SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

Closing the Gap

An interview study with Swedish newspaper publishers and editors on the lack of consistency between commitments on media and gender and actual representation

Abstract and Keywords

Women are grossly underrepresented as news subjects globally. This is a direct violation of the universal human right of freedom of expression, as well as a major hindrance to global sustainable development and societal gender equality, as addressed by the United Nations.

Vast research has been carried out to find possible answers to this problem, and different explanation models include journalistic routines, organizational structures, and deeply rooted societal norms. Sweden is one of the most gender equal countries in the world. Still, this image is not reflected in the Swedish news content, which shows the same patterns of gender inequality as the rest of the world's media. At the same time Swedish media organizations fight a constant battle to find sustainable business models and increase revenue in times of globalization and increased competition.

The purpose of this Master's thesis is to find possible explanations as to why gender parity in news content is taking so long, from the point of view of people who produce news content. The aim is to find alternative solutions to speed up the process, going outside the traditional evaluations of the issue of female underrepresentation. The empirical data consists of ten deep interviews with publishers and editors of the largest newspapers in Sweden. The theoretical framework is based upon the well-known hierarchal model of news selection by Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, as well as on other theories and concepts regarding media, gender and power structures.

The result of the analysis indicates that there is a big gap between the global commitments on media and gender and the newsmakers' awareness of the same. This creates an opening for co-operation between international actors in this arena and the media to jointly drive change. A change that could generate both new business models as well as new standards for contemporary journalism.

Word count: 19,488

Keywords:
gender equality, freedom of expression, global commitments, media, gender, business model

Acknowledgements

At UN Women, we want gender inequality to have a 2030 expiry date. We know that this is possible, and that success depends on important partnerships such as with the media.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Foreword GMMP 2015 (Macharia, 2015: 3)

Author's Note

As a woman and a journalist in Sweden, I have never hesitated to pursue the same dreams and career options as my male colleagues, friends and family members. I have never felt inhibited by the fact that I´m a woman. Nevertheless, with age, education and experience, I have come to realize that patriarchal power structures still exist in Sweden, as well as in the rest of the democratic world. Of course they do. One hundred years of broad female emancipation cannot tear down thousands years of male societal domination.

Still, I was largely surprised by the fact that the aggregated results of Swedish news content showed that only 31 per cent of the news subjects were women, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2015. 31 percent! In this day and age?! I felt tricked and misled by an industry that I had loved so unconditionally. Since setting foot in my first newsroom in the late 1990s, I had bragged about the drive and ambition of journalists to expose abuse, power games and inequalities. How no issue is too delicate to deal with. About the inherent pathos of the entire journalism brigade. Apparently though, there are severe irregularities within the field that concern the whole of society. Even worse, going back in my own media archive, I realize that I have been part of the unbalanced and stereotyping news portrayals.

I came in contact with GMMP by a lucky coincidence when I began writing for the Swedish report *Räkna med kvinnor 2015* during my internship period as a Master's student at Gothenburg University. After four months, a book, a visit to the human rights organization Gender Links in Johannesburg, and participation in the first general assembly of the Global Alliance on Media and Gender, I cannot let go. I have to find out more about this issue and what to do about it. Because journalism should be leading the way to a better society, not lagging behind the democratic development of the world.

Josefine Jacobsson, January 18, 2016

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Abbreviations

EFJ = The European Federation of Journalists

GAMAG = The Global Alliance on Media and Gender

GMMP = The Global Media Monitoring Project

IFJ = The International Federation of Journalists

MDGs = The Millennium Development Goals

PK = The Swedish Association of Publicists[1]

SJF = The Swedish Federation of Journalists[2]

TU = The Swedish Association of Newspaper Publishers[3]

2030 Agenda = Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

WAN IFRA = The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

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[1] In Swedish = Publicistklubben
[2] In Swedish = Svenska Journalistförbundet
[3] In Swedish = Tidningsutgivarna

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION AND METHOD

Freedom of expression – for whom?

The news media is our mirror to the outside world, for better or worse. As such, it can both hinder and drive societal change. According to UN Women "The media plays a significant role in perpetuating and challenging social norms" (UN Women, 2015).

Yet, newsmaking is a strictly routinized business. News evaluation is a matter of choosing which events and persons are the most newsworthy. Men and women each make out half of the world's population. Still, research show that women are dramatically underrepresented in the news globally (Macharia, 2015: 8). This is a direct violation of the universal human right of freedom of expression, as well as a major hindrance of global sustainable development and societal gender equality.

The United Nations has been addressing this issue for more than 20 years. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was formulated in 1995 and demonstrates the determination of the international community to promote gender equality and enhance the status of women. One of its 12 key areas concerns women and the media.

As a result, the European Union has increased their pressure on the European media houses. The Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) has been created by UNESCO as an umbrella organization for media, researchers, governments and social movements engaged in the issue of media and gender.

Still, there are no legal obligations on the free press to work for gendered-balanced content.

During the past 40 years, Sweden has made several achievements concerning gender equality within areas such as political representation, salaries, and shared parental leave. In most newsrooms there is an equal distribution of male and female journalists, as well as gender-balanced management teams (Edström, 2011, World Economic Forum, 2015). Swedish journalists are fully aware of the situation of female underrepresentation in news content and are willing to work on the problem (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 45-64). Still, this progress is not reflected in the Swedish news content, which shows the same male overrepresentation in news subjects as the rest of the world's media.

Aim of study and research questions

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to find possible explanations to the overarching research question why gender parity in news content is taking so long, from the point of view of Swedish newspaper publishers and editors. The title of the thesis – Closing the Gap – aims both at the struggle to close the gender differentiation in news content, as

well as at finding solutions for journalists, researchers and activists to speed up the process towards a more inclusive journalism.

The three research questions are:

1. What explanations do Swedish newspaper publishers and editors give for the underrepresentation of women in news content?
With this question I want to map the major obstacles to gender parity in news content, according to my informants.

2. How well informed are Swedish newspaper publishers and editors about the global commitments on media and gender?
This question aims to find out whether and how the informants integrate the global commitments on media and gender in their work.

3. What kinds of tools are needed to achieve gender parity in news content, according to Swedish newspaper publishers and editors?
The answers to this question will hopefully generate a basis to be able to drive change from within newsrooms.

Scope

All studies are limited in some way or another. As I am a Swedish journalist, studying at a Swedish university, this study is based in a Swedish setting for natural reasons, related to interest, time limitations and accessibility.

Regarding the issue of plurality, there are many more groups in society than women to take into consideration. Still, regarding my personal interest in gender as well as the scope of this work, I have only focused on the underrepresentation of women in the news.

The global commitments on media and gender cover several aspects of female representation, such as access to news, access to new technologies, and non-stereotyped portrayals in the media (Platform for Action, Section J). Yet, again regarding the timeframe and scope of this study, I have chosen to focus mainly on the participation of women. I will also refer to non-stereotyped portrayals of women in regards to declarations and guidelines.

There are several conceivable methods suitable for these types of studies, as the chapter on previous research also suggests. Still, I found an interview study to be the best alternative in order to be able to investigate how contemporary media managers, ultimately responsible for news content, regard the issue of female underrepresentation.

The reason I am turning to representatives of editorial management teams of commercial print media, instead of a wide variety of media channels, is that Swedish newspapers are self-regulated in comparison with public service. In other words, there are no external rules and regulations governing printed content, which makes gender balance strictly a self-interest issue for these actors. To see whether that is enough to create gender equality is very interesting to me, as it could set a standard for other actors of the free press globally. Swedish media is also particularly interesting to study, as it is operating in a very well-developed society in regards to gender equality. Print media is also the only media in Sweden with a wide variety of publishers operating within the same framework. This enables fair comparisons and equal terms for all participants.

Sources

My main sources are made up of the informants of this study. I believe their statements to be genuine and trustworthy as they have given independently from one another similar reports of the status of gender in their particular newsroom. It can be argued that their testimonies are biased, as they as media representatives could have an interest in toning down the problem of gender-imbalanced news. Still, I argue that they did not have a hidden agenda, as they all willingly participated in the study with the outspoken aim of contributing to the knowledge of cultural and structural obstacles towards an inclusive news coverage (Leth and Thurén, 2000: 22-30).

Previous research in the field of media and gender have contributed with findings and theories on the subject. I have made an effort to only use primary sources. Still, in some cases where I have not found the primary source, I have referred to authors who are describing a specific study or concept of others. The major part of the books and articles that I refer to have been written during the past ten years, which makes them reliable sources of information. Nevertheless, there are cases of older theories or concepts which are still valid (Leth and Thurén, 2000: 23).

Feminist researchers and their findings can be argued to be biased, as they view the world through gendered lenses. Still, I would not have been able to find information on this particular subject in traditional media research. Additionally, there are global commitments on media and gender to tackle the problem of female underrepresentation in the news, issued by the UN. The UN´s supposed neutrality and trustworthiness strengthen the assessment that the issue at hand concerns a larger audience. Having said that, all parties can be argued to be biased in one way or another (Leth and Thurén, 2000: 30-31).

I also refer to a number of sources online, such as from recognized international bodies and established associations. These are all updated and considered to be genuine, unbiased and trustworthy. The information provided has also been double-checked with other sources (Leth and Thurén, 2000: 23-26).

The feminist approach

Feminist research emerged from the second wave of feminism movements in the 1960s and 70s. It focuses on and problematizes the relationship between the sexes as a key factor when describing the world and courses of events within it. Gender research focuses on structures and power, not on blaming the male half of the population or lumping all women into one single group (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 28-30, 39).

Feminist media research often has a political agenda, while both the academic world and the media embrace objectivity and neutrality. Therefore, it has had troubles being accepted as a part of traditional media research. Due to gender blindness within dominating media theories there has also been a need within feminist research to develop new theories as well as to clarify different female perspectives within the field (Kleberg, 1993: 15).

Thus, feminist research is per se critical theory. Having said that, I argue that no research is free from bias and ideology. Being a former journalist and co-author of a report on media and women (*Räkna med kvinnor 2015*), and engaged in the struggle to achieve gender equality in the news media, I am undoubtedly speaking from a biased position. Yet, by being aware of my own sympathies, I will strive to be objective to my own subjectivity. Conversely, I believe that my prior knowledge in the field and my background in journalism helped me get close to my informants and facilitated meaningful conversations, and therefore got me closer to the core of the issue.

Liberal feminism

Most of the theories within the research area of media and gender derive from liberal feminism. Its distinguishing feature is equal opportunities for men and women. The empirics are found in quantitative content studies on gender representation and stereotypical gender portraits, as well as in qualitative studies on journalistic values, newsmaking and organization. By working for societal and organizational changes liberal feminists, like myself, believe that gender equality and freedom of speech for all can be achieved (Kleberg, 1993: 11-12).

Explanations of key concepts

Gender

Our biological sex indicates whether a person is a man or a woman. Gender, or what is considered male or female, is on the other hand socially and culturally constructed, according to feminist theory (Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, 2016).

News

News in this study refers to all content. In other words, politics, sports, culture, as well as other sections of a newspaper are referred to as news.

Methodological approach regarding data collection

Qualitative research as a means to develop knowledge from experience
The road set out in this study is to find explanations for the evidently very long and complicated road to gender parity in news content. This issue is surrounded by norms, structures and democratic development. In other words, it is an issue not easily measured by quantitative research. Instead, I have performed a qualitative interview study with an inductive approach to find possible answers to my research questions and to develop knowledge from the participants' lived experiences. The goal is to uncover connecting opinions between the informants (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2008:54, Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 17).

Selection of informants
Much has been said on the democratic problem of female underrepresentation in the news media. Non-governmental organizations for media criticism have raised the issue. Research has been done on the effects of underrepresentation. The UN has been involved to bring about change. Organizational factors have been examined to find answers to the media's failure to make female news subjects equally visible to their male counterparts. Still, I wanted to talk directly to the people ultimately responsible for everyday newsmaking, without pointing fingers. By letting them argue for the reasons why news becomes news and discussing obstacles towards gender-equal content, I want to show an honest and realistic image of what is being done in the field and what is left to be done. Therefore, I made a strategic selection of informants consisting of representatives of the editorial management teams of the biggest commercial newspapers in Sweden. My selection criteria was Swedish newspapers with a minimum of 40,000 newspapers daily, according to the Swedish media auditing company TS Mediefakta (2015). The reasoning is that the bigger a newspaper is, the bigger its impact on media consumers (Teorell and Svensson, 2013: 150-152). The twelve different newspapers chosen belong to nine different media groups. Accordingly, I sent interview inquiries (see Appendix A) to twelve different publishers and editors by email. Out of the twelve requests, I got positive replies from ten representatives of the newspapers' editorial management teams. This amount of informants were enough to reach empirical saturation, which is when a subject is exhausted and no new information is to be found (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 156). It is also an appropriate number in regards to be able to report on percentages.

