



Politicians' Instagram personas in relation to Swedish politics

A discourse analysis of personas from a gender point of view of Swedish political party leaders' Instagram accounts

Emelie Bröms

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences – Department of Gender Studies

Advanced Research Essay in Gender Studies

15 ECTS

Supervisor: Sandra Modh

Examiner: Tara Mehrabi

Date

Serial number

Abstract

This essay aims to investigate how the leaders for the Swedish parliamentary parties appear on their official Instagram accounts. By conducting a discourse analysis, looking at both text, visual images, and the combination of the two in the Instagram posts, the intention is to analyse how gender is being performed through the rhetorical concept of persona.

The analysis show that all eight party leaders mainly enact political/professional personas. Sub-personas derived to this category are individual vs group member, active vs passive, and critic. The male party leaders exhibit the individual, active and critical personas to a greater extent than their female counterparts, and thereby performing gender in a stereotypically masculine way – reproducing the image of the stereotypical male politician. The analysis also finds that some party leaders, mainly female ones, use personal personas to a greater extent.

The conclusion is that all party leaders mainly use professional personas, profiling them as first and foremost politicians. But when looking at *how* the personas are carried out, the female party leaders can be seen using numerous more personas than the male ones, especially adding on personal personas. In addition to enacting the traditional female stereotype of having to handle both carrier and family, this may reward them with additional Instagram followers. But when the number of followers is put in relation to surveys of trust and opinion polls, the conclusion is that the party leaders exhibiting masculine coded personas are more prosperous in actual politics.

Keywords: gender performativity, persona, rhetoric, social media, Instagram, politics, party leaders, political communication, Sweden.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Aim and research questions.....	2
1.2 Background	3
1.2.1 Media and social media.....	3
1.2.2 Politicians, politics, and Instagram	4
2. Material	5
3. Method	8
3.1 Discourse analysis	8
3.2 Application	10
3.3 Research ethics	11
3.4 Qualitative research and positionality	12
4. Previous research	13
5. Theoretical framework	15
5.1 Gender performativity	15
5.2 Persona	16
6. Analysis	18
6.1 Political/professional personas	20
6.1.1 Individual or member of the collective	20
6.1.2 Active or passive	23
6.1.3 Opponent, critic, and saviour	25
6.2 Personal personas	26
6.3 Summary of analysis	28
7. Discussion	29
8. Conclusion	36
9. References	38

1. Introduction

The political ideal has been masculine coded ever since the art of public speaking, rhetoric, first evolved in ancient Greece and subsequently in the Roman empire. Throughout history, the politician has been a man, and among the qualities premiered in a public speaker can be mentioned; active, warlike, combative, independent, problem solving, determined, hierarchical.¹ Through the centuries, women who have tried to access these male dominated arenas have been forced to adapt to the constraints, often by using male personas to strengthen ones credibility.² This persona, a sort of mask or role, the speaker puts on is “a strategic adaptation to the expectations and rules of a specific situation.”³ Thereby, the stereotypical, ‘successful’ politician has been measured and judged according to these, often implicit and unspoken, norms and ideals. Consequently, they have been reproduced over time, when politicians have adopted these styles, attributes, and personas, to gain and win the public’s trust – and by extension their votes.

Today, women are included on the political arena. Since 1921, women in Sweden are allowed to vote in public elections on the same premises as men.⁴ Today, they are allowed to be politically active, become politicians, become party leaders. Today, there are as many female party leaders as there are male, when looking at the eight Swedish parliamentary parties. But the question is, what has happened to the norms and ideals? Are politicians today still enacting and drawing on gendered characteristics, exhibiting and using specific personas to win trust and votes?

Something that certainly has changed since Ancient Greece and Rome are the arenas on which public speech takes place. The agoras have gone digital, and social media has taken and gained a fundamental position in today's political landscape. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have become increasingly important pieces of the puzzle when politicians, political parties, and organisations are spreading their messages, arguing for their cause, and attracting voters. Not least since Barack Obama's presidential US election campaign in 2008, social media has proven to be an important communicative platform for both political messages, statements, and personal opinions.⁵ Social media make it possible for both individual politicians and political parties to have direct contact with the public,

¹ Brigitte Mral, *Talande kvinnor: kvinnliga retoriker från Aspasia till Ellen Key* (Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2011), 15.

² Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 212–213.

³ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 18.

⁴ Riksdagen. How the Parliament Works. 2020, p. 28-29.

⁵ Filimonov K, Russmann U, Svensson J. Picturing the Party: Instagram and Party Campaigning in the 2014 Swedish Elections. *Social Media + Society*. July 2016.

without traditional media as filters. Here, the sender can present his messages, to convincingly try to prove his own case. Not least, this arguing is formulated in an increasingly personal and intimate way, at the same time as the individual politicians are becoming ever more synonymous with their parties.

An obvious goal of politicians' argumentation is, of course, to attract voters, to convince them that their own and the party's politics are the best way forward. That's an explicit fact. Another form of persuasion is somewhat more implicit, partially hidden and unconscious for both the speaking politicians and their recipients. This is the argumentation that portrays and does gender, that help shape our perceptions of what is masculine and feminine. The well-known gender researcher, and professor in rhetoric, Judith Butler argues that gender is performative. Our perception of gender is shaped and created through repeated bodily actions and social staging.⁶ Hence, they could be expressed and performed using different, perhaps gendered, personas observed on politicians' social media accounts. Here, we have locations where it can be possible to identify, analyse and look more closely at the gendered acts Butler mentions.

This aspect of discourse, political personas and performativity is what this essay intends to investigate further: What personas occur on Swedish party leaders' Instagram accounts, and what this says about the performance and reproduction of gender.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to investigate how the leaders of the Swedish parliamentary parties appear on social media, more specifically on their official Instagram accounts. The reason for looking at Instagram specifically, is the personal platform's person-focused framework, which enables coming close to the *individual* party leader. Hence, it is also a place that enables the study of the party leaders' personas. As the influential power of having a large following, seem to become more important for the success of the party, this is especially interesting to analyse further. Today, social media platforms seem crucial for parties prior to election, to gain voters trust and by extension their votes. But as the party leaders become more personally profiled, how does this relate to their professional role as party representative? Which one of these roles takes or gets more space on their social media? Which 'persona' is most predominant and how do these personas relate to gender performativity? Do the female party leaders adopt 'male' personas to gain trust and

⁶ Judith Butler, *Genustrubbel: feminism och identitetens subversion*. (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2007), 219–220.

popularity, like their historical precursors? Do ‘power’ on Instagram also equals political power, identified in for example high numbers in surveys on trust, and opinion polls/actual votes? Many questions are raised, and are to be analysed further in this study, where the two main research questions guiding the work are:

- Which personas are identified on the Instagram accounts of Swedish party leaders?
- How do these personas relate to gender performativity?

West and Zimmerman writes: “An understanding of how gender is produced in social situations will afford clarification of the interactional scaffolding of social structure and the social control processes that sustain it.”⁷ So, by looking at the way gender is performed by politicians on social media, we can hopefully gain a better and wider understanding of the processes surrounding the way concepts of gender is created, and by extension come a little bit closer to questioning what we otherwise would consider ‘normal’.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Media and social media

Humans have been using different forms of media for thousands of years. Evidently, initially in more spartan technical terms, but the purpose of connecting people has always been at the centre. The breakthrough came with the art of printing in the 17th century, and from there on technical development has made it possible for people to connect faster and more efficient, not least since electricity, radio, television, the Internet. Today, digital technology is a natural part of most people's everyday lives.⁸ Couldry describes how media makes us “feel close to people we will probably never meet” and creates a sense of what is common and normal.⁹ This function can be clearly linked to a social constructivist idea that we create meaning together and in interaction with each other.¹⁰

Instagram is one of these relatively new, interactive social media platforms. Here, people can upload photos and videos to share with followers, as well as view, comment, like, and share posts of other users.¹¹ It was launched in 2010, and the number of users grew rapidly, as the mobile application spread across the world. In 2012 it was bought by Facebook and is now part of the company’s social media universe. Today, more than 1 billion people use Instagram

⁷ Candace West, and Don Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2. (1987): 147.

⁸ Nick Couldry, *Medier: och deras roll i våra liv* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2020), 26–27.

⁹ Couldry, *Medier och deras roll i våra liv*, 48.

¹⁰ Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

¹¹ “What is Instagram”, *Instagram Help Centre*, 2021, accessed Oct 31, 2021, <https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573>.

every month. Roughly, there are as many women as men using Instagram. Since the initial launch, new functions have been released regularly and it has gone from being an app for photo only, to also include for example video and shopping.¹² When creating an account, the users have their own profile where all posted material is collected.¹³ In Sweden, 95 % state that they have used social media sometime during the last year.¹⁴ YouTube is the most used platform, followed by Facebook, with Instagram on third place. Two out of three Swedes have used Instagram the last year, with about 50 % using it every day.¹⁵ Practically all Swedish Instagram users view the main feed of posts, whereas functions such as Stories and IGTV are less used.¹⁶

1.2.2 Politicians, politics, and Instagram

The task of politicians is to be the citizens' representatives, elected by the people to represent the people. As the political profession have become more of a profession and a job, rather than a non-profit task of trust in the same way as it has been functioning historically, more of a distance has emerged between politicians and the 'ordinary' people they are to represent.¹⁷ It thus seems logical to think – based on Couldry's ideas presented above – that the media, not least the social ones, is one way to reduce this supposed distance. The political party leaders' Instagram accounts hold a platform where citizens can come closer to an otherwise far politician. The citizens can see more of what being a politician means, who these people are, what they stand for, as well as get a sense of who is and can become a politician. Partially, to speak in terms of the purpose of this essay, through observations of the personas the politician adopts. Therefore, Instagram composes a (rhetorical) arena where the platform and the medium themselves enables a spectrum of possible personas to be displayed – and hence identified in an analysis.

Media development has also changed politics and political work. Today it is easier than ever to raise ones voice, share ones opinion, debate, discuss, and spread political messages.¹⁸ It is also an accepted approach, which has become increasingly common, to “personify politics by highlighting its representatives” in media contexts.¹⁹ To let individuals stand in the

¹² Christina Newberry, “44 Instagram Stats That Matter to Marketers in 2021”, *Hootsuite*, Jan 6, 2021, accessed Oct 31, 2021, <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-statistics/>.

¹³ “Your profile”, Instagram Help Centre, 2021, accessed Oct 31, 2021, <https://help.instagram.com/110121795815331/?helpref=related>.

¹⁴ Internetstiftelsen, *Svenskarna och Internet 2021* (Stockholm, 2021), 178, accessed October 31, 2021.

<https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/app/uploads/2021/09/internetstiftelsen-svenskarna-och-internet-2021.pdf>.

¹⁵ Internetstiftelsen, *Svenskarna och Internet 2021*, 201.

¹⁶ Internetstiftelsen, *Svenskarna och Internet 2021*, 201.

¹⁷ SOU 2016:5. Låt fler forma framtiden!, p. 189. <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2016/01/sou-20165/>

¹⁸ Couldry, *Medier och deras roll i våra liv*, 30.

¹⁹ Mia-Marie Hammarlin, and Gunilla Jarlbro, *Kvinnor och män i offentlighetens ljus*. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014), 16.

spotlight, as a ‘symbol’ for, for example, an otherwise complex and abstract political ideology, question or process helps communicate the issue more efficiently and persuasive.²⁰ Once again, party leaders play a key role for this purpose, and the fact becomes another reason to look even closer at what and how they behave in the spotlight, for example on their Instagram accounts.

Prior to the Swedish parliamentary election in 2018, the Swedish Internet Foundation declared that “The first real Internet election is here”.²¹ They identified a strong trend where more voters use both Internet and social media to find political information and engage in political issues. Especially younger and first-time voters are embracing these digital channels.²² A report presented after the 2018 election also shows that social media in many ways has positioned itself as the primary source of information and for monitoring politicians and politics.²³ Since the 2018 election, the use of social media and other digital channels increased even further among the general public, political parties and politicians included.²⁴ Generally, the Swedish party leaders have a large following on Instagram, even if the number of followers range from 7700 up to 160 000. Assume that a large following also would imply high popularity, would that also mean that a party leader with many followers is more popular as politicians? That the public have more trust in them and that their parties are more successful? This is also an aspect will be considered throughout this essay.

