WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH GENDER INEQUALITY?

Poststructural Policy Analysis of Gender Equality Policies from County Administrative Boards in Sweden 2018-2020

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Abstract

Essay/Thesis:	15 hp
Program and/or course:	Master's Degree Project in Gender Studies
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	St/2019
Supervisor:	Hulya Arik
Examiner:	Juan Velasquez Ateh
Report No:	xx
Keyword:	Gender equality, policy analysis, county administrative boards

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to do a poststructural analysis of gender equality policies from four county administration boards in Sweden. The thesis aims to examine how the policies construct the problem with gender inequality and what subjects, effects and political implication the representation of the problem produces.

Theory: This thesis theoretical framework is based on theories of poststructuralism and gender as a social construction.

Method: To analyze the material, Carols Bacchi's policy method "What's the Problem Represented to be?" will be used. The method builds upon the idea that problems in policies are not self-evident or objective, but that policies produce specific representations of the problem.

Result: The analysis shows that the policies construct the problem with gender inequality as structures and norms about gender that results in an unequal division of power between women and men. The policies also emphasize knowledge and method as important solutions to gender inequality. Gender inequality is regarded as a human right issue and as a problem for society and the labor markets development. The main subject positions in the policies are *the citizen* and *the worker*. Implications of this representation of gender inequality are that women and men are both disadvantaged by gender inequality and that there is a need for people to learn about gender inequality and make better decisions that will help overcome the problem with gender inequality.

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1. Introduction

> The Swedish government is feminist and puts gender equality at the center of
> both national and international work (Regeringen1, 2019).

In 2017 Sweden was ranked as number one at the EIGE gender equality index[1]. Sweden's former gender equality minister Åsa Regnér said that this proves that Sweden's work with gender equality works well, but that the goal is not reached yet (Regeringen2, 2019). The ultimate goal with Swedens gender equality policy is that women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own life (Regeringen3, 2019). The government aims to achieve this goal by implementing it in all political areas and processes where decisions are made. This means that the work with the gender equality goal is part of the Swedish governments work with gender mainstreaming (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2018, 10-11). Gender mainstreaming have since mid-90 been Sweden's official strategy to work with gender equality and means that gender equality must be considered in all state agencies and political steps in decision making (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016, 8).

One of these state agencies that have the assignment to support, coordinate and develop the work with gender mainstreaming and Swedens gender equality goal is county administrative boards. A county administrative board is a state agency who is responsible for sustainable development and implementation of government goals in Sweden's different regions. They work with both a national perspective and with local conditions and can be described as a link between the government and the regions (Svekom, 2019). The Swedish government has given the county administrative boards the assignment to develop strategic policies for the period 2018-2020 for how they can work with the Swedish gender equality goals (Regeringen1, 2019). This thesis aims to analyze four strategy policies from county administrative boards in Sweden for the period 2018-2020 and look at how the problem with gender inequality is presented and understood. The county administrative boards that have been selected are Stockholm, Skåne, Uppsala and Västra Götaland. The analysis shows that the policies construct the problem with gender inequality as structures and norms about gender that results in an unequal division of power between women and men, where knowledge and method improvement are pointed out as the main solution to gender inequality.

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[1] EIGE Gender Equality Index is a composite indicator that measures the complex concept of gender equality and, based on the EU policy framework (EIGE, 2019).

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Swedish Gender Equality Policy

Gender equality has been a separate policy domain in Sweden since the early 1970s (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten1, 2019). In 2006 the government bill *Makt att forma samhället och sitt eget liv – nya mål I jämställdhetpolitiken (prop. 2005/06:155) [The Power to Shape Society – Towards New Gender Equality Policy Goals]* was adopted by the Swedish government. In this bill Swedens current gender equality goal "Women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own life" was presented. The goal was revised in 2016 through the bill *Makt, mål och myndighet – en feministisk politik för en jämställd framtid (Skr. 2016/17) [Power, Aims and Authority – Feminist Policy for a Gender Equal Future]* and since 2017 the goal consists of six-part goals (from Jämställdhetsmyndigheten1, 2019).

1. An Equal Division of Power and Influence
2. Gender Equal Economy
3. Gender Equal Education
4. Gender Equal Division of Unpaid Home and Care Work
5. Gender Equal Health
6. Men's Violence Against Women Must Stop

These are the goals that the county administrative boards policy documents are based on and their purpose is to implement these goals in the regions.

1.2 Purpose

The aim of this thesis is to do a poststructural policy analysis of gender equality policies from four different county administrative boards in Sweden. More precisely this means to critically examine how the policies construct the problem with gender inequality and what subjects, effects and political implications the representation of the problem produces.

The thesis research questions are:

- How is the problem with *gender inequality* constructed in the policies?
- Which subject positions does the representation of the problem assumes and who is constructed as a political subject and who is excluded?
- What effects and political implications does the representation of the problem produce?

1.3 Limitation

This thesis is a small-scale analysis of four county administrative boards in Sweden. The county administrative boards that have been selected for this thesis is Stockholm, Skåne, Uppsala and Västra Götaland county administrative board. These county administrative boards include Sweden's four biggest city's which the selection of the material has been based on. The conclusion should therefore not be seen as representative for Swedish gender equality policy in general, but rather as a cluster sample of how four county administrative boards construct the problem of gender inequality.

The selected method for this thesis *The WPR approach* have proven to be an efficient method to analyze policy documents. Several different problem representations, assumptions and implications have been discernible in the policies. This means that I have had to select themes I have considered most prominent in the document. The thesis does, however, consist of a lot of different themes, which has resulted in another limitation problem. Due to page limit restrictions, I have not had enough space to do deep analysis of each theme, I, therefore, regard my thesis to be more of an overview of how the policies construct the problem with gender inequality. I do however regard overviews to be important and showing how policies consist of several different problem representations, assumptions and produces a range of different effects and subject positions.

1.4 Reflexivity

This thesis builds upon a poststructural understanding of how society is constituted through a plurality of discourses and knowledge productions. This means that I as a researcher is also part of this creation of reality. Depending on what I highlight and which theories I use to analyze my material, will also produce a specific representation of how can understand the problem of gender inequality. My aim is therefore not to find "the real problem" of gender inequality, but rather to critically examine how the policies construct the problem. I also regard that research has political implications and that my findings in this thesis can affect people's lives. A term that captures this relation is Annemarie Mols (1999) *ontological politics,* where ontology refers to multiple possibilities of conditions and where the term politics is used to underline that these conditions are shaped through complex interventions and where research is an important part of how realities are shaped in different ways and therefore becomes a political practice (Moll, 1999).

2. Method for Poststructural Policy Analysis

2.1 The WPR Approach

To analyze the material, Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?", also known as the WPR approach, will be used. The WPR approach challenges the dominant view within policy analysis that the purpose is to solve already existing problems. Instead, the WPR approach shifts focus to how the problem is constructed and that the policies produce problems rather than solves them. The method starts with the premise that what one proposes to do about something reveals what one think is problematic and needs to change (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, 16; Bacchi, 2012, 21).

The approach builds upon an asset of six questions (from Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, 20).

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The goal in question 1 is to identify the representation of the problem, which can be explained as working backward from the proposal, to see what is problematized. In relation to my thesis, the representation of the problem is gender inequality. The goal in question 2 is to identify assumptions and meaning that needs to be in place for the problem to make sense. For example, how the policies regard gender equality to be important for the development of society. The goal in question 3 is to critically examine knowledge productions, discourses and power structures through which the problem representation has been developed. Here we can mention how neoliberalism and new public management is part of how the policies emphasize knowledge and method improvement as a solution to gender inequality. Question 4 examines unproblematic themes within the policies and where the silences are. For example, how the policies build upon a binary idea of gender that excludes trans persons as political subjects. The goal in question 5 is to identify the effects of the problem representation. Effects should be

understood as political implication and not measurable outcomes. This means identifying discursive effects, subject positions and how it affects peoples lived experiences. For example, how the policies emphasize the need for people to learn about gender inequality and learn to do better decisions in life that will help overcome the problem with gender inequality. Finally, question 6 aims to examine where the problem representation has been produced and how it has been defended and criticized. Here I will connect my discussions to previous research and political debates that relate to the policies representation of the problem with gender inequality (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, 20-24).