Ethical considerations
The interview inquiry explicitly described the purpose of the study and how it would be used, as well as the structure of the interview. To enable as detailed and truthful answers as possible, the informants have been anonymized in the analysis. This prevents the exposure of the interviewees, as they are public figures within the Swedish media landscape as well as in Swedish society in some cases. A copy of the final thesis will be sent to the informants once the study is finished. Thus, the scientific requirements

of information, consent, confidentiality and usage have been met (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002: 7-14).

The structure of the interview guide
The interview guide (see Appendix B) was divided into five different categories. The purpose of this was to approach the research questions from different angles. The questions in my interview guide were semi-structured and open-ended, which was key to finding answers to my research questions. A semi-structured interview also opens the possibility for detailed and spontaneous answers, as well as follow-up questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 176). As both my informants and I are journalists, and as such used to the context of interviews, I did not feel the need to start off with a softer set of questions, but went straight to the issue. By starting out by problematizing the issue, I ensured that my main questions were discussed in the beginning of the interview in case my informant had to leave early and disrupt the interview. After this, my aim was to fill in the information gap by slowly narrowing the arena from a societal level down to the newsroom. I ended the guide with a set of factual questions, partly about the informant and partly about the news organization, for later comparisons and organizational explanations. The different categories mirror both prior research on the topic, as well as my theoretical framework. The broad perspective of the interview guide gave me lots of entries into the analysis. Yet, many topics did not fit into the final analysis, as I chose to focus only on the most prominent features of the results. Examples of topics not included are *online harassment* and *other aspects of pluralism than gender*.

Prosecution of interviews
Since the informants are spread across the country and lead busy lives, the deep interviews were performed by phone. They were recorded with an iPhone app called Tape a Call, with the consent of my informants, to facilitate the following transcriptions. Each interview took approximately 50 minutes. Even though interviews are said to be best done in person, I did not find this problematic since I am an experienced reporter and the participants are actors in the public arena. Thus, the conversations were conducted without problems, in a collegial manner, and I was happy that the informants could confide in me and provide such revealing answers as they did. In other words, I do not believe I would have received different replies if the interviews had been made face to face (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 187).

Transcription and categorization
When transcribing the interviews I put down every single word said on paper. However, fillers such as "ah", "you know" and "sort of" have been taken out of the translated quotations used in the analysis. I have chosen to write my thesis in English to be able to spread the results to the global community of activists, journalists and researchers engaged in the struggle for gender parity in the news. For this purpose the entire text has been reviewed by a professional English proofreader.

I will refer to the informants in the analysis chapter according to the following model:

Informant 1
Informant 2
Etc.

Methodological approach regarding analysis

Interview analysis as theoretical interpretation

By posing questions, presenting counter-arguments and maintaining a creative dialogue with my informants, I wanted to come as close to the truth of the matter as possible and potentially find joint solutions to the problem. Due to my previous research and knowledge of the obstacles to gender parity in the news media I did not feel the need to use a strict systematic tool when I later analyzed my interviews to find underlying truths or hidden messages. Instead, I have chosen to interpret theoretically the replies to my probing questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 283-284). By taking a theoretical approach from the beginning of the study, the analysis can bring new dimensions to well-known phenomenon. On the negative side, theoretical interpretations can also prevent the emergence of new aspects and approaches. To counteract this symptom, I have tried to be as sensitive and receptive as possible to new information and dimensions from my informants (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 286-288).

Still, before this interpretation started I needed to arrange the answers into some sort of categories. These categories started to form in my head already during the interviews and were made up of a combination of the categories used in the interview guide and the different levels of gatekeeping from Shoemaker and Reese's theoretic model that would be used in the analysis phase. When transcribing the recorded conversations I immediately highlighted reoccurring arguments or formulations applicable to prior research and theories. Later, when coding the data I used colored pencils to mark answers connected to the same area of questions in the interview guide with the same color. In the end, I had a protocol of several different colors, which were easily adapted into the structure of my analysis (Backman, 2014: 60-61, Grusell, 2016: 14, Höijer, 1990: 16).

Qualitative research always involves the risk of personal interpretation. Yet, regarding the use of quotations, I have put effort into presenting different arguments in the proper settings to do them justice. I have also made sure that all of the informants are represented in the analysis chapter (Höijer, 1990: 16).

Validity, reliability and generalization

The validity of this study is ensured by making sure that the questions in my interview guide give answers to my overarching research questions. The reliability or reproducibility is somewhat more complicated to achieve as it is a qualitative study. Even if another researcher were to use exactly the same question formulations in future interviews under the very same conditions, it is highly doubtful that he or she would get the same answers, since communication involves so many simultaneous factors (Teorell and Svensson, 2013: 58-59). Instead, I have been able to identify patterns and common denominators showing the unanimity with previous findings on the global news logic. As the similarities between different news media and their news evaluation are greater than

the differences, I argue that the rhetoric of this study is generalizable in an international news context (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014: 310, Strömbäck, 2015: 154). Another form of generalizability, applicable on feminist research, is accountability. Accountability refers to usefulness of the research. I argue that the results of this study indeed bring practical value to both participants as well as to the global community involved in the issue of media and gender, as it highlights best practices and brings forward other possible solutions to the problem of female underrepresentation in news (Dallimore, 2000: 174).

Overview

The findings of this study is divided into four different chapters. In the following chapter, chapter 2, I frame the discussion by reviewing the current situation on the underrepresentation of women as news subjects both globally and in Sweden. I then present an overview of the global commitments on media and gender, as well as the guiding principles for the free press. Previous research on media and gender highlights possible explanations to gender-imbalanced news.

Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical framework of the study, as well as additional theories and concepts used. These models mirror previous research well and also serves as a framework for the empirical data.

Chapter 4 contains interview extracts and data analysis, which will map the major obstacles to gender parity in the news content, according to the participants (Q1). It also explores how well informed the informants are about the global commitments on media and gender and what kind of importance they are ascribed (Q2). Regarding question number three (Q3), this chapter also provides information on successful measures for driving change already undertaken in the newsrooms, as well as ideas on other tools needed to achieve gender-balanced news.

The fifth and last chapter summarizes the conclusions made and provides suggestions on how to proceed on the path towards gender parity in the news. I conclude with suggestions for further research and describe how this study has contributed to the research field of media and gender.

CHAPTER 2 - BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Content monitoring

There are multiple studies on news content. However, not all focus on gender. Counting heads is a starting tool of media monitoring and necessary to reveal structural norms and segregation. The result is a clear indicator of the status of gender, which helps to put it on the public agenda (Djerf-Pierre, 2011: 45, Edström, 2011, Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 76).

The Global Media Monitoring Project

The idea of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) was first envisaged at the Women Empowering Communication Conference in Bangkok in 1994. It is the largest and longest longitudinal study on gender in the world's media. It is also the largest advocacy initiative in the world on changing the representation of women in the media. Every five years since 1995, women's presence in relation to men, gender bias and stereotyping in news media content are monitored during one day.[4] The fifth and latest research in the series was conducted in 2015 by thousands of volunteers in 114 countries around the world. In total 22,136 articles and newscasts from 2,030 different media outlets were analyzed. The results demonstrate a persistent pattern of female underrepresentation in the world's news media: 24 percent of the news subjects were women, the same score as in GMMP 2010 (Who Makes The News, 2016).
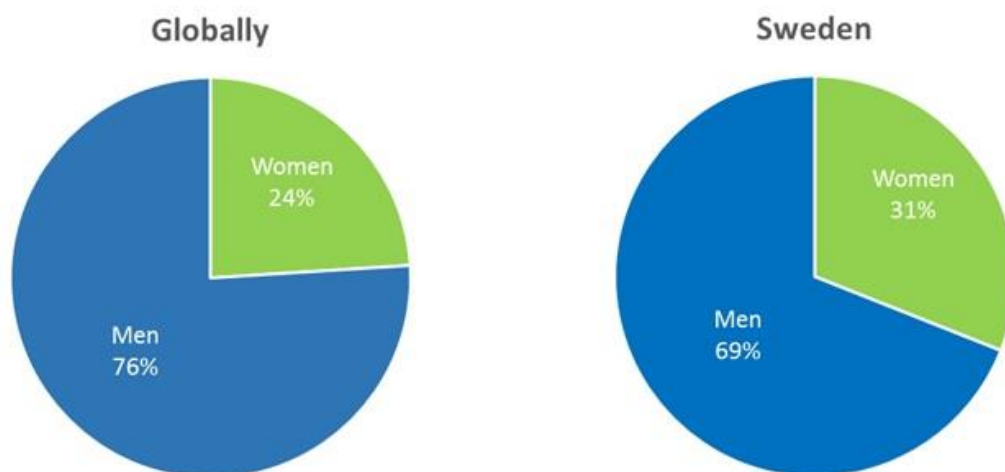
Diagram 1: Proportion of men and women as news subjects, according to GMMP 2015 (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 23)

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[4] It is important to stress that the results of the GMMP are based on one single day of monitoring every fifth year. Still, due to similar patterns both longitudinally and latitudinally, the results can be considered reliable.

Sweden scored the highest when it was first included in the GMMP in 2000. Having 31 percent women in the news was then a top score, even though the Swedish result by no means could be considered gender equal. 15 years later, women still made up 31 percent of the news subjects in Swedish media, which means that countries like Romania, Pakistan, Jamaica and Peru are performing on a higher level (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 22-23, Macharia, 2015: 121-124). Four out of five experts interviewed are men in both a Swedish and a global news context. Politics, business and sports are news sections particularly dominated by men (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 22, 26, 28, 36-38).

The underrepresentation of women is static
Other news research confirms these statistics. Only in the past year, several other studies have presented the same result of female underrepresentation. One is *Rättvisaren!*, performed by the Swedish crowdsourcing network Equalisters. They randomly selected and analyzed 2,400 Swedish news articles during the period of January 1st – June 30th, 2015. The report shows that 27.5 percent of the news sources in the study were women (Rättviseförmedlingen, 2015).

On a larger scale, a study of English speaking news media has been performed in the UK. With the help of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, the research team analyzed over two million news articles collected over a six month period from hundreds of English language online news outlets. The result shows an overall probability of 77 percent that an entity mentioned in the text is male, or 70 percent that a face image is male (Jia, Lansdall-Welfare, Sudhahar, Carter and Cristianini, 2016).

No matter who is doing the studies or how, the results support the longstanding claim by feminist scholars that women's voices are marginalized in the media, a fact that has significant implications for democracy.

> In other words, the media is not only a mirror; rather, it often seems to enforce male dominance in the public sphere.
> (Maria Edström, 2011)

Gender-based censorship
Agnès Callamard, Executive Director of the organization Article 19, campaigning for free expression, argues that the media is practicing a gender-based censorship by the continuing exclusion of women in the news. This censorship can be both systematic and selective, as well as unintentional and thoughtless. Still, "it alters reality, dis-empowers, controls, renders invisible, and silences" (Callamard, 2006).

Background

The following pages are framing the issue of gender equality, both from a global and a Swedish perspective. A detailed overview of the global commitments on media and gender follows, as well as a description of the guiding principles for the free press.

Gender equality in a global context

Gender equality is considered a fundamental condition for the full enjoyment of human rights by women and men by the UN, and the promotion of gender equality is a worldwide obligation through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is one of the most ratified conventions globally. Sweden was the first country in the world to ratify it (Glans and Rohter, 2012: 5). Despite this, CEDAW is not made into Swedish law (Norlin and Rönngren, 2011: 49, Swedish Women's Lobby, 2015).

In September, 2015, the 193-member United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The goals aim to build on the work of the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000 gathered the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle poverty. The 2030 Agenda is composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to tackle global challenges and surviving inequities in the years to come. Goal 5 is named Gender Equality and addresses structural barriers to women's empowerment (UN News Centre, 2015).

Gender equality in a Swedish context

Sweden is ranked as one of the most gender equal countries in the world together with the other Nordic countries (Global Gender Gap Index, 2015). During the past 40 years, Sweden has made several achievements concerning gender equality within areas such as political representation, salaries, and shared parental leave (Edström, 2011). The first Swedish law on gender equality in the workplace is dated 1978. Since 2009 gender equality in the workplace, in schools and within higher education is regulated through the Law of Discrimination (Diskrimineringslagen 2008:567, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 199). Out of 349 sitting members of Parliament 56.4 percent or 197 members are men, while 43.6 percent or 152 members are women (Sveriges Riksdag, 2016). The 22 Ministers of Parliament are equally divided between the sexes. Additionally, the Swedish government has an outspoken feminist agenda (Regeringskansliet, 2016). Yet, gender disparity remains in many sectors. For example, although more women attend university in Sweden, there are still more women in low-status labor and more men in Swedish boardrooms. Continuously, women also take a greater responsibility for childcare and household work (AllBrightrapporten, 2016, Wahl, Holgersson, Höög and Linghag, 2011: 26-27).