2. Material

The material consists of posts from eight Swedish party leaders' official Instagram accounts, published in September 2021. Looking at a selected period is necessary to have a material easy to overview, as well as making it clearly defined. During the chosen period, the 2022 parliamentary elections is one year away. As a result, the election work is becoming more intensive and important, another interesting aspect of the analysis. The defined period is also motivated by timeliness. Social media is constantly and rapidly developed, both technically and in terms of users, so the scope makes the survey as relevant and updated as possible. At the same time, it can be pointed out that the number of posts made by each party leader during

²⁰ Hammarlin and Jarlbo, *Kvinnor och män i offentlighetens ljus*, 16–17.

²¹ Internetstiftelsen, *Valspecial 2018* (Stockholm, 2018), 3, accessed Sep 25, 2021.

https://internetstiftelsen.se/docs/Svenskarna_och_internet-valspecial_2018.pdf. (Authors' translation). The Swedish Internet Foundation, Internetstiftelsen in Swedish, writes on their website internetstiftelsen.se that they are “an independent, private foundation that works for the positive development of the internet (...) and our vision is that everyone in Sweden wants to, dares to and is able to use the internet.”

²² Internetstiftelsen, *Valspecial 2018*, 5–6.

²³ Lars Nord, Gunnar Nygren, and Sanna Volny, *Medierna och lokalvalen 2018. Gamla aktörer på nya digitala arenor* (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2019).

²⁴ See e.g., Internetstiftelsen, *Svenskarna och Internet 2021*. <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/app/uploads/2021/09/internetstiftelsen-svenskarna-och-internet-2021.pdf>

the period studied corresponds to an ‘average’ month if their post frequency is studied historically. The scope can also be justified by the fact that some party leaders are relatively new, and an earlier time interval would give a different line-up.²⁵ The material only include posts from the Instagram feed, not any postings made on other Instagram functions. But as the feed is the most used and viewed part of Instagram, with practically 100 % of the Swedish Instagram users using this function, this is the most relevant choice of material.²⁶ The entire material, i.e. the party leaders’ Instagram posts, is originally written in Swedish. To favour the thesis’ readability, all quotes are translated to English by the author.

Something should be mentioned about the party leader as publisher on the studied accounts. Each account analysed is the person's official one and each account bears the party leaders’ own name. The posts are written and framed in such a way that it appears to be the party leader who is the producer, and the most obvious implication is a consistent use of first person, e.g. ‘I’ in post captions. However, the organizational apparatus surrounding a party leader, and political parties of today, should be considered. Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that advisers to some extent may be involved in what is published on the party leaders’ accounts, as well as how the communication is formulated. Therefore, it is possible that a person other than the party leader himself or herself manages the account and communicates in his/her name. On two analysed accounts, it is explicitly stated in the profile others than the party leader manages the account.²⁷

However, emphasis should be placed on the fact that all communication is presented ‘in the name of the party leader’. As mentioned, it is the party leader as an individual who is highlighted and presented as the poster – regardless of who it is that press the publishing button. Thus, it is also possible to carry out this analysis with full legitimacy and achieve its purposes – which is to examine what personas appear on the party leaders’ Instagram accounts, and what potential effects this can be said to have from a gender point of view.

The Instagram accounts of eight party leaders, one from each of the eight Swedish parliamentary parties, are being analysed. In the table below, they are presented. Adjacent to each party leader, their gender is stated, as well as a short introduction to their respective parties, with a note on whether the party is part of the government or not.

²⁵ For example, Nooshi Dadgostar, took over as party leader for the Left Party in October 2020.

²⁶ Internetstiftelsen, *Svenskarna och Internet 2021, 202*.

²⁷ The Instagram profile of Stefan Löfven state that “The accounts is administrated by Stefan Löfvens co-workers.” On the profile of Jimmie Åkesson it says “The accounts is administrated by Jimmie Åkesson personally as well as his staff.”

Party leader (party) ²⁸	Gender (M/F)	Introduction
Per Bolund (Grn). ²⁹	M	Representing the Green Party, in government. Key issues concern the environment and the climate, with investments in public transportation, green energy, environmentally friendly food, as well as more investments made in the school system. ³⁰
Ebba Busch (ChrDem).	F	Representing the Christian Democrats, not in government. Key issues concern children and the elderly, lower taxes, improved working conditions for people in school and care professions. ³¹
Nooshi Dadgostar (Lft).	F	Representing the Left Party, not in government. Key issues concern equality and reducing societal gaps based on e.g. economy, gender, prohibiting profits and privatisation in welfare, more money to schools and welfare. ³²
Ulf Kristersson (Mod).	M	Representing the Moderate Party, not in government. The second largest party, making Kristersson leader of the opposition. Key issues concern employment and low taxes, especially for those who work and/or have their own companies, stricter requirements for immigrants, and societal security. ³³
Stefan Löfvén (SocDem).	M	Prime minister, representing the Social Democratic Party, in government, and the largest party in Sweden. Key issues concern employment and jobs, health care, and societal security. ³⁴
Annie Lööf (Cen).	F	Representing the Centre Party, not in government. Key issues are access to jobs in the entire country, making it easier for people to run their own businesses, the environment and the climate. ³⁵
Nyamko Sabuni (Lib).	F	Representing the Liberal Party, not in government. Key issues concern the school, with e.g. grades in younger years and more time spent in school. Jobs and employment are other important questions. ³⁶
Jimmie Åkesson (SweDem).	M	Representing the Swedish Democrats, not in government. Key issues are immigration, which they want to decrease heavily, stricter laws and punishments for committing crimes, and issues concerning the elderly. ³⁷

Table 1. Overview of the party leaders, their gender, and short description of their parties.

Even if this study takes place in a Swedish context and study Swedish politicians, its insights can hopefully be applied in a wider context. The world's use of social media will most likely increase even more in the future. Everything also suggests that social media will play an increasingly important and influential role in our lives, in many ways. The people we follow,

²⁸ The English abbreviations used for the parties are equal to those used by the Swedish Parliament in their publications and communication. See "Members and parties", *Sveriges riksdag*, 2021, accessed Dec 5, 2021, <https://www.riksdagen.se/en/members-and-parties/>.

²⁹ The Green Party has two spokespersons instead of a single party leader: Per Bolund and Märta Stenevi. In the analysis, only one representative from each party is studied. For the Green Party, Per Bolund is analysed, as he is vice Prime Minister and thus can be considered to have a more prominent role in the Parliament and as a politician.

³⁰ "Miljöpartiet", *Miljöpartiet de gröna*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://www.mp.se/>.

³¹ "Välkommen till Kristdemokraterna", *Kristdemokraterna*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://kristdemokraterna.se/>.

³² "Ett Sverige för alla", *Vänsterpartiet*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://www.vansterpartiet.se/>.

³³ "Start", *Moderaterna*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://moderaterna.se/>.

³⁴ "Socialdemokraterna", *Socialdemokraterna*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/>.

³⁵ "Centerpartiet", *Centerpartiet*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://www.centerpartiet.se/>.

³⁶ "Liberalerna", *Liberalerna*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://www.liberalerna.se/>.

³⁷ "Sveriges snabbast växande folkrörelse", *Sverigedemokraterna*, 2021, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://sd.se/>.

especially those with a large following (as many of the politicians) influence many people. What they explicitly say is just one aspect of this influential power. Another one is the implicit and normative impact. To try to clarify these implicit and underlying aspects, the norms, and ‘truths’ that we often let pass as obvious and natural, thus becomes increasingly important to reveal, examine, and perhaps question.

3. Method

The following sections present the essay’s methodological considerations. First, the discourse analysis used to study the party leaders’ Instagram posts is described, including some basic theoretical assumptions and the method’s relevance to the thesis with both more theoretical assumptions and the practical application in the thesis study. This is followed by reflections on research ethics, qualitative research, and positionality.

3.1 Discourse analysis

There are different views on how a discourse can and should be defined, especially when it comes to the width of the definition. However, a common basic assumption is that a discourse includes social practices, such as patterns of action, habits, and conventions in different social contexts.³⁸ For the purpose of this essay, a relatively broad meaning of discourse is applied, which does not only focus on spoken or written text. In addition, non-linguistic aspects such as visual elements and images are taken into account.³⁹ On this theme, Björkvall aim to define a “multimodal text concept that includes both language, image and illustrations”, he calls visual texts.⁴⁰ Among other things, it is emphasized how these visual texts can create “versions of the world”, something that is based on the social constructivist idea that one can’t aim to analyse a ‘true reality’, but rather try to explain what a text does and how it helps shape our perception of the world.⁴¹

As method, a discourse analysis primarily focuses on how language and text constitute reality, but the discourse can, as mentioned, also include visual elements.⁴² Here, it is relevant to insert Instagram and the platforms’ obvious combination of both visual and textual elements. On this note, Hammarlin and Jarlbro argue that the media in general is “of great importance for the establishment of discourses about how gender is formed; how perceptions

³⁸ Kristina Boréus, and Göran Bergström, *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2018), 23.

³⁹ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 254.

⁴⁰ Anders Björkvall, “Visuell textanalys”, i *Textens mening och makt*, ed. Kristina Boréus and Göran Bergström (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2018), 358.

⁴¹ Björkvall, “Visuell textanalys”, 371.

⁴² Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 253.

about gender are negotiated, constructed and represented”.⁴³ By extension, this makes us see “how femininity and masculinity are constructed and how power relations within and between the sexes are constituted”.⁴⁴

The idea of visual texts and the importance of the media for reproducing and shaping discourses, make the discourse analysis relevant for this essay, as the intention is to study both text, image, and how they interact in the posts to convey the different personas. Fundamental to discourse analysis is the assumption that language – with visual images and elements included in the concept – is contributes to shaping our reality. All use of language appears in a social context, with different possible interpretations, and these interpretations are renegotiated in an ongoing constitutional process. Different words and symbols can thus have different meanings in various situations and contexts.⁴⁵

Another strength of the discourse analysis in the context of this essay is the fact that the method often focuses on issues of power and power relations. For example, who gets to speak and set the discursive agenda.⁴⁶ Here, a note should be made on the concept of power, and its use in this specific context. Throughout the history of gender studies, issues of power have been used, studied, and discussed in various settings and several different meaning. For this essay, when the term ‘power’ is used in relation to persona and the politicians Instagram accounts, it is mainly seen as having influential and argumentative powers to reach out with one’s politics, as well as political power as in actual votes, number of places in Parliament, i.e., having power to implement party politics. Which persona, then, seem to be the one generating this ‘power’ most effectively?

Furthermore, the discourse analysis can be used to clarify how different discourses create different societal understandings and categories, that influence both the specific context and the outside world.⁴⁷ Great emphasis is also placed on “the creation and change of social identities”, that an individual can relate to an identify with.⁴⁸ Examples of these identities could be ‘woman’, ‘Christian’, and ‘parent’.⁴⁹ Here, parallels can be drawn to the rhetorical concept of persona, that will be described in more detail later. Shortly, personas are ‘masks’, aspects of one's person that a person highlights to be more convincing and credible in a

⁴³ Hammarlin and Jarlbo, *Kvinnor och män i offentlighetens ljus*, 28.

⁴⁴ Hammarlin and Jarlbo, *Kvinnor och män i offentlighetens ljus*, 28.

⁴⁵ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 255.

⁴⁶ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 255–256.

⁴⁷ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 255–256.

⁴⁸ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 256.

⁴⁹ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 264.

specific context.⁵⁰ Boréus and Bergström argues that one way of analysing social identities, and self-representations is to let the discourse analysis focus on “the rhetorical organization” in analytical material, since this becomes a kind of manifestation of the individual's self-constitution.⁵¹ Here, the use of the rhetorical concept of persona in relation to discourse become evident once again. Another strength of the discourse analysis is its eclectic approach, where it is possible to use and combine different scholarly fields.⁵² Given that the essay intends to use both rhetorical and gender theory, this is applicable.

