Constructions, identifications and ambivalence
- the encounter between perceived and lived reality of immigrated women

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Abstract

This thesis aims to understand the encounter between the Swedish government’s constructions of immigrated women and the women’s own identifications. By merging post-structural ontology with feminist post-colonial ideas a theoretical framework was created to meet this aim. The government’s constructions were found through discourse analysis of governmental publications and interpellation debates while the immigrated women’s stories were captured through interviews. The findings show that the government homogenizes the immigrated woman and positions her as unemployed, excluded, caring, and dependent etc., while the women recognize themselves as among other things professionals and agents. However, while the government constructs a homogeneous image of the immigrated woman, the women express very diverse identities, and the differences are significant. Thus, there is a clear discrepancy in the perceived and lived reality of immigrated women in Sweden. This could lead to a reproduction of immigrated women as belonging to patriarchal structures, which attributes the women the problem. Accordingly, the women also become the targets for the suggested solutions.

Keywords: integration, immigrated women, ‘othering’, subject positions, discourse
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1. Introduction

“Can you work with women?” Haider Ibrahim was asked this question 20 years ago in an employment interview (launch of the Global Forum for Migration and Development). The Swedish discourses on migration and integration have changed since then, but recent research indicates that the perception of the relationship between immigrated men and women as patriarchal persists (Carbin, 2010; Thomsson & Hoflund, 2000). This can seem contradictory in a country which is ranked as number one on both gender equality and integration (Mipex; UNDP, 2011).

Sweden has in many studies been described as constituting a role model for gender equality. Ann Towns stresses for instance that gender equality is essential for what it is to be Swedish. What is interesting is however that this image of the gender equal Sweden seems to exclude immigrated men and women (Towns, 2002). Even though Sweden was ranked highest in the Migrant Integration Policy Index 2011 (Mipex) we seldom hear about the successful Swedish integration. The highlighted issue is instead the failed integration policy. The difference in the employment rates between ‘Swedish born and ‘foreign born’ is for instance tremendous. Conversely, the sociologist Ryszard Szulkin has studied employment among immigrated people in 16 European countries and places Sweden on the second worst place (Szulkin, 2012).

Thus, it is obvious that there are problems. Sweden’s Minister of Education Jan Björklund stated recently that migration, i.e. the increased mobility, is needed in order to meet a future presumed lack of labour force (Karlsson & Pelling ed., 2011). The challenge is instead, according to Björklund, integration (Björklund, 2013). Erik Ullenhag, Sweden’s Minister of Integration has identified foreign born women as the far greatest integration challenge (Ullenhag, 2013).

Feminist researchers warn for this kind of articulation. Migrant women have in different contexts been constructed as unskilled, ignorant, or victims, which removes them their agency and entitle the problem to the women or to “their culture” (e.g. Agustín, 2003; Brooks, 2002; Mohanty, 2003). Do immigrated women share Björklund’s and Ullenhag’s image? Or, do they have a different perception of themselves? What do they identify as the problem? And what if there is a discrepancy?

1.1. Thesis aims and research questions

Previous feminist research on migrant women argues that policies in Europe regard migrant women’s cultures as a problem; that these women are considered as being more domestic and
traditional than men and European women; and that they have no agency (e.g. Agustín, 2003; Brooks, 2002; Mohanty, 2003; Sassen, 2002). Sweden is ranked as having the best policies for integration and for being the most gender equal country in Europe. Meanwhile research suggests that gender equality is something connected to the Swedishness and thus excluding immigrated women and men, and examples point to that the integration is not as good in practice as on paper.

In this thesis I aim to investigate how the Swedish government constructs gender in its integration politics – i.e. in its publications, statements, and debates. With the intention to discover if there is a mismatch between the constructions of immigrated women and their own perception of their integration and identifications, I also aim to learn how they relate to this understanding through interviews. Are the arenas that are directed towards immigrated women the same as the actual arenas where the women are situated? The focus will be on the encounter between the government’s perceived reality and the immigrated women’s lived reality. The purpose of this thesis is to generate a greater understanding of the encounter between the perceived integration of migrant women in Sweden and the women’s own understanding of their identities and integration. Post-structural theory and ontology, and feminist post-colonial approaches are used to back a discourse analysis of the constructions and perceptions. In order to reach the study’s aim, I will try to answer the following questions:

- How is gender constructed in the Swedish government’s discourses on integration? How and where are immigrated women positioned in the discourses?
- How do immigrated women in Sweden construct their identities? How do they relate to these constructions and these assumed positions?
- What could the implications of the constructions and positions be?

Whereas the first questions will lead my analysis, the very last question will be brought up first in the conclusions and discussion.

The positions in the research questions refer to subject positions, which is how people or groups are subscribed identities within discourses (Butler, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The term is a methodological concept and will accordingly be treated in the method chapter.

While I have decided to limit the subject positions to women, the constructions in the publications refer to gender. Gender is a broader analytical term which includes the
notion of power and power relations between the sexes. The construction of gender is therefore fundamental in order to understand the positioning of women.

1.2. Previous research and relevance of the study

There has been an increased focus on integration of immigrated women in Sweden and elsewhere the last years within several fields of study. This thesis is accordingly positioned within this debate. Below the issues brought up within the debate are presented.

1.2.1. The ongoing debates

The main issues discussed in the debate are the questions of Swedish versus non-Swedish, for instance mirrored as Swedish gender equality versus migrants’ lack of gender equality, and the relation between the policy construction of gender in the integration politics and the immigrated women’s identity constructions.

Ann Towns, PhD in political science, describes the paradox of gender equality in Sweden, where it is one of the components unifying the state identity, while it is simultaneously creating divisions between the Swedish and non-Swedish. While gender equality is seen as a part of the Swedish identity, it does not belong to the image of immigrated men and women who are perceived as less gender equal (Towns, 2002).

The issue is highlighted by Maria Carbin, PhD in political science, who studies the debate on honor’s crimes in Sweden and how these could be understood in the intersection of policies on integration and equality. She discusses how different discourses have competed to try to provide an understanding of honor violence and how these have positioned the ‘immigrant girl’ differently, but all resulting in exclusions and comparisons with the ‘Swedish’ (Carbin, 2010).

This dichotomy between the native and non-native could also be found in the Norwegian context. Cecilie Thun, researcher at the Centre for Gender Research in Oslo, stresses that immigrated women are ‘minoritized’ and racialized, not being included in the category ‘women’ in the Norwegian discourse, but instead stigmatized as the ‘other’. Thun explains that there is a notion of ‘sameness’ imbedded in the Norwegian understanding of gender equality which implies that minorities that are not ‘integrated’ are regarded as ‘culturally different’; meaning a problem (Thun, 2012).

The Dutch social cultural researcher Conny Roggeband and the professor of comparative politics Mieke Verloo, have found similar trends in the Netherlands where the policies on gender equality as well as on migration have shifted towards focusing on migrant
women and the political problem they are believed to constitute. They conclude that there is an increased use of terminology referring to ‘us’ and ‘them’ and increased responsibilities put on immigrated women to ‘integrate’ and adapt the Dutch ‘culture’ (Roggeband & Verloo, 2007). It seems thus, as Thun has stated, that there is still a perception of ‘us’ and ‘the others’ in the European context (Thun, 2012).

While Towns, Carbin, Thun, and Roggeband and Verloo discuss the dichotomy of ‘us’ and the ‘other’ in national discourses and on policy level, other scholars have focused on the municipal and individual level. Lena Grip, PhD in human geography, discusses spaces and the meaning of integration and its gendered implication in Swedish municipalities. According to her, there is a paradox between the discursively space of similarity and the assumptions of difference. Since immigrated are treated as a separate group, integration measures that aim at reaching gender equality rather reinforces inequality in the treatment. An example is that immigrated women more often are put in projects that are related to traditional female jobs, such as cooking, sewing and conversation, while immigrated men take part in projects which include computer training (Grip, 2010).

The psychologists Heléne Thomsson and Linda Hoflund, who have interviewed immigrated women that have taken part in labour market measures, reveal that the women many times are unsatisfied with the project they are placed in and stress that their own suggestions are not paid attention to. This is, according to Thomsson and Hoflund, a result of a discrepancy in the problem focus between the actors forming the labour market measures and the immigrated women that these measures are directed to. The decision makers regard the women as the problem while the women consider the labour market’s discriminatory practice as constituting the problem (Thomsson & Hoflund, 2000).

Klara Folkesson, PhD in history, brings the discussion to another dimension and means that there is a ‘non-meeting’ between the political structure and the immigrated women where the women are active in a space outside the hegemonic political framework. These conclusions are drawn on her dissertation where she studied individual experiences of Muslim women in a Swedish municipality, and the municipalities’ policies and decisions concerning immigrated women during the period of 1972 to 2002 (Folkesson, 2012). Despite passivation of immigrated women, visualized in among others the professor in urban planning Carina Listerborn’s (2005) study of location of women in a municipality in Sweden where she points to the medial image of Somali women as passive, Folkesson stresses that “the women clearly underline the presence of individual agency in their everyday life, and the majority do not
identify with the existing image of them and of their home community” (Folkesson, 2012: 296, my translation).

1.2.2. Relevance

Studies on immigrated women are not a new phenomenon. The research field of migration and integration has exploded lately, and gender and migration is a topic which gathers more and more interest. This could partly be due to the so called ‘feminization’ of international migration – the female immigration to the EU was in 2004 greater than that of men (Diez Guardia & Pichelmann, 2006).

The last years’ research on gender and migration differs from previous inquiries that generally have been overreaching, but where few studies have included the migrant women’s own stories (Grip, 2010). The exception was previously single case studies on ‘vulnerable’ women (mainly concerning domestic work and trafficking), focusing on the women and not on the system. On the contrary, when the system was under focus it was essentially comparative analysis between different migrations regimes (e.g. Kofman, 2000; Liversage, 2009; Williams, 2001).

However, also these newly produced texts leave gaps and show that there is place for more research on the topic. As indicated above the focus has either been on solely the national policy level, such as the analysis conducted by Carbin, Roggeband and Verloo, Towns and Thun, or rather regarding discrepancy between municipal efforts or specific issues and individual levels, such as the reviews by Folkesson, Grip, Listerborn, and Thomsson and Hoflund.

It would thus be fruitful to investigate the encounter between the national policy level and the individual level. Feminist political scientists tend to be more focused on the policy level, while forgetting the individual. The individually focused group of researchers was inspired by discourse theory, but within the fields of history, human geography, urban planning and psychology. My research will therefore, being a study in political science focusing on the encounter of the national and individual spheres, contribute to the creation of further understanding of the gendered intertwined levels in policy shaping.

The previously mentioned Netherland example shows furthermore the importance of addressing gendered dimensions of migration, especially in this era of globalization. The migration flow to the EU is increasing, and several countries in the EU have to tackle new challenges related to immigration, such as the rise in xenophobia (Karlsson & Pelling, 2011). This study could thus meet this increased interest in integration issues, as
well as complement, build on and develop the two theoretical fields; discourse theory and feminist post-colonial studies.

1.3. **Disposition of the thesis**

After the introductory chapter, which identifies the problem and discusses the surrounding debate, chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework. The theses’ theoretical foundation consists of post-structural theory and post-colonial theories. In chapter 3 the method – discourse analysis – is elaborated. Chapter 4 treats the materials used to conduct the research are discussed. The empirical material contains governmental publications and transcripts from interviews. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the empirical results. The analysis is divided into three sections: integration discourses, the government’s construction of gender and subject positions, and the women’s identifications. Finally, the summary and conclusions are wrapped up in chapter 6.

