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”Sadly, he could be a sympathiser of the Sweden Democrats”
- A study of Sjöbo’s women’s resistance towards refugee hostility in their community.

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Abstract

This thesis explores seven women's resistance towards refugee hostile agendas in a Swedish municipality, Sjöbo, renowned for its anti-refugee sympathies. Departing from feminist sociology the thesis places emphasis on the interplay between gender and the field of the political by exploring how specific forms of privileged (white) femininity condition, regulate and shape women's strategies towards what they experience as refugee hostile agendas in their own communities. Through a thematic analysis of seven in-depth interviews the study outlines how the participants' resistance is conditioned by dis-identifications with the working-class of Sjöbo, investments in a normative femininity and, up to a certain extent, reproduction of their own privilege.

Keywords: Femininity, gender, feminist sociology, resistance, refugee hostile, privilege, cultural capital.

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1 Introduction

Either you are pro refugees [...] or you are against. [My translation] [Kerstin]

Kerstin, one of the women interviewed for this study, grasps the level of tension that she experiences in her everyday life regarding specific societal topics. The intensity of the polarisation that she is trying to mediate is confirmed by several sociological studies that point to the sensitivity of issues regarding citizenship and belonging in Europe (Fekte 2009) more generally and in Sweden in particular (Schierup et al 2006). While most media focus lies on events, agendas and expression of opposition towards refugees (Ekman 2015), resistance towards these agendas and the agenda of right wing xenophobic parties such as the Sweden Democrats is extensive and grows and develops from several civil society organisations such as Youth Against Racism and Refugees Welcome (Jämte 2013).

This thesis derives from my intention to explore citizens' resistance towards refugee hostile agendas. It is not uncommon that certain opinions and sympathies are ascribed to different geographical locations. This connection between place and worldview led me to explore resistance towards refugee hostile agendas in a Swedish municipality, Sjöbo, renowned for its anti-refugee sympathies, where 30 per cent of the population support parties with anti-migrant and –refugee policies (Valmyndigheten 2014a).

1.1 Aim and research questions

The study departs from the experiences of seven white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women who actively engage and challenge the hegemonic understanding of migrants and refugees as problems, threats and burdens so present in the locality they reside.

The overall aim for the study is to explore women's resistance towards a societal agenda that demands being against refugees in order to belong to the community. The study departs from feminist sociology and the concept of femininity. While previous Swedish femininity research has focused on femininity in relation to work, sexuality or class (Ambjörnsson 2003; Selberg 2012; Sohl 2014) this study fills a persisting gap in feminist research by placing emphasis on the implications of femininity to the field of the political.

This is explored through the following research questions:

- How is resistance towards a refugee hostile societal agenda conditioned among women in Sjöbo?
- In what way do their gender identities, particularly their specific form of femininity, shape and regulate their resistance?

In this thesis, I will refer to the women who express resistance towards the refugee hostile societal agenda in Sjöbo as *refugee friendly* and to sympathisers of anti-migrant and –refugee policies as *refugee hostile*. These terms are chosen because they are the categorizations the women use to separate themselves from those who they imagine are the sympathisers of anti-migrant and –refugee hostile agendas in Sjöbo. Of course, there is no way of knowing whether or not the persons who the women refer to as refugee hostile actually sympathises with these worldviews, nevertheless such information is not necessary for the aim of the study, which focuses on how the women’s resistance is conditioned in relation to what they experience as refugee hostile “others”.

1.2 Background: Research Context

This section aims at framing the context where I conducted my study: the rural (Svanström 2015) municipality Sjöbo, in southern Sweden. As this section will show, Sjöbo, due to its past and present situation, is a highly politicized municipality with a renowned refugee hostile societal agenda. Although Sjöbo’s political composition is not unique in Sweden (Valmyndigheten 2014b) certain historical aspects make Sjöbo a suitable place to study refugee advocates’ resistance towards support of anti-migrant and –refugee policies.

Although aspects of rurality is not the main focus of this study it is a relevant background in the representation conveyed about Sjöbo and its renowned refugee hostile societal agenda. The sections below will account for how the image of Sjöbo as a refugee hostile society has been conveyed during the last three decades.

1.2.1 Sjöbo

Looking at the available statistics that the Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics provides, Sjöbo share many similarities with other municipalities in Skåne (Sweden’s southernmost province). In November 2015 Sjöbo had 18 514 residents (SCB 2015) and is thus a municipality of average size in Sweden (SKL 2016). Included in the Sjöbo municipality are also the five smaller communities called Blentarp, Vollsjö, Tolånga, Lövestad and Sövde. The

number of residents with post-secondary education in Sjöbo is 26 per cent compared to the average of 39 per cent in Sweden. 79 per cent of the residents are involved in waged labour compared to 77 per cent in Sweden. The largest employment sectors in Sjöbo are construction industry and healthcare industry, with men dominating the former (16 per cent men and 2 per cent women) and women dominating the latter (13 per cent women and 3 per cent men). The mean income in Sjöbo, 229 079 SEK, is lower than the mean income 248 690 SEK, in Sweden (Sjöbo Kommun 2015).

Besides these societal characteristics, Sjöbo, in comparison to other municipalities in Sweden, has a low number of foreign-born residents: 9 per cent compared to 16 per cent in Sweden. Although the number of asylum seekers received by Sjöbo has increased over the last couple of years from nine persons during 2011 to 42 persons during 2015. During 2016 the municipality expect to receive 60 asylum seekers as part of the new government legalisation that stipulates that all municipalities in Sweden are obligated to accept asylum seekers (Länsstyrelsen 2016).

After the parliamentary elections in 2014 it became evident that a large portion of the sympathisers of the political party the Sweden Democrats¹ were living in rural municipalities in Skåne (Valmyndigheten 2014b). In Sjöbo, the Sweden Democrats became the largest party with 29.96 per cent of the votes (the left wing party Social Democrats with 23.65 per cent of the votes and the right wing party the Moderates with 23.19 per cent became the second and third largest parties) as well as the local party Sjöbo Party² received 7.16 per cent in the Municipal Council election. It is worth noting that Sjöbo is the municipality in Skåne with the highest number of Sweden Democrat supporters (Valmyndigheten 2014b).

These statistics are almost two years old now and recent opinion polls in Sweden show that the support for the Sweden Democrats has increased since the last election. Opinion polls from February 2016 reports 16.6 per cent nationally for the Sweden Democrats (Sifo 2016) compared to the 12.86 per cent at the election in September 2014 (Valmyndigheten 2014b).

Historically speaking, the public opinion against refugees is not a recent development in Sjöbo. It stems from a mobilisation and a debate that took place during the 1980s and which culminated in the fall of 1988. Sjöbo City Council, propelled by Sven-Olle Olsson, decided in 1988 to implement a consultative referendum in the municipality regarding if Sjöbo should accept asylum seekers: the results were a strong majority against. Sociologists Fryklund and

¹ The Sweden Democrats are a right wing xenophobic party who aims at reducing the granting of asylum and limiting immigration to Sweden (Müller et al 2014).

² The Sjöbo Party is a local party in Sjöbo whose main political agenda is to reduce immigration to Sjöbo (Lindström 2003: 49-51).

Peterson (1989) who studied the event, show how the outcome of the referendum, if it were to follow the previous years' municipality elections, should have been a small majority against the acceptance of asylum seekers, but instead it was a strong majority against, leading the authors to conclude that "In this sense you can say that Sjöbo clearly and unequivocally voted against refugees" (my translation) (Fryklund & Peterson 1989: 89). The authors also outline the arguments and reasons expressed by parts of Sjöbo residents for supporting the referendum, which included: criticism towards Sweden's refugee policies, the notion that the costs of refugees have an adverse effect on Swedish welfare system, increased immigration equals increased crime rates and lastly, that Swedes are in danger of becoming a minority in their own country (ibid: 134).

These arguments are very similar to those of the Sweden Democrats, who often shift the focus from a critique of migration policies to welfare chauvinistic and ethnonationalist arguments that underline the threat of the other for the nation's body (Rydgren & Ruth 2011).

1.2.2 Rural racism and the conveying of Sjöbo as a refugee-hostile municipality

The historical background of the communities seems to play a role in the spread of racism and right-wing extremism. Researchers have found a relationship between the communities that once supported the German Nazi regime and those, in which developed neo-Nazi structures already exist. [...] Besides the factors and forms of expressions of xenophobia and racism in Swedish society, the stronger isolation of immigrants and the lack of mechanisms for protecting immigrants against the every day racism seem to be the particular characteristics of racist discrimination in the Swedish countryside. (Blaschke & Ruiz Torres 2002:260)

In a country analysis about the situation of rural racism in Sweden, included in the report *Racism in Rural Areas* published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), the authors Blaschke and Ruiz Torres (2002) suggest that the relatively widespread, rural racism in Sweden may be related to the refugee decentralisation policy of the Swedish government where the policy places asylum seekers in villages and small towns. These small towns and villages often lack required infrastructure for reception and integration of asylum seeker and many of these communities have often been heavily affected by economic transformation (Blaschke & Ruiz Torres 2002: 256). While this is a relevant explanation to a certain extent, not all rural communities in Sweden responded in the same way to the demand of receiving refugees. Further, there is a history of support for the far right in Skåne connected to WWII (Lodén 2000), which offer also other explanations to the high number of anti-migrant and –refugee sympathies that still persist in the area.

Local media and local politicians are believed to contribute to racist tendencies (Brune 2000) and media has played a central role in conveying an image of rural Swedish

municipalities, and especially Sjöbo, as proponents of anti-migrant and –refugee policies (Althén & Nygren 2014).

The women interviewed for this study all tell stories of how Sjöbo for long has struggled with, what they experience is, a negative image. This negative image has its origins in the debate of the referendum in 1988 and the image of Sjöbo and its residents as supporters of anti-migrant and refugee policies have since then been produced and reproduced in media (Fryklund and Peterson, 1989; Åkerström 2010: 83). Although it has been almost three decades since the referendum, the debate and events of the late 1980s are still very present in Sjöbo. In fact, all of the women refer to the referendum and the “hostile” debate against refugees (participants words) of the 1980s in the interviews. Furthermore, all the participants assume that I have knowledge about the event of the referendum although it must be clear to them that I was not yet born by the time of the referendum, or at least very young in the late 1980s. The referendum makes up such a large portion of the history and identity of Sjöbo that the residents assume that although almost three decades ago, outsiders like me (who due to age could not have experienced it) are aware of the referendum. While the referendum received large media coverage, taking into consideration and Althén and Nygren’s (2014: 41) arguments on the decreasing political media coverage it is arguable that the now limited national reporting on rural Sweden, including Sjöbo, leaves the perception of Sjöbo as a refugee hostile municipality unchallenged.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

The disposition of the thesis is as following. Chapter two outlines previous scholarship on femininity, starting with an overall outline of femininity as an analytical concept before moving on to a discussion of Swedish research on normative femininity. Chapter three analyses the theoretical framework of the thesis, first accounting for a feminist reading of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu before exemplifying a feminist understanding of Bourdieu by an account of sociologist Beverly Skeggs’ research of femininity as cultural capital. Chapter four focuses on methodological considerations of the study inspired by feminist sociologists within the tradition of standpoint theory and feminist ethnography. The thesis ends with an analysis of how resistance towards a refugee hostile societal agenda is both possible and conditioned in Sjöbo and concludes with an outline of the paradoxes included in expressions of resistance by privileged women in Sjöbo towards refugee hostile sympathies.

2 Previous Research: Scholarship on femininity. An overview.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the research field relevant to my study. The chapter presents a short introduction to research on gender and femininity. Previous Swedish femininity research has focused on femininity in relation to work, sexuality or class (Ambjörnsson 2003; Selberg 2012; Sohl 2014). This study fills a persisting gap in feminist research by placing emphasis on the implications of femininity to the field of the political through the exploration of the concept of normative femininity.

2.1 Women as a category of analysis

The strength and the shortcomings of the category of women have been at the core of feminist debates during the last decades. It is crucial to ask the question of how it is possible to conceptualize women without reinforcing the notion of women as a homogenous group that all “suffer” the same oppression and ending up in essentialism. Some scholars, among others many sociologists (Collins 1990; Yuval Davis 2011), argue that there is a serious risk in marginalising issues of stratification when thinking and researching women as a homogenous group. Overlooking different social locations and social relations such as class, ethnicity- and sexuality when discussing gender inequalities leads to narrow theoretical analysis. Other scholars refer to the same need by emphasising pragmatic political reasons of speaking about women as a category – what postcolonial feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak defines as strategic essentialism (Ritz & Ryan 2010: 193). These scholars usually search for a way to conceptualise woman as a category of analysis without assuming that all women have the same gender identity or suffer the same forms of oppression and without isolating gender from other social relations. Judith Butler, a very influential critic of the category of women, asserts in *Gender Trouble* (1990) that “the insistence on a subject for feminism obscures the social and discursive production of identities” (interpreted by Young 1994: 716) and that feminist efforts to distinguish sex and gender itself contributes to such obscuring. Butler identifies how the notion of women as a category is rooted in internal coherence that also demands a stable and oppositional heterosexuality (Butler 1990).