Media responsibilities in a global context

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 10 of the European Convention, which should be ensured by the state.

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
> (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 19)

In other words, gender equality is intertwined in the concept of freedom of expression, as gender, race and other identity differences do not determine enjoyment of this right, but are included in the democratic vision of the concept.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995, states:

- Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication (Strategic Objective J.1.).
- Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media (Strategic Objective J.2.).

Actions to be taken by governments in connection to Section J includes:

- Guarantee the freedom of the media and its subsequent protection within the framework of national law and encourage, consistent with freedom of expression, the positive involvement of the media in development and social issues (239.h).

Actions to be taken by national and international media systems are:

- Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, regulatory mechanisms, including voluntary ones, that promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women by the media and international communication systems and that promote increased participation by women and men in production and decision-making (240).

According to UN Women the stand-alone goal of gender equality in the 2030 Agenda must establish minimum standards and push change forward in three critical areas holding back women, namely violence against women, women's choices and capabilities, and the voices of women. The last area points out media as an actor for true democracy, saying:

Give women a voice within households and in public and private decision-making spheres. For meaningful and inclusive democracy, women's voices should be heard in decision-making and in all spheres, such as public and private institutions, national and local parliaments, media, civil society, in the management of firms, families and communities.
(UN Women, 2015)

Media responsibilities in a European context

Both the European Union and the Council of Europe are pushing the issue of gender equality within its media organizations and their content. In 2013, the EU Council of Ministers adopted a set of indicators in regards to the Beijing Platform for Action, which the member states are obliged to report on annually (Council of the European Union, 2013). The Council of Europe has adopted new recommendations on their part to increase gender equality within the media. Both member states and media corporations are requested to take their responsibility in regards to the recommendations (Council of Europe, 2013).

Media responsibilities in a Swedish context

Sweden has one of the largest press freedoms in the world, together with Norway, Finland and Denmark, among others (Edström, 2011, Reporters Without Borders, 2016). Three out of four Swedish constitutions regulate the freedom of expression. The first one is the Swedish Constitution. The second is the Regulation of the Freedom of the Press, adopted after the Second World War to prevent governmental censorship of the media. Finally, there is the Constitution of the Freedom of Speech. It builds on the Regulation of the Freedom of the Press, but includes all media channels but printed material (Olsson, 2012: 23, 273). The Swedish media management system has traditionally been split between financial and editorial/publicity management. The publisher has the judicial responsibility of the content published (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 414, Andersson, 2015: 134). PO (the press ombudsman) and PON (the press opinion board) were established in the 1960s to increase the public influence over media content. The authority for press, radio and television surveys the objectiveness and detachment of Swedish public service (Olsson, 2012: 227-228).

The National Code of Ethics

The Radio and TV law regulates the Swedish broadcasting media. The Swedish press on the other hand is primarily guided by self-regulation. The self-regulatory system is founded on the principles of freedom of speech, the independence from the state and the protection of the individual. (Olsson, 2012: 225-232, SJF, 2013). The self-disciplinary system of the Swedish press is voluntary and wholly financed by four press organizations: The Swedish Association of Newspaper Publishers (TU), The Swedish Association of Magazine Publishers (Sveriges Tidskrifter), The Swedish Federation of Journalists (SJF) and the Swedish Association of Publicists (PK). These organizations are also responsible for drawing up the Code of Ethics for Press, Radio and Television (PO, 2016). This code does not cover the issue of broad representation (SJF, 2013).

Still, Swedish media companies are linked to guidelines on gender through its trade organizations, as we shall see below.

The Swedish Federation of Journalists
During the 1990s the Action Plan of the Swedish Union of Journalists (SJF) included a statute calling upon its members to work on the issue of gendered content. This statute has since been removed as it was regarded to circumscribe the principles of the free press (SJF, 1998). Still, the SJF is part of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), which has issued a handbook on gender equality best practices. One of the examples encouraged to be used is UNESCO's *Guidelines on Gender-neutral Language* (EFJ, 2012). SJF is also part of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). In 1954, the IFJ adopted an international declaration of principles on the conduct of journalists. One of the nine articles read:

> The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.
> IFJ Code of Principles, Article 7 (IFJ, 2016)

Further, the IFJ adopted an action plan on gender equality in 2001, including seven points. One of them concerns the portrayal of women in the media (IFJ, 2001). The IFJ together with UNESCO have also developed a set of indicators for gender portrayal in media content. The hope is that its media organizations will adopt these indicators to enhance the quality of their journalism (UNESCO, 2012). On International Women's Day 2016, IFJ published a report on the high levels of media discrimination against women that still persist, pointing to the results of the GMMP 2015 (IFJ, 2016). The day before, the IFJ called "on media companies to increase the number of women journalists in newsrooms and decision making posts":

> We urge our affiliates to build momentum for widespread action towards gender equality within our structures and in the media and mark International Women's day by spreading the word that journalists' unions stand by gender equality standards.
> *IFJ President Jim Boumelha* (IFJ, 3/7/16)

The Swedish Association of Newspaper Publishers
The Swedish Association of Newspaper Publishers (TU) is the trade association for Sweden's approximately 200 daily newspapers and other media companies. TU is in turn a member of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). WAN-IFRA is one of 500 media organizations and civil society groups from around the world forming the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG), an initiative of UNESCO to promote gender inequality in and through the news media (WAN-IFRA, 2016).

Previous research

The research on gender and media is vast. To be able to prove my theories on the different levels of obstacles towards gender-balanced news content, I have looked into research on newsmaking, news content, organizations and media development.

The power of media

Being the fourth estate[5], the media in democratic countries has an important part to play in monitoring their governments and democratic principles. This major societal role in combination with the industry's principles of self-regulation give the media immense power. Journalism is by some researchers viewed as an ideology, where journalists identify themselves with power to drive change (Nordberg and Edström, 2007: 475, 482, 494-495). Swedish media organizations are run like any other corporations, but there is a traditional closeness to the political world and also, increasingly, to the corporate sector. Owners, advertisers, editorial managers, unions, other media organizations, governments and political parties all have interests in the media sector and the content produced (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 411-412). Journalism is about choosing which stories to make public. At the same time people are dependent upon news for information and formation of opinions, possibly more so in today's globalized world than ever before. The type of stories that are being uplifted and the people being heard, therefore, have a huge impact on how we understand our world (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 411, Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 22, Jia, Lansdall-Welfare, Sudhahar, Carter and Cristianini, 2016, Nordberg and Edström, 2007: 487-488, 495, Shehata, 2015: 353, Strömbäck, 2015: 151, Tuchman, 1978: 3).

Media researchers Karin Nordberg and Maria Edström suggest that apart from setting the news agenda, the media has the power to:

1) Influence peoples' opinions
2) Decide who is being heard
3) Create norms by the repetition of public discourses
(Nordberg and Edström, 2007: 474).

The nature of news

Sociologists Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge made the first and most well-known study on the valuation and selection of news, called *The Structure of Foreign News* (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). After them a number of other researchers have compiled similar lists. Media researcher Jesper Strömbäck has found some common denominators between the different studies (Strömbäck, 2015: 158-159):

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[5] In Sweden, the concept of *the fourth estate* is called *tredje statsmakten.* Its role is to monitor the first two powers, i.e. the Swedish government and the Swedish parliament.

- Proximity – events taking place timely, geographically and culturally close to the audience
- Elites and celebrity – powerful persons, organizations and nations
- Institutional agendas – events important for governments and political processes
- Deviation and sensation – events not expected to happen
- Threat and risk – crimes and conflict between persons, groups or societies
- Continuity – events and actors already well-known to the audience, follow-ups of previous news

News can be events that are taking place independent of the media, but it can also be press conferences and other initiatives taken to attract media's attention (Strömbäck, 2015: 159) News is also marked by competition and achievements (Zilliacus-Tikkanen, 1993: 233-235).

When asking Swedish journalists which criteria make up a news story the following factors turned out to be the most significant:

1) an event is sensational and unexpected
2) an event is dramatic and exciting
3) it is an exclusive piece of news
(Strömbäck, 2015: 155)

At the same time, the very same journalists thought these factors *ought* to have the most importance:

1) an event that raises awareness of societal abuse
2) an event that has consequences in peoples' daily lives
3) an event that increases peoples' insights and knowledge
(Strömbäck, 2015: 155)

A democratic pillar and a commercial industry
The legitimacy of news media is built upon correct and credible news reports. Two additionally important parameters considered in the newsroom, described by Jesper Strömbäck, are importance and interest. Importance deals with what the audience ought to know, while interest concerns what the audience wants to know. By only focusing on what the audience needs, the democratic pillar of journalism, media would not be profitable. On the other hand, by only focusing on the will of the people, the commercial aspect, media would no longer be a democratic cornerstone. To understand the difference between what *ought* to be news and what *becomes* news one needs to see both sides of the coin (Strömbäck, 2015: 160-161).

Routinizing the unexpected
Sociologist Gaye Tuchman called the news process "the routinization of the unexpected" (Tuchman, 1973, Tuchman, 1993: 129). Management researcher Dan Kärreman

developed this reasoning when he equates the journalism trade to "catastrophe trades", such as the police, ambulance force and health workers. The reasoning is that journalists, too, have to routinize the unspecified and unexpected elements of their work (Kärreman, 1996: 169). One way of doing this is to divide events into hard and soft news. Hard news could be categorized as unexpected events, important for people to know about. Soft news, on the other hand, are not as time bound and could be categorized as interesting information about the lives of people (Tuchman, 1993: 114, 118). To give the readers a quick and comprehensive overview, journalists can also use well-known stereotypes, such as the hero, the villain, the mother, the mistress, and others (Kärreman, 1996: 169). The problem with stereotypes is that they limit our range of possibilities and ways in which we are supposed to act, feel, look and so on, to be accepted in society (Tuchman, 1978: 5).

Gendered news
Media researcher Monika Djerf-Pierre argues that media organizations, like any other organization, are gender coded, which in turn affects both the organization and its content (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 416). The gender codification of media positions and areas of coverage were established already in the beginning of the 20th century. The female journalists in the liberal press were well-educated and got to translate foreign news. Household news, as well as women's and consumer issues, were also regarded female tasks. Male journalists, on the other hand, got to cover domestic politics and economics. During the First World War, foreign politics grew in importance and status. Thereafter it has been regarded a male domain (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 416-419). Also media researcher Madeleine Kleberg explains how gendered news can change sides. Abortion, prostitution, pornography and domestic violence were once regarded too private to write about. Nowadays these types of news are considered public. The line between private and public is drawn by those in power of the debate (Kleberg, 2006: 20). These differences must be perceived as social constructions of a patriarchal and capitalist society, argues media researcher Margareta Melin. It is a question of power. And again, the problem arises when individuals of one of the groups do not identify with their given identities, behaviors and positions (Melin, 2008: 196-197). Media researcher Monica Löfgren Nilsson has found most journalists agree that there is such a thing as gender coded news, even though male journalists find it less problematic than their female counterparts (Löfgren Nilsson, 2007: 51-53).

The newsroom as a historically male domain
Historically, newspapers were started to bring forward political messages. It was a male domain for a male audience. During the 1940s and 1950s many Swedish local newspapers were closed down. As a result, local media monopolies were created, which tried to attract readers over party boundaries. A decade later, Swedish universities started offering journalism educations, which lead to an increased professionalization and feminization of the journalism trade. This depoliticization together with professionalization brought about political autonomy. From this point on, political opinions in the newspapers were for editorials only (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 420-421). The

inequalities within the Swedish media sector were first given attention in the 1970s. Female journalists demanded access to management positions and male domains of coverage, as well as equal pay (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 420-421).

Globalization, feminization and digitalization of the media
There have been substantial changes within the media landscape during the past decades. From the 1980s and onwards, deregulations and the globalization of the media have resulted in large media conglomerates, including a large number of channels and platforms for publication. There was also an influx of female journalists, new techniques, new consumer habits, increased competiveness, restructuring, cutbacks, mergers and new forms of cooperation. As a result, the market increasingly sets the rules of the media (Andersson, 2015: 144-145, Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 412-415, Nordberg and Edström, 2007: 477). There have been misgivings as regards the possibilities of maintaining journalism ethics in this new reality, marked by commercialism and managerialism. Still, more research is needed to see the long-term effects of these changes, media researcher Ulrika Andersson argues (Andersson, 2015: 144-145).