To analyze the material the policies have been read several times, every time I did a rereading of the policies a new question from the WPR approach was asked to the policies. First, the policies were read through question one, two, four and five. Through these questions, I identified the policies problem representation, assumptions, unproblematic themes and effects. The results from these readings were put together in different themes that could be distinguished in the policy documents. Finally, the results were read through question three and six in order to connect the results to previous research, theories and public debates. This approach to the policy documents gave me a good overview of what is regarded to be the problem of gender inequality in the documents. Throughout my reading of the documents, I have also asked what kind of subject's positions can be distinguished and what subjects' positions are excluded in this understanding of gender inequality.

2.2 The Material: Gender Equality Policies

The material that has been selected for this thesis is strategy policy's for gender equality from four different county administrative boards in Sweden. The county administrative boards that have been selected for this thesis is Stockholm, Skåne, Uppsala and Västra Götaland county administrative board. These county administrative boards include Sweden's four biggest city's which the selection of the material has been based on.

The purpose of these strategy policies is to develop and implement the Swedish gender equality goals in each region of the specific county administrative board. As stated in the introduction a state administrative board is a state agency who is responsible for sustainable development and implementation of government goals in Sweden's different regions and the gender equality policy goals is part of this assignment (Svekom, 2019).

The policy documents consist of an introduction where the policies purpose is explained and of different focus areas where each gender equality goal is discussed in relation to the specific region. The focus areas consist of an explanation of the problem and of a goal and action plan. The structure of the county administrative boards policies looks different, but they all consist of these different parts. The policy documents are written in Swedish. In this thesis, I have included quotes from the policies that I have translated into English.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Poststructural Policy Analysis

Poststructuralism is not a singular theory, but in general, it refers to a critique against traditional science belief in an objective and universal truth. Instead, attention is directed to how heterogenous practices, especially knowledge practices, constitutes our society. By emphasizing a plurality of practices, it becomes possible to understand our reality as constructed and open to change. Poststructuralism shifts focus from the essence of things to how things are done. The selected method for this thesis, the WPR approach, build upon this understanding. It challenges the usual approach within policy scholarship that treat policies and problems as self-evident and neutral. Instead, the WPR approach focuses on how policies and problems are done (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016 4-7; Ambjörnsson, 2012, 40-45).

The WPR approach makes the case that the doing of policies has political implication and affects people's life and experience. A starting point for this is, as Wendy Brown explains it, that we live in societies that are saturated with policies (Brown, 1998). This builds upon Michel Foucault theories of governmentality and of power as productive. According to Foucault, today's western society is characterized by an increased discipline of citizens. Foucault's theory of governmentality refers to how different authorities aim to produce desirable citizens through policies. Foucault means that this exercise of power becomes productive since subjects will internalize policies in order to pass a normal. In this understanding, governmentality refers to any form of activity that aims to shape, guide or affect the conduct of people (Foucault, 1977, 102-107; Foucault, 1991). Policies become an important part of this thinking and how order is maintained in society. Knowledge and categorization of objects, subjects and places are an important part of this "order maintenance", which is why the WPR approach emphasizes the need to examine how the problem representation has been produced within specific discourses and knowledge productions (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, 4-7; Ambjörnsson 2012, 45-48).

3.2 The Doing of Gender

This thesis builds upon an understanding of gender as a social construction. A perspective that has emerged within gender studies since the 1980s is the theory of *doing gender*. The first to develop this theory was Candance West and Don Zimmerman (1987) who turned against the division of biological sex and social gender. West and Zimmerman argue that the relation is more complex, and that gender instead should be understood as a presentation and

accomplishment that is done through everyday interactions. Doing gender is connected to norms and structure of what is considered being male or female in a specific context. When this doing is reproduced every day, they seem natural and produces a legitime social ideology about gender. Power becomes important in this approach to gender since people are valued through this ideology, resistance becomes difficult (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This idea can also be found in Judith Butler theory of gender as performative:

> That the gendered body is performative suggest that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse… (Butler, 1999, 173).

Butlers theory about performativity means that gender is constituted through discourses and ideas about gender. When these ideas are repeated through gendered acts they appear as natural and stable. Butler, however, argues that both gender and sex are constructed categories.

Feminist scholars have been concerned about the use of categorical distinction such as *women* and *men* and how categorial thinking may produce an image of them as fixed and essential categories. Carol Bacchi writes in *Policies as Gendering Practices: Re-Viewing Categorial Distinctions* (2017) how a poststructural approach to categories shift focus from a more ethnomethodology way of describing characteristics ascribed to women and men to how categories are done. This means shifting focus from gender to its verb form *gendering* and how subjects become gendered (Bacchi, 2017).

This thesis will use this approach to categories and not only regarding gender but also other categories such as ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability (etc.) and how this produce particular kinds of subjects. It is also important to point out that even if categories are regarded as being done, is not to say that they are without significance. Therefore, I regard it as important to investigate what effects and political implication the use of categories have. The same way I regard gender to be constructed and filled with meaning through every practice, I also regard gender equality to be something that is done rather than is. This means that gender equality is given meaning in regard to how it is used both in daily life as well as in policy document (Rönnblom, 2011, 38). The selected method for this essay, the WPR approach, enables a way to examine how gender equality is done in Swedish policies

4. Literature Review

Research on Gender equality policy is an extensive research area and multidisciplinary. In this section, I will focus on research from feminist studies.

4.1 Literature about Gender Equality in Sweden

Sweden is often regarded as very successful when it comes to gender equality and is often ranked as one of the world's most gender-equal countries. An image that has been (re)produced so many times that it has created a national mantra and described by many as "Swedish exceptionalism". This image has emerged from a range of different discourses, research, reports, politics, media and popular culture (Martinsson et al. 2016, 1-4).

The image of Sweden as a strong welfare state has also played an important part in this image (Martinsson et al. 2016, 1-4). Ann Towns (2002) writes how Sweden as a modern welfare state, emerged in the post-war period. This image was filled with values of democracy, rationality and justice and at the same time as being liberated from nationalism. In this identity of being a modern and progressive country the idea of Sweden as a gender equal state emerged (Towns 2002, 163-165). From the 1970s a range of welfare reforms regarding gender equality was made with a special focus on efforts for women to take part in the labor market and to combine work and family life (Martinsson et al. 2016, 3). In mid-1990's the image of Sweden as welfare and gender equal state strengthened. Town (2002) points out that the fact that Sweden became a member of the European Union and was declared the most gender equal state at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 had a great impact on this image (Towns, 2002, 163-165).

Feminist scholars do however argue that the norm of Sweden as gender equal is highly problematic and (re)produces a whole range of problematic norms such as cis- and heteronormativity and builds upon nationalism and postcolonialism (Martinsson et al. 2016, 3). Ulrika Dahl (2005) writes that heterosexuality in Swedish gender equality work is seen as natural and desirable and that the purpose of gender equality is to correct problematic norms (such as masculinity and violence) so that men and women can live together in a safe relationship (Dahl, 2005). Research also shows how gender equality builds upon a hetero-cis normative understanding of gender, for example, the law on parental leave that assumes a "he"

and "she" as parents which produce an image of them as optimal parents (Martinsson et al. 2016).

Previous research also shows how gender equality is done as part of Swedish national ideology. National ideology refers to the idea that people (often citizens in a country) come together in a "we" that are united by common descent, history, culture and language. (NE1, 2019). Ann Town (2002) writes how gender equality as a national identity in Sweden has created a division within the state where "immigrants" and "other cultures" are constructed as different from "Swedes" and that they do not value gender equality.

4.2 Literature that Uses WPR to Analyze Gender Equality Policies

There is also research that uses the WPR approach to analyze gender equality policies. Swedish gender scholar Malin Rönnblom (2011) examines how gender equality is filled with meaning in Swedish national policies and ask the question of what happens to gender equality in a neo-liberal context. Rönnblom's results show how gender equality is reduced to a question of administrative techniques, like auditing, checklist and evaluations of methods concerning gender equality. Rönnblom also shows that there is a gap between gender equality policies and when the policy is to be implemented, where explanations about gender inequality disappear and instead focuses on methods concerning gender equality (Rönnblom, 2011).

Dolores Calvo (2013) examines how gender equality is represented in European Union gender mainstreaming policies concerning development cooperation and migration. Calvo's shows that the representation of gender (in)equality is the lack of women's participation. This is regarded as a problem since women are regarded as a useful resource for the economy and because it is a human right for women to participate. Calvo's also shows how gender is constructed as a fixed and binary category in terms of being male or female (Calvo, 2013).