While acknowledging the risk of essentialising the category of women, political philosopher Iris Marion Young establishes and develops a materialistic understanding of the category of women, arguing that “without conceptualizing women as a group in some sense, it is not possible to conceptualize oppression as a systematic, structured, institutional process” (Young 1994: 718). Young suggest that the problems with social categories from a feminist perspective interested in power relations are that classifications systems that create categories

rely on privilege and subordination, since some have the power to determine for others how they will be categorised, which categories that are important and for when.

Young's solution to the dilemma of needing to describe women as a group without being normalizing and essentialist is to conceptualise women as a seriality. Young argues that understanding gender as a seriality "provides a way of thinking about women as a collective without requiring that all women have common attributes or a common situation" (Young 1994: 723). A group in this way consists of people who are united by actions that they undertake together and where individuals acknowledges oneself as oriented toward the same goals as others – serial collectivity, without having to mutually identify with other members of the group (ibid: 724-725). In this way, "women" is an equitable social category expressing a certain kind of social unity (ibid: 728). I will in this study subscribe to Young's definition of "women" as "individuals who are positioned as feminine by the activities surrounding those structures and objects" (Young 1994: 728).

Following Young, I have chosen to focus on women in this study since it is through the doing of femininity, which cannot be understood without an analysis of gender relations, that conditions of resistance will be understood.

2.2 Femininity as an analytical concept

Gender scholarship in the discipline of sociology has recognized the importance of women's lived experiences (Smith 1992; Acker 1978) and has provided theoretical strategies to introduce gender as an analytic category within the discipline and to re-write the social through the standpoint of women (Smith 1987).

Concepts of gender and sexuality are often at the core of debates among feminist sociologists. Although most scholars agree on the cultural significance of gender and sexuality and understand gender and sexuality norms as historically and culturally constructed, diverse theoretical location from materialist to poststructuralist feminism (see for example Joan Acker 2006 and Judith Butler 2004) conceptualise gender differently (Esseveld & Mulinari 2015).

Social anthropologist Fanny Ambjörnsson provides a clear explanation of an understanding of gender that focuses not on material conditions of reproduction and production, as sociologist Joan Acker (2006) would have it, but on the doing of gender – as individual and collective identity. Women become women because of how they act as women (Ambjörnsson 2003: 12). Many scholars have during the last couple of decades similarly

argued for an understanding of gender as a process and as performative (see for example Ambjörnsson 2003; Butler 1990).

One of the more influential feminist post-structuralist scholars, philosopher Judith Butler, conceptualises gender and sexuality as performative, an account in which gender constantly needs to be *done* and in which society punishes those who fail to do their gender correctly (Butler 1990: 139-140). In Butler's words: "gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (Butler 1990: 140). But the author goes further to challenge the binary opposition between gender as cultural and sex as biological: the idea of a *natural* sex, she asserts, is a normative conception that decides not only *how* we should act as male or female but also *that* we are male or female. The body itself is a produced effect where the categories of male and female are only comprehensible in relation to heterosexuality (ibid: 14, 17, 151).

Sociologist R.W. Connell, while sharing Butler's understanding that it is not the biological characteristics of the body that determine the practice of gender, argues for the conceptualisation of gender in a slightly different way. Connell argues for gender as a social process where the body is implicated in gender relations through sexuality. However, the relation between the social and the biological is different from biological determinism in any form since human practice interacts with biological qualities in order to produce something new: it is a cultural transformative practice (Connell 1987: 77-78). Sociologist Rebecca Selberg argues, and implements in her study, that a way to avoid locking femininity with the female body is to understand femininity as behaviours, interests and ways of presenting oneself that are usually associated with those who are female (Selberg 2012: 46).

Connell (1987) further argues that some forms of femininities are privileged in relation to other and in later works Connell outlines the concept of hegemonic masculinity (see Connell 1995 and Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), which refers to the dominant position within a given pattern of gender relations. Few men can embody this hegemonic masculinity, but all men as a category must relate to this kind of masculinity and are complicit in the hegemonic project. It is difficult to translate hegemonic masculinity into femininity since hegemonic masculinity requires a superior position in relation to another (in this case women as a subordinated category). Speaking about hegemonic femininity in order to discuss differences of femininity would be to ignore the power relations between men and women and the fact that femininity is primarily about adapting to men's power and masculinity (Ambjörnsson 2003: 314; Selberg 2012: 310). Scholars such as Ambjörnsson (2003) and Selberg (2012) have instead used the concept of normative femininity when discussing privileged forms of

femininity. In this study, I will follow Selberg and Ambjörnsson's use of the concept of normative femininity to understand my participants' position in their locality as well as how their resistance towards the societal agendas is conditioned. An account of Ambjörnsson's and Selberg's understanding of and research regarding normative femininity follows below, however it is important to underline, as femininity is context specific, that the circumstances of normative femininity in Ambjörnsson and Selberg's research varies from the ones present in this study.

2.3 Normative femininity in Swedish research

In Fanny Ambjörnsson's dissertation *I en klass för sig* (2003) she examines how feminine gender positions among high school girls are created within the framework of a heteronormative order. Ambjörnsson examines how the girls' doing of femininity is guided by terms of acceptance and how they relate to a normative femininity and heterosexuality (Ambjörnsson 2003).

At the foundation of Ambjörnsson's study is the notion of "the normal" and the author shows how the concept of normality is not merely descriptive, but also functions regulatively towards acceptance and subordination of societal gender norms. Ambjörnsson exemplifies how norms only exist in relation to a conceived and designated counterpole: girls know that they are supposed to shave their legs since the opposite places them in the category of boys (Ambjörnsson 2003: 143-147).

Through the experiences of her participants, Ambjörnsson outlines what are desirable expressions of femininity. In similarity with hegemonic masculinity, normative femininity is not accessible to everyone, but Ambjörnsson's participants must all relate to the normative femininity, which includes characteristics such as moderation, control, empathy and tolerance, either by trying to embody it, or by resisting it (Ambjörnsson 2003: 57-63).

Ambjörnsson argues, in similarity with the results from Skeggs' (1997) research on working class women in England, that normative femininity can be located within a white, heterosexual, middle class position, and concludes that the participants enrolled in the vocational programme lack access to this particular form of femininity – and could not use it in the same way as the middle class students enrolled in the university-preparatory programme³. In *Femininity at Work* Selberg (2012: 16) explores the relationship between paid

³ See for example research by Diana Mulinari (2010) on how whiteness is a privileged position that can embody many different forms of femininity.

care work and ways in which gendered practices are maintained, reconfigured and challenged within the organisation of work. Drawing on Connell, she conceptualizes femininity as collective patterns of configurations of practices structured through gender relations.

Selberg suggests that normative femininity in Sweden is linked to middle-class women and women within the labour aristocracy (ibid: 50). Normative femininity in the author's conceptual framework is closely linked to notions of membership and belonging. With the concept of belonging Selberg indicates inclusion, visibility, peer respect and security – the opposite of exclusion and being deemed deviant (2012: 10). The hospital organisation environment is inclusive and protective, but only towards those who succeed in embodying normative femininity. For example, not having children by the age of forty means not subscribing to normative femininity, and is thus viewed as suspicious (ibid: 316).

This study has shown that in this context belonging is conditional on the embodiment of a certain kind of femininity. The concept of normativity captures this process through its focus on the specific relation of femininity that is associated with mothering and with moral duties of the welfare state. [...] Further, the term 'normativity' has contributed to the discussion on how and what kinds of different femininities can be conceptualized (Selberg 2012: 310)

In Selberg's research, normative femininity is tied to successful career paths. Normative femininity is what enables mobility within the organisation, towards more administrative and managing positions (which are normatively desirable because they mean moving on from performing high-touch body work). Deviating from normative femininity made the nurses in Selberg's study feel othered, and the author, referring to the experiences of one nurse, concludes that "only in contexts where cohesive practices are assumed and strongly emphasised can people who by many standards are perfectly 'normal' made to feel this way: unseen and othered at the same time" (Selberg 2012: 201).

Inspired by Selberg and Ambjörnsson's notion of the belonging, othering and mobility aspects of normative femininity I argue that in order to understand femininity as implicating resistance the intersection between class, whiteness and femininity as cultural capital must be acknowledged. These arguments will be developed further in the following theoretical framework.

3 Theoretical framework

This chapter focuses on the theoretical agenda framing this study. Feminist sociologists' reading of Pierre Bourdieu inspires the framework, with emphasis on femininity as cultural capital as argued by gender scholar Beverly Skeggs (1997). To be able to comprehend how resistance is conditioned for the women in the study, the theoretical framework also includes an exploration of the concept of privilege developed by sociologist Bob Pease (2010) and cultural theorist Ruth Frankenberg (1993). The chapter concludes with short reflections on the theoretical framework.

3.1 Bourdieu's theory of capital – a feminist sociologist reading of Bourdieu

To write a master thesis in the sociological discipline without acknowledging inequality, particularly class inequalities, appears next to impossible – due to the importance of sociological debates on class for the discipline (Breen & Rottman 1995: 454). There are numerous conceptualisations of class as an analytical category within sociology: the most established would include Marxist approaches, Weberian models and Bourdieu's approaches. Specifying the theoretical foundations of the concept of class depend upon what explanatory work the concept is aiming to do (Olin Wright 1999: 1-2). The question is thus not *if* class should be included in analysis, but *how*. Determining class membership is a matter of debate among sociology scholars. Breen and Rottman argue for how there is “widespread agreement as to what classes are in broad terms, although there is less agreement as to the details” (1995: 456) with shifting focus on income, ownership and relationship to means of production, educational qualifications and self-identification as bases of stratification (Breen & Rottman 1995: 459).

This study is inspired by a Bourdieuan understanding of class, extending beyond the analysis of class locations as determined by the relationship to the means of production to an understanding of class as culturally constructed, structurally determined and subjectively experienced and reproduced (Swartz 1997: 153-154).

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu contributed extensively to theories grasping the reproduction of inequality during his academic career (Adkins 2004: 5-6). Some of his most relevant concepts: habitus, field and capital are frequently used across disciplines. Bourdieu views the social world as “a multi-dimensional space that can be constructed empirically by discovering the main factors of differentiation which account for the differences observed in a given social universe” (Bourdieu 1979: 3). By factors of differentiation he means forms of capital, or fundamental social powers, of which there are four: economic, cultural, social and symbolic.

People upheld positions in the social spaces depending both on the volume of the capital they possess as well as its composition (Bourdieu 1987: 4). Bourdieu's theory of capital, where those who have access to various forms of capital have access to legitimised power, provides the theoretical framework needed to understand the conditions of resistance for the women in this study. Economic capital includes income, wealth and monetary assets, social capital refers to resources based on group membership and is generated through relationships, cultural capital entails symbolic elements such as education, taste, credentials and skills. Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, meaning in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state as in the form of cultural goods; and in the institutionalised state such, as with educational qualifications. Symbolic capital is the form that the three other forms of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate within the context, for all capital is context specific. All capital must be legitimated before it can have symbolic power (Bourdieu 1986: 241-244). Symbolic capital is a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands for recognition or the service of other (Swartz 1997: 90). Symbolic capital is thus referred to as "collective belief" and "a capital of trust" (ibid: 92).

Feminist scholars have engaged in the project of how Bourdieu's writings, which are pre-eminently framed in terms of class inequalities, can relate to - and possibly reframe - feminist theoretical issues regarding gender (Moi 1991). Bourdieu's social theory did not focus on the connection between gender and power (Adkins 2004; Skeggs 2004) except for his latter work on masculine domination, published in 2001 (Bourdieu 2001). Nonetheless, many feminist scholars have critically developed and extended Bourdieu's understanding (see for example Skeggs 1997; Butler 1990; Moi 1991; Lovell 2004) and sociologist Beate Kraus argues that "Bourdieu's idea of a sociology of practice and his concept of habitus, offer a theoretical framework for fundamentally reconstructing sociology to integrate gender as a central category" (2006: 119).

A feminist reading of Bourdieu does not seek to simply ask how gender relations can be included into Bourdieu's social theory, but rather, as Moi (1991) argues, a Bourdieuan approach enables the conceptualising of gender as a social category with the advantage of undercutting the traditional essentialist/nonessentialist divide (1991: 1019). Incorporating Bourdieu's theoretical approach to feminist theory allows the inclusion of even the most mundane details of gendered everyday life in analysis (Moi 1991: 1019). As structures of femininity lies at the centre of this study, I searched for a way to discuss the implication femininity has on the women's resistance, without risking essentialising that same femininity.

In the article *Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture*, literary scholar Toril Moi (1991) argues that rather than a specific and autonomous (Bourdieuian defined) field of action, gender is better conceptualized as part of fields. Reasons for this, Moi suggests, is that gender is relational, often shifting in importance, value and effect and enters into the “game” of the different social fields in ways specific to each field (Krais 2006: 128; Moi 1991: 1034-35). Moi draws on Bourdieu’s understanding of social class, which Bourdieu sees as underpinning all social fields (Bourdieu 1986), and suggests that gender should be understood in a similar way. The author understands gender not as an autonomous system but rather as dispersed across the social field: infiltrating and influencing every other category (Moi 1991: 1035). When understanding both gender and class as underpinning all categories, Moi highlights the problem of often assuming that class is the more fundamental node regulating social inequalities. To resolve the problem of the relationship between gender and class, Moi suggests “we may try to see both class and gender as belonging to the ‘whole social field’ without specifying a fixed and unchangeable hierarchy between them” (1991: 1035). I argue that this relational view of gender and class in the social field is necessary to uncover how femininity as capital is utterly linked to class, seeing as the use of femininity as capital is *dependent* on class.

