

Master of Arts in European Studies
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The Feminist Spring?

A Narrative Analysis of the Media Discourse of
the Swedish party Feminist Initiative

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Master Thesis, 30 ect

Submitted in May 2015

Abstract

This thesis investigates the media discourse of the Swedish party Feminist Initiative in conjunction with the election to the European Parliament, and the general national election, in May and September 2014. Through the methods of narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis, it identifies the dominating media approaches and attitudes towards the party, and analyses what norms and structures generates these approaches. Through a theoretical orientation of gender studies, populism as political style and the notion of power, it maps the narratives and discusses the construction of the narratives. Furthermore, it compares the media approaches to the different elections and investigates possible reasons for variations in the narratives. Finally this thesis investigates the practical outcome of the discourse, whether the media discourse on Feminist Initiative influenced the general political landscape in Sweden and if so, how?

The result of the analyzes gave three narratives in conjunction with the election to the European Parliament, and two narratives of the national general election. The narratives were characterized by simplifications and exaggerations and followed a populist discourse and responded to a patriarchal structure. Furthermore, the analyzes of the narratives showed that media tends to follow already existing narratives rather than adjusting the news coverage to the object it aims to portray. Through a contextualization of the narratives, I conclude that the media discourse on Feminist Initiative did create a political environment more supportive of feminism. That the feminist agenda became more prioritized through the popularization but simultaneously entered the Swedish political landscape in terms of action.

Keywords: Feminist Initiative, discourse, media, power, gender, populism.

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Appendix

1. Introduction

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Sweden has the highest Gender Equality Index of all the member states in European Union.¹ At the current election to the European Parliament the Swedish party, Feministiskt initiativ (from here on: Feminist Initiative), became the first feminist party to win a seat in the parliament. A few months later, the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven declared the new Swedish government feminist.² The Minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström stated that she would conduct a feminist foreign policy, which would focus on "women, peace and security"³ - a clear statement - not only from a national perspective but also in terms of the international stage. In 2006 Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality, Nyamko Sabuni, explicitly said that she was not willing to define herself as a feminist.⁴ One might ask - is this difference in attitude only due to opposing ideologies (Sabuni belonging to the Swedish Liberal Party whilst Löfven and Wallström are social democrats) or has something happened to the general attitude towards the concept of feminism in Sweden?

Over the past year feminism has been discussed intensively in Sweden, mostly due to the growing feminist party Feminist Initiative (FI). The party has increased significantly in popularity over the past years, receiving 3.12% of the votes in the general election in September 2014, and 5.41% in the election to the European Parliament earlier in May. After their success in being elected to the European Parliament, the party didn't manage to do as well in the national election of the same year. This raises the question: is the difference in support for Feminist Initiative due to shortcomings in the party program, or rather because of different approaches towards the elections?

¹European Institute for Gender Equality. Gender Equality Index <http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index> accessed 11 May 2015

²"Regeringsförklaring 2014" accessed 12 May 2015 <http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/Stefan-Lofven/Tal-och-artiklar/2014/Regeringsforklaring-2014/>

³"Wallström: Vi ska ha en feministisk utrikespolitik" Sveriges radio accessed: 12 May 2015 <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5982258>

⁴Orrenius, Niklas, "Jämställdhetsministern som inte var feminist" *Expressen* accessed 13 May 2015 <http://www.expressen.se/kronikor/niklas-orrenius/jamstalldhetsministern-som-inte-var-feminist/>

The media coverage on Feminist Initiative has been extensive since its beginning, but increased drastically prior to the election in 2014. A search on the party, using the search word *Feministiskt initiativ*, in the digital print archive retriever Mediaarkivet shows 8405 articles in 2014 in comparison to 1517 articles in 2010.⁵

”Analysis of media language should be recognized as an important element within research on contemporary processes of social and cultural change [...].”⁶ Media plays a crucial role in the creation of a political reality - politics cannot exist without communication⁷ and the political agenda of the political parties is mediated through different medial platforms - newspaper, web, phone. In this thesis the media coverage on Feminist Initiative is examined to provide an idea about the Swedish medial approach towards the party, and to identify what attitudes and approaches dominates the medial landscape. Furthermore, the study compares the election to the European Parliament and the national general election, and investigates variations in the articles prior each election. Lastly, based on the analysis of the news coverage through a contextualization, this thesis identifies and analysis the political feminist environment in Sweden at the time of the elections.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

If Sweden is to be considered a role model for gender equality in the European Union, as EIGE proposes, I find it of great importance to question and investigate the Swedish example. Is the rapid progress of Feminist Initiative to be considered an indication of growing support for feminism and gender equality in Sweden, or, if it is more complex, then how? What does the press coverage say about the media attitudes towards the party?

After the successful outcome of the election to the European Parliament, many believed that Feminist Initiative would reach the 4% limit that is required in order to get in to the

⁵ Retriever Mediaarkivet, search word: Feministiskt Intitiv 2014-4-25 - 2014-5-25. <http://web.retriever-info.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/services/archive/search> accessed 2015-05-11

⁶ Fairclough, Norman, *Media discourse*. (London:Edward Arnold, 1995), 2.

⁷ Strömbäck, Jesper, *Makt, medier och samhälle: en introduktion till politisk kommunikation*, 1. edition. (Stockholm:SNS förlag, 2009) 9.

Swedish Parliament. The party failed this goal, as it only received 3.12%. This raises interesting questions about the reason for decreased support during the national elections. Is there a connection between the media approach towards the party and the differing results at the elections?

This thesis investigates the media discourse of Feminist Initiative in two instances: one prior the election to the European Parliament and the other before the national general election. The thesis studies the media discourse in order to identify the medial attitude and approach towards the party and the politics it carries, at the time of the two elections. Furthermore through the analysis of the media discourse, it aims to explore the reason for the reduced support in the election to the Swedish parliament in comparison to the success in the the election to the European Parliament.

I carry out this investigation through a study of a selection of news articles from the most influential news magazines in Sweden (based on the amount of readers) at the time of the general election and election to the European Parliament in 2014. Through structural and thematic narrative analysis as presented by the sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman, and Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis, scrutinize how the party has been depicted and define the dominant narratives in the media discourse. Finally, I compare, evaluate and contextualize the result and discuss what the dominating narratives say about the medial attitude towards the party, and how this relates to the political context.

1.2 Research Questions

- What were the dominant narratives in the news coverage of Feminist Initiative at the time of the general election and election to the European Parliament in 2014?
- What medial attitudes and approaches can be identified from these narratives and what generates these attitudes?
- Contextualizing the result, did the identified narratives influence the political discourse and context in Sweden at the time of the elections, and if so, how ?

1.3 Previous Research

This thesis deals with material from the current election to the European Parliament and the general election to the government. These are events close in time, and to my knowledge no research is to be found on this exact subject or material. However, the media discourse about the Feminist Initiative has been studied before; the most prominent study is written by Maria Wendt and Maud Eduards in 2010 and is called *The Enemy amongst us - gender and nation in the media coverage of Feminist initiative*.⁸ In this study, political scientists Eduards and Wendt investigate the media coverage on the party at the time before their first election in 2006. It is a study that focuses on the challenges of the party due to its feminist agenda and female front figures. Through the study they intend to expose how the "political activity of FI - the women, the proposals and the organization - is portrayed as wrong and alien in media"⁹.

Eduards and Wendt conclude that Feminist Initiative is considered a threat to the idea of Swedish nationality - that the party's ambitions do not fit the Swedish self-image. More precisely they argue that Feminist Initiative, its front figures and politics, challenge consensus-democracy, equality and the traditional "nuclear family" as defining Swedish features.¹⁰

Whilst the study by Wendt and Eduards is performed with a strong underlying hypothesis - that the party is depicted as wrong and alien - this thesis doesn't start with a specific expectation. Furthermore, the study differs in regards to the date of the scrutinized empirical material. For the above mentioned reasons I don't consider Wendt and Eduards's study as an obstacle, but rather an interesting object of comparison in this thesis.

⁸ Eduards, Maud & Wendt, Maria "Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ" in, *Den nationella väven: feministiska analyser*, edited by Jansson, Maria, Wendt, Maria & Åse, Cecilia (17- 49) 1. uppl., (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2010)

⁹ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 18.

¹⁰ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 18.

1.4 About the Feminist Initiative

My intention with this thesis is not to identify how Feminist Initiative intend to portray themselves. Thus, in order to understand the how media selected to portray certain aspects of the party, a basic understanding of the party in terms of their politics and campaigning is needed.

Feminist Initiative is a Swedish feminist party founded in 2005. The party participated in the Swedish election in 2006, 2010 and recently in 2014. In this time period the party radically increased its support amongst the Swedish electorate as it went from 0.68% in 2006, 0.4% in 2010 to 3.12% in the recent election in 2014. The party defines itself as a social movement that wishes to apply a feminist perspective to all political areas.¹¹ On their homepage they state the following: "Feminist Initiative challenges the national perception of Sweden as an equal and open country, which respects human rights. A perception which indicates that being Swedish means to be equal, open and tolerant."¹² On the homepage of Feminist Initiative it is described how the party challenges both the left wing and right wing parties - as they argue that none of the established parties are brave enough to work with equality the way it's needed. Feminist Initiative doesn't seem to define themselves in terms of right or left - but rather in opposition to the other established parties and the structure they are part of.¹³

Currently Gudrun Schyman and Sissela Nordling Blanco serve as party leaders for Feminist Initiative, before the recent election they had three spokespersons; Schyman, Blanco and Stina Svensson. Gudrun Schyman is experienced in Swedish politics, and served as party leader for "Vänsterpartiet" (the Swedish left party) between 1993 and 2003. Feminist Initiative describes her as a "political revolutionary"¹⁴ which might be one of the reason for frequent writings and news coverage on Schyman in media. In 2010

¹¹ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 2010, 17.

¹² "Om Feministiskt initiativ", Feministiskt Initiativ, accessed 12.May 2015 <http://feministisktinitiativ.se/om/>

¹³ "Om Feministiskt initiativ", Feministiskt Initiativ 12 May 2015 <http://feministisktinitiativ.se/om/>.

¹⁴ "Om våra partiledare" Feministiskt initiativ accessed 12 May 2015, <http://feministisktinitiativ.se/om/vara-partiledare/>

Schyman set alight 100,000 Swedish Crowns, to make an example out of the salary gap between men and women in Sweden. In Wendt and Eduards's study from 2010, they explain how Schyman was made the main target for the critique of the party - a critique however that was interested more in her personality and interests than her as a politician.¹⁵

What was the political context of Feminist Initiative in 2014? The political campaign of 2014 was, like many other countries in the European Union, characterized by the growth of right wing extremists, in Sweden through the far right populist party "Sverigedemokraterna" - The Swedish Democrats. During the campaign Feminist Initiative directly addressed The Swedish Democrats, and other right wing extremists aiming for a position in the European Parliament with the slogan "out with the racists - in with the feminists"¹⁶. Before the election in 2014 Sweden was governed by an alliance of four centre-right parties, as they won majority in the election 2006. Sweden has a tradition of being governed by the left-leaning Social Democrats - whom were reinstated as the party won majority in 2014. Other than Feminist Initiative, "Vänsterpartiet" - the left wing party, explicitly expresses strong feminist ambitions¹⁷. On a few occasions in the articles studied, Feminist Initiative was compared to this party.¹⁸

In 2014 Feminist Initiative won a seat in the European Parliament. Soraya Post, the top candidate, became both the first member of a feminist party and the first Romani to be chosen as a Member of the European Parliament. Next to Schyman, Post was frequently featured in the press coverage of the party during the election year of 2014.