2. **Theoretical framework**

The above mentioned theories will simultaneously be used to build the research’s theoretical framework. Discourse theory deriving from post-structural theories set the ontological and epistemological foundation for the thesis. It explains on what premises the study is conducted and introduces the importance of power for the analysis. Discourse theory enables an analysis of constructions and subject positions since it visualizes how meanings are ascribed to things. However, the theory is not explicit regarding the implications of how power operates. Therefore, feminist post-colonial research can complement discourse theory as it aims at explaining how power structures and power relations intra-act and create different dimensions of inequalities. Feminist post-colonial theories highlight especially the notion of the specific inequalities regarding women perceived as the ‘other’ (e.g. migrant women); the intersection of gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, the usage of feminist post-colonial theories implies that the knowledge production of migrants and Swedes could be visualized. By combining these two theoretical strands I create a theoretical framework which underlines the particularity of gendered migration and integration in Sweden.

2.1. **Post-structuralism and discourse theory**

Post-structuralism has an anti-essentialist presumption, which means that the meaning is not essential in itself and that there is no objective truth (Bergström & Boréus, 2005). Jacob Torfing, professor in social science, describes that in post-structuralism “there is no pre-given,
self-determining essence that is capable of determining and ultimately fixing all other identities within a stable and totalizing structure” (Torfing, 2004: 13). Post-structuralism sets the ontological and epistemological foundation for discourse theory. Discourse theory assumes the world to be socially constructed in language, which infers that the meanings of things are socially constructed. Attention is paid to the discursive construction of norms, values and symbols, knowledge paradigms and identity formation (Torfing, 2004). Thus, gender is understood as socially constructed, and likewise are subject positions. These constructions influence the actions.

This thesis will be based on the political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s understanding of discourse theory. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory springs from Marxism and structuralism, and is fused into a post-structuralist approach. Discourse, for them, is as a partial fixation of meaning attempting “to dominate the field of discursivity” (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 112). This implies that no discourses are ultimate and meanings are thus never totally fixed. However, the partial fixation of meaning also refers to that meanings never are totally non-fixed (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Accordingly, meanings get their significance from discourse which means that discourses originate and define every constructed reality (Stavrakakis & Glynos, 2004; Torfing, 2004). In Laclau and Mouffe’s understanding of discourse theory nothing is non-discursive. All social phenomena – not only language – are included in their theory. They believe that it is impossible to separate between linguistic and behavioral aspects of social practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Words have no own signification; it is their relation to other signs that give them meaning. The word ‘immigrant’, for example, is given its meaning by relating it to signs such as ‘foreign born’ and ‘non-Swedish’.

This employment of discourse theory entails therefore that the meanings of all signs, including ‘immigrant’, ‘equality’, ‘integration’, and ‘women’, are socially constructed and define how the discursive reality is understood. Hence, there is no such thing as the ‘real interest of immigrated women’, only different discursive constructions of their interests. This implies both that meanings change over time and that there are different discursive realities where for instance the concept ‘immigrant’ means a particular thing within one discourse, but have another signification within another discourse. What I aim to do is thus not to find ‘the truth’ about the perceptions of and by immigrated women, but to problematize and interpret.
2.2. **Power and politics in discourse theory**

Power is in the core of discourse theory, and plays simultaneously an important role in this thesis. It is power that determines how things are discursively understood, since it is through power that the social, relations, knowledge, and identities are produced (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Torfing, 2004). The social theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault’s notion of power has had a strong influence on all discourse theories, and this thesis is accordingly inspired by Foucault’s power definition. Foucault emphasizes that “power operates […] through the discursive productions of […] subjects” (Foucault, 1998: 34). Discourses are hence constructed in and through struggles for power, and result in both inclusion and exclusion. This relation between power and discourse and the temporal conditions of what is possible to say, think, imagine, and do is stressed by both Foucault, and Laclau and Mouffe (Torfing, 2004).

Foucault means that the formation of discourses includes mechanisms of exclusion deciding not only what is allowed to be said, but also by whom and from where. Who can say what about, for instance, integration in Sweden? The deterrent of the discursive limitations of possibilities of actions by different identities is power and, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, then subsequently politics. Power decides what is regarded as social objectivity, and the meaning creation take place in the political, discursive processes through *political articulation*. Articulations are the processes of meaning creation, reproduction or change which are done through discourses. Since everything is regarded as being discursive, all social practices are considered articulations. *Political articulation* defines the actions and thoughts, and therefore how the society is organized, what is included, and what is excluded. It is in political processes that normality is created. This implies that the political shape the politics (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001; Mouffe, 2000); for example how we act and think of immigrated people shape the politics on immigration. Political articulation channels the power in the discourses, and visualizes how gender is constructed in Sweden’s policies on integration, and how immigrated women are positioned.

2.3. **Hegemony and antagonism in discourse theory**

As stated before discourses only fix meanings partially. How gender is constructed and how women are positioned in the integration discourse could hence change. Laclau and Mouffe call the processes that can shift the present power relations *hegemonic struggles* (Bergström & Boréus, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). For these struggles to appear it is necessary that
antagonism – an antagonist ‘other’ – is present, as well as that opposing camps strive to articulate signs that are especially open for the struggle to fix the meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Hegemonic practices are those which manage to fix the meanings so that their reality is viewed as ‘common sense’. These practices constitute identities by constructing them as different to a constitutive outside (Mouffe, 2000). The constructions include thus both an inside and an outside. Laclau and Mouffe have described that “any form of consensus is the result of hegemonic articulation, and [...] it always has an ‘outside’ that impedes its full realization” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: xviii).

Dominating or hegemonic discourses are thus those that are ascribed to represent the ‘truth’. Hence, for me, it is essential to investigate if there are any ‘objective realities’ about immigrated women or if the meaning creation is subjected to a hegemonic struggle where different discourses claim different realities. The presence of antagonism entails moreover that discourses include the shaping of ‘we’ and ‘them’ where the ‘other’ which is excluded is characterized by ‘sameness’ in form of a constitutive outside (Mouffe, 2000; Mouffe, 2002 in Stavrakakis, 2004; Torfing, 2004). For example, in the hegemonic Swedish discourse on integration, the antagonist ‘other’ could be visualized as ‘the immigrant’ or ‘the foreign born woman’.

Discourse theory is useful in the sense that it highlights the presence of power in discursive formations, and how hegemonic political articulation can create perceived realities. By using discourse theory I could reveal underlying power relations in the creation of integration policies. How gender is constructed and women are positioned in the policies are products of discourses that are created in and through power and hegemonic struggles. However, discourse theory does not specify how power structures and hierarchies interact and create exclusions. This is why feminist post-colonial theories are added to the theoretical framework.

2.4. **Feminist post-colonialism**

Whereas post-colonial feminist research foremost use the term ‘Third World women’, immigrated women in Sweden also include Nordic and European women. The terminology I have chosen to use is therefore adapted to my case; instead of naming the women ‘Third world’ and risking to generalize all immigrated women as having their origin in the ‘Third world’, I will refer to migrated/immigrated women or specify when other references are done.
Post-colonial feminist researchers pertain to the intersectional view\(^1\), assuming the existence of non-fixed social hierarchies and power relations that intra-act differently depending on the context, and that create inclusions and exclusions (Carbin & Tornhill, 2005; Lykke, 2005; Thun, 2012). Nira Yuval-Davis, professor in gender and ethnic studies, argues that inclusions and exclusions are results of active imaginations of who is included and excluded, which entails that discourses maintain and are reproduced (Yuval-Davis, 2007; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler, 2002). Post-colonial theories focus on what these *intra-twined* hierarchies and power structures result in, such as inequalities and stereotypical constructions (e.g. Agustín, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Sharpe & Spivak, 2002).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, professor of women’s and gender studies, stresses that interacting hierarchies of gender and race, as well as spatial locations, produce specific definitions of ‘women’s work’. Migrated women’s work is constructed as unskilled, temporal or as no work at all (Mohanty, 2003). The sociologist and gender and migration professor Laura Agustín, argues that migrated women are trapped in a domestic and caring discourse where the jobs they are allowed and assumed to perform, such as ‘service jobs’, ‘care jobs’, and ‘sex jobs’, are not considered labour (Agustín, 2003). Post-colonial feminists accentuate that non-western migrated women are defined as ‘housewives’, as dependents – conjoint to their husbands instead of workers, or as ‘victims’ of oppression, poverty, ‘tradition’ or ‘patriarchy’. These definitions also remove these women their agency since they are not seen as their own agents (e.g. Agustín, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Sassen, 2002).

The assumed lack of agency is exemplified by Ethel Brooks (2002), associate professor in gender studies and sociology, who stresses that non-white, female workers in other localities are constructed as victims who need ‘salvation’. These constructions rely on that the ‘savior’ of the ‘other’ has to come from the outside, since the ‘other’ is assumed to not be able to take care of herself (Brooks, 2002). For example, Lila Abu-Lughod, professor of anthropology, exemplifies that there is a victim-savior rhetoric about Afghan women and Taliban men which is the same as in the colonial history when colonial men went to save the colonialized women (Abu-Lughod, 2002, cf. Spivak, 1988).

This western discourse where the ‘other’ often is constructed as an *oppressed group* ‘in need of help’ by ‘saviors’ universalizes and excludes non-western women, and ignores spatial and temporal differences, and is therefore criticized by many feminist post-

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\(^1\) Intersectionality is an analytical term, here referring to its post-structural connotation: “sociocultural and discursive *intra-action* between gender and other power structures” (Lykke, 2005: 13, my translation, emphasis added).
colonial scholars (cf. Abu-Lughod, 2002; Agustín, 2003; Marchand, 2002; Mohanty, 2003; Sharpe & Spivak, 2002; Tornhill, 2010). It is this emphasis on the ‘otherness’ and creation of the ‘other’ I will draw on in this thesis, since also ‘western’ migrated women could be constructed as the ‘other’. Feminist post-colonial theories exemplify how this exclusion of the antagonist enemy – the ‘othering’ – is done and explain why it persists. It is therefore a useful complement to discourse theory when analyzing constructions of gender and the positioning of ‘the other’.

The usefulness of feminist post-colonial theory lays furthermore in its criticism of how western women when they construct the ‘other’ at the same time construct themselves, and thus reproduce what is perceived as western (Carbin, 2010; Mohanty, 2003). This could in my case be translated to ‘Swedish’ instead of ‘western’. As discussed in the previous research chapter, there is still a perception of ‘us’ and ‘the others’ in the Nordic context, and immigrated women have showed to be perceived as a problem (Roggeband & Verloo, 2007; Thun, 2012). Feminist post-colonial theories can thus be used to ascertain both how immigrated women are constructed in the Swedish hegemonic discourse, and how this simultaneously implies a reproduction of what it means to be ‘Swedish’.

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The combination of discourse theory and feminist post-colonial theories yields a thick ground for the analysis, and constitutes my theoretical framework. It gives me analytical and methodological tools which will support the elaboration of the research. Power is a central concept in both discourse theory and feminist-post colonial theories, and since I use both theories I am able to apply power to my case. For instance, the construction of the ‘other’ is in discourse theory incorporated in hegemonic struggles, and is a result of the need to create antagonisms. However, why this is the case is better understood when it is clear that different power hierarchies and power relations intra-act, and that these intra-actions depend on stereotypes of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and on the spatial and temporal variations, as stressed by feminist post-colonial theories.