The inherited and accumulated capital by a person determines which position in the social space they occupy and it influences movements and relations to other social positions, and also the chance to accumulate more capital (Skeggs 1997: 8-9). The legitimation of capital into symbolic capital brings power to it, and if one’s capital is instead delegitimised it cannot be traded as an asset. As an example, discourses are regulated by the possessors of the specific kind of capital recognized by the field as powerful capital. Discourse must thus observe the correct forms legislated by the field to avoid exclusion or assumed nonsense (Moi 1991: 1022). The Bourdieuan field is of competitive structure where the aim is to rule the field and to become the instance with power to confer or withdraw legitimacy to the other participant’s capital. This position of dominance is achieved by accruing the maximum amount of capital in a specific field (Reed-Danahay 2005: 133-134).

Legitimacy as a symbolic value is produced by the field itself and may be defined as that which is recognised by the field at any given time – most commonly identified by Bourdieu in the educational context (Reed-Danahay 2005: 52, 63). However, as argued by Moi, the different positions of different players in the field will require different strategies. Different individuals have different social backgrounds, they may be of different class, gender or

ethnicity, and thus their habitus (a system of dispositions adjusted to the field) cannot be identical (1991: 1022).

A feminist appropriation of Bourdieu assumes that gender is always a socially variable entity, which means that gender carries different amounts of symbolic capital in different contexts. Moi sums up this notion well in the following quote:

The difference between a feminist appropriation of Bourdieu and certain other forms of materialist feminism is not, of course, the emphasis on gender as a socially constructed category, but the fact that a Bourdieuan perspective also assumes that gender is always a socially variable entity, one which carries different amounts of symbolic capital in different contexts. Insofar as gender never appears in a "pure" field of its own, there is no such thing as pure "gender capital." The capital at stake is always the symbolic capital relevant for the specific field under examination. We may nevertheless start from the assumption that under current social conditions and in most contexts maleness functions as positive and femaleness as negative symbolic capital (Moi 1991: 1036).

In one of Moi's final arguments she concludes that feminists cannot assume that femaleness carries the same extent of negative capital through the course of life or in all social fields (for example we will see in Skeggs' study how femininity is one of the few forms of capital available to the working-class women) and she argues that femaleness may sometimes be converted from a liability to an advantage – especially when other forms of symbolic capital are accumulated (1991: 1038). Moi writes, "sometimes a woman is a woman and sometimes she is much less so" (Moi 1991: 1038) and although I agree with most of Moi's aspects of gender as a socially variable entity, her argument that gender is sometimes less relevant in the social field seems to me to be too simplistic. I argue that gender always informs our ability to acquire capital whether it is economical, cultural, social or symbolic and thus can never be less significant in such an analysis. Further, as we will see in the outlining of Skeggs' research below, femininity was always present in the women's lives. They constantly needed to relate to it, it was never optional.

In this sense, femininity is very much a public performance dependent upon validation by others. Appearances [...] are more than just surfaces. [...] They do not recognize themselves by the category of femininity but their appearance (amongst other practices) are central to how they know themselves. This suggests that women are not feminine by default but that femininity is a carefully constructed appearance and/or form of conduct that can be displayed. (Skeggs 1997: 107)

By these words, to ever be able to *not* relate to femaleness (if socially coded as such) and femininity seems as nothing less than impossible. Beverly Skeggs argues for how femininity as cultural capital can only be capitalized on if it is symbolically legitimated and femininity as a symbolical legitimate form of cultural capital is not accessible to all different variants of femininity (Skeggs 2004: 24), which will be discussed in the next section.

All of the women participating in this study have post secondary education and have (or have had) employments consistent with their education. In accordance with Bourdieu's theory

of capital they thus have institutionalized cultural capital. My understanding of the class position of the women in this study can be exemplified by how sociologist David Swartz conceptualises Bourdieu's notion of class as "defined in terms of 'similar positions in social space' that provide 'similar conditions of existence and conditioning' and therefore create 'similar dispositions' which in turn generate 'similar practices'" (Swartz 1997: 153) and where the women's access to cultural capital (foremost through education and employment) locates them as middle-class.

3.1.1 Becoming respectable – femininity as cultural capital

In her study on working-class women in England, Skeggs (1997) outlines how femininity can be seen as a form of cultural capital. The ability to capitalize on femininity is however restricted and depends on the ability to express a certain kind of femininity. The emergence of femininity as an ideal was produced through textuality in the eighteenth century, which produced a difference among women where white middle-class femininity was defined as the ideal. At the end of the nineteenth century femininity was established as a middle-class sign, as a particular form of womanhood and investments in ideal femininity enabled access to limited status and moral superiority (Skeggs 1997: 99).

In 1997 Beverly Skeggs explored how (white) working class women in England inhabit and occupy the social positions of class- and femininity. At the centre of the study was the concept of respectability, a concept that according to Skeggs contains judgments of class, 'race', gender and sexuality. Skeggs (1997) shows how, through examples of how the women in her study constantly have to relate to it, different groups have different possibilities to resist or display respectability.

Since I locate the women participating in this study as middle-class, Skeggs research on working-class women could be seen as a problematic choice for the theoretical framework for this study. However, the relevance – and in fact, necessity – of Skeggs' analysis of femininity and dis-identification with working-class background to understanding the experiences of my participants will become evident in the analysis.

Using Bourdieu's metaphors of capital, Skeggs establishes how a group of white working class women's inheritance provides them with different amounts of capital, which influenced their movements through social space. Middle-class women, unlike working-class women, Skeggs argues, have access to capital that through, for instance, education and employment can be traded-up to symbolic capital and economic reward. The working-class women in Skeggs study, who found themselves without, or with very little, cultural capital, instead

“were in the process of continually halting losses rather than trading-up or accruing extra value” (Skeggs 1997: 161). Skeggs shows how working-class women, in attempts to acquire cultural capital, invest in a caring femininity and claims for respectability. Skeggs proclaims that the women’s attempts to claim respectability, where discontinuing from caring would potentially included great losses, locked them into systems of self-regulation and monitoring (Skeggs 1997: 161-162). In her own words: “the women produced themselves as a particular sort of ‘women’ in relation to public narratives of what it means to be a working-class woman” (1997: 162). This could be connected to what Moi identifies as that discourses are regulated by the possessors of the specific kind of capital recognized by the field and that discourse must thus observe the correct forms legislated by the field to avoid exclusion or assumed nonsense (Moi 1991: 1022). There are limitations to which positions the women in Skeggs research can hold and thus they invest in being what they perceive as being normal. Occupying a middle-class position instead entails a certain amount of freedom. Middle-class women have far more alternatives of who they *can be* and thus middle-class women do not have to try “to pass” to the same extent as working-class women, to gain capital as their capital already exists embedded in their class position (Skeggs 1997: 91).

The women have few opportunities of capitalizing on their inherited capital, as their access to routes such as higher education and primary labour market is restricted. One of the few opportunities available to them to accumulate cultural capital is to invest in caring femininity, through education in the field of care work (Skeggs 1997: 57-58).

Skeggs also outlines how the women in her study does not identify as working-class but rather systematically dis-identify from their class backgrounds and make efforts through femininity and respectability to distance themselves from the label of working-class (1997: 74).

Due to their lack of access to economic resources and cultural ways the women experience working class identity as boundaries and exclusions. The women relate to class by dis-identification from what they argue is the “real working class” - someone without a job or education (ibid: 75-76). Skeggs writes, “The real working class for these women is something from which they are desperately trying to escape. It is why they are doing college courses. They want to be seen as different.” (1997: 76). The women are well aware of the negative values associated with the working-class and Skeggs highlights how the women rarely addressed matters of class-identification (ibid: 82).

When outlining how the women display their appearances and their homes, Skeggs notices how they always relate to it in terms of an external judgemental other, which positions them

as surveillant of themselves – they constantly doubt their own judgments. Skeggs refers to this as the emotional politics of class (1997: 89-90). One of the main signifiers of middle-class dispositions is the certainty of which one knows that something they are doing is right, which is something that working-class women can never hold for sure (see also Bourdieu 1987). Skeggs argues how working-class women cannot make use of social spaces in the same way because of their doubt about themselves and that they feel as if the need to prove themselves through every object and action (1997: 90). Thus I argue that middle-class women have a greater liberty of action, which will be exemplified in the analysis. As Skeggs clarifies, middle-class women can of course feel inadequate and be normalized, however, their anxiety is not of the class-based character as it is for working-class women.

By referring to the research of Skeggs I show how investments in femininity can accrue cultural capital and as will be shown in the analysis below, this study examines how, and if, cultural capital can be used to provide a certain liberty of action – which can in turn be used to express resistance.

3.2 (White) Privilege

There are many reasons for including a discussion of scholarship on privilege in the theoretical frame of this study. First, I want to make sure not to under-theorize the fact that this study explores *white* women's⁴ resistance towards what they themselves experience as a refugee hostile societal agenda. Although this section will address various forms of privilege, the focus lies on the privilege of whiteness (Frankenberg 1993; Pease 2010). Some forms of unearned privileges have more social consequences than others in specific contexts (Pease 2010: 20) and the circumstances of the women's resistance lead me to argue for the emphasis on privilege evolving from their positions as not only middle-class but also embodying whiteness, a privilege that the women themselves take for granted and seldom recognize.

The second reason for this section is that there are prominent connections between different forms of capital and diverse forms of privilege. Referring to femininity as capital demands an exploration of diverse forms of femininity, or rather underlines the need to explore how femininity is also shaped by other social relations, among them ethnicity (Ambjörnsson 2003: 26).

Sociologist Bob Pease's book *Undoing privilege – Unearned advantages in a divided world* places emphasis on how privilege is actively reproduced by members of privileged

⁴ Beverly Skeggs, among other scholars, has been criticised for under-theorizing the fact that her participants were *white* working-class women.

groups (2010: 17). Focusing on the intersectionality of privilege and oppression (Pease 2010: 20) as well as acknowledging how they mutually reinforce each other, Pease discusses privilege on basis of class, gender, racial formations, heterosexuality and ability. The women participating in this study hold most of these privileges: they are white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied women.

Understanding how different privileges shape femininity, and thus its influence on femininity as cultural capital, as well as putting the conditions of whiteness into perspective, can be done through exploring arguments of privilege evolving from whiteness as a location of privilege.

In sociologist Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) research regarding the interplay of perception and reality in shaping the structures of racism, she argues for how race shapes white women's lives – a shape and a location which she calls "whiteness". White people and people of colour live racially structured lives and she argues for how whiteness is complexly constructed. Its intersectional construct she explains as follows:

And if whiteness varies spatially and temporally, it is also a relational category, one that is coconstructed with a range of other racial and cultural categories, with class and with gender. This coconstruction is, however, fundamentally asymmetrical, for the term "whiteness" signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality and privilege rather than disadvantage (Frankenberg 1993: 236-237).

Whiteness, similar to gender, is a process where the "dominance" of whiteness is something that is performed and practiced. It is thus the activities of people in their everyday lives that reproduce racial inequalities (Pease 2010: 120-121). However, as Lena Sohl notes in her study on women's upward class mobility, where she discusses the presence of whiteness in the women's experiences of class mobility, the women in her study view whiteness as something they "have been given" rather than something that they maintain and reproduce (Sohl 2014: 347). Similarly, the women I talked to did not understand their social location as privileged.

Similar to Skeggs' arguments on how respectability is located in the middle-class bodies, Pease highlights how members of privilege groups belong to an "unmarked" category that identifies what society takes for granted – privileged groups represent what is natural, normal and right, in other words: the norm (Pease 2010: 10-13). Sohl discusses how the women in her study had trouble answering questions regarding the consequences of their whiteness on their class mobility and emphasises the difficulties in talking about one's privileges (2014: 341-342). In accordance with Skeggs, Sohl also establishes the relationship between middle-class positions and whiteness. In her words, "whiteness can re-shape the perception of class

belonging through the fact that passing as white can facilitate and enable passing as middle-class” (my translation) (Sohl 2014: 346). She also establishes that the women, who are positioned as white in her study, relate to whiteness as a lack of obstacles instead of an asset and enabler (2014: 347).

In regards to this discussion it is also worth to shortly note that the concept of ‘race’ is rarely present in Swedish societal discourse - whereas the notion of ‘Swedes’ and ‘migrants’ is used to create boundaries between those that belong to the nation and those that do not. These boundaries are however coded through notions of race and ethnicity (Mulinari 2002: 112) where a ‘Swedish person’ is assumed to be white (Sohl 2014: 343). This is something that Ambjörnsson also refers to when exploring how the different attitudes towards ‘immigrants’ among the women in her study contribute to establish and maintain the notion of a specific Swedish, white femininity (2003: 342-344).

