Constructing the ideal youth recreation leader
- a Foucault inspired analysis

Andreas Ruschkowski

Supervisor: Andreas Fejes
Examiner: Malin Wieslander
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**Title**
Constructing the ideal youth recreation leader - a Foucault inspired analysis

**Author**
Andreas Ruschkowski

**Abstract**
Youth recreation centres in Sweden are significant venues for youth to engage in meaningful activities, as a way to counteract increased segregation and social tension. The professionals promoting young people’s social inclusion and fostering positive personal development in this context, are youth recreation leaders. Since young people’s informal learning is construed in relation to youth recreation centre attendance, a question of these leaders’ professionalism is actualized. What knowledge and competencies are needed - and valued as important - to be a ‘good’ youth recreation leader? The aim of this thesis is to explore how the youth recreation leader is shaped and governed through discourses on youth recreational work. How is the discourse shaped, and what kind of subjectivity emerges through it? Drawing on Michel Foucault’s concepts discourse, subjectivity, governmentality, and technologies of power and the self, the thesis analyses policy texts on youth recreation leader education and professional practice, as well as youth recreation leader educators’ talk about the youth recreation leader. The analysis illustrates how four subject positions emerge and are made possible through current discourses on youth recreational work - the democratic, relational, recreation-anchored, and reflective youth recreation leader. These subjectivities are enmeshed in power-relations through which they are fostered into governing themselves and others, i.e. the conduct of conduct. Government operates, for example, through students’ use of portfolios and personal reflection as confession.

**Keywords**
Youth recreation leaders, Foucault, discourse, subjectivity, government, ideals
Contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 5
   Youth recreation leader education at folk high schools .............................................................. 7
   Aim and outline of the thesis ...................................................................................................... 8

2. Previous research .................................................................................................................... 11
   Youth recreation centres ........................................................................................................... 11
   Youth recreation leaders ........................................................................................................... 13
   Research overview - summary .................................................................................................. 16

3. Theoretical and methodological approach ........................................................................... 17
   Theoretical concepts.................................................................................................................. 17
   Data analysis procedure ............................................................................................................ 20
   Population and sampling ........................................................................................................... 21
   Empirical material ..................................................................................................................... 21
   Policy texts.................................................................................................................................. 21
   Transcriptions of semi-structured interviews ....................................................................... 23
   On quality in discourse analysis .............................................................................................. 25
   Research ethics.......................................................................................................................... 26

4. Results ...................................................................................................................................... 29
   The democratic youth recreation leader .................................................................................... 29
   The relational youth recreation leader....................................................................................... 34
   The recreation-anchored youth recreation leader ...................................................................... 37
   The reflective youth recreation leader....................................................................................... 41

5. Discussion ................................................................................................................................ 47
   Results discussion ..................................................................................................................... 47
   Technologies of power and the self .......................................................................................... 48
   Previous research in relation to the results ............................................................................... 49
   Discrepancy in the empirical material ...................................................................................... 49
   Methodological discussion ....................................................................................................... 50
   Future research ......................................................................................................................... 51

References .................................................................................................................................... 53

Appendices ................................................................................................................................... 61

Appendix A. Interviewee recruitment letter.............................................................................. 61
Appendix B. Interview guide ........................................................................................................ 62
1. Introduction

Research and various reports the past couple of decades have pinpointed negative developments in Swedish cities, including increased segregation, polarization, frustration, and social tension (Dahlstedt, 2018, p. 9). In the wake of this negative development, especially young people’s overall living situation is depicted as insecure and vulnerable. To improve this particular groups’ precarious living situation, meaningful leisure-time activities are utilized as a powerful alternative. One context accomplishing such an alternative - reaching out to and strengthening vulnerable youth - is youth recreation centres (Swedish fritidsgårdar) (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008). These centres are voluntary, free of charge, and for youth aged 13-18 to engage in interaction, unstructured and structured activities, informal learning of new skills, or ‘just chilling’; today, they are primarily run by municipalities and to a minor extent also by nonprofit organizations or religious groups. Historically, youth recreation centres originate chiefly in the late American and English 19th-century settlement movement, inspiring the 1912 start with Swedish study circles striving to under informal conditions integrate varied social classes and raise knowledge levels (Olson, 1982). From the 1930s and onward, youth recreation centres were enacted as a constructive way to handle the alleged youth problem, involving criminality and getting restless young people off the streets by means of meaning-making activities. In today’s society, youth recreation centres are both viewed as significant cogwheels in a general intervention-machinery actively promoting young people’s social inclusion (Ferrer-Wreder, Stattin, Cass Lorente, Tubman, & Adamson, 2012) and as crucial youth venues fostering positive personal development (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008).

The occupational category working at these youth recreation centres, not least to promote young people’s social inclusion and foster positive personal development, is youth recreation leaders (Swedish fritidsledare). From a historical perspective, this occupation and others relating to youth recreation work are relatively new (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2007). In looking at occupational statistics, youth recreation leaders are set within social work employing a total 300,000 professionals in Sweden, many of which work in the public sector, for
instance, at municipality social services, preschools, and leisure-time centres\(^1\) (Swedish Public Employment Service, 2018, p. 28f). In 2016, approximately 14,300 individuals were employed as youth recreation leaders (Statistics Sweden, 2018, p. 20), thus encompassing close to 5% (14,300/300,000) of the social work employees. However, despite the illustrated historical significance of the youth recreation centre context and the magnitude of youth recreation leaders currently working there, research in these two fields is limited both nationally and internationally (Ferrer-Wreder, Stattin, Cass Lorente, Tubman, & Adamson, 2012; Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008; Tebelius, 2007). It appears reasonable to state that there are distinct gaps of understanding to be addressed here which fuel questions in need of further elaboration.

One such overarching question concerns youth recreation leaders’ competence and professionalism, since young people’s informal learning is construed in relation to youth recreation centre attendance (Forkby, Johansson, & Liljeholm Hansson, 2008). A more specific question in need of elaboration is what knowledge and competencies are needed to be a ‘good’ youth recreation leader, and what knowledge and competencies are valued as important in this particular occupation (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017, p. 11). In line with such question, in this thesis, the focus is on identifying how a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader operates and with what effect. This is carried out by focusing partly on policy texts from within and beyond youth recreation leader education at folk high schools in Sweden, partly on youth recreation leader educators’ talk about the youth recreation leader.

Considering that these specific educators and this vocational education are situated within Swedish popular education\(^2\), my ambition is to make a critical contribution to discussions on ideals in youth recreational work generally and in relation to popular education research specifically.

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\(^1\) Leisure-time centres in Sweden are voluntary daytime activities for a large proportion of children aged 6-13. For an elaboration on this type of institutionalized leisure-time integrated in the Swedish education system, consult Pihlgren (2017).

\(^2\) For an elaborated account in English on Swedish popular education as a phenomenon and practice, see Laginder, Nordvall, and Crowther (2013).
Youth recreation leader education at folk high schools

The education system in Sweden encompasses various forms of education that target different individuals irrespective of their age, needs, and conditions. Since 1868, one such form for adults is popular education, today consisting of 155 folk high schools and 10 study associations dispersed in each of the country’s municipalities (Håkansson, 2018). The agenda of Swedish popular education includes a great variety of courses, programmes, study circles, and cultural activities. Through this agenda, the intention is to contribute to democracy by means of social inclusion, levelling of educational gaps, empowerment, and cultural expression (Decree on government subsidies to popular education, SFS 2015:218). The folk high schools offer general courses where students can attain knowledge to qualify for higher studies, and, for instance, special courses where some of these prepare for work in a variety of occupations (Information Service of the Swedish Folk High Schools, 2014, 2018). Historically, there has been continuous tensions in the Nordic folk high schools between the strands of civic education – i.e. general courses - and vocational education from the mid-19th century up until today (Lundh Nilsson & Nilsson, 2010). The vocational orientation of the special courses connects to each local folk high school’s ideological foundation as well as the specific cultural-geographical context and job market locality (Landström, 2004, 2018). In this context of civil society, youth recreation leader education is set.

The two-year post-upper secondary level youth recreation leader programme is set at folk high schools since 1979, in accordance with a parliamentary decision (Boräng, Mellin, & Nilsson, 1981). Today, the programme is carried out at 22 locations spread across the country (Fritidsledarskolorna, 2018a) and a national curriculum forms the base for each folk high school’s local syllabus as well as their unique profile. Importantly, the national curriculum is not encompassed by the state regulated Education Act. The Education Act governs most of the Swedish education system, making explicit that education and teaching must be based on scientific knowledge and proven experience (Swedish Education Act, SFS 2010:800, chapter 1, §5; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014). Nevertheless, Fritidsledarskolorna (2010)

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3 For an overview in English of the Swedish education system, see the Swedish National Agency for Education (2016).
emphasizes in the curriculum that the programme is based on “scientific grounds as well as proven experience, anchored in the students’ own lifeworld” (p. 2, §1).

The programme engages its students in a variety of themes and subjects central to youth recreational work but both the specific content and pedagogy may vary locally. The overarching knowledge areas in the national curriculum include human development and its conditions, social studies, leisure time activities in theory and practice, recreation culture, leadership, and the professional role (Fritidsledarskolorna, 2010). Common subjects and themes targeting these overarching knowledge areas are, for instance, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, power, democracy, and interculturalism. A few examples of unique youth recreation leader programme profiles include outdoor life, social work, and project leadership.