More women in journalism brought different news angles
During the 1980s, more women got into the journalism profession, but it was not until the new millennium that gender equality was achieved within media organizations (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 420-421). Nowadays, there is even gender balance at the managerial level in the larger newsrooms (Edström, 2011).
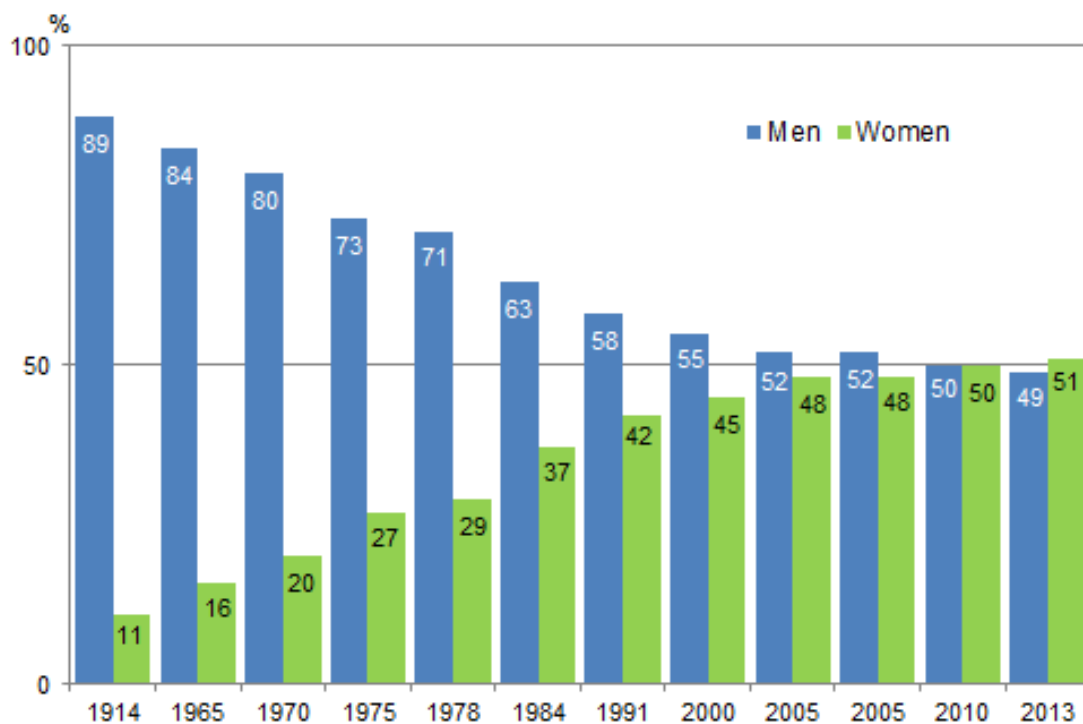
Diagram 2: The share of male and female journalists in Sweden 1914-2013 (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 85)

The magical line of 40 percent women in the workforce, the quantitative definition of gender equality (SCB, 2014, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 67), was crossed at in the end of the 1980s (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 23). The feminization of journalism was an important issue in international media research during the 1990s. Margareta Melin argues that the concept of feminization actually involves three main issues:

1) The increasingly commercialized media landscape makes women visible as a market
2) Popularized, intimate and soft news are given more space in the media
3) The implied connection between soft news and female journalists
(Melin, 2008: 180-181).

Monika Djerf-Pierre argues along the same lines. She suggests that the feminization of journalism has brought:

1) A wider experience in the news room
2) Different news angles
3) An extension of the subjects covered
(Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 425).

In other words, there is the assumption that there is a correlation between popularized, unserious news and women. One underlying dimension suggests that a larger female audience has dumbed-down news content. Another is blaming female journalists for the changing culture of news content (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 425-426, Melin, 2008: 181-182).

Women's invisibility in traditional news media is transferred online
The digitalization of the media has not seemed to equalize the gender balance in content. There has been an ongoing reduction of media personnel in Sweden during the past two decades, while the pace of newsmaking has increased. At the same time new techniques make it easier to track both consumer habits and competitors. Organizational researchers Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag summarize a stand in the academic world, where new technology is of high status and therefore male coded (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 117). All of these factors combined are suggested to have a negative effect for gender equality, looking at the results of content studies (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 29, Macharia, 2015: 63-64, 68).

Gender blindness and gender resistance within journalism culture
Research on the cultural aspects of organizations started in the 1980s. Cultures within organizations can be both visible and invisible, and control actions and determine what is considered to be right and wrong. Since the concept of gender is considered to be socially constructed within liberal feminist research, a cultural perspective on organizations is easily applicable with this type of study (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 105-106).

The Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman coined the term *gender contract*. The concept implies there are social norms governing male and female behavior, which we are all expected to follow. This dichotomy gives people meaning and orientation. Secondly, it upholds the male norm, which explains male superiority and female subordination. Female behavior is linked to the private, reproductive sphere, while male behavior is linked to the public and productive (Hirdman, 1988: 15-16, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 71). This is easily translated into the newsroom logic.

The Swedish journalism workforce is gender equal, as stated above (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 23-24). The issue of gender equality is continuously discussed in Swedish newsrooms. Despite this, internal gender segregation still exists (Nordberg and Edström, 2007: 478). One of the reasons for this is suggested to be that the traditional male culture of media organizations is still embedded within both male and female journalists' way of thinking and acting and this male journalism culture seems to be stronger than the female gender culture (Edström, 2011, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 66, 111).

Several studies have been made on the organizational resistance to gender equality work. Men are more often than women opposed to gender equality. Many researchers suggest this is only logical from the perspective of power, as men belong to the most privileged group of society and therefore run the risk of losing some of their entitlements in an equal world (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 214). Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag describe a study of organizational researcher Janne Tienaris about organizational restructuring and the consequences of gendered leadership. It shows that when major organizational restructurings are happening, men in management leave their positions to move on to newly developed functions of high status. As a result, the old management positions are left to women (Tienaris, 1999, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 182-184). Organizational researchers Yvonne Due Billing and Mats Alvesson made a comparative study of cultural aspects in three different types of organizations in 1989. One of their findings was that companies considering leadership to have low cultural status often had a high level of female managers (Due Billing and Alvesson, 1989, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 108). It is also argued that female leaders have everything to lose on highlighting the issue of gender, as they historically have been excluded from the trade because of their sex. That is suggested to be one of the reasons some female leaders are distancing themselves from the issue of gender (Zilliacus-Tikkanen, 1993: 229).

CHAPTER 3 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework

To explore how news content is shaped and to find possible solutions to my research questions, I have used the hierarchal model, developed by media researchers Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese. They argue that news selection is made out of a complex series of interrelated decisions made at different so-called gatekeeping levels, illustrated by the model below.
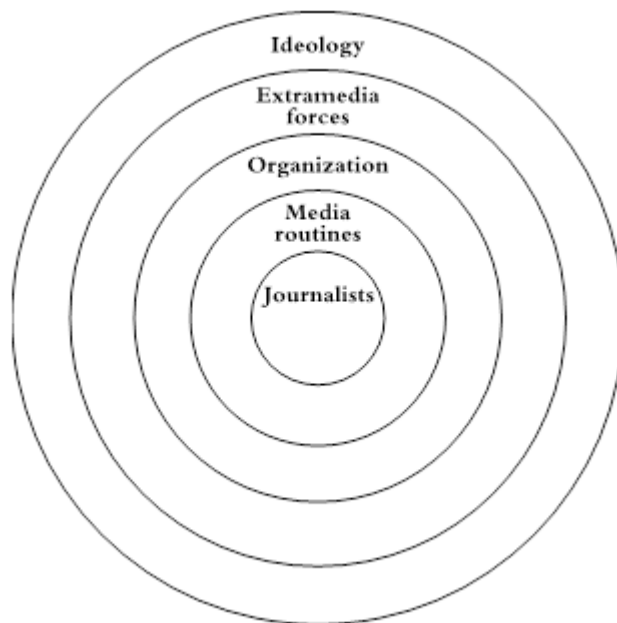
Figure 1: The hierarchal model of influences on media content
(Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 64)

Gatekeeping at different levels

The individual journalist is at the main core of news production. The journalist's characteristics, education, values, beliefs, role, ethics and power within the organization all influence the news content (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 64-65). Secondly, media routines affect the news content. Journalists represent their profession and organization, with its own practices and routines. (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 105-107). The middle ring in the "doughnut" is made out of the media organizations, with their internal structures, goals, technologies, owners, policies and markets. In other words, journalists are subordinated to the larger organization and its goals (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 139-140). Still, media organizations do not operate in a vacuum. The ring in the model labelled *extramedia level* includes special interest groups, news sources, audiences, PR agents, revenue sources, businesses, governments and technologies. As news messengers and makers, "journalists have a job that is understood by few and criticized

by many" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 175). The final and macro level of the hierarchal model is made up of the ideological values of the society, in which media acts. Shoemaker and Reese consider ideology to be a total structure rather than a system of individual attitudes and values. All gatekeeping levels in the inner circle of the model are considered to be working toward this macro level of social control. The media is constantly reaffirming social norms, as well as redrawing and defining boundaries for what is socially accepted (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 221-225).

Interpretation of the hierarchal model

I will divide my analysis chapter into the five different gatekeeping levels of the hierarchal model when interpreting my interviews. The informants are referred to as journalists, with the first part examining their actions and opinions as newsmakers. The second part deals with the news routines at the newspapers included in this study, while the third part takes on the organizational structures and cultures of the newsrooms involved. The fourth part takes a closer look at the readers and their relation to the news content. The fifth and last part investigates the informants' views on the societal gender norms, both in a Swedish context and in a broader perspective as regards to the global commitments, and media's possibilities of redrawing boundaries of societal values.

Additional theories and concepts

In addition to the hierarchal model, I will analyze the data with the help of the following theories and concepts:

Framing

To describe the process of media formatting our minds, Gaye Tuchman used the concept of *framing* to describe how news is like a window to the outside world:

> News is a window on the world. Through its frame, Americans learn of themselves and others, of their own institutions, their leaders, and life styles, and those of other nations and their peoples […] But, like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view from a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard. The unfolding scene also depends upon where one stands, far or near, craning one´s neck to the side, or gazing straight ahead, eyes parallel to the wall in which the window is encased.
> (Tuchman, 1978: 1)

Gender-coded news

There is a visible division in the newsroom between hard news sections and soft news sections. Politics, sports and business are examples of hard news sections, while culture, health and lifestyle are considered soft news sections. There are more men in the hard news sections, while women work in the soft news sections to a larger extent. Hard news stories are prioritized before soft news stories (Djerf-Pierre, 2007: 416-419,

423). This so-called gendered logic of journalism can be explained by the following figure:

MASCULINE:	FEMININE:
Public / Elite level	Private / Intimate sphere/ Everyday level
Male sources and perspectives	Female sources and perspectives
Distance / Neutrality / Objectivity	Intimacy / Empathy / Subjectivity
Autonomy ("professional" criterias)	Publicly oriented (the audience´s needs/interests)

Figure 2: Gender logic in journalism
(Djerf-Pierre, 2003: 45)

Gender parity as a business model
Maria Edström claims gender parity in the news brings three major benefits for the media. Firstly, increased pluralism strengthens equality and democracy. Secondly, including more voices and angles makes the story more complete, interesting and informing. Finally, by turning to both men and women the journalistic product becomes attractive to a larger audience (Edström, 2011). The EFJ further develops the business idea below:

> Women are a large growth market for the print media, as well as loyal readers. In the family, they frequently make the decisions on household spending and choose the newspapers their family will buy. From this point of view, gender awareness is also a good business idea.
> (EJF, 2012: 26)

Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag point to the American discourse on pluralism, which also highlights the businesscase-argument. In this case, gender equality and pluralism are ways of utilizing new talent and creativity by recruiting employees from underrepresented groups (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 203).

Homosociality
Homosociality, i.e. same-sex relationships in one's social life, is a term alluding to the phenomenon when men favor other men. A consequence of homosociality is the exclusion of women in the workplace or in management, researched by Jean Lipman-Blumen (1976: 16). In arenas of homosociality the male norm is dominant and women pose as admirers of men confirming their actions (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 240).

Local feminists
Men in gender-balanced workplaces are more positive to gender equality progress than men in male-dominated workplaces. Organizational researchers Anna Wahl and Charlotte Holgersson call men with a positive view of women and gender equality *local feminists* (Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 226).