3. Method

3.1. Discourse analysis

In this section the application of theory to methodological tools is presented. When conducting a research on constructions, and using post-structuralist theories, the theory and
methods are blended (Carbin, 2010), since it takes its point of departure in discourses. As a logical consequence of a post-structuralist stance, this thesis will conduct a discourse analysis. There are several kinds of discourse analysis, but I have, because of their focus on constructions of identities, chosen to use Laclau and Mouffe’s version of discourse analysis. By using their discourse analysis I can identify discourses in the Swedish governmental integration context, and point to constructions and subject positioning. In this chapter I present the main tools which guide the search for discourses, power relations, and antagonisms. Laclau and Mouffe offer a large variety of concepts where I have selected a limited amount which will guide me in the analysis. Several have already been discussed in the theory chapter, but some, more technical concepts, will be introduced hereunder.

3.2. Tools related to constructions

Laclau and Mouffe describe that a discourse is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain nodal points. Nodal points are stabilizing signs which give meanings to and order other signs (terms/concepts) and identities. Different discourses fill nodal points differently through chains of equivalence; linking together signifiers that establish identity relationally. Chains of equivalences consist of negative or positive signs and identify subjects as something they are equally not (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). I have for instance found that in the Swedish government’s discourse ‘integration’ is a central concept, and constitutes a nodal point. Signs such as ‘employed’ and ‘inside’ are connected to this nodal point in chains of equivalence. Meanwhile they are positioned against ‘non-integration’ which is connected with signs such as ‘unemployed’ and ‘exclusion’. Non-integration is thus the constitutive outside which is connected to values and codes different from the Swedish. An ‘us’ and ‘them’, hence social antagonism, is created by comparing the Swedish with what it is not. And, in the creation of the ‘other’, the ‘Swedish’ is simultaneously reproduced.

How problems are formulated depends on power through political articulation. I am analyzing how the Swedish government articulates, i.e. talks about, immigrated women and integration. This articulation produces and reproduces the discourses which the government needs to relate to (Alnevall, 2010).

Chains of equivalence and nodal points, as well as revealing the constitutive outside and antagonisms, will therefore be used in order to find patterns which could circle the discourses to find how gender is constructed in the Swedish governmental context. Moreover, power and politics through political articulation play important roles in explaining
why this might be the case, since political articulation determines how the government ascribes meaning to things.

### 3.3. Subject positions and identifications

An important concept for Laclau and Mouffe, and likewise in this thesis, is *subject positions*. Subject positions refer to positions within discourses which imply that “every subject position is a discursive position” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 115). Actors are regarded as subject positions determined by discourse, which means that one cannot talk about *subjects* as defining social relations, but has to talk about subject positions. Judith Butler, professor of philosophy, describes subject positions as how groups of individuals are positioned and subscribed an identity (Butler, 1990). *Identity* is accordingly understood as “identification with a subject position in a discursive structure” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 45, emphasis added). Since subjects are decided by discourses it means that they have other subject positions within the discourse as well as within other discourses (Howarth, Norval & Stavrakakis, 2000). Thus, immigrated women could both be positioned as, for example, ‘mothers’ and ‘workers’.

Though, even where there is no hegemonic articulation, there are discursive limitations to what subject positions are possible and for whom (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Linked with the subject positions are indications of how the subjects should behave and what they can say; thus again the aspects of *power* and *politics* (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Mouffe explains that “politics always consists in the creation of an Us versus a Them and that it implies the creation of collective identities” (Mouffe, 2002 in Stavrakakis, 2004). Collective identities – or group formations – are constituted in processes of chains of equivalence that make certain identifications possible while other interpretations are excluded. These processes of group formation imply the neglecting of differences within the group and alternative formations of groups are ignored. An example would be the universalization of the ‘other’ which is stressed by post-colonial scholars. Group formations are therefore *political*, since a group is formed first when it is *represented* as such (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

This brings us back to political articulation; when the Swedish policies speak about ‘foreign born women’ they simultaneously create this group and its limitations. From a post-structural perspective, categories are something individuals ‘make’, not fixed and predetermined characteristics (Lykke, 2005; Thun, 2012).

The subject positions and collective identifications will therefore affect the immigrated women’s identities and identifications. People arriving to Sweden bring with
them identities built on a set of subject positions depending on among other things origin, ethnicity, class, gender etc. When they arrive to Sweden they meet the Swedish discourses including constructions and positions, and these discourses might differ from the discourses they previously related to. Depending on their background, the encounters with the new discourses imply different reconstructions of their identities. If they are not comfortable with their ascribed identities, they can either seek to renegotiate this identity within the frame of the discourse, or try to ignore it.

3.4. **Discourse analysis in practice**

Discourses are hence both identified by recognizing nodal points and chains of equivalence, and by finding what the discourses are positioned against; the constitutive outside. Careful reading is needed in order to capture these concepts. Nodal points could not be identified as key concepts which are especially important until a close reading of the materials has been conducted. The concepts are captured by investigating the political articulation, i.e. the way a certain issue is talked about. How the government describes integration tells us what they find important, since certain signs are used more than other and in particular ways. By looking at what signs are mentioned, how they are described, and how they are connected to each other and to the nodal points, the chains of equivalence are revealed.

When uncovering connections of meanings I can also find the antagonism which the center of the discourses are positioned against. Since the signs that are connected to each other simultaneously are opposed something else, they create the constitutive outside. The latter is thus found by looking at what the signs are contrasted to; opposed to the ‘Swedish’ is naturally the ‘non-Swedish’. The constitutive outside defines accordingly the inside of the discourses. How things are articulated in the political documents and by the immigrated women, could therefore help me to reveal power relations and hierarchies.

Concepts such as power and hegemony are also decisive in the uncovering of subject positions, since they could help to resolve how subjects are put in categories by looking at chains of equivalence forming groups and how this affects their possibilities for action (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Hence, subject positions are identified by defining the discourses and by looking at how groups are constructed, and what characteristics and identities that are ascribed to this group through chains of equivalences.
4. Material

The material consists of two different kinds of data, where the first – governmental documents – corresponds to the first research question, and the second – interview transcripts – complements when answering the second question. In this chapter I will present the material and discuss the choice of such.

4.1. Governmental publications

The aim of using governmental documents is to be able to describe how the government constructs gender and positions immigrated women. These documents do not exclusively compose the government’s discourses on integration, but they will provide a good indication of the discourse or discourses. In order to capture the discourses and give a representative selection of publications, I have decided to include a wide range of publications. The documents analyzed consist therefore of committee directives, communications, government bills, regulations decided by the government, government commissions, debate articles, and interpellation debates. Discourse analysis implies a close reading of the texts and the amount of material analyzed is therefore – even though quite extensive – limited (Bergström & Boréus, 2005). To ease the research for relevant documents and due to spatio-temporal limitations, some conditions are established for the materials. Firstly, they are all focused on integration. To find publications concerning integration I searched for documents including the word ‘integration’ in the government’s database. Secondly, they are all published by the present government, i.e. after the 6th October 2006 (until present time), and not for or to the government such as the Swedish Government Official Reports. The selected documents indicate what the government considers as being problematic, and how it ascribes subject positions to different groups and thus constructs gender. The debate articles are written by the Ministries, but are compared with the government bills and communications directed to the people and not only to the parliament. Interpellation debates are included to provide a deeper picture (Carbin, 2010). The varying character of the documents offers a broad picture of the government’s discourses.

4.2. Transcripts from interviews

The reason to why I have chosen to conduct interviews is that I want that the women subjected to the integration policies shall be able to give their own version. The interview guide springs therefore from an inductive approach, i.e. developed in order to discover and understand the constructions and realities. Philomena Essed, professor of Critical Race,
Gender and Leadership studies, explains that power is more easily detected when listening to stories told by people that have experienced the inherent power relations (Essed, 2002). Listening to immigrated women’s stories could thus help me establishing what they think about integration (Aberback & Rockman, 2002; Tansey, 2007), and what power mechanisms that are at play. However, as a researcher I also take part in the constructions. The sociologists Mats Börjesson and Eva Palmblad suggest therefore that the interview should be regarded as “an interactive situation that also places the researcher within the frame of the analysis of the content and context of the interview” (Börjesson & Palmblad 2007:16–19, in Tornhill, 2010:55). Consequently I cannot deny that both my questions and interpretations are colored by my own positions and identifications.

In order to not construct categories and positions before the interviews, they take the form of conversations, where only a few, open-ended, questions are posed. The purpose of this approach is to gain detailed in-depth knowledge about the respondents’ perspectives by letting them reason and give their picture of how they have experienced integration. Open-ended questions allow the respondents to talk freely and express their thoughts and attitudes (Tansey 2007), which means that new, unexpected information could appear. The main advantage for me is that this type of interview is less likely to be directed by my own assumptions and presumptions. Instead it is led by what the respondent finds important and how she wants to express it (Aberback & Rockman 2002; Berry 2002). When using broad, open-ended questions, these do not necessarily need to be posed in a certain order, and follow-up questions can be added freely during the interview (Reinharz, 1992).

The respondents were contacted by e-mail where the study was presented and where I asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview about their experience of the encounter with Sweden for about 30 minutes to 1 hour (Aberback & Rockman 2002; Goldstein, 2002; Leech, 2002). The bioethics researchers Helene Starks and Susan Brown Trinidad argue that the respondents should be “situated in one or more of the discourses of interest” (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007: 1373). This implies that I should talk to immigrated women with experiences from the Swedish integration process and who are subjected to the government’s integration policies.

The respondents are accordingly selected strategically. They arrived in Sweden from different countries and continents, for different reasons (refugees, labour migration, family migration) and at different times. Two arrived recently (3 and 5 years ago), two in the 1990s and two in the late 1980s. While the respondents who arrived most recently experience the integration process and its problems and opportunities now and thus gave me their own
image of the present integration politics, the women who have been in Sweden longer also answered based on the experiences of other immigrated women. These women were thus used as representatives, since they represented a special category of people; they were chosen based on their capabilities to represent other immigrated women (Aberback & Rockman, 2002; Blaikie, 2010; Tansey, 2007). I got in contact with the respondents through RIFFI (National Federation of Immigrant Women’s Associations) and through the organizations connected to SIOS (The Cooperation Group for ethnic Associations in Sweden). The interview transcripts spring from interviews with 6 women (Esaiasson et al, 2012) which bring forward immigrated women’s experiences of integration (Devine, 1995). However, as Berry reminds us, and according to post-structural ontology, respondents do not need to tell the “truth”; rather they will probably have a purpose with responding to the questions (Berry, 2002). As everyone else’s, their articulations are political. I do not claim to capture all views with 6 respondents, but these interviews could give a hint about tendencies and insight for further research.

The interview transcripts are coded accorded to themes that are relevant for answering my second research question and that were central in the interviews: the concept of integration and subject positions and identifications (Esaiasson et al., 2012).

4.3. **Self-reflection**

Before proceeding to the analysis I wish to discuss how I as a researcher position myself. Following the logic of discourse theory, nothing could be understood outside discourse. This implies that I cannot step outside discourse; instead I take part in the discursive formations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Furthermore, as a white feminist, I have to take Carbin and Tornhill’s warning into account: that conciliatory attempts within the feminist perspectives of intersectionality might lead to a neglecting of the power configurations within and between feminist theorists; white feminists might forget their own role and positions (Carbin & Tornhill, 2004). Therefore I have to be aware of the possibility that while describing immigrated women I might meanwhile reproduce them as such and myself as a Swedish woman. While acknowledging these risks, and the risk of me coming from the outside to speak for the ‘other’ (Spivak, 1988), I desire to accomplish an analysis which show that these aspects are paid attention to.

It is also important to mention that the women I have interviewed are all individuals and they are only six voices, even though two of the women speak ‘for’ other women as representatives. Five of the women have university degrees and all women work.
This means that the group of women I have interviewed cannot represent immigrated women as a group. Some women would probably recognize themselves in my respondents’ stories while other women would not. While six interviews are too few to generalize, I can still give a hint of how well adapted the policies are to women’s own perceived realities. The interviews could give good signs of tendencies and possible discrepancies between policy and lived experiences.