For the past few years, about 300 students graduate each year from the programme (Fritidsledarskolorna, 2016, 2018b). These graduates obtain employment relatively evenly distributed between municipal youth recreation centres and leisure-time centres, whereas a minority work in other contexts such as various social care institutions or treatment centres. Notably, youth recreation leaders are at times confused with leisure-time teachers (Swedish grundlärare med inriktning mot arbete i fritidshem, previously fritidspedagog). One major difference between these two occupational categories is that the former is prepared for work in a multitude of contexts with people of different ages, while the latter instead specifically targets state regulated pedagogical work in leisure-time centres in the education sector with children aged 6-13 (Falkner, 2009).

Aim and outline of the thesis
Youth recreation centres are significant venues for youth to engage in meaningful activities, as a means to counteract increased segregation, polarization, frustration, and social tension. The specific professionals promoting young people’s social inclusion and fostering positive personal development in this context, are youth recreation leaders. Since young people’s informal learning is construed in relation to youth recreation centre attendance, a question of these leaders’ competence and professionalism is actualized. What knowledge and competencies are needed - and valued as important - to be a ‘good’ youth recreation leader?

To this end, the aim of the thesis is to explore how youth recreational work shape the
youth recreation leader subject in specific ways. How is the discourse shaped, and what kind of subjectivity emerges through it? More specifically, the analysis draws on a Foucauldian discourse analysis of five policy texts addressing the programme’s pedagogical content and the role of the youth recreation leader in professional practice, as well as seven youth recreation leader educators’ talk about the youth recreation leader.

The thesis is structured in five sections. Having set the scene in this introductory section with the study’s rationale, context, and aim, section 2 outlines previous research on youth recreation centres and youth recreation leaders. Coming next is section 3, describing the theoretical and methodological approach. This is followed by section 4, where the results of the Foucauldian discourse analysis are presented and illustrated in four categories. In the final section 5, these results and some methodological limitations are discussed together with a suggestion for future research.
2. Previous research

Research on youth recreation centres and youth recreation leaders appears to be limited fields of study. In support of this observation, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (2008, p. 9) pinpoints that both these fields not only lack research but also literature in general as well as documentation and evaluation. Regarding youth recreation leaders specifically, Tebelius (2007, p. 96) clarifies that research on them and their work is scarce in Sweden. Similarly, in crossing national borders and instead taking an international perspective, research on youth recreation centres in the rest of Europe and the USA is also limited (Ferrer-Wreder, Stattin, Cass Lorente, Tubman, & Adamson, 2012, p. 222).

In the upcoming previous research review, policy texts are excluded as this follows from the choice to merely include research-based literature. A brief selection of these excluded policy texts is included in the empirical data for analysis.

Youth recreation centres

Sarnecki and Ekman (1978) suggest that the needs of young people who are socially excluded must be prioritized at the youth recreation centres. The reason being that young people with more stable social foundations clearly have better possibilities for overall positive personal development. They argue for the importance of systematic activities adapted to marginalized groups; more specifically, by means of long-term activities such as theater, film or specific girls’ clubs. However, it is stated that these types of structured activities simultaneously may repel the socially excluded youth due to demands of committed participation.

In another study based on interviews with and questionnaires to 7582 school children aged 7-16, Blomdahl and Claeson (1989) map out the general recreation habits of these children and in particular in relation to youth recreation centres. The aim is to explore the youth recreation centres’ visitors and argue for the youth recreation centres’ future. The results show that 20% of the 12-14 year olds in compulsory school have the youth recreation centre as their

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4 A search for previous research was carried out in September-October of 2017, via the Swedish databases DiVA and SwePub complemented with Google Scholar and Libris. The search words used were ‘fritidsgård’ and ‘fritidsledare’ as well as their English translations ‘youth recreation centre’ and ‘youth recreation leader’. The need for selection criteria was not actualized due to the limited amount of research-based hits.
sole recreation activity; most visitors are boys and from the working class or lower middle class; the visitors value social interaction and spontaneity; and the visitors are primarily young people youth who are not interested in or excluded from organized, goal-oriented club activities. For the future, the authors advocate strengthening three particular aspects, namely (a) the visitors’ democratic influence by means of having them initiate and be responsible for activities, (b) girls’ position at youth recreation centres, (c) and the work with youth at risk of crime or social exclusion by activities addressing their social, political, and cultural competences. A challenge here is that the youth recreation leaders potentially become complacent and therefore may avoid actively promoting other youth groups to participate, thus maintaining the visitors’ status of subordination and exclusion.

More recent research highlights youth recreation centre attendance as a risk among socially excluded and ‘expressive’ youth (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Mahoney, Stattin, & Magnusson, 2001; Mahoney, Stattin, & Lord, 2004). The risk is that the high representation of marginalized youth at youth recreation centres leads to an increase in antisocial behavior, such as criminality, even among other visitors. However, it is suggested that this negative learning spiral can be countered with goal-oriented, skill-building, and structured activities. Indeed, similar to the later research mentioned above, this problematizes the notion that every type of recreational activity is equally beneficial for all youth groups’ social adjustment.

In the most recent research, the contributors in the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs’ (2008) anthology elaborate on various venues for young people - including youth recreation centres - from different perspectives. The contributions’ ambition is also to inspire and suggest improvements that makes a difference especially in reaching out to and including the socially excluded or otherwise vulnerable youth. A common thread throughout is youth recreational works’ two types of functions related to the youth recreation centres’ visitors, namely preventive work and fostering work. The former function focuses preventing young people’s exposure to life’s risk situations, such as destructive environments with social groups that potentially is conducive to criminality and drug use, while the latter as a contrast emphasizes resilience and empowering young individuals’ own resources to handle life.
Youth recreation leaders

Previous research on youth recreation leaders appear from the 2000s up until today and this review includes six studies. To begin with, Kihlström and Roos (2000) explore leisure and leisure work - specifically youth recreation leaders’ work - in late modernity. Their analysis draws on Habermasian theory, exploring individuals’ self-realization through leisure in terms of tensions between the lifeworld and the system. Data consists of youth recreation leaders’ statements about their professional tasks, and selected previous research on changes in the labor market, welfare system, and identity shaping. For reasons of demarcation, in the following I focus merely on the youth recreation leader. The authors depict seven abilities or competencies demanded for this occupation: 1) Knowledge of youth’s everyday lives including an understanding of their values, preferences, and actions, 2) Being a present adult by acknowledging youth as well as developing their sense of morale and social responsibility, 3) Understand society and its structures, rules, and organization, 4) Communicate well in order to argue with, listen to, and make activities possible for youth, 5) Cooperate with various stakeholders and occupational groups, 6) Cope with young people’s serious life problems such as unemployment or depression, and 7) Coordinate solutions to problems together with a multitude of representatives and rules systems.

The above abilities or competencies combined with an analysis of changes in the labor market, welfare system, and identity shaping, are summarized by Kihlström and Roos into a synergy of two different abilities demanded of both youth recreation leaders and adults in late modernity. First, an interactive competence that supports youth in integrating the lifeworld and the system. This entails communicating how to act in socially acceptable ways in various situations in life, thus strengthening identity; furthermore, the communication also involves assistance with interpreting possibilities and restrictions within given rules systems. Second, an integrative capacity involving a deep understanding of youths’ unique meaning-making and needs, and supporting them in formulating and expressing them.

Second, Trondman (2000) investigates possibilities and hindrances in youth recreation leaders’ ways of understanding themselves, their actions, and positioning in professional practice. Drawing on a sociology of culture perspective and the theoretical frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu, central questions addressed are: Who are the youth recreation leaders and why do they
understand and act the way they do? Data encompasses a survey about youth recreation leaders’ experiences of everyday work, three studies focusing the youth target group, and one interview with a youth recreation leader. Trondman argues that the working conditions are very challenging, with low wages and a high workload, and that the youth recreation leaders’ origin of recognition and identification is the youth, not the politicians. The youth at youth recreation centers are described as being poorly educated, poor achievers, practically rather than theoretically inclined, mostly boys, and of the working class; i.e. outcast and marginalized. In combination with the interview data, a picture of a destined ‘subordinate solidarity’ between youth and youth recreation leaders is presented, building on a logic of different ways of joint belonging. I.e., it is argued that the ‘social subordination’s logic’ alienates youth recreation leaders from authorities and this position of powerlessness makes it difficult to challenge the subordination of young people.

Third, in Pettersson Svenneke and Havström’s (2007) grounded theory-inspired analysis, they explore the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the youth recreation leader occupation. That is, the key questions of interest are: What do youth recreation leaders do in everyday professional practice, and how do they do it? The data set consists of thematically structured time-sheets and semi-structured interviews with eleven youth recreation leaders. The results are divided into five themes and these are that youth recreation leaders, (1) Make recreational activities available either directly or by creating infrastructure for them, (2) Create relationships to and between youth, (3) Contribute to strengthening youths’ identity development, (4) Act as democracy coaches and links to society, and (5) Exert leadership.

Fourth, Tebelius’ (2007) ethnographic study of four youth recreation centres in Sweden explores youth recreation leaders’ views of their professional tasks as well as notions of ethnicity and gender. The results highlight that the primary tasks are considered to be to socialize and treat everyone in a respectful manner, make sure that the recreation centres’ rules are followed, and stop conflicts. The overall ambition is, it is argued, to create an environment of trust and friendship.