Feminist Initiative has received a lot of attention in media since its inception in 2005. Since the beginning the party met much resistance, not only in the form of low voter

¹⁵ Eduards, Wendt Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 21

¹⁶ "Ut med rasisterna in med feministerna" Feministiskt initiativ, accessed 12 May 2015 <http://feministisktinitiativ.se/ut-med-rasisterna-och-in-med-feministerna/>

¹⁷ "Feminism" Vänsterpartiet, accessed 15 May 2015 <https://www.vansterpartiet.se/politik/feminism>

¹⁸ "FI till val på Vänsterpartiets hjärtefrågor", *Sydsvenskan*, 9 Maj 2014

support, but through controversial and critical reactions in the media.¹⁹ The number of articles written on the party has increased drastically since its inception. Being a new party, Feminist Initiative has economic constraints, and therefore relies on free forms of marketing and promotion such as social media. Their heavy presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in conjunction with the elections was notable as an important form of promotion for the party.²⁰

An important feature in the campaign in 2014 was the so called 'homeparties'²¹. The homeparties offered personal visits by Gudrun Schyman during which she would give a lecture on the politics of Feminist Initiative at somebody's home. Prior to the election in 2014 the party also presented an album in which several Swedish musicians participated and showed their support for the party. The campaign culminated when Pharrell Williams invited Schyman to join him on stage the day before the election, during his concert in Stockholm. Schyman was seen dancing on the stage with the the superstar in front of thousands (something she was subsequently criticized for due to Pharrell's often sexist lyrics and music videos).²²

1.5 Theoretical Standpoints and my Role as a Researcher

Social constructivism is the ontological approach from which this thesis derives. It is based on the idea that knowledge is constructed, not created.²³ In this case, media is acknowledged as an important actor in what we perceive as "reality". My aim with defining the narratives is thus not an attempt to find a "truth" about Feminist Initiative, nor the state of feminism in Sweden, but rather to identify the dominant narratives that characterize and dominate the discourse as such.

¹⁹ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 18.

²⁰ F! mest aktiva på sociala medier, *Dagens Nyheter* 24 Augusti 2014

²¹ "Fixa ett homeparty - politik i stället för plast!" Feministiskt Initiativ, accessed 15 Maj 2015 <http://feministisktinitiativ.se/bli-aktiv-i-f/politiska-homepartys/>

²² Melin, Erik "Gudrun Schymans val-kupp, –dansade med Pharrell Williams" *Aftonbladet*, 13 Sep. 2014

²³ Gergen, Kenneth J. & Gergen, Mary. (ed.), *Social construction: a reader*, (London:Sage 2003) 5.

My definition of "truth" in this thesis is thus from a social constructivist perspective, which means that I believe that truth is not a static phenomenon but rather an ongoing process, constructed through social processes and power struggles.

This thesis has not evolved from a specific hypothesis, but rather a curiosity towards the rapid progress of the political party Feminist Initiative, the extensive and rich press coverage of the party, and how it relates to the current state of feminism in Sweden. I have followed the campaign and the media discourse of the party closely, and been fascinated by the way Feminist Initiative has been depicted in media since its very beginning - especially because at its beginning in 2005 the party was heavily criticized, if not counteracted, from media.

I acknowledge that my role as a researcher will influence the analysis of the empirical material which I have chosen for the study. Both the selection of media texts, and the conclusions made through the applied analysis will be affected by my personal understandings and theoretical orientation.

Even though I have supported my assumptions about the narratives with charts showing the quantitative occurrence of specific themes - this too is marked by subjectivity as I have *selected* the themes I understand as most prominent. Thus, it is my belief that objective research as such is unavoidable, the analysis can however still generate interesting and important insights.

My native language is Swedish, which has been an advantage studying the articles and defining narratives. All the translations from Swedish to English in the thesis are performed by me, thus, this might influence the message of the quotes, but the general message should remain intact and clear.

2. Method and Empirical Material

2.1 Material

The empirical material for my study consists of news-articles found through the digital print archive retriever Mediearkivet. Based on the amount of readers I have chosen to use articles from the six most popular newspapers in Sweden: Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Sydsvenskan, Göteborgs-Posten, Expressen and Aftonbladet.

Dagens Nyheter (DN) defines itself as an independent liberal paper. The paper version of the magazine has about 793,100 readers every day. Dagens Nyheter is owned by the media group Bonniers - one of the leading media companies of northern Europe.²⁴ The editorial page of Svenska Dagbladet is independent moderate (independent right-wing) whilst the rest of the paper is politically independent. The paper has about one million readers every day²⁵. Sydsvenskan is independent liberal²⁶ and has approximately 212.000 readers per day.²⁷ It is also owned by Bonnier media group, like Dagens Nyheter.²⁸ Göteborgs-Posten has 600,000 readers every day counting both the paper magazine and the online version. The magazine belongs to the media group called "Stampen Lokal media"²⁹. Expressen defines itself as independent liberal, and just like Dagens Nyheter, the magazine belongs to Bonnier. Expressen has about 669.000 readers a day.³⁰ Aftonbladet is independent social

²⁴ "Om oss" Dagens Nyheter, accessed 5 May 2015. <http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/>

²⁵ "Försäljningsstatistik" Svenska Dagbladet, accessed 5 May 2015 <https://kundservice.svd.se/annonsera/Forsaljningsstatistik/>

²⁶ "Välkommen till oss på Sydsvenskan" Sydsvenskan, accessed, 12 May 2015 <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/om-sydsvenskan/valkommen-till-oss-pa-sydsvenskan/>

²⁷ "Dagstidningarnas räckvidd 2014" Medievärlden, accessed 12 May 2015. <http://www.medievarlden.se/nyheter/2015/03/dagstidningarnas-rackvidd-2014>

²⁸ "Companies & Brands" Bonnier, accessed 12 May 2015. <http://www.bonnier.com/companies-brands/>

²⁹ "Om GP" Göteborgs-posten, accessed 5 May 2015. <http://info.gp.se/omgp/1.1139529>

³⁰ "Dagstidningarnas räckvidd 2014" Medievärlden, accessed 12 May 2015 <http://www.medievarlden.se/nyheter/2015/03/dagstidningarnas-rackvidd-2014>

democratic³¹ and currently has about 739,000 readers every day.³² The magazine is owned by Schibsted media group.³³

Feminist Initiative served as the search term for my investigation. Based on this term I focus on the articles available the month before each election as the debates culminated during this last period. In case of the election to the European Parliament this implies 25 April 2014 — 25 May 2014 and the general election 14 August 2014 — 14 September 2014. A selection of the search results was made, based on the relevance the articles for my study. Articles which only presented numbers from opinion surveys were not included. Furthermore, I chose not to include articles written by any of the party leaders or representatives of the party, as I'm not interested in how the party chooses to portray themselves but rather how the party has been portrayed in the media. Being part of the same media group, Göteborgs-Posten and Expressen occasionally publish the same articles, therefore duplicates are not included. In this thesis, I have chosen not to focus on the difference in how the newspapers depict Feminist Initiative, but rather approach them as one actor - part of the same medial discourse, infiltrating the society through various platforms - paper, web and phone.

In total, fifty-nine articles were studied prior the election to the European Parliament, with the following distribution: fourteen articles from Aftonbladet, nine from Dagens Nyheter, eighteen from Expressen, eight from Göteborgs-Posten, seven from Svenska Dagbladet and four from Sydsvenskan. The sample before the general elections contained forty articles, out of these fourteen came from Aftonbladet, five from Dagens Nyheter, eight from Expressen, six from Göteborgs-Posten, four from Svenska Dagbladet and three from Sydsvenskan.

³¹ <http://www.aftonbladet.se/amc/stefan/hist.html>

³² "Dagstidningarnas räckvidd 2014" Mediavärlden, accessed 12 May 2015. <http://www.mediavarlden.se/nyheter/2015/03/dagstidningarnas-rackvidd-2014>

³³ "Aftonbladet" Schibsted accessed 12 May 2015. <http://www.schibsted.com/en/Media-Houses/Aftonbladet/>

2.2 Narrative & Narrative Analysis

Narrative is an important concept in the social constructivist framework. Simply put, a narrative is the organization and flow of events.³⁴ Narratives are not only to be found in fictive texts, moreover, narrative is an ontological approach through which "reality" is considered as a constructed story. This means that narrative analysis can be used in a wide range of fields. The sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman explains this well:

"Narrative analysis in the human sciences refers to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form. As nations and governments construct preferred narratives about history, so do social movements, organizations, scientists, other professionals, ethnic/racial groups, and individuals in stories of experience."³⁵

As Riessman formulates it, the narrative acknowledges that there is an active "instance" - an actor of some kind behind each narrative, which shapes it in a certain way. This actor can be of more concrete nature - as the government which Riessman mentions in the quote above, but can just as well be a structure or norm. Narratives thus raise questions about why and for what reasons the narrative is constructed this peculiar way. Looking into this - the study of a narrative can bring us to a deeper understanding of society.³⁶ Narratives can provide insights on power, political action or passivity, belonging and legitimacy.³⁷

Different models of narrative analysis are used depending on the material used for the study. In this thesis *structural* and *thematic* analysis is used in order to pursue a comprehensive approach. In *Narrative Analysis* Riessman describes how the structural analysis focuses on the way a story is told. Furthermore, language is object for an close investigation and the meaning of words can be scrutinized through a comparison of

³⁴ Robertson Alexa, "Narrativanalys" in *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*, vol 2, ed Bergström, Göran & Boréus, Kristina, (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005) 229.

³⁵ Cathrine Kohler Riessman, "Narrative Analysis" in *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*. (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2003) 1.

³⁶ Robertson, *Narrativanalys* 221.

Alexa Robertson, "Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning," in *Identitetsstudier i Praktiken* ed. Bo Petersson and Alexa Robertson (Malmö: Liber ekonomi, 2003) p.93

several narratives of the same account.³⁸ Even though I predominantly work with themes in the analysis, the *way* the narratives are told plays a crucial part in the investigation. In order to identify from what values and norms the narratives derive, expressions and words - the language describing Feminist Initiative - are studied.

In the *thematic analysis*, the focus is on content, not language. Language is rather approached as a tool for creating meaning. In the thematic analysis focus is on *what* is being said. In Riessman's words: "The thematic approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases - finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report"³⁹. The empirical material in this thesis consists of multiple articles. Rather than approaching the articles separately, as autonomous phenomena I allow the articles to conflate. This gives me the possibility to identify themes and narratives that transcend the articles, giving a more general understanding of the medial attitude and approach towards the Feminist Initiative.