Regarding the governments’ publications I must mention that debate articles were only accessible two years back in time, i.e. from October 2010, on the government’s webpage where they were retrieved. However, interpellation debates from earlier dates could partly compensate for this.

5. Analysis

The analysis consists of three parts. First I discuss the government’s view of integration. This part of the chapter can be seen as a background to the other parts of the analysis, and introduces the government’s discourses and how gender is constructed in these; thus the first part of my first research question. Thereafter, the government’s construction of gender and subject positions is discussed. This part relates to my first research question. Finally, I present the interviewed women’s own stories and identifications, in order to search an answer to my second question. The last research question will only vaguely be touched upon in the analysis, and will instead – as I stated in the introduction – be treated in the concluding chapter.

5.1. What is integration?

In order to understand the construction of gender and subject positions by the government and by the women, it is pivotal to know what discourses they are framed within. I will therefore start the analysis by presenting the existing discourses which could be found regarding the government’s perception on integration².

5.1.1. The labour discourse

The establishment reform which came into force in December 2010, mirrors great parts of the government’s discourses on integration. The reform aimed at facilitating and accelerating newly arrived immigrants’ establishment in the labour market and in the society

² For a historical account of the integration policies, see e.g. Carbin, 2010; Folkesson, 2012, Lundh, 2010
(Statskontoret, 2012). The Swedish labour market agency was given increased responsibilities
and shall for instance inaugurate an establishment plan for the newly arrived (regeringen.se).

The establishment reform […] sets the foundation for a new integration policy where employment
and knowledge in the Swedish language are in focus from the first day (Art20*, my translation*4).

This quote reflects the core in the discourse. The government articulates work as essential for
integration, and the integration policy can be seen as a part of the government’s labour policy
(“arbetslinjen”). The rhetoric about ‘establishment’ is prevailing also before its
implementation (Dir1;Prop2;3;Art10;40;41;GC4). I have therefore chosen to call this
discourse the labour discourse.

The articulated aim in the discourse is immigrated people’s inclusion in the
community and contribution to economic growth, welfare, and Sweden’s future. Employment
means in this context both contribution and self-sustaining, as well as to obstruct and decrease
exclusion and alienation5. It also means own power and own breadwinning, as well as
independence and wealth (Art1-3;21;30;38;Dir1-2;5;GC15-16;ID5-7;12;Prop1;Skr2).

Language knowledge is another important element in the labour discourse. The chain integration/establishment – employment – Swedish knowledge is present through the
publications (Art1;2;4;8;10;19;20;33-34;37-38;40-41;Fm1;Int2;4;Prop3;Skr1-2). Swedish
knowledge is regarded a condition for employment, and these two components constitute the
inside, while unemployment and lack of Swedish knowledge constitute the outside. A dual
breadwinner model is considered the norm as well as a condition for a good life. This dual
breadwinner model has been the norm in Sweden since the 1960s and encompasses the whole
span of the Swedish parties and acquires accordingly a dominant discursive position
(Hirdman, 2001). Since the politics departs from a dual breadwinner norm, it is implicit that
the policies position against the single breadwinner norm. According to the policy, the dual
breadwinner norm infers a condition for integration for immigrated women which they will
have to accept. With this plea follows that the integration process always will be an inclusion
in a hegemonic power structure – independent of the government’s rhetoric about
multiculturalism.

The labour discourse positions itself against the previous policy adapted by the
social democratic governments. In the analyzed publications the previous policy is

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3 For the referencing, see bibliography
4 The *-symbol will hereafter replace ‘my translation’
5 ‘Alienation’ and ‘exclusion’ refer to the Swedish concept of ‘utanförskap’. The government has translated
‘utanförskap’ to exclusion, and I will hereafter mostly use this term.
characterized as departing from a care mentality where the immigrated were regarded as a homogenized group of subsidy takers resulting in exclusion and passivation. The government is on the contrary pictured as having policies aiding establishment: economic incentives, establishment talks and ‘guides’ (Art1-2;4;6;8-10;20;30;34-35;40-41;Dir1;5;Fm1;GC2;8-9;13;15;17;ID1;6-7;12;Prop1-3;Skr1-2).

The labour oriented policy could be illustrated as a nodal point in the labour discourse, connecting various positive signs to it, while the constitutive outside that the labour discourse is articulated as opposing is focused around the nodal point care focused policy and negative signs. The labour discourse legitimizes itself as what is desirable and how to escape the vicious circle characterizing the care focused policy. Hence, the chains of equivalences are:


Care focused policy – old – immigrated as passive – exclusion – failed integration.

5.1.2. The Swedish belonging discourse

In a second discourse, establishment is associated with establishment in the society, which in addition to employment, education, Swedish knowledge, and breadwinning, have a more overreaching meaning. For instance, Swedish knowledge is here articulated as the possibility to function in the society; not only to function on the labour market (Dir1-2;Prop3): “it is a societal interest that everyone living in Sweden have sufficient knowledge in Swedish to not end up in exclusion” (Prop3*). Other signs connected with establishment are likewise accommodation, health, safety, networks, feeling of participation and belonging, and information about Sweden, such as rights, obligations and values. Acquisition of information is to be granted through society orientation, introduced with the establishment reform (Art1;6;8;26;32-34;40;Dir1-2;Fm1;GC2;5;12;15-16;ID15;Prop2;Skr1-2):

The society orientation shall include knowledge acquisition and reflection about Sweden and about what it means to live in the Swedish society, as well as information about rights and obligations. An important point of departure shall be the respect for the core values such as human rights, the democratic form of government and gender equality (Prop2:74*).

To be included in the Swedish society and belong to it is articulated both as a governmental goal and an individual endeavor. This discourse I have chosen to call the Swedish belonging discourse. A condition to be included in the ‘Swedishness’ is to embrace the ‘Swedish values’

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6 Translation of ‘lotsar’.
mentioned in the quote above. To not belong, and not be Swedish, is therefore to have other values different from the Swedish, such as reflected here:

Simultaneously as the Swedish society has become more and more secular there are people that have fled or immigrated to our country who have religions as an important part of their daily lives. This implies that we will be facing reinvented questions where religious convictions can clash with the norms of the society or other values (Art17*).

Since the Swedish belonging discourse assumes secular conceptions, religious convictions such as radical Muslim ideas, create exclusion. The Swedish could in this discourse therefore be regarded as a nodal point connecting positive signs to it while its constitutive outside, the non-Swedish, is connected to negative signs:


5.1.3. The discrimination discourse

A third discourse which is identified embraces multiculturalism and recognizes the threat of xenophobia and discrimination. I call it the discrimination discourse. In this discourse immigration and immigrated people are articulated as necessary for the Swedish welfare as contributors to the welfare state and to economic growth. Sweden is connected with values such as tolerance, humanity, openness, dynamics, unity, equality, freedom of religion, and solidarity (Art13;22;27-28;30;33-35;38;40-42;Skr1).

It is recognized that intolerance and discrimination, which is connected with prejudices, racism, xenophobia, unsuccessful integration, and values clashing with the principle of people’s equal values, exist in Sweden as well (Art19;28;30;39;41;Dir3;ID8;10-11). However, the problem is articulated as worse in the rest of Europe (Art19;30).

In this discourse it is also admitted that foreign born women are subjected to structural discrimination which partly can explain their exclusion (Dir4;ID13;15):

The expectations on the women's activities are low from the governmental agencies and the measures that the women are offered are also often presupposing stereotypical conceptions of gender and ethnicity (Dir4;6*).

Multiple discriminations and intersectionality are recognized. Other examples state that the society accepts that women stay at home, do not learn Swedish and do not work because they are women from ‘another culture’ (Art5). The discrimination is articulated to be an institutionalized practice; a problem rooted in the system; not due to the government. Instead they anticipate a will to change the structures (Art14;18;30;33-34;40-41;Dir4;ID12;Prop2;Skr1). This concept of structures conflict with the government’s other
two integration discourses, which depart from an individual perspective while neglecting the structural problems. The structural subordination becomes thus an inconsistency in the government’s policies. The reason could be that the discrimination discourse is positioned as a counter discourse to the other, dominant discourses.

*Tolerance* constitutes here a nodal point binding a chain of signs to it, such as openness, inclusiveness, and equality. The constitutive outside defining the inside of the discourse is instead *intolerance*, xenophobic parties and extremists in Sweden and in Europe (Art13-14;19-20;38;41). The xenophobic parties are blamed for grouping groups of individuals against each other, i.e. to use the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ rhetoric (Art21). The nodal point and constitutive outside are thus connected in chains of equivalence as showed below:


### 5.2. The government’s construction of gender and subject positions

As showed above there are three main discourses in the context of integration: the labour discourse prioritizing employment and Swedish language knowledge while fearing exclusion; the Swedish belonging discourse stressing the Swedish values; and the discrimination discourse admitting discrimination but where tolerance is at the core. The first discourse is the most dominant while the third is the least articulated. Knowing existing discourses, how do they then relate to gender and how do they position immigrated women?

#### 5.2.1. The unemployed and excluded foreign born woman

The most salient subject position is the *unemployed and excluded foreign born woman*, placed within the labour discourse. By highlighting women’s situation and stating that women are established slower than men and are more unemployed than men, the problem of unemployment of immigrated is pictured as in essence a problem of foreign born women’s unemployment (Art5;10;15;20;Dir4;GC3;15;Prop2;Skr1-2). This corresponds with Thun’s, Thomsson’s and Hoflund's, as well as Roggeband’s and Verloo’s identifications of immigrated women as constituting the presumed problem (Roggeband & Verloo, 2007; Thomsson & Hoflund, 2000; Thun, 2012).

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7 The government uses the term ’foreign born’ women and men in most cases, and I will therefore use it as well. In other cases I usually refer to ‘immigrated’ women and men. While ‘foreign born’ attributes the person with a fixed identity which concerns what that person is, ‘immigrated’ refers to an action, to move to Sweden, which is ended (c.f. Grip, 2010).
While the exclusion of foreign born is described as a temporary position concerning *some* foreign born people, foreign born women is described as *a group* stuck in exclusion (Art15:Prop2). They are in most cases clustered together as unemployed, outside or excluded, and all ‘foreign born women’ or groups of women such as ‘family migrants’ are given this identity. This homogenizes the women and ignores the differences that exist depending on origin, class, age etc. Intersectionality is thus not taken into account. Instead the signs ‘woman’ and ‘foreign born’ result in the articulation of a collective identity where the temporal and spatial conditions are articulated as fixed; resulting in a reproduction of the positioning in the discourse (c.f. Mouffe, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2007).

While women are assumed to be situated *outside* the labour market, men are constructed *on* the labour market (ID4;12;15;Prop3). A single breadwinner model is assumed for the immigrated, and different measures aim to counter this norm. For instance, the SFI (‘Swedish for immigrants’) and the SFI-bonus is hoped to result in women *entering* the labour market, while for men it is anticipated to lead to *improvements* on the labour market:

The bonus can contribute to increase the family’s interest of that the woman studies [...] increased possibilities to become self-sustained. The bonus can also motivate more men to study sfi and complete the studies in sfi and consequently improve their position on the labour market in the long run (ID12*).