Fifth, Silleborg (2009) investigates tensions in lifelong learning as exemplified in the two occupations youth recreation leaders and leisure-time teachers. The study draws on Pierre Bourdieu's sociocultural perspective and Anthony Giddens’ sociological theory inspired by
Marxist and Habermasian ideas. The population consists of twelve youth recreation leaders from Sweden and twelve leisure-time teachers from Denmark, involved in a three-year collaborative project run by the Öresund region municipalities. Utilizing an action research approach and actively observing 36 project meetings in Sweden, analysis is carried out on the participation and discussions in these meetings. In brief, the results show three tensions, (1) between the municipalities’ project board versus the youth recreation leaders and leisure-time teachers, regarding expectations on the project outcome; (2) between the youth recreation leaders and leisure-time teachers concerning the content of the meetings as well the working method to be used for progression; and (3) concerning the lacking competence to address root causes to problems in matters of coherence and meaningfulness.

Sixth, Fejes and Dahlstedt (2017) deconstruct the discourse on the role model in youth recreational work in Sweden, by carrying out a Foucauldian analysis of nine youth recreation leader students’ narratives about their occupational choice. The results demonstrate how a particular discourse is construed in a logic where the ways students’ talk of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ merge with their becoming as role models. This study stands out in that it is current and explores youth recreation leader students, who essentially are professionals-to-be, enrolled at a folk high school.

Finally, not fitting the above studies but still worth mentioning is Holmberg’s (2018) study from an adjacent field of research, namely Child and Youth Studies. To a meaningful extent, this study resembles the present study in addressing how children and staff are governed discursively in and through Swedish leisure-time centres. But Holmberg's overarching concern is citizenship in today’s society, more specifically, the formation and creation of citizens as well as how individuals construct themselves as citizens. Accordingly, self-governing practices are of interest as well as deconstructions of the establishment of certain knowledge through exercising power; a power affecting individuals’ view of themselves while generating truths about normality. Drawing primarily on theoretical concepts from the Foucauldian tool box (e.g., power-knowledge, subjectivity, freedom, technologies of power and of the self), the study’s aim is to examine how leisure-time centres are set up and legitimized. In brief, the analysis shows the leisure-time centre as an educational institution with the ability to transform interests into knowledge. Moreover, “an administration of children and control of the development of society
through the autonomous, competent, and voluntarily active individual” (Holmberg, 2018, p. 80) is visible. Here, power is stated to operate through a perceived freedom in such a way that the free choice is the normalized choice.

**Research overview - summary**

To summarize, previous research on youth recreation centres in Sweden mainly focuses its visitors and specifically a variety of socially marginalized youth group’s needs. For the past decades, the concerns address identifying, reaching out to, problematizing, and socializing youth at the risk of crime or social exclusion. For instance, socializing them by means of adapting structured, well thought-out activities at the youth recreation centre to their needs and also by wisely bridging preventive and fostering work. However, elaborations on youth recreation leaders specifically are minimal in this targeted research. As illustrated, previous research on youth recreation leaders in Sweden focus on analyses of their work such as tasks, abilities, positioning, possibilities, and tensions from different theoretical and methodological approaches. Merely one study focus on discourses in youth recreational work and in an adjacent occupation - i.e. the leisure-time teacher - the leisure-time centres are also explored with resources from the Foucauldian toolbox.

None of the illustrated previous research explores discourse in policy texts on youth recreation education and the youth recreation leader’s role or youth recreation leader educators’ talk about these specific leaders. Therefore, in this thesis I strive to identify how a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader operates, and with what effect. The ambition is to elucidate taken-for-granted notions in discourse on an occupational category working to promote youth’s social inclusion and foster positive personal development.

In the next section, the thesis’ theoretical and methodological approach is accounted for.
3. Theoretical and methodological approach

Theoretical concepts

In pursuing an analysis of discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader, I draw on a poststructural approach inspired by the work of Michel Foucault (1980, 1990, 2002, 2007). To be more precise, I draw on the concepts discourse, subjectivity, governmentality, and technologies of power and the self. These particular resources enable me to analyze how youth recreation leader subjectivities emerge and the ways these subjectivities are positioned through discourse, and with what effect. In the following, I outline these concepts as used in this thesis. But first, the fundamental Foucauldian concept framing the outline is presented, namely power.

Foucault (1990, p. 84ff) criticizes a dominant Western conception of power as operating in hierarchical relations with someone having repressive power over others by refusing them things, determining laws, and using prohibition and censorship. In this view, power belongs to someone and is used on others. By contrast, it is argued that power is relational. It is considered ever-present, everywhere, and positions various subjects and their relations to one another. Power is dispersed through different social practices and is considered productive, that is, it produces discourses, knowledges, and subjectivities (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 20). In being productive, it is viewed as simultaneously enabling and limiting what can be said and not said in the social world. As power relations are related to truth they define what is good and bad, and a Foucauldian analysis can demonstrate how discourse excludes as it includes (Foucault, 1993, as cited in Bolander & Fejes, 2015, p. 93). Further, such a discourse analysis illustrates how truths about normality and what is taken-for-granted operate discursively, while at the same time elucidating the abnormal or not desirable in need of normalization (Foucault, 2007).

‘Discourse’ has been understood differently in varying historical time periods, academic disciplines, and theoretical systems (Howarth, 2000). Therefore, it is relevant to address how the Foucauldian approach employed here influences the specific perspective taken on this concept and text. In a Foucauldian approach, everything is considered as text. Essentially, anything that produces meaning is viewed as text, for instance, various kinds of speech or writing such as talk,
interview transcripts, folders, policy texts, and literature. But discourse also goes beyond the mere signs of language and is therefore not limited to what is being said (Foucault, 2002). In this ontological view, there is no connection between the meaning production of signs and ‘reality’. From this follows an epistemological stance that knowledge of the world is obtained through discourse, where the world is seen as linguistic and social (Mills, 2004). Here, text is considered to simultaneously construct discourse and be constructed through discourse (Foucault, 1980). A discourse analysis shows how discourses construct meaning and thus what is possible for subjects to say and not to say at any given point in history (Börjesson, 2003). In this thesis, discourse is seen as statements containing text excerpts. Consequently, these statements construe meaning, and thereby simultaneously enable and limit what can be said. Moreover, discourse is viewed as a specific way of ‘talking’ about phenomena where ‘the talk’ at the same time constructs relations between different subjects and objects (Bolander & Fejes, 2015, p. 9).

Through discourse, subjects are shaped and fostered. A Foucauldian approach to the concept of subject diverges from other dominant views in that subjects - such as you and me or groups of individuals - instead are considered ‘decentered’ (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 21). This means that subjects are not seen as individuals with thoughts, feelings or acting selves based on autonomy. Put differently, the idea of individuals’ autonomy by means of a coherent and centered entity is replaced. Rather, individuals are seen as decentered and thus acting as cultural representations of the shifting positions that can be taken through discourse in specific historical and cultural practices. Here, these shifting subjectivities - referred to as subject positions - can potentially be numerous, and thus emerge through and produce discourse. If they are numerous, the uptakes and omissions differ and take specific forms through the regularities of statements in an empirical material (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017). In this thesis, subject positions emerge through and within regularities of statements in the empirical material consisting of policy texts and interview transcriptions from youth recreation leader educators’ talk. As a consequence, subjectivity is viewed as an effect of the operation of power and thus government is at play which by Foucault (2003) was called ‘governmentality’.

The concept of governmentality concerns the government of human conduct - referred to as the ‘conduct of conduct’ - by means of shaping it in a multitude of rational ways (Foucault, 2007). Here, conduct of conduct means leading people’s choices, needs, aspirations, lifestyles,
etc. and ‘rational ways’ refer to any logical or systematic thinking regarding how to govern. The how-to encompasses rationalities on how to govern individuals, authorities, and populations but also one’s own self, such as through the body and one’s desires, knowledge, abilities, beliefs, etc. Necessary premises for government are partly that human conduct is present in the first place, partly also that it can be regulated, controlled, shaped, and transformed to suit specific effects according to desirable norms and values (Dean, 2010, p. 18ff). Taken together, a governmentality analysis strives to identify the multiple rational practices and techniques of government. These practices and techniques of government shape and transform the conduct of both the self and others. Foucault (2003) purports that one central meaning of governmentality is as a specific and “complex form of power” (p. 244). In other words, government is power. This type of analysis essentially aids in understanding modernity’s complex forms of employing power and thus renders its different expressions or effects visible (Hultquist & Petersson, 1995, as cited in Fejes, 2006, p. 23).

In order to identify how power operates, Foucault talked about ‘technologies of power’ and ‘technologies of the self’. Foucault (1988) writes, that technologies of power “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject” (p. 18). This type of technology has to do with the practices through which the self is objectified, that is, made an object for examination and regulation. Being made an object for such examination and regulation, it is shaped to act in certain ways (Dean, 2010). As power is productive and enabling, the objectified self is constructed as normal and desirable or abnormal and in need of normalization (Foucault, 2007). In other words, power excludes as it includes. However, government also operates to create self-governing subjects by having them work upon themselves through the technologies of the self.

Technologies of the self includes the specific ways government operates to shape an individual to work upon themselves, in pursuit of self-transformation and an improved self (Foucault, 1988). This work upon or care for one’s self is enacted solitarily or together with others, and with or without their coercion and help. Foucault (1988) shows, through examples from antiquity and the early Christian era up until today, how individuals act upon themselves in the technology of the self by shaping particular subjects. The shaping of these particular subjects is culture-dependent and shift over time. For instance, the care of the self in early religious cults
was practiced through prayer, reading, meditation, and ceremonies. In classical Greece, self-examination operated through reflection on one’s conscience by comparing what was done in a day to what ought to have been done. Further, other religious practices involved admitting one’s own faults and verbalizing them to God, keeping diaries, and communication by letter writing. All of these act as self-disclosing technologies and create individuals committed to governing themselves (Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988). Foucault (1990) argues that the confession - i.e. a type of verbalization of the innermost self - is one of modern times’ main technologies of the self. Indeed, recently the consequences of living in a ‘confessing society’ have been elaborated by education scholars in relation to lifelong learning (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013) and education (Fejes & Nicoll, 2015).