I shortly included these examples of how Swedish gender scholars have analysed the presences and conditions of whiteness in their studies in order to show illustrations of the role (white) privileges play in the shaping of forms of femininity.

3.3 Concluding remarks

Untangling the relationship between class, femininity and privilege proved to be more complicated than I first anticipated. By emphasising how femininity can be understood as a form of cultural capital, Beverly Skeggs underlines the necessity of a class perspective when examining femininity. However, as Skeggs also argues, whiteness and middle-classness as well as other social relations such as sexuality shape what is considered respectable femininity and thus a perspective of privilege was added. Therefore, perspectives of femininity, class and privilege, that interlink, shape the theoretical framework.

4 Method and Methodology

This chapter includes a reflection of the methodological approach chosen for this study. The study follows a feminist inspired frame towards research methodologies (Letherby 2003) and the chapter will outline how feminist inspired methodological approaches affect the research. The chapter is organised as follows: a discussion of the epistemological and methodological basis of the research and how it reflects on the methods decided upon is followed by an outline of research design as well as a discussion of the implementation and participants. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations and frames the basis for analysis.

4.1 Feminist research

To ignore questions of methodology is to assume that knowledge comes from nowhere allowing knowledge makers to abdicate responsibility for their productions and representations (Skeggs 1997: 17)

In many ways this quote by feminist sociologist Beverly Skeggs sums up the basis for my methodological standpoint. In the convoluted field that is methodology I have learned about the responsibility that comes with doing research. It is through dialogues with feminist sociologists (Smart 2009; Smith 2004) that I have begun to understand how to best confront, identify and act upon this responsibility; particularly how to produce research that do not reproduce already existing stereotypes and that takes responsibility for its productions and representations.

Feminist methodologies, like most research methodologies, are subject to much debate. Feminist researchers often struggle between the notion of absolute truth and absolute relativism: on the one hand striving to produce knowledge about what gendered lives are “really like” in order to identify the link between gender and inequalities and on the other hand the contextual understanding that the “reality” and “truth” that the feminist researcher “discovers” are socially constituted in particular situations, cultures and ways of thinking (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2012: 60-64, 76-77). The predominant strength of feminist research and especially standpoint theory as developed by several feminist sociologists, I argue, is that instead of forcing the researcher into an intermediate position between absolute truth or absolute relativism, the researcher can make visible the connections of power and knowledge and produce valid knowledge of gender relations through positioning, situated knowledge and careful epistemological and ontological considerations. I position myself as a feminist researcher, and this thesis as feminist sociology.

4.2 Standpoint theory: epistemological considerations

The epistemological basis for this research derives from feminist standpoint theory. There are many different notions and understandings of standpoint theory (see for example Harding 1991, 2004; Haraway 1988; Collins 1997; Skeggs 1997) and it has often been the source of debate among scholars. The debate circles around; experience and *whose* experience we value as knowledge; *objectivity* or rather how to deal with the fact that researchers are always subjective in some aspects; difficulties of *generalisation* and the value of generalisation due to difference in conditions of women's lives; *exploitation* and *disempowerment* when claiming to represent and speak for others including the difficulty of "giving voice" to others.

One of the main challenges among those listed above is the difference in conditions of women's lives, which pose theoretical difficulties of generalisation, when producing knowledge about gender relations. Standpoint theory responds to this dilemma through the idea, although fragmented, of experience as epistemological foundation (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002: 76). Haraway (1988) and Skeggs (1997) criticise that some standpoint theorists claim that positions of oppression generate epistemic privilege. While Haraway abandons the understanding of knowledge production from women's experiences as privileged knowledge in favour of partial visions and socially situated knowledges, Skeggs argues that standpoint theory grants authority and hierarchy to certain groups while silencing others. Further, when using the experience from "groups" as knowledge, researchers have to be careful not to override diversity by representing experience as a unifying phenomenon (Selberg 2012: 78).

In Skeggs' extensive study on working class women in England, she uses the concept of experience as a way of understanding how the women in her study occupied the category "woman" – a category that she means is "classed and raced and produced through power relations and through struggle across different sites in space and time" (Skeggs 1997: 27). Skeggs argues that it is "through the experience of subjective construction that we come to know and be known" (ibid: 28). Shying away from the formula of being = knowing (which she suggests other scholars, for example Patricia Hill Collins, subscribe to) Skeggs argues that viewing experiences as subjective constructions allows for the production of a knowing subject in which identities are continually in production rather than fixed (Skeggs 2001: 432; Skeggs 1997: 28).

The understanding of my participants' narratives is guided by Skeggs' view of experience. I have understood their resistance towards a societal agenda as subjective constructions, which allows their experiences and knowledge to change over time. Allowing this change is crucial since the experience of resistance varies among the participants, as well as their

expression of and motivation for resistance varied over time. The category of “women who express resistance towards a societal agenda” must be understood as produced through power relations and struggle across different sites in space and time, like Skeggs’ understanding of the category “woman”.

4.3 Research design: Feminist ethnography

Skeggs defines ethnography as “a theory of the research process – an idea about how we should do research” (2001: 426). Ethnography has the capacity of challenging established views (Blommert & Dong 2010: 10) and an inductive research approach allowing the experiences from the participants to guide the research and theory. There are many different definitions of ethnography and some argue that ethnography must take place over a long period of time and with a variety of data collecting methods. This study lacks those characteristics but I still define my study as an ethnographic study, agreeing with Skeggs that “the definition as ethnographic is based on not just the methods used, but the questions asked and how they are analysed” (Skeggs 2001: 427). I further argue that it is a feminist ethnography – defined by its attention to gender and reflexivity (ibid: 429).

Within sociology there is a vivid debate on ethnographic methods and the emphasis on induction have been seen as both simplistic and problematic since it is based on the notion that there is a real world that can be captured and understood by the ethnographer (O’Reilly 2009: 104-105; Skeggs 2001). Critical ethnographers argue that realities only exist within the discursive representation of it (Skeggs 2001: 431) and sociologist Rebecca Selberg means that ethnography needs to be framed by theory in order to gain insights (Selberg 2012: 80). This research is influenced by the inductive approach although subscribing to the criticism of a real world to discover and to the idea that ethnography needs to be framed by theory. Hence my research methods have been guided by sociologist Lena Sohl’s (2014) way of conducting her research: I initially brought with me theoretical tools, but allowed myself to shift between the empirical material and theory so that the interviews would sometimes guide me towards new theories and sometimes have me continue with the one that guided me initially (Sohl 2014: 69).

Critical ethnographers have argued for research as a way to “give voice to the voiceless” (O’Reilly 2009: 65). However, different scholars (Skeggs 2001; Stacy 1988) have discussed the danger in entering your research with the notion of your research objects as voiceless. Although I argue that (feminist) research should aim at providing space for women who are seldom represented in research and never as the norm, I view the notion of people as

“voiceless” as disempowering. “Giving voice” includes a great risk of exploitation, where researchers tell their own story instead of the ones to which they are claiming to give voice. Judith Stacy argues that it is always the researcher who narrates and authors the ethnography, meaning that the researcher conditions the research product and it is the researcher’s understanding that is presented (Stacy 1988: 21-23). One can thus question if it is ever possible for research to show others’ true voices. This study does not claim to speak for a group of women, but rather aims to tell their stories.

Feminist research has fought to reclaim, validate and provide space for women’s experience and fought an epistemological battle over whose experiences count as knowledge (Skeggs 1997: 24-25). As explained earlier, my choice of participants is based on their engagement in expressing resistance towards the refugee hostile societal agenda in Sjöbo. But why did I choose not interview men who express resistance? Selberg (2012) argues for her selection of female nurses in two ways. Firstly, hospital wards are predominantly female workplaces, which is also true for the field where I conducted my study. The members of the volunteer organisations that operate in Sjöbo are by vast majority people who identify themselves as women and the same applies to the area of employment included in expressing resistance. Secondly Selberg argues that the gender practices formed in a setting which is “dominated by the one group (women) are not necessarily shaped in constant relation to the other group (men). That is to say, femininity at work is not necessarily or exclusively practiced and maintained in the everyday vis-à-vis male co-workers” (Selberg 2012: 91). Similarly I argue that it is not the construction of femininity in relation to masculinity that is focus for this study, but rather the conditions and implications of femininity in regards to resistance. Thus this study focuses on interviews with women.

4.3.1 Participants of the study

In the introduction I argued for the choice of Sjöbo as research context. The next phase of the research then included finding participants who could be identified as expressing resistance towards the refugee hostile societal agenda in Sjöbo. In this study, *expressing resistance* is defined either by the participants’ voluntary commitments or the focus of their employment – which, by their categorisation, included activities categorised as refugee friendly.

I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with women, all residing in Sjöbo municipality. Of the seven women, three are working with the local Save the Children, who

offers language practice and homework help to newcomers⁵ in Sjöbo. The municipality employs three of the other women and their work tasks involve facilitating what is conceptualised as “the integration of newcomers” to Sjöbo. The seventh woman works as a municipal politician for one of the oppositional parties and her work tasks involve influencing the public opinion towards more refugee-friendly policies. All of the women are middle aged, ranging from 44 to 72 years old and they all have post-secondary education. Three of them are educated teachers, two are educated social workers, one journalist and the last one is an educated guidance counsellor. As argued previously, I categorise them all as part of a well-established and solid white middle-class in Sjöbo due to their level of education and their employment. Four of the women are currently living in heterosexual relationships and the other three are living alone, although they have previously lived in heterosexual relationships. Five of the women have children. All of the women are residents of Sjöbo municipality but the timeframe for their residency varies from the longest residency of thirty years and the shortest of six years.

4.3.2 Access to the field and interviews

I began my search for participants by sending emails to voluntary organization that I knew operated in Sjöbo and whose agenda I identify as expressing resistance towards the refugee hostile societal agenda in Sjöbo. The organisations I contacted were: The Red Cross, Save the Children and “Allt för Sjöbo” (All for Sjöbo). The organisations forwarded my email to their members and that is how I made contact with the two first participants. After the two initial interviews I gained contact with the other participants through snowballing techniques (Letherby 2003: 104) meaning that the women I interviewed would give me names of other women who might be interested in participating, and who fit the description of expressing resistance, and I would then reach out to them via email.

The email contained a short introduction of myself and the research, which I presented as a research focusing on women, living in Sjöbo, who through work or voluntary commitments were engaged in society. I also attached a formal information letter about the research⁶.

In this initial state I received few responses but after the first contact with members from Save the Children I had no trouble finding participants. In fact, besides a couple of unanswered emails, all of the women that were recommended to me gladly participated.

⁵ The term ”newcomer” refers to the Swedish word ”nyanländ” which is often used in Swedish societal discourse about migrants and refugees who recently arrived to Sweden.

⁶ See appendix 1

The initial low response rate I experienced was probably due to the fact that email accounts connected to organisations are often managed by someone in their spare time and thus have lower priority than individual email accounts. When I later emailed individuals directly, and also wrote that someone had recommended them, the response rate was high.

The interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes, some were held in the participants' homes, and some at their workplaces. I conducted semi-structured interviews, where I had prepared a couple of different themes⁷ for us to discuss. However, I allowed myself to stray from the interview guide to ensure that the interviews, as Blommert and Dong argues, could take the form of a conversation (2010: 44). All of my interviews can be categorised as in-depth interviews and took the form of a conversation where I took an active part and not only asked questions but rather discussed subjects with the participants.

Discussing the history of interview-techniques Letherby (2003) accounts for how the interviewer have been advised to have specific interview behaviour, guided by being completely neutral and in control, in order to avoid to bias the answer. The benefits are argued to be that any researcher could conduct the research and the answers from the interviews would be the same. I would argue for the opposite, where I instead am of the opinion that the reason why my interviews proceeded like conversations and that the women so happily shared their life stories with me is *precisely* because of who I am, where my young age and gender are attributes that made me seem less intimidating as a researcher (Letherby 2003: 81-83) and I will return to this later on.

4.3.3 Analysing the women's experiences

I conducted a thematic analysis, which means that after transcribing the interviews the material was organised into different analytical themes⁸. I approached my material empirically, meaning that I let the themes derive from the empirical material (Widerberg 2002: 144-145). However, in the process of the thematic analysis the empirical material was filtered and understood through the theoretical frame I had explored previously. This process can be described as dialectic move between data and theory. Sociologist Lena Sohl refers to it as “theory influencing empiricism” and “empiricism influencing theory”, where from the beginning, you bring with you a theoretical framework, through which you can understand the complexity of your material, but the empirical material can also expose shortcomings of the

⁷ See appendix 2

⁸ For more detailed information on how to do a thematic analysis see Widerberg 2002.

theory. Theory and empiricism is intertwined (Sohl 2014: 69-71). As an example, theory guided me towards the discussion of privilege, which I in the interviews would discuss by asking the participants about their position in the society.

