer questions regarding discrimination there were no questions asked about the experiences the female managers had about the subject. Although, when asked if The Bank provides the same opportunities to men and women, M3 explained that the opportunity to use flexible hours to be able to balance work and family is provided by The Bank for both men and women, including the option of working less than full-time. She continued by explaining that the major
difference between men and women in these situations are that when a woman chooses to work part-time, she changes to a part-time contract. While a man who works part-time does not bother to change his contract because of more flexibility in the schedule. M3 believes that women, in general, wants to do things the right way while men might not think about it in the same way. If this is the case in these situations, it should be investigated by The Bank to make sure that they do not hinder women's careers even further.

5.2.2.3 How to overcome obstacles

The banking industry has been known to be male dominated and having a masculine corporate culture. Although, all the managers said that there is an ongoing change happening at The Bank. M1 explained that the culture has changed drastically from how it was ten years ago, and the culture now is characterised by inclusion, openness and transparency. There are still departments within The Bank where this change has not happened as much yet and there is still a masculine culture, M5 explained that in the departments where the macho-culture still exists it is all about being seen and heard, sometimes it is more important to assert oneself than to prioritise the clients. A change in the corporate culture could not only be positive for the organisation but also for women to reach higher positions.

The managers described that the same possibilities for career advancement are given to both men and women by The Bank. If this was the case, there should be a more equal distribution in top-level positions. The unconscious biases might be a bigger complication than realised by the managers and make up a larger obstacle for women's career development than the theory explains it to be. The best way to change the impact of the unconscious biases is to raise awareness to them and first then, people on decision-making positions can act against their own biases, which was confirmed by M4. The idea that women should follow the male career model in order to be successful, could be seen as impossible. Therefore, the career model would be suggested to be changed into a modern model that is unisex, and where the interruption of starting a family does not affect a woman's career to the extent it does today. By implementing the changes of corporate culture and modernising the career model on the top of the organisation the change will spread throughout the organisation. As explained by M1 explained in the empirical findings, people in the organisation are like children, that they do as the managers do. Hence, if the management do things right the people in the organisation will follow.
5.3 Mentorships

5.3.1 The importance of mentors

In this section of the analysis, theory and literature will together with primary data analyse the importance of mentors for women. The aim is to find out if mentorships can be used as a tool to overcome structural discrimination, which is possible according to Burke (2007), but also to see if this is true in the reality of one organisation.

To start with, as Hägg and Politis (2017) states, the purpose of a mentorship relation is to create opportunities for the mentee’s personal growth and to discuss business-related issues. The importance of mentors was confirmed by Fransson in the empirical findings, where she clearly pointed out that she thinks mentorships are a useful tool for women to climb the career ladder. Given the understanding that mentorships are an effective tool for women, how can they work in an organisation and what are the results? A comparison of formal and informal mentors will be analysed below.

5.3.2 Formal and informal mentoring relationship

Ragins et al. (1999) confirmed that formal mentorships are being implemented with success in many organisations. This was also stated by Fransson where she pointed out that it is common for a formal mentoring relationship to develop into an informal mentoring relationship when the structured program is completed. This was likewise described by M1, her formal mentor at her first workplace developed to an informal mentorship when the formal mentoring relationship was over, and they are still in contact today. The biggest difference between the two types of mentorships is the structure and length of them (Ragins et al., 1999). Since an informal mentor is an unstructured relationship it can be hard to see the difference between a colleague or a friend that is giving supportive advice about one's career. The purpose with the mentorship is to deliver career functions and psychological functions, which both M1 and M5 gained from their informal mentorships.

Although the invisible line between an informal mentor and a friend is difficult to see, the interviewees had experience of informal mentors and are still using them today. The reason a formal mentoring relationship turns into an informal mentoring relationship is often because it is easier to maintain, confirmed by M1 who thought it was great since there is a genuine interest from both in the relationship.
5.3.3 Comparison between formal and informal mentors

As one can read in the literature, Kram (1983) describes the phases of the mentorships, where the needs from the mentee are moving the mentorship to the next phase. M1 provided the research with essential and important points when she described that she do not believe in proper formal mentorships, she explained this by stating that she rather thinks mentorships organised for a certain situation are more valuable. The result from this was interesting since Fransson explained that they have seen a better result with formal mentorships since it is actually scheduled and happening. She stated that she thinks the actual mentor is of most importance, either a formal or an informal one. All the managers believed mentorships, formal or informal, is an effective tool for career advancement. Therefore, the results from different types of mentorships is not as important as the actual mentor. It was argued both in literature and in the interviews that mentorships are important for female career development.