**Data analysis procedure**

The analysis was guided by the analytical concepts outlined above. The focus was on identifying regularities across the empirical material in terms of what subject positions that emerge, and how governing operates. In order to identify such positions, in an initial step I skimmed the empirical material taking brief notes to acquire an overarching understanding. Reading it again more thoroughly, effort is put into identifying and marking regularity of statements or a meaningful system of codes. In the subsequent analysis, it is fruitful to have questions guide the reading (Bolander & Fejes, 2015, p. 97). In this analysis, the questions guiding the reading are: What narratives are there about the ideal youth recreation leader’s knowledge, competence or characteristics, and how are they constituted? Which constituents of the ideal youth recreation leader are constructed as truths, and in which ways? What is discursively constructed as not desirable? Analytical work continues with the plentiful of marked-out statements in the empirical data and judging which are especially significant in relation to the aim. The significant statements appearing similar are grouped together while comparing them in terms of similarities and differences. This iterative cycle fine-tunes a preliminary category system consisting of different categories with sets of similar meaning-making statements. Each category is named on grounds of what appears to be their similarities. The last step is to closely scrutinize the significant statements again in relation to all the categories, to assure their fit in the respective categories. The results of the analysis are then underpinned with vivid, content-rich statements from the structured data interpretation (Bryman, 2016).
Population and sampling
The interviewed population are youth recreation leader educators at folk high schools in Sweden. They are chosen for two specific reasons. First, because they are the frontiers in educating and being close to youth recreation leaders in-the-making. As frontiers, their impact on students is likely both great and deep due to being authorities in the school situation and field of youth recreational work, as well as being role models. Accordingly, these educators’ talk appears especially fruitful and significant as possible indicators of youth recreation education perspectives. Second, for close to a decade I have worked as a folk high school teacher - four years as a youth recreation leader educator - and have therefore an insider perspective to this professional context. Arguably, knowledge from and experience of the interviewees’ specific conditions and conceptualizations can be valuable in understanding their overall situation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Regarding the selection of which youth recreation leader educators to interview, a blend of convenience sampling and purposeful snowball sampling (Patton, 2015) was used. The former involves choosing on basis of availability the specified dates and times for interview carry-out (see appendix A). The latter concerns - after the interview - encouraging interviewees to contact relevant others about also participating in the study and thus potentially create a ‘snowball effect’, in which one interview leads to another, and so on.

Empirical material
The empirical material consists of 832 pages of text in Swedish. These pages comprise policy texts and interview transcriptions. The policy texts encompass the national curriculum for the youth recreation leader programme in Sweden and local syllabuses from folk high schools carrying this programme. Additional policy texts address recreation centres and the role of the youth recreation leader in professional practice. The interview transcriptions entail print-outs of semi-structured online interviews with youth recreation leader educators. For the sake of clarity on part of the reader, the mentioned dual empirical materials are elaborated in some more detail below.

Policy texts
The term ‘policy’ means “plan of action” or “statement of aims of ideals” and can be related to
official documents produced by the state to regulate individuals and organizations, such as students, teachers or universities (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 1997, p. 1). But other distinctions of documents in the social sciences are possible, such as distinguishing between official documents deriving from sources such as private organizations as opposed to the state (Scott, 1990). In this study, the conceptualization of policy involves official documents deriving from private organizations addressing plans of action and ideals in youth recreational work. Here, the role of the regulating actor differs when comparing the state to authors such as organizations or academics. The former has a greater responsibility for carry-out and follow-up whereas the latter have more freedom to shape their own level of accountability. Now to a more specific description of the five (1-5) policy texts included in the study.

The first (1) policy text is Fritidsledarskolornas’s (2010) national curriculum for the youth recreation leader programme, accessed on October 30, 2017, via Fritidsledarskolornas’s website www.fritidsledare.se The author Fritidsledarskolorna is the umbrella organization for the 22 member folk high schools that carry the youth recreation leader programme in their vocational orientation. A central part of the umbrella organization’s purpose is to facilitate cooperation among its members and foster pedagogic development while addressing issues of quality (Fritidsledarskolorna, 2012, § 2).

The second (2) policy text is a group of texts consisting of 17 local syllabuses available online from the folk high schools currently carrying the programme. These are also accessed at the same date as above, partly from the individual folk high schools posting them on their respective websites, partly from Fritidsledarskolornas’s intranet First Class. The syllabuses vary between 15 and 59 pages in length, and combined with the curriculum they consist of 479 pages. This type of text is relevant for analysis in that it sets up an explicit direction for and content of the programme, to be seen as plans of action.

The third (3) policy text under scrutiny addresses young people’s venues and the youth recreation leader’s professional role. This is a research-based anthology on youths’ various venues, namely the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs’ (2008) Mötesplatser för unga - aktörerna, vägvalen och politiken [Venues for youth: The actors, the choice of path, and the politics]. It is relevant as policy partly in addressing preventive and fostering youth activities, partly in that the reader target groups clearly are stated to be professionals in the field, such as
youth recreation leaders, officials and politicians, as well as students attending vocational programmes for youth recreational work. The author is the Swedish government authority working to ensure young people’s access to influence and welfare.

The fourth (4) policy text is an analysis of 1800 discussions with representatives from youth recreation centers in Sweden over a three-year period, namely Fritidsförum and Swedish Municipal Workers' Union (2015) Fritidsledarens roll och funktion i öppen verksamhet [The youth recreation leader’s role and function in Open youth activity]. It is relevant as policy partly as it makes explicit statements on the youth recreation leader’s role and function at venues for youth, partly because of the central position of its authors. The authors are Fritidsförum, an umbrella organization with members consisting of associations running youth recreation centres and other activities for young people in Sweden, and the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, operating at various local level municipalities.

The final (5) policy text is Kunskapscentrum för fritidsledarskap’s (2016) Etik för fritidsledare [Ethics for youth recreation leaders]. It is relevant as policy in making available an ethical code for youth recreation leaders, with the ambition to raise awareness of ethical issues in professional practice. The author is a regional umbrella organization wanting to contribute to the development of the youth recreation leader profession and venues for youth. The members consist of 14 municipalities and one folk high school. In total, the final three policy texts (3-5) consist of 293 pages.

Taken together, these 772 pages of current policy texts from different organizations provide significant narratives on how the ideal youth recreation leader is shaped within and beyond youth recreation leader education at folk high schools in Sweden.

Transcriptions of semi-structured interviews
Semi-structured interviews are chosen to complement the empirical material from the mentioned policy texts. The ambition with such a qualitative method choice is to expand and deepen narratives (Bryman, 2016), in this case, narratives about the ideal youth recreation leader. To support the interviewer in carrying out the intention of the interview, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 161ff) advocates using a standardized interview guide originating in the aim of the study. Therefore, the main questions (Appendix B) in this study remain the same across the
interviews whereas the follow-up probes are adapted to the experienced rhythm of real-time conversation.

Bryman (2016) purports that the interviewer benefits from exploring a deliberate distance to one’s own preconceptions of the research question and to instead focus on expanding the interviewees’ statements. For this reason, I posed mainly open-ended questions and probes with the intention to stimulate the emergence of a professional narrative, in contrast to using leading questions that may confirm my own preconceptions. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, an unpretentious language was consciously used in order to support conditions for fruitful conversation.

The interview questions focused on developing the interviewees’ professional narrative partly concerning what a graduate from the respective youth recreation leader programme must know, partly concerning youth recreation leaders’ ideal professional knowledge and competence. The ambition with the follow-up probes was to deepen descriptions emphasizing the youth recreation leaders’ required knowledge and who or what the ideal youth recreation leader is. Another line of focus addressed the specific ways in which the programme prepare the students for what (the interviewees state that) they must know or be upon graduation. Concerning the interview and its surrounding structural conditions, it is relevant to elucidate some issues of power.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 37ff) argue that the qualitative interview is a social practice generating knowledge intersubjectively by means of the interviewer and the interviewee being co-constructors of meaning. Here, some of the interview situation’s issues of asymmetrical power relations and dominance are elucidated. The authors claim these power issues to be inherent and involve, for instance, the interviewer having scientific competence; initiating and ending the conversation; deciding the topic under scrutiny; and asking questions as well as judging which answers to explore further with follow-up probes. Wang and Yan (2012) suggest that the interviewer’s main linguistic power device is the questioning. By means of controlling the turn-taking mechanism and topic shifts through questioning, a role positioning is set up. In other words, the power role takes the lead and asks questions while the subordinate role contributes with answers and follows. Additional asymmetrical power relations concern the interviewer controlling the interviewee statements’ interpretation in accordance with specific
research interests but also in selecting which statements to report. On part of the interviewees, they may more or less purposefully react to their subordinate power position by withholding information. But quite the opposite may also occur, where they articulate what they believe the interviewer wants to hear instead of being more authentic to their own thinking (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 38).

Turning to the interview carry-out, I first emailed an interviewee recruitment letter (Appendix A) to the online communications platform for the youth recreation leader programme in Sweden. The sending list also included each of the 22 folk high schools carrying the programme as well as the board of directors of the umbrella organization Fritidsledarskolorna. The mentioned letter concisely introduced the study and offered relevant information about potential participation while highlighting ethics considerations at an early stage. On basis of this information, the interested youth recreation leader educators responded via email and interview appointments were set up accordingly.