Further aspects include detecting “silence” in an interview (Widerberg 2002: 45), which could mean identifying discussions of femininity and privilege, although not identified as femininity or privilege by the participants. Both Skeggs (1997) and Selberg (2012) examine class and gender in their research. They proclaim that although their participants rejected the notion of class as something meaningful and argued for gender as a biological fact, Skeggs and Selberg did not abandon such concepts. Instead they pursued analysis trying to explain their responses in line with the theoretical framework. Similarly, the women’s, participating in this study, dis-identification with the working class played a significant role for the process of identifying discussions of normative femininity through what Widerberg (2002: 167) refers to as clarifying different subject positions. Statements such as “No, I am not the norm in Sjöbo” from the participants would thus inform the analysis of normative femininity.

Interpretation is a large part of analysing empirical material. Skeggs proclaims, “knowing is always mediated through the discourses available to us to interpret and understand our experience” (Skeggs 1997: 29). In previous chapters I outlined the concepts of femininity, privilege and femininity as cultural capital which are concepts that guide my analysis and thus to some extent have been attached by me and not identified by the participants themselves. It is thus likely that the participants would interpret the empirical material in a way that differs from mine, since we have different contextual positions and situated knowledge.

Sociologist Lena Sohl (2014) highlights how empirical data collecting should not be seen as separate from the analysis. Collection method, selected interview questions, analysis and theoretical understanding are interconnected processes (Sohl 2014: 67). I organised my empirical material in analytical themes, but the analysis also happened continuously in my mind. I would do short reflections and notes during interviews, connecting and comparing one interview with another. I would think about the interviews I just conducted while driving home from it and write down my thoughts whenever I had the chance. I would read journals and study theoretical concepts and suddenly remember something from an interview that I had not noticed before. Similarly to Sohl, I performed the analysis work continuously (2014: 68-69).

The feminist research debate usually places large emphasis on the importance of positionality and reflexivity in regards to research, and below follow a discussion on positionality in regards to this study.

4.4 Positioning

Feminists have argued that no research is value-free or objective and one of standpoint theory's main contributions to epistemology is the critical examination of notions of objectivity within social science (Selberg 2012: 77). The (feminist) researcher "knows" from a specific and partial social location and ways of thinking and authorizing knowledge are socially constituted. Feminist standpoint theory thus argues for the importance of researchers to position themselves and question their "knowing self" (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2012:64-66). Through positioning and reflexivity the researcher is made visible. Queer theorist Jin Haritaworn emphasises that positionality urges researchers to reflect on where they stand, to define their speaking positions and how they relate to others, especially whom they claim to speak for, in terms of power relations (Haritaworn 2008: 2.3). However, as Diana Mulinari emphasises, positioning yourself does not only mean noting the power differences between researcher and participant, but understanding how these differences create the context for what will be said, asked and kept silent (Mulinari 1999: 49). Even more so, Mulinari argues that researcher's own biography will influence both the research topic chosen as well as how and under which conditions we are allowed access to a field. She means that it is important to examine analytically one's own biography, reflect over how this is interpreted by participants and to analytically understand the consequences of one's own story during data collection (Mulinari 2005:116). As mentioned above, my access to the field, and even more so, the answers I received during the interviews were conditioned by my position within the research context. The fact that I and the participants shared educational experiences and that I am at least twenty years younger than all the participants as well as our shared experiences identifying as women all affected the power relations between us. I was not perceived as an authority researcher but as someone who they could speak freely to about their life experiences. Further, my position as a white woman probably affected how the white women of this study related to me (Mulinari 2005: 116). It is also imaginable that it would be more challenging for the women to talk about refugee hostile sympathies with a researcher of migrant background.

Of even more importance is the fact that I consciously tried to position myself as an ally to the women. The information letter, which was sent to the participants when asking them to participate in the study, was carefully authored and contained arguments that I believed would appeal to the potential participants. This was of course guided by my position in the research and my presumptions of the women. The letter included a paragraph explaining how women in rural areas have long been excluded from research and that a negative image of rural areas

is often produced and reproduced. Had I been looking for different participants, I might have chosen to present different facts. The facts I presented were of course grounded in research and statistics, however my point is merely that the researcher has the power to choose what research to present to their potential participants in this initial state.

The assumption about the women turned out to be both true, and untrue, which will be discussed further in the analysis. It is important to note that I do identify myself as an ally to the women in my study and I found myself being constantly impressed with their work.

Sometimes during interviews I would highlight my own biography and experience as a volunteer worker in different organisations. I could have chosen not to share this information, but because I consider it to have a positive effect on the interview I did share my own stories.

Similar to Mulinari (2005), Blommert and Dong (2010) also discuss silence. Silence is not an absence of speech, but a production. Silence during an interview indicates hesitation (because we find something controversial, sensitive or emotional), that we do not want to answer or that we have to think (Blommert & Dong 2010: 45-46). Although the main part of my interviews went well I still encountered some difficulties regarding what could or could not be asked. When asking the women about femininity it was usually met with silence. In the end of the interviews I would steer the conversation towards the connection between femininity and their choice of career or voluntary commitments. This turned out to be a confusing question that the women did not know how to answer. They were unsure of what I was asking and often ended up answering something else, or steering away from the question. This does not mean that the concept of femininity was not present in their life; however, they did not use the word femininity to articulate such connections. Here my part as a researcher becomes clearer. The empirical material will be understood through my vocabulary. I have tried to be as reflexive as possible when interpreting the empirical material but I as the researcher have, like Haritaworn stresses, the last word in terms of an analysis and thus I will throughout try to make visible my part in the narrative (Haritaworn 2008: 2.4). Haritaworn writes

How we arrive at our sample, what questions we ask of our participants, how they respond to these questions, which parts of our co-produced dialogue we extract, and how we edit and interpret them, are at least as much a function of our own positionings as those of our interviewees (Haritaworn 2008: 2.4).

I view reflections of the researcher's implications on research as part of a larger ethical discussion within science and I have tried to be exhaustive and comprehensive regarding my own position in this study. Below follow further discussions of ethical considerations.

4.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical decisions in this research were guided by the Swedish Research Council's Codex (2016). Verbal consent was obtained from all participants. When reaching out to the participants, and once more before we started the interview, I explained how they would be kept anonymous in the research, I asked their permission to record the interview (they all said yes) and that they could at any time choose to end the interview as well as they in a later stage could decide to withdraw from the study and I would then exclude their interviews from the empirical material. I also explained how the material would only be used for research purposes. Thereby the study subscribes to the four principles of individual protection requirement: the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement and the utilization requirement.

As discussed before, the strength of feminist research is its sensitivity to power relations. Ethics must inform throughout the research process, and reflect on if the research re-inscribes the researched into powerlessness and without agency (Skeggs 2001: 434). The participants of this study cannot be viewed as powerless or without agency. Letherby concludes that letting women speak for themselves and influence the research agenda increases the chances of producing work which women can use to challenge stereotypes, oppression and exploitation (2003: 85). As an argument this influenced my decision to disclose the location of the study, Sjöbo. The women in this study participated because they wanted a chance to show a different perspective of Sjöbo. As will become clear, they were all aware of Sjöbo's societal agenda and they did not agree with it, in fact, most of them argued that one reason for their resistance was precisely that they were living in Sjöbo. By participating in this study they saw the opportunity to communicate an image of Sjöbo different than the one conveyed in media and by hearsay and I have tried my utmost to retell their stories fairly.

Although I decided to disclose Sjöbo as the research location I have, following the Swedish Research Council ethical frame, changed the names of the women in the study. Seeing as Sjöbo is a rather small municipality I have, in the aspects where it is not of importance, also chosen to not specify their occupation or role in the voluntary commitments since it could contribute to them easily being identified.

5 “Sadly, he could be a sympathiser of the Sweden Democrats” – analysing resistance towards refugee hostility

This analysis is centred on three themes evolving from my empirical material. It starts off with an outlining of the women’s relationship towards Sjöbo. The second section explores issues of femininity and the process of constant dis-identification with Sjöbo and concludes with a discussion regarding normative femininity and its implication on resistance, which will lead us into the final chapter that locates resistance towards refugee hostile discourses at the core of Sjöbo society.

5.1 The typical Sjöbo resident

The typical Sjöbo resident? The typical Sjöbo resident has dogs, at least two dogs maybe, preferably at least one car, and a nice garden if they live in a house. Sadly he could be a sympathizer of the Sweden Democrats or the Sjöbo Party. [My translation] [Maj-Louise]

As the quote indicates, I asked Maj-Louise, a retired teacher, how she would define Sjöbo’s population. Her answer illustrates the complexity of this question, as we can detect feelings of contempt and resignation towards what the participant names as the “typical” resident of the municipality where she has been living for the past 30 years. Maj-Louise is not alone in this account of Sjöbo residents: similar descriptions are found in all of the interviews. Starting the analysis by introducing the women’s own experiences and ideas of Sjöbo provides the reader with an understanding of the discrepancy between the women’s experiences of their own local community and the image portrayed by media and public discussions, which is important in order to fully comprehend for the following discussions.

5.1.1 “It is simply not true” – representations of Sjöbo

I interviewed seven women for this study and as the sections below will focus on the similarities among the women and their experiences, I feel the need also to highlight the intricacy of their experience and relationship to Sjöbo. As mentioned previously in this thesis, all of the women are well aware of the public image of Sjöbo and this public image was a subject in all of the interviews. The following excerpts from the interviews show that although this awareness, they all have their own “truths” of what Sjöbo, and its societal agenda, is.

Throughout the analysis the women will appear homogenous in many aspects, which they in regards to their position within the society and the privileges they share (whiteness and middle-classness) also are. However, this section aims at showing how they articulate the image of Sjöbo slightly differently, and thus also understand theirs, and others, resistance

differently. I also hope that I can illustrate to the reader how impressive, clever and compassionate these women are, and I also encourage the reader to be humble towards the effect the common reputation constantly attached to Sjöbo have on these women.

As the women and I talk about their daily lives: their families, their careers and leisure, an image of how they experience life in Sjöbo is disclosed. The aspects of what they appreciate, and not appreciate are outlined. Regarding what the women appreciate about life in Sjöbo they are surprisingly in agreement. They all highlight the closeness to nature, the calmness of the society, the relatively low living expenses and foremost, the social aspects of living in a small, rural society as Sjöbo. They refer to it as a form of belonging and community that they all value and, due to their involvement in voluntary organisation or the characteristics of their employment, they also speak about being well known in the area.

Gunilla, a 47-year-old woman, moved to Sjöbo from a small municipality outside of Malmö seven years ago. Although a couple of years have passed since she separated from the man she initially moved to Sjöbo for, she still lives in the area. I ask her why she decided to stay:

I enjoy the closeness to the nature and the people who live here. People say ‘hello’ to one another on the streets, even if they don’t know one another, and I like that! [My translation] [Gunilla]

Kerstin is a 61-year-old woman who grew up in one of Sweden’s larger cities but has been living in small, rural municipalities around Skåne since she finished university. She moved to Sjöbo six years ago. When I ask about what she likes the most about Sjöbo she declares:

It’s the relationships, no doubt about it. I mean, out here your neighbour’s neighbour is also your neighbour. I call people even 100 meters away my neighbours. You say ‘hello’ to one another, talk about your dogs, and I don’t remember it being like that in the city. [My translation] [Kerstin]

When discussing the image of Sjöbo with the participants I would usually frame the questions about their experience of this image by talking about the complex picture of Sjöbo, and how I have the notion of media usually referring to Sjöbo as a society with a refugee hostile societal agenda –referring to Sjöbo’s history and election results. Annika’s answer, a 48-year-old woman who works with what is conceptualised as “the integrating of newcomers”, exemplifies one of the reactions I receive when asking about the experience of the image conveyed about Sjöbo:

You mean that Sjöbo is still stuck in that refugee hostile mind-set? But that is just an old image of Sjöbo that still persist among people who haven’t been here and just refer to old merits [the referendum] and they still speak of the time with Sven-Olle⁹ [...] Of course there are still one or two

⁹ Sven-Olle is the name of the politician who initiated the referendum on 1988.

who thinks like him, but that is nothing unique for Sjöbo. Sure we had Sven-Olle but I don't think it's any different in for example Simrishamn and Ystad¹⁰. [My translation] [Annika]

This quote discloses the very complex relationship Annika, as well as the other women in the study, have to the image of Sjöbo. Annika feels the need to distance Sjöbo from the politics represented by Sven-Olle, since she does not believe that many Sjöbo residents sympathise with his refugee hostile ideas anymore. In the next sentence she admits to that some residents may still sympathise with refugee hostility but she dismisses this fact by arguing that refugee hostile sympathies are not unique for Sjöbo but exist in other municipalities in Skåne as well.

The following conversation between me and Maj-Louise portray a similar feeling experienced by Maj-Louise:

M-L: I think that they have highlighted the negative image of Sjöbo for too long. And I know that people all the time.. Sjöbo have been a symbol for refugee hostility and that is *absolutely* not true anymore. It was at a time, and I know that there are historical evidence, that there were even plans to build a concentration camp and all those horrible things I have heard. And the election results, we cannot ignore it. But maybe they could also highlight that the public opinion has shifted; now there are both [refugee hostile and refugee friendly residents].

And I know, when I worked as a teacher, students from Sjöbo could say "Maj-Louise, it is not true that we must be stupid just because we are from Sjöbo, is it?" They felt that there was pressure on them, in regards to refugee hostility and so.