5.3.4 Mentoring women in organisations

As seen in the literature, Ragins (2002) stated that mentoring is a great career development tool and even more so for women, and it can be an important tool for breaking through the glass ceiling. Mentioned in the empirical findings by M3, she could see there are more mentoring programs focusing only on women, and not so many specifically for men. This was confirmed in the literature by Ragins et al. (1999) saying that formal mentoring relationships have increased in organisations and have particularly more relevance for women than men. Therefore, one can argue that women who are using mentorships experience greater self-esteem and confidence, leading them to progress in their career, which is also confirmed by Ragins (2002).

5.3.4.1 How men and women use mentors differently

Questions were asked to find out if there is a difference in the need of mentors between men and women. That formal mentoring relationships in organisations are more relevant for women than for men is already stated both from Ragins (2002) and by Fransson. Many organisations take for granted that formal mentorships are as efficient as informal mentorships, and many organisations use formal mentors as a replacement for the informal ones, but one does not have to eliminate the other (Ragins et al., 1999). Therefore, many organisations target women in their formal mentoring programs as an attempt to help women's career advancement and to break through the glass ceiling (Catalyst, 1993).
The mentorship according to Kram (1983) has to satisfy the needs of the mentee, which could explain why M3 never had a mentor, because she never felt a need for it, even though she still possess a high manager role in The Bank. As confirmed in the literature by Catalyst (1993), women face major barriers when developing informal mentoring relationships, and will therefore search for formal mentoring relationships. One could suppose that M3 did not feel the need for a mentor since she has been working in The Bank for many years and could therefore be influenced by the masculine dominant corporate culture. She has learned from men and developed relationships just like men do, using informal mentors subconsciously. Gentile (2012) states that a mentor can help a person to develop and learn, either by observing their methods or copying their behaviour and this is what M3 is doing.

That men are much better at promoting each other was stated both by M1, M3 and M4. In the literature by Kram (1985), and Vance and Olsen (2002) this was confirmed by their research and came to the conclusion that women got access to politics and information through their mentors that had previously been unobtainable for them. As proven by Fransson to be true in reality. One could therefore argue that men build professional relationships easier than women. This is a reason why there are fewer women at the top, which means women are more likely to use mentors to progress through the hierarchy, according to Fransson.

5.3.4.2 Gender of mentor
A female mentor can be a good role model, but a man can give another perspective, what is of importance is the need of the mentee. This is what Ragins and McFarlin (1990) concluded in their research, that same-gender mentorships have a bigger possibility to engage in a relationship outside of work. Even though Ragins and McFarlin (1990) described that their study showed no evidence that the gender of the mentor was of impact, at least one of our participants show that depending on the purpose of the mentorship a different gender could be better suitable while the other participants agree with previous research.

5.3.5 Career advancement
According to the literature by Burke (2007), both mentors and the mentees have shown evidence of positive outcomes from mentoring relationships. This is further confirmed in the literature by Mullen (1994), where research shows that mentorships benefits both parties
involved in the relationship. Burke (2007) states that mentorships are of great aid to the employees to become part of the companies faster, which was likewise pointed out by M4. That argument is further supported by Kram (1983), a mentorship can be of importance at the beginning of the career and in the midcareer period.

5.3.5.1 Comparison between mentors and sponsors
A mentoring model includes both mentors and sponsors, as Hunt and Michael (1983) states in their literature. Almost all the female managers had knowledge about sponsor, where M3 was more experienced with the term and explained that they are planning on implementing sponsors more into The Bank’s organisation. Hence, sponsors are not as common as mentors today, since The Bank are not using it as frequently as mentors. Having that said, M3 explained there are people who act as sponsors today but are not aware of it themselves. One could argue that sponsors are as frequently used as mentors, but people are not aware of the relationship since it happens subconsciously. If The Bank would develop a more concrete and organised sponsor relationships, it could be a good way to increase the diversity in the organisation, as stated by M5.