Seven youth recreation leader educators - four females and three males - from six different folk high schools participated in the study. The interviews were semi-structured and carried out on a computer utilizing the telecommunications software Skype, in combination with the recording software Pamela for Skype Professional Edition 4.9. This type of synchronous interviewing online carry similarities to in-person interviews and is increasingly being explored by social researchers as digitalization spreads across the globe (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; James & Busher, 2012). In two of the interviews, technical problems (recording-/microphone issues) and human error in real-time necessitated rescheduling for other dates than originally agreed upon. Each of the seven online interviews lasted about 30 minutes and the spoken language was Swedish.

Transcription of the audio recordings was made verbatim on a word processor in order to strengthen the quality of data and subsequent analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 203-214). Altogether, the interview transcriptions to be analyzed discursively comprise 60 pages.

On quality in discourse analysis
All research demands the ability to demonstrate high quality and ‘good’ competence concerning both conduct and presentation (Fejes & Thornberg, 2015, p. 256). Since different qualitative
traditions from their respective perspective may address these issues differently, it is relevant to concisely reflect on quality in relation to discourse analysis specifically. Here, Bolander and Fejes (2015, p. 111f) purports self-reflectivity in relation to one’s own discourse analysis as an important quality requirement. This type of reflectivity may encompass, for instance, pondering on making explicit truth claims, exclusions and inclusions, and one’s own positioning in relation to an analyzed discourse. On another track, Howarth (2000, p. 141f) argues that the quality of a discourse analysis partly depends on the plausibility and coherence of its narrative, partly on the degree to which it offers novel interpretations of social phenomena. The ultimate judge of quality is considered to be the community of scholars; that is, if the readers view a study’s argumentation as plausible, coherent, and offering new insights, then it is considered trustworthy and thus of ‘good’ quality. Similarly, Dean (2010) states that whether a discourse analysis is good or not cannot be a strictly relativistic endeavor and argues that it “should be judged in terms of its coherence, clarity, completeness and, above all, capacity to convince” (p. 17). Hence, it is not a matter of ‘anything goes’ but broad requirements abide concerning what is acceptable quality in discourse analysis, which is the case in qualitative research in general.

In employing these lines of reasoning on quality to my text, it is inevitably constructed by and part of the discourse analyzed. Indeed, I am inevitably embedded in the discourse and in this awareness, I am left to, hopefully critically, reflect on it. In doing so, my text also construct truths about normality in terms of the ideal youth recreation leader. Lastly, this study is carried out ‘well’ if the reader considers it coherent and that the arguments on how the ideal youth recreation leader is construed, convincingly broaden their understanding.

Research ethics

Ethics considerations in research are crucial as research influences society in fundamental ways, in a variety of areas, and in the long-term (Swedish Research Council, 2017). Occupying such a prominent position in today’s society demands responsible, well-founded action and depends on trust. The entire research process - including the relation between a researcher and the study participants - is advised to follow explicit research ethics principles. In Sweden, these four principles encompass the requirements to inform, to seek consent, to strive for confidentiality,

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5 For an elaboration on quality in qualitative research in general, consult Larsson (2005).
and to clarify the usage (Swedish Research Council, 2002). As a consequence for the present study, the interviewees are given information on voluntary participation and it is stressed that they can avoid answering certain questions or drop out at any time without adverse consequences. The study’s intention and scope is clarified as well as that the interviewees’ names will be de-identified. Moreover, information is given regarding online recording of the interviews.

By using a password-protected computer, the recording audio files are kept inaccessible to unauthorized and the interview transcriptions are handled with care throughout the study (James & Busher, 2012). No conspicuous conditions of dependency exist between the author and the interviewees.

In the upcoming section, the results of the Foucauldian discourse analysis are in epicenter.
4. Results

By reading the policy texts and interview transcriptions with a focus on how they illustrate the necessary knowledge or competence to be a youth recreation leader, I identified strong regularity of statements in terms of how the ideal youth recreation leader emerges as important in youth recreational work. To be more specific, the ideal youth recreation leader emerges through the solid logic of four interrelated subject positions. These four subject positions are the democratic youth recreation leader, the relational youth recreation leader, the recreation-anchored youth recreation leader, and the reflective youth recreation leader. Throughout the analysis described below, they are deliberately illustrated as analytically separate to make a point; however, it is more accurate to instead view them as being discursively intertwined with one another.

In the following, I fall back on the logic of these subject positions and in each section this argument is underpinned with vivid statements from the policy texts and interviews. The interviewees are anonymized with ordinary names while the folk high schools authoring the syllabuses are abbreviated FHS 1, FHS 2, and so on. A few final remarks concerning readability are that every statement is indented regardless of length, pauses are marked with “…”, and in cases of omitted words or sentences they are marked with “---”.

The democratic youth recreation leader

The democratic youth recreation leader is the first subject position that emerges in the discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader. Here, exerting leadership grounded in knowledge about democracy is construed in three different ways which is depicted in the following. First, it is construed as important to have knowledge about social studies and different aspects of democratic society. This is exemplified by the youth recreation leader educator Petri, asserting that:

Our youth recreation leaders must also know about society. --- These knowledges about our democratic system in relation to other political systems. Municipalities, very important because they are the largest employer. So that you somewhere know what to relate to. What is it to work in a politically governed organization? To be knowledgeable about society in some sense, is an important knowledge, a competency, I would like to say.

The statement construes the importance of knowing democratic society ‘in relation to other
political systems’ as well as having knowledge about working in a politically governed organization in general, and municipalities in particular. Here, knowledge about democracy is illustrated as necessary in order to ‘know what to relate to’ in professional practice. With this competence, the youth recreation leader can provide answers to ‘what it is to work in a politically governed organization’ in which the work context likely is to be situated. The next example expands on the construction of required knowledge of social studies.

The construction of required knowledge of social studies is expanded in a policy text, where it in a couple of concise bullet points is made explicit that:

The youth recreation leader has knowledge about:
- The starting and development of non-governmental organizations as well as understands [sic] the foundation of civic society.
- The local community, the common situation, the local actors as well as the social, cultural, democratic, and physical “map” of an area. (Fritidsforum & Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union, 2015, p. 4)

Here, the statement construes the youth recreation leader’s required knowledge of social studies to also include knowledge about democratic society in terms of non-governmental organization development and ‘the foundation of civic society’ in general. Moreover, knowledge is required regarding the local community in particular, i.e. the ‘common situation, the local actors’. The locality is constituted as significant including broadening aspects such as its ‘social, cultural, democratic, and physical map’.

Second, the democratic youth recreation leader is construed as exercising democracy in concrete practice which is underscored by both the youth recreation leader educators Doa and Petri:

Then you can say that when it comes to democracy, we work with it all the time, that you practice, partly you learn it on the class council and work democratically yourself ---Then we look at different ways to work with democracy and participation in an activity. That is, concrete methods how you can do. (Doa)

The skills somewhere becomes, then, to use these knowledges in a type of concrete, eh, in concrete contexts. That I can transfer the knowledge, in this case concerning social studies--- to transfer it to a youth group, for instance. I mean, then you can talk about these things, participation, to be able to influence, how you do it, and how can I do it? (Petri)

These statements construe knowledge about practicing democracy as being obtained ‘all the
time’ such as in class councils and the democratic work going on there. Moreover, continuous discussions are carried out on the skills to transfer social studies into concrete methods of use in professional practice. These methods need to be effective for encouraging participation and influence in activities with participants, such as a youth group.

Third, the democratic youth recreation leader is constituted in relation to fundamental values. These fundamental values consist partly of humanistic values, partly of values based in a fostering approach. Here, a couple of different policy texts succinctly exemplify the humanistic values (i.e., the former):

YOUTH RECREATION LEADERS’ WORK emanates from the principle of human dignity - everybody’s equal value. It is the foundation for human rights with democratic values and an attitude of humanism towards other people. --- Humanism means seeing every person as a fellow human being that we are to meet with trust, receptiveness, compassion, and love. (Kunskapscentrum för fritidsledarskap, 2016, p. 3, emphases in original)

The youth recreation leader stands for values based on human freedom and human rights, everybody’s equal value, and shows confidence in man's own power and ability to take responsibility. (Fritidsforum & Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, 2015, p. 2)

These statements construe youth recreation leaders’ knowledge about democracy as originating from the principle that ‘all humans have equal value’. Out of this origin arises thoughts about human rights, democratic values, and a humanistic approach towards others. A humanistic approach on mankind is constituted to encompass the view that every individual is a potential fellow being and therefore by necessity must be approached with ‘trust, receptiveness, compassion, and love’. This kind of leadership is also to manifest itself as ‘trust in mankind’s own strength and ability to take responsibility’.

The democratic youth recreation leader being grounded in humanistic values is also expressed by the youth recreation leader educator Margot:

[W]e have a large module in the first year --- where we depart from the discrimination Act. We marinate them [the students] in it, I would like to say. They sort of have to have a grasp of it --- independent of your own background, you sort of without a problem must stand up for those values. So it is a process throughout the programme, to sort of become safe in your own values but also be able to be professional.

The statement construes that no matter what the students’ own personal values, background, conception of life or faith are, they must be grounded in humanistic values and equal rights in
alignment with the discrimination Act. The students are ‘marinated’ in the Act and are in the continuous process of becoming more secure and professional in their own set of values.