K: So the image conveyed of Sjöbo was something that affected them?

M-L: Yes, they suffered from it, they couldn't really distance themselves from it.

K: They felt like it was something that was attached to them –as individuals from Sjöbo?

M-L: Yes exactly. And it also feels like that when you're in Stockholm or Gothenburg or meet people from different areas and they say something like "Oh... so you are from Sjöbo? Isn't that where Sven-Olle is from? So you always had to be a little defensive and say, "it is not as bad as you think". Like, you always have to tell them that it is possible to live in Sjöbo and have different opinions. [My translation] [Maj-Louise]

Maj-Louise feels the need of distancing herself from those who she identifies as responsible for the election results: the refugee hostile, and she does so by emphasising her solidarity and friendliness towards refugees. Maj-Louise, like Annika, experiences the image constantly attached to Sjöbo as unfair and she understands the societal agenda of Sjöbo as less refugee hostile nowadays. However, which will become evident, creating a distance between herself and the (assumed) image of Sjöbo is important for both Maj-Louise and the other participants and thus Maj-Louise never fully see herself as *real* Sjöbo resident, like the one she describes in the initial quote of this chapter. Many of the women experience that as soon as they reveal themselves as residents of Sjöbo, people assume that they agree on a refugee hostile societal agenda and thus they defend their choice to live there by explaining that the image of Sjöbo conveyed in media is no longer true. I argue for how the attachment of opinions on them as

¹⁰ Simrishamn and Ystad are other average sized municipalities in Skåne.

Sjöbo residents is one of the conditions of their resistance, and as we will see later on, almost all of the women argue that their residency in Sjöbo affect their resistance.

Kerstin have a different view of Sjöbo, as she more explicitly refers to her encounters with refugee hostile sympathies and is more convinced of its still existence. When I ask Kerstin about how the refugee hostility is articulated in her village she answers:

This village is relatively small, only a 1000 residents. And that means that everything becomes so black and white for the residents. Either you are “pro” refugees and are referred to as good, or you are “against” and are referred to as evil. And that’s a little.... But I find it interesting because I love trying to influence people. Everybody usually gathers up by the supermarket with petitions and looks for signatures so there are a lot of opportunities.

We have a Facebook group for the residents of the village where people share their opinions, about the hotel¹¹ among other things. They think it is outrageous. That we are not taking care of our own first, that we already have homeless people in the municipality, you know, the same old arguments. [My translation] [Kerstin]

Kerstin’s mention of the Facebook group grasps the level of hostility towards refugees existing in Sjöbo, a hostility that the other participants seldom mention. The remaining women of the study acknowledge the presence of refugee hostility in Sjöbo, but do not share any vivid examples and refer to how they personally seldom encounter the hostility. Kerstin’s retelling of the opponents’ arguments regarding the hotel accounts for similar arguments as expressed during the referendum in 1988 (Fryklund & Peterson 1989:134) and as these are the same arguments used by the Sweden Democrats (Rydgren & Ruth 2011), this quote can be viewed as a confirmation of the widespread sympathies with the Sweden Democrats in the area. Kerstin’s experience could thus depend on that she encounters refugee hostility more upfront than the other women (or interprets her encounters as refugee hostility), or it could be that she is more honest about it.

The majority of the women try to rebut the image of Sjöbo by examples of how residents engage in refugee friendly activities. Gunilla, who also works with the “the integration of newcomers” in Sjöbo, is often confronted with non-residents’ ideas of Sjöbo.

It is not unusual that journalists or other people, students like you, who want to do different surveys, call me at work. They have chosen Sjöbo because they think Sjöbo is a specific way. And I have a chance to change that. They think that everyone here is a racist and that we don’t have any refugees or immigrant and that we do not welcome anyone. That attitude, you know. [My translation] [Gunilla]

It is clear that Gunilla is getting tired of defending herself against this image of Sjöbo and when I ask her what she thinks the journalists and students like me are looking for she answers:

¹¹ The hotel is a planned refugee accommodation, whose operation has been delayed due to many appeals about its opening.

Scandals! “Why aren’t you doing anything?” they ask. Last year a journalist called and said that he had been walking on our main street but hadn’t seen a single migrant. “Don’t you have any migrants?” he asked. Yes I said, but it’s the middle of the day and they are in employment. They don’t go running around town. [My translation] [Gunilla]

In this quote Gunilla refers to the image of Sjöbo as a municipality who accepts very few refugees, something that she argues to be untrue. Gunilla tries to rebut the image of Sjöbo as a municipality that does not welcome refugees by explaining to a non-resident what Sjöbo municipality is doing for refugees. This can be understood in the light of Skeggs’ discussion about an external judgmental other who the women in her study always position themselves against (Skeggs 1997: 89-90). In this case it is the reporter who functions as the external judgmental other and since Gunilla does not want to be associated with a refugee hostile municipality she argues against journalists and students when she feels as if they want to attach that image to Sjöbo. Just as the working-class women in Skeggs’ study display their homes in ways that distance them from the working-class, Gunilla displays an image of Sjöbo that distances her from refugee hostility.

Anna, a municipality politician in Sjöbo, is also tired of having this image associated with her, while Agneta, also working with “the integration of newcomers”, expresses her confusion and despair about the discrepancy between the image of Sjöbo and her own “truth” about the municipality.

Sometimes it can feel a little bit frustrating when you’re at larger conferences and people are like “Oh, so you are from Sjöbo...”. There is a judgmental image attached to Sjöbo, which I don’t experience as entirely true today. We are today quite similar to the other rural municipalities. [My translation] [Anna]

I mean, we need to keep fighting.. because the image that media conveys about Sjöbo is actually not true. And when I see the election results I feel; well this is not true! Are people not aware of what they are doing? Because the tone in Sjöbo isn’t that narrow-minded as the results show. So, ehm, something is strange, it’s not quite right. It is simply not true! [My translation] [Agneta]

It seems as if the rebuttal of the image of Sjöbo as refugee hostile is of grave importance to the women as well as they feel that the image is inaccurate. The women’s relationship to Sjöbo is of complex character since while the women claim that the image of Sjöbo is not true; they just as well find it important to distance themselves from the average (which they presume is refugee hostile) Sjöbo resident. Similar behaviours are identified by Skeggs among the women in her study. Skeggs outlines how the working-class women distance themselves from the label of working-class by dis-identifications with what they argue is the “real working class” as they are well aware of the negative values associated with the working class (Skeggs 1997: 75-76). Similar, the women are aware of the negative values associated

with Sjöbo, which is why they feel the need to rebut the persisting image of Sjöbo and instead convey a different one.

A short conclusion of the women's relationship to the image of Sjöbo is as following. Some of the women, like Maj-Louise and Agneta, understand the image of Sjöbo as unfair and argues that it is an outmoded image. These women seldom encounter residents who are openly refugee hostile and conclude that there are thus not many who represent those opinions living in Sjöbo anymore. Others, like Anna and Annika, refer to Sjöbo as non-unique in the matter and highlights similarities to other rural municipalities in the area. Finally, only one of the participants, Kerstin, is more upfront about her experience of refugee hostile expressions in the municipality. This shows a complex picture, with similar, yet different understandings of Sjöbo. I argue that this - up to a certain extent of denial of the hostility towards refugees among the women - is the second condition that shapes the women's resistance, and it will be discussed later on in regards to privilege. The different understandings of Sjöbo affect how the women relate to the image of Sjöbo and ultimately also how they resist it.

It is on the basis of the women's experiences of Sjöbo disclosed in this section that the analysis will continue, as the implications of their construction of Sjöbo and its residents in a certain way will be developed further in the following sections. The next chapter focuses on a discussion regarding femininity as a condition for the women's resistance and the women's dis-identification with the working-class Sjöbo residents.

5.2 Femininity

Earlier in this thesis I refer to Iris Marion Young's understanding of gender as seriality and how it "provides a way of thinking about women as a collective without requiring that all women have common attributes or a common situation" (Young 1994: 723). During the next two chapters, the category of women in this study is understood as a seriality where the women are united by the actions that they undertake (Young 1994: 724-725). This chapter discusses how the women engage in dis-identification with the working-class residents of Sjöbo and outlines the women's cultural capital through normative femininity and the implications it has on resistance.

By relating the experiences of my participants to Skeggs' conceptualisation of respectability among working class-women (1997) it is possible to highlight 1) how investments in certain kind of context-specific femininity brings a form of cultural capital and 2) the liberty of action the middle-class status brings the women in my study (as opposite to the women in Skeggs').

5.2.1 Dis-identification with the societal agenda through dis-identification with the working class

Insuring middle-class position depends on dis-identification with the working-class (Skeggs 1997) and similar to the women in Skeggs' study, who dis-identify with their working-class position, the participants in this study constantly engage in similar dis-identification projects. In the previous section I show how the women distance themselves from the image of Sjöbo and its (assumed) refugee hostile residents. However distancing oneself from the refugee hostile societal agenda of Sjöbo utterly depends on dis-identification from what the women perceive as typical, working-class Sjöbo residents.

The women engage in dis-identifications with the societal agenda by arguing for how the refugee hostile residents of Sjöbo are someone else, not them, and they locate the refugee hostility in the working class. Birgitta does this by separating between the residents involved in her voluntary organisation, which offers language practice to newcomers, and the residents who do not engage in these activities. For her, there is a difference between the ones who recently moved to Sjöbo, and the ones who lived there for generations.

It's like this: the area has a bad reputation. But then there are many who recently moved in. Most of us who engage in voluntary work are new residents who feel like working for making things better. It is difficult to involve the old residents, but we are working on it!.. Most of us who engage in the language café are old teachers, one is a journalist. [My translation] [Birgitta]

There are a lot of Sweden Democrats here and they initiate discussion everywhere. There are a lot of 'old' residents here you know. And they have their images and their interpretations of things.. And they are very.. and so are their children. There are old clans and they talk and dwell on things and, I mean, that's even the case with families with children. [My translation] [Birgitta]

Birgitta locates the refugee hostile sympathisers among the "old" (referring to people who lived in Sjöbo for a long time), working-class Sjöbo residents. Simultaneously Birgitta locates the refugee friendly among the recently moved in, middle-class and educated residents of Sjöbo. It is interesting how she refers to the old residents as "clans" - indicating that the location of these residents would be something static and unchangeable, which she specifies by experiencing their opinions as difficult to reverse while also disapproving of what she understands as parents transmitting their opinions to their children.

It is mostly the same people who live here, there is not many new people coming here. And they do not have contact with a lot of new people, like I do. It becomes a little, well this is a bad word, but incestuous in a way. [My translation] [Kerstin]

This quote from Kerstin exemplifies the homogenous image many of the women have about the residents of Sjöbo, which is also found in the quote by Maj-Louise below. In order to maintain middle-class status the women dis-identify with the, identified by them, typical

Sjöbo resident's (working) class position. When I ask the women if they identify themselves as typical or average in Sjöbo, they all answer no.

Maj-Louise identifies the lack of cultural capital among most residents in Sjöbo while at the same time validating her own middle-class position and access to cultural capital in a conversation about the cinema.

At one time, people in Sjöbo didn't go to the cinemas. We tried at one point, we had a movie cooperative in the 1970s. But only children came. People dropped off their children because they thought that only children go to the cinema. But we were showing really heavy grownup movies at that time. I believe it has changed now, that even people from Sjöbo goes to the cinema now. But they watch crowd-pleaser movies. It's a big difference in the number of audience when they show those movies with low level of recognition. [My translation] [Maj-Louise]

The embodied state of cultural capital is characterized by the ability to appropriate or consume cultural goods – music, works of art and popular culture - which can only be done by apprehending their meaning (Swartz 1997: 76). What Maj-Louise refers to is her ability to consume such cultural goods, which she does not believe the typical working-class Sjöbo resident could (due to lack of cultural capital).

Kerstin dis-identifies from the working-classness among Sjöbo residents by showing the difference between her and them in terms of work ethics and narrow-mindedness. In the following excerpts we are discussing the living situation for residents in Sjöbo when she discloses that many women are stay-at-home-moms and I ask her what she thinks is the reason for this.

Traditions, and of course combined with that they do not want to work. Many people have children because they do not want to work. And then they have more than one children, they have four and a house here in Sjöbo and hangs out on the playground. Well now I'm being judgemental again.. But I mean that's one kind of life. I think the unemployment is more extensive in these smaller communities. [...] And that there are more intellectuals and working people in Skurup municipality than in Sjöbo. [My translation] [Kerstin]

Before this part in the interview, Kerstin highlights her need to work. Kerstin has changed her career path many times, and emphasises multiple times during the interview her need to stay active, preferably combining both different work assignments and voluntary engagements. Kerstin defines the difference between her middle-classness and the working-class position of the other residents in Sjöbo through class subjectivity – through the real and imagined experiences, perceptions and judgments of others (Skeggs 1997: 95) by assuming that the stay-at-home-moms do not want to work. Kerstin refers to the working-class in the exact way that the women in Skeggs' study try to deny and dis-identify from (1997: 94). When Annika answers the question concerning who the typical Sjöbo resident is she describes a person with

attributes which according to Skeggs (1997) are (negative) attributes which are often ascribed to the working-class such as un-moral and in need of monitoring.