Individual compensation intends to motivate the women to participate in the establishment activities and become self-sustained. Foreign born women are in this position enunciated as passive and in need of special treatment and assistance in order to “find ways out to the working life”. Unemployment is in discourse equalized with a lack of power and freedom for the women, an economically exposed situation and risk of isolation and suffering (Art5-6;15;18;Dir3;GC3;ID12-13;15;Prop1;3;Skr2):

Especially urgent is to reach the women who neither work nor study and to prevent that they get isolated from the surroundings or abused because they cannot take advantage of their rights (Prop1:13*)

These women are thus articulated as a powerless and dependent group which implies that they are removed their agency and universalized. The Swedish government positions itself as a helper to break foreign born women’s alienation and to get them on the ‘inside’ (Art6;15;18;ID12-13;15;Prop1;3;Skr1-2). The government represents thus the ‘savior’ enunciated by Brooks (2002) and Abu-Lughod (2002).

The unemployment of immigrated women is often compared with Swedish women’s employment. Just like men are positioned on the labour market, Swedish women are
articulated as being inside – part of the ‘collective’ and employed (Art5;15;Dir3;ID13). This creates a division of ‘Swedish’ and ‘foreign born’ women:

Even though Sweden is the best ranked in a European comparison when it comes to labour force participation among women, we have a gap between foreign born women and foreign born men which is very hard to accept (ID12*).

The problem is articulated a problem of inequality among foreign born, since the differences that persist in employment rates both between Swedish born women and men, and to a greater extent between inborn and foreign born, is removed. Lack in gender equality among foreign born is pronounced as the reason for the employment gap (Art15;30;GC3;ID12-13;15):

It is a great gender equality policy challenge to adjust the difference that prevails in employment rates between foreign born women and men (ID15:Anf68*).

The notion of gender equality means therefore in this discourse equal participation on the labour market (Art5;18). Immigrated people are connected to unequal practices and traditions of a male breadwinner, compared with the dual breadwinner model in Sweden:

In families where there is not a tradition that the woman works it is especially important to create incentives for both the woman and the man to actively participate in Swedish education and other activities which aim at easing the establishment in the working and society life (Prop2:107*).

Gender inequalities are connected to foreign born; it is articulated as an integration issue, denying the possibility of gender inequalities within the ‘Swedish’. The foreign becomes a symbol for the opposite of the ‘equal Swedish’, the constitutive outside, connected with gender inequality, unemployment, and passivity (Art15;ID15).


The gender equality dichotomy reinforces the construction of an ‘us’ and an ‘other’. Carbin, Thun and Towns’ observations about a Swedish state identity closely connected to gender equality, while the non-Swedish does not fit in this image, are thus present in this discourse (Carbin, 2010; Thun, 2012; Towns, 2002).

Something else worth noting is that the establishment measures and other means to decrease the gender inequalities only are directed towards women – that more women shall participate and ‘enter the society’ and ‘break the exclusion’. Gender equality is therefore understood as a 'women's issue' since only women are referred to when gender equality is mentioned (Art30;ID4-5;12).
5.2.2. The caring foreign born woman

Foreign born women as mothers and wives is a position which appears both within the labour discourse and within the Swedish belonging discourse. The foreign born women are described as having a great responsibility for the home and family (Dir4;ID12-13;15;Prop2):

Today, more than 50 per cent of the students in SFI are women. Despite this there are women that do not participate in SFI for family reasons. The bonus can contribute to increase the family’s interest of that the woman studies (Prop3:49*)

What these ‘family reasons’ refer to is not described, but quotes indicate that patriarchal structures place women home with their children. The women are for example articulated as taking parental leave and waiting at home for the children to get a pre-school place. The construction of the parental leave is postulated to create to ‘lock-in effects’ where the women and her family choose mother leave rather than employment (Art30;41;Dir4;ID7;12-13;15;Prop2):

Then it is fairly possible that I choose to be home with the children, because that was what I did in the home country, and I do not go to the Swedish classes (ID13:Anf76*)

Behind this assumption there is an imagination of immigrated families as more traditional and patriarchal (c.f. Agustín, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Sassen, 2002). The family model contributes thus to explain the policy’s view of women as mothers. It supposes that the woman was a housewife in her country of origin. The assumed patriarchal relationship between foreign born men and women is, again, articulated as a gender equality challenge – reaffirming Carbin’s (2010), Thun’s (2012), and Towns’ (2002) emphasizing of presumed ‘othering’ of immigrated people.

Moreover, while women are assumed to be foremost family migrants, men are described as arriving as refugees or to work or study (Art6;Dir4;ID15;Skr1). Even though a majority of women arrive as family migrants and more men arrive as refugees, to study or work, statistics reveal that it is not that simple: family migration is since 2005 the most common way of immigration for men as well (SCB, 2012). By categorizing men and women into different categories of immigration the existing stereotypes and gender roles are reinforced – men as the breadwinner, and women as the dependent. The Swedish politicians produce thus knowledge which fits in their worldview, not necessarily what has been proved true (Dir4, Mouffe, 2000; Mohanty, 2003). The assumed patriarchal relationship infers a subordinated position for ‘foreign born woman’ as they are seen as dependent on their partners (Art15;18;Dir4;ID12-13;Prop3). An own guide is for instance articulated as necessary in order for the women to have access to an own network and not becoming

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dependent on their partners for information: "the women are referred to their husbands as their only link to the society" (ID13:Anf73*). The society orientation is also stressed as especially important for women:

To early be able to take part of information about rights and obligations, the society’s value system and codes is important, especially from a gender equality perspective. No newly arrived woman shall need to be referred to only her partner for societal information (Art15*).

Besides that a heterosexual relationship between the immigrated man and woman is presumed, the foreign culture is expected to be different from the values and codes that are attributed the Swedishness. Foreign born women are assumed to need information in order to be conscious about the ‘right’, Swedish norms, such as the Swedish notion of gender equality, to obstruct them being abused (Art15):

When these women do not get a job they become totally dependent on the husband’s economy and network. In the worst cases it evolves in a life of violence and isolation (Art6*).

One of the solutions for these women – information – implies a problem formulation regarding the women as victims, passive, and ignorant, accentuated by e.g. Mohanty (2003). Another solution suggested in order to increase foreign born women’s independence is individual establishment compensation. By assuming that the women need economic incentives in order to enter the system, SFI, and establishment activities, there is an expected reluctance from the women to take part in the activities otherwise, or for her ‘family’ to let her take part in the activities (Art18;Dir4;ID4;13;15;Prop2;4). It is said that the economic compensation "would result in better conditions for newly arrived women to establish themselves on the labour market" (Prop2:141). This implies that before they were assumed to be restrained and the problem lies among the foreign born instead of the system (Prop2).

This also implies – to connect to the Swedish belonging discourse – that if not dependent on the husband, the immigrated women are assumed to be dependent on the state for society information, network creation (the guide) and economic compensation. In sum, the caring woman is connected to these signs:

*The caring woman* – patriarchal culture – mother & wife – dependent on husband or state for information, networks and breadwinning – reluctant or restrained to work.

5.2.3. *The structurally discriminated woman*

This position is situated in the *discrimination discourse* where it is recognized that gender stereotypes persist in the activities offered foreign born men and women, and the notion of intersectionality is accepted. The ‘double discrimination’ aggravates foreign born women to
enter the labour market (Dir4;ID13;15;Prop2). The mentioning of society’s discrimination towards women or hindrances in the society’s structure is however seldom mentioned alone. Instead it is stressed in combination with ‘individual hindrances’ for the foreign born women, identified as less work experience, their roles as mothers, or because of the lack of gender equality in their country of origin (ID15;Prop2):

The reason to the low employment rates among foreign born depends probably both on that people have arrived from countries that have not come as far regarding gender equality as Sweden has, and on structures in the welcoming here (ID13;Anf81*).

The very same gender stereotypes that are criticized are simultaneously reinforced in the government’s publications. The foreign born women are not only articulated as double discriminated, but as triple discriminated: twice by the Swedish structures – race and gender – and once because of the patriarchal structures they are assumed to encounter in their families.

Meanwhile, foreign born men are described as having an advantage compared with women because of their sex. They get, for instance, more help during the introduction and more qualified establishment measures than women and have thus more possibilities to establish on the labour market (Dir4;ID9;12-13). On the other hand, in the communication Skr. 2009/10:233 it is acknowledged that foreign born men to a higher extent are subjected to ethnic discriminated than women, for instance because of their name (Prop2). Since this is not mentioned elsewhere, one can however assume that it is not regarded as very serious. The structurally discriminated woman is thus connected to:

The structurally discriminated woman – structural hindrances – individual hindrances – disadvantaged.

5.2.4. The contributing foreign born woman

This position, situated in the labour discourse as well as in the discrimination discourse, is less significant compared with the excluded and caring positions, and it points to the ambivalence that exists within the discourses. It could also be regarded as a counter-position, which opens up for change for immigrated women since it puts them in the position of agents and resources (Art5;ID13):

The foreign born women constitute furthermore a great labour resource which the Swedish society has to become significantly better of taking care of (ID13;Anf73*).

Foreign born women are described as resources and unused potentials having the ability to contribute to the labour market and to the welfare state (Art5;20-21;GC3;ID12-13). This agency is articulated as present despite their low education and lack of work experience. Foreign born women are thus identified as agents with ‘individual hindrances’ and ‘worse
conditions’ compared with men, i.e. less work experience, less education, worse health, and responsibility for the family (Art6;Dir4;GC3;ID4;13;15;Skr1-2).

This leaves room for immigrated women to escape the domestic and caring discourse, mentioned by Agustín (2003). However, when being described as less educated and experienced, foreign born women are universalized as unskilled. Such positioning implies a limit in the possible space of agency, since they can only contribute and be agents within this framework. The jobs they can perform from this position are therefore, as Mohanty and Agustín stressed, constructed as unskilled or temporal (Agustín, 2003; Mohanty, 2003).

There is a connection between the assumed exclusion and the jobs enabled for foreign born women, since the excluded foreign born women are described as uneducated and inexperienced. Some foreign born women are identified as analphabets which is believed to result in ignorance and in the end a lack of Swedish knowledge. This language lack and low education is described as more devastating for women than for men since they are assumed to be excluded (Prop1;GC3;ID13):

[...] the group of women that have maybe not even knowledge in the Swedish language, we are in that situation that children become parents to their parents since they get to follow and translate for their mothers at the care center or at the national insurance office (ID13:Anf79*).

The framework where women are described as agents, differ from the articulation of foreign born resources. Contrary with the contributing foreign born woman, the foreign born resource is not constructed as unskilled, but instead as a risk taking and innovating entrepreneur who’s contribution is pivotal for the survival of the Swedish welfare state (Art1;3;9;12;20-21;30;33-36;39-40;Fm1;Skr1-2). Women should, by fact, be included in the articulation of foreign born resources, but in several documents it is clear that the norm is the man, and the woman is the exception (Art6;Skr1). For instance, it is stated that:

In total foreign born show, especially those born outside Europe, a significant improved employment rate increase compared with Swedish born no matter the age. For the women the pattern is however another (178fbw*).

‘Foreign born’ could thus be understood as men, whereas women have to be labeled ‘foreign born women’ to be included in the concept of ‘foreign born’. Another interpretation would be that foreign born as a theoretical concept is regarded as something positive, connected to the advantage of migration and mobility. Meanwhile, in most cases when women are withdrawn from the category foreign born they are not placed within migration discourses, but within integration discourses – where they are situated as a problem. The difference between the contributing foreign born woman and the foreign born resource is thus:


5.3. The women’s identifications

The policies create as discussed above a universal stereotype of the ‘immigrated woman’ (cf. Folkesson, 2012). The women’s positioning is more ambivalent compared with the government’s positioning: they do not only express one identity per person; significant is instead the multiple identities articulated by the women and their different identifications. Whereas I have identified four main positions in the government’s discourses, the women express a larger span of identities and also within these positions there is a large variety. The identified subject positions are therefore more versatile compared to the government’s subject positions.