2.3 Challenges with Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis has been criticized for being a subjective method, as the process of defining narratives is strongly influenced by the researchers own experience and agenda. In Riessman's words: "There is a real danger of over-personalising the personal narrative."⁴⁰ The narrative analysis is intended for studies with a smaller amount of subjects. In this thesis, approximately 100 articles in total are scrutinised, a comprehensive amount that has enabled thorough readings of each article, providing a qualitative analysis. The narrative analysis allows for a decomposition of the articles - it liberates the initial structure of the articles and allows for narratives that transcend and connect it to the larger media discourse as a whole. My intention is not in any way to state that there in this case exist specific, static, narratives waiting to be identified, but rather to recognize new perspectives which can give insights about the situation of Feminist Initiative, the medial approach to the different elections and feminism in Sweden.

³⁸ Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, 2

³⁹ Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, 3

⁴⁰ Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, 3.

2.4 Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis

In this thesis *discourse* refers to Foucault's definition of the concept, by Chris Weedon interpreted as "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern."⁴¹ Discourse in this sense emphasizes the relationship between social institutions, language, subjectivity and power and accentuates its strong influence on the individuals idea of reality.

Just like narrative, discourse acknowledges that reality can not be presented through language - but is a tool in the process of constructing a *specific* reality.⁴² As the discourse influences our way of thinking - *power* is an important notion in the concept of discourse. This has specifically been accentuated by Foucault who argued that discourses control humans. According to Foucault power is not exercised from subject to subject but rather developed in relation between people. Through a mechanism of exclusion some individuals are offered possibilities while others are left with limitations.⁴³ This "mechanism" can refer to a social structure or a discourse as well, as in this case, the medial discourse. Applied on the media discourse of Feminist Initiative, this mechanism of exclusion can be translated to what is not being said about the party. Through a process of exclusion a specific narrative is mediated, shaped by the valuations and norms of the magazine and all the different factors that influence it.

There is no real consensus as to whether discourse and narrative should be considered as identical concepts or not. Roland Barthes argues that there is no difference - narrative and discourse are synonymous concepts.⁴⁴ Through a different take on this issue, the narrative

⁴¹ Weedon, Chris, *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*, 2. ed., (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers 1996), 5.

⁴² Bergström, Göran, Boréus Kristina. "Diskursanalys" in *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*, 2. vol, (Lund:Studentlitteratur, 2005) 305.

⁴³ Bergström, Boréus, *Diskursanalys* 311.

⁴⁴ Alexa Robertson, "Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning," in *Identitetsstudier i Praktiken* ed. Bo Petersson and Alexa Robertson (Malmö: Liber ekonomi, 2003) 95.

is approached as a possible form of discourse.⁴⁵ This disagreement speaks for the attitude towards discourse as a whole - it has a multifaceted function and its meaning differs deepening on the field in which it is being used.⁴⁶ My approach to discourse in this thesis is the latter, that narratives are a form of discourse and that the narratives are part of a larger media discourse. In the analysis I use both concepts, narrative referring to the stories I am identifying and discourse being a more comprehensive concept, aiming at the medial discussions as a whole.

According to the British linguist Norman Fairclough discourse analysis in the linguistic sense only scrutinizes language without contextualizing or putting the text in relation to the social context. Fairclough's take on discourse analysis opens for a wider practice.⁴⁷ The so called critical discourse analysis (CDA) takes the social dimension into account:

"Critical discourse analysis sees discourse - the use of language in speech and writing as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectal relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation, institution and social structure that frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them."⁴⁸

In this thesis, the method of critical discourse analysis is used. This allows for an analysis that captures the social and the political context of the media discourse of Feminist Initiative. As mentioned previously, I shall not approach media texts as autonomous phenomena, but rather in relation to and in the context of the the society that they speak for and aim to portray. CDA allows for a wider perspective and is therefore a convenient method for this thesis.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 95.

⁴⁶ Bergström, Boréus, *Diskursanalys* 306.

⁴⁷ Bergström, Göran, Boréus Kristina, *Diskursanalys*, 307.

⁴⁸ Ibid 308.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Media and Politics

Politics, communication and the media can be described as a symbiotic trio where each component is equally dependent on the other.⁴⁹ This thesis is based on this assumption - that media is crucial for politics and vice versa - the media discourse of Feminist Initiative is considered significant as it portrays *and* influences the ongoing political landscape in Sweden - in terms of which values and norms are being mediated.

Jesper Strömbäck is a Swedish professor of journalism and the author of several books dealing with media, power and politics. Strömbäck describes how "one of media's most important tasks is to collect, process and distribute information about society"⁵⁰. He concludes that this information is a foundation for how individuals and political actors shape their perception of and opinions on society. Strömbäck is far from the first one to acknowledge media's role in shaping our realities. In *Media Discourse* linguist Norman Fairclough states that "analysis of media language should be recognized as an important element within research on contemporary processes of social and and cultural change"⁵¹. Fairclough offers a bridge between the textual and and society. In line with Fairclough's statement, the media language on Feminist Initiative is studied as a part of a social and cultural change.

One of the reasons for media's importance in the political discourse is the power of selection. That media, depending on underlying ideological standpoints and power structures, chooses to tell certain stories over others. In media studies this selection is identified as so called *framing theory*, first introduced by the sociologist Erving Goffman. Goffman's idea did not initially refer to the media, but rather referred to the organization of experiences in general.⁵² Framing theory describes how medias representation of society has a strong input on the what we perceive as reality.⁵³ Framing theory acknowledges the

⁴⁹ Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle*, 9.

⁵⁰ Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle*, 13.

⁵¹ Fairclough, *Media Discourse*, 2.

⁵² Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle* 119.

⁵³ Ibid. 119.

power of the media - the idea that journalism and news mediate truth and portray reality as it is, generating a position of power. The claim on reality that journalism implies might leave a subjective and suggestive message unquestioned.⁵⁴

The reason for a certain framing - why media chooses certain narratives over others - can be explained with the so called *media - logic*. A concept which implies that medias reporting is shaped by technological conditions, institutional and organizational factors, the consumers, interaction with political and economical actors, rather than the "reality".⁵⁵ In order to understand the narratives on Feminist Initiative the media logic needs be taken into consideration.

3.2 Gender, Media and Politics

Feminism can be described as the political movement of "changing existing power relations between women and men in society."⁵⁶ In my understanding, feminism is about political action directed at deconstructing patriarchy⁵⁷. Gender studies is different in that it is theoretically orientated, but it invariably informs, influences and innovates the feminist movement.

Gender studies is an interdisciplinary field elaborating the idea of gender identity and gendered representation. Gender studies implies that the idea of gender is socially constructed, and not a biological phenomenon.⁵⁸ A gender perspective can be applied to any kind of text, speech or process in order to define gendered structures. In this thesis, media and the news coverage of Feminist Initiative serves as empirical material onto which this critical gender perspective is applied.

⁵⁴ Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle* 119.

⁵⁵ Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle*, 171.

⁵⁶ Weedon, *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*, 1.

⁵⁷ A system of society where the man governs over woman. See Eduards, Maud, *Kvinnor och politik: fakta och förklaringar*, (Stockholm, Liber Förlag, 1977) 130.

⁵⁸ Butler, Judith, *Genustrubbel: feminism och identitetens subversion*, (Göteborg:Daidalos,, 2007) 11.

The media has always been an important subject of investigation for the feminist critique. One major theme in this field is how female stereotypes are presented in the media, and what the effect of these is on the audience.⁵⁹ In difference to texts which are explicitly fictive - the news is expected to mediate "truth". Naturally, this media form does not stand above prevailing societal structures, and in journalism "the problem is one of male norms, values and beliefs being allowed to subjectively distort 'what really took place'"⁶⁰.

According to Jenny Kitzinger "feminist academics have tended to focus on 'feminine genres' such as soap operas or magazines."⁶¹ I find that the claimed "objective" character of news and journalism makes it an even more interesting object of investigation than fictional media. Gender structures might be more complex to identify, but on the other hand it should say more about the existing structures in the society that it aims to mirror.

According to Kitzinger "gender-politics fundamentally shape the production of news and need to be a central consideration for those studying the media."⁶² Gender politics cannot be neglected just because we expect news to deliver an objective reality. Objectivity as such is, according to many feminists, a masculine phenomenon due to societal patriarchal structure: "Feminists have claimed that objectivity, value-freeness and neutrality are the offspring of the hegemony of masculine modes of thinking"⁶³. Following this argument, a text is never to be considered free from its social context. No matter if the text is written by a woman with an explicit feminist message - it is still a part of the structure that it aims to criticize.

In terms of the stereotypical presentation of women in media, certain characteristics are often accentuated. According to Lisbet van Zoonen, women are often portrayed as "incompetent, inferior and always subservient to men"⁶⁴. Moreover, women in media are often portrayed for their personality rather than their achievement.

⁵⁹Zoonen, Liesbet van, *Feminist media studies*, (London: Sage 1994) 11.

⁶⁰ Allan, Stuart "Gendering the truth politics of news discourse" in *News Gender and Power*, ed. Carter Cynthia, Branson, Gill, Allan, Stuart, (London: Routledge 1998) 121.

⁶¹ Kitzinger, Jenny, "The gender-politics of news production", in *News Gender and Power*, edited by Carter Cynthia, Branson, Gill, Allan, Stuart, (London: Routledge, 1998) p.186

⁶² Kitzinger *The gender-politics of news production*, 187.

⁶³ Zoonen, Liesbet van, *Feminist media studies* 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 16.

According to Eduards and Wendt, a female politician and her wish to exercise power contradicts the idea of women as primarily being caring, available and "for others"⁶⁵. Being engaged in politics requires rationality and objectivity - which are characteristics not compatible with the general understanding of femininity.⁶⁶ Being a female politician is perceived as if a paradox - the woman is expected to still keep the role as primarily an individual caring for others rather than being a professional. According to Pippa Norris, "Women in politics are commonly seen as compassionate, practical, honest and hard-working, while men are seen as ruthless, ambitious and tough leaders."⁶⁷

Leonie Huddy argues that media is the most important source from which people learn about the terms feminism and feminist. As the case of women in media and female politicians in media, the portrayal of feminism and feminists in media are too limited to certain stereotypical presentations. Huddy means that "the terms feminist and feminism will often be presented simplistically and in association with support for one single issue"⁶⁸.

As the case study of this thesis is the feminist party Feminist Initiative, a party which doesn't only operate issues of equality but women's rights, a party with only female party leaders - a gender perspective on the studied articles is necessary in order to give justice to the studied texts. Furthermore *Feminist Initiative* is intruding on two areas, that of politics⁶⁹ and news⁷⁰, both considered to be of masculine nature and not in harmony with the idea of femininity. Though my intention is not to limit my analysis to this perspective, but rather to allow other readings in order to identify a possible progress in terms of emancipation in the studied media texts. A gender reading can establish the exact hierarchy

⁶⁵ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 22.