Kajsa: Would you say that you are the norm here in the area?

Annika: No, not in the least.

Kajsa: What is the norm or typical here then?

Annika: The typical resident works in healthcare, is twenty-five kilos overweight, has adult children, hasn't travelled very much, has always done the same thing. They grew up here. Maybe this sounded a little contemptuous. But it is pretty much like that. People have a lot with their houses, grandkids, garden, watching TV, spending time with their parents during the weekend. They are not very active.

[My translation] [Annika]

Annika is very condescending in the way she describes the typical Sjöbo residents. Including the excerpts referred to earlier in this section it is evident that the women engage in a moral valuation (Elias 2010: 11) where the moral of the middle class is superior to the one of the working class.

Kajsa: Besides from the retired teachers, who else engage in the language practice activities?

Kerstin: Mostly families with children. Families with children who use their brains understands that when their children starts school ten-twenty per cent will be migrants, it would be great for their children to get to know some migrants in a easy and casual manner before then. [My translation] [Kerstin]

I mean, there are still people here who think like that, who are narrow-minded and hate everything and all migrants and all dissidents. But then there are also a lot of other people here who think differently and realizes that a colour doesn't determine if someone is a good person. [My translation] [Annika]

In the above quotes both Annika and Kerstin further exemplify the women's conceptualisation of a difference between refugee hostile and refugee friendly residents in Sjöbo. In most of the interviews the refugee friendly are referred to as "smart" and the refugee hostile as "not knowing better".

In conclusion this section has shown two things: first how the women dis-identify from the working-class residents of Sjöbo and secondly how the women locate the refugee hostile sympathies within this same working-class. Their way of referring to the people living in Sjöbo (excluding themselves) as homogenous in their (lack) of education and employment as well as lack of contact and/or interest in new opinions and impression adds to the women's conceptualisation of the typical working-class resident in Sjöbo as also refugee hostile. It seems as if a homogenous view of working-class Sjöbo residents would also influence and inform an understanding of the refugee hostile residents of Sjöbo as homogenous. Through their way of conceptualising this contributes to a formula where working-classness in the context of Sjöbo equals refugee hostility in Sjöbo. This could be seen as the creation of *established* and *outsiders*, which according to sociologist Norbert Elias means that two groups, who in one way or another are interdependent, create a moral valuation of the groups

and their members. The members of the group of greater power perceive themselves as better than the others – due to specific characteristics that they share but members of the other group lack (in this case – refugee friendliness) (Elias 2010: 10-12). Placing this in the context of resistance towards refugee hostility, political science scholar Jan Jämte means that anti-racists engage in resistance towards an antagonist other: the racist (Jämte 2013: 14). Arguably, due to election results, the women are aware of the existence of a refugee hostile agenda in Sjöbo and through social stratification they try to locate the sympathisers of such opinions – the racist others - as far away from themselves as possible.

5.2.2 Femininity as capital: investing in a normative femininity

In the previous section I show how the women identify a typical Sjöbo resident as someone different from themselves. The norm in Sjöbo, following Skeggs' outlining of working-class positions (1997), is according to the participants working-class. They describe the typical Sjöbo resident as someone with little - or no – education and someone who works in healthcare (if they are women) or as mechanics (if they are men), and someone who invests their time in appearances. When asking Maj-Louise if she is a typical Sjöbo resident I receive this answer:

No I don't think so. We [Maj-Louise and her husband] sometimes feel a bit odd. For example, I think that people think we have a scrubby garden. It's difficult to say this without sounding judgmental, but people from around here believe that things need to be in a specific way. That they need Christmas-curtains, and to do things in certain way and we don't oblige to that pattern. I don't think we have ever been treated badly for this, but I imagine that people think that we are a bit odd. [My translation] [Maj-Louise].

The theoretical framework of this thesis outline how the working-class women in Skeggs' study invest in femininity in order to accumulate cultural capital. By investing in a caring femininity the women can engage in respectability projects. The women in this study differ from the working-class women since they identify themselves as middle-class, holding cultural capital accumulated from both their education and employment. However, Skeggs argues that femininity is a means of gaining cultural approval for the women in her study and to not look or be feminine could carry enormous cultural costs (1997: 156). Maj-Louise's quote shows how the same structures seem to regulate many of Sjöbo residents' lives as well. Further, Skeggs describes how the working-class women cannot make use of social spaces in the same way as middle-class women due to feelings of needing to prove oneself through every object and action (1997: 90). It is obvious that Maj-Louise on the other hand, with access to cultural capital, can afford to have a garden that neighbours think is scrubby since she does not experience the class-based anxiety in the same way.

There is a great difference to what the women in this study account for as the norm, in Sjöbo, and what I mean by the term normative. The women account for the most common or average form of femininity in Sjöbo – the typical - when they mention the norm, while I refer to the term “normative femininity” in the same way as Selberg (2012) and Ambjörnsson (2003). As Connell (1987) establishes, some forms of femininities’ are privileged in relation to other forms and Selberg and Ambjörnsson uses the concept of “normative femininity” to describe the form of femininity which is privileged in a specific context. The understanding of normative femininity as a privilege position is closely connected to accumulated capital. Both Ambjörnsson and Selberg conclude that normative femininity in Sweden can be located within a white heterosexual middle class position, a position that all the women in my study obtain. As Pease (2010:10) highlights, members of privileged groups belong to an “unmarked” category that tells us what society takes for granted – privileged groups represent the norm, which is very true for the women in my study. It is worth noticing that none of the women notice, or bring to attention the fact that they are white, middle-class women which affords them certain privileges or that they hold very privileged and embedded positions within the society.

As a second step in the analysis I argue that embodying normative femininity provides the women in this study with more liberty of action than women who cannot embody the same normative femininity. Skeggs (1997) shows how due to working-class positions the women in her study have limited liberty of action. Occupying a middle-class position instead entails a certain amount of freedom and middle-class women have far more alternatives of who they *can be* as opposite to the working-class women who constantly instead invest in being “normal”. In relation to the liberty of action Selberg establishes how normative femininity is closely linked to notions of membership and belonging (Selberg 2012: 10). I argue that the women in my study, as bearer of normative femininity, have a greater liberty of action and can engage in resistance without jeopardising their belonging and embeddedness in the society. This quote from Anna is an example of this:

Kajsa: Would you say that you are typical in Sjöbo?

Anna: No, I don't! Maybe I am a bit weird for saying that, but I really don't think so.

Kajsa: How are you different then?

Anna: I think I am more outspoken and candid. I mean you are not supposed to be so outspoken in Sjöbo, it deviates from the norm. [My translation] [Anna]

Anna's way of perceiving herself as more outspoken than most Sjöbo residents is an example of Moi's arguments of how discourses are regulated by the possessors of the specific kind of capital recognized by the field as powerful capital. The fact that discourse must observe the

correct forms legislated by the field to avoid exclusion or assumed nonsense (1991: 1022) provides a condition for the women's resistance, exemplified by Anna who feels safe "being outspoken" without risking exclusion.

How the women's privileged position as middle-class allow them to embody normative femininity, which provide them with greater liberty of action, can be further exemplified through the women's investing in what can be identified as a *resistant femininity*. Investing in a resistant femininity is a way for the women in Sjöbo, who hold cultural capital, to obtain a position of dominance by accruing the maximum amount of capital in a specific field (Reed-Danahay 2005: 133-134). I argue that the constant media focus and reproducing of Sjöbo as a municipality with a refugee hostile societal agenda conveys the notion that anti-refugee sympathies and refugee hostile expression are disapproved by the Swedish society at large. As capital is context specific, the Swedish society at large is the context where a certain form of femininity could be legitimized and recognized as symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is the "collective belief" (Swartz 1997: 92) and although many residents of Sjöbo sympathises with an anti-migrant and -refugee political party (Valmyndigheten 2014a) the "collective belief" of Sweden is to *not* sympathise with refugee hostile parties (Valmyndigheten 2014c). The idea of a "collective belief" as refugee friendly in Sweden instead of refugee hostile is further supported by the fact that the Swedish mainstream society has for long regarded itself as a society where racism is discouraged and condemned (Jämte 2013: 1). Consequently a refugee hostile femininity will not be legitimated as symbolic capital. However, a way for the women to trade on femininity as a cultural capital is to invest in *resistant femininity*, similar to how the working-class women invest in a caring femininity in Skeggs' study in order to claim respectability. Thus the women's resistance towards Sjöbo's societal agenda can be understood as them investing in a resistant femininity, a femininity which can be legitimised as symbolic capital in the context of educated middle class in which they are positioned.

5.2.3 Privileged femininity and its implication on resistance

One of the aims for this thesis is to understand how the women's resistance is conditioned. So far I have outlined how the women invest in a resistant femininity to capitalise upon their cultural capital as well as their embodiment of normative femininity, which allows them a certain liberty of action. Collectively this means that they have the means to express resistance. In this section I will further develop how the conditions of normativity, privilege and embeddedness in society shape their resistance.

The importance of normativity is best illustrated by the following quote from Kerstin where we are discussing what kind of reactions she has received about her involvement in the accommodation for refugees.

I am also a family-home, meaning that I have a foster daughter living with me right now. She's in the second year of gymnasium right now and well, she has her share of problems. [...] And I think she was subjected to harassment for a while because of my involvement [with refugees], so I had to speak to her about it. But I mean, nobody threw stuff through the window or anything like that. And I am always very well-treated down at the grocery store. But I don't have the reputation to be especially troublesome. You have to keep your distance you know. So there are not many who know me, but I think most people have good experiences of me. But I think Sofia [the daughter], she attracts and hangs out with kids who perhaps you would not normally be around. I think she gets to hear about it a lot.. I have had to support her a lot. [My translation] [Kerstin]

This accounts for how Kerstin seldom receive negative attention regarding her engagement in resistant activities – she still feels respected in the community. Her foster daughter, on the other hand, who does not embody normative femininity in the same ways as Kerstin, gets harassed for Kerstin's involvement in resistant activities. Although this account by Kerstin could be understood in different ways, it does illustrate how someone who does not maintain normative femininity and who deviates from the societal norm (Skeggs 1997) does not have the liberty of action that is needed to express resistance without risking harassment. Kerstin's foster daughter's association with resistant activities thus does not pass unnoticed or without confrontation even though she is only engaged in resisting the societal agenda by association. This bears similarities with Selberg's (2012) arguments about how the hospital environment was inclusive and protective, but only towards those who succeed in embodying normative femininity. Not embodying normative femininity could be met with exclusion and being deemed as deviant. In Selberg's study, a minor thing such as being a middle aged female without children would be enough for the nurse in question to feel as she was deviating from the normative femininity within the hospital context (2012: 316). Understanding normative femininity in this way could explain the reactions that Sofia had to face, since it is arguable that Sofia also deviates from the normative femininity seeing as she is in foster care and according to Kerstin "has her share of problems".

The liberty of action that is allowed through the embodiment of normative femininity is further illustrated by the fact that the women outline how they mostly receive positive reactions to their resistance. I argue that this, too, is because of their embeddedness in the society.

In the discussions regarding reactions they receive about their engagement in resistant activities they all assure me of how they mostly receive positive responses:

K: How have the reactions towards the cultural exchange café been?

A: Fantastic! Great! It's really fun, everybody shows ups, even Sjöbo residents. Maybe 50/50 old and new ones, so that is really fun. [My translation] [Agneta]

Now it sounds as if everything is positive, but nobody has actually told me that they think I am doing something wrong or stupid. When I am down at the gym people come up to me and tell me "I saw you in the local paper. And are you helping refugees, that is nice. I think I would like to do that to". So the reactions I have gotten are actually positive. [My translation] [Maj-Louise]

It is possible to argue for a number of different explanatory models to why the women seldom encounter any negative reactions towards their resistance. One way would be to argue that people may in fact resent them for it, but simply do not share their opinions with them.

Although remembering Kerstin's encounter with the Facebook group and the fact that people in Sjöbo openly organise petitions such an argument could not function as a holistic explanation.

Another possible explanatory model includes arguments about how the women could be right in their experience of Sjöbo as a less refugee hostile municipality now a days and thus people would not react negatively towards their acts of refugee friendliness. These arguments however, also appears to rest on an insufficient analysis due to the fact that the recent election results showed over 30 per cent support of parties who represent an anti-refugee societal agenda (Valmyndigheten 2014a) and that Sjöbo residents use different communication channels such as Facebook to display their discontent.

The results from this study instead lead me to argue for how the women's lack of negative response can be attributed to *who* is expressing resistance. Relating on a discussion of privilege, where members of privileged groups belong to an "unmarked" category where privileged groups represent what is natural, normal and right – i.e the norm (Pease 2010: 10-13), I argue that the women's position as white, middle-class women allows them to engage in resistance without risking being (too) questioned or excluded. The women understand their lack of negative response as evidence of a decreasing refugee hostility in Sjöbo, however, the women's lack of reflections regarding how their position within society conditions the responses they receive can be understood as an indication that they, similar to the women in Sohl's study, do not view their whiteness as an asset and enabler (2014:347).