Helle Poulsen (2006) examines how gender and gender equalities are represented in the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Poulsen shows that gender refers mainly to women's employment and becomes a question of women inequalities. In ILO gender equality is legitimized through human rights arguments and as a matter of efficiency within the labor market. Poulsen concludes that the main subject position available in this representation is the "the women worker" and that men are invisible as gender subjects in the ILO context (Poulsen, 2006).

5. Analysis

In this first section of the analysis, the policies problem representations are introduced. In the second part, the most central presuppositions and assumptions that underlie the representation of the problem is discussed. The third part includes themes that are unproblematized in the policies. Finally, the fourth part is about implication and effects that are produced by the representation of the problem.

5.1 What's the Problem Represented to be?

For policy documents concerning gender equality, the overall problem representation becomes *gender inequality*. It is however very uncommon to hear people talk about the problem of gender inequality. Previous research shows that even if gender (in)equality is presumed to be a well-understood concept, it carries multiple meanings that change depending on context (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, 64; Rönnblom, 2011, 36; Giritli Nygren et al. 2016, 51). In this section, I will look at how the problem of gender inequality is constructed in the policies. To summarise I argue that the problem with gender inequality is represented to be that there are structures and norms about gender that results in an unequal division of power between women and men. The policies also represent the problem with gender inequality as a lack of knowledge and insufficient work methods on how to work with gender inequality.

5.1.1 The Problem of Power

The gender equality policies build upon Sweden's national gender equality goal: *Women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own life* (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten1, 2019). The underlying problem representation becomes that women and men *do not* have the same power to shape society and their own life. This becomes what is regarded as the main problem with gender inequality and the purpose of the policies is to overcome this problem. I will refer to this problem as the *general problem representation.*

Power becomes essential in this problem formulation, however, the only county administrative board who really define power is Västra Götaland who defines it "as a relationship, where a person can get another person to do something" (Västra Götaland, 2019, 42). Stockholm and Skåne do not define power but say that power can be informal and formal (this formulation can also be found in Västra Götaland). Formal power refers to representation (quantitative aspect) in public and private decision making. Informal power refers to the possibility to influence the

agenda and to formulate questions, problems and solutions (qualitative aspect). Uppsala county administrative board do not explain their understanding of power at all.

This constructs an understanding of power as something a person can possess and a position in society that can be achieved. The policies do however state that not all people have the same possibility to power. The reason behind this is said to be power orders and structures in society such as gender, age, socio-economic background, origin, education, sexuality and functionality (etc.) that affects a person's possibility to power. This constructs an image of power as something enclosing, that affects persons. This differs from the previous understanding of power as something a person can possess. A conclusion can, therefore, be that the policies understand power as both something a person can have and something that affects people possibility to take action.

It is however not stated who is disadvantaged by this unequal division power. Instead, the policies construct the problem to be that it affects both women and men in different ways. This can be highlighted in the quotation below from Skåne and Stockholm county administrative boards regarding the focus areas *Gender Equal Health* and *Gender Equal Education:*

> Notions of gender affect health care, treatment and diagnosis, which affects the possibility of equal health and dental care. A number of studies show that there are medically unjustified differences, caused by conscious and unconscious notions of gender, so-called gender bias. An example is the field of cardiovascular diseases where women's symptoms or stories have been misinterpreted or ignored. Another example is that men are underdiagnosed when it comes to depression (Skåne, 2017, 36).

> Current norms about masculinity consist of an anti-study culture that prevents boys from succeeding in school. At the same time, girls are affected by stress due to norms and expectation of performing well, which can affect their mental health (Stockholm, 2018, 16).

Here the problem is that healthcare and education are unequal and that both women, men, boys and girls are disadvantaged by this inequality. The only time the policies construct someone as responsible and disadvantaged by this unequal division of power is the focus area *Men's Violence Against Women* where men and norms about masculinity is pointed out as the reason to violence against women (Uppsala, 2017, 7; Skåne, 2017, 39; Stockholm, 2017, 26; Västra Götaland, 2019,33).

The policies also construct the problem with gender inequality to not only be a problem between women and men but also among groups of women and men. The policies use an intersectional perspective to analyze how different power structures affect people in different ways and their possibility of power. The policies explain that this means looking at how gender interacts with other power structures such as age, socio-economic background, origin, education, sexuality and functionality to name a few examples. The policies also explain that this will strengthen and provide better conditions for achieving the gender equality goals (Uppsala, 2017, 5; Skåne, 2017, 6+9; Stockholm, 2017,5; Västra Götaland, 2019, 8).

In critical and feminist scholarship, the term Intersectionality refers to the interaction of different categories and are used to describe different outcomes of identity, social practices and oppression. The term was coined by Kimberly Crenshaw (1991) and have been especially important in black feminism in America who argued that black women's experience was invisible in white feminism (Davis, 2008). An intersectional approach to gender equality work in Sweden has recent years started to be integrated into state agency work on gender mainstreaming (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten2, 2019, 39).

The purpose of county administrative boards policies is to focus on the category of gender, however, *The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research* (that until 2017 had the mission to support state agencies work with gender mainstreaming*)* have emphasized the importance of highlighting differences among groups and developed the strategy *Always gender, never just gender*. This strategy is meant to examine how gender interacts with other power structures, but where gender is the primary category for investigation. This means that the policies purpose is to examine how power structures affect gender and women's and men's life situations, experience and possibility to power in different ways (Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, 2016, 10).

5.1.2 The Problem of Norms
So far, I have focused on how the policies construct the problem of the unequal division of power between women and men as both something that can be possessed and as a structure that affects a person's possibility to take action. In this section, I will shift focus to formulations of norms and how norms affect people and structures in society.

Norms are in the policies constructed as a problem because they affect people's self-image and expectations from society in a negative way. This can be highlighted in the following quotations:

> Values about masculinity and power become normative, which means that men are considered better leaders and are chosen to a greater extent than women in leading positions (Västra Götaland, 2019, 20).

> But there are still expectations and ideas about men as family providers and women as caregivers who have consequences for men's and women's workload, finances, health and contact with relatives (Skåne, 2017, 30).

> In terms of grades, girls generally perform better than boys. Research shows that there is a connection between masculinity and lower performance (Stockholm, 2017, 18).

Norms are constructed as a problem because people are valued through them and that men and women are valued differently because of these norms and expectations, for example how men are regarded to be better leaders than women. Norms are also constructed as a normative force, which means that people act in accordance with what is expected of them, for example how norms about masculinity and performance result in lower grades for boys in school. Norms are also understood to have consequences in society. For example, norms about women as caregivers results in that they take more parental days than men, which have economic consequences since women get a lower pension.

It is a bit unclear if the policies understand all norms to have a negative influence or just some norms. The policies do not either explain if the problem with norms is that they are reproduced or whether ideas about women and men are taken for granted. They only specify that norm can have negative effects and that it is important to talk about norms and raise awareness to the fact that norms have consequences when it comes gender inequality (Uppsala, 2017; Skåne, 2017; Stockholm, 2017; Västra Götaland, 2019). This means that norms become part of the problem with gender inequality.

Another dimension of this problem with norms and structures is that what is considered being male have more value than what is considered being female. For example, Uppsala county administrative board writes that budgets tend to give more resources to men and that more weight is given to activities, needs and priorities that are traditionally male. Uppsala does

however not specify what these traditionally male activities are, only that it is important to consider it (Uppsala, 2017, 22). This understanding is also visible in how the policies explain gender segregation in the labor market:

> The main reason for pay differences between women and men, in addition to working hours, is that work dominated by men are valued higher than work dominated by women (Skåne, 2017 19-20).

Work sectors that are dominated by men have more value and often better working conditions then sectors dominated by women. The policy also states that a less segregated labor market would probably overcome this problem and equalize the economic differences between women and men (Skåne, 2017, 20).

As I have previously stated the policies construct the problem to be that both men and women are affected by gender inequality. To some extent, they do however seem to have the understanding that women are more disadvantaged than men and that there is some kind of system that results in that what is considered being male have more value than what is considered being female. The county administrative board do however seem to to be unwilling to say this in words, which constructs an image that both women and men are equally victims of gender inequality.