⁶⁶ Norris, Pippa (ed), *Women, Media and Politics*, (Oxford Univ. Press, New York, N.Y., 1997) 8.

⁶⁷ Norris, *Women, Media, and Politics* 9.

⁶⁸ Huddy, Leonie. "Feminists and Feminism in the News" in *Women, Media and Politics*, ed. Norris, Pippa, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997) 186.

⁶⁹ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 27

⁷⁰ Allan, Stuart "Gendering the truth politics of news discourse" in *News Gender and Power*, ed. Carter Cynthia, Branson, Gill, Allan, Stuart, (London:Routledge 1998)121.

it aims to criticize⁷¹, I therefore find it important to maintain an openness towards the practiced theories. The gender perspective and my theoretical approach in general is thus rather approached as tools that support the analysis of the identified narratives.

3.3 The Notion of Power

As stated in the above section, the media is in this thesis considered to possess a form of power, as they are an important factor in creating what we appreciate as truth and reality. Furthermore, the applied gender perspective acknowledges an existing power structure where woman is subordinated to the man, one party exercises power over the other. Just like discourse, power is a multifaceted concept comprising different kinds of practices and dimensions. Influence, impact, authority and dominance are all concepts representing different dimensions of power.⁷² In terms of media, all of the above concepts can be applied. Media has the authority to influence the reality of its audience - which can be understood as a kind of dominance over its consumers.

Rather than power being governed and controlled by one person or actor making an active decision, it is something that, according to Foucault, is developed in relations between people. Through a mechanism of exclusion some individuals are offered possibilities while others are left with limitations.⁷³ This can be exemplified in the case of the gender: woman is not essentially subordinated to the man - this asymmetry is rather derived as "relation between people" and through a society continuously favoring men. Again it is societal structure creating the asymmetry - not a single person: "Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanism produce the relation in which individuals are caught up."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Butler, *Genustrubbel: feminism och identitetens subversion*, 22.

⁷² Strömbäck, 2009, 47

⁷³ Bergström, Boréus, *Diskursanalys*. 311

⁷⁴ Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1991) 208.

Foucault's idea of panopticism, can advantageously be applied on the way media practices power. Bentham's 'panopticon' is an architectural form, a tower that allows for ultimate surveillance where the observed is "[...] seen - but does not see; he is object of information, never subject in communication"⁷⁵. Media, specifically the news, exercises power in the same "silent" way. The public expectation of the media's responsibility to portray reality establishes a regime of truth to which consumers respond.

3.4 Populism and Populism as Political Style

Populism is a contentious concept, with multifaceted significance. It can refer to a political strategy, discourse or ideology. Lately, populist parties have been associated with a right-wing agenda and skepticism towards refugees and sometimes racist tendencies.⁷⁶ But in practice, it is a concept which is not limited to a certain political ideology but can appear on the far right as well as left.⁷⁷ The word populism comes from the latin word *populus* meaning people. Populistic parties tend to appeal to the people as a unified group that stands in opposition to a political elite.⁷⁸ It is often described as a peoples movement which initially derives from a dissatisfaction of some kind.⁷⁹ In, *Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style* Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey describe this dichotomy between the political elite and the people as follows: "'the elite', 'the establishment', 'the state' or 'the system' (or other related signifiers) are usually evoked in populist discourse as the source of crisis, breakdown, corruption or dysfunctionality, as opposed to 'the people' who in turn have been 'let down', 'ripped off', 'fleeced', rendered powerless or badly governed."⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, 200.

⁷⁶ Lodenius, Anna-Lena, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*, accessed 12. May 2015 http://al-lodenius.com/rapporter-utredningar-2/populism-makt-demokrati/#_ftn4

⁷⁷ Moffitt, Benjamin, Tormey, Simon "Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style" *Political Studies* Volume 62, Issue 2, pages (2014) 381

⁷⁸ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Moffitt, Tormey, *Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style*, 391.

As the extract above indicates, there is often an amount of affection involved in a populist party. Above this emotional aspect of populism is captured in the words "let down" "and ripped off". This gives a political agenda that is not always practically feasible or well thought through, but with a a strong emotional engagement.

As populist parties don't have the same economic support as parties already in the government, they are highly dependent on media in order to spread their political agenda.⁸¹ This is relevant in the case of Feminist Initiative, whose presence in media is and has been extensive before and after the elections in 2014.

In *Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style* Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey argues that populism is a "key feature of the contemporary political landscape"⁸². They stress the complexity and comprehensive nature of the concept, and therefore suggests that populism rather is to be considered a "political style" than a fixed political concept.⁸³ Describing populism as a political style, accentuates the performative aspects of politics. They define populism as a "style" also much due to the changing political landscape in general, what they describe as : "...the contemporary political landscape is intensely mediated and 'stylised', and as such the so-called 'aesthetic' or 'performative' features are particularly (and increasingly) important. Thus, political style is an important conceptual tool for exploring the contemporary political realm."⁸⁴

The notion of *style* liberates populism and widens the concept rather than narrowing it down to one specific definition. This solves the problem of populism referring to, in Mofitt and Tormey's words, a: "wide disparity in regard to these leaders' ideological approaches, discourses and political and organizational strategies" - as it becomes more about the performance and appearance of the political movement than the content.

Feminist Initiative fulfill many of the aforementioned populist criteria: in referring to itself as a peoples movement, the strong presence in media and the notion of emotion and

⁸¹ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

⁸² Moffitt Tormey, *Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style*, 381.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Moffitt Tormey *Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style*, 388.

affection being strong in the rhetoric of the party. It can therefore be reworded to apply the idea of populism as a political style in order to analyze the medial texts and define and understand the narratives. Still, it's important to note that Feminist Initiative doesn't follow the trend of populist parties being right wing, sometimes racist or xenophobic, and with a strong, explicit skepticism towards refugees and immigration.⁸⁵ In terms of a populist reading, this makes Feminist Initiative more complex, but also more interesting.

4. Thematic Analysis and Quantitative Findings

The charts below summarize the result of a thorough reading of the selected articles. In order to support my definition of the most dominant narratives I have counted the amount of articles in which a certain theme related to the narratives - occurs. Thus it's important to note that I am aware of the notion of bias in this case. The selection of the themes used in the charts are based on my understanding and appreciation of what media portrays as important and most distinctive in the articles. I do still believe that the graphs give a good overview over the articles and the way media portrays Feminist Initiative prior to the elections. It is important to note that as this is not a quantitative study, the narratives are more complex than the result shown in the charts. More attention is put on how, for example, Gudrun Schyman is described than how many times she is mentioned in the studied articles.

4.1 Explanation of Themes

Where the themes consist of the **"names of the spokespersons, party leaders, or candidate to European Parliament"** I have simply counted in how many of the articles the person has been mentioned. In **"criticism of the politics of FI"** I have counted in how many articles criticism are directed against the politics of the party. **"Personification"**

⁸⁵ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

implies the amount of articles writing about personal issues of the representatives of the party. **"FI lacks content"** refers to the articles where Feminist Initiative is described as with ambitions but with no party-program or implementation plan. **"FI as a catalyst for the feministic spring"** aims at the articles where Feminist Initiative is portrayed as if they made feminism an important issue in the general political climate. **"FI will not make it"** aims at the articles which state that the party won't make it in the election and **"FI will make it"** the opposite.

4.2 Result

Result articles prior election to the European Parliament:

Theme	Occurs in x % of the articles
Gudrun Schyman	83,3
Sissela Nording Blanco	3,3
Stina Svensson	3,3
Soraya Post	6,6
Criticism FI's ideas	13,3
Personification	0
FI lacks content / implementation plan	18,3
FI as catalysator for the "feminist spring"	28,3
FI will not make it	0
FI will make it	51,6

Result from the articles prior the national general election:

Theme	Occurs in x % of the articles
Gudrun Schyman	68,3
Sissela Nordling Blanco	4,9
Stina Svensson	0
Soraya Post	0
Criticism FI's ideas	12,2
Personification	2,4
FI lacks content / implementation plan	17,0
FI as catalysator for the "feminist spring"	24,4
FI will not make it	29,3
FI will make it	9,76

4.3 Comment

Gudrun Schyman occurs frequently, in both occasions, but even more often prior the election to the European Parliament. In conjunction with the election to the European Parliament, more of the articles tend to focus specifically on her rather than just mentioning her, which is the case in the articles prior to the general election. The other spokes persons, Sissela Nordling Blanco and the candidate to European Parliament, Soraya Post, are treated with low interest on both occasions. The direct criticism remains the same, just as the amount of articles portraying how Feminist Initiative has inspired or even forced other parties to put feminism on their political agenda. The drastic change is to be found in the amount of articles stating that the party will make it versus won't make it in the election. Prior to the election to the European Parliament there is a consensus that Feminist Initiative will make it, in opposite to before the general election were almost all the articles state that the party will not manage the 4 % limit.

5. Analysis - Narratives about the Feminist Initiative

Part I: Election to the European Parliament

This first part of the analysis is based on 59 articles from the the time period of 25/4/2014 - 25/5/2014 - articles collected the month before the day of the election to the European Parliament. The search through digital print archive retriever Mediaarkivet showed that this time period offered more articles than at the time of the general election. As I compared the articles from each time period, the sample from the election to the parliament felt more rich, more extensive, also there is a certain excitement present in the articles, that Feminist Initiative is 'popular' and 'newsworthy'.

5.1 Gudrun the Storm

In Expressen on the 11th of May, one of the spokespersons of Feminist Initiative, Gudrun Schyman, is referred to as "Gudrun the Storm"⁸⁶ - an expression which indeed captures the essence of what I define as one of the dominant narratives in the selected articles, a narrative characterized and personified by Gudrun Schyman.

Reading the articles, the constant focus on Gudrun Schyman is immediately noticeable - despite her being one of the three spokespersons for the party. The articles leave the reader with the impression that it is Schyman alone pushing the campaign. The other spokespersons, Sissela Norling Blanco and Stina Svensson, are barely mentioned, nor questioned or held responsible for the politics of the party. In fifty-nine articles Sissela Norling Blanco and Stina Svensson are mentioned only at two occasions. This occurs in an article titled "In the shadow of Gudrun"⁸⁷ where the two other "secret" spokespersons are being interviewed about the attention Schyman receives, and awakens how they cope with constantly being in the shadow of this "famous spokesperson".

⁸⁶ "Veckans snackisar", *Expressen*, 11 May 2014

⁸⁷ Jakobson, Hanna, "I skuggan av Gudrun", *Expressen*, 10 May 2014

Gudrun Schyman is described as a talented politician, but more often pictured as a rockstar on tour. On the 11th of May, Aftonbladet writes that "Schyman seems to enjoy life as a touring missionary, she is energetic and excited. She lacks a press secretary, media strategist and head office."⁸⁸ The so called 'homeparties' that are an essential part of the campaign of the party, are described as "revival meetings". The same article asks if there is a "Gudrun cult"⁸⁹ going on, considering the strong support and attention the party leader has received. The distinct and charismatic leader is a common phenomenon among populist parties.⁹⁰ In this case, the focus on Schyman and the way she is portrayed in media contributes to the understanding of Feminist Initiative as a typical populist party. A leader who bewitches and seduces the audience, rather than receiving support based on her political competence.