Yet another example of the way the democratic youth recreation leader is to be grounded in humanistic values, is from a module in the youth recreation leader programme, on the theme Fundamental Rights of Children and Youth. The following concise learning outcome is articulated in the syllabus:

After the module’s completion, the participant is to:

- have the competence to apply knowledge about children’s rights and the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child in professional or educational situations. (FHS 17)

This statement construes the learning outcome for the student as having the competence to apply knowledge on the rights of children and the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child. The competence is to be applied in ‘professional or pedagogical situations’ and pinpoints that certain sets of fundamental values are pivotal when exerting leadership of young people.

As mentioned earlier, the democratic youth recreation leader also exerts leadership in relation to values based in a fostering approach (i.e., the latter of the fundamental values). Essentially, this is an approach acknowledging individuals’ resources and what is experienced as positive characteristics. In the youth recreation leader programme’s national curriculum, it is purported that:

The youth recreation leader role is characterized by a fostering approach in which it is important to focus people's inherent resources and what is experienced as positive. --- In the collaboration with other occupational groups, the youth recreation leader’s special task is to have people’s possibilities as a point of departure to strengthen the factors that promote coherence, participation, and meaningfulness. (Fritidsledarskolorna, 2010, p. 4)

The statement construes the youth recreation leader’s fostering approach as specific in relation to and in collaboration with other professionals. Here, the starting point is that mankind is intrinsically resourceful and full of possibilities. Thus, the skill involves attending to each individual’s positive aspects in order to thereby strengthen the factors fostering coherence, participation, and meaningfulness. The next example expands on this discourse on values based in a fostering approach.

In the following, a couple of policy texts together explicate reasonings on values based in a fostering approach:
An important foundation to succeed with the youth recreation centre is that the leaders have a positive approach to the youth they meet. That the leaders’ starting point is the positive, the youths’ possibilities, resources, and expect something good. This brings about a salutogenic and health-promoting approach. You focus on wellbeing and the positive, what works, and work to find more space for this. The starting point means that the leaders search for resources and strengths instead of getting stuck in what is problematic, and that which does not work. With this approach you give space for humans’ resources, making them able to better cope with the difficulties and challenges they face on their own. The leader’s approach and working methods will target making growth and development possible. --- The leaders expect something good and show trust: “I know you can make it”. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 104f)

The youth recreation leader has a deliberate leadership with a salutogenic approach in encounters with people. The exercise of the occupation is based on trust and confidence. (Fritidsforum & Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, 2015, p. 2)

These statements construe the youth recreation leader’s fostering approach as also having a positive expectation in young people - thus exuding confidence and trust in that they can ‘make it’. The result is positively expected to be ‘something good’ with a clear focus on their ‘resources and strengths’ instead of getting stuck in that which is ‘problematic and does not work’. Consequently, or so it is constituted, this type of deliberate leadership base together with relevant methods strengthens young people’s own coping abilities and ‘makes development possible’.

The construction of the ideal youth recreation leader exerting leadership grounded in knowledge about democracy in relation to values based in a fostering approach certainly involves young people. However, in extension, as emphasized by the youth recreation leader educator Petri, it involves all of mankind:

That is, we think that when our students graduate…. Our students are to have an outlook and an approach to people in general. It can involve, sort of, children, it can involve teenagers, it can involve adults, it can involve the elderly. It does not matter. We give them [the students] a general foundation, an approach. That is, how they think about the one they are working with.

The statement constitutes the notion that values based in the fostering approach is to encompass everybody within the students’ professional practice, but also beyond that specific context. Thus, it involves not only work with the youth target group but with other groups such as children, adults, and the elderly; in short, a logic emerges where the fostering approach is to encompass all of mankind.

In the analysis for this thesis, power relations are related to truth and they define what is good and bad, thus demonstrating how discourse excludes as it includes (Foucault, 1993, as cited
in Bolander & Fejes, 2015, p. 93). In the present section, the ideal youth recreation leader is construed as exerting leadership grounded in knowledge about democracy. This acts as a truth about normality and what is taken-for-granted while at the same time elucidating the abnormal or not desirable. By discursively making this type of knowledge ground explicit, as norm, the undesirable youth recreation leader is one who neither has knowledge of nor exercises democracy in concrete practice. More specifically, the youth recreation leader in need of normalization is the one who does not know about social studies, humanistic values or values based in a fostering approach. Hence, an undesirable youth recreation leader is more or less ignorant of, for instance, aspects of the Discrimination Act. Here, a truth-delimitation is constructed concerning who is and who is not the normal youth recreation leader.

In the following results subsection, I describe how the relational youth recreation leader subject position emerges.

The relational youth recreation leader

The relational youth recreation leader is the second subject position identified in the discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader. Here, the youth recreation leader is construed as having the ability to create relationships with young people and other professionals, as well as between young people. In a policy text, this ability is exemplified as follows:

Adults have to breathe trust, desire, and passion in their relationships to youth. Sincere and genuine. Not like empty phrases in a verbosity of objectives and political correctness. Youth unveil falsehood. Fostered in a message on the rights to both have and express an opinion, they have furthermore learnt to turn their backs against those they do not believe in. Just because of this, the occupation as a youth recreation leader demands top quality concerning the ability to communicate and create trustworthy relationships. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 278-279)

The statement construes young people’s need of trusting relationships to be founded in authenticity rather than in empty phrases of objectives and political correctness; otherwise, the young people will ‘turn their backs against those they do not believe in’. Therefore, it is stated, adults and the youth recreation leader must ‘breathe trust, desire, and passion’ in their relationships to youth, as well as have an excellent ability ‘to communicate and create trustworthy relationships’. Here, a logic emerges where the two separate abilities ‘communicate’ and ‘create trustworthy relationships’ are considered one ability, in singular, as if intertwined.
In another example from the same policy text, the significance of the youth recreation leader creating relationships at the youth recreation centre is illustrated:

The only thing you have to work with at a recreation centre is relationships. Without relationships, no real influence. For this reason, it is important that the youth recreation leaders have the relationships with the visitors in epicenter. Having a relationship is not merely about knowing the visitors’ names. You build a good relation over time. The strongest relationships are not those occurring spontaneously - challenges can sometimes create conditions for stronger bonds. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 80-81)

Here, the statement construes the recreation leader’s sole work at the youth recreation centre to be to create relationships; it is pivotal in obtaining ‘real influence’. Therefore, relationships with the visitors are portrayed as being top priority and relations are considered to be built over time. Here, it is stated that trials with the visitors sometimes can create conditions for ‘stronger bonds’.

Considering the above elucidated significance of the youth recreation leader’s ability to create relationships, it is logical that specific modules in the syllabuses address this ability. Below is an example from the two-week module Social and Emotional Competency in a syllabus:

The module aims to build a greater awareness and understanding of the interpersonal encounter that the youth recreation leader occupation demands. To function well in different social situations and social groups is about in a balanced manner be able to cooperate with others in a way that partly means you continue maintaining a good communication with others, partly does not confine one’s own specificity or values base. (FHS 5)

This statement construes an understanding of and familiarity with the interpersonal encounter as being demanded in the youth recreation leader occupation. The logic that emerges is that ‘interpersonal encounter’ is very similar to ‘relationship’. It is constituted that being able to successfully cope with a variety of social situations and target groups is about collaborating in a ‘balanced’ manner. This balanced manner encompasses continuously maintaining a good communication with others while simultaneously staying true to one’s own specificity or values. I.e., this particular module’s focus can be said to be to increase the knowledge about and experience of creating relationships.

Now, the youth recreation leader having the ability to create relationships with others is addressed above but it also involves creating relationships between visitors. This is illustrated in
a couple of similar examples below, one from the youth recreation leader educator Agnez and the other from a policy text:

[T]he youth recreation leader at the youth recreation centre must help, now, I do not know if this is the right word, but maybe more, eh, make available encounters for the youth recreation centre visitors… encounters between the youth recreation centre visitors, in between them. (Agnez)

They [the leaders] must also function as ‘social architects’ that facilitate for the visitors to connect and build relationships between themselves. --- One of the leaders’ most important mission is to create relationships between visitors. The leaders are to choose activities that promote cooperation, deepens bonds, and builds different kinds of relationship. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 115)

Both statements construe making relationships happen between visitors as a central ability for youth recreation leaders. They are to create relationships and thus act as ‘social architects’, and make activities available that facilitate visitor cooperation, deepen their connections with one another, and create different types of relationships.

So far, the examples in the present section have mainly shown constructions focusing on creating relationships with and between the youth recreation centre visitors. However, the ability to create relationships also constitutes collaboration with other professionals both within and beyond the concrete work context. These collaborations are exemplified by the youth recreation leader educator Peter:

You [the youth recreation leader] must be good at cooperating with colleagues, with the youth, with other occupational groups that are in the activity where you are. --- If you are in the school, it is teachers and the principal and thus that group of people. If you are at the youth recreation centre so, probably you have, you know, you have networks with the police, with social workers, field assistants, and so on.

Here, the youth recreation leader is constructed as one that must have a good ability to create relationships when collaborating with colleagues and various others working with young people. Who these other professionals are vary depending on the context but they include, for instance, teachers and principals as well as networks consisting of the police, social workers, and field assistants.

The collaborations also extend to additional actors and stakeholders in the community, as exemplified in a policy text below:

With the area’s needs and conditions as point of departure, the youth recreation leader collaborates
with local actors and groups of individuals focusing possibilities and coordination of resources.  
(Fritidsforum & Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, 2015, p. 2)

The statement construes the youth recreation leader as having the competence to create relationships in collaborations with a broad spectrum of ‘local actors and groups of individuals’. On basis of the community's needs and conditions, these collaborations focus on possibilities and the coordination of resources.