So, by studying the rhetorical personas in the Instagram posts, it is possible to say something about the discourses in the political context. Specifically, it is about identifying the party leaders' personas used, and how these relate to gender performativity.

3.2 Application

The analysis began with the collection of the material, which, as previously described, comes from each party leader's official Instagram accounts. Text and photos from the posts of the selected date range were collected, and thereafter, the material was closely read and studied. As the discourse analysis, as already been pointed out, put great emphasis on the meaning of language – here, in a broad definition of language with visual elements included – this close textual reading is crucial. Firstly, to create an overview and secondly to identify recurring and/or common themes in the material.

The current research question and the chosen theory determine the focus of the discourse analysis – and thus through which lens the material is studied.⁵³ In this case, it is a matter of approaching the material based on primarily rhetorical theory and the concept of persona. For example, it is a matter of mapping out which different identities (personas) show in the party leaders' posts. This is done, for example, by studying the post texts to identify prominent keywords, values, tone, and/or how the recipient is being addressed. Also, if ethos arguments are used, which can be linked to the persona and the party leader as a person, any metaphors or if the text is formulated as a statement, question, offer, or similar. This form of linguistic design can say something about the sender's appearance, self-image, and intention.⁵⁴

The images are analysed based on, for example, how the people (in this case the party leaders) are presented visually. It is possible to read visual texts discursively, when taking into account

⁵⁰ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 18.

⁵¹ Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 269.

⁵² Boréus and Bergström, *Textens mening och makt*, 257.

⁵³ Björkvall, ”Visuell textanalys”, 397.

⁵⁴ This can also be related to the linguistic action described by Björkvall, ”Visuell textanalys”, 368.

whether the person in question is portrayed as active/passive, whether there is a superiority/subordination between persons in the image, camera angle and perspective, and occurring symbols.⁵⁵ An extra interesting aspect of the discourse analysis in this context is about the (visual) texts' ability to create so-called “versions of the world”, i.e. actually give impact on shaping the recipient's perception of how the world is perceived.⁵⁶ Björkqvall mentions, for example, that women tend to be portrayed as passive, while men are more often portrayed as active. Similarly, different symbolic values are conveyed whether someone is the one performing an action and thus shows action/power, compared to someone that passively is the recipient of the action.⁵⁷

Additional aspects examined are whether the party leaders are seen/presented individually or as part of a group. Whether visually and linguistically, it is easier for a recipient to relate to an individual, rather than an entire group.⁵⁸ In the case of the party leaders, this becomes extra interesting since they *are* representatives of their parties, and thereby must speak its case. Then, the question is to what extent this representation is recognized by the individual leaders, and what it does for the impression conveyed? The analysis also considers how the written text interacts with the post images, whether they convey similar messages and thus strengthen each other, or whether contradictions exist. So, in short, the analysis of each party leaders Instagram account will consist of three main aspects: written argumentation, visual argumentation, and the overall (combined) argumentation.

3.3 Research ethics

All material analysed is gathered from each party leader's official Instagram accounts. All accounts are public, and the published content is available to anyone who wants to take part. Thus, further reasoning about research relative to the collection of the material, is not necessary. Due to image rights, no exemplary images will be displayed in the essay. Instead, publication dates of the mentioned posts are added in footnotes. Quotes from post captions are referred to where relevant, again with referring publication dates in footnotes.

However, Instagram and social media are fast-moving platforms, where communication, change, and development run fast. Thereby, posts, texts, and images in the studied material may have been removed and/or changed after the data collection. Likewise, accounts may

⁵⁵ Björkqvall, “Visuell textanalys”, 358–361.

⁵⁶ Björkqvall, “Visuell textanalys”, 371.

⁵⁷ Björkqvall, “Visuell textanalys”, 371; 373.

⁵⁸ Björkqvall, “Visuell textanalys”, 380.

have been deleted or made private. The date of the data collection is stated in the references and saved copies of the analysed material are available at the author.

3.4 Qualitative research and positionality

Following postmodernism, a text is always influenced by the person writing it.⁵⁹ The presentation of qualitative research is dependent of the author, his/her position, linguistic toolbox, and pre-understanding. Also, it matters how the author reflects and positions himself in relation to the studied object.⁶⁰ It should therefore be emphasized that the essay does not in any way intend to imply something about the party leaders' personal intentions and/or opinions. Nor are audience surveys included, in that anything can be said about how actual followers view the posts. We all interpret media messages based on our own position, experiences, and social status, as well as parameters such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.⁶¹ However, there are socially accepted and somewhat more common ways of understanding symbols that are common in a culture or social context. The essay author lives in and is part of the (Swedish) context being studied. Therefore, the interpretations in the analysis most likely will resemble those of 'ordinary recipients'.

The analysis focuses on how the posts can be interpreted from the selected theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, the essays interpretive approach should be emphasised, and the ways in which this relates to the mentioned postmodernism and social constructivism, as well as to hermeneutics.⁶² As for the studied Instagram posts, it is about closely studying the material, after which the details can be out together in a greater societal context, where identified personas, for example, can be linked to theories of social constructivism and gender performativity. However, qualitative research in general, is about the researcher interpreting a phenomenon in a specific context and from a specific position. Thereby, an analysis of this kind is affected by the analysts' personal experiences. Methodologically, in relation to the discourse analysis, Björkvall highlights the fact that meanings "are never static or given in advance. They are linked to the contexts and cultures that they are part of and to the prior knowledge and interests of the authors, or text creators, and readers."⁶³ Accordingly, the interpretations of the material in question, as presented in this essay, are *one* available

⁵⁹ On this note, sociology professor Laurel Richardson states: "The product cannot be separated from the producer, the mode of production, or the method of knowing". Laurel Richardson, "Writing: A method of inquiry," in *Turning points in qualitative research*, ed. Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003) 377-394.

⁶⁰ See e.g., Richardson "Writing: A method of inquiry".

⁶¹ Couldry, *Medier och deras roll i våra liv*, 44.

⁶² A more extensive and in-depth discussion of hermeneutics is conducted by, for example, Per-Johan Ödman, *Tolkning, förståelse, vetande: Hermeneutik i teori och praktik* (Stockholm: Norstedts akademiska förlag, 2007), 25–26; 59; 103.

⁶³ Björkvall, "Visuell textanalys", 360.

interpretation. Thus, there may be other interpretations, based on other perspectives and preconceptions.

4. Previous research

There is a lot of research made on politicians from a gender perspective and trying to account for all of this cannot be done within the framework of this thesis. Instead, a selection of studies is presented below that may be of particular interest for the purpose of this essay, primarily based on its implementation in a Swedish context.

A few studies of so-called ‘party leader effects’⁶⁴ have been conducted, i.e. the possible impact the individual party leader may have on the public opinion. The research field is quite unambiguous. In some cases, the ‘mistakes’ of an individual party leader may have had an impact on the party and election results, in other cases no effects can be identified. For example, Weiner and Silferskiöld have mapped the ‘party leader effect’ in Swedish politics from 1988 to 2014, looking at how trust in a party leader correlate to election results. Their study shows a slight positive connection between public’s attitude towards the party leader and the success of their respective parties in the parliamentary elections.⁶⁵

What can be said though, is that party leaders in more recent years have become more visible in media, often at the expense of the actual political content. Yet, there is also research showing that the party, its politics, and the political questions, are fundamental to the voters. The Swedish Research Company Novus has found that if people have a basic trust in an individual politician, say the party leader, the next step is to start looking at the party, and thereafter become a potential voter in an election. So, in that sense there is no question about the advantage of having a popular and likeable party leader, for the purpose of reaching out with a party’s politics and messages.⁶⁶

On this topic, professor of rhetoric Jens E. Kjeldsen, has studied how the new media landscape has affected the political rhetoric.⁶⁷ He argues that the emergence of the mass media has above all changed the rhetoric, and thereby also influenced the political discourse, for example through intimacy and ethos-orientation.⁶⁸ The new media allow viewers /

⁶⁴ In Swedish “partiledareffekt”.

⁶⁵ J. Weiner, and S. Silferskiöld, ”Spelar partiledaren roll?: En studie om partiledareffekter i riksdagsvalen år 1988-2014,” (bachelor dissertation, Uppsala University, 2019).

⁶⁶ Lisa Pettersson, ”Om Kristdemokraternas framgång i valet 2018.” *Novus*, Dec 12, 2018, accessed Nov 17, 2021, <https://novus.se/think-with-novus/blogg/om-kristdemokraternas-framgang-i-valet-2018/>.

⁶⁷ Jens E. Kjeldsen, “Politisk retorik i tv, radio – och online”, in *Retorisk kritik*, ed. Otto Fischer, Patrik Mehrens, and Jon Viklund (Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2016), 339.

⁶⁸ Kjeldsen, “Politisk retorik i tv, radio – och online”, 339.

followers to get closer to the politicians, which consequently puts greater focus on the politician as a person (and his ethos), rather than the politics. This enables a more intimate relationship between politician and audience.⁶⁹ Critics have argued that this change in rhetorical conditions in modern media have made the actual politics (which can be traced to the logos of rhetoric, i.e. the factual arguments), have to stand back in favour for the person conveying the message (i.e. the politician and the strength of his ethos).⁷⁰

When Filimonov, Russman and Svensson studied how Swedish political parties used social media prior to the 2014 election, they found that the tone was personal rather than party political, since the top candidates as individuals were put in the spotlight. However, it was the parties' Instagram accounts that were studied, not the individual party leaders.⁷¹ A study by Cronsell and Markås on the other hand, looked specifically at party leaders on Instagram. Their results indicate that although the party leaders primarily show a professional persona, they also add more personal touches "to create portraits of complete human beings (...) and that the purpose was to portray themselves as competent leaders in relation to their professional role."⁷² Another study, by Åsberg and Åkerlund, imply that Instagram as communicative platform has 'forced' politicians to become more personal, since it is expected by the social media audience. They also argue that Instagram enables more equal communication and giving politicians more control of their image.⁷³ Additionally, there are quite a few student essays on the topic of party leaders, social media, and gender. For example, Skott and Swalander looked at how Annie Lööf and Ulf Kristersson were portrayed on their respective Instagram accounts. They concluded that stereotypical representations of female and male are reproduced, with Lööf appearing sensitive and caring, while Kristersson appearing active and competitive.⁷⁴

The presented research can put this essay in context. It seems like social media makes politicians act more personal, although trying to maintain a professional and politically credible persona. Whether the individualisation of politics have had impact on the election votes of the entire party is not entirely investigated. Here, this study hopefully can add one

⁶⁹ Kjeldsen. "Politisk retorik i tv, radio – och online", 339–340.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Richard Sennett, *När karaktären krackelerar: människan i den nya ekonomin*, (Stockholm: Atlas, 2006).

⁷¹ Kirill Filimonov, Uta Russmann, and Jakob Svensson, "Picturing the Party: Instagram and Party Campaigning in the 2014 Swedish Elections," *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 3 (2016): 1–11.

⁷² H. Cronsell, and J. Markås, "Personliga politiker eller professionella privatpersoner? En kvalitativ studie av politikernas självrepresentation på Instagram," (bachelor dissertation, Lund University, 2019).

⁷³ A. Åkerlund, and O. Åsberg, "Politik på Instagram - På lika villkor: En kvantitativ innehållsanalys av partiledares kommunikation via Instagram" (bachelor dissertation, Mid Sweden University, 2019).

⁷⁴ F. Skott, and J. Swalander, "Just (fe)male it! : En jämförelse mellan Annie och den moderata partiledaren Ulf Kristerssons framställning på Instagram utifrån ett genusperspektiv" (bachelor dissertation, Jönköping University, 2018).

more piece to the puzzle, by looking at how party leaders' personas, the relation to gender performativity as well as to national surveys of trust and opinion polls.

5. Theoretical framework

The following section will define and discuss the theoretical framework of the essay. Key concepts are drawn from the fields of gender studies and rhetoric; where gender performativity, ethos, and persona are the main ones applied in the analysis.