Schyman is portrayed as if she alone is representative of the politics and feminist ambitions of the party. This prevents a development of a more diverse and comprehensive feminism and politics of the party. The party program of Feminist Initiative is only to be interpreted through her actions and statements. On this subject political scientist Leonie Huddy states that "the media have tended to minimize the diversity among feminists by reserving the label feminists for a few prominent women 'superstars' but rarely using it for it for the many other individuals who call themselves feminists, including ordinary women and men"⁹¹. In this case, the other feminists and politicians in the party are not given the possibility to contribute to the image of the feminist politics driven by the party - nor widen it through their personal and maybe differing feminist input. The politics of the party is thus reduced and limited.

Gudrun Schyman is made synonymous with the party. The articles writes about "Schyman's party"⁹² and "her supporters"⁹³. Through Schyman, the party is personified, she embodies its ambitions and political agenda. In *Kroppspolitik, Moder Svea*, Maud

⁸⁸ Kazimierska, Natalia "Allt fler ser igenom myten om Sverige" *Aftonbladet*, 14 May 2014

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Medier*

⁹¹ Iyengar, Valentino, Ansolabehere, Simon, "Running as a Woman" in *Women Media and Politics*, ed Noriss, Pippa (*New York: Oxford University Press*) 86.

⁹² "Förbered tackkort till Göran, Schyman," *Expressen* 24 May 2014

⁹³ Svensson, Niklas "Här är s-kvinnornas kravlista till Löfven" *Expressen* 13 May 2014

Eduards explains how women often are used to embody the Swedish nation. The man performs political negotiation, he represents process, whilst the woman is made symbol for the Swedish nation.⁹⁴ Through this embodiment, woman is made a static object, and taken away from the possibility to influence and change. Making Schyman a symbol for Feminist Initiative has a similar same effect - the politics of the party are simplified and Schyman is silenced through symbolization. The image of Schyman is so well established that it seems fixed, standing in the way of political process and progress.

The way Gudrun Schyman awakes emotions amongst her supporters is pictured frequently: "I almost started crying talking to her"⁹⁵ - a young women comments to the reporter. Furthermore, the terms "missionary" or "cult" are concepts that alludes to emotion and affection. Looking at the nouns, one could believe that Schyman was a religious leader rather than a party leader. This can both be seen as a way for media to popularize the image of the party, religious references are common in the populist discourse⁹⁶, but also the emotive character can be identified as a way to consolidate the party in a feminized discourse. Emotion versus rationality is a dichotomy associated with woman versus man.⁹⁷ This allusion to emotion and affection is also present in the way Schyman is described. She is talented, but more in terms of her being a "natural" politician rather than a professional who has earned her success through hard work. Schyman is in contrast to the rational and objective - what usually is associated with man and masculinity, that "men are seen as rational and women as emotional, lacking rationality"⁹⁸ - her ability as a politician seems to be a coincidence.

Maria Wendt and Maud Eduards state that wanting power contradicts the normative idea of femininity.⁹⁹ This could explain the strong reactions to Schyman in media. The amount of attention she receives due to her campaigning is not necessarily proportional to her actions,

⁹⁴ Eduards, Maud, *Kroppspolitik: om moder Svea och andra kvinnor*, (Stockholm: Atlas 2012) 40.

⁹⁵ Kazimierska, Natalia "Allt fler ser igenom myten om Sverige" *Aftonbladet*, 14 May 2014

⁹⁶ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Medier*

⁹⁷ Crawford, J., Kippax, S., Onyx, J., Gault, U., & Benton, P. *Emotion and gender: Constructing meaning from memory*. (London: Sage Publications.1992) 17.

⁹⁸ Ibid.17.

⁹⁹ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 22.

but the fact her political style is not what is usually to be expected from a female politician. According to political scientist Pippa Norris "Women in politics are commonly seen as compassionate, practical, honest, and hard-working, while men are seen as ruthless ambitious and tough leaders"¹⁰⁰. Even though none of the articles explicitly criticize Schyman, they often comment on her wanting power and enjoying being the centre of attention. On the 13th of May, Svenska Dagbladet published an article about the "feminist who always wants to be in the centre of the political landscape"¹⁰¹. As a party leader, taking up space seems legitimate, if not necessary, but in the case of Schyman media still depicts this behavior as if it were strange or extraordinary.

The focus and constant reporting on Schyman simplifies the agenda of the Feminist Initiative: the political agenda of the party becomes secondary to a person who serves as a symbol, icon or leader of a cult. In *Media Coverage of Women of in the 103rd Congress*, Susan J. Carroll and Ronnee Schreiber writes that "Women in politics also accuse the media of emphasizing the superficial and the trivial."¹⁰² The media coverage on Schyman can be considered a shallow and trivial way to picture the party. The articles on Schyman are not particularly substantive or informative, but rather characterized by a portray of a more subjective character, such as Scyman being a "touring missionary"¹⁰³ and that she is "energetic and excited"¹⁰⁴. This creates a notion of sensation and newsworthiness with the reader.

According to Gamson and Wolfsfield "the economics of news creation impels the media to cover social movements in ways that can minimize or distort their message. First, the media's need to emphasize a movements entertainment and dramatic value can result in the choice of flamboyant movement leaders and actions that may not represent the movement as a whole"¹⁰⁵. In the case of Feminist Initiative, the constant focus on Gudrun Schyman

¹⁰⁰ Norris, *Women Media and Politics*, 9.

¹⁰¹ Hellekant, Johan "Fullblods-feministen som alltid vill stå i politikens centrum" *Svenska Dagbladet*, 13 Maj 2015

¹⁰² Carroll, Susan, J, Schreiber, Ronnee, "Media Coverage of Women of in the 103d Congress" in *Women, Media and Politics* ed. Norris, Pippa (New York: Oxford Press) 139.

¹⁰³ Kazimierska, Natalia "Allt fler ser igenom myten om Sverige" *Aftonbladet*, 14 May 2014

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Huddy, *Feminists and Feminism in the News* 185.

doesn't give justice to the party and its aims to practice an intersectional awareness, visible both in their politics and through their representatives.

Assuming that media adheres to a patriarchal structure, which a reading from a gender-perspective would imply, it is a natural consequence that articles express the values of this structure. The personalization, the emotive aspects, and the critique can thus be a result of this structure. Hence, as these features also fit the perception of a populist party, it can also be media responding to the existing discourse on populism. Furthermore, the media-logic generates articles of a certain character, articles that win the readers attention and sell rather than inform - the straightforward portrayal of Gudrun Schyman allows for a simple, accessible and exciting narrative for a readership.

5.2 The Feminist Spring

What I identify as another prominent narrative in the studied articles is how Feminist Initiative has made feminism an important issue in the political dialogue and campaigning of 2014. The narrative has two sides, on some occasions the progress of Feminist Initiative is described as a threat towards the other parties, that they are stealing votes from other political parties, or described how Feminist Initiative has created a sudden awareness and willingness to prioritize and discuss feminism and gender equality.

The power of media and their use of framing is significantly present in this narrative. Frequently the newspapers use quotes that confirm the feminist profile of the other parties, but frames it as if the parties are left with no other choice than to start prioritizing feminism. The engagement is portrayed as a sacrifice, that the other parties are "forced" to bring feminism on to their political agenda. In *Dagens Nyheter* it is written that "Feminist Initiative's success in the opinion polls has made other leftist-debaters nervous" and later on in the same article the party leader of Socialdemokraterna (the Social Democrats) Stefan Löfven is quoted on the party's feminist profile: "The Social Democrats are a feminist party and we will create a feminist government"¹⁰⁶. In *Expressen* on the 17th of

¹⁰⁶ "Jämställdhet i Fokus under Löfvens tal" *Dagens Nyheter* 1 May 2014

May, in an article with the headline "Stefan Löfven tries to secure EU-victory flirting with Gudrun Schyman", Löfven's attempt to confirm the Social Democrats feminist profile is pictured through the following quote: "The Social Democrats is a feminist party. I am a feminist."¹⁰⁷. Whilst Löfven makes it seem as if feminism is and has always been a natural part of the Social Democrats, the headline and the framing implies that it's due to Feminist Initiative's progress and growing support rather than because of a genuine interest in the issue.

In difference to Wendt and Eduards' study, which aims to show that the whole political activity of Feminist Initiative is pictured as "wrong and alien in the press"¹⁰⁸ the examples above show that the main aims of Feminist Initiative are taken seriously, and that their political agenda is considered important and accurate. In this case, the articles are rather criticizing the other parties for their attempts to accentuate their feminist profile. This critique is expressed through skeptical and ironic comments or headlines such as "Stefan Löfven tries to secure EU-victory by flirting with Gudrun Schyman". The "flirting" and the claim that Löfven is supporting feminism only in order to "secure" EU-victory, implies that the Social Democrat's sudden interest in feminism has nothing to do with ideology, but rather the wish to increase their support among voters.

In an article published in Dagens Nyheter with the headline "The F-word is meaningless if you don't mean it" the author Catia Hultqwist writes that: "It's an electoral and the feminist winds are blowing. But has the strong f-word only become fashionable amongst the politicians or have young people started to react on the racist and anti-feminist wave"¹⁰⁹. No matter the reason for the sudden engagement in feminist issues amongst the other parties in Sweden, the articles still emphasize the strong input Feminist Initiative has had on the political climate in Sweden. This contrasts the normative pattern of how a populist party is pictured - where the party usually is marginalized due to its "extreme agenda," and put in opposition to the other established parties¹¹⁰ Feminist Initiative is to

¹⁰⁷ Svensson Niklas, "Löfven flörtar med Schyman för seger Expressen" 17 May 2014

¹⁰⁸ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Hultqwist, Catia "F-ordet är helt meningslöst om du inte menar vad du säger" *Dagens Nyheter*

¹¹⁰ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demorkati*

some extent acknowledged as a party that inspires all the other parties to become better at prioritizing equality. ”The only thing we can be fully sure of is that equality will become more prioritized”¹¹¹.

In *Feminism and Feminists in the News* Leone Huddy argues that ”the terms feminists and feminism will often be presented simplistically and in association with support for a single issue”¹¹². The same can be identified in this narrative. The feminism in Feminist Initiative and the feminism which is now supported by other political parties, is never defined in specific actions or aims. This might also be the media’s way to ”keep the news stories interesting but simple”¹¹³ as the actual implication of feminist politics can be complex and not suitable for the intentions of the articles.

5.3 Under the Pink Surface

The first two narratives are surprisingly supportive of the party and its feminist agenda. Even more in comparison to Eduards and Wendt’s study from 2010, which identifies the media discourse around the party as explicitly aggressive towards its ambitions and sexualizing of their party leaders and representatives.¹¹⁴ Eduards and Wendt also argue that media tend to focus on the personal issues of the party leaders, rather than the politics of the party.¹¹⁵ This too differs from this research, even though a simplification of the politics Feminist Initiative is made, the political goals and the party program of Feminist Initiative is discussed and criticized, not the party leaders personal appearance.