5.1.3 The Problem of a Lack of Knowledge and Insufficient Work Methods

The main solutions to the problem with gender inequality that is presented in the policies are knowledge and better work methods on how to work with gender equality. This is an argument that has a prominent role in the policies understanding of gender inequality and which the policies constantly refer to as a solution. The quotations below highlights how the policies present the importance of knowledge about gender inequality:

> A norm-conscious work (in school) has the potential to make the education more equal, by improving the conditions for students to make free and conscious education choices. The norm-conscious work is crucial to prevent negative effects of destructive norms (Stockholm, 2017, 19).

> Through knowledge of the underlying structures, we can create a society with equal conditions and opportunities for women and men (Västra Götaland, 2019, 7).

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> There are several explanations as to why we still have a long way to go regarding gender equality. One reason is that we do not see that society is unequal because we are so used to it. Therefore, it is important to have updated knowledge of how the situation looks for women, men, girls, boys and transgender people from different groups (Skåne, 2017, 5).

> There are good prerequisites to develop and raise the level of knowledge in the county. The level of knowledge differs within the county, the county administrative board support competence development through education and materials.... (Uppsala, 2017, 10).

Knowledge about norms and underlying structures are constructed as essential in order to reach the gender equality goals between women and men. This means a lack of knowledge becomes a problem representation. Another problem representation is that there are insufficient working methods on how to work and prevent gender inequality:

> Develop working methods to create and spread knowledge on how to equalize gender differences and give men and women equal opportunity to work (Stockholm, 2017, 13).

> Therefore, a variety of actors are needed, who with different tools work to achieve the vision that women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own life. Successful gender equality work must take place systematically, in collaboration and based on knowledge (Skåne, 2017, 3).

Systematic and efficient working methods are presented as essential in work about gender inequality. There is a range of different methods and tools that are mentioned in the policies, such as mapping, statistic and investigations, networking and collaboration between different actors in society, education material, better law enforcement and also better safety and protection for people who are targeted for violence (Uppsala, 2017; Skåne, 2017; Stockholm, 2017; Västra Götaland, 2019).

Gender scholars have pointed out that knowledge, education and surveys are a common way of doing gender equality in Sweden and that it can be understood from New Public Management entrance in the public sector. New Public Management refers to the application of market solution in the public sector which have resulted in an increased focus on administration such as documentation, evaluation system and market solutions such as sale- and purchase systems and customer relations (Rönnblom, 2011, 37-38; de los Reyes, 2016, 29).

5.2 Presuppositions and Assumptions

The purpose of this chapter is to answer what assumptions about *gender inequality* the policies problem representation builds upon. Questions that are raised are; why gender inequality is seen as important to work with, how is it legitimized and why is it regarded as a problem. I present my discussion thematically since the different themes can be found in all of the policies. The themes are: *Gender Inequality as a Society Problem, Gender Inequality as Problem the Labor Market, Gender Inequality as a Human Rights Issue.*

5.2.1 Gender Inequality as a Society Problem

The policies connect gender inequality to a society problem and as a threat against democratic processes: "At a society level, there is a risk that democracy is eroded if society allows systematic violations based on gender (Stockholm, 2017, 11). Discrimination, violations and different treatment based on gender are seen as negative for peoples faith in a democratic society. This is regarded as a problem since the policies emphasize the need of participation for society's development: "Active and participating citizens are a prerequisite for both the individuals and society development and to create prosperity…" (Skåne, 2017, 13). The policies also highlight that gender inequality is a society problem because it cost a lot of money, especially for juridical and healthcare. Here the policies especially mention men's violence against women: "At a community level, [men's] violence involves gigantic economic cost related to, health problems, production cost and judiciary cost (Uppsala, 2017, 7).

This can be interpreted as that the policies regard gender equality as important for Sweden as a state to function. The policies construct an image that Sweden needs citizens who both respect society and help it to develop. The assumption is that in order to achieve this, people need to have power and ability to be participating citizens, which is why gender inequality can be seen as a concern since it becomes a hinder to participation. The idea that gender equality is important for society and democracy can also be found in the Swedish constitution from 1971 which states that the public power is to be exercised with respect for people's equal value (1 kap, §2).

Another image that occurs in the policies is the idea of a relationship between the state and its citizens, where the policies both emphasize the responsibility of the state to protect its citizen: "It is the state's responsibility to protect girls and boys from all types of physical and mental violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation…" (Uppsala, 2017, 8) and at the same encourage them

to participate in society: "Active and participating citizens are a prerequisite for both the individuals and society development and to create prosperity…" (Skåne, 2017, 13). This image corresponds to an image of a society contract where citizens both have right and obligations. Rights in terms of diplomatic protection and influence and obligation in terms of taxes and conscription (NE2, 2019). In the policies, this contract is presented as that the state will protect its citizens and make sure that people have the possibility to power, in exchange that people respect the state and help it develop. The official definition of "citizen" according to *Nationalencyklopedin* is*:* "a legally binding relationship that can arise between a state and an individual (citizen) by law…" (NE2, 2019). This shows that the idea of being a citizen is an important part of the idea of gender equality for society and democracy. This is a discussion I will elaborate on in the section *5.4.3 Subject positions.*

5.2.2 Gender Inequality as a Problem for the Labor market

The policies also connect gender equality as important for labor markets development. The policies state that there is a risk that valuable competence will be lost if employers do not take advantage of all peoples knowledge: "It is important that employers take advantage of the skills that newly arrived women, men and transgender people possess in order to increase growth" (Skåne, 2017, 19). The policies also state that the reason behind this problem is norms and stereotypes about people who affect the image of people and who is regarded as competent for a specific job (Skåne 2017, 19; Stockholm, 2017, 14). Discrimination is also said to be a problem regarding why some people competence are not valued (Stockholm, 2017,15; Uppsala, 2017, 15). The policies also state that it is important to value all peoples competence in order to create innovation and efficiency within the labor market. This image is visible in the quotations below:

> As with gender segregation in the labor market, there are many indications that
> efficiencies are to be made because of gender (Stockholm, 2017, 14).

> In order for Skåne to develop as both a producer of innovative ideas and as an
> expansive region, the county needs to be at the forefront when it comes to
> creating an open and inclusive enviroment….(Skåne, 2017, 18).

This can be interpreted as that economy and development within the labor market becomes an important drive for the need to work with gender equality. This is an image of gender equality that can be found in previous research. Calvos (2013), and Poulsen (2006) show in their studies about gender equality policies how women are regarded to be an important resource for the

labor market and that gender equality can increase efficiency and growth. The studies show that gender equality is legitimized both as a human rights issue (women's right to participation) and as the usefulness of women participation as a valuable resource.

During the 1970s a range of gender equality reforms that were connected to the labor market was adopted in Sweden. For example, the parental law, the introduction of the municipal childcare, the abolition of joint taxation. Between 1974 to 1991 the Swedish gender equality minister was placed at the department for the labor market. It has since moved around between several different departments but is since 2019 back at the department for the labor market. This show that gender equality has been closely connected to the labor market in political discussion in Sweden (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016, 25-26).

Another idea that is prominent in the policies is the understanding of work as the main occupation for people. The policies constantly highlight that gender equality is important so that people can work. Especially those who stand outside the labor market is regarded as a problem, such as migrant women: "The county administrative board sees the need to do mapping of the labor market for women born abroad (Uppsala, 2017, 16). It is also regarded as a problem that women work less than men due to unpaid reproductive work: "A more even distribution of home and care work would also equalize the opportunities for gainful employment (Stockholm, 2017, 14). This creates an image of work as a self-evident goal that all aim to reach for.

Roland Paulsen has theorized the idea that work today is a self-evident goal. Paulsen writes in his book *Arbetssamhället: Hur arbetet överlevde teknologin* (2010) *[A Working Society: How the Work Survived Technology]* that the need to work today has never been less (due to technological development) still we work more than ever, and politicians constantly emphasize the need to create job opportunities. Paulsen argues that we live in a working society, where everybody needs to work. Paulsen makes in his book a historical overview to show how work has gone from being seen as a curse during antiquity to be regarded as every human's duty, responsibility and right in today's society. The main reason to this change, Paulsen argues, is that work is regarded to be an important component in a modern and welfare society that emphasizes the need for citizens to work and pay taxes in exchange for protection. Work then becomes both a requirement to be a citizen and the purpose of politics is to create work and make sure that people can work.