5.1 Gender performativity

Gender is something we do; it is a social construction that is created in societal contexts, that changes over time and between cultures.⁷⁵ Butler describes “gender performativity” as the way we perform and act our gender and thereby reproducing stereotypes, norms, and conceptions of what it is to be masculine or feminine.⁷⁶ She believes it must be understood “not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.”⁷⁷ Butler also points to the socially constructed ‘gender binary’, the idea of a system where there are only two pronounced, separate categories: male and female. These two categories then, are assigned different attributes, statuses, characteristics, etc.⁷⁸ West and Zimmerman make a similar reasoning about the very basic premise of a socially constructed male vs female. They claim that “Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological.”⁷⁹ At the same time, they ask themselves the question of whether it’s even possible, in any situation, *not* to make gender. At least if virtually all cultures, societies, and contexts we face are based on a binary categorization of men and women.⁸⁰

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.⁸¹

As Butler points out, gender performativity is about repeated unconscious actions, behaviours, attitudes, and discourses that shape and reshape what gender is. Gender, and our

⁷⁵ See for example: Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–531. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999[1990]). Lorber, *Paradoxes of gender*.

⁷⁶ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”.

⁷⁷ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 12.

⁷⁸ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 48.

⁷⁹ West and Zimmerman, “Doing Gender”, 137.

⁸⁰ West and Zimmerman, “Doing Gender”, 145.

⁸¹ Butler, *Gender trouble*, 10.

notion of it, is changing, between time, society, and culture. It often becomes noticeable only when someone or something deviates. But with the 'deviation' the invisible norms may become more visible, discussable, changeable.⁸² So by making the concept of gender performativity one of the theoretical steppingstones in the analysis of the Instagram, it will be possible to say something about how the party leaders convey and perform gender, how this relates to thoughts of masculine/feminine. More specifically, the analysis will look at how gender is being performed through the rhetorical concept of persona, which will be presented in the following.

5.2 Persona

Rhetoric is largely based on three main concepts: ethos, pathos, and logos. Simply put, ethos is about the speaker's person, pathos is about emotions, and logos is about logic and facts.⁸³ As rhetoric put great emphasis on the context, it may vary which aspect is most used in a situation, the combination makes rhetorical argumentation credible.⁸⁴ Traditionally, the arena of public speaking and the art of rhetoric has only been available to men. Thereby, the (rhetorical) ideals of how a speaker 'should' appear to be perceived as credible has also become male coded.⁸⁵ For example, a large part of the history of the Western world and, above all, of Europe, premier ideals of knowledge, fact, logic, and reason, i.e. the use of logos. This while pathos, emotional arguments, is admittedly used by men, but can generally be said to be more female-coded.⁸⁶ It should be emphasized that ethos, pathos, and logos constantly interact in a rhetorical situation and together form the overall impression of a speaker. However, a high use of logical logos arguments could be said to result in a higher ethos, especially on historical basis, where the male-coded knowledge was rewarded over the more female-coded emotional expressions.

A speaker can express these three aspects with different rhetorical means and strategies.⁸⁷ How the perception of one's person is formed argumentatively derives from the concept of ethos. Hence, connected arguments aim to exhibit aspects of the speaker's character that are most favourable in the current context.⁸⁸ Well-used arguments based on ethos should make

⁸² Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution", 520.

⁸³ Brigitte Mral, Marie Gelang, and Emelie Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys: text, bild, actio* (Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2016) 35–39.

⁸⁴ Janne Lindqvist Grinde, *Klassisk retorik för vår tid* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008), 55–57.

⁸⁵ This topic is presented and discussed, for example by the following: Mral, *Talande kvinnor*. Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford, "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism." *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 13, no. 4, (1995): 401-441. Cheryl Glenn, "Silence: A Rhetorical Art for Resisting Discipline(s)," *JAC* 22, no. 2 (2002): 261-291.

⁸⁶ See for example, Sonja Foss, and Cindy Griffin, "Beyond persuasion: A proposal for an invitational rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 2–18.

⁸⁷ Mral, Gelang, and Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys*, 35–39.

⁸⁸ Mral, Gelang, and Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys*, 37, 53–54. Kjeldsen, *Retorik idag*, 135.

the speaker appear benevolent, reasonable, and someone with good morals.⁸⁹ Visual ethos arguments could be appearing active and energetic, showing specific symbols, wearing symbolic clothes and/or colours, and being portrayed in a certain camera angle/perspective.⁹⁰ For the purpose of this essay, ethos become extra relevant, as the focus is on the party leaders present themselves as individuals.

One way to strengthen one's ethos is to through the concept of persona. Its origins lie in the Jungian psychology, where it is described as a kind of mask an individual chooses to adopt towards the surrounding world.⁹¹ In rhetorical contexts, on the other hand, a persona can be seen as a way for a speaker to strengthen his ethos, by emphasising a specific aspect of his personality. Given that this aspect makes him appear more credible to the audience.⁹² Professor of rhetoric Brigitte Mral describes the rhetorical persona as being about “toning down certain traits in personality and instead emphasize others, to vary and develop different aspects of one's own identity. The choice of persona can be seen as a strategic adaptation to the expectations and rules of a specific situation.”⁹³ Mral uses the parable of the speaker who is painting a self-portrait, in which certain characteristics are highlighted. Exactly which ones depend on the context and the audience's expectations, basically which appearance is most effective in the given context.⁹⁴ She also discusses the concept of persona from a gender perspective and describes how female speakers historically have adopted more ‘masculine’ characteristics to strengthen their authority in ‘masculine’ arenas, such as politics.⁹⁵

Hence, the concept of persona becomes relevant to this essay, when used to study which personas appear on the party leaders' Instagram accounts in relation to gender performativity. Mral believes that the use of a specific persona is a matter of various degrees of strategic adaptation to the environment. About context and situation – and above all a matter of finding the persona or personas that will best strengthen the person's ethos, and thereby assist the argumentation and by extension convince the audience.⁹⁶ Nor is the ‘choice’ of persona always a deliberate one, but rather a reflection on the prevailing societal and cultural norms and expectations.⁹⁷ Thereby, the concept of persona become even more relevant for this

⁸⁹ Lindqvist Grinde, *Klassisk retorik för vår tid*, 88–93.

⁹⁰ Mral, Gelang, and Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys*, 91, 131. Jens E. Kjeldsen, *Retorik idag: introduktion till modern retorikteori* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008), 287–288.

⁹¹ Mral, Gelang, and Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys*, 36.

⁹² Mral, Gelang, and Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys*, 36.

⁹³ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 18.

⁹⁴ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 211.

⁹⁵ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 211–212.

⁹⁶ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 211–212.

⁹⁷ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 215–216.

study. Because by identifying the present personas, one can also say something about the (gendered) context in which the party leaders exist. As well as, for example, if the females still are required to ‘act male’ and adapt more masculine coded personas on their accounts.

Before moving on to the analysis, a note on the political rhetorical history. It was briefly mentioned above that the political arena historically only has been available to men. But women have tried, even though they first had to fight to reach the same level of status as men, gaining access to the public patriarchal sphere before they could even engage in ‘real’ rhetoric. As rhetoricians Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford put it: women had to “challenge traditional understandings of the rhetor, for until recently, the figure of the rhetor has been assumed to be masculine, unified, stable, autonomous, and capable of acting rationally on the world through language.”⁹⁸ So, when looking to the Instagram of the party leaders, is this masculine ideal still present? Is it this ‘traditional understanding of the rhetor’, i.e., the politician, that reflects in the personas used, by both male and female party leaders?

6. Analysis

In the following section the result of the analysis is presented. Initially, Table 2 gives an overview of the analysed Instagram accounts. Here, the number of followers, the number of posts during the analysed period, and the Instagram bio of each account is visualised.⁹⁹ Thereafter follows the analysis, implemented according to the discourse analysis described earlier. The concept of persona is central, as to study what aspects of character are reflected in the posts. By extension, the essay aims to relate these personas to gender performativity, which is more exhaustively investigated in the ‘Discussion’ section.

The analysis is disposed according to the two main themes found in the material: professional/political, and personal. Under these two sections, various ‘sub-personas’ identified, and related to either category, are presented, exemplified, and discussed.¹⁰⁰ Note that the most distinctive examples from the material are presented in the essay. Those party leaders that do not figure as frequently, are simply not relevant to the purpose of the essay.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford, “Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism,” 412.

⁹⁹ An Instagram bio is description under the username on an Instagram profile page. It can be a maximum 150 characters. The number of followers is as of 2021-09-30, i.e., the last day of the analysed period.

¹⁰⁰ A thorough analysis of each party leaders’ Instagram is performed and carefully documented. Due to space and readability of the thesis, the core and main findings are presented here in the Analysis section. All notes and documentation from each step of the implemented analysis can be found at the authors.

¹⁰¹ There are party leaders that do not exhibit any particular feature in relation to the thesis’ purpose, but rather the quite basic persona of a politician and his/her everyday work life. Therefore, some party leaders are only mentioned shortly in summaries and similar contexts.

Initially, one can reflect upon Table 2. First, note the number of followers, and the wide range. Ebba Busch (ChrDem) have the most followers (160 000), while Per Bolund (Grn) has 7700. A ‘ranking’ based on the number of followers could serve as an indication of the party leaders’ prosperity, popularity, and power on Instagram. But does this social media power translate into political power? In the concluding section of the analysis, the number of followers is set in relation to opinion polls and public surveys of trust.

A first implication of the party leaders’ personas is found in their Instagram bios. In their presentations, self-imposed titles can provide a first clue to the personas *they themselves* convey. All party leaders state that they are leaders of their respective party. However, it is worth noticing if there are additional ‘titles’, as well as the order of presentation. One could suppose that the most important one should come first. So, seven of the party leaders address themselves firstly as party leaders – but for Per Bolund (Grn), the political role comes in at number three, after ‘dad’ and ‘basketball lover’. He, Annie Lööf (Cen) and Ebba Busch (ChrDem), are the only ones adding titles/personas their roles as party leaders. These additional ones are all of personal character, e.g., as parent or pet owners.¹⁰²

Party Leader	Followers ¹⁰³	# posts	Bio
Ebba Busch (ChrDem)	160 000	15	Party leader for the Christian Democrats, mother of Birger 6 and Elise 4, owner of the boxer Bella and the cat Cattis.
Jimmie Åkesson (SweDem)	113 000	7	Jimmie Åkesson’s the party leader of the Sweden Democrats. The account is administered by Jimmie Åkesson personally and his staff.
Stefan Löfven (SocDem)	111 000	33	Party chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Sweden's Prime minister. The account is administered by Stefan Löfven's employees.
Annie Lööf (Cen)	93 700	36	Party leader for the Centre Party, mother, feminist and liberal. Committed to creating a freer, safer, and greener Sweden.
Ulf Kristersson (Mod)	85 400	25	Party leader for the Moderate Party.
Nooshi Dadgostar (Lft)	40 300	22	Party chairman of the Left Party @vansterpartiet
Nyamko Sabuni (Lib)	13 800	40	Party leader for @liberalernas ❤️
Per Bolund (Grn)	7 700	17	Dad, basketball lover, spokesperson, minister. For contact, email m.registrator@regeringskansliet.se.

Table 2. Overview of the party leaders Instagram accounts, with number of followers, number of posts during the studied period, and their bio descriptions. The listing is sorted based on the number of Instagram followers.

¹⁰² See Table 2.

¹⁰³ By September 30, 2021.

6.1 Political/professional personas

The main and most prominent persona identified on all party leaders Instagram accounts are related to their professional roles as politicians. It becomes extremely obvious that their accounts are dedicated to their work and are intended to profile them as politicians. As mentioned, all eight party leaders state in their bios that they are leaders/representatives of their respective parties. This professional persona is visible in practically all posts during the studied period – as well as a majority of earlier and later posts, that has been briefly observed. The party leaders are seen in different professional situations and contexts. For example, there are video clips from tv or parliamentary debates, from the yearly opening of Parliament, from visits at workplaces and schools, meetings with organizations and companies. Every situation communicated, in both text and visuals, are clearly professional. The party leaders mainly speak as politicians.

This finding may not be too surprising, considering it is the party leaders' public and professional accounts. The primary purpose of the Instagram accounts as communicative channels should be, and apparently is, to show and mediate to voters/the public what the party leader does and convey their party politics. In rhetorical terms, in relation to ethos and persona, with a purpose to strengthen their credibility. Therefore, it becomes more interesting to look closer at what 'sub-categories' of political/professional personas are present and if these vary and/or are similar between the party leaders. More specifically, how the party leaders' personas relate to the gender performativity, which is also more interesting for the thesis' aim and purpose.