According Dalton et al. (1977) their career model includes both mentors and sponsors, since both is an effective career development tool. Some of the managers expressed that they would rather work with a sponsor than a mentor, since a sponsor can affect their career more direct, mentioned by M4. While Fransson explained that she thinks mentors are better than sponsors and coaches, since a mentor guide you through the development and lift you to the next level, and simultaneously challenge you for your personal growth. The managers at The Bank shared that sponsors could be a faster and a better development tool if it was more common. Although, M5 expressed a valuable point, it is not possible to compare the two since they are different forms of relationships, both are of importance if you want to have a successful career and develop as a person.
6 Conclusion

In this section the main conclusions of the study drawn from the analysis are being presented and the answers to the research question are outlined.

In this study the authors investigated if mentorships can be an effective tool to overcome structural discrimination. The impact of mentors in female career development has proved to be an interesting research topic and has provided the researchers with many important learnings for future career progression. The two identified research questions are answered below:

**RQ1: How do mentorships help female managers overcome structural discrimination?**

The respondents all highlighted how the mentorships have been in favour for them, and that it is necessary for women in a male dominated industry. A clear conclusion is that the glass ceilings still exist within the banking industry which hinder women’s careers as a form of structural discrimination. The structural discrimination is an obstacle for women since they are the minority within the top-level of the banking industry. In order to make the top-level of The Bank more equal more women need to reach these positions. One tool to make this change is through mentorships, and later seen in the research through sponsorships. Mentors would help the personal growth and push the women to apply for higher level positions. With more women on top-level positions, even more women will get there as well. The research has shown that in the same way men hire men, women also hire women. Hence, a positive snowballing effect will occur when more women begin to reach top-level positions. The discovery of sponsors was made during this research and has indicated to be an eminent complement to mentors since sponsors have more authority to change the career of a person.

Unconscious biases has shown to be something that managers need to realise that they have and be more aware of when it comes to recruiting and hiring for new positions. By discussing the biases, it is possible to minimise the effect of them since they are brought into the light and not kept unconscious. These biases are also a part of the structural discrimination that is taking place at The Bank as a hinder for women's career advancement.
One obstacle we could see in women’s careers include the difficulties women face when starting a family, meaning pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. The historical view, that women have taken more responsibility in the household and with the children, is still very much alive today. The problem found is that women’s careers freezes in connection to starting a family and then it does not excel again until the children are grown up. We have realised that it is impossible to change the way humans reproduce and therefore it is very difficult to give a solution to the problem. The suggestion for a solution we have found includes organisations taking responsibility to make it easier for women in this situation. A mentor could help women to overcome the structural discrimination in connection to having children. Having a mentor could therefore decrease the impact children has on a woman's career development.

The corporate culture within the banking industry has been and still is very masculine, even though it is currently changing. A masculine culture does not encourage women, only the women who act like men. In order to make it more equal on the top-level of The Bank, and many similar organisations, a more modern culture needs to be implemented in order to reduce the structural discrimination happening today.

*RQ2: Which mentorship structure appears to be most influential for female career development?*

Based on the interviewee’s experiences of formal and informal mentorships, both are of importance for women to break through the ceiling in order to progress through the hierarchy. It has been shown that the formal mentorship can transform into an informal relationship which contributes to the long-run development of a woman’s career. Although a formal mentor program is especially a priority for women since they do not build relationships as easy as men do. The mentor could help a woman overcome the structural discrimination by breaking the norms, guidance through the political game and pushing the woman to excel in the hierarchy. What has also been discovered is that a formal mentoring relationship might be most efficient in the early stages of a woman's career, then a mentor is helpful in order to understand the workplace, give her support, and develop personally in order to be confident to reach for new positions. Later in her career an informal mentorship can be more valuable. This is when the political game needs to be understood and to have a large network within different areas can be the most positive for a woman’s career advancement. The gender of the mentor has been shown
not to have an impact on the mentee’s characteristics or the outcome of the mentorship, it is only a personal preference from the mentee.

_The purpose of this study is to analyse the structural discrimination in organisations and if the development of female’s careers can be influenced by mentors._

In order to accomplish the purpose, the answers and results has led the researchers to conclude that mentorships are an effective tool to overcome the structural discrimination against women in an organisation.

To conclude, mentorships and sponsorships are great tools when used in the correct way in order to improve the equality situation. Sponsorships should be developed further in order to work in a more formal way than it does today when it is mostly done subconsciously. The positive impact mentors can have on a woman’s career should not be minimised but rather emphasised to make it clear how much they can contribute to help break the masculine culture and the structural discrimination, including the glass ceiling, which today hinders women to advance in the career the same way men do.
7 Discussion

In this section limitations, contributions and suggestions for future research are being presented. A student reflection by the authors are also included.