Paulsen also writes that this is especially visible in Swedish politics and what is called *arbetslinjen*, which best translate into *the work line,* which means that people who have the ability to work, are expected to work and will also have possibility work (Paulsen, 2010, 53-77). I argue that the policies focus on gender equality as important for the labor market can be seen as part of this political *work line* in Sweden that emphasizes the importance for people to work and the importance of gender equality to make sure that people can work.

It is however important to point out that women have not always been part of this political work line, where women traditionally have been placed at home and in the family (there are however differences here where working-class women have been part of the labor market to a greater extent then middle-class women) (Gemzöe, 2014, 88-90). But 1970s focus on women's participation at the labor market marks a shift in political discussions in Sweden, where women got a more prominent role in the political discussion about the labor market.

5.2.3 Gender Inequality as a Human Rights Issue
Another theme that is prominent in the policies is gender equality as a human right issue. The quotations below show how gender equality is regarded to be a human right in the documents:

> "Power, influence and economic equality is a fundamental human right. Women around the world live in unequal conditions. According to UN women convention, it is the state's responsibility to ensure that women are not discriminated at the labor market when it comes to wage settings and opportunities to reconcile professional and family life (Västra Götaland, 2019, 14).

> The right to one's own body is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for having the power to shape your own life and take part in society on equal terms (Uppsala, 2017, 7).

> The right to your own body is a prerequisite to be able to have power and influence over your own life. Men's violence against women is a serious crime against women's and children's human right, both internationality and in Sweden. (Skåne, 2017, 40)

In these quotations, the policies refer to UN conventions about human rights. UN defines human rights as: "…recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (UN, 2019). In this understanding of human right, the focus is on the individual's freedom and

rights. For example freedom in terms of individuals right to their own private life and rights in terms of protection from the state (NE3, 2019). This understanding of human right can be found in the policies since they both emphasize individuals freedom to shape their own life and right in terms of protection from discrimination and violence. That gender equality is regarded as a human right is also visible in Calvos (2013) and Poulsen (2006) studies of gender equality policies that show that gender equality is legitimized as a human rights issue, which makes it a moral concern and a justice argument. I likewise observe this in my material and that gender equality can be interpreted as a moral concern.

Another theme that is prominent in the policies is how they connect individual freedom and possibility to shape your own life to economic independence:

> For the individual, income is crucial for their own independence and to not be dependent on a partner or family. It is also an important factor in a persons independence and self-realization (Stockholm, 2017, 15)

> Good health, knowledge, a place to live, community/fellowship, financial security and a good start in life are crucial for the possibility to the individual to create its own life (Skåne, 2017, 12).

> Individuals own livelihoods creates economic security and is a prerequisite for an independent life. Without their own livelihood, the individual easily dependent on others, which can limit both decision making and possibility to take action (Västra Götaland, 2019, 15)

In these quotations, the policies connect independence to economic security and having your own livelihood. This can be interpreted as the policies emphasize the importance of people being independent and free individuals, which makes gender inequality an economic concern. I, therefore, argue that gender inequality as a human right issue can be interpreted as both a moral concern and as an economic concern where freedom and possibility to shape your own life is connected to economic independence.

5.3 Unproblematic Themes

In this chapter, I will discuss themes that occur in the documents but without being questioned or problematized. The themes that I will discuss are: *Knowledge and Method Improvement as a Solution, Binary View of Gender, Heteronormative Assumptions, Intersectionality as Representation.*

5.3.1 Knowledge and Method Improvement as a Solution

As presented in section *5.1.3 The Problem of a Lack of Knowledge and Insufficient Work Methods* knowledge and method improvement is pointed out as the main solution to the problem with gender inequality. The policies state that through updated knowledge about how the situation looks for women and men and through norm-consciousness the underlying structures can be challenged. Method improvement that is mentioned is statistics, mappings and surveys. The policies also state that social actors (NGO, state agencies, private sectors) must improve their work with gender inequality such as networking between institutions, law enforcement and support and safety to persons exposed to violence and threats (Uppsala, 2017, 11-13; Skåne, 2017, 8-9; Stockholm, 2017, 4-7; Västra Götaland, 2019, 9-13). It is however not mentioned why knowledge and method improvement is the best way to work with gender inequality.

As I have presented previously the focus on knowledge and method improvement can be understood from New Public Management entrance in public sector, which have resulted in an increased focus on administration such as documentation, evaluations systems and market solutions (Rönnblom, 2011, 37-38). That this has influenced the work with gender mainstreaming in Sweden, can we see in the Swedish government assignment to *The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research* (that until 2017 had the mission to support state agencies in their work with gender mainstreaming) which state that they will work to improve and develop methods for the work with gender mainstreaming. The assignment also included creating a forum for networking, information about gender mainstreaming and to create the condition for long-term support for gender mainstreaming (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016, 48-50). *The Swedish Gender Equality Agency* (which is the coordinating authority for gender mainstreaming in Sweden since 2018) also writes that gender equality is a complex and intersectoral work and therefore it is necessary to have high demands on method and follow-ups (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2018, 7).

The increased focus on knowledge and method improvement is something that has been criticized from gender scholars, who argue that gender equality work risks focusing more on evaluating methods rather than on the effects methods have on gender equality in society (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2018, 3). A gender scholar who has presented this critique is Malin Rönnblom (2011) who argues that the focus on knowledge and method improvement turns the problem with gender inequality into an administrative routine, where the insufficient techniques, methods and education becomes the problem rather than gender inequality itself. Rönnblom also argues that the focus on knowledge as a solution to gender inequality creates circular reasoning, where knowledge about gender equality will solve the problem with gender equality.

Rönnblom also argues that the focus on knowledge as a solution creates an image that people are not aware that gender inequality exists, and that knowledge will make them aware of the problem. This is an image that is explicit in Skåne county administrative board:

> There are several explanations as to why we still have a long way to go regarding gender equality. One reason is that we do not see that society is unequal because we are so used to it. Therefore, it is important to have updated knowledge of how the situation looks for women, men, girls, boys and transgender people from different groups (Skåne, 2017, 5).

The implication in this quotation becomes that gender inequality exists because we are not aware of it and as soon as we are aware of the situation it will change. Another implication is that it makes the work with gender inequality individual oriented, where the focus is on the individual to increase its knowledge about gender equality, rather than challenging the structures behind gender inequality.

I argue that knowledge and method improvement appear as unproblematic themes and solutions to gender inequality since the policies do not explain why this is the best way to work with the problem and since it, as critique has shown, risk turning it into an administrative routine, where the focus is to improve methods rather than challenging structures behind gender inequality. My point here is not that knowledge and methods are necessarily a bad thing, but since critique against knowledge and methods is not picked up by the policies, it becomes unproblematized and there is silence regarding that this problem exists.

5.3.2 Binary View of Gender

The general representation of the problem: *Women and Men should have the same power to shape society and their own life* build upon a binary view of gender, where non-binary and trans persons are largely excluded. To some extent, trans persons are included in the policies, but this differs between the policies. This is one of the few areas where the policies differ from each other.

In Stockholm county administrative board trans persons are not mentioned at all. In Uppsala, they are briefly mentioned in the focus area *Gender Equal Health* which states that: "Young LGBTQ+ people experience home and school as insecure, to a greater extent than other" (Uppsala, 2017, 19). In Västra Götaland trans persons are mentioned as a sidenote in the introduction, where a binary approach to gender is problematized:

> In Sweden, there are two legal sexes – women and men – and these are the ones that gender equality policy are based on. But there are people who do not define themselves as women or men. All people, no matter what gender identity or gender expression is affected by societies norms of gender and how society values the categories women and men (Västra Götaland, 2019, 7).

In the quotation, Västra Götaland recognizes trans persons as political subjects and states that all people, no matter the gender identity, are affected by norms and gender inequality. However, mentioning trans persons as a sidenote also presents them as deviant from a binary gender norm. Trans persons are also mentioned briefly in the focus area *Power & Health* which states that: "Gay and bisexual, especially women, as well as transgender people, have significantly poorer health than other…" (Västra Götaland, 2019, 24). In other parts of the document, it is a silence regarding issues that relates to trans persons. This means that even if the policy explains that all people are affected by gender inequality, they disappear as a subject in the different focus areas, except briefly in the focus are *Power & Health*.