6.1.1 Individual or member of the collective

One notable aspect is whether the party leader takes on a persona of 'the individual' or as 'the group member', in this case mainly a member of their respective parties. The most prominent indicator of these personas in the Instagram posts are the use of pronouns and how the party leaders formulate their captions, for example if they put emphasis on themselves and that *they* think – using first person and 'I' – or if they mainly speak about what 'we' think, highlighting the party as collective. Historically, the latter option, with an emphasis on the collective and inclusivity, has been seen as a more female way of arguing in comparison to the more individual male image.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford, *Border crossings*, 418-419.

First, it should be stated that all party leaders mix the use individual persona with the one of the collective. But some party leaders let one or the other dominate and thereby become more prominent. For example, Nyamko Sabuni (Lib) rarely speak as an individual, and if she does, she still connects herself to the party as a whole: “I and the Liberal Party will not give up until all children (...) get the chance to succeed in the Swedish school.”¹⁰⁵ In other captions, she does not use personal pronouns at all, rather but talking about what “the Liberal Party” thinks, wants, and does. In other cases, she acts *together* with someone else: “I am writing about this today together with the Liberal Party's new school policy spokesperson”, “I write about this today in Dagens Industri together with Mats Persson”, “I write together with the Liberal Party's legal policy spokesperson”.¹⁰⁶ The post image often shows Sabuni together with the mentioned other. Consequently, Sabuni seem to be doing much of her work together with others. On one hand, this can be interpreted as an inclusive leadership. She is a leader that involves her party colleagues, emphasizing the group in the use of ‘we’, and putting the party first by repeatedly highlighting the party politics. She is, after all, a representative of the party. On the other hand, though, her constant referral to the collective may come across as lack of individual drive and power of action. How good of a leader is she really, if she always needs a ‘co-pilot’ or the collective to make things happen? In rhetorical terms, this could be described as strengthening one’s ethos using others authority. It may be effective at times, mainly when you do not have ‘enough’ credibility in yourself to convince the audience, and instead, ‘borrow’ from more trustworthy others.¹⁰⁷ This strategy is often used among female speakers, trying to enter the male dominated public arena, by drawing on male authority.¹⁰⁸ So, when Sabuni, in her role as party *leader* repeatedly draws on others authority in the use of a persona as ‘group member’, she reproduces these gendered stereotypes. It appears she always need others to make things happen. It is also worth noting that ‘female leadership’ often is synonymous with this collective approach. And as mentioned, an emphasis on the collective is often considered a female feature, devalued in relation to the ruling norm of ‘the strong male individual’.¹⁰⁹

In great contrast to Sabuni’s collective persona, is the individual one of Ulf Kristersson (Mod). He mainly writes in first person: “Today, I was in Tensta”, “I’m reading the sad news about”, “I’ll do everything I can to make this happen”. The text is accompanied by imagery

¹⁰⁵ Post made on September 6, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Post made on September 8, September 9, and September 10, 2021. Dagens Industri is a Swedish financial magazine.

¹⁰⁷ Mral, Gelang, and Bröms, *Kritisk retorikanalys*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 212–213.

¹⁰⁹ As described by, for example Glenn, “Silence: A Rhetorical Art for Resisting Discipline(s).” Also, by Cheryl Glenn, *Unspoken: a rhetoric of silence*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

where Kristersson himself is in focus, either in portraits or with any other people present as bystanders and/or out of camera focus. Sure, there are posts where the ‘we’ of the party is mentioned, but the overall impression is the one of the individual, of the leader who make things happen. In other words, a typically masculine coded persona.

Another noticeable use of individual vs collective persona is seen in the posts of Stefan Löfvén (SocDem), who is both party leader and Prime minister.¹¹⁰ It is explicitly stated in his bio that posts are published by Löfvén’s staff.¹¹¹ Even so, captions are written in first person, which could be seen as taking on a more personal, although still professional, persona where it at least appears to be Löfvén talking. If the posts would be phrased as if “He look forward to”, the distance to the audience would surely become greater, and less relatable. Although, Löfvén is rarely present as an individual ‘I’ in the posts. Instead, he constantly makes himself part of the government, talking about what ‘they’ are doing. Here, the Social Democratic Party seem to come in second to the government. In other cases, he speaks about a ‘we’ that includes the nation and the Swedish people. Like when speaking about children’s rights, his caption states that ‘we’ must keep fighting, as to say the whole country. This way, he makes himself part of an even larger context, not just devoted to the party or even the government, but to Sweden. Is it possible only because of his role as Prime minister? He is already at the top of the hierarchy, the most powerful, the leader not just of his party but of Sweden. In this sense, he can ‘afford’ to make himself part of the collective, highlighting others, due to his power and high position. If he would use the individual persona more often, it could be perceived as bragging and/or misuse of the power advantage he obviously has. Therefore, a collective persona could strengthen him, by making him look more generous and inclusive. Note that, this use of a collective person appear more prosperous for the male Löfvén, than for the female Sabuni.

Yet another interesting use of persona in this individual/collective aspect is seen in the Instagram feed of Ebba Busch (ChrDem). In her bio, she describes herself as ”party leader”, “mother” and “dog owner” – a mix of both professional and personal self-imposed titles. This also reflects in her actual posts, that are mainly written in a personal tone of voice, using first person. In rhetorical terms, the personal aspects are clear examples of pathos, arguments based on emotion, when stirring emotion by referring to personal experience.¹¹² But she

¹¹⁰ Stefan Löfvén was Prime Minister and party leader for the Social Democratic Party during the studied period. Since then, he has resigned from both posts, succeeded by Magdalena Andersson in December 2021.

¹¹¹ Two party leaders make this note, the other one is Jimmie Åkesson (SweDem).

¹¹² Lindqvist Grinde, *Klassisk retorik för vår tid*, 86–87.

always makes smooth transitions from personal to political, showing how personal experiences (in this case her own), also are relevant in a wider context. For example, she starts writing a post about meeting an organization working with sexual crimes, and her very personal impressions of this, and then continues to convey what the Christian Democrats want to do about this problem.¹¹³ In this way, the individual becomes part of the party's larger whole, part of the 'we', where she shows what policy Busch (through the party) stands for. Another example is a post describing a visit to her hometown. In quite emotional detail, she speaks about her background and upbringing, her memories, and her grandmother. But then she once again shifts the personal story into concrete political suggestions of the Christian Democrats.¹¹⁴ Once again, the personal bridges over to the professional. This way, she can be said to first use pathos and stir the audiences' emotions, and then use more formal logos in the role of professional politician. This could be a way of giving the otherwise quite anonymous party a face, just like standard media logic and rhetoric states: telling the story of one individual is a more effective way to convince and to evoke emotions, rather than speaking of an entire group.¹¹⁵ This applies for Bush's account and is both an effective way of using emotional arguments (pathos) and the use of more formal logos, as well as strengthen her own person by showing an active, energetic, individual persona. Perhaps, it could be described as a way of bridging the more female emotional/collective female persona, to a more politically accepted logos/individual one.

To conclude this section, it can be stated that all party leaders use a mix of individual and group member personas, even though the examples mentioned above are the most distinguishing. Generally, the individual persona is more prominent among the male party leaders, while the females more often emphasise the collective. Thereby, the gender that is being performed align with stereotypical ideas of gender. The males enhances the notion of traditionally strong, individual, forceful masculinity, whereas the females perform gender according to the feminine norm.

6.1.2 Active or passive

Related to the individual and/or collective persona, is also the demonstration of oneself as active or passive. Politics is basically about proclaiming action, a constant argumentation to favour their party's way forward towards a better society. This 'mission' is also evident in

¹¹³ Post made on September 27, 2021.

¹¹⁴ Post made on September 3, 2021.

¹¹⁵ Kjeldsen, "Politisk retorik i tv, radio – och online".

the party leaders' personas. Written captions mainly focus on various political actions and suggestions from the party leaders and their parties. Here, there is a constant 'textual' action. A differentiation in the active/passive persona become more evident when looking specifically at the visual aspects. As mentioned, whether a person appears active or passive convey different symbolic values, where active/acting attributes is considered more masculine.¹¹⁶ For example, in visual communication, men are often seen using their bodies *doing* things actively, while women more often is still, posing.¹¹⁷

For example, Ulf Kristersson (Mod) is often seen walking, gesturing, talking, debating, *doing*. He is acting and is being active. As described earlier, he is also in focus in the visual image, the one taking place, taking a stand. Another example of active doing is seen in the visuals of Stefan Löfvén (SocDem), he is seen meeting people, discussing, speaking. But in contrast to Kristersson, Löfvén often is visually equal to, or even bystander, in the images. He is physically placed in the background or allowing others to make him recipient of action, e.g. listening to children, elderly, workers when they speak. Sure, he is active, but he is receiving. Once again, there is the possibility of his hierarchical position and power making this somewhat passive persona a possible, perhaps even favourable, alternative. Mral and Olinder argues that the allegory of "David vs Goliath" is commonly used in visual communication, where the audience often feel compassion for the weaker part, if the supremacy takes too much advantage of the power position.¹¹⁸ So, by showing Löfvén smiling, listening, and being quite passive, his hierarchical powers are somewhat softened. His power position compensates for the use of attributes stereotypically seen as more 'feminine', that would otherwise be less advantageous.

Nooshi Dadgostar (Lft) is seen out 'in the real world', and visually, an active persona emerges. Even though she is sometimes simply posing quite passively in a factory or in front of an industry building, her body language conveys determination, presence, action. In other cases, is seen in the middle of *doing* something; speaking, being interviewed, debating, leaning forward, walking, etc. This illustrates the active persona prominent throughout Dadgostars posts. The visuals also complement the post captions, that, even though quite short, still convey determination and activity. Hence, the persona of an active politician, as well as a female using a traditionally male coded political persona, emerges.

¹¹⁶ Björkvall, "Visuell textanalys", 371; 373.

¹¹⁷ Tomas Gunnarsson, *Bildhandboken: Bilder som förändrar världen*, (Gävle: Gävle kommun), 25.

¹¹⁸ Brigitte Mral, and Henrik Olinder, *Bildens retorik i journalistiken* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2011), 23.

Writing the posts in first person, highlighting the “I” who acts and is being active is another distinct dimension to this type of persona. For example, when Ebba Busch (ChrDem) writes in first person it is clear to the audience that it is *she* who speaks, thinks, argues, is active. This also goes for Kristersson, Dadgostar, Löfvén, and Lööf, who all uses the personal pronoun as a way of conveying action and activity – a powerful persona. In contrast, Sabuni and her constant use of ‘we’ communicates personal passivity. Here, the gender performances are mainly drawn on the stereotypical male ideal of the active, individual, forceful politician – present among both male and female party leaders.

6.1.3 Opponent, critic, and saviour

Another notable persona appearing in the material is the one of ‘the critic’ and/or ‘the opponent’. They are mainly identified in writing, when the party leaders question and criticise other parties and their politics, with the apparent main purpose of making themselves and their politics seem more favourable and the better option. Of course, it is partly a question of whether the party leaders’ party is in government or opposition, but the persona is in many cases visible independent of this aspect. For example, Ulf Kristersson (Mod) applies this persona to a very great extent. He repeatedly stresses that Sweden is moving in the wrong direction, that the current government has failed; with more unemployment, more death shootings, longer queues in health care, challenges in energy supply, etc.¹¹⁹ In one post he argues on climate politics, and how the SocDem and Grn have failed, and that they (Mod) will handle things better.¹²⁰ With Kristersson, a distinctive political persona appears: ‘the Opponent’, or ‘the Critic’. In his post captions, Kristersson does not only highlight his and his party’s politics. Rather, he presents himself as the new better leader, and the Moderate Party as the ‘better choice’. He apparently sees a society where things are about to go very wrong, but he has a solution to the problem, he can ‘save’ Sweden and the Swedes, if only they follow him and the Moderate Party: “If Sweden is to be put on a new course, a new government is needed. I will do everything I can to make it a reality.”¹²¹ Note it is ‘I’ who will take action, the individual, forceful persona of the male political leader emerges once more. Thereby, it is also worth noticing how this ‘I’, as in Kristersson, who takes on a persona of ‘the Saviour’, the better choice. Throughout his posts, he does use ‘we’ as making himself part of and representative of his party, but he is just as much highlighting himself as an individual. Together with assertive choice of words (verbs), he states what either he or his

¹¹⁹ Examples can be seen in posts made on September 8, September 11, September 20, 2021.