7.1 Limitations
This research was conducted through six semi-structured interviews as part of a qualitative study. The sampling method resulted in a selection of women with similar positions in the same bank in Sweden. Therefore, it might be difficult to generalise the answers to the whole industry or to other organisations or countries, which could be seen as a weakness of the study. However, the small sample is the strength of this research since it provided answers with higher quality and personal experiences, which could be more difficult to discover with a larger sample. As the theory stated in the literature review does not only focus on the banking industry nor Sweden, saying that the literature is not specifically for one industry or country but still expresses the importance of mentors for women in all industries. There are other ways to handle the structural discrimination and gender imbalance in organisations than the approach and method chosen for this research study.

Lastly, empirical findings of this single case study is only based on a small sample, with participants of the same gender in the same organisation. It can therefore be argued that by considering other methods, such as focus groups or a multiple case study as a compliment, would have contributed with a broader understanding of the problem. The mix of real-life experiences from managers in the industry today with theories, makes this research highly trustworthy and has a strong reliability.

7.2 Contributions
This research contributes within the field of female career development and equality in organisations and shows that mentorships in organisations is an effective tool to overcome structural discrimination. More specifically to empower and give women the same opportunities as men in organisations. This research may serve as valid information and suggestions for organisations on how to achieve gender balance and which type of mentorship that would be the most effective.
On an organisational level, the findings of this research may serve as guidance for The Bank, and other larger organisations, on how to increase the gender balance. Firstly, by understanding the importance of equality on high management positions. Secondly, by understanding the importance of mentors for the overall organisation, but especially for women.

7.3 Student reflection
From doing this research we have learned the dept of how different men and women act, create relationships and are treated at the workplace. We expected to discover differences in men and women’s careers but what they origin from and how much they are impacted by natural causes surprised us. Further, we expected a mentor to be useful for women’s career development but did not realise how much a mentor could actually impact one's career.

As authors and soon to be graduates it was very interesting and rewarding to interview the women at The Bank. They prove that these positions are obtainable for us to reach in the future. The information provided by the managers was invaluable, and together with the previous research it has provided insights we will bring with us when starting and developing our own careers. The realisation of the importance of a role model, mentor or sponsor is something we will always have in mind.

7.4 Future research
As a suggestion for future research, we argue that it would be interesting to study the impact of sponsors in organisations even more, both for men and women. A more in-depth analysis on the comparison between mentors and sponsors would be a valuable research topic. A study on the possibilities of making sponsors formal would be interesting since they now only exist as informal relationships. A formal version of sponsors could be beneficial for the company and the career progression would speed up drastically.

To bring further depth in the research, one last suggestion for future research would be to use a larger sample by including male respondents which could increase the perspectives in real life and provide more insights and possible solutions to close the gap. That could be researched in a multiple case study including several Swedish banks. Future research could be made in other industries and countries, where the results could differ compared to Sweden’s banking industry.
8 Reference list


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Appendix 1

Pre-interview questionnaire
These questions are for us to get to know you better prior to the interview. We only need short answers, details are not necessary in this step.

Name:
Age:
Current Position at The Bank:
Education:
Civil State:

1. How long have you been working at The Bank?
   a. Within The Bank, which positions have you had? (in chronological order)
   b. What are your daily tasks?
   c. Do you have any employee responsibility? (if yes, for how many employees?)
2. What relevant positions have you had previous to The Bank? (year and position)
3. What is your previous experience of mentorships?
4. Do you have a current mentor at The Bank?
5. Do you believe that mentors can be used as development tools in women's career development? If yes, shortly motivate your answer.
Appendix 2

Interview template (English version)

Women in business

1. How do you perceive the equality between women and men at managerial positions within The Bank?
   a. Why do you think the situation looks like it does?

2. Can you remember that you have had reactions from your surroundings regarding your various steps in your career? For example: when changing position.
   a. Positive/negative?

Organizational culture

1. Can you describe the organizational culture at your workplace? (for example; norms, values and attitudes)
   a. How would you describe the characteristics needed of a person to fit in at your workplace? (characteristics, attitude)
   b. Have you adapted in any way to blending in with prevailing culture?

2. How would you describe your employer’s expectations on you and your career development?

Definition Glass Ceiling: An invisible roof/barrier that prevents women from climbing the corporate career ladder.

3. Have you encountered the so-called glass ceiling?
   If yes,
   a. How tangible was it during your career development?
   b. How has it affected you as a person?
   c. Did it hinder you in your career development?
   d. We think of you as having passed the glass ceiling, how did you do it?
   e. Have you seen others encounter the glass ceiling?