This part of the analysis is based on interviews with Maria, Svetlana, Ciya, Fathima, Saide, and Sara. Maria and Sara arrived to Sweden quite recently, Svetlana and Ciya for 10 – 20 years ago, while Fathima and Saide have been in Sweden for over 20 years. Maria, Svetlana and Fathima arrived with or after their husbands who were employed in Sweden. Ciya and Saide were refugees and Sara went to Sweden in order to study and work. All women except Ciya have children. In order to not reveal the women’s identities I have decided to not include more information. However, naturally the diverse backgrounds of the women imply that their encounters with Sweden and their identifications differ. The names that I use in this analysis are feigned names.

5.3.1. The professional woman

In contrast to the most coherent subject position created in the government’s labour discourse, the unemployed and excluded foreign born woman, all of the interviewed women identified themselves with their professions. Their professional identity is both taken for granted and is strong, and their stories are based on their professional perspectives. Imbedded in this identity are pride and the articulation as someone active. Own responsibilities, initiatives, and hard work is stressed as important components in order to satisfy the professional identity (Ciya; Saide; Sara). For instance, Saide describes herself as a forerunner when she finished her education and searched for jobs. Ciya articulates a wish and will to change her situation as driving her to improve:

And then I applied for SFI and I went there during the nights. When I worked in the bookbindery I finished at 4 pm and from 4 pm I went to school […] we started at 6 pm with school until 9 pm. And then at 9 I went home. It was very heavy, very heavy for me, I didn’t feel good. And then
during a month I went to this course, this SFI, and I managed. I passed (silent). I passed and then, the same time I searched for jobs as well (Ciya*).

While Ciya and Saide identify themselves with the ‘contributing foreign born woman’ and regard themselves as successful with what they have accomplished, Svetlana struggles with the fact that in Sweden she is not immediately recognized with the status she identifies with. During the interview she articulated a professional competence which she considers is not enough taken care of. For her, the non-recognition of her self-identified status was: ”a, you know, almost humiliating process” (Svetlana*). She expresses a subject position – as an agent and a qualified one – which is not present in the discourses on integration for foreign born women (c.f. the contributing foreign born woman). Therefore, there is a non-meeting between policy and lived reality, as stressed by Folkesson. Svetlana does not fit within the discourse and struggles to find a new place. Signs connected to the professional woman are thus:

The professional woman – work – agent – active – includes highly qualified.

The identification with the profession is connected to agency. Likewise, the Muslim women Folkesson (2012) interviewed in her dissertation highlighted their individual agency. The universalizing image of the ‘foreign born woman’ as passive and without agency, which is articulated in the governments’ publications seem to deviate with the women’s own perceived reality. The hegemonic Swedish discourse constructs and re-constructs thus a stereotype and an illusion.

It is of course important to recognize that all of the interviewed women work which implies that I cannot for sure state the inexistence of the ‘unemployed and excluded foreign born woman’. There might be women – as well as men – that would identify with the this position, but mine and other scholars’ (e.g. Folkesson, 2012; Grip, 2010; Thomsson & Hoflund, 2000) results indicate that the hegemonic articulation has to be reformulated in order to direct the assumed target group instead of stigmatizing them. The lack of differentiation and acknowledgement of immigrated women as active professionals, infers a limitation of immigrated women’s sphere of action.

5.3.2. The different woman

This subject position is ambivalent. To some extent the women position themselves as having an identity different from ‘only Swedish’; something more which adds to their ‘Swedish identity’ (Ciya; Sara; Svetlana). However, it is also articulated as an identity that is forced upon them by others.
The first articulation of this subject position coheres somewhat with the government’s position of the *contributing foreign born woman*, with the addition of a cultural component. Some of the respondents stress that since they have the experience of two cultures they can enrich and improve the Swedish society by for example suggesting unexpected solutions on problems (Sara; Svetlana). This position is thus also placed within the *Swedish belonging discourse*. Diversity and difference means in this sense a contribution and an advantage, and two cultural backgrounds is positive (Fathima; Sara; Svetlana). For instance, Svetlana articulates herself as someone outside the box, representing an alternative to the Swedish rationality:

And then it is good that you know that there is a totally different way to solve the problem, and I know it [...] And I have another angle on the whole thing. And it is this, which on the other hand is an advantage, because I often present weird suggestions which just work and they just, but [laugh] how do you know that? I don’t know, I just know it, because I have done it many times before (Svetlana*).

The problem Sara and Svetlana face is that they neither get many possibilities to show that they are an asset, nor to realize their entrepreneur plans (Sara; Svetlana). However, Fathima believes that more and more people start to realize what potential the foreign born encompass.

The women have all in common that they regard all people as agents who want to work and likewise are good at something. They are thus opposing the government’s image that ‘foreign born’ – and in particular ‘foreign born women’ – need incentives in order to work. The problem is not the reluctance to work; it is the system’s reluctance to let them in. While the women identify themselves with the subject position of the enriching women, they are not encapsulated as such in the government’s discourses. The result in this discrepancy is that the women do not feel that there is room for them to show their capabilities. In this context it is clear both *what* could be said and by *whom*, and that the hegemonic political articulation in facto includes mechanisms of exclusion (c.f. Laclau & Mouffe, 1995; Foucault in Torfing, 2004).

The other part of the subject position as different is connected with feelings to not fit in and to a forced ‘othering’. Svetlana makes references to a movie to describe this:

And in the movie there is a fish, a big orange fish which walks through the streets. And I feel like that fish. Do you understand? I can’t tell what I see, but I see everything. Because [...] what I see, then I can’t explain to you that, do you know what, he did something totally weird because that might be something totally normal for you. Then I have to explain why I think that it is something weird, what he did. Because somehow you observe and take in things as they are (Svetlana*).

During the interview Svetlana expresses the existence of exclusion – not resulting from unemployment – but from being categorized as a foreigner and stigmatized as such, and not
feeling belonging to the same extent as Swedish people. Both she and Maria stress that they are coded culturally different compared with Swedes; they are the fish in the movie.

Within the identity as a foreign woman, or an immigrated woman, there is reluctance. As Svetlana stated: “You know, I’m not an immigrant. I’m a woman who is an international star, for you” (Svetlana*). Instead of being positioned as a foreign woman, Svetlana wants to be positioned as international and as a professional. The label ‘immigrant’ is regarded as something negative, connected to “a non-creature with strange behavior” (Svetlana*). Sara criticizes the wording on the migration website: “They call us foreigners aliens. We are not aliens. We still have two eyes; we don’t have extra pair of stuff” (Sara). What she describes is a creation of an ‘us’ and ‘them’ where foreign born are categorized as different. However, what the category ‘foreign born’ refers to, is not clear to the women and they express the need of a differentiation (Fathima; Sara; Svetlana):

The problem with the immigrant-hood is that we also differ. If you say foreign, it is like day and night […] I want to see some nuances here actually. Because to […] call everyone one and the same, that I become…I have nothing to do with Iraq, Iran (Svetlana*).

The clustering of all ‘foreign born’ in the same group results in an identity where the ‘foreign born’ women do not recognize themselves: “Because then, you know, you are stigmatized in some circumstances where you have absolutely nothing to do with” (Svetlana*). This stigmatization leads to the reproduction of foreign born women as the ‘other’. For instance, the women exemplify instances where they have been encountered stereotypically. Fathima says that it happens that people get surprised when it is revealed that she is highly qualified. Behind the surprised reactions it is possible to identify the image of cultural stereotypes of ‘foreign born women’ as unskilled. In addition, two of the women consider their nationalities or assumed nationalities being conceived stereotypically and negatively – images they do not agree with (Sara; Svetlana). Sara recognizes segregation as another consequence of the ‘othering’ of immigrated people. She stresses that Sweden needs to accept the multiculturalism and say that “look, we are not only Swedish – pure Swedish here, we have people from different countries, we need to make them feel welcome” (Sara).

The women express that the stigmatization of them as ‘an immigrant’ does not fit with their self-perception, just like the Somali women in Listerborn’s study did not recognize themselves in the media image (Listerborn, 2005). An ‘othering’ is taking place which situates the ‘non-Swedish’, immigrant, and different as opposing the Swedish. All people who cannot be ‘classified’ as ‘Swedish’ are given the label ‘immigrant’ or ‘foreign born’, assuming a sameness (c.f. Thun, 2010). The immigrated are this way attributed
inferiority. Simultaneously, the forced classifications obstruct the women to identify themselves freely as they wish – as enriching for instance – and their own interpretations of their identities are aggravated when they in advance are given the collective identity of foreign born women. The two directions within the different woman are connected with signs as showed below:

\[\text{Different woman (enriching) – culturally different – diversity – add to the Swedish.}\]

\[\text{Different woman (immigrant) – culturally different – non-Swedish – homogeneity – outsiders.}\]

5.3.3. The adapting woman

This subject position is related to agency and adaptation; the women articulate themselves as willing to react to the Swedish norms and adapt to the Swedish system. Contrary to the previous subject position, they express the desire to change and fit in. The plea to apt to the Swedish context is enunciated by all respondents:

\[\text{It’s the adaptation of the life style here. That’s why sometimes people have psychological problems, emotional problems, because they feel it’s hard to fit in (Sara).}\]

Information is seen as the key to adaptation. To be included in the society is, according to Fathima, to know what is happening in Sweden, to eat the Swedish food etc., while the opposite leads to exclusion. Maria and Ciya add the desire to learn as a pivotal element in the adaptation. For instance, Ciya does everything to fit in; she informs herself and learns the codes which could lead to jobs. She says that in Sweden people judge her on how she speaks Swedish and how she responds, so she informs herself to be able to answer the questions according to the expectations. The individual responsibility to make the homework on how to adapt and to find the information which is suitable for each occasion is underlined (Sara).

Adaptation is articulated as both a skill and necessity, and the struggle to fit in and to manage is due to a fighting mentality, hard work, and stubbornness (Ciya; Svetlana). This fighting mentality infer a strong believe in their own agency. Saide deviates from the other women by stressing the need to help the newly arrived and provide them with information. Her view is thus quite close to the government.

What this adaption in reality means differs between the women. One view is the assimilation perspective, where immigrated people have to forget their ‘home country’ and not compare and criticize the Swedish system but accept it as it is (Saide). Another is the one articulated by Sara. She does not show any need to assimilate: “you just a need to understand the system, people and culture” (Sara). Saide and Ciya stress that in Sweden work and dual breadwinning is a norm and everyone has to adapt to that. The necessity of adaptations related
to the loss in status from the place you move from is emphasized by several respondents (Ciya; Saide; Sara).

A way to adapt to the Swedish while keeping their previous identities is to identify as international. A couple of the women represent themselves as international and globetrotters – adventurous, free, curious with what happens in the world, and interested in other cultures and ways of living (Fathima; Sara; Svetlana).

This subject position shows that the process of integration is ambivalent. However, instead of the adaptation to the Swedish values, which has been the main argument in the government’s Swedish belonging discourse; the women express a need and desire to adapt to the Swedish way of functioning, and to get a grip of how the system works. This has nothing to do with values, but with how a society decides to organize itself and what role the inhabitants of such society play. The signs which are connected to the adapting woman in a chain of equivalence are thus:

*Adapting woman – information – desire to learn – active adaptation.*

### 5.3.4. Women in patriarchal structures

In the policies immigrated people were generalized as less gender equal compared with Swedish people. The majority of the interviewed women have another image of themselves. They regard Sweden as highly gender equal, but this gender equality does not exclude them – they include the gender equal discourse in their own identities and they express themselves as highly gender sensitive. Although they recognize patriarchal structures, they rebel against it.