¹²⁰ Post made on September 13, 2021.

¹²¹ Post made on September 9, 2021.

party “know”, “will”, “want to”, etc. He draws on the persona of a potential leader, surely wanting to present himself as the best option for a new prime minister. These personas are also evident on other party leaders’ accounts. Nooshi Dadgostar (Lft) often highlight the failures of today’s society, and how she (as an individual) as well as the Left Party will make things better. So does Ebba Busch (ChrDem) and Nyamko Sabuni (Lib), other opponents who take on the persona of the critic, as their suggested politics are to make Sweden better.

One party leader seems to build his entire professional persona on the ‘sub-category’ of the critical opponent: Jimmie Åkesson (SweDem). In basically every post, he highlights something that is wrong with the current policy. He is pinpointing other parties, other named politicians, the presently ruling politics, and today’s society. For example, “Unfortunately, both the current and previous governments have refused to take this seriously. (...) Thank Reinfeldt and Löfvén for that – by voting right next autumn.”¹²²

This oppositional persona, based on criticising your opponent and thereafter presenting your own (better) solutions, sure is an established part of the political landscape. That the persona of ‘the Opponent’ becomes extra prominent on Kristerssons account, is logical since he is party leader of the largest opposition party and surely ‘need’ to point to weaknesses of the current government. The same goes for Åkesson as representative for the third largest party, known for putting themselves in opposition. But when many of these posts focuses on and points at what other parties are doing wrong, it could be at the expense of making their own political point. So, the question is if this critiquing persona, may be the one the audience remembers and suddenly, the critique has become complaints, and the result could be that the audience only see ‘whining’.

From a gender performative perspective one can also consider the mere visual aspect in relation to these personas. Stereotypically, women are more often seen smiling modestly, quietly, passively. Men on the other hand, are more often portrayed with a serious facial expression, either looking beside the camera or straight into it with a dominant stare.¹²³

6.2 Personal personas

Although most posts are related to the political/professional personas, it is interesting to note the presence of more personal ones. Firstly, the frequency and occurrence of personal personas vary enormously between the party leaders. While some every so often say or show

¹²² Post made on September 6, 2021.

¹²³ Gunnarsson, *Bildhandboken*, 24.

something from their more private everyday lives, indicating that there is a ‘real private person’ behind the political mask, others are strictly professional. Two party leaders stand out in this aspect: Annie Lööf (Cen) and Ebba Busch (ChrDem). Lööf shows herself reading bedtime stories, children's birthday parties, and balloons to be taken home to her children.¹²⁴ Personas of ‘mother’ and ‘parent’ appear alongside the politician, and thereby a kind of humanization. Even though politics dictate her account, she also shows additional attributes. Busch’s feed also visualises a more personal side, for example holding hands with her children, addressing her children’s knowledge on combating litter, and describing herself as ‘mother’ and ‘dog/cat owner’ in her bio.¹²⁵ These personal personas are mainly seen among these two female party leaders. From a gender perspective, the cliché often places men in working and professional contexts, while women (even though acting in their professions) are “taken out of the office”, being placed in more non-professional settings.¹²⁶ In this sense, gender is being performed stereotypically, since it is only females who addresses these personal personas, traditionally such associated with women, e.g., caring for family.

In contrast, Stefan Löfvén, Nyamko Sabuni, Nooshi Dadgostar, and Per Bolund exhibit mainly professional personas. Although, it is noticeable how Bolund for example describes himself as “Dad, basketball lover, spokesperson, minister” in his bio. If one should consider the order in which he mentions his ‘self-imposed roles’, the more personal aspects of his person are mentioned before the professional. However, this ‘prioritization’ is not at all reflected in the actual posts published in his feed. There, full focus is placed on his political/professional persona, and he can be said to perform gender in a traditional way, visualising the male coded personas of the working professional.

Yet another aspect of the more personal approach and ditto persona, can be called as ‘the Listener’ or ‘the Inviting’. This persona become very prominent with Annie Lööf, since practically every post end with either a question or a personal greeting to her followers: “What investments do you think should be made in the next budget? Feel free to comment!”, “Are you reading a book right now? Feel free to leave a book tip so we can inspire the joy of reading together!”, “Have you ever left a motion in an association you were involved in? What was it about? Feel free to comment!”¹²⁷ She also wishes her followers a nice weekend, asking them what they have been doing during the weekend, giving tips and guidance on how

¹²⁴ Examples can be seen in posts made on September 8, September 10, and September 26, 2021.

¹²⁵ Post made on September 17, and September 25, 2021.

¹²⁶ Gunnarsson, *Bildhandboken*, 27.

¹²⁷ Posts made on September 2, September 8, and September 25, 2021.

they can get involved in politics, calling on them to watch an interview, a video or tv show. Again, the invitational rhetoric, the collective leadership, the inclusivity, and personalisation, associated with femininity, are being constituted in Lööf's presented personas.¹²⁸

Then there is the case of Jimmie Åkesson (SweDem), that stands out in several aspects. As mentioned, he has a very political approach, and thereby the political/professional persona. On the note of personal personas, Åkesson does not indicate anything about his family and/or personal lives. Although, two out of his seven posts, are related to soccer – which indicates an interest in the sport, and by extension the more personal persona of 'soccer fan'. But the main point here, is the implicit communication and overall impression of his entire account. The imagery is quite disjointed, and not nearly as 'polished' as the rest of the party leaders. There are screen shots of news websites/web articles, a selfie, and a blurry cropped close-up from what seem to be a team image. The captions are straight forward, written in quite informal words, using first person. The impression conveyed can be described as relaxed, informal, unpolished, and even 'ordinary'. Thereby, Åkesson certainly stands out in comparison to his colleagues, as he does not seem to care how he comes across. He says what he wants to say, seemingly not making too much of a fuss about it, just posting, not overthinking. Even though his bio says the account is partially administrated by his staff, the impression is that it is Åkesson himself who acts, without help from 'strategic communication experts' whose only purpose is to 'persuade the followers'. The look and feel of Åkessons account is that it could be anyone of ours. In this sense, Åkesson do *communicate* a personal persona, even though the *content* is mainly professional. The use of words, language, and images, all together show a quite human politician, a personal professional. The question is, does he 'get away with it' simply because he is a man? Would this 'commonality' be accepted if, say, Bush or Lööf would present themselves the same way? Or are these personal personas yet another indication of a normative gender performativity?

6.3 Summary of analysis

The analysis identifies a varied set of personas on the studied Instagram accounts. The dominant persona, however, is the one of the politician, even though this professional persona is seen in various ways. Some party leaders present themselves strictly professional, with texts and visuals only related to their duties. The post captions are designated to the politics and to convey the messages of their party. Although, the voice of which they speak vary.

¹²⁸ As described by Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford, *Border crossings*. Female personas are described by Mral, *Talande kvinnor*.

Some use a clear ‘I’, as of saying ‘my politics’, while others are constantly making themselves part of a collective, speaking in terms of ‘we’. These two approaches, could also be seen as two different personas, suggested called ‘individual’ and ‘collective’. Additional personas are ‘active’ or (more) ‘passive’, as well as those related to the ‘opponent’, ‘critic’ and/or ‘saviour’. These personas are predominantly found in the imagery and visual rhetoric. Because while some party leaders generally post images of themselves acting and doing; others mainly use portraits where they simply pose. For some party leaders, the professional personas are combined with more personal ones, as with Ebba Busch and Annie Lööf.

Table 3 summarises the most prominent personas on each party leaders account. Note that additional ones may exist, although more rarely, or not as significant.

Party leader	Followers ¹²⁹	Trust % ¹³⁰	Poll ¹³¹	Personas identified
Ebba Busch (ChrDem)	160 000	22% (6)	4,7% (6)	active, critic, personal
Jimmie Åkesson (SweDem)	113 000	29% (4)	19,6% (3)	critic, personal
Stefan Löfvén (SocDem)	111 000	37% (1)	26,1% (1)	collective, passive
Annie Lööf (Cen)	93 700	24% (5)	8,9% (5)	personal, politician
Ulf Kristersson (Mod)	85 400	35% (2)	21,5% (2)	individual, active, critic, saviour
Nooshi Dadgostar (Lft)	40 300	32% (3)	10,6% (4)	individual, active, critic
Nyamko Sabuni (Lib)	13 800	8% (8)	3,0% (8)	collective, passive
Per Bolund (Grn)	7 700	13% (7)	4,2% (7)	politician

Table 3. Overview of the party leaders’ number of followers, what percentage of the Swedes have trust in them, and the main types of personas identified on their Instagram accounts in the performed analysis. The numbers in parentheses indicate which place in the ranking the party leaders have, regarding that aspect. The listing is sorted based on the number of Instagram followers.

7. Discussion

Firstly, let us reconnect to the aim and research questions of the essay: “Which personas are identified on the Instagram accounts of Swedish party leaders?” and “How do these personas relate to gender performativity?” The answer to the first question can be found in the recently presented analysis with the summary in Table 3. The second question have been partly

¹²⁹ By September 30, 2021.

¹³⁰ Novus, *Partiledarförtroende sept 2021* (Novus, 2021), accessed Dec 5, 2021. <https://novus.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/rapportnovusfortroendeinklanderssonsept2021.pdf>.

¹³¹ Kantar Sifo, *Sifo väljarbarometer september 2021* (Kantar Sifo, 2021), accessed Dec 5, 2021. https://www.kantarsifo.se/sites/default/files/reports/documents/sifo_valjarbarometer_sep.pdf.

connected to throughout the analysis, but is to be discussed, answered, and summarized more exhaustively in the following.

Traditionally, the political arena has only been available for men. So, the mere existence and visibility of female party leaders enacting personas of professional politicians are positive, contributing to establishing/changing ideals, and performing gender differently. It is often stated that mere visibility and actual representation is a first step of renegotiate status quo.¹³² As described earlier, the result of gender performativity is on one hand the reproduction of norms and stereotypes, but on the other a more general conception of what it is to be masculine or feminine.¹³³ It is also in the situations when something is done differently from the norm, that we can identify normative perceptions of gender and thereby be able to do differently.¹³⁴ With this said, and to draw on Widegren, it is not only about who is being seen and taking (visual) space that makes the difference, it is also – and perhaps foremost – about *how* these representations are carried out.¹³⁵ The analysis show that the party leaders – both males and females – generally confirm and reproduce the persona of the ‘typical’ politician. Thereby, the gender performances are much in line with the ‘traditions’; displayed by active (male) politicians and adopted by the women trying to access and gain power on the male dominated political/public arenas.¹³⁶

The analysis show that all party leaders mainly use a professional persona(s) on their Instagram accounts, even though the *kind* of political persona vary. All repeatedly use the persona of a party/group member, often explicitly concretised using ‘we’ in the post captions. Putting great emphasis on the collective and using the persona of ‘group member’ could be seen as a potential disadvantage, as it may weaken the party leader’s ethos, individual force, and credibility. This is mainly relevant in the case of Sabuni, and not only evident from this analysis, but also from the national survey, where she is the party leader with least credibility.¹³⁷ In the case of Löfvén though, the use of the collective seems to be an advantage. He exhibits somewhat more ‘feminine’ attributes but have enough positional and hierarchical power to do so. He can ‘allow’ himself to listen, appear more passive, not highlight himself as much. Everyone ‘knows’ he as prime minister have the actual power, and the collective approach makes him appear empathic and inclusive. Löfvén is also the party leader with the

¹³² Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”, 520. Gunnarsson, *Bildhandboken*, 10. Kajsa Widegren, *Att göra verklighet* (Göteborg: Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, 2017).

¹³³ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”.

¹³⁴ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”, 520.