What I define as the third most prominent narrative is thus a critic of the party in terms of it lacking proposals and ideas of how to implement suggested feminist ambitions and the lack of an economic plan. I identified a certain patronizing and sometimes even stupefying

¹¹¹ ”Framgångar som oroar andra partier” *Göteborgs posten* 12 May 2014

¹¹² Huddy, *Feminists and Feminism in the news* 186.

¹¹³ Ibid. 185

¹¹⁴ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 20

¹¹⁵ Eduards, Maud, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 21.

tone towards the party and its politics in the studied media-texts, as if they were not capable of, nor interested in thinking in more pragmatic terms. In *Sydsvenskan* on the 20th of May in an article named "Behind the pink fluff"¹¹⁶ the writer states that "Gudrun Schyman, front figure of Feminist Initiative, seem to possess a secret knowledge about how politics can be separated from economics"¹¹⁷, in other words, that the political ambitions of Feminist Initiative are not economically doable. In *Göteborgs-Posten* on the 16th of May in an article with the title "Ridiculously unrealistic proposals from FI"¹¹⁸ it's written that "Gudrun Schyman is a competent and experienced politician and it's strange that she allows the party to promote such unrealistic ideas".¹¹⁹ In the article "F!'s tax-shock"¹²⁰ *Göteborgs-Posten* state that: Schyman's "incompetence in counting"¹²¹ is due to her either on purpose wanting to destroy the Swedish economy or Schyman being "a populist"¹²². The critique does aim at certain, concrete, problems within the party, and might be legitimate - but the way the critic is put is still notably emotive and suggestive. The expressions used in the quotes above: "ridiculous", "unrealistic" or "incompetence", have a subjective tone which can be described as a form of scandal or event-driven rhetoric. Jesper Strömbäck calls this 'intensification' in order to attract readers, making the text more vivid and intriguing, the media elaborate with this type of suggestive rhetoric.¹²³ No matter the need for sincerity and nuanced reviews in times of the election, the magazines must respond to the market and "what sells".¹²⁴

This narrative follows a populist discourse, the media portrays Feminist Initiative in a populist style. The party is described as if they have strong ambitions and motives, but little content and no serious suggestions about how to implement their party program. The media portray the party as if they offer "simple solutions to complex issues"¹²⁵, in other

¹¹⁶ Skogkär, Mats "Under det rosa fluffet" *Sydsvenskan*, 20. May 2014

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "Löjligt orealistiska förslag från FI Göteborgsposten" 16. May 2014

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ "F!:'s skatte-chock" *Göteborgsposten* 15 May. 2014

¹²¹ "F!:'s skatte-chock" *Göteborgsposten* 15. May 2014

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle*, 159.

¹²⁴ Strömbäck, *Makt, Medier och Samhälle* 160.

¹²⁵ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

words as a populist party: "Naturally one wonders - what does this mean in practice? What other party is allowed such vague answers when it concerns finance and economy?"¹²⁶ In *Expressen* on the 6th May in the article "From old-man-politics to FI-bureaucracy" the politics of Feminist Initiative is described as diffused, abstract and completely without any reasonable suggestions: "In the world of FI there doesn't seem to be a single societal problem which can't be solved without an action plan, a mapping or why not a national knowledge centre"¹²⁷. Not only does this imply that the party has notable shortcomings in terms of their politics and party program, but that they are ignorant and lack competence.

This is similar to the analysis by Eduards and Wendt in which they conclude that the party is described as if empty and without political content"¹²⁸. An important difference is thus that the critique is more specific this time and often accomplished with statements from "experts" who explain why the politics of Feminist Initiative is un-reasonable. In the articles Wendt and Eduards investigate, the "critique" that the Feminist Initiative receives is less of a critique and more of a subjective disapproval of the party and its representatives - personal attacks and sexualization. Even though one can sense an aggression in the quotes above, for example, "What other party is allowed such vague answers when it concerns finance and economy?" it is still with a certain substance. Even though the intention may be the same - to put the party in place - it is done with more respect and discretion.

The skepticism and critique may be due to media following the normative way of reporting on populist parties, but can also be hence the dominant medial approach towards women politicians: Huddy writes that "One of the most persistent complaints voiced by women politicians is that the media focus on the negative - on the problems that women in politics confront rather than on their accomplishment"¹²⁹. Naturally a new party will be examined and reviewed in media, but the critique, the frequently occurring sensation that media aims

¹²⁶ Madon, Sakine, "Förbered tackort till Göran, Schyman" *Expressen* 24 Maj 2014

¹²⁷ Kronqvist, Patrik "Från gubbslem till Fi - byråkrati" *Expressen* 6. May, 2014

¹²⁸ Eduards, Maud, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 2.

¹²⁹ Huddy, *Feminists and Feminism in the News*, 38.

to "put the party in place" may be due to Feminist Initiative being a feminist party and that it is driven by female representatives.

Analysis part II: The General Election

Narratives prior the national General Election

The following episode presents the most dominant narratives from articles one month before the general election to the Swedish parliament. This election takes place approximately four months after the election to the European Parliament. In order to understand the context of the articles and the narratives, it's important to keep in mind that Feminist Initiative was successful in the election and managed a seat in the European parliament. Due to the decreased amount of articles, but also what I understand as reduced interest for the party compared to before the election to the parliament - I have defined only two dominant narratives in this part of the analysis.

5.4 The Backlash

As clearly shown by the chart, the articles at the time of the general election indicate that Feminist Initiative will not make it past the 4% limit (which is required for a place in the government). In the articles, this expected failure is supported by statistics from opinion surveys but also frequently written as if this is now the 'general understanding' - accepted as the truth. The general tone towards the party, which prior the election to the European Parliament was characterized by superlatives describing the success story of the party, is more critical and unsupportive. The decreasing support is brought up in almost every article, and amongst other things blamed on lacking confidence for the party and Gudrun Schyman: "The confidence for her and the party is decreasing drastically"¹³⁰. Furthermore, the depicted failure of the party now is constantly compared with the previous success at the election to the European parliament and described as a "backlash"¹³¹. On some

¹³⁰ Flood, Linda "Trippel-smällen - Så knäckte Löfven Gudrun Schyman", *Expressen*, 22. May-2014

¹³¹ Flood, Linda "Trippel-smällen - Så knäckte Löfven Gudrun Schyman", *Expressen*, 22. August-2014

occasions expressions which were previously used to describe the success of the party, such as "Gudrun the storm"¹³² are reused, but now in a negative way: "Gudrun the storm has passed"¹³³.

Even though the opinion surveys 'show' that Feminist Initiative prior to the general election have decreased, the surveys themselves, and media's use of the surveys to prove Feminist Initiative's backlash, might be a reason for the lacking support. The 'Spiral of science', originally formulated by the German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, describes the dynamic of opinion formations.¹³⁴ Jesper Strömbäck states the following on the subject: "if media depicts an opinion as abnormal, in a minority or decline, the probability for a person to change opinion or become silent, increases."¹³⁵ What can be described as a circular movement where media and news reporting creates reality while reporting on what is assumed to be the 'truth'. Applied to the case of Feminist Initiative, Noelle-Neumann's theory could show that the constant reporting on negative outcomes in opinion surveys may have contributed to poorer results at the general election. Media stating that Feminist Initiative most likely will not make it in the election, may lead off former supporters as they are influenced by the 'truth' as it is formulated by media.

In regards to the party, little changed over the four months which separated the two elections. In an interview on the success of Feminist Initiative at the election to the parliament Jesper Strömbäck aims that Feminist Initiative's success at the election to the parliament rather was due to luck and circumstances than competence or a well formulated party program.¹³⁶ On the 16th of August, Svenska Dagbladet published the article "The EU - effect has subsided"¹³⁷. The title makes it seem as if Feminist Initiative's success prior to the election to the European Parliament was a sensation, not due to a need of more gender awareness or increased equality in Sweden. The party is rather depicted as a phenomena

¹³²"Veckans snackisar", *Expressen*, 11. May 2014

¹³³ "Stormen Gudrun har bedarrat" *Sydsvenskan* 6. September 2014

¹³⁴ Strömbäck, *Makt Medier och Samhälle*, 132.

¹³⁵ Strömbäck, *Makt, Medier och Samhälle*, 133.

¹³⁶ *Jesper Strömbäck's valspecial* Schlingmann, accessed 13 May, <http://www.schlingmann.se/jesper-strombacks-valspecial/>

¹³⁷ Eriksson, Göran "EU- effekten har klingat av" *Svenska Dagbladet*, 16. September. 2014

which will pass - or *has* passed. Continuing on Strömbäck's notion of "luck" and "circumstances", the backlash can as well be due to the same reasons. The now dominant negative tone creates articles of the same character - the magazines appeal to the same discourse and follow each other in the formation of opinions.

What strongly characterizes this narrative is the sense that the party now has been revealed - all the flaws in the party program have been brought to light, and it's confirmed that the politics of the party cannot be implemented as there is no actual budget or implementation plan. This is a framing in line with the idea of populism - in *Populism, Makt, Demokrati* (Populism, Power, Democracy) Lodenius states that populist parties tend to use simple solutions for complex problems. In one of the article it's written that Feminist Initiative is lacking a "reasonable and complete program"¹³⁸ which falls in line with Lodenius's definition of a populist party.

On several occasions 'experts' interviewed in the magazines state that Feminist Initiative's success in the election to the parliament was due to the different approaches to the elections. More precisely; people tend to vote more freely in the election to the European Parliament in comparison to the general election. In an interview in *Expressen* the political scientist Ann-Catherine Jungar, states that after the party entered the parliament they were more examined, which might have lead to voters finding the politics of the party to simple.¹³⁹ The different approaches towards the elections amongst the voters can be applied on media. The difference in the media discourse of the two elections may be due to the perception that the election to the European Parliament is less important for the Swedish political future than the general election - the discourse before the general election is therefore more critical than before the election to the European Parliament.

This narrative has certain similarities with Wendt and Eduards study of the media coverage of the party at its beginning. In the articles selected for this study the party is described as 'extreme' on occasion. In their study, Wendt and Eduards describe how the women of Feminist Initiative are depicted as threatening and extreme in comparison to the normal

¹³⁸ Olsson, Per T. "De tänkte into på det" 17 August 2014

¹³⁹ "Förtroendet rasar för Schyman och Fi", *Expressen*, 22. August, 2014

Swedish woman (which in their study refers to the average, part-time working mother).¹⁴⁰ In *Expressen* on the 9th of September Gudrun Schyman is described as a provocateur due to a part of their campaign in which they painted pink glasses onto party leaders from the other parties. In conjunction with the critique of this event, the article tells of when Schyman, in 2010, set alight 100,000 SEK to exemplify how much higher the salary is for a man in Sweden compared to a woman.¹⁴¹ An event used frequently to prove Schymans extremism.