In previous sections of the analysis I show how the women rebut the image of Sjöbo. This rebuttal of the image of Sjöbo could also be understood as part of their privileged position. The dominant Swedish self-image has, since the decades after World War II, held an assumption of basic, deep-seated anti-racism. Consequently, a vast majority of the Swedish population, probably those who themselves runs little risk of experiencing racism, rejects the idea of Sweden as a racist society and problems of racism that are detected have often been

seen as the exception (Jämte 2013: 2). I argue that the women rebut the image of Sjöbo rather than confirming it because of their white privilege; or in the words of Frankenberg, the women have “experienced race privileges as normalized to the point of invisibility” (Frankenberg 1993: 179). It is arguable that the women, as white women, have never experienced racism and thus are not aware of its expressions in Sjöbo, similar to how the women in Frankenberg’s study were not implicated in racism (Frankenberg 1993: 236). The women’s privileged positions implicates their resistance in that they do not fear any repercussions because of their resistance on the basis of who they *are*, which is the very core of privilege (Pease 2010). Simply put, they do not fear racism.

5.3 Resistance

In the two previous sections I outlined how the women’s privileged class-positions enables their resistance but also shape their understanding of themselves as refugee friendly by dis-identification from working-class residents in Sjöbo, where they locate refugee hostility sympathies. This section will focus on locating the women’s resistance and finishes with a short outlining of the women’s contributions to society.

5.3.1 Locating resistance

In order to draw conclusions about the conditions that shape and implicate the expressions of resistance by the women in this study, it is necessary to locate the idea of resistance that inform the study. The resistance expressed and engaged in by the participants of the study is not a political organizational resistance and it is thus not what I refer to when referring to their actions, ideas and opinions as “resistance”. Rather, the women’s resistance is located through a post-structuralist understanding of resistance with greater focus on individual actions, as outlined in a study by Prasad and Prasad (2000). Prasad and Prasad discuss both formal and informal resistance where the former refers to any kind of organised collective opposition while informal, also called routine, resistance refers to less visible and more indirect forms of opposition that can take place within the everyday world and is often unplanned and spontaneous, occasionally being even covert in nature (2000: 387-388). The women in this study engage in both formal resistance: volunteering as teachers for language practice for newcomers, organising cultural café-events, engaging in the planned accommodation for refugees; and in informal resistance: agreeing to an interview with me and sharing their views and experiences of Sjöbo. Women who either in formal or informal ways advocate for refugees are thus, in this study, defined as resisting the refugee hostile societal agenda in Sjöbo.

Further, the resistance expressed by the women is mostly what Prasad and Prasad (2000:393) identify as owning resistance, which entails resistance where individuals themselves construct certain actions as deliberately resistant. The women all understand their resistant actions as something that they engage in *because of* the societal agenda in Sjöbo and the owning resistance is what motivates the women to express resistance. When asked about why they chose to engage in these different (resistance) projects they answer:

I guess it's because I think there is a lot of things that are wrong in this society which I would like change. Sjöbo was very conservative back then, especially during the increased refugee immigration, and then I felt that it was very important to engage in the opposing camp [against the refugee hostile]. [My translation] [Maj-Louise]

Well, it's a little about.. revenge. If I'm being really honest. Something like "let's get those bastards", now we are going to change things around here! [My translation] [Kerstin]

They thus construct their engagement in different activities as certain actions of deliberate resistance. Furthermore, the *location* of their resistance arguably informs their decision to engage in resistant activities as almost all of the women mention the fact that they are residents of Sjöbo as a motivational factor for their expression of resistance. This means that if they were residents of another municipality, where the social agenda was perceived differently, they may not have engaged in voluntary organisations focusing on refugees. And furthermore, such engagement probably would not be understood as resistance in another context.

In addition, the women's embedded position within the location also shapes their resistance. The women enjoy living in Sjöbo. They have all made the choice of moving there, some more recently than others, and none of them have any plans or desires to move away from Sjöbo in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, as I highlight in the first section of the analysis, they like the social aspects of living in Sjöbo and care about their belonging to the community. When I ask about how they handle confrontation about their involvement in refugee friendly activities, and if the possibilities of confrontation affect their resistance, I receive different versions of the same argument:

It depends on who you talk to, but on the other side, I can imagine that it affects me when I meet new people whose opinion I am unsure about. Then I like to try to figure that out first, to see if it is even a person I should be talking to or not. [My translation] [Agneta]

We will start with the activity in such a small scale that the society will hardly notice, and we are careful to plan activities for the youths during the day where they will hardly be noticed. But at the same time, I want to be a little bit provocative, otherwise things will never change. It is important to keep the balance. To both be noticed and not noticed. [My translation] [Kerstin]

G: I don't mind having an argument, but you do not have to ruin a whole party by having such a discussion. Then you have to tell them to just let it go, to move on. But some people just can't let it go.

K: Yes, many people in the municipality must know about your activities?

G: Yes, in the municipality a lot of people know me. And I have neighbours who sometimes approach me like "now there are too many refugees in Sweden!". But then I just try to joke around with them a little bit instead. [My translation] [Gunilla]

The women listen to the confrontation and then try to steer the conversation in a different direction. They try to design and formulate their resistance in ways that will not upset the residents in Sjöbo too much. I thus argue for how the women's sense of, and desire to maintain, belonging conditions their resistance by inducing them to express the right amount of resistance. Thus, one condition for their resistance is the possibility to maintain an embedded position within society.

Political science scholar Jan Jämte's research on anti-racist movements (2013) in Sweden offer further insights to the women's balancing act of expressing resistance to the refugee hostile societal agenda while still managing to stay embedded in the society. Jämte describes how, what he identifies as the moderate anti-racist movement in Sweden risked antagonizing different political actors, which they occasionally collaborated with, by highlighting discrimination and structural racism. The participants' "dual loyalties" posed a problem as the aim and activities of the organisation were hindered by members' fear of conflict with collaboration partners (Jämte 2013: 456) and the same dual loyalties can be identified in the women's quotes above. Jämte also outlines different forms of anti-racist activism where *conscientious activist* refers to people who support the aim of the movement due to moral obligations, not because of their own experiences of oppression (2013: 108, 458). Jämte means that conscientious activists, due to lack of own experiences, more easily abandons the movement when situations become too consuming or fraught with conflict. The following quote from Agneta, where I ask her about why she engages in refugee friendly activities summarises the position towards refugee friendly activities all the women express in one way or another:

Yes it's fun, but at the same time I feel like we need to help each other at times. I have the principle that: "Alone I cannot save everyone, but everyone can do something." No one can do everything but everyone can do something, and I think that is really important and it becomes more and more important for the world in general... We must work together and we should speak up when something is wrong. [My translation] [Agneta]

The women can be understood as conscience activist as they are white middle-class women who do not suffer racist discrimination. As exemplified by Agneta, the women seldom refer to structural racism, but rather identify their resistance towards refugee hostility as "the right thing" to do. This can also be connected to Frankenberg's argument regarding how white

people can see anti-racist work as something optional and not as something intimately linked to their own lives (1993: 5).

5.3.2 The women's contribution to society

This analysis mainly focuses on the privileged position of the women participating in this study – a necessity in order to outline conditions and implications of resistance in the context of Sjöbo. However, these women are spending numerous hours of their lives working for a more inclusive and friendly society hence I feel the need to also acknowledge the contributions of this group of women to society.

It is through the engagement of these women that a local Save the Children exists in Sjöbo. Thanks to these women, newcomers in Sjöbo can now during two hours, five days a week, practice their Swedish together with refugee friendly residents in Sjöbo – which is nothing less than impressive for a municipality of Sjöbo's size. It is because of these women that a cultural café is hosted once a month, where old and new residents of Sjöbo can meet unconditionally and get to know each other. It is through the efforts of these women that 30 families in Sjöbo are now involved in a dinner-invitation programme where newcomers in Sjöbo are invited into peoples' homes to have dinner as a way to get to know the municipality. And it is also through the engagement of these women that an accommodation for unaccompanied refugee children is about to open in Sjöbo.

In conclusion: it is because of these women's strength and persistence to change the refugee hostile sympathies in Sjöbo that refugees, in a society where 30 per cent are sceptical to their arrival and inclusion in society, are made to feel welcomed.

6 The paradox of resistance: conclusions

Departing from the idea of femininity as a specific form of cultural capital (Skeggs 1997) and circumstances of privilege (Frankenberg 1993; Pease 2010) this thesis has shown how resistance, in this case against a refugee hostile agenda is conditioned and implicated by femininity.

I have chosen to conclude the results of this study by summarising the many paradoxes surrounding conditions of resistances towards a refugee hostile societal agenda among women in Sjöbo.

It is important to notice that the three paradoxes summarised below are not entirely distinct from each other - rather they are interlinked and dependent on one another. Separating one from the others may be difficult, and furthermore, it may be fruitless. That being said, I have tried to organise them in the most logical manner possible, in order to show how they inform one another.

The first paradox includes the women's bisected image of Sjöbo where they find it important to rebut the image of Sjöbo as a refugee hostile municipality while simultaneously constructing a distinction between the established and the outsider (Elias 2010) in order to articulate themselves as refugee friendly residents in contrast to the outsiders – the refugee hostile. Their rebuttal of the image of Sjöbo can be understood through the analysis of their privileged position in society where they, through the embodiment of whiteness and middle-classness (Frankenberg 1993; Pease 2010), are not subjected to expressions of racism and thus understand the image of Sjöbo, despite evidence in form of election results and racist incidents, as “not true anymore”.

The second paradox centres on how the women's privileged position within society shape their expressions and engagement in resistance. The women's resistance is understood as conscience resistance (Jämte 2013), where they engage in resistance due to moral obligations and view it as the “right thing to do”. The women's dual loyalties (Jämte 2013) – the perception of themselves as refugee friendly while also valuing their embedded position in society – affects their resistance such that they only express the amount of resistance which will still allow them an embedded position in the community.

The third, and final paradox is rooted in the women's need to dis-identify with the working-class residents in Sjöbo. The women articulate and locate the refugee hostile residents of Sjöbo within the working class and thus the women sustain and reproduce the polarised position between the assumed refugee hostile and refugee friendly (Fekte 2009;

Schierup et al 2006) which they, at the same time, criticises by rebutting the refugee hostile image of Sjöbo.

The dis-identification with the working-class is one of the main conditions for the women's dis-identification with the refugee hostile societal agenda – and therefore ultimately also a main condition for the women's resistance. In addition, the women's subject – and moralistic – position precludes the existence of a working-class anti-racism in Sjöbo and the effects and consequences of such exclusions should be studied by further research.

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Appendix 1

Information letter about research

Research Project: Women's identity formation in rural Skåne.

Author: Kajsa Ryberg

Supervisor: Diana Mulinari

Swedish gender research has for long focused on urban areas while rural areas have been marginalized. Due to this fact, there is limited research about women's life situations in rural Sweden.

While rural areas is a relatively unexplored area of research within gender studies, rural areas are often stigmatised through media representations. The conveying of the image of rural areas as traditional and value conservative is widespread although limited research support has been done on this subject.

In collaboration with the Gender Studies Department and the Sociological Department at Lund University a study designed to explore and understand women's lives and organisation in civil society in rural areas will be carried out by student Kajsa Ryberg. The study is part of Masters education "Social Studies of Gender" and will follow the Swedish Research Council's Codex of ethical rules. Are you interested in being interviewed or want to know more about the study, please contact Kajsa Ryberg via email: gbe10kry@student.lu.se or telephone: 0739-041608.

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Background

Tell me a little about your self: age, occupation, education, family, living situation?
For how long have you lived in Sjöbo?
Why Sjöbo?

About Sjöbo

Tell me a little about Sjöbo
What do people work with in Sjöbo? Who lives in Sjöbo?
Is there something that is distinctive about Sjöbo? What is Sjöbo like in comparison to other municipalities in Sjöbo?
Do you think that you are “average” in Sjöbo? What is the “typical” Sjöbo resident like?
Is your living situation different than other Sjöbo residents’ living situation?
Are there any specific characteristics about rural areas?
What do you like/ not like about living in a rural municipality?
What are the advantages/ disadvantages about living and working in a rural municipality?
Does media portray rural municipalities in any specific way?
Has anything (social aspects, work, population) in Sjöbo changed over the past 5/10/15/20 years?

About resistance

Tell me a little about your voluntary commitment?
Why did you decide to get involved in the organisation?
What do you like about engaging in voluntary organisations?
Are there any negative aspects of voluntary commitments?
What motivates you to engage in in voluntary activities?
Have you engaged in other voluntary organisations? What has been the focus of their activities?
Do any of your friends engage in the same activities as you? Who in Sjöbo, would you say, engages in voluntary activities?
How do people react when you tell them about your engagement in voluntary organisations?
Do you receive positive or negative responses?
How do you experience medias and non-residents image of Sjöbo?

About femininity

Are living conditions for women different in rural vs. urban areas?
Do you think your living situation would be different if you lived in an urban municipality instead of a rural?
Do you ever reflect on femininity/masculinity?
Do you think there are any connections between voluntary commitments and femininity?