¹³⁵ Widegren, *Att göra verklighet*.

¹³⁶ As described by Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 212–213.

¹³⁷ Novus, *Partiledarförtroende sept 2021*.

highest trust, and SocDem is the largest party.¹³⁸ So, what does this imply about gender performativity? Perhaps that different ‘rules’ apply for females and males, even though they use the same personas.

The ideals of the ‘typical leader’, are often derived from the Western history of ‘strong men’, leaders and kings conquering lands, winning wars, being active, forceful, individual heroic decision makers. Personas related to these attributes are mainly identified on the accounts of Kristersson and Dadgostar. But does this mean that the leaders who enact personas connected to these stereotypically and historically masculine features – such as the active individual – are more trustworthy? If one look at the national survey of the party leader’s credibility once more, this is partially confirmed. Like mentioned, Löfvén rank highest on trust, followed by Kristersson, and Dadgostar.¹³⁹ Especially Kristersson and Dadgostar exhibit very ‘masculine’ personas, as both text and visuals present them as quite harsh, determined, forceful, critical. All traditionally masculine attributes.¹⁴⁰ Here though, it seems that when a female adopts a male persona, her status is raised. But when a female adopts the ‘female persona’, like Sabuni, her ‘prosperity’ remains low.

On this note, one can reflect upon Butler’s writings, and how she argues that “Performing one’s gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect”.¹⁴¹ Stereotypically, Dadgostar can be said to do her gender ‘wrong’, as a woman displaying typically masculine traits. At the same time, her performance is all according to the professional persona of the typical (male) politician, in the active, forceful, leader. In comparison to Dadgostar, Busch and Lööf perform gender more stereotypically as women focusing on their carriers *as well as* taking care of family, pets, home, etc. Thereby, the female party leaders seem to see a ‘need’ to be something more than the male ones. It is not enough ‘just’ to show your professional persona, of the politician. Busch’s and Lööf’s Instagram accounts demonstrates several, varied aspects of themselves – as if additional personas would be better. In addition to being party leaders, they are also, for example, mother, daughter, granddaughter, dog owner, feminist, environmentalist, party member, colleague, house owner, outdoor enthusiast, etc. As if to show that they can handle the politics, be leaders, make life work, have time for *all* aspects of life. This though, may be counterproductive. Being too inconsistent and using too many personas, may come across as fragmented to the

¹³⁸ Novus, *Partiledarförtroende sept 2021*. Kantar Sifo, *Sifo väljarbarometer september 2021*.

¹³⁹ Novus, *Partiledarförtroende sept 2021*.

¹⁴⁰ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 15.

¹⁴¹ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 528.

audience – lowering the party leaders’ credibility. But implications of ‘being more than a politician’, with experiences from ‘the real world’, also could strengthen credibility, there is an act of balance.¹⁴² Thereby, these Instagram posts and these ‘additional’, more personal personas, could also be interpreted as a way of challenging the ruling norms and ideals. As mentioned, the political ideals have always been male coded, and the traditional politician has been male. But as female politicians enter the arena, they seem to be breaking and challenging these traditions. They are not only showing their professional personas, but also more personal ones, by bringing family life onto the political scene. And since gender performativity is a *performance*, this does also open up for change and renegotiation of what it means to be a politician and what performance is ‘expected’ from a party leader. By extension, one could hope this change goes whether the individual is male or female.

In contrast to Busch and Lööf, Dadgostar and Sabuni, exhibit stricter (traditionally ‘masculine’) political personas on their Instagram accounts. Both put emphasis on their professional personas, even though in completely different ways and with different results. Dadgostar, on one hand, visualise traditionally male-coded attributes: strictly professional, active, determined, tough, confident. She emphasizes herself as an individual, not least visually. In many ways, she breaks the gender norms – and it seems to work, if one considers the national polls.¹⁴³ Sabuni, on the other hand, focuses on her role in the collective – as if her strategy to settle on a traditionally male-dominated arena is to establish her ethos by derive credibility from others; either her party or (male) colleagues. This does not seem to be successful either regarding Instagram followers, in confidence polls for herself or opinion polls for her party.¹⁴⁴ Mral argues that female speakers often ‘borrow’ authority from the other gender in case the situation demands it. Either by referring to other persons, like Sabuni, or highlighting more ‘masculine’ aspects of oneself, like Dadgostar.¹⁴⁵ In this case, the second ‘strategy’ appear more successful. But still, and once again, this is also a gender performance, and as such contributing to a constantly ongoing negotiation of what it means to be a politician.

Still though, the party leaders can be said to continue to perform gender stereotypically to a relatively large extent, where men are obvious authorities, they own their professions, and

¹⁴² Lindqvist Grinde, *Klassisk retorik för vår tid*, 92–93.

¹⁴³ Dadgostar is the party leader with the greatest increase in confidence from the previous survey to the one mainly referred to in this study. She goes from 19 to 32 percent in confidence, which is a significant increase of 13 percentage points. Novus, *Partiledarförtroende sept 2021*.

¹⁴⁴ An overview of these statistics can be seen in Table 3.

¹⁴⁵ Mral, *Talande kvinnor*, 213.

their 'only' persona of the political professional. Women, on the other hand, do not seem to be able to use this single persona correspondingly. Even though Dadgostar is performing gender in an untraditional, non-normative way – and it seem to work – one can question whether the personas related to the stereotypical male politician is something we wish to be reproduced and re-performed. Åkesson appear quite uninterested and unpolished on his Instagram, still attracts both followers, score high on credibility and in opinion polls, can also be considered as an example of performing gender in a stereotypical way. Even though he seems completely uninterested, with posts swiftly published, it is still okey, even appreciated. But what would be the case if the female party leaders would do the same, handling their accounts in this 'non-polished' sense. Would it be okay, or would they be accused of not trying, not wanting, not coping, in the way they are 'expected' to?

It seems though, that the persona of a strong political leader is premiered in the actual politics, but followers like more personal politicians on Instagram. On the latter stage, the personal aspects could even be a success factor. So perhaps, on social media – we want the 'female' politician. But 'in real life', when it comes down to who we want to be ruling our country, we still want the strong, active, forceful leader. It is the party leaders who present traditionally male coded personas who receive the highest score on trust and their parties the highest figures in the opinion polls. When it comes to governing the country, we seemingly do *not* want to feel that the politicians are like anyone of us; as someone with children, family, and a life – something that can take focus from politics? We do not want them to be as traditionally 'female', enacting traditionally female coded personas.

Although, one still must make clear that Instagram and actual politics make very different contexts. One can also reflect upon the relationship between social media popularity, political trust, and party prosperity. What argumentation, which personas, that are considered credible in the eyes of the audience vary between situations. This situational emphasis is found in both rhetoric, gender studies, and social sciences generally.¹⁴⁶ For example, the more personal approach and ditto personas seem to redeem more popularity on social media. Some party leaders have a large following, be interpreted as 'popularity', on social media but does not rank as high in the surveys on trust. Nor do their parties note higher numbers in opinion polls. The best example of this is Ebba Busch, with over 160 000 Instagram followers, but her party is one of the smallest, and she is among the most trusted. Perhaps, these eligible personas do

¹⁴⁶ Lindqvist Grinde, *Klassisk retorik för vår tid*, 56–59. A discussion of this is also found in the Method section.

not fit together, just because the contexts are so different? On social media, the audience wants and expects to meet a person, a relatable individual. Social media logic often states that a person being open, inviting, inclusive, personal, etc, also gain followers and popularity. With politics though, different ‘ideals’ apply, and the audience search for the prevailing masculine ideals and norms.

It is clear from opinion polls and confidence polls; the female party leaders and their parties are bypassed by males. Thereby, it is implied that the number of followers on social media do not seem reflect their public trust, nor on their parties' opinion figures. In this sense, the analysis performed are in line with earlier – ambiguous – research on potential party leader effects and the importance of a single individual.¹⁴⁷ But this study also aligns with the theories of Kjeldsen, who argues that a new media landscape have ‘forced’ politicians to communicate in a more intimate and personal way, with a greater focus on the individual person.¹⁴⁸ Sure, the Instagram accounts studied are the ones of the individual leader, and the results would perhaps be different if the official Instagram accounts of the party would be studied. But the analysis clearly indicate that the party leader plays a prominent role in the communication of the party’s politics.

What then, can we learn from this analysis of Swedish party leaders and their Instagram accounts? Mainly, shows that gender is constantly being performed and reproduced. By identifying existing personas, the gender performance is embodied and possible to examine. To draw on Butler: “the performance renders social laws explicit”.¹⁴⁹ Sweden often present itself as forerunner in gender equality and representation, also highlighting the 50/50 representation in Swedish parliament.¹⁵⁰ The analysis also shows that all party leaders, independent of gender, appear as political professionals, mainly communicating their professions. This representation is important, and the fact that all party leaders – male and female – are visible to the audience, showing that both men and women can be politicians is a way of expanding the scope of gender performativity. But eventually, it all still comes down to how. *How* are they communicating their work and lives as politicians? The male ones fully focus on the profession, of trying to show themselves active, forceful, competent, saviours, all traditionally male attributes. The female party leaders do show these personas as well, but they also show additional ones, more personal personas. Thereby the gender performance

¹⁴⁷ Presented in the section ‘Previous research’.

¹⁴⁸ Kjeldsen, “Politisk retorik i tv, radio – och online”, 339–340.

¹⁴⁹ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 526.

¹⁵⁰ “Gender Equality”, *Sweden.se*, Nov 30, 2021, accessed Dec 5, 2021, <https://sweden.se/life/equality/gender-equality>.

they put on convey that the female politicians not only have to handle the complex, high demanding parliamentary work – they *also* manage family, home, hobbies, ideological commitments, etc. They adjust to the political arena, to the masculine ideals, and thereby still partly performing gender in a way that conveys and reproduces the traditional gender hierarchy, where male attributes are premiered, and female ones are devalued. The men have a larger more allowing field of play, where it is okey to ‘not be perfect’ or to be Goliath generously reaching down David.

Thereby, the party leaders on one hand perform gender in new ways, in females being top politicians, accessing a historically male field. Thereby, they have the possibilities to make a change, widening the personas accessible to women. On the other hand, though, the gender performance still follows traditional, normative, and stereotypical ways. The male ideals are prevailing and premiered. Men are allowed to fully focus on their carriers, while the women must either adapt ‘male strategies’ to gain status and power or show themselves handling the constant work-life-balance. By extension, the latter may reward them with followers and social media popularity, but when it comes to actual politics – voters still seem to want the man fully focused on his political mission.

In the very core of the concept gender performativity, that is central throughout the essay, is the fact that gender is in fact a performance, and thereby a constant negotiation and reproduction.¹⁵¹ This means that what the party leaders do, no matter what and how they do it, constantly contributes to a (re-)defention of what it means to be a party leader and a politician. So, when Sabuni speaks in terms of ‘we’ instead of the more common and traditional ‘I’, or when Busch and Lööf incorporates more personal aspects to their professional personas, they are put on another (gender) performance. That way, it could be argued as a way of subverting what it is to be a political leader. By going beyond the image of the ‘traditional’, male persona of the political leader, wheels of change are put in motion. Even if change takes time, these gender performative acts can be said to be one way of changing the stereotypes – and open for future, more varied political personas.

Now, Sweden just got its first female prime minister. We also got our first minister with trans background. Wonder what personas they show on their Instagram accounts, and how this will affect politicians gender performativity? The intervention most likely continues, as new

¹⁵¹ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”.

gender performances are constantly put on, and what we think of as ‘normal’ in political, as well as societal, contexts are continuously up for negotiation.

8. Conclusion

This essay investigates how the leaders for the Swedish parliamentary parties appear on their official Instagram accounts. The research questions guiding this study are: “Which personas are identified on the Instagram accounts of Swedish party leaders?” and “How do these personas relate to gender performativity?” To answer these questions, a discourse analysis is conducted, intended to analyse how gender is being performed through the rhetorical concept of persona. A persona is partly conscious, partly performed, based on societal norms and expectations. Thereby, the concept is useful for the purpose of uncovering gender performative aspects of the party leaders’ Instagram posts.