Skåne county administrative board is the only policy that mentions trans persons more profoundly. Almost every time women and men are mentioned, trans persons are also mentioned. The quotations below are a few examples of how it is presented in the policy document:

It is also important that Skåne's employers take advantage of the skills of new arrivals women, men and transgender possess to increase growth (Skåne, 2017, 19).

Therefore, it is important to have updated knowledge, about how the situation looks for women, men, girls, boys and transgender persons from different groups (Skåne, 2017, 5).

Increase the confidence of women and men, girls and boys and transgender persons and participation in democracy (Skåne, 2017, 8).

It is also important that Skåne employers take advantage of the skills of new arrivals women, men and transgender possess in order to increase growth (Skåne, 2017, 19).

The quotations show how trans persons are included as political subjects in Skåne county administrative board when it comes to goals regarding gender inequality. It is, however, important to point out that these formulations are goals of gender equality work. A close reading of the focus areas shows that issues that are related to trans persons do not get so much space, as the policy's first impression. When problems that relate to trans persons are mentioned it is regarding health issues and that they are targeted to threats and violence (Skåne, 2017, 34 +41). In other cases, there is silence regarding issues for trans persons. Skåne does, however, give an explanation to this silence. In the introduction to Skåne's policy document, it is stated that their analysis is based on gender-based statistics and that they will include trans persons when there are studies that explicitly include trans persons (Skåne, 2017, 6).

My analysis above shows that trans persons visibility differs between the policies and that trans persons commute between being included and excluded as a political subject. I interpret this as an unproblematic theme since they commute between being included and excluded and the way trans persons are constructed as deviant from a binary view on gender.

Previous research in Sweden shows how gender equality policies often naturalize and reproduce a binary and cis-normative understanding of gender that constantly refer to "he" and "she" as essential categories (Martinsson et al, 2016, 1-4). Calvos (2013) and Poulsen do in their studies of gender equality policies show that gender is constructed a stable and binary in terms of being male or female. Lena Martinsson (2000) also shows in her analysis of Swedish gender equality policies that there is a clear distinction between the categories men and women and that they

are regarded as essential categories. A consequence of this is that it reproduces an idea of gender as binary and establish women and men as different, instead of a reinterpretation of categories (Martinsson, 2000). This shows how gender equality policies often build open a binary idea of women and men, where trans persons are excluded as political subjects.

5.3.3 Heteronormative Assumptions

The policies explain that norm-consciousness is important when working with gender inequality. The policies do however on some occasion build upon a heteronormative idea about women and men. Heteronormativity refers to practices, institutions, structures that maintain heterosexuality as something natural and as the expected way to live in a relationship (Ambjörnsson, 2012, 52). This idea is especially visible in the focus area *Gender Equal Division of Unpaid Home and Care Work:*

> A more gender equal parenting, with a fair distribution of parental leave, household responsibility, involvement and participation in the decision, leads to improved health, quality of life and leads to improved health and that children get a better relationship with both its parents. Also, a child's social behavioral and cognitive development is fostered by a gender equal parenting (Skåne, 2017, 30).

> In Västra Götaland unpaid home and care work is gender unequal. A common way to solve the family puzzle in families consisting of a man a woman is that women work part-time. It is particularly evident in families where men weekly commute to distant workplaces, for example in border area municipalities. Then more often the women take greater responsibility for the unpaid housework. (Västra Götaland, 2019, 17).

In the quotation above there is an assumption that women and men live in heterosexual and monogamous relationships. In the first quotation women and men are not mentioned, instead, the Swedish term *Jämställdhet* (gender equal) is used, which relates to an equal relationship between women and men, I, therefore, interpret the quotation to mean women and men. Other ideas that can be found in the quotations is a two parent's norm and that a child needs both parents for social and cognitive development (assumingly a man and a woman since the Swedish word *Jämställdhet* is used in the quotation).

Gender equality about parenting and family often interpellates heteronormative ideas. For example, the law on parental leave that interpellates a "he" and a "she" and produces an image

of them as optimal parents (Martinsson et al. 2016, 4). The heteronormative focus can also be connected to Ulrika Dahls (2005) research who shows that gender equality policies in Sweden often reproduces heterosexuality as natural and desirable and that the purpose with gender equality work becomes to corrects problematic norms about heterosexuality (Dahl, 2005). I argue that the focus area *Gender Equal Division of Home and Care Work* can be seen from this perspective and that heterosexuality is presented as a natural and expected way of living and that problems in relation to this are something that can be fixed.

Another part of the policies that can be interpreted as building on a heteronormative idea is the focus area *Men's Violence Against Women*. The policies state that men's violence against women is the ultimate negative consequence of an unequal society which violates and limits women's development. The policies also state that norms about masculinity and violence are part of this problem that men express violence against women. The formulation men's violence against women have been criticized from a queer and intersectional feminist who argue that it excludes LGBTQ+ persons experiences by making violence that is not performed by men against women invisible and that it reproduces a heteronormative understanding of relationships. Instead, the term "violence in close relationship" have been encouraged to include more relationships. A gender-neutral term has however also been criticized for making its part in a gender power order invisible (Nilsson & Lövkrona, 2015, 41).

In some part of the documents the policies do however use a norm-critical approach to relationships:

> The national agency for education action plan for gender mainstreaming points
> out that sex education is often characterized by a heteronormative perspective.
> Gender equality work and values [in school] needs to include knowledge about
> gender equality and a norm critical perspective (Skåne, 2017, 26).

> If you look at groups that do not find themselves within the heteronormative
> framework, both suicide attempts and suicide are more common than the
> population in general in Västra Götaland (Västra Götaland, 2019, 25).

In this quotation, the policies recognize more relationships than heterosexual and regard heteronormativity to be a problem. I, however, argue that this section can be interpreted as an unproblematized theme since the policies both aim to be norm critical and on the other hand build upon a heteronormative idea about relationships. I argue that is comparable to the

conclusion I made in *5.3.2 Binary View on Gender* that the policies commute between including and excluding trans persons. In this section, the policies commute between a norm critical and heteronormative perspective on relationships.

5.3.4 Intersectionality as Representation

As presented in chapter *5.1 What's the Problem Represented to be* the policies use an intersectional perspective to analyze how different power structures affect people in different ways and their possibility of power. The term intersectionality was coined by law professor Kimberly Crenshaw (1991) and have been especially important in black feminism in America who argued that black women's experience was invisible in white feminism (Davis, 2008). Today the concept reaches out to several strands within feminism (such as poststructural and queer feminism) and have been celebrated for providing a tool that can investigate variation and complexity in identities (Davis 2008, 67-71). There are however debates whether intersectionality should be defined as a theory, method or strategy for feminist thinking and if its aim is to understand identities, individual experience, power structures or discourses (Davies 2008, 68; Carbin & Edenheim, 2013, 234).

This raises a question of how the policies use intersectionality in its aim to analyze how it affects people and their possibility of power. I argue that two themes can be distinguished here. The first way of using intersectionality is to show variation in representation between groups of people. This can be highlighted in the quotations below:

> There are more people with disability, age 16-24, that neither work nor studies
> in comparison with the rest of the population (Västra Götaland, 2019, 17).

> Age also affects gender equality in boards and management. The proportion of
> women and men that are managers are the same up to age 30. Thereafter the
> proportion of women in a managerial position is constant, while the proportion
> of men continues to increase until the age of 50 (Skåne 2017, 14).

> Several factors besides gender interact at the labor market, for example,
> country of birth and educational level. Foreign-born women have in Sweden
> the lowest employment rate (Uppsala, 2017, 15).

The second way of using intersectionality is to explain different experiences and life situation between groups:

Gay and bisexual, especially women and transgender people have significantly poorer health than others. People born abroad have poorer health than Swedish born, often due to heavy and low-paid jobs and structural discrimination. Women born abroad have poorer health than men with the same origin (Västra Götaland, 2019, 25).

For example, research indicates that women with disability are exposed to violence to a higher degree than women in general. The same applies to LGBTQ people. It is important that everybody, regardless of their life situation get the support they have the right to (Skåne, 2017, 43).

An obstacle to gender equality when it comes to women's and men's financial position is discrimination. Ideas about how competent a person is often based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, age or function variation. (Stockholm, 2019, 15).

Well educated women born outside Europe, have more difficulties getting a job that matches their competence. This may be partly due to the fact that their education does not match with demands on the Swedish labor market. Discrimination is probably another reason (Uppsala, 2017, 15).