In this section, I have illustrated how the ideal youth recreation leader is construed as having the ability to create relationships with young people and other professionals, as well as between young people. By discursively making a relational ability explicit, as norm, the undesirable youth recreation leader in need of normalization is the one who does not know how to create relationships with young people and other professionals, or between young people. Again, a truth-delimitation is constructed concerning who is and who is not the normal youth recreation leader.

In the upcoming results subsection, I describe how the recreation-anchored youth recreation leader subject position emerges.

The recreation-anchored youth recreation leader

The recreation-anchored youth recreation leader is the third subject position identified in the discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader. Here, the youth recreation leader is construed as being anchored in knowledge about and experiences of recreation. This is exemplified concisely in a policy text, as follows:

Youth recreation leaders’ work builds upon knowledge about and experiences of what creates a positive and developing recreation, where the voluntary encounter generates trusting relationships.  
(Kunskapscentrum för fritidsledarskap, 2016, p. 3)

The statement construes youth recreation leaders’ work as being anchored in knowledge about factors that create a rich recreation, where the voluntary encounter creates trusting relationships. Essentially, the youth recreation leader is constituted as making deliberate and well-informed choices concerning recreational activities for the youth recreation centre visitors.

In another policy text, the youth recreation leader’s knowledge and experience of recreation is related to collaborative work with creating new activities for the youth recreation
centre visitors:

The youth recreation leader can through occupational competence, experience, and knowledge of new methods and phenomenon - together with the youth and their ideas - create new activities in the youth recreation centre’s activity. The youth recreation leader must not avoid the role to, as an inspirer, show new possibilities in the recreation field. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 112)

The statement construes the youth recreation leader’s knowledge of new methods and phenomenon as a means to, together with the young people, stimulate them to come up with new activities. Knowledge of the recreation field is thus constituted as a foundation and spark for youth to embark on new opportunities at the youth recreation centre.

The youth recreation leader educator Doa becomes specific in what is included in knowledge about recreation, when being asked what the youth recreation leader at the youth recreation centre is to know:

Yes, then I think you [the youth recreation leader] must understand what the recreation field looks like. With that I mean a few different things. Partly, you need to have a historical and also current knowledge about which ideas there are concerning the good recreation. --- I usually have a review of historical documents… [and ask the students] Why should the state and municipality employ youth recreation leaders? Or why should you invest money on people’s recreation at all? Which motives are there behind that and which expectations are there on organizations versus youth recreation leaders? Then, I usually go through various documents from the beginning of the 1930s and onward, that relate to recreation and youth politics. --- In order for us to see that certain ideas more than others recur on a regular basis and have greater influence on how the state and municipality invest money.

The statement construes the knowledge about recreation for youth as consisting of ‘an understanding of the recreation field’, more specifically, a historical and also up-to-date knowledge of ideas about ‘the good recreation’. Moreover, it is constituted that some of these ideas are recurrent and those that are, have greater influence on how the state and municipalities do their funding. In short, the logic that emerges is that this type of knowledge of recreation is a history of ideas-perspective.

Another type of knowledge about recreation concerns the sociology of recreation, also expressed by the youth recreation leader educator Doa:

It [the sociology of recreation] concerns you having knowledge about what the activity patterns look like in different groups. Which preferences you have, what do you choose, and how is it related to class, gender, well, ethical background, and so on. --- This is simply about us reading research
on different recreation styles, and statistics, and other stuff. Yes, who is it that engages in different types of activities?

The statement construes the youth recreation leader’s knowledge about recreation to include the sociological patterns of recreation activities among different target groups. The preferences that certain groups have and the choices they make in relation to recreation are constituted to be shaped by aspects such as class, gender, and ethnicity. The resources used to obtain this type of sociological knowledge is, for instance, research on recreation styles and statistics.

Having the knowledge about recreation be based on research is further expanded in the learning outcomes of a syllabus in a module called Leisure Studies:

Goals that the student is to attain during the education:
- To have read and reflected on research reports concerning the recreation field.
- Understands the concept ‘recreation’.
- To have insight into the history of recreation from a recreation research perspective.
- To have insight into research on today’s recreation and youth cultures.
- To have an orientation on different recreation-scientific research fields. (FHS 10)

This statement construes the youth recreation leader student’s knowledge about recreation as being based on research, including the concept ‘recreation’, the history of recreation, and youth culture. Consequently, an expansion of the research fields is constituted in comparison to the previous example mainly focusing on recreation styles and statistics.

Hitherto in this section, the examples have focused on knowledge about recreation.

Another strand of logic also emerging is anchored in experiences of recreation, that is, hands-on experiences of doing recreation activities in order to develop concrete abilities. In the curriculum for the youth recreation leader programme, the practice of such concrete abilities is articulated broadly in the at least ten-week overarching course area Recreation Work Methodology:

The student is to after the carried-out module have abilities in general and specific working methods. Especially, this applies to the youth recreation centre’s methods - to based on a specific target group, regardless of context, create a recreation activity that emanates from the participants’ needs and wishes. The student is also to have practiced the ability to turn given missions into concrete practice, and be able to analyze, evaluate, and advance methods. (Fritidsledarskolorna, 2010, p. 6).

The statement construes the student as having both general and specific abilities of recreation methods specifically adapted for work at recreation centres. The student with these abilities is constituted as giving special attention to the visitors’ needs and requests; moreover, the student
gets to practice from-mission-to-concrete-practice and thus be able to plan, carry out, analyze, and further develop various methods. Clearly, a logic emerges of a strand anchored in experiences of recreation. The next example expands on the student’s abilities relating to various recreation methods.

In the syllabuses, the mentioned curriculum course area Recreation Work Methodology is expressed in more detail by means of a multitude of different modules. These modules encompass a wide range of topics with the ambition to give the students hands-on experiences of recreation methods adapted for work at youth recreation centres. In a syllabus, one such module is Cultural Workshop and it contains aesthetic methods such as music, dance, photo, film, theater, and virtual reality. Two of the learning outcomes for film act as an example of general and specific abilities of recreation methods, articulated as follows:

- To be able to apply general knowledge about filming, editing, and production of a final product.
- To show ability to edit the films in a Smartphone with the help of optional application. (FHS 6)

The statement construes the student as able to apply general knowledge about filming, editing, and production of a final product. Moreover, the ability to edit the films in a Smartphone can be considered a specific method. Here, a logic emerges in which the student is anchored in hands-on experiences of recreation.

A final example of the youth recreation leader being anchored in experiences of recreation is from a syllabus carrying the module Outdoor Education. In this module, the students get to practice outdoor life and various activities during different seasons, and in shifting environments. A selection of the learning outcomes is illustrated as follows:

- To participate and practice one’s abilities in downhill skiing, cross country skiing, and other winter activities
- To practically practice and verbally and in writing reflect on outdoor life leadership
- To be able to carry out a hike
- To be able to carry out a canoe trip (FHS 12)

The syllabus statement construes the student as concretely practicing abilities in downhill skiing, cross country skiing, other winter activities, and leadership. Moreover, the student is constituted as being able to carry out a hike and a canoe trip. As is the case in the prior example, the student is again constituted as anchored in hands-on experiences of recreation.
In this section, I have illustrated how the ideal youth recreation leader is construed as being anchored in knowledge about and experiences of recreation. By discursively making a recreation-anchored knowledge explicit, as norm, the undesirable youth recreation leader in need of normalization is the one who does not have this type of knowledge about and experience of recreation. Thus, a truth-delimitation is constructed concerning who is and who is not the normal youth recreation leader.

In the final results subsection, I describe how the reflective youth recreation leader subject position emerges.

The reflective youth recreation leader

The reflective youth recreation leader is the fourth subject position identified in the discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader. Here, the youth recreation leader is construed as having the ability to reflect on professional practice or one’s own role and personal character. The youth recreation leader educator Petri describes a general model with specific cyclical steps, to be used in class with and by students when creating and reflecting on new recreation activities:

That somewhere you [as a youth recreation leader] make an inventory, you might have an idea or have received an aim or a thought with what the activity is to consist of. You make some research on this, so to speak, with the target group and the target groups’ needs. You sort of think, yes, ‘but what is it so to speak that is needed then with methods and activity, in order for this to move in any direction?’ Then you do it, you carry it out, then you, you evaluate this too, and come back and reflect: What did we do right, what did we so to speak do well, what did we eventually do not so well? And then develop. Then you run it another time, and so on, and so on. ---- I think this model describes something very, very important. That is, you do not just do but you also think about what you do. You are not afraid of testing: ‘Yes, but let us test this and we will see’. But you are incredibly meticulous with making an evaluation later, reflecting on: How close did we, so to speak, come to that which was our aim and our goal?

This statement construes the ability to in a structured manner reflect on the activities carried out in professional practice as very important. Initially, the youth recreation leader starts with an idea of a recreation activity, adapting its content and methods to the previously explored needs of the target group. After the activity is manifested an evaluation follows, asking questions such as ‘What did we do well and possibly not so well?’ and ‘How close did we come to what was our aim and goal?’ Reflecting on the experience is constituted as possibly resulting in some adjustments to the carry out or the understanding of the target group. When the activity is
manifested again, it is evaluated again, additional adjustments are made, and so on in iterative cycles. A logic emerges, suggesting that structured reflection on professional practice is necessary and that it results in development. This is also the case in the next example.