Media as a driver of change

Monika Djerf-Pierre makes the comparison between media and an engine, able to construct and circulate cultural values and thus bringing about social development in the current era of mediatization. In her view, the analysis of media and gender must be weighed against politics, economy and culture to be fully understood (Djerf-Pierre, 2011: 43-44).

Politics of presence

Anne Phillips theory on the politics of presence (1995), which states the necessity of female representation to defend female interests, has its equivalent in the media sector (Zadig and Tryggvason, 2014: 66). GMMP and other studies show that female journalists choose female subjects to a larger extent that male journalists (Macharia, 2015: 46-47).

The "time lag" theory

Gaye Tuchman describes how people expect media to reflect the society as a whole, although there seems to be a "time lag" or discrepancy, which means that media does not reflect societal changes as fast as other arenas (Tuchman, 1978: 8-9)

Tokenism

Rosabeth Moss Kanter is famous for her studies of *tokenism*. A person belonging to a group representing less than 35 percent of the total group is likely to be considered a token or symbol of the same group with no real influence. In contrary, a person belonging to a majority group both has influence and gets the right to be treated as an individual. Being the symbol of one's group puts high pressure on representability. To draw a parallel with the newsroom, female journalists are often "obliged to make a difference in the newsroom" gender-wise (Djerf-Pierre, 2011: 44). Tokenism translated into the contexts of news content and organization makes the odd female subjects highly visible symbols of their gender, disguising the fact that they are in fact in minority (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 40, Kanter, 1993: 210-212, Wahl, Holgersson, Höök and Linghag, 2011: 157).

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Journalists as gatekeepers

There is a broad understanding among Swedish journalists on the issue of female underrepresentation in the news. Strategic work and discussions on increased gender equality frequently occur in Swedish media houses, and it is an issue that is regarded with great importance. The fact that 83 percent of the newspapers asked to participate in this study agreed to do so promptly strengthens this argument.

Gendered approaches to gender

Still, the issue of gender-balanced news is a female issue, even though most of my informants refer to it as a "human issue". Seven out of ten informants participating in this study were women, despite the fact that the initial interview inquiry was sent to half men, half women. Two out of the four participating female managing editors got the task forwarded to them by their male publishers who first got the interview inquiry. One of them is new in the editorial management team and responsible for gender issues. Accordingly, gender equality seems to be regarded a soft issue of lower importance than hard issues, left to female managers to deal with.

Interview Inquiry

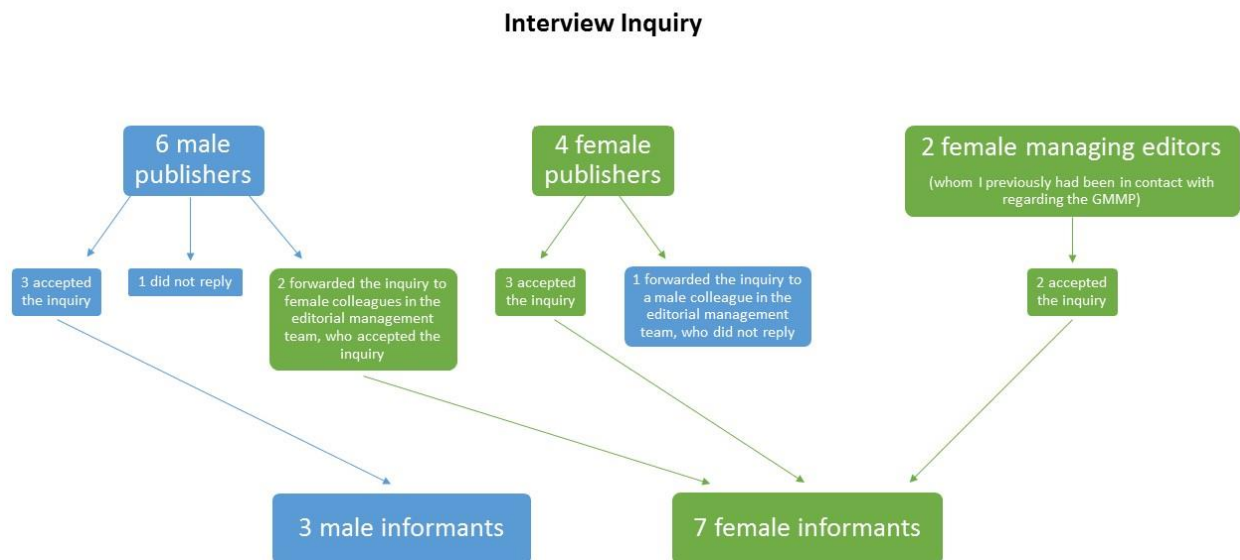| 6 male publishers	4 female publishers	2 female managing editors (whom I previously had been in contact with regarding the GMMP)
3 accepted the inquiry / 1 did not reply / 2 forwarded the inquiry to female colleagues in the editorial management team, who accepted the inquiry	3 accepted the inquiry / 1 forwarded the inquiry to a male colleague in the editorial management team, who did not reply	2 accepted the inquiry
3 male informants	7 female informants	

Figure 3: Chart explaining the distribution of informants

Why gender parity matters

90 percent of the informants identified the lack of female news subjects in media as a problem. (The odd informant, representing the remaining 10 percent, stated that gender equality is indeed important, but that it is a matter of target groups and who one is aiming the content at.) When asked to rank the problem by the parameters of democracy, journalism and business, the answers varied. Still, even when phrased as a democratic or editorial problem, the underlying consequence is that the underrepresentation of women in news content is strongly connected to the commercial side of business. This strengthens the argument that gender-balanced content is considered a business model:

> It's […] a question of mirroring society as it looks. And it goes without saying that if we mirror society as if it is 30 percent women, it gives a false picture of reality. So, that's one of the problems, I think. […] Secondly, I think we lose readers by doing it.[6]
> *Informant 6*

> […] well, the newspaper gets better. […] it's a commercial argument […] We could do a newspaper that could survive any sort of crisis if we put a focus on this.[7]
> *Informant 4*

Another gender differentiation that can be noticed in the data is that male publishers see gender equality as an *important* factor of a democratic, profit-driven media house, while female publishers and editors consider it to be a *crucial* factor:

> […] it's a momentous issue for us to be relevant to our audience. It's not just desirable, I mean it's absolutely necessary.[8]
> *Informant 8*

This view can be connected to Monica Löfgren Nilsson´s findings, showing that female journalists find gender-coded news more problematic than male journalists do. These results are also related to power, as previous research also suggests. If men were to agree on that the issue of gender equality is a main priority, they would also have to agree to let go of half of their power. This study implies that we still have not reached that point in time.

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[6] The original Swedish quotation: Det är […] en fråga om att spegla samhället som det ser ut. Och det är klart att om vi speglar samhället som att det är 30 procent kvinnor, så ger det ju en skev bild av verkligheten. Så det tycker jag är det ena problemet. […] Men sen den andra delen; jag tror att vi tappar läsare på det.

[7] The original Swedish quotation: […] alltså, det blir ju en bättre tidning. […] det här är ju ett försäljningsargument […] Vi skulle kunna göra en tidning som verkligen kunde överleva alla möjliga kriser om vi satsade på det här.

[8] The original Swedish quotation: […] det är en ödesfråga för oss att vara relevanta för vår publik. Det är inte bara nåt eftersträvansvärt, jag menar att det är nånting som är nödvändigt.

Little time for reflection in an exposed industry

With less journalists doing the same amount of news at a faster pace the work is stressful. Among the informants there is a sense of frustration that there just is not enough time to start working along new lines:

> Of course we talk content every single day, but right now the main priority is, and I think that's the case in many media houses: "How do we get the resources to last?"[9]
> *Informant 8*

A time-consuming personal interest

Journalists that are committed to work with the issue of gender are welcome to do so, but without any extra resources like time, crew and/or money. When it is a personal interest, instead of an organizational interest, the gender focus of a particular media house is also heavily dependent upon one single person or group of persons. When this individual (who often is a woman) gets other assignments or quit his or her job, the gender focus naturally fades out. These female journalists or local feminists become tokens, expected to make a change in the newsroom, but without real influence or broad support. Needless to say, this approach is not sustainable. The informant below, who was previously head of a gender group in the newsroom, which regularly monitored the news content and compiled statistics based upon the share of male and female news subjects, confirms this:

> There is an exhaustion, chiefly among the ones who are supposed to do the monitoring. That's one of the reasons we stopped, it took its toll.[10]
> *Informant 5*

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[9] The original Swedish quotation: Det är klart att vi pratar innehåll varje dag, men, och jag tror att det är så hos väldigt många mediehus, att man just nu jobbar med; "Hur ska vi få resurserna att räcka till?".

[10] The original Swedish quotation: Det är ju så att det blir en mättnad, alltså framför allt hos de som ska göra jobbet och mäta. Det var lite det som gjorde att vi slutade, det var ju liksom att det krävdes så mycket.

Media routines as gatekeepers

Despite good intentions, media routines regarding gender equality are not very well developed in Swedish newsrooms. Both news evaluation and attempts aimed at attracting female readers are tainted by a traditional, male mindset. Overall, this suggests that Swedish newspapers' are framing the world according to men's behaviours, needs, wishes and thoughts.

News evaluation

Regarding the issue of news-worthiness there is a strong resemblance between previous research and this study. Hard news is the traditional core of journalism. Yet, softer issues and an expansion of the news coverage have taken place in recent years. With the birth of online news hard news has again taken the main focus on the newspapers' websites, which the quotation below indicates:

> Those types of news have a digital fast lane, always. They go right out there. […] if one wants to be a news intermediary 24/7, where people can get their news straight to their mobile phones, then these fast news items are prioritized, yes.[11]
> *Informant 10*

News, according to the informants of this study, is something unexpected – societal disorder, which can be compared to Jesper Strömbäck's list of common news denominators, where sensational and unexpected events also were placed on top. This means that Swedish newspapers contain lots of news on accidents, crimes, immigration, politics and sports, which all fit well into the masculine side of the model of gendered news logic and as such include more male news subjects:

> […] we're focused on conflict, we write a lot about conflicts in different ways, about crime and such things. […] so the male aggressiveness is visible all the way into the papers. Which has to do with how we're culturally coded, I think. [12]
> *Informant 8*

Gendered news sections

30 percent of the newspapers in this study have gendered news sections, or magazines aimed at either men or women. This is seen as a way to attract more readers, which also has proven successful. Still, I argue that this way of viewing one specific subject as only connected to one of the sexes is tainted by male norms and perspectives. Instead of trying to attract new audiences with an inclusive journalism, such business models are rooted in old school journalism with its traditional news evaluation:

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[11] The original Swedish quotation: Den typen av nyheter går ju digitalt först på nåt sätt, alltid. Alltså, de ska liksom rakt ut. […] ska man vara en nyhetsförmedlare dygnet runt, där människor ska få sina nyheter direkt i sin mobil, då är det de här snabba nyheterna som går först, ja.

[12] The original Swedish quotation: […] vi är ju konfliktinriktade, vi skriver mycket om konflikter på olika sätt, om brott och sådär. […] alltså den manliga aggressiviteten syns hela vägen ut i tidningarna. Och som har att göra med hur vi är kulturellt kodade, tänker jag.

> […] You can start out from the assumption that there are three hundred years of experience behind this. If you go into a bookstall and look at the covers, you will find the answers to what both men and women want. […]
>
> But have there been any other approaches?
>
> Yes, yes, yes […]. These are billion dollar industries. In other words, no counter-productive decisions are being made. It's all very well evaluated. It's the same all over the world, so to speak. But that doesn't mean that it's bad.[13]
> *Informant 1*

This news sectioning can also be seen as a way of further preserving the existing dichotomy between hard and soft news. A couple of newspapers went about the issue of broad attractiveness the other way around. These media houses previously had weekend magazines aimed at women, but gradually decided to make them appealing for both sexes, which have been successful experiences:

> Yes, we made it broader. So it's about housing, intimate stories, food and such things. But it's also a longer interview and a foundational, deepening coverage. […] So there is some heavy stuff in there as well. There is not such a thing as […] well, this is only light and pleasant, but it's supposed to be interesting.[14]
> *Informant 10*

The result of a gender-neutral magazine, which provides the reader with a mix of hard news, human interest stories, opinion pieces, inspiration and entertainment, is a more complete product. The following quotation also highlights the relationship between gender equality and profit, as it is regarded as more beneficial producing a magazine aimed at both men and women, than to exclude one of the groups:

> […] I was actually part of the remake of that magazine, made to include both women and men, because I felt that we can't afford not to be relevant for men as well.[15]
> *Informant 8*

In regards to the two business models described above, where one is dividing male and female readers and the other one is uniting them, only time will tell which approach was the most successful. Still, if democratic values continue to develop at the same pace as

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[13] The original Swedish quotation: […] Alltså, du kan utgå ifrån att det finns trehundra års erfarenhet av det där. Om du kliver in på en kiosk och tittar på omslagen, då får du svaret på vad både män och kvinnor vill ha […].
Men har man testat nåt annat?
Ja, ja, ja, […]. Alltså, det här är ju miljardindustrier. Det fattas ju inga beslut som är kontraproduktiva i den meningen här, så det är noga utvärderat. Det är ju likadant över hela världen, så att säga. Men det behöver ju inte betyda att det är dåligt.