Wendt and Eduards claim that Feminist Initiative is depicted as an anomaly - something that deviates from the norm and the expected¹⁴². Even though the critique prior to the general election is harsh, and the politics of Feminist Initiative are described as unachievable and thoughtless, the critique still has some currency. In difference to the critique that Eduards and Wendt identify, media actually criticizes concrete problems with the party program of Feminist Initiative rather than attack their party leaders or subjectively declare the party as wrong.

A main observation in Maud and Eduards study - is how the party members constantly are exposed to personal critique, and a sexualization through a focus on the party members looks. This barely appears in the articles used in this thesis - but - one of the articles brings up Schyman's alcoholism and speculate as to whether she has started drinking again. This is thus rather an exception in the media coverage as a whole, and really stands out.

5.5 Continued Support for Gender Equality

Despite lacking support, critique and decreased attention in media, the articles confirm that gender equality remains an important issue for the other parties in the campaign - and Feminist Initiative is identified as reason for the increased interest of the subject. The prediction that Feminist Initiative is expected to do badly in the election is often

¹⁴⁰ Eduards, Wendt, *Fienden mitt ibland oss - kön och nation i pressbevakningen av Feministiskt initiativ*, 23.

¹⁴¹ "Håll fingrarna borta från valaffischerna" *Expressen* 9. September. 2014

¹⁴² Oxford Dictionaries, "Anomaly" Available: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/anomaly> accessed 1. May 2015

complimented with the observation that Feminist Initiative has still managed to make equality an important and prioritized question in the the two elections of 2014. On the 22nd of August, *Expressen* formulates how Feminist Initiative will likely not make a place in the government, but also how "This spring Feminist Initiative managed to make gender equality the most important issue in the public debate"¹⁴³. On the 2nd of September *Svenska Dagbladet* published an article named "Gender equality - a popular concept". The article show that the use of the concept of gender equality has increased amongst the political parties in Sweden. Furthermore it is described how Feminist Initiative has "the gender issue high up on its agenda, and other parties have followed their example"¹⁴⁴. Only a couple of days later, *Sydsvenskan* confirmed that Feminist Initiative put issues of gender equality high up on the agenda in an article named "The answer is not FI"¹⁴⁵. They also conclude that "there is a frustration, due to lacking gender equality, especially amongst female voters, that is not hard to understand". The articles confirm Feminist Initiative's importance and accuracy, the influence the party has had on the general political climate in Sweden, but still states that it is unlikely that the party will succeed in the election. It also expresses that the party "FI identifies problems, but has no credible solutions"¹⁴⁶.

In this narrative there is a certain ambiguity as to whether gender equality is 'only' a popular vocabulary, as the article in *Svenska Dagbladet* expresses it and the progress of feminism rather being due to luck and circumstances rather than it being a result of lacking gender equality in Sweden. Regardless of the underlying reasons, the fact that the party managed to make their main concern a prioritized issue in the election differs from the way populist parties are usually portrayed in media. The influence on other parties indicates that there exists a substance to the politics of Feminist Initiative, opposing the idea of a populist agenda being simplistic and lacking in importance.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Flood, Linda "Trippel-smällen - Så knäckte Löfven Gudrun Schyman" *Expressen* 22 August 2014

¹⁴⁴ Svensson, Frida " 'Jämställdhet' populär glosa" *Svenska Dagbladet* 2 September 2014-

¹⁴⁵ "Svaret heter inte FI" *Sydsvenskan* 8 September 2014

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

Populist parties tend to be pictured in opposition to the normative political dialogue and established parties¹⁴⁸, but in this case, Feminist Initiative has brought their main issue into the general political debate. Rather than the party being depicted as in opposition to other established parties, the other parties are depicted as in dialogue with the politics of Feminist Initiative.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Narratives

The narrative analysis of the studied media texts resulted in three narratives from the articles prior to the election to the European Parliament, and two narratives in conjunction with the general election. More articles were published prior to the election to the European Parliament than before the general election, hence the difference in the number of narratives.

The first narrative, which I have chosen to call *Gudrun the Storm*, stood out the most, and implied rich descriptions and critique of one of the party leaders - Gudrun Schyman. She is, among other things, portrayed as "power-searching", "charismatic", "radical" and as a "cult-leader". Characteristics that are in line with the medial discourse on a populist party, in which the presence of a charismatic leader is essential.¹⁴⁹

The focus on Schyman gives us a personalization of the party, from a gender perspective this can be identified as an objectification of Schyman, and the party. She is made a static symbol for the party, and little is mentioned about her political visions and ambitions.

Considering Schyman's wide experience within the Swedish political landscape, she has been portrayed in the media for many years, it is interesting how the magazines still choose to focus on her, rather than examining or criticizing any of the other spokespersons or party leaders. In terms of the practical dimension of the media, that they should offer information

¹⁴⁸ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

¹⁴⁹ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

- it would have made more sense to report on what's new and unexplored. In this case, the media chooses a narrative they are already familiar with, rather than creating a new.

It would have been interesting to compare the medial discourse on Feminist Initiative with that of a populist party with an extreme right political agenda. I believe that the media discourses would be notably similar, despite drastically different political agendas. The portrait of Schyman in the studied articles - doesn't emphasize her political agenda, she could have been a representative of any party. The focus is on Schyman as a seductive and manipulative leader - not her political ambitions and goals.

In *Under the Pink Surface*, Feminist Initiative is portrayed as a party with high political ambitions, but with no real implementation plan. This narrative is quite critical of the party - but more in terms of their politics, not their representatives. The narratives also fit to the normative portrayal of a populist party, as a party "offering simple solutions to complex issues"¹⁵⁰. *Under the Pink Surface* is characterized by exaggeration - strong nouns are used in order to create a sense of excitement and newsworthiness. This exaggeration is visible in headlines such as "under the pink fluff" or articles describing the party as "ridiculous" and "unrealistic". In comparison to the narrative on Schyman, this has more substance as it actually tackles the politics of the party. Thus, the critique can also be read as an expression of the normative way of criticizing women and feminists in politics. As media is part of the patriarchal structure, the party with its feminist agenda and female representatives is opposed and counteracted.

In *The Feminist Spring* Feminist Initiative is depicted as a catalyst for what the media called the 'feminist spring'. It is described how the party has influenced other parties to put feminism on their political agenda, but also how the other parties are left with no other choice, in order to keep their own voters they feel forced to show engagement in the feminist movement. This gives currency to the party in a way which opposes the general idea of a populist party, which usually is portrayed in opposition to the established parties as well as the normative way to portray feminists and women in politics.

¹⁵⁰ Lodenius, *Populism, Makt, Demokrati*

The notion of exaggeration is present - "the feminist spring" is indeed a strong and suggestive expression which implies a big change, a movement of some kind. No matter if the expression is legitimate or not - the expression has a magnetic effect on the reader.

The Backlash awakens interesting reflections on opinion polls and the transcendence of what is considered 'facts' and the media discourse. In this narrative it is repeatedly stated that Feminist Initiative will not make it past the 4% limit in the general election. This is established as "truth" and often, but not always backed up with the latest statistics. No matter what the surveys show, one can not know for sure what creates what - is it maybe so that the constant reporting on bad results in opinion polls creates even worse results? What is apparent is thus the strong confidence media has in surveys. It is often presented without any critical insight - as if the media is attracted to anything which can result in persuasive and strong statements.

Continued support for Feminism confirms the backlash of Feminist Initiative after the election to the European Parliament, but states that the party has managed to make feminism an important issue amongst the other parties. Thus - whether Feminist Initiative actually has managed to open the eyes of the other parties, or it is due to a popularization of the concept of feminism is not made clear.

The narrative confirms that Feminist Initiative has managed to enter the political dialogue. In comparison to 2010 when the party was marginalized and more in polarity with the established political parties - the feminist ambitions of the party are now brought up and commented on by the other parties.

6.2 Dominant media Approaches to Feminist Initiative

In the case of Feminist Initiative, as the media-logic implies, media follows the already existing discourses and the media logic, rather than creating new or changing the existing discourse for it to become more in harmony with the event it wishes to portray. It seems as if media observes a possible news-story, and there after portrays it through the existing perceptions of the object or event. The fact that Feminist Initiative is the first party with a

feminist agenda to win a post in the European Parliament, and that their candidate is the first member of the parliament of Romani origin, should be enough to generate new narratives. However this is not the case, instead the media chooses to focus on Schyman, the other party leaders and representatives remains anonymous. The forces that control media, economy and the dominating social structures, seem to overcome idealistic journalistic ambitions, and quality for that matter. Exaggeration occurs frequently, to the extent that the magazines occurs as more interested in 'selling' than fulfilling the important task of being a critical and informative outlet.

Based on the assumption that the media and their audience are part of a **patriarchal structure**, and that the media expresses the values of this hierarchy, the critique of the party can be read as an expression of an unequal treatment of men and women in politics and media in general. Women are exposed to insult and critique on a different level to men. Certainly this has influenced the medial discourse, but in comparison to Eduards and Maud's study, the medial discourse of Feminist Initiative in conjunction to the two elections in 2014, is much gentler and less aggressive. Even though the articles focus on Schyman, her persona and personal business is left alone. Only once is her private-life, her being a sober alcoholic, brought up. It indicates a more respectful environment in terms of women in media but also towards feminism - the concept appears less controversial.

The polarity has to some extent dissolved and Feminists Initiative, and the politics of the party, is much more integrated in the Swedish political dialogue. Thus, the perceived 'support' is more in terms of the attention in media, the observation that the party will make it in the election to the European Parliament, and the acknowledgment that the party has influenced the other parties - rather than showing explicit support to their party program or ambitions.

What is apparent is the consensus amongst the magazines, none of the articles distinguish themselves with a notably different approach to Feminist initiative, the discourse is rather consistent and coherent. I believe **the power of the discourse to be** reason for this consensus - the different magazines correspond to the same discourse - and influence each

other on what is perceived as truth. Together they establish a discourse, a truth, and a reality from which it is hard to break free.

6.3 The Different Elections

I find it most interesting that the material before the election to the European Parliament was more extensive than that of the general election. This doesn't only apply to the quantity, the articles prior the election to the European Parliament felt 'richer' - the tone more excited and engaged. It seems as if media reported more freely prior the election to the Parliament - which is in line with the general approach towards the election to the European Parliament. Thus, if the general election is considered more important, the news coverage should also generate more articles. My assumption is that media prior the general election, focused on the established parties, and as soon as opinion polls confirmed that Feminist Initiative would't get past the 4% limit, the interest for the party decreased. If media considered the election to the European Parliament less important than the general election - how does this relate to the different amount of articles? I would argue that in conjunction with the general election, the newspapers rather focused on the established parties than Feminist Initiative. The understanding that the election to the European Parliament is of less importance, may have created a discourse primarily motivated by entertainment - which was a criterion the reporting on Feminist Initiative could offer.

The differing amount, and the less supportive tone in the articles could also be due to the time of the elections. After Feminist Initiative won a seat in the European Parliament, the party was exposed to a more extensive review - which in the end influenced the discourse and the result in the general election.