In the quotations above it is explained that LGBTQ+ persons and women born abroad have poorer health and are exposed to violence to a greater extent than others. It is also explained that women and women born abroad have fewer opportunities in the labor market. Discrimination and violence are mentioned as reasons for this variation in life situations. However, it is not mentioned what kind of discrimination that is in question. What becomes silence here is how racism, xenophobia, trans and homophobia are part of this discrimination. Positioning experience in power structures is therefore not part of the analysis, which means that even when the policies use intersectionality to acknowledge different live situations it still becomes a matter of representation.

This way of using intersectionality has been problematized by gender scholars Diana Mulinari and Paulina de los Reyes who in *Intersektionalitet – Kritiska reflection över (o)jämlikehetens landskap* (2005) *[Intersectionality – Critical Reflection on the Landscape of Gender (In)Equality]* writes that the focus on diversity as a matter of representation ignores how identities are part of different power structures. I agree with Mulinari and de los Reye's argument that it is not enough to only acknowledge that diversity and inequality exist, but also to explain why they exist and looking at the connections between different identities and within

power structures. Paulina de los Reyes also writes in *When feminism became gender equality and anti-racism turned into diversity management* (2016) that racism is seldom mentioned when it comes to gender equality work and diversity management. This is also something we can see in the policies where there is silence regarding discrimination, such as racism and trans and homophobia.

5.4 Implications

In this final part of the analysis, I will discuss implications and discursive effects of the way gender inequality is done in the policy documents. Two themes will be discussed: *Women and Men as Equally Affected by Gender Inequality* and *Gender Equality as Making the Right Decision*. I will also turn to one of my research questions for this thesis and discuss two positions that are available in order to be understood as the correct political subject in the county administrative boards understanding of gender inequality.

5.4.1 Women and Men as Equally Affected by Gender Inequality

As stated in chapter *5.1 What's the Problem Represented to be?* the general problem representation is that women and men *do not* have the same power to shape society and their own life. This constructs an idea that there is an unequal division of power between women and men in society. It is however not stated who is disadvantaged by this unequal division of power. The only time the policies construct someone as responsible and disadvantaged is the focus area *Men's Violence Against Women* where men's violence and norms about masculinity are pointed out as the reason to this violence. The policies do however also state that men and boys should also be considered as affected by this structure and that the goal is that both women and men should have the same rights and opportunity to bodily integrity (Skåne, 2017, 40; Stockholm, 2018, 28; Uppsala, 2017, 8; Västra Götaland, 2019, 33). This creates an implication that gender inequality is something that affects both women and men. The policies do however state that gender inequality affects women and men in different ways and in a different situation. For example, how boys do not perform as well as girls in school and how girls are more stressed than boys in school (Stockholm, 2018, 16). The implication is however that even if gender inequality affects women and men in different ways, they are still regarded as equally affected.

On some occasion, the policies do however seem to build upon an idea that what is considered male have more value than what is considered female. For example, how budgets tend to give more resources to men and how work sectors dominated by men have more value than work sectors dominated by women (Uppsala, 2017, 22; Skåne 2017, 19-20). This connects to an idea of a gender power order where men and what is considered being male have a more privileged position in society. There seems however to be an unwillingness for the policies to say this in words and I, therefore, argue that the implication becomes that women and men are equally affected by gender inequality, but in different ways and in different situation. What becomes unproblematic in this understanding of gender inequality is how power structures can have both

majority and minority affects. This means that groups of people, even if they are also affected by structures and norms, can still have a privileged position in society. This is a discussion that is not articulated in the policies and can also be interpreted as an unproblematic theme.

This discussion can also be connected to an idea of gender equality as sameness. Gender equality as sameness refers to the idea that all people regardless of gender should have the same rights and treatment in society. The other side of this debate is gender equality as difference that refers to the idea that since people are being treated differently based on their gender, this difference must be considered in political decisions (Liff & Wajcman 1999). The policies do acknowledge that difference between groups exist but since but the overall goal is always that women and men should have the same treatment, opportunity and rights and women and men are regarded as equally affected by gender inequality I interpret that the policies to relate to an idea of gender equality as sameness.

5.4.2 Gender Equality as Making the Right Decisions
As presented in section *5.1.3 The Problem of a Lack of Knowledge and Insufficient Work Methods* knowledge and method improvement is pointed out as the main solution to the problem with gender inequality. The policies state that through updated knowledge about how the situation looks for women and men and through norm-consciousness the underlying structures can be challenged. I have also in section *5.3.1 Knowledge and Method Improvement as a Solution* problematized that gender inequality risks turning into an administrative routine, where the purpose is to improve methods rather than challenging structures behind gender inequality. I have also problematized that the focus on knowledge creates an image that people are not aware that gender inequality exists and that this will change through knowledge about gender equality. In this section, I will discuss how this creates an implication where gender equality is talked about as learning to do the right decisions.

The policies put a lot of focus on that people through education about norms and gender equality, will do better decisions: "A norm-conscious work [at school] has the potential to make education more equal and help students make free and conscious education choices" (Stockholm, 2018, 19). This creates an image that people through knowledge will learn to the right decision and that this will help the problem with gender inequality. Rönnblom (2011) argues that this place the problem with gender inequality on individuals rather on structures behind gender inequality.

This individual-oriented approach to gender inequality is something that gender scholars argue is a neoliberal way of doing gender equality. Wendy Brown defines neoliberalism as a form of governmentality and disciplinary force that through education and practices produces a rational actor who is disciplined into thinking in a market and calculating way (Brown, 2005, 40-43). This means that individuals through norms, values, education are taught to act in a specific way. Katarina Giritli Nygren, Siv Fahlgren and Anders Johansson writes in *Normalization meets governmentality: gender equality reassembled* (2016) how a neoliberal approach reduces gender equality to "good" and "bad" solutions instead of challenging structures, values and norms behind gender inequality (Giritli Nygren, Fahlgren & Johansson 2016, 56-57).

 I likewise observe in my analysis of the policies that gender equality is talked about as that people must learn to do better decision in life and that knowledge and ideas of "good" and "bad" solutions will help people make this decision. I also want to highlight how this place the problem of gender inequality on the individual rather on structures that affect a person's possibility to power and action. This is a contradiction in the policies since the representation of the problem points out that there are structures that affect a person's possibility to take action, but as I have shown in this section the policies also focus a lot on individuals possibility to make decisions and create their own life.

5.4.3 Subject Positions

I will now turn to the question of what subject's positions are constituted in the policies representation of the problem. I have already touched upon this matter earlier in the thesis. In the section 5.3.2 *Binary view on gender,* I discussed how the categories women and men are the main positions of investigation and how trans persons commute between being included and excluded as a political subject. I have also shown how the policies often assume a heteronormative subject when discussing issues that relate to family and relationships. I have also discussed that the problem representation creates an image of a gender-equal subject who through education will make the right decisions. I will end this thesis by shortly discussing two other positions that occur in the policies and that are important in order to be understood as a political subject in the county administrative boards doing of gender equality.

5.4.3.1 The Citizen

As presented in section 5.2.1 *Gender Inequality as a Society Problem* gender equality is seen as important for society and democracy to function and develop. The policies also focus on the importance of people to be participating citizen. This produces the subject *the citizens* that take

part in society's development: "Active and participating citizens are a prerequisite for both the individuals and society development and to create prosperity… (Skåne, 2017, 13). The subject who is excluded in this problem representation are people who have migrated to Sweden. Migrant is however mentioned quite extensively in the policies, especially women who stand outside the labor market, but assumingly this is people who are asylum seekers or have been granted a residence permit and what could be referred to as "soon to be citizens". Migrants who have been rejected residence permit become invisible and are not seen as political subjects.

5.4.3.2 The Worker

Another assumption the policies makes is that gender equality is important for the labor markets development and that gender inequality is a problem since valuable competence is at risk as getting lost. The different focus areas in the policies also often relate to the importance that people have the possibility to work and that any obstacle to this participation becomes a gender inequality problem: "Gender unequal education […] has consequences for the individual, the labor market and competence [at the labor market]" (Skåne, 2017, 24). This produces the subject of *the worker* and the aim of gender equality becomes to make sure that people have the possibility to work. Even when the policies discuss family issues for example the focus area *Equal Division of Unpaid Care and Homework* the focus is that unequal care and homework is an obstacle for women participating in the labor market, rather than discussing the importance of gender equality within family and relationships: "A more even distribution of home and care work would also equalize the opportunities for gainful employment (Stockholm, 2017, 14). This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the policies regard individuals own income to be important: "...income is crucial for their [individual] own independence and to not be dependent on a partner or family." (Stockholm, 2017, 15). Being a subject in this understanding of gender equality means taking part in the labor market and being a *working person* and being an independent person.