[14] The original Swedish quotation: Ja, vi gjorde den bredare. Så den handlar om bostäder, hemma-hos-reportage, det är matsidor och såna grejer. Men det är också en längre intervju och det är ett grundläggande, fördjupande reportage. […] Så vi har tunga saker i den också. Det finns inte nån […] ja, här ska det vara trevligt, bara, utan det ska vara intressant.

[15] The original Swedish quotation: […] jag var faktiskt med och skruvade om den bilagan lite till att inkludera både kvinnor och män, för jag kände att vi har liksom inte råd att inte vara relevanta för män också.

they have been during the past decades, I argue that the latter example of inclusive journalism belongs to the future.

The problem of finding female news subjects
When asked about the lack of gender parity in the news, journalists sometimes refer to the difficulties of getting women to speak publicly, as do the informants of this study. One possible explanation is that female experts are more self-critical than male, as women's opinions are not regarded as highly as men's from a patriarchal power structure perspective (Edström and Jacobsson, 2015: 43). This study also suggests that local media outlets find it harder finding female experts to interview, than regional and national newspapers. This is explained by the fact that there is often just one authority on a subject to turn to, which leaves no choices of gender. Still, there are positive examples of when journalists have put an extra effort in finding female news subjects. The two main keys to success in the area seem to be knowledge and time. Knowledge is needed to know where to look for female expertise, time is needed to establish contact long before deadline. The below informant tells a story about how all the previous male editors had failed in finding female news subjects to interview. Then a female editor started in the workplace and suddenly the female absence was not an issue anymore:

> […] what happened was, she was maybe interested in other subjects, she didn't give up, she had an entirely different network of contacts. In other words, another type of competence. And then we had change. […] It's about working methods and this is actually a question of competence, I think. Who one choses to turn to and who one actually knows exists.[16]
> *Informant 7*

This example proposes that there are women out there willing to talk to the media, but it is the media's task to find them. This is a classic example of politics of presence, where female journalists with an interest and knowledge in the field of female expertise can make a difference and set new standards of news-making.

Media monitoring as a tool for progress
Counting heads gives an overview of the gender situation in the news content. By visualizing the gender imbalance journalists are being made aware of the situation and able to work on the problem. Yet, media routines implemented to generate gender parity lack prestige in the male-coded newsroom climate. The below quotation confirms this stand:

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[16] The original Swedish quotation: […] utan vad som hände, hon kanske var intresserad av andra ämnen, vägrade ge sig, hade ett helt annat kontaktnät. Alltså, en sån annan sorts kompetens. Och då blev det ändring. […] Det handlar om hur man jobbar och detta, det är faktiskt en kompetensfråga, tycker jag. Alltså, vilka man väljer att vända sig till och vilka man vet ens finns.

> […] if you have written a piece generating lots of pageviews or, as in our case, lots of new subscribers, or if it gets lots of cred by other media or gets shared a lot in social media -– that's a crucial success factor. Then you know that you have done a good job. But […] if you have written a story highlighting three female news subjects instead of three men it won't be rewarded. It just won't happen. There are no daily scorecards [on gender] telling you that you have done a good job.[17]
> *Informant 6*

Still, tools for digital monitoring have been developed in recent years, which makes the job both easier, better visualized and perhaps even more attractive to male journalists, based on the findings that new technology is of high status and therefore male-coded. 70 percent of the newspapers included in this study are currently counting men and women in their content. The remaining 30 percent have been counting or would like to start monitoring gender as soon as they "have more capacity". This shows that the will of publishers and editors to change the dominant male structures is strong. The below quotation also indicates that if the business case argument can be further strengthen, then there is incentive to continue working on the issue:

> I believe in monitoring tools. I think that's a very good way of getting instant feedback. And of course […] if we can find correlation between how much we let women express themselves in our media, if we can see that it leads to increased reading or added interest or new target groups, then we're on the right path. After all, we're a profit-driven corporation that is supposed to do things because they work.[18]
> *Informant 8*

Another concrete measure or "scorecard" is the introduction of individual goals for each employee in two of the newsrooms, which are in the process of making inclusive news a salary criterion (both newspapers belong to the same media group). The two publishers responsible both confirm that the co-workers are favorable of the initiative. This approach of individual responsibility can help break down the gender barriers of newsroom gender projects (Edström, 2011).

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[17] The original Swedish quotation: […] har du fått till en artikel som får in väldigt många sidvisningar eller för vår del väldigt mycket nya prenumeranter, eller som blir väldigt creddad av andra medier eller blir väldigt delad i sociala medier, då är det en framgångsfaktor. Då vet du att du har gjort ett bra jobb. Men […] har du skrivit en artikel och lyft fram tre kvinnliga intervjupersoner istället för tre män så premieras det inte. Det finns inte. Det finns inga dagliga scorecards [för genus] som berättar att du har gjort ett bra jobb.

[18] The original Swedish quotation: Jag tror ganska mycket på mätverktyg, faktiskt. För jag tycker det är ett väldigt bra sätt att få direkt återkoppling. Och det är klart att […] kan vi hitta en korrelation mellan hur mycket vi låter kvinnor komma till tals i våra medier, om vi också kan se att det faktiskt leder till ökad läsning eller ökat intresse eller nya målgrupper, då är vi ju rätt ute. För vi är ju trots allt ett privat, vinstdrivande bolag som ju ska göra saker för att de funkar.

Organization as gatekeeper

Swedish media houses are gender equal workplaces in this day and age, as previous research shows. This is also clear, looking at the gender and roles of my informants. Still, the organizations included in this study are pre-dominantly male-oriented, both in culture and in structure.

The traditional male culture of journalism persists

Internal resistance to gender equality work is posed by both sexes, according to this study. This phenomenon is traceable to previous research suggesting that the male culture is deeply embedded within the journalism trade, which directly and indirectly sets the rules for what is considered right and wrong. The below quotation is made by an informant who earlier was in charge of a monitoring program for news content. Tragicomic as it is, it bears witness of the powerplay still taking place in Swedish newsrooms, where opponents of gender work are belittling the (female) fight for equality:

> The first time [we started counting] all hell broke lose. We counted the wrong week and it was an odd way of counting and it's not about quantity, and bla, bla, bla. And I remember that there was a man […] saying […] why are you doing this? Aren't you happily married? And this wasn't like before Christ, but during the 21st century.[19]
> *Informant 4*

The gender counting at the newspaper continued, nevertheless. And so did the internal resistance:

> Every now and then some division succeeded in reaching gender parity. But then there were instant reactions, like "what a female majority indeed". I think that is why one loses speed all the time, because there is such a hefty resistance if one really is to reach 50/50. Many people find it looking really odd. Not just men, unfortunately.[20]
> *Informant 4*

Gendered news coverage by journalists' choices

Most editors and publishers disagree that reporters get to cover soft or hard news because of their sex. On the other hand, they point to the fact that there are more female reporters applying for so-called soft news jobs, while male reporters in abundance are applying for hard news employment. As a result, soft news sections are held by female journalists, and vice versa:

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[19] The original Swedish quotation: Första gången [vi räknade] blev det ett jäkla liv, kommer jag ihåg. Då var det fel vecka vi räknade och det var konstigt att räkna så där och det handlar inte om kvantitet, och bla, bla, bla. Och jag kommer ihåg att det var en man […] som tyckte att […] "varför är du med i det här? Är du inte lyckligt gift?" Och det här var ju alltså inte för Kristus, liksom, utan det handlar om 2000-tal.

[20] The original Swedish quotation: Och då så var det så fort vi nån gång, nån dag, lyckades ha en ganska jämn könsfördelning bara på någon avdelning, då var det direkt liksom att "ja, men det var ju väldig kvinnodominans." Så jag vet inte om det är det som gör att man tappar farten hela tiden, för det blir liksom sånt otroligt motstånd om det verkligen blir 50/50. Det ser jättekonstigt ut, tycker många. Tyvärr inte bara män.

If you're looking for a sports reporter you will get 100 applications from male reporters and two from female reporters, so it's a much harder job on our part to handle that balance of interest and gender.[21]
Informant 3

The testimonies imply that the odd female sports reporters rarely stay for long:

[…] I have been told it was about being more attracted to the news desk, for example. But the question still remains – why is that? Could it be because of an exclusionary environment, that one does not feel welcome and such? Those are the things one has to consider.[22]
Informant 10

The below informant follows this line when speaking of the need for gender-sensitive leadership who support norm-breaking initiatives in order to change the culture:

We had a female manager at the sports desk for a while, which was very fun. And we had two female sports reporters. Everyone has quit. They can´t cope.

Because of the resistance?

Yes, I think so, absolutely. Maybe not the coworkers, but the manager, definitely. […] It gets really hard when one doesn't get the support promised. […] Simply, putting a female manager in such a position, then she ought to get lots of support from the management.[23]
Informant 4

Breaking the structural codes of news organization
There are attempts at trying to curb these gendered structures. Recruiting female talent is seen as a way to inject new values into the organization. At the same time it is a business model, as the prospect is to attract new audiences. One informant has been able to change the traditional gender roles by recruiting an all-female investigative team, as well as a gender-equal sports staffing led by a female sports editor. According to this local feminist the content nowadays has different characteristics, due to the different staffing. This suggests that the politics of presence works. Female reporters seem to

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[21] The original Swedish quotation: Om du söker en sportreporter så kommer du att få 100 manliga ansökningar och två kvinnliga, så att det kan vara ett mycket hårdare jobb från vår sida för att rubba den intressebalansen och könsbalansen.

[22] The original Swedish quotation: […] när jag har fått det berättat så handlade det mer om att man tyckte att det var roligare att gå in på nyheterna, till exempel då. Men sen är ju frågan – varför är det då det? Skulle det kunna bero på att, ja, att det finns en sån stämning som gör att man inte passar in, eller att man inte känner sig välkommen eller vad det skulle kunna vara för nånting? Det är ju sånt man får fundera över.

[23] The original Swedish quotation: Sen på vår sportredaktion hade vi ett tag en kvinnlig sportchef, det var jättekul. Och vi hade två kvinnliga sportmedarbetare. Alla har ju slutat. De orkar inte, liksom.
Är det på grund av motståndet?
Ja, det tror jag absolut. Inte medarbetarna kanske, men chefen, absolut. […] Det blir jättejobbigt när man inte får stödet som var lovat på nåt sätt […] För det är ju givet, att sätter man en kvinnlig chef på en sån post, då måste hon ju få jättemycket stöd från ledningen.

turn to female news subjects to a larger extent than male reporters. In turn, this leads to a different framing of events:

> […] the sport pages are no longer an obviously male domain. The investigating and the coverage of the local authorities are made by women, which means that neither of these areas are no longer obviously male. We have also tried to expand beyond the traditional definitions of investigative reporting.[24]
> *Informant 2*

Still, there is little room for new recruitments in the slimmed newsrooms of today. The informant below talks about the nearly all-male staffing of the newsroom:

> […] I have inherited an editorial staff that is very problematic, and it's very hard getting at those structures since we're also downsizing.[25]
> *Informant 9*

The feminization of journalism brings plurality and lower status
One informant talks about the feminization of culture journalism in the past decades, where a previously completely male domain has had to give space to a major female breakthrough:

> […] culture journalism is less hierarchical, in one way more democratic, in one way more pluralistic, but also less status-laden than before. […] It's still a largely important place for opinions, but it's not as linked to academia or elites in that way. It has changed. At the same time there is the old guard talking about cultural twilight or that it's become too simplistic.[26]
> *Informant 7*

The lowered status of culture journalism has also carried with it an increase of female managers, in line with previous research of organizational power-shifts. As a result, culture journalism seems to be more inclusive gender-wise than news journalism. At the same time, I argue that the lowered status of the field is problematic since this content is given lower priority than hard news as a result.