In a policy text, a structured model for deliberate recreation methods - referred to as ‘the recreation method spiral’ - is described. The model resembles Petri’s structured reflection above, with the explicit ambition to analyze and develop recreation methods applicable to various target groups and activities. The source for the need to reflect is often a problem needing attention, or an idea or task needing to be implemented in practice. The youth recreation leader is to engage in an iterative spiral consisting of several steps, described as follows:

The first step involves the youth recreation leaders acquiring solid knowledge and making an analysis of their target group(-s). Here it is important to extract both what they wish and what they need. The more knowledge the leaders have, the easier it will be to find the ‘right’ methods. Hereafter, goals are formulated that are to emanate from this analysis. The goals should focus what the participants are to gain but you can also make explicit the goals for the activity or the staffs’ work. When the goal formulation is complete you choose methods and carry out the activity. If the resources are insufficient, you might need to seek extra funding to carry out that which has been planned. Deliberate methods are also followed-up by a reflective evaluation. On basis of which answer you get, then, this hopefully results in a development and raised awareness of what is beneficial to participants and activity. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 109)

This statement construes the initial step for identifying the ‘right recreation methods’ as formulating goals based mainly on a thorough analysis of the target group’s desires and needs. These goals may also involve the activity or the youth recreation leaders’ work. In the next step, methods are chosen, and activities are planned and implemented. Hereafter, the implementation is reflected upon. The structured reflection on professional practice is constituted as potentially resulting in the ‘development and increased awareness of what is favorable for visitors and the activity’. However, the goal of reflection is not merely constructed as being to analyze and develop activities or methods in professional practice as has been shown so far, which the next example demonstrates.

The youth recreation leader educator Margot demonstrates another goal with reflection, namely that the ability to reflect on professional practice is beneficial in order to ‘be cool’ and therefore potentially avoid acting impulsively at the youth recreation centre:

And then I think that a youth recreation leader, at least after a while, sort of gets…. practices an eye to see things, it [sic] becomes attentive, able to interpret. Becomes good at people, so, to be able to
read people. I probably think that you also as a youth recreation leader at a youth recreation centre can benefit from not… overanalyzing. And above all perhaps not, what should you say, act out of proportion but [instead] be a bit cool, reflective.

The statement construes a youth recreation leader that with work experience becomes increasingly attentive and interpretive. It is stated that ‘overanalyzing’ might be detrimental and lead to acting ‘out of proportion’ in relation to what is realistically demanded in a given situation. Thus, reflection is construed as necessary for the youth recreation leader to obtain a more realistic perspective and be more relaxed - ‘be a bit cool’ - in interpreting young people.

Reflection is illustrated as an ability to be systematically developed in the students and the development of this ability more or less permeates the syllabuses. Typical examples of this are a couple of folk high schools making explicit that reflection is to permeate every single module of the programme:

In every module the [student’s] ability to plan, follow up, and evaluate one’s own work is practiced. To be able to document what you have accomplished and decided is important in the upcoming work life. In the introduction to every module, the student formulates their own goals with the module. These are if [sic] the basis for a reflection over one’s own work. By creating a portfolio that follows [the student] throughout the module, one’s own learning can be elucidated and lifted. (FHS 7)

Knowledge, reflections, and practical exercises in leadership are present in all [education] areas. (FHS 10)

These statements construe that every single module will allow for practicing the ability to plan, evaluate, and reflect on what has been done. The students document their own goals in the modules and this is considered important for their ‘upcoming work life’, i.e. their future professional practice. These goals are constituted as the foundation for reflections on work and by collecting them in a portfolio, a logic emerges that the students’ own learning then can be elucidated. How specific learning outcomes facilitating reflection may be formulated is depicted in the following example.

Specific learning outcomes of the syllabuses’ modules emphasize the ability to reflect, for instance, in the syllabus of a four-week Pedagogy module in the first year of the youth recreation leader programme:

After a carried-out module, the student is to:
* be able to reflect on one’s own pedagogical foundation
* be able to reflect on and discuss about the role of knowledge in society and people’s responsibility for how the knowledge is used
* show an ability to independently and in groups analyze and reflect on pedagogical theories and concepts related to practical activity (FHS 2)

The statement construes the learning outcomes facilitating the student’s ability to reflect on their own and pedagogic theories and conceptions in relation to professional practice. The use of the word ‘reflect’ in each learning outcome signifies this concept’s central position in the particular Pedagogy module.

Up until now in this section, the illustrations of reflection in professional practice have depicted the youth recreation leader in relation to developing recreation activities, methods, a realistic perspective on youth, pedagogy, and knowledge. Another depiction instead accentuates the ability to self-reflect, that is, turn the reflective gaze of development towards one’s own role and personal character. This is illustrated in a couple of examples from the same syllabus:

Catching oneself and becoming aware of one's own patterns is a decisive competency for a professional youth recreation leader and is also the primary characteristic to leave the programme with, sought for in our students by employers. (FHS 15)

A central part of the programme is to develop the self-reflective ability and receive feedback from teachers and fellow students. Feedback on thoughts, feelings, and behavior becomes an important way of working to let my [the student’s] picture of me meet others’ picture of me, and thereby render possible a deliberate and desirable development. The ability and the quality on self-reflection set the limits for my own [the student’s] developmental process. A few question formulations that can guide the self-reflection are: Which presumptions and values govern my thinking and my actions? Which intentions did I have with my actions? Which were the effects of my actions? Which alternative actions are there? How can I become fully responsible for my way of being? (FHS 15)

These statements construe making oneself visible for oneself as a crucial competence in the youth recreation leaders’ professional practice. The ability to self-reflect on one's own role and personal character with teacher and peer feedback is constituted to develop this competence, by means of the self-image meeting others’ image of that same self in discussion. Further, a logic emerges that specific guiding questions assist reflection on the student’s innermost thoughts, feelings, and behavior. These guiding questions take interest in, for instance, the student taking responsibility for finding out the assumptions and values governing their own professional thinking and actions as well as personal character.
In another example of the youth recreation leader’s self-reflection on one’s own role, emphasis is instead solely on development on a more personal level. This is exemplified briefly in the section in a syllabus where the youth recreation leader educators’ own pedagogical thoughts for the programme are made explicit:

We think that a good leadership builds upon a good self-awareness. In the beginning of education [sic], the modules therefore focus the student’s own person in modules such as Personal Development, Ethics and one’s own Health and Leadership. Large part of teaching [sic] thus builds upon personal reflections, evaluation exercises, and self-assessment. (FHS 12, italics in original)

The statement construes self-awareness as a key characteristic of ‘good leadership’. As a result, it is constituted that large parts of teaching during the first year of studies are carried out with personal reflections, evaluation exercises, and self-assessment, in modules relating to personal development as well as one’s own health and leadership.

In this section, the ideal youth recreation leader is construed as having the ability to reflect on professional practice or one’s own role and personal character. By discursively making a reflective ability explicit, as norm, the undesirable youth recreation leader is the one who does not have this type of ability to reflect. Yet again, a truth-delimitation is constructed concerning who is and who is not the normal youth recreation leader.

Taking center stage in the final section, is a discussion of the results and methodology as well as a suggestion for future research.
5. Discussion

Results discussion

In this thesis, I have illustrated how a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader operates in policy texts within and beyond youth recreation leader education, as well as in youth recreation leader educators’ talk about the youth recreation leader. In the policy texts and interview transcriptions, four subject positions emerge - the democratic, relational, recreation-anchored, and reflective youth recreation leader - that makes possible a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader. Here, the ideal youth recreation leader is construed as knowing about and practicing democracy, being founded in democratic values; as having the ability to create relationships with youth and others, and between youth; as anchored in knowledge about and experiences of recreation; and as having the ability to reflect on professional practice or one’s own role and personal character. Conversely, then, the undesirable youth recreation leader in need of normalization is one who does not have knowledge about - or have specific abilities - in relation to democracy, creating relationships, recreation, and reflection. Here, a truth-delimitation is constructed (Foucault, 2007) concerning who is and who is not the normal youth recreation leader. Essentially, the need for normalization is construed to be met by means of education; in this case, by attending youth recreation leader education at folk high schools.

These results can be read as “effects” of how government operates. As power is productive in constructing discourse, knowledge, and subjectivities (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 20), one can say that they are the specific expressions or effects of power. Power is everywhere, simultaneously enabling and limiting what can be said and not said, and can be identified in its different effects. But how is the illustrated emergence of these effects to be understood? In line with the argument developed here, such emergence can be understood by means of governmentality and the conduct of conduct (Foucault, 2007). Consequently, the aforementioned four subject positions that make a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader possible are viewed as the specific effects of multiple rational practices and techniques of government, that shape the conduct of the self and others according to specific norms (Dean, 2010, p. 18ff). Hereby, complex forms of power (Foucault, 2003) and its different expressions previously being invisible are made visible through a lens of government.
Technologies of power and the self
Specifically, which various normalizing practices and techniques of government shape the ideal youth recreation leader? Here, an example of technologies of power operating in youth recreation leader education is through the students’ reflection and use of portfolios. For instance, reflection is used systematically as a pedagogical practice to improve the students’ abilities to plan, follow up, and evaluate aspects such as their performance or the outcomes of activities. Here, the students document their own goals, actions, and accomplishments in portfolios acting as a basis for further scrutiny. By being encouraged to continuously take notes about work improvements in such portfolios, reflection and learning are made visible. Indeed, reflection in various forms is encouraged and frequently used in education today (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Fejes & Nicoll, 2015). In elucidating one’s learning and experiences to others, the youth recreation leader is objectified, that is, made an object for examination and regulation by them. Thus, aspects of assessment