6. Final Discussion

My aim with this thesis has been to do a poststructural policy analysis of gender equality policies from four county administrative boards in Sweden. My main objective has been to examine how the policies construct the problem with *gender inequality.* My starting point is that gender equality is not a self-evident goal, but that it is done and filled with meaning through Swedish policy. Important questions I have raised are why gender inequality is seen as a concern, who becomes a political subject and what implications the representation of the problem produces. The method I have used is Carol Bacchi's the WPR approach. This method builds upon the idea that problems in policies is not self-evident or objective, but that policies produce specific representations of the problem.

In the first chapter *5.1 What's the Problem Represented to be?* I argue that the policies present the problem with *gender inequality* to be that there is an unequal division of power between women and men. In this problem representation, the problem of power is essential. I argue that two understandings of power can be found in the policies. The first way of understanding power is something a person can possess in order to do things and influence society and their own life. The other way of understanding power is as a structure (such as gender, ethnicity, dis/ability, etc.) that affects a person's possibility to take action and influence society and their own life.

Another representation of the problem with gender inequality is norms and how norms affect people and structures in society. Norms are in the policies constructed as a problem because they affect people's self-image and expectations from society in a negative way. Norms are also understood as a normative force which means that people act in accordance with them. Another dimension of the problem with norms is that what is considered being male have more value than what is considered being female.

The last representation of the problem that I have distinguished in the policies is that there is a lack of knowledge and insufficient work method on how to work with gender inequality. The policies state that it is important to raise awareness of the fact that gender inequality exists and that it is important to work with norm-consciousness and knowledge about gender inequality. Methods that are mentioned in the policies are mapping, statistics and education material. The policies also state that social actors have to improve their work on gender inequality through better networking, law enforcement and safety and support for people who are targeted by

violence. I argue that knowledge and method improvement is pointed out at the main solution to the problem with gender inequality and that the focus on knowledge and methods can be understood from New Public Management entrance into the public sector in Sweden.

In chapter *5.2 Presuppositions and Assumptions,* I discuss why gender inequality is regarded as a problem and why gender equality is seen as important to work with. I argue that three themes can be distinguished. The first theme is that the policies regard gender inequality as a problem for society and democracy. The policies state that gender inequality is a problem since people risk losing faith in a democratic society that can't protect its citizen and make sure that people have the same rights and treatment. Gender inequality is seen as a society problem since it cost a lot of money and that society needs participating citizen who can help it develop. This can be interpreted as the policies regarding gender equality as important for Sweden as a state to function. Another image that occurs in this theme is the idea of a relationship between the state and its citizen, where the policies emphasize the state's responsibility to protect it citizen and also encourage people to take part in society and help it develop. This can be interpreted as relating to an idea of a society contract where citizens have both rights and obligation.

Gender inequality is also regarded as a problem for the labor market. The policies state that it is a problem that people are valued differently due to ideas of gender and who is competent for a specific job and that people are discriminated at the labor market. The policies state that gender equality is important for labor market development. This can be interpreted as that the economy is an important drive for gender equality. Another idea that is prominent in this theme is work as the main occupation for people and that gender equality is seen as important so that people have the possibility to work. I argue that this can be seen as part of the Swedish policy that is called *the work line,* which means that persons who have the ability to work are also expected to work and will have the possibility to work.

Gender inequality is also regarded as a human rights issue where the policies both emphasize individual's freedom and the state's obligation to protect its citizens from discrimination and violence. In this section, I have also discussed how the policies connect individual freedom to economic independence which makes human right both a moral and economic concern.

In chapter *5.3 Unproblematic Themes,* I discuss four themes that occur in the document but without being questioned or problematized. The first theme I discuss is knowledge and method improvement as a solution to gender inequality. I argue that this is an unproblematic theme since the policies never explain why this is the best way to overcome the problem with inequality. I also discuss critique against knowledge and method as solutions to gender inequality and that it risks focusing more on improving methods, rather than challenging structures behind gender inequality. I argue that since knowledge and method improvement is not explained properly it becomes unproblematized and risk falling into this critique.

The second theme is that the policies build upon a binary view on gender and that trans persons are largely excluded. Trans persons are mentioned to some extent, but this differs between the policies. In the policies where trans persons are mentioned they also commute between being included and excluded as political subjects. I also argue that the way trans persons are presented as a sidenote in the policies constructs trans persons as deviant from a binary gender norm.

The third theme is that the policies build upon heteronormative ideas about relationships. This is especially visible in the focus area *Gender Equal Distribution of Unpaid Home and Care Work* where relationships are assumed to be between a man and a woman that live together in a monogamous relationship. In some part of the policies, the policies are however norm critical and include more relationships than heterosexual and state that heteronormativity is a problem. I interpret this as an unproblematic theme since policies commute between a norm critical and heteronormative assumptions about relationships.

The fourth theme I discuss is the way intersectionality is used in the policies. I argue that two ways of using intersectionality can be distinguished. The first way is to show variation in representation and the second way is to show different life situations and experiences. However, even when the policies explain that people are treated differently due to discrimination it is not explained further. For example, how there is silence regarding racism, xenophobia, trans and homophobia in the policies. This means that life situations and experiences are not positioned in power structures, which turn intersectionality into a matter of representation. I argue that this can be interpreted as an unproblematic theme since the policies aim to use intersectionality to show how people are treated differently but without explaining or problematizing these experiences.

In this final chapter of the analysis *5.4 Implications,* I discuss implications and discursive effects of the way gender inequality is done in the policy documents. The first implication is that both men and women are equally affected by gender inequality, but in different ways and in different situations. I have also discussed how the policies on some occasions relate to an idea of a gender power order where men and what is considered being male have a more privileged position in society, but that it seems to be an unwillingness in the policies to say this in words, which construct an idea of both women and men as equally affected by gender inequality and where majority and minority effects of power structures are left unproblematic. I have also connected this idea to debates about gender equality as sameness, where the overall goal is that women and men should have the same power, rights and treatment and where all are equally affected of inequality.

The second implication is that the focus on knowledge and method improvement as a solution to gender inequality creates an image where individuals through knowledge about gender inequality will learn to better decision in life that will help overcome the problem with gender inequality. I argue that this is a neoliberal way of doing gender inequality that reduces gender inequality to "good" and "bad" solution and that place the problem with gender inequality on individuals rather than on structures behind gender inequality.

In *5.4 Implication,* I have also discussed positions that are available in order to be understood as the correct political subject in the county administrative boards understanding of gender inequality. I argue that it is especially two subject positions that are prominent in the policies. The first is *the citizen* which excludes migrants who have been rejected residence permit and the second is *the worker* where the policies assume a working and independent person. In this section, I have also discussed how the categories women and men are the main positions for investigation and how trans persons commute between being included and excluded as a political subject. I have also discussed how the police assume a heteronormative subject when discussing issues that relate to family and relationship.

To summarize, the main representation of the problem is that there are norm and structures that result in an unequal division of power between women and men. What I, however, find notable is that even if the policies state that norms are a problem with gender inequality, the policies themselves reproduce norms and expect people to live in a specific way. Here we can, for example, mention how the policies assume binary and heteronormative subjects. Another

contradiction I want to point out is that even if the policies point out structures as a reason to gender inequality the policies put a lot of focus on that individuals will learn about gender inequality and make better decisions, which place the problem with gender inequality on individuals rather than on structures behind gender inequality. These two contradictions are conclusions which are in line with previous research in Sweden that shows that gender equality policy (re)produces a whole range or problematic norms and how structures tend to disappear from solutions to gender inequality (Martinsson et al. 2016, 3).

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the WPR approach has proven to be an efficient method to analyze policy document, where several different problem representations, assumptions and implications have been discernible. This means that I have had to select themes I have considered most prominent and I regard this thesis to be more of an overview of the policies rather than a deep analysis of the different themes. I believe that each of the different themes could have easily been enough to write a whole master thesis about and they are all interesting themes to look closer at in future research about gender equality policy in Sweden.

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