All women connect Sweden with gender equality. They compare Sweden with their country of origin or with other countries, which are articulated as more patriarchal compared with Sweden. For instance, Sara says that “women are seen as second class” in her country of origin (Sara). Maria talks about how the patriarchal culture means that women normally take care of the home and children and therefore start working later than women in Sweden. Ciya estimates that these patriarchal structures are so rooted that they are fixed: “it is their culture, you can’t change it” (Ciya*).

The patriarchal stories are however diverse. Saide rejects the idea of patriarchal power relations, some of the women recognize that patriarchal structures exist but they do not include themselves in these structures (Fathima; Saide), while other hint a patriarchal under story. Some women ‘followed’ for example their husbands to Sweden or elsewhere (Ciya; Fathima; Svetlana). Fathima accepts women’s primary roles as mothers. Ciya articulates the authority of the family father. However, there is also a resistance against these structures
among the women. For instance, both Ciya and Maria acted against the will of their (now) ex-husbands.

The ‘Swedish gender equality’ is anyhow embraced by all women, reaffirming the government’s view of Sweden as gender equal. However, while the government distinguishes between ‘the gender equal Swede’ and the ‘less gender equal immigrant’, the women see themselves as included in this gender equal society since they live here (Ciya; Fathima; Sara). The kindergartens, fathers’ care taking, and women with high positions are examples of signs connected with the Swedish gender equality which is acclaimed. As Sara declared: “I’m kind of like girl power thingy” (Sara). Since arriving to Sweden, Svetlana is more aware of gender equality issues and she articulates herself as a gender equality propagator. As such, she does not fit in the government’s positioning where it is the ‘Swedish’ that shall teach the foreign about the fundamentals of gender equality.

Whereas the government’s discourse excludes gender inequalities from the ‘Swedish’, the women give examples of the opposite. Svetlana and Maria have encountered Swedish, patriarchal men; a Swedish manager who was a hinder for professional success and a man using his assumed superiority for suppression. While these examples recognize patriarchal individuals, Sara articulates a gender discriminatory system practice in Sweden: a woman who arrived in Sweden with her diplomat husband was unable to get a real personal number, resulting in her dependency on the husband. It was thus not the ‘foreign culture’ that created this dependence, but the Swedish system.

Moreover, Fathima’s impression is that also Swedish women take more care of the children than the men; it has thus nothing to do with Swedish or not Swedish. Similarly, she dements the articulation of the parental leave as a ‘woman trap’ for foreign born women.

The Swedish discourses which places ‘foreign born’ as less gender equal and more patriarchal, simultaneously create Swedish people as more gender equal and less patriarchal. The constructions infer both an exclusion of the position of the foreign born woman as a gender propagator, and that of the unequal Swedish. In the interviews it appeared that it is not that simple: some of the women identified themselves as gender equality fighters, while they identified patriarchal structures in the Swedish society. The government’s discourses recreate thus obsolete images of the immigrated and embellished self-images of the Swedish.

The chain of signs connected to the position is thus:

5.3.5. The structurally limited woman

The women express different kinds of hindrances that they have faced in the encounter with Sweden. Because of the slightly different kind of obstacles – expressed differently by the women, I have chosen to call this subject position the structurally limited woman, and thereafter explain what kind of limitation the subject position contains. The identity as limited is articulated by the women, but the symptoms are in most cases not gender specific and the women indicate that immigrated men would express a similar subject position.

The first limitation is the closed labour market. There is a professional exclusion prohibiting immigrated people to enter the labour market, or enter where they feel belonging (Maria; Svetlana). The problem is thus both the get on the inside – to get a job – and to get a job which corresponds with their qualifications. For Svetlana it was obvious that she was on the same level as a Swedish woman, but it was not at all that obvious that she would have the chance to prove it because of the structural hindrances. The identity as limited thus re-coups and overmatch the identity as professional for some of the women and they have decided to handle this conflict in different ways. One way is to accept and go on and maybe invest less in the career, another is to continue trying, and a third to try to find new spaces equivalent with the old and where borders do not matter. Sara believes that she has to go back to university in order to be in the system and get a job. From the third aspect Svetlana says that it is stupid to try to be a Swedish woman in Sweden:

Pff, that’s the most stupid thing you can think. You shall think on how can I come as I am […] and then find places there, do you understand? Because here you are locked out […] If we look for energy where it is closed, then you just become tired and humiliated, and reduced […] (Svetlana*)

Another opening to the inside from the otherwise so closed and excluded was, as Svetlana describes, the diversity year in 2006. However, even though the diversity year opened up for her at that time, it was only a temporary solution since it was not integrated in the system. Why this closure then? Fathima asks:

And you wonder sometimes that is it the name? Is it that your name is Muhammed or Angelo or that—what is the reason? Like, that you can’t get a job even though you have an education (Fathima*).

In addition, Fathima points to the one-sided labour market in Sweden and the high expectations regarding the education level as a constraint. This type of structural hindrances is not articulated as being a problem attributed only women, but more as a general problem for immigrated people.
Another major barrier is articulated to be the language. In order to be included in the society as well as to get a job, you need to have a good command of Swedish (Ciya; Maria; Saide; Sara; Svetlana). The language barrier is not represented as gender specific either. Ciya describes her husband’s situation: “no one gives him a job because he can’t speak Swedish” (Ciya*). While Svetlana stress that language is not the only hindrance, Saide and Sara do not believe that immigrated are discriminated because of their origin. Sara thinks it depends on the language knowledge and adaptation:

For me that’s my only barrier, language [...] It’s harder for us because we come from another place and we need to adjust ourselves to the system here, the language, the whole system (Sara).

Except for the language and adaptation, practical hindrances are connected with arriving in Sweden, such as waiting for a residence permit, waiting for a personal number and complicated bureaucracy which prolong the time from arrival to employment (Ciya; Fathima; Sara). For Sara, the personal number is her main problem, and she expresses impatience and frustration of being stuck without it: “I want to go back to school, I want to have an insurance here, I want to build my life here” (Sara). For her, the personal number is the key that will open up the door and let her step into the society: “it’s limitless, you can do anything” (Sara).

The lack of networks when arriving in a new country is stressed both in the publications and by the respondents (Fathima; Maria; Sara; Svetlana). Svetlana says that: “I can call it a network since we all know who is included in this network” (Svetlana*). Networks are both connected with having friends and personal support as well as with professional support and better chances to get a job.

The women have faced different levels of discriminations. Maria felt that the Swedish rule of law treated her badly and she believes that it was due to her origin: “I wonder [...] how it would be, the whole process, if it was a Swedish woman” (Maria*). Xenophobia is articulated as existing, but apart from Maria, the other women have not experienced any major events, even though some smaller incidents have happened (Ciya; Fathima; Saide; Sara). Ciya says for instance that when she arrived in Sweden people judged her because of her veil.

In conclusion; different people face different types of problems in Sweden. Thomsson and Hoflund (2000) pointed out that whereas the official institutions regard immigrated women as a problem, the women attribute the labour market’s discriminatory practice the problem. The same tendencies are very clear here: the women articulate their agency, but what prevent them are different types of structural hindrances towards immigrated people. The government admits that there are structural discriminations, but these are
articulated as combined with other, more personal hindrances for immigrated women. The structural limitations stressed by the women are however not essentially articulated as gender specific, even though Svetlana suspects that the professional closure might be worse for women:

I can suspect a bit, but I don’t know, because I haven’t searched [for a job] as a man, but as a woman I know that is completely blocked. And almost, I can imagine that it goes in that direction, that it is harder than for men (Svetlana*).

Different signs are thus connected to the identity of the structurally limited women in a chain of equivalence:


**5.3.6. Other positions**

The five positions above where the most salient, but as discussed the women articulated various other positions. Three of them are shortly presented hereunder. They differ in many aspects from the earlier positions.

**5.3.6.1. The mediator**

The two women that represent other people with the same origin, Fathima and Saide, differ in many ways from the other four, as it is clear that they take on the role of representatives. They identify as a mediator which is the link that tries to influence the Swedish authorities as well as their ‘target group’. The mediator is thus in some way both the government’s prolonged arm when representing the Swedish for their country men and women, and a representative for their group of origin towards the official institutions.

Connected with this position is to provide information about Sweden. As representatives of their associations, they articulate themselves as the legitimate actors for information provision:

I think we are good on our target group. Instead of that the governmental agencies orient, it would […] go faster if we got this task (Fathima*).

Saide has for a hotline where her country fellows can call her to ask about any problems, for example concerning language, and a radio program where she talks about society information in her mother tongue. Fathima helps her country fellows to find the map enabling them to orient themselves. The mediators are also articulated as network creators. Fathima and Saide describe thus their need to help newly arrived with the creation of networks and with places of
encounters: "they can get out in the society, they can come to the association, they can be together" (Saide*).

The two ‘mediators’ have been in Sweden for many years. They feel integrated and speak about Sweden as ‘us’. Their roles as representatives infer that they are regarded as ‘integrated’ in the eyes of the public. A chain of signs are connected to the mediator:

*The mediator – bridge between government & compatriots – information provider – network provider.*

5.3.6.2. The equal woman

The two ‘mediators’, Fathima and Saide, also distinguish themselves from the other four by stressing everyone’s same possibilities in Sweden. I therefore call this position the equal woman. The immigrated woman is in this position articulated as equal with immigrated men as well as with inborn people. The equal woman has the same possibilities regarding jobs, education, living and sharing as men and inborn women, and it is up to the individuals to use these possibilities.

This subject position rejects the discrimination discourse – there are no hindrances for immigrated or women specific. The opportunities are thus articulated as the same for everybody in Sweden; however, the background, such as education, could differ.

5.3.6.3. The advantaged woman

A position which goes in direct opposite direction compared with the government’s discourses is the advantaged woman. Both Fathima and Saide stresses that it is easier for women in Sweden, since women are more adaptable. Women are hence seen as having a psychological advantage: they can adapt to the decreased status on the labour market, and they can talk about personal problems, while men are described as more proud and closed to themselves (Ciya; Fathima; Saide). The society is also supporting women more than men, argues Saide. Both Ciya and Sara find that women are very powerful in Sweden: “I’m amazed at how there are so many women there that hold strong positions here” (Sara).

6. Summary, conclusions and discussion

The purpose of this thesis has been to understand the encounter between the perceived integration of immigrated women in Sweden and the women’s own understanding of their identities and integration. By merging post-structural ontology with feminist post-colonial ideas I created a theoretical framework to meet the aim of the thesis. The government’s
constructions were found through discourse analysis of governmental publications and interpellation debates while the immigrated women’s stories were captured through six interviews.

In order to understand the context of the constructions and positioning of immigrated women, I started the analysis by presenting the three main discourses that prevail in the integration debate: the labour discourse, the Swedish belonging discourse and the discrimination discourse. These discourses set the framework for the construction of gender, the subject positions, and the identifications.

My findings from this research are summarized below according to my research questions.

6.1. The government: constructing the immigrated woman

My first question was How is gender constructed in the Swedish government’s discourses on integration? How and where are immigrated women positioned in the discourses?

Earlier research have highlighted that the notion of gender equality in Sweden excludes immigrated women and men. I have come to the same conclusion. Whereas gender equality is attributed the Swedish, the foreign is attributed with gender inequalities and patriarchal structures. These attributes are explained as the reason for the ‘problem of unemployed foreign born women’. The problem is thus articulated to be the immigrated woman and her culture, just as in the Netherland example. The solution to this ‘problem’ is accordingly special measures towards women, such as economic incentives, articulated as a motivation to step out from the assumed male breadwinner norm. This ‘othering’ (also emphasized by Carbin (2010), Thun (2012), Towns (2002), and Roggeband and Verloo (2007)) and assumptions of the subordination of women are the premises when positioning immigrated women in the discourses.