The analysis show that all eight party leaders mainly enact political/professional personas. Sub-personas derived to this category are e.g., individual, group member, active, passive, and critic. The male party leaders exhibit the individual, active and critical personas to a greater extent than their female counterparts, and thereby performing gender in a stereotypically masculine way – reproducing the image of the stereotypical male politician. The analysis also finds that some party leaders, mainly female ones, use personal personas to a greater extent. In addition, a strong implication is that the number of followers on social media do not seem reflect in surveys of trust in the party leaders, nor in party opinion polls. Thereby, a main conclusion is that those politicians exhibiting male personas, whether male or female party leader, seem to gain higher rankings in the ‘real world’, whereas the female personas attract more followers and social media popularity. Additionally, the female party leaders are seen using numerously more personas than the male ones, especially adding on personal personas. Thereby they are reproducing the gendered stereotype of women having to handle careers *and* family life. But at the same time, they are a clear example of a political leader bringing together personal and professional. On one hand, they may be reproducing the personas of the traditional politician, but on the other they are subverting the stereotypical image of the same role. They are bringing family into the political realm, which has not been ‘allowed’ earlier. It may not give them political power, but it is an intervention. It is a way to put on

another persona, another gender performance, and thereby tapping into the very core of gender performativity as well as its roots in social construction.¹⁵²

By no means, Instagram and social media are a democratizing platform, where anyone can speak directly and personally to an audience. The public can get insights to the lives of otherwise distant politicians and gain better understandings of both politics and the work of their elected representatives. But what if we continuously see politicians reproducing normative ideals of gender, of how politicians ‘supposed’ to act and behave to succeed? And the ones breaking the norms, or being ‘too personal’, may gain followers, but no actual political power.

So, with the conclusion that all party leaders mainly use professional personas, profiling them as first and foremost politicians, it is still questionable what it takes to be a politician if you only look at Instagram. Perhaps, we have not come so far from the Greek and Roman agoras after all? Sure, today women are permitted on the political scene, but how much more equal are we if they still must play by the gendered rules? If politicians still must play the male coded part of the politician. To get to the top of the hierarchy, you still need to put on a male performance. But we must remember that all action, every step, however seemingly small, can be the first on the road to change. We know from history that action within the political field is possible. It may take time, and it may take courage, patience, persistence, strength, repetition. But it is possible. In line with this, the results of this essay may on one hand seem like a confirmation on a prevailing status quo. On the other, there are alternative glimpses of light and hope. Of posts, people, and gender performances who can become part of the action towards change. Because what we view as normal is a social construction, so is our idea of gender. So why not reconstruct the notion of the persona of a political party leader?

¹⁵² As described and argued by for example Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”. Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, and Lorber, *Paradoxes of gender*.

9. References

- Björkvall, Anders. "Visuell textanalys". In *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*, edited by Kristina Boréus and Göran Bergström (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2018), 335–399.
- Bolund, Per. "perbolund", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021.
<https://www.instagram.com/perbolund/>.
- Boréus, Kristina, and Bergström, Göran, ed. *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2018.
- Butler, Judith, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–531.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1999[1990]).
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Genustrubbel: feminism och identitetens subversion*. Göteborg: Daidalos, 2007.
- Busch, Ebba. "buschebba", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021.
<https://www.instagram.com/buschebba/>.
- Centerpartiet. "Centerpartiet". *Centerpartiet*, Centerpartiet. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021.
<https://www.centerpartiet.se/>.
- Couldry, Nick. *Medier: och deras roll i våra liv*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2020.
- Cronsell, H., and Markås, J. "Personliga politiker eller professionella privatpersoner? En kvalitativ studie av politikernas självrepresentation på Instagram" Bachelor dissertation. Lund University, 2019.
- Dadgostar, Nooshi. "nooshidadgostar", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021.
<https://www.instagram.com/nooshidadgostar/>.

- Ede, Lisa, Glenn, Cheryl, and Lunsford, Andrea. "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism." *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 13, no. 4, (1995): 401-441.
- Filimonov, Kirill, Russmann, Uta, and Svensson, Jakob. "Picturing the Party: Instagram and Party Campaigning in the 2014 Swedish Elections." *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 3 (2016): 1-11.
- Foss, Sonja, and Griffin, Cindy. "Beyond persuasion: A proposal for an invitational rhetoric." *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 2–18.
- Foucault, Michel. *The history of sexuality Vol. 1 The will to knowledge*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.
- Gelang, Marie. *Actiokapitalet: retorikens ickeverbala resurser*. Åstorp: Retorikförlaget, 2008.
- Glenn, Cheryl. "Silence: A Rhetorical Art for Resisting Discipline(s)." *JAC*, 22, no. 2 (2002): 261-291.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: a rhetoric of silence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.
- Gunnarsson, Tomas. *Bildhandboken: Bilder som förändrar världen*. Gävle: Gävle kommun, 2016.
- Hammarlin, Mia-Marie, and Jarlbro, Gunilla. *Kvinnor och män i offentlighetens ljus*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014.
- Instagram. "What is Instagram?" *Instagram Help Centre*, Instagram. 2021. Accessed October 31, 2021. <https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573>.
- Instagram. "Your profile" *Instagram Help Centre*, Instagram. 2021. Accessed October 31, 2021. <https://help.instagram.com/110121795815331/?helpref=related>.
- Internetstiftelsen. *Valspecial 2018*. Stockholm, 2018. Accessed October 31, 2021. https://internetstiftelsen.se/docs/Svenskarna_och_internet-_valspecial_2018.pdf.
- Internetstiftelsen. *Svenskarna och Internet 2020*. Stockholm, 2020. Accessed October 31, 2021. <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/rapporter/svenskarna-och-internet-2020/sociala-medier/>.

- Internetstiftelsen. *Svenskarna och Internet 2021*. Stockholm, 2021. Accessed October 31, 2021. <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/app/uploads/2021/09/internetstiftelsen-svenskarna-och-internet-2021.pdf>.
- Jarlbro, Gunilla. *Medier, genus och makt*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006.
- Kantar Sifo, *Sifo väljarbarometer september 2021*. Kantar Sifo, 2021. Accessed Dec 5, 2021. https://www.kantarsifo.se/sites/default/files/reports/documents/sifo_valjarbarometer_sep.pdf
- Kjeldsen, Jens E. *Retorik idag: introduktion till modern retorikteori*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008.
- Kjeldsen, Jens E. "Politisk retorik i tv, radio – och online". In *Retorisk kritik*, edited by Otto Fischer, Patrik Mehrens, and Jon Viklund, 337–352. Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2016.
- Kristdemokraterna. "Välkommen till Kristdemokraterna". *Kristdemokraterna*, Kristdemokraterna. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://kristdemokraterna.se/>.
- KristerSSon, Ulf. "kristerSSonulf", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/kristerSSonulf/>.
- Liberalerna. "Liberalerna". *Liberalerna*, Liberalerna. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://www.liberalerna.se/>.
- Lindqvist Grinde, Janne. *Klassisk retorik för vår tid*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008.
- Lorber, Judith. *Paradoxes of gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Löfvén, Stefan. "stefanlofven", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/stefanlofven/>.
- Lööf, Annie. "annie_loof", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021. https://www.instagram.com/annie_loof/.
- Miljöpartiet. "Miljöpartiet". *Miljöpartiet de gröna*, Miljöpartiet. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://www.mp.se/>.
- Moderaterna. "Start". *Moderaterna*, Moderaterna. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://moderaterna.se/>.

- Mral, Brigitte, and Olinder, Henrik. *Bildens retorik: i journalistiken*. Stockholm: Norstedt, 2011.
- Mral, Brigitte. *Talande kvinnor: kvinnliga retoriker från Aspasia till Ellen Key*. Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2011.
- Mral, Brigitte, Gelang, Marie, and Bröms, Emelie. *Kritisk retorikanalys: text, bild, actio*. Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2016.
- Nash, Jennifer. *Black feminism reimagined: After intersectionality*. Duke University Press, 2018.
- Newberry, Christina, "44 Instagram Stats That Matter to Marketers in 2021", Hootsuite, Jan 6, 2021. Accessed Oct 31, 2021. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-statistics/>.
- Nord, Lars, Nygren, Gunnar, and Volny, Sanna. *Medierna och lokalvalen 2018. Gamla aktörer på nya digitala arenor*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2019.
- Novus. *Partiledarförtroende sept 2021*. Novus, 2021. Accessed Dec 5, 2021. <https://novus.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/rapportnovusfortroendeinklanderssonsept2021.pdf>.
- Pettersson, Lisa. "Om Kristdemokraternas framgång i valet 2018." *Novus*. Dec 12, 2018. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://novus.se/think-with-novus/blogg/om-kristdemokraternas-framgang-i-valet-2018/>.
- Richardson, Laurel. *Writing strategies: Reaching diverse audiences*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1990.
- Richardson, Laurel. "Writing: A method of inquiry." In *Turning points in qualitative research: tying knots in a handkerchief*, edited by Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin, 377-394. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003.
- Riksdagen. "How the Parliament works". *Sveriges riksdag*, 2020. Accessed Nov 16, 2021. <https://www.riksdagen.se/globalassets/15.-bestall-och-ladda-ned/andra-sprak/sa-fungerar-sveriges-riksdag-201204-eng-web.pdf>.
- Riksdagen. "Members and parties". *Sveriges riksdag*, 2021. Accessed Dec 5, 2021. <https://www.riksdagen.se/en/members-and-parties/>.

- Sabuni, Nyamko. "nyamkosabuni", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/nyamkosabuni/>.
- Sennett, Richard. *När karaktären krackelerar: människan i den nya ekonomin*. Stockholm: Atlas, 2006.
- Skott F, and Swalander J. "Just (fe)male it! : En jämförelse mellan Annie och den moderata partiledaren Ulf Kristerssons framställning på Instagram utifrån ett genusperspektiv." Bachelor dissertation. Jönköping University, 2018.
- Socialdemokraterna. "Socialdemokraterna". *Socialdemokraterna*, Socialdemokraterna. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/>.
- SOU 2016:5. *Låt fler forma framtiden!*. Stockholm, 2016.
- Sverigedemokraterna. "Sveriges snabbast växande folkrörelse". *Sverigedemokraterna*, Sverigedemokraterna. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://sd.se/>.
- Swedish Institute. "Gender Equality." Sweden.se. Nov 30, 2021. Accessed Dec 5, 2021. <https://sweden.se/life/equality/gender-equality>.
- Tannen, Deborah. *Du begriper ju ingenting: samtal mellan män och kvinnor*, Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1993.
- Viklund, Jon, Mehrens, Patrik, and Fischer, Otto, ed. *Retorisk kritik: teori och metod i retorisk analys*. Ödåkra: Retorikförlaget, 2014.
- Vänsterpartiet. "Ett Sverige för alla". *Vänsterpartiet*, Vänsterpartiet. 2021. Accessed Nov 17, 2021. <https://www.vansterpartiet.se/>.
- Weiner, J., and Silfverskiöld, S. "Spelar partiledaren roll? : En studie om partiledareffekter i riksdagsvalen år 1988-2014." Bachelor dissertation. Uppsala University, 2019.
- Wetherell, Margaret, and Potter, Jonathan. *Mapping the language of racism: discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*. London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf and Columbia University Press, 1992.
- West, Candace, and Zimmerman, Don. "Doing Gender". *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2. (1987): 125–151.
- Widegren, Kajsa. *Att göra verklighet*. Göteborg: Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, 2017.

Zoonen, Liesbet. "The Personal, the Political and the Popular: A Woman's Guide to Celebrity Politics." *European Journal of Cultural Studies - EUR J CULT STUD* 9 (2009): 287–301.

Åkerlund, A., and Åsberg, O. "Politik på Instagram - På lika villkor: En kvantitativ innehållsanalys av partiledares kommunikation via Instagram." Bachelor dissertation. Mid Sweden University, 2019.

Åkesson, Jimmie. "akesson.jimmie", *Instagram*. 2021. Accessed September 30, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/akesson.jimmie/>.

Ödman, Per-Johan. *Tolkning, förståelse, vetande: Hermeneutik i teori och praktik*. Stockholm: Norstedts akademiska förlag, 2007.