Praise and oblivion in the newsroom
Another gender phenomenon reported is the homosociality of the newsroom. Male reporters' achievements are often recognized, while female reporters' achievements are not, which is referred to as old structures and practice. This can also be traced to the theory of hard versus soft news, where hard news has higher status than soft news:

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[24] The original Swedish quotation: […] sporten är inte en självklart manligt område, heller. Grävandet och kommunbevakningen görs av kvinnor, det gör att det inte heller blir självklart manligt. Och där har vi försökt också att inte nöja oss med de definitioner som finns av vad som är ett gräv.
[25] The original Swedish quotation: […] jag har ju ärvt en bemanning på redaktionerna som är oerhört problematisk, där det är otroligt svårt att komma åt de strukturerna eftersom vi också är i nedbamanning.
[26] The original Swedish quotation: […] kulturjournalistiken är mindre hierarkisk, är på ett sätt mer demokratisk, på ett sätt mer mångröstad, men är också mindre statusfylld som den var förut. […] Det är fortfarande en jätteviktig opinionsplats, men det är inte lika akademinära eller högt på det sättet. Den har förändrats. Och det sker ju då samtidigt som det finns ett gammalt garde, som verkligen säger att det är, du vet, pratar om kulturskymning eller förfackning, eller att det blivit för ytligt.

> The work that is being noticed, that is given extra space, like hard news, investigative news, is often made by men. Are male bastions, so to speak. And the reason behind it is tradition, I would say. Hard news for men, soft news for women. But that is something one could see to that it gets changed.[27]
> *Informant 2*

One of the informants told the story of how she drew the male publisher's attention to the general discontent among the employees about the fact that only male reporters were praised, which led to a staff survey. This shows that gender equality is a question of knowledge and experience:

> […] So it's a matter of raising awareness, constantly. […] Because it's not, I don't regard it to be deliberate when one doesn't see. But it's actually that one doesn't see.[28]
> *Informant 7*

Later, the very same informant was awarded a seat in the editorial management team to drive gender issues. Still, she has not received any additional resources to be able to focus on the problem. The same thing happened to another female editor who had been heading a gender group in the newsroom for some time:

> We became kind of the usual alibi. […] we have a gender group. End of story. […] After a while, I got a seat in the editorial management group. And became an alibi there as well, since there were no other women there at the time. […] It doesn't do any good if I don't get more resources than previously.[29]
> *Informant 4*

These situations are, yet again, examples of tokenism. Female journalists are chosen to make a change in organization and content. As representatives of editorial management teams they are highly visible symbols of the female sex, but without tools to accomplish a shift. Tokenism can also lead to the misconception of high status, while the issue of gender rather has a low status in these organizations. This, in turn, can generate resistance, as other journalists and newsreaders can perceive that the issue of gender has an advantage of other subjects.

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[27] The original Swedish quotation: De jobb som uppmärksammas, som får stor plats, tunga nyhetsjobb, grävjobb, ofta görs av män. Är manliga basioner, så att säga. Och orsaken till det är väl också en tradition, så att säga. Hårda ämnen till män och mjuka ämnen till kvinnor. Men det är ju någonting man kan se till att ändra på, då.

[28] The original Swedish quotation: […] Så det handlar bara om medvetandegörning, hela tiden. […] För att det är inte, jag uppfattar det inte som att det är illvilligt när man inte ser. Utan det är att man faktiskt inte ser.

[29] The original Swedish quotation: Vi blev lite mer som det här vanliga alibit, liksom. […] vi har ju en genusgrupp. Punkt. […] Och sen efter ett tag då fick jag då en plats i ledningsgruppen. Jaha, då var jag också ett alibi då, för det fanns ingen kvinna där då. […] Det hjälper ju inte om inte jag har nåt mer mandat än jag hade tidigare.

Extramedia forces as gatekeepers

This chapter mainly concerns the news audience, who seem to be gender equal, according to subscription lists. The audience online is younger than traditional print readers, according to the informants, but are still gender equal. None of the newspapers are getting more print subscribers. The new readers to be found are considered to prefer online news.

> Representation in the newspaper is one thing, but it's not the same crisis regarding female readers.[30]
> *Informant 3*

Gender inequalities in representation are transferred onto digital platforms

Content research suggests that online news is even more imbalanced when it comes to gender than traditional news, due to time pressure, news imitation and reduced staffing. With less journalists producing news in-house the newsrooms are increasingly dependent on news produced by external actors. The quotation below suggests this method contributes to the gender imbalance:

> […] we have [a news agency] feeding our site with news and we only have secondary influence on what they chose to write about. I don't think they are notably gender neutral, to put it mildly.[31]
> *Informant 3*

Still, the journalists participating in this study claim that the digitalization of the media has had a positive impact for democracy and that it is developing the journalism trade. The reason is that online news is more easily monitored compared to printed news. As a result, the audience is given a growing importance:

> What has happened is that you have got a much more responsive journalism that is much more individual-friendly and listens much harder to the audience. That's what has happened.[32]
> *Informant 3*

Readers' attitudes are setting the news agenda online

Most newspapers have at some point conducted reader surveys. Yet, one problem noted is that the audience only tend to react to the current situation, which does not give many leads to what kind of content they are missing or even know that they are missing, for that matter. To be able to receive more comprehensive data about the readers' wishes and needs, and to create an exchange of information, focus group discussions seem to be a more effective approach. According to reader surveys and pageviews,

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[30] The original Swedish quotation: Representationen i tidningen är en sak, men det är inte samma kris på kvinnliga läsare.

[31] The original Swedish quotation: […] vi har ju [en nyhetsbyrå] som matar våran sajt med nyheter och exakt vad de skriver om har vi ju bara sekundärt inflytande över. Jag tror inte att de är speciellt könsneutrala, om jag ska uttrycka mig försiktigt.

[32] The original Swedish quotation: Det som har hänt är att du har fått en mycket mer lyhörd journalistik, som är mycket mer individanpassad och lyssnar mycket hårdare på publiken. Det är det som har hänt.

readers prefer reading hard news, like sports, crimes, foreign news and investigative reporting, but also increasingly softer news, like longer, socially-oriented articles and opinion pieces. As the media organizations are eager to attract more digital readers, hard news has precedence online, while soft news and deeper analysis go into the paper versions of the newspapers. This mirrors the results of GMMP 2015. It also implies that the organizational theory on how women are left behind when men conquer new technical areas of high status also includes the news audience. One paradox to be seen is that the younger, supposedly more gender aware, online audience is served mainly hard news. The older print audience, on the other hand, receives more gender-balanced news.

A reader survey on sports and its implications
One of the media outlets has just recently been conducting a survey of its sports section. Despite the fact that the local female soccer team is as well publicized as the male team, the result showed that most readers prefer to read about the male team's achievements. The publisher below expresses disappointment that the gender focus on the sport pages has not generated a bigger involvement by the readers:

> […] it's with a certain sadness that I notice that the readers are not nearly as interested in this type of journalism [the female soccer team], as they are of the journalism about [the male soccer team]. Interesting and sad, to be honest.[33]
> *Informant 9*

Yet, there are many aspects interconnected in this case. First, we have the issue of soccer being a traditional male culture affecting both sexes. I imply that male soccer therefore is seen as the "real thing" by many soccer fans, both men and women. As a result, big businesses invest more in men's soccer than women's soccer. This generates both increased revenues for the media house, as well as larger visibility for men's soccer in society as a whole. In other words, male soccer is a construction of news between the media and other parties interested in setting the agenda. One determinant factor here is time. I argue that the audience needs time to adjust to female athletes and sports teams, as well as to a female breakthrough in all societal arenas. For example, female soccer was regarded as a girl's hobby a few decades ago. Nowadays, the viewing scores of female soccer's World Championship are at an all-time high (Aftonbladet, 2015). Which in turn generates an increased interest from sponsors, fans and other stakeholders. This indicates that the audience's acceptance of "female phenomena" will increase over time.

What the audience wants vs. what the audience needs
Should the media houses always listen to their audience? For commercial reasons, yes, they should. Still, media's role is also to monitor the democratic principles of plurality, freedom of speech and enlightenment. In other words, the mission of the news media is not only to give the audience what they want, but also what they need as citizens of a

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[33] The original Swedish quotation: […] det är då med viss sorg jag ser att läsarna inte är tillnärmelsevis lika intresserade av den journalistiken [det kvinnliga fotbollslaget], som de är av journalistiken om [det manliga fotbollslaget]. Intressant och deppigt, om jag ska vara ärlig.

democratic society. Regarding the above discussed time aspect maybe the media houses should not focus too much on its audience's preferences regarding gender. The question is if media's strained budgets of today allow such a time lag between production and effect? In other words, can media afford to be a driver of change?

> […] the web is asking us new questions and gives us some really tough knowledge. […] If all of our own detailed analysis of what people want to read show one thing, we will have troubles over time to pursue driving change. I believe that we will have to pick our fights if this continues.[34]
> *Informant 9*

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[34] The original Swedish quotation: […] jag tycker att webben ställer ju nya frågor och ger oss också en del riktigt jobbiga insikter. […] Om alla våra egna detaljerade analyser av vad folk vill läsa visar en sak, så kommer vi över tid att få problem att driva på bred front. Vi kommer att få välja våra strider, tror jag, om det här håller i sig.

Ideology as gatekeeper

A common explanation to the underrepresentation of women in the news is the continuing lack of gender equality in society in general, and among the elites in particular. It is also an effective way of removing guilt from the media house itself and instead blaming societal patriarchal structures for the overrepresentation of male news subjects.

> […] we're not an isolated structure, but like the rest of society we're dependent upon what's surrounding us. So the political structures, the business structures and so on, they are mirrored and affect us too, so to speak. So it's not as easy as deciding to include more women in the paper and then doing it, because we have to dig much, much deeper than that.[35]
> *Informant 3*

> Our mission is to survey those in power, that's our main mission. Another mission, I consider as a publisher, is to give an equal image of society. Those two are not very easily combined.[36]
> *Informant 9*

> […] these are rather slow mechanisms and it's very, very hard to force things to move faster. One can talk about the need to influence this [the issue of gender equality] with monitoring tools, discussions and consequence analysis. One can make decisions on the margin, saying "we have a ban on surveys with only men", or only women for that matter, and so on. That will affect some parts, but eventually journalism is about mirroring society, meaning this is what it looks like, so to speak.[37]
> *Informant 1*

Sweden is ranked one of the most gender equal countries in the world, built on political benchmarks and laws providing men and women with the same responsibilities, opportunities and rights. The total structure of Sweden, to use the wordings of Shoemaker and Reese, is built on solidarity, plurality and inclusiveness, even though traditional male values still persist in some areas of society. Thus, there seem to be a "time lag" between the societal development and media's development, gender equality-wise. In this sense, ideology is not a gatekeeper hindering a more inclusive journalism. Rather, it can be argued that media, being a major influential social actor, is restraining the democratic development of society.

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[35] The original Swedish quotation: […] vi är ju liksom ingen ensam struktur, utan vi är ju precis som alla andra delar av samhället beroende av det som är runt omkring oss. Så de strukturerna som finns i politiken, de strukturerna som finns i näringslivet och så vidare, de återspeglas ju och drabbas så att säga oss också. Så det är inte riktigt så enkelt att vi bara bestämmer oss för att nu ska vi ha fler kvinnor i tidningen och så gör vi det, därför att vi måste gå mycket, mycket djupare än så.

[36] The original Swedish quotation: Vi har i uppdrag att granska makten, det är vårt allra viktigaste uppdrag, men vi har också som uppdrag, tycker jag som är ansvarig utgivare, att ge en jämställd bild av samhället. Och det där går inte i alla givna situationer ihop.

[37] The original Swedish quotation: […] det är ganska så långsamma mekanismer och det är väldigt, väldigt svårt att tvinga fram snabbare saker. Man kan med mätverktyg, med diskussioner, med konsekvensanalyser påminna om behovet av att påverka detta [jämställdhet], och man kan fatta aktiva beslut på marginalen och säga så här "vi har förbud mot att ha enkäter med bara män", eller för den delen bara kvinnor, och så vidare. Då kan man påverka vissa delar, men till syvende och sist så handlar ju journalistik om att spegla samhället och då kommer det se ut som det gör, så att säga.