A first subject position is identified as the unemployed and excluded foreign born woman. Immigrated women form a collective identity and are situated outside the labour market, articulated as excluded, passive, powerless, and dependent. The caring foreign born woman is the second identified subject position. The immigrated women are here placed within the home as mothers and wives. Being situated in the home infers dependency on a heterosexual partner for breadwinning, information, and networks. Within the discrimination discourse the structurally limited woman is found. She is articulated as facing both structural hindrances and individual constraints (connected to her position as a woman in a patriarchal relationship), which together obstruct the woman to work. The forth subject position is the
contributing foreign born woman. Immigrated women, as well as men, are regarded as resources and agents. Women are however articulated as unskilled.

These subject positions show that the construction of the immigrated woman is one-sided and stereotypically imagined. The intersection of gender and ethnicity has resulted in the production of the ‘immigrated woman’. Whereas lived understandings depend on the intersections of background, ethnicity, age, class etc., the constructed characteristic ‘immigranthoodness’ is what is at core in the government’s construction of the immigrated woman. For instance, the highly qualified immigrated woman is attributed inferiority to the lowly qualified Swedish woman. The existing power structures, and the subsequent need to create an antagonistic ‘other’, result in a position subordinated both all ‘Swedish’, and all men.

Does this correspond with the interviewed women’s perceived reality?

6.2. The women: in the search for new identities

My second set of research questions was How do immigrated women in Sweden construct their identities? How do they relate to these constructions and these assumed positions?

While having to relate to the dominant discourses, the women do not share the governments positioning; especially not the imagination of immigrated women as a homogenous group. The women differ in many aspects from each other and position themselves differently. What they have in common is that they do not represent the identities attributed to the ‘immigrated woman’.

Firstly, they all identify themselves with their profession and as active agents. The position as unemployed and excluded was thus not shared with any of the women. Unlike the contributing foreign born woman, the professional woman includes highly qualified labour.

In the ambivalent position of the different woman, three of the women stressed that by being ‘foreign born’ they enrich the Swedish society and culture. This aspect of multiculturalism was not recognized in the government’s discourses and the women articulated accordingly limits in their abilities to show their capabilities. The clustering together of an ‘immigranthoodness’ universalizes the women as culturally different, non-Swedish, and outsiders, and places them in situations where they do not recognize themselves.

The women articulate a plea to adapt to the Swedish system, but in contrast to the government that stresses the need to ‘educate’ with the society orientation, the adapting
woman, even though expressing different kinds of adaptations, articulates the desire to learn and the need to actively search for information.

Whereas the ‘Swedish’ gender equality is embraced, most of the respondents include the gender equality sensitiveness in their identities. Among the women there are both gender equality propagators and recognitions of patriarchal structures in Sweden. The position of women in patriarchal structures conflicts thus with the hegemonic Swedish discourse where the foreign need to learn gender equality from the Swedish.

Finally, different women face different kinds of problems when arriving to Sweden. These problems are captured in the structurally limited woman, highlighting labour market discrimination, language barriers, bureaucratic problems, lack of networks as well as ethnical discrimination. This position agrees somewhat with the structurally discriminated woman, but while the latter points to structural and individual hindrances, the women stress the ongoing discrimination as constituting the problem.

In conclusion, what is most significant is the variety and diversity of identities and identifications among the woman. Other subject positions which appeared included for instance the mediator, the equal woman, and the advantaged woman, which in much diverged from the other positions. The universalizing of immigrated women creates an image of all foreign born women as the same. However, even though all the interviewed women have jobs and could be classified as ‘middle class’, they are very different.

In the final section I will discuss what the implications of this could be, but before that I have to ask why the policy is generalizing? Why are there no variations in the policy process? This is nothing I have investigated, and it is not really mentioned in the previous research either, but since it is fundamental for the implications it is worth mentioning. Probably, the answer lies in the historical pathway Sweden has taken, with the building of the welfare state. Yvonne Hirdman, professor in gender studies, stresses that the state historically has had the role of putting the lives right for the Swedish citizens by treating them as a universal group: ‘the people’. Thus, the state has had the role of a social engineer where the people only composed the cog wheels in the machinery (Hirdman, 1989). It seems like the present government continues to take on the same role.

6.3. The implications of the divergence

It has been proven that the government’s hegemonic production of the foreign born woman as a universal group does not correspond with the women’s lived reality. What could these
diverges lead to? My third research question – What could the implications of the constructions and positions be? – aimed to treat this.

Mouffe, and Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler underline that constructions are the results of active imaginations. The present articulation of a collective identity where spatial and temporal conditions are assumed to be fixed, results in a reproduction of this homogenized image of the immigrants woman. Laclau and Mouffe argue that while discourses can change, there is a resistance for them to do so. Political articulation reinforces discourses and subject positions, since constructions influence actions. So what happens when the discourses reproduce knowledge which appears to be stereotypes and that diverges with the perceptions of the presumed ‘target group’ – the immigrated women?

There are implications both on the policy level and on the individual level. Let us start with the individual level. The government’s positioning of immigrated women does not only lead to reproduction of power hierarchies, it subsequently risks resulting in essentialism. The immigrated women bring different identities to Sweden and react to the encounter with Sweden depending on these previously composed identities. What they have in common is that they all have immigrated to Sweden. While this action binds them together, they do not share the identity immigrant. One could thus say that there are no immigrants in Sweden, there are only immigrated people. However, the government does not account for the immigrated people’s various backgrounds. Instead it departs from the thought about immigrants, which results in this above discussed discrepancy and which contribute to the limitation of the women’s acting space.

The constructed collective identities make thus certain identifications possible while other interpretations are excluded. The expectations from immigrated women are therefore mirrored by the dominant discourses. In the encounter with the Swedish labour market the immigrated women have to renegotiate the terms under the condition of the dominant discourses. By being attributed inferiority – as women under patriarchal suppression – the possibilities for the women to speak out and change positions in or between discourses become limited.

For instance, since the highly qualified professional woman is not recognized in the policies, it creates a conflict between what is possible to say and do and what is desired. However, the contributing foreign born woman is a counter position and this position and the discrimination discourse counter the hegemonic perception and could mean a possibility to change. Though, while it leaves the immigrated women room to be agents as unskilled, they
encounter greater hindrances when trying to step outside this imagination, as exemplified by Svetlana’s struggle to show her capabilities.

Laclau and Mouffe state that the political shape the politics. The homogenized representations and stereotypes of immigrated women contribute thus also to shape the policies and the measures taken to solve the assumed exclusion and unemployment. The stereotypes can thus have real policy effects although not corresponding with the women’s perceived reality. For instance, when the problem is put on the immigrated people’s patriarchal structures and single breadwinning models instead of the Swedish system, it creates solutions directed towards the immigrated women and men instead of towards the system. This entails a risk of an enhanced emphasis on ‘us’ and a ‘them’. Instead of treating the immigrated as equals to ‘Swedish born’, this strengthens the ‘othering. The integration measures venture therefore reinforced inequality in the treatment, as stressed by Grip.

The assumed subordination of immigrated women could moreover lead to that they are not given a voice in the policy making. And if they are, are all women asked or only some? Who in that case? The women Thomsson and Hoflund interviewed in late 1990s were unsatisfied with their projects and they perceived that their opinions were ignored. In Grip’s study it was revealed that women were offered measures related to traditional ‘women’s tasks’ such as sewing and cooking, while men were offered computer training. Ciya told me that she likes to work with electronics and she took therefore own initiatives to educate herself within electronics. Would she have been offered this if she would not have asked for it? Due to the existing problem formulation and the hegemonic constructions of immigrated women, it is a qualified guess to say no.

When the generalization is abandoned, this will be possible. The women have different interests, requests, qualities, and backgrounds, but as long as the immigrated are treated as one group there will be universal measures aimed for the whole group, reinforcing antagonisms and the ‘othering, and giving the immigrated women less space to act according to who they are.

6.4. Final reflections
Discourse theory and feminist post-colonial theories have helped me to visualize the stereotypization of the ‘immigrant woman’ as the ‘other’. With analytical tools such as nodal points, chains of equivalences, and constitutive outside I have been able to recognize the dominant discourses and the counter discourse. By identifying subject positions the
divergence between the government’s construction and the women’s identifications is envisaged.

Feminist post-colonial studies, while criticizing essentialism, do not explain how the power structures can change. Laclau and Mouffe’s understanding of discourse theory opens however up for change with counter discourses and counter positions. A more actor focused theory would probably stress that the individual possibilities for change is underestimated in my study. The intra-acting power structures and hierarchies are conversely best visualized with post-structural ontology, and the hegemonic struggles resulting in dominant discursive constructions risk to be neglected if power structures would not have be taken into account.

With only six interviews I cannot generalize, but the criticism which springs from the interviews is still coherent. However, in a later study it would be interesting to interview a larger span of immigrated – and maybe also Swedish born – people. Would the results be the same if including women and men with other ‘characteristics’? To include men would be especially interesting; how do they relate to these images? How are they constructed? Comprising men would hence provide a more complete image of gendered constructions. A cross-country comparison could moreover add to the Swedish specificity.

Furthermore, what would the result have been if I had studied a longer time period? Interesting would be to study the discourses historical developments. Since this study focuses on a limited period of time, the devotion has not been on temporal variations. A historical aspect could provide deeper comprehensions in later research.

The material is limited to the context of integration. Immigrated people are however touched upon in other contexts as well. The interpellation debates visualize this since the interpellators include the Ministers of Education, Health and Social Affairs, Finance, Labour market, and Employment, apart from the Minister of Integration. This implies that there might be other discourses including immigrated people as well. A broader inquiry focusing on the act of immigration instead of integration could therefore give complementary insights to this study.

More research on this topic is thus needed. I hope however that my study could contribute to a stronger emphasis on difference instead of sameness in future policy shaping.
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7.1. Analyzed publications and interview transcripts

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Interviews

"Ciya" – Interview 2012-12-07
"Fathima" – Interview 2012-12-19
"Maria" – Interview 2012-12-04
"Saide" – Interview 2012-12-20
"Sara" – Interview 2012-12-21
"Svetlana" – Interview 2012-12-07

7.2. Literature


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Annex 1: Interview Questions

Introduction

- Introduce myself and my project, thank the respondent.
- Anonymity: can I quote you? Would you prefer not to be mentioned by name? Can I record the interview?

Theme: the respondent

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself? How did you arrive in Sweden?

Theme: problems and solutions

- Can you tell me a bit about your engagement in this association?
  ⇒ How did you get in contact with the association? Why did you join the association? How long have you been active? What do you do? Are you member of other associations/projects? Why?
- What do you want to influence in your daily life? What do you want to influence with your engagements?
  ⇒ Do you see anything that needs to be done? What solutions are encouraged? How do you want to change…?

Theme: integration

- How are women’s possibilities in Sweden? How are your possibilities?
  ⇒ In the family? Work? To get a job? How are men’s possibilities? Other women’s? Compared with your country of origin?
- Are there any hindrances?
  ⇒ For immigrated people? For women? What? Why?
- How do you experience that other people view you?
  ⇒ People in your surroundings; the society, people you meet, at work, Swedish authorities, labour agency, care center, school, kindergarten, health insurance fund, neighbors?
  ⇒ If veil: how do your regard the veil? How do other people regard the veil?

Theme: actors

- How do you experience that you were welcomed in Sweden?
  ⇒ What institutions have you met? In what way/under what circumstances? The welcoming of others, e.g. the labour market? How would you like to be encountered? In what way could it change?

Examples from policies

Quotes from the policies, followed by questions such as ‘What are your spontaneous thoughts about this?’ ‘Do you recognize yourself?’

Ending

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Thank.

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\(^8\) The interview questions are translated from Swedish.