   If no,
   a. Have you seen others encounter the glass ceiling?
   f. How was it noticable?

Mentors

By mentor, we mean someone who guides, supports and engages in your career but is not a person in your family or close relationship but only job-related.
Definition:

Informal mentoring: An unstructured relationship that arises between two individuals without external involvement. One wants to support and supervise the other, or one seeks to support and guidance to develop.

Formal mentoring: A structured relationship built from a job perspective usually with a goal to achieve. The people are appointed to the mentorship by external persons, an organized mentorship, usually for a specific time.

Option 1: has/had Mentors

1. Have you had or do you have a mentor, and can you describe that person?

2. For what reason did you want/get a mentor?

3. What did your relationship look like?
   a. Formal/informal?

4. Can you see that the gender of the mentor had any significance for you?
   a. Can you see any pattern in what is typical of a male/female mentor?

5. What has the mentor meant for your career development?

6. When have you had the most use of a mentor in your career?

7. What other options except mentors do you know of, or used in your career development?
   a. Sponsors?
   b. Coaches?

Alternative 2 does not have/never had a mentor
(Have you had, or do you have a mentor, and can you describe that person?)

1. Why have you not had a mentor?

2. Would you like to have a mentor/test a mentorship?

3. Who do you use instead of a mentor when it comes to your career development? (not family or friends)

4. What other options, except mentors, do you know of, or have you used in your career development?
a. Sponsors?
b. Coaches?

Sponsors
1. Do you have any experiences working with a sponsor?
2. How do sponsors differ compared to mentors according to you?
   a. Would you prefer a sponsor over a mentor?

General questions about mentorships
1. How important do you think it is to have a mentor to advance in your career?
2. Do you think men and women use/want mentors in different ways/for different reasons?
3. Can you see that mentors have been more occurring more or less among the employees at lower or higher-level positions?
4. Have you been a mentor?

Concluding questions
1. We see you as a successful career woman, do you have any tips for us and others who are now going to graduate and start working?
2. Is there anything we haven't talked about or is there something you would like to add?
Appendix 3

Information Safety Actions for collected interview material from "The Bank"

Since we are in the process of writing our bachelor thesis, which is a part of the education program International Management at Jönköping International Business School, this information letter is written to clarify which data we possess and how we will manage your personal information. Since the thesis is written within the frame of an education process, interviews will be held to give results for analysis and discussion.

The Bank has expressed that the interviews are to be held anonymous with no possibility to connect them to The Bank. We have a complete understanding of this demand and will, therefore, shape the bachelor thesis so the confidentiality can be upheld.

What is written below has been decided to guarantee that we follow The Bank’s demands of confidentiality, after a meeting between the students (authors), the course responsible, and the data protection officer at JIBS.

The personal information and the data that the students possess is the following:

- Recordings of the interviews where voices are personal data.
- Name and position of the interviewees.
- Answers to the interview questions, that will be held anonymous.

The recorded interviews will be deleted after they have been transcribed. Pseudonymisation of the transcripts will be handled through a physical code key in the form of a paper that only the authors have access to, this makes it possible for us to connect the answers with the questions and the interviewees. The code key, the transcripts and the mail account that has been used to contact The Bank, will be deleted as soon as the thesis has been opposed in June.

We hope that the mentioned safety actions are sufficient, and if more actions or guarantees are required can a non-disclosure agreement be established.

Jönköping 2019-03-08
Appendix 4

1. Read through the transcripts and make notes in the margin when interesting and relevant information is found.
2. Read through the margin notes and list the different types of information that was found.
3. Categorise the information in a way that describes what it is about. Some items might refer to the same topic, thus some categories can be used multiple times.
4. Try to link the categories with each other. List the categories that can be linked as major and minor categories.
5. Compare and contrast the different categories and switch places if needed, since the categories might fit better under another category and some information might fit within two categories.
6. Repeat the steps 1-5 with the rest of the transcripts. Relevant and interesting information can be accommodated in existing categories or new categories can be created if needed.
7. Review all the categories and information again to check that the data is in the right category. If two or more categories seem to fit together it is possible to form a major theme out of these in the research.
8. Return to the original transcripts and the primary notes in the margins. Read through the text that did not appear relevant the first time. Reconsider if information that was previously excluded is relevant and should be included under created themes, major categories or minor categories.