The news media as a stumbling block or as a driver of change

Intergovernmental organizations, like the UN, the EU and others, all state the important role of media for a truly democratic and equal society. This study suggests that the Swedish media houses themselves agree on this view. Many journalists seem to have an idealistic drive, striving to make the world a better place. Some of the informants were nearly apologetic regarding the issue of female underrepresentation and expressed a strong belief in the norm-creating power of media:

> […] that we would work in some sort of vacuum, that's just not the way it works. We do have a responsibility for what kind of picture of society that we leave behind.[38]
> *Informant 3*

The following quotation mirrors an opposite position, where the power of media is seen in a different light, namely as a driving force for true democratic values:

> […] isn't that totally amazing how media is part of pushing questions and creating... one is not fabricating, but one is governing issues. […] I don't think that media should be a campaigning agency, but one should know that one is part of creating […] society. I think that's a good thing.[39]
> *Informant 7*

The black holes of global commitments

Still, 90 percent of the informants were unaware of the global commitments on media and gender. Nevertheless, this is not regarded as problematic by most with reference to the independence of the press and the self-regulatory system, which are regarded to go hand in hand with the spirit of the global agenda. Overall, journalists are very sensitive regarding the issue of regulatory guidelines and policies:

> […] all external attempts to influence our news assessment would backfire pretty much, I believe.[40]
> *Informant 1*

Others welcome initiatives and information on how to tackle the problem of female underrepresentation, which presents an opening to cooperation between global actors involved in the issue of media and gender and the media industry. It is noteworthy to mention that the following comments all came from female informants:

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[38] The original Swedish quotation: […] att vi bara skulle jobba i nåt sorts vakum, så funkar det ju inte. Vi har ju ett ansvar för vilken bild av samhället som vi lämnar ifrån oss.

[39] The original Swedish quotation: […] det är väl helt fantastiskt det att medier är med och liksom flyttar frågor eller skapar... man hittar inte på, men man kommer upp liksom och styr. […] jag tycker att man får ju inte bli ett kampanjorgan, fast man ska också veta att man är med och skapar […] samhället. Det tycker jag är bra.

[40] The original Swedish quotation: […] alla externa försök att påverka vår nyhetsvärdering skulle tvärtom backfira, tror jag ganska mycket.

I think it [knowledge of the global commitments] would have led to immensely relevant and good discussions. Then again, there is the freedom of the press and the power of the publisher to decide what ought to be published or not. Overall, we're a bit hostile towards regulations of that freedom, even if they, as in this case, are beneficial.[41]
Informant 9

I don't know if the media is to blame or if it is the ones that have come up with the commitments that didn't inform the media, or didn't bring the media along when drawing them up. […] So, I don't think this kind of message would be resisted here, but it's a question of bringing it into the light.[42]
Informant 6

One wants to say; "Why hasn't anybody told us?" It ought to be stated somewhere, it ought to... Then again, the newspapers should be working actively with these issues themselves.[43]
Informant 7

This suggests that female journalists need to take a lead in driving the issue of gender-balanced content. They see the problem, they understand its implications and they greet the efforts made. In this sense, politics by presence seems to be a promising way forward. Still, if male journalists are not willing to follow, I argue that the issue of gender-balanced news will never be successful based on the results of this study. Inclusive news includes the entire media industry.

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[41] The original Swedish quotation: Jag tror att det [kunskap om globala åtaganden] hade lett till otroligt relevanta och bra diskussioner. Sen finns det ju nånting i yttrandefrihet och att man som ansvarig utgivare själv bestämmer vad som ska stå och inte stå i ens publikation. Att vi generellt sett är lite avogt inställda till regleringar av den friheten, även om det är, som i det här fallet, av godo.

[42] The original Swedish quotation: Sen vet jag inte om det är medierna man ska lägga skulden på eller om det är de som har tagit fram riktlinjerna som inte har informerat medierna, eller inte haft medierna med sig när man har tagit fram det här. […] Så jag tror inte det finns någon motvillja här på något sätt att ta emot ett sånt budskap, utan det handlar ju mer om att det behöver föras fram.

[43] The original Swedish quotation: Man får lust att säga; "Varför har ingen berättat det för oss?" Det borde ju stå nånstans, det borde ju… Sen borde ju då förstås tidningarna arbeta aktivt med det själva.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to find possible explanations to why gender parity in the news is taking so long. By utilizing the gatekeeping model I have been able to structure the data into likely layers of explanations, ranging from the attitudes of the individual journalist, the structures of the newsroom, and the expectations of the readers. The additional theories and concepts have been useful in pinpointing and grouping specific areas of interest, in terms of explaining how the journalism gender logic works in practice as well as visualizing efforts to change these norms.

Regarding research question 1

The major obstacle to gender balanced news is suggested to be a prevailing male journalism culture. This culture affects all levels of newsmaking, as well as the expectations of the audience. The issue of gender-balanced news seems to be considered a female or soft question within the media organizations. Along the same line, news aimed at women has a different, softer character than news aimed at men. This supposed softness has low journalistic status. Thus, issues and news attributed as hard or male have an advantage in Swedish newsrooms, which in turn affect the content gender-wise. The informants as well as their co-workers are said to be well aware of the situation of female underrepresentation in content and the need to do something about it. Nevertheless, their testimonies suggest that the resistance is still strong and can be both explicit and implicit. The results mirror well with the ones found in previous research, namely that the changes need to take place on all different levels of the industry, from individual journalists to media management.

Regarding research question 2

Swedish publishers and editors are well educated, both academically and well read. Thus, they are very knowledgeable of issues, such as norms and gender structures. Still, as power players who in many ways are setting their own rules, they can also allow themselves to be a bit picky regarding which information affects them or not. The informants of this study comply to the common codes of conduct, based upon the principles of the free press. Still, they are very wary of other guidelines, which could be considered to infringe on these principles. As a result, a majority of them are not interested in learning more about the global commitments on media and gender. This is a Catch-22 situation of the democratic free press.

Regarding research question 3

Gender is an area of knowledge; it has to be taught. There is a gender awareness in the Swedish newsrooms. Still, this awareness needs to be transformed into knowledge on how it affects the organization and how to cope with the issue. A starting point to visualize the (possible) gender imbalance in content is to monitor news subjects. A majority of the participating newsrooms are monitoring their content, according to this study. One way to create change is to nominate gender focal points, or gender specialists, to problematize the issue and to drive change from within. However, to be able to cope with this task, these persons have to be given extra resources as well as full support by the top management. Mixing editorial groups as a way to displace the strictly gendered news sections is also suggested to make a difference in content. Individual responsibility is seen as a progressive way to tackle the male resistance to gender work within the media organizations. Still, all of the above tactics do not seem to generate lasting change without persistence and continuity. Time is a scarce commodity in today's media landscape. Nevertheless, it seems to be a key element in this equation. Time is needed to monitor content, to localize female news subjects, as well as to change norms. Thus, I argue that publishers and editors that want to pursue this work of change need to have the courage to allocate enough resources for the purpose.

Final discussion

Apart from the above findings one can distinguish three distinct features when summarizing the results of this study:

- Publishers and editors are hesitant on how to tackle the problem of female underrepresentation in the news.
- There is a strong reluctance in the media to interference with journalistic work.
- The media sector is under pressure. The need for sustainable, profitable solutions is strong.

Swedish publishers and editors agree to that media have a responsibility to mirror society in a fair and equal way. At the same time they are struggling to find sustainable solutions to the problem of gender imbalanced news. Progress is being made, but there is still a lack of information and resources spent on the issue. Simultaneously, major international players, like the UN, are working actively for a more inclusive journalism as a way of tackling global challenges to humankind and the full enjoyment of human rights for all. The problem is that they have not informed the Swedish media of their agenda. The media, on the other hand, seems reluctant to any external guidance. Still, I argue that these two parties, the media industry and the intergovernmental organizations working with the issue of media and gender, have to come together to discuss problems, ideas and solutions to their common goal. This will create a solid base for all parties involved and open up great opportunities to drive change in and through the media. It is not a matter of infringing the freedom of the press, but an opportunity for global cooperation. Human rights cannot be seen as a threat, but should embolden representatives of the free press. Despite its gender-imbalanced content, Swedish media is one of the forerunners in this race for gender equality. Thus, taking on a champion role in such a partnership Swedish media could become a role model for others to follow. As a result, more journalists will be made aware of the problems of female underrepresentation in content and the effects of it, the resistance will fade, and a more inclusive journalism will set the standards for a modern news evaluation. In turn, the audience will get used to an increased plurality of both identities and ideas in the media and expect nothing less of future journalism. Inclusive news also has the possibility of attracting larger audiences. New groups of readers can in turn generate new joint ventures between the media and other actors, such as revenue sources and businesses. A truly inclusive journalism can in fact serve as a re-birth of the newspaper industry.

Further research

This study suggests that there is a gap between the global commitments on media and gender and the media's awareness of them. Thus, further research needs to be conducted on the implementation of these commitments. Important aspects of such studies would be to investigate if the UN and others are following-up on the objectives set, as well as what the main problems of implementation are suggested to be.

A key incentive for media to succeed in this area, besides democratic and journalistic values, is profitability. Thus, more research is needed on the connection between inclusive news reporting and a larger audience, in line with similar research on increased profitability for companies with mixed-sex management boards. If such a connection can be scientifically secured, the efforts to achieve gender parity in the news will certainly increase.

A future interview study with the same informants, following up on these results, would also be highly interesting in order to track the development of gender-balanced news.

Contribution to the research field of media and gender

This study is based on deep interviews with publishers and editors of the largest newspapers in Sweden. This elite level of the editorial hierarchy is not easily accessible. Nevertheless, the knowledge, thoughts and explanations to the problem of female underrepresentation in the news and the effects of it formulated by these informants are highly valuable in finding ways forward on this seemingly difficult path. To my knowledge, I do not believe that the media's awareness of the global commitments on media and gender has previously been researched. Therefore, I argue, that this study is unique in its character and a valuable contribution to prior research in this field of knowledge.

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Appendix 1: Interview Inquiry

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to ask if you would like to be part of a study on how Swedish newspapers can achieve a more gender equal news reporting?

I am a journalist and communicator, currently on leave from the content agency Spoon. Last year I was co-editing the Swedish report *Räkna med kvinnor 2015* (attached) together with media researcher Maria Edström as part of my Master's degree in human rights at Gothenburg University. *Räkna med kvinnor* is part of an acknowledged international content study, called the Global Media Monitoring Project.

Now I am in the process of writing my Master´s thesis on the same subject, with Maria as my supervisor. The purpose of the study is to find out why gender parity in news content is taking so long. The prospect is to be able to use the results in an international context.

The aim is to be able to include approximately ten interviews in the study, including representatives of editorial management teams of national and regional newspapers. All informants will be anonymized to enable as exhaustive and honest answers as possible. In other words, this study is not about naming and shaming participants that are less good at gender equality, but finding joint solutions.

On a practical level, the interview will be conducted by phone sometime in March. It will take approximately 45 minutes. If you do not have the possibility to participate, will you please forward this inquiry to other members of the editorial management team.

I hope you will find this inquiry interesting and important. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,
Josefine Jacobsson
Cellphone no: 0702-282807

http://jmg.gu.se/digitalAssets/1552/1552995_rakna-med-kvinnor.pdf

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Problematizing gender
Why is gender imbalance in news media a problem?

Swedish news content has stagnated at 30 per cent women over the past 15 years. Why do you think that is?

What are the difficulties when striving for gender parity in the news?

What kind of tools are needed to start working for gender parity in the news?

Media as a social actor
Media creates social norms, but what kind of responsibility do newsrooms have for gender issues in society as a whole?

In what way have you noticed an increased gender equality in society and among your readers?

How aware are you of Sweden´s global commitments to gender regarding women and media?

Have you and your staff been offered any courses, information or guidelines regarding female representation from unions, business associations, or others?

The newsroom
Are male and female reporters assigned different areas of interests, such as sports, human relations, politics, etc?

How do you tackle online harassment towards your journalists?

How do you tackle online harassment towards your female news subjects?

The working process
What makes a story newsworthy?

In what way is newsworthyness affected by the ongoing commercialization?

According to GMMP it's even harder achieving gender parity on the web than in traditional media outlets. Why do you think that is?

How is your newspaper sectioned?

Who are your readers (and how do you find out)?

What do your readers want (and how do you find out)?

Content
A business plan for gender equality is obligated by law, but does your gender equality plan include content as well?

How are you monitoring news content?

What is the aim of monitoring?

Are you monitoring the appearance of underrepresented groups in society, in regards to gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, etc?

What kind of profits do you see in working for gender parity in the news content?

Is gender parity paramount a question of democracy, of publicism, or of profit?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Personal
Title?
Gender?
Age?
Education?

The Product
The newspaper's editorial mission?
Political affiliation?
No of employees?
No of editorial employees?
The editorial distribution in terms of gender among your employees?
The editorial distribution in terms of gender in management positions?
Edition?
No of publishing days?
HQ?
Region?