Considering the short amount of time separating the elections, the political content of the Feminist Initiative didn't change drastically. Still, the narratives and the amount of articles varied. Based on this observation it seems that media tends to adjust the content in the articles depending on the circumstances, not the object they are reporting on - in this case the politics of Feminist Initiative.

6.4 Outlook

What is notable, is that none of the articles offered a deeper analysis of Feminist Initiative - all the articles were relatively short and the narratives more 'news-oriented', none of the articles offered critique of a more constructive nature. This accessible style - contributes to the notion of popularization, politics becomes more about entertainment than discussing ideology or critical review. If this is representative of the media climate in general, in terms of reporting on politics, its interesting to consider what then creates opinion amongst the voters - is it rather how attractive and persuasive a party can appear than the actual political content?

As stated in the beginning, the newly elected Swedish prime minister, Stefan Löfven, declared a feminist government at his accession in early October 2014. In conjunction to this, minister for foreign affairs Margot Wallström stated that she would conduct a feminist foreign policy, with a focus on "women, peace and security"¹⁵¹. A statement which strengthens the status of feminism on a national level, but also makes a case for feminism in international relations. No matter the ambiguity media expressed in the articles - the indication that the other parties' only interest in feminism was to secure their own successful outcome in the election - the extent of the discourse on the party and its politics ultimately resulted in political actions. The more supportive discourse on the party broke down the barriers present in 2010. Through the media discourse, Feminist Initiative infiltrated the political dialogue, influenced other parties, and in the end managed to generate a more feminist political climate in Sweden.

The extensive medial discourse, the many articles and the received attention, may also have implied a normalization of the concept of feminism. Due to the frequent writings, and the more supportive discourse (compared to in 2010) feminism as concept has become less controversial. Following this argument, the statements in support of feminism made by Löfven may be due to a popularization of the concept, rather than a genuine interest in the feminism.

¹⁵¹ "Wallström: Vi ska ha en feministisk utrikespolitik" Sveriges radio accessed: 12 May 2015
<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5982258>

I believe that what happened is a combination - that the feminist agenda became more prioritized through the popularization but simultaneously entered the Swedish political landscape. From this point of view, it doesn't really matter if Löfven's statement was due to feminism suddenly being a popular concept - as it still managed to generate political actions. The media discourse on Feminist Initiative exemplifies how discourse and action are intertwined - how the media discourse on Feminist Initiative successively gave a more feminist political climate - in terms of action. It thus confirms the importance of studying and questioning a discourse, in order to increase the awareness of the creation of a reality.

7. Suggestions for Future Studies

Studying the media discourse of Feminist Initiative, raised further questions about the reception of the party, the media discourse as well as Feminist Initiative's place in the political landscape in Sweden and Europe. As mentioned in the conclusion, It would have been interesting to compare the media discourse of Feminist Initiative with the right-wing populist party The Swedish Democrats or other populist parties in the European context. A comparison of this kind could generate interesting insights about the reason for certain medial texts. Whether it is content - what is being reported on - or the power of established discourses that create certain narratives in the news. Furthermore, a study of greater extent could have contained a study of the media language of Feminist Initiative - how does the party depict themselves through the use of social media? - followed by a comparison with the media discourse as it is created by the media actors. I will follow the development of Feminist Initiative as well as the media discourse with great interest, and hope to return to this subject in the future.

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Appendix

Articles prior the election to European Parliament

Tabell 1-1

Title	Magazine	Date
Här drabbar de samman	Aftonbladet	22/5/2014
Sifo. Nu kliver de in i Bryssel	Aftonbladet	23/5/2014
F! vad du skräms'	Aftonbladet	2/5/2014
Ny löftet-heltid åt alla	Aftonbladet	11/5/2014
Allt fler ser igenom myten om Sverige	Aftonbladet	11/5/2014
Vi gillar ju varandra'	Aftonbladet	10/5/2014
1107 år kvar tills vi blir jämställda	Aftonbladet	7/5/2014
Artisterna som tar politisk ställning	Aftonbladet	25/5/2014
Bråket om kvinnorna	Aftonbladet	15/5/2014
Lena Mellin: S känner sig hotade	Aftonbladet	15/5/2014
Reinfeldt till attack mot F!	Aftonbladet	13/5/2014
Sossarna dalt banar vägen för Fi och SF	Aftonbladet	10/5/2014
Varning Stefan, snart tappar du kvinnorna	Aftonbladet	6/5/2014
SD och Fi väntas ta plats i parlamentet	Dagens Nyheter	23/5/2014
Göteborg är den feministiska staden	Dagens Nyheter	25/5/2014
Soraya Post: "Vi skapar historia i hela världen"	Dagens Nyheter	21/5/2014
Catia Hultquist: F-ordet är helt meningslöst...	Dagens Nyheter	19/5/2014
Här utmanar Schyman det politiska etablissemang	Dagens Nyheter	30/4/2014
Gudrun Schyman gör reggae	Dagens Nyheter	26/4/2014
8 frågor som präglat valet	Dagens Nyheter	25/5/2014
Frukta inte debatten mot Fi	Dagens Nyheter	13/5/2014
Jämställdhet i fokus under Löfvens tal	Dagens Nyheter	2/5/2014
Fel väg till jämställdhet	Expressen	14/5/2014
Vi har inte gjort någon beräkning	Expressen	15/5/2014
Pressen på Löfven	Expressen	5/5/2014
Fi:s gliring till Löfven	Expressen	6/5/2014
Glädje-rycket	Expressen	12/5/2014
I skuggan av Gudrun	Expressen	10/5/2014
Från Gubbslem till Fi-byråkrati	Expressen	6/5/2014
Schyman flåsar de röda i nacken	Expressen	3/5/2014
Schymans Show	Expressen	18/5/2014
Schymans storslam: "Går inte att hejda"	Expressen	9/5/2014
Schymans tuffa svar	Expressen	16/5/2014
Var är invandrarkillarna, Gudrun	Expressen	7/5/2014
Vänster-vindarna socialdemokraterna	Expressen	17/5/2014
Här är S-kvinnornas kravlista till Löfven	Expressen	13/5/2014

Title	Magazine	Date
Förbered tackkort till Göran, Schyman	Expressen	24/5/2014
Veckans snackisar	Expressen	11/5/2014
Feminism används som fernissa av S	Expressen	14/5/2014
Men löf och Schyman drabbade samman - sedan kramades de	Expressen	12/5/2014
Schymans EU-glädje	Göteborgsposten	23/5/2014
Prislappen inte det viktigaste enligt Schyman	Göteborgsposten	15/5/2014
Framgångar som oroar övriga partier	Göteborgsposten	12/5/2014
F!s skatte-chock	Göteborgsposten	15/5/2014
F!-pressen på Löfven	Göteborgsposten	5/5/2014
Schymans syn på Putin är en gåta	Göteborgsposten	11/5/2014
Familjefejden	Göteborgsposten	24/5/2014
Löjligt orealistiska förslag från F!	Göteborgsposten	16/5/2014
Schymans parti sätter ideologi före ekonomi	Svenska Dagbladet	17/5/2014
Oengagerat om jämställdhet	Svenska Dagbladet	6/5/2014
FI näst största parti på nätet	Svenska Dagbladet	14/5/2014
Löfvens rosa mardrömmar	Svenska Dagbladet	17/5/2014
FI - när MP och V inte är nog	Svenska Dagbladet	09/5/2014
Fullblods-feministen som alltid vill stå i politikens centrum	Svenska Dagbladet	13/5/2014
Kantpartierna växer i EU-valet	Svenska Dagbladet	23/5/2014
Det kostar att sova för djupt	Sydsvenskan	17/5/2014
Under det rosa fluffet	Sydsvenskan	20/5/2014
Schyman på väg	Sydsvenskan	10/5/2014
Riksdagsvalet Vänsterns hjärtefrågor kan ta FI till riksdagen	Sydsvenskan	10/5/2014

Articles prior the General Election

Title	Magazine	Date
Fi:s inträder kan bli förödande för SD	Aftonbladet	5/9/2014
En röst på FI är inte bortkastad - tvärtom	Aftonbladet	9/9/14
Åka runt och träffa folk - det är grejen	Aftonbladet	26/8/2014
Här är de nya männen	Aftonbladet	14/8/2014
Fi fan, vilken kupp	Aftonbladet	14/9/2014
Om spritryktet: Jag dricker inte	Aftonbladet	11/9/14
Tänk till innan du röstar på Fi	Aftonbladet	11/9/14
De unga ställer nya krav på partierna	Aftonbladet	11/9/14
Fi för en rent galen politik'	Aftonbladet	10/9/14
"Det här beslutet kan få människor att tänka om "	Aftonbladet	5/9/14
FI över spärren in ny valmätning	Aftonbladet	4/9/14
Schyman är intet revisor men hon vet hur man talar	Aftonbladet	3/9/14

Feminismen vinner även om FI förlorar	Aftonbladet	31/8/2014
Nu krängs politik på 'home parties'	Aftonbladet	28/8/2014
FI mest aktiva i sociala medier	Dagens Nyheter	23/8/2014
Borliga feminister blickar över blockgräns	Dagens Nyheter	11/9/14
Feministiskt åsiktsdirektiv	Dagens Nyheter	9/9/2014
Rosa glasögon upprör Ohlsson	Dagens Nyheter	9/9/14
Fi-krav en tuff utmaning för Socialdemokraterna	Dagens Nyheter	8/9/14
F! mest aktiva på sociala medier	Expressen	24/8/2014
Trippel- smälen	Expressen	22/8/2014
Schymans drömläge	Expressen	13/9/2014
Håll fingrarna borta från valaffischerna	Expressen	9/9/14
"Vi kommer in. Det har vi planerat för"	Expressen	31/8/2014
Vi måste öppna våra hjärnor	Expressen	7/9/14
Anledningen till att vi äger frågan är för att ni inte gör någ	Expressen	6/9/14
Därför ska du missnöjesrösta	Expressen	6/9/14
Scymans scensation	Göteborgsposten	14/9/2014
Schymans drömläge	Göteborgsposten	13/9/2014
Håll fingrarna borta från valaffischerna	Göteborgsposten	9/9/14
Valet har intetts - med polisanmälningar	Göteborgsposten	6/9/14
Vi kommer in. Det har vi planerat för.	Göteborgsposten	31/8/2014
F! mest aktiva på sociala medier	Göteborgsposten	24/8/2014
Eu-effekten har klingat av	Svenska Dagbladet	16/8/2014
Tuffa år väntar FI vid S-seger	Svenska Dagbladet	5/9/14
Höjda skatterska finansiera FI:s Sverige	Svenska Dagbladet	2/9/14
"Jämställdhet" populär glosa	Svenska Dagbladet	2/9/14
Svaret heter inte FI	Sydsvenskan	8/9/14
Stormen Gudrun har bedarrat	Sydsvenskan	6/9/14
De tänkte inte på det	Sydsvenskan	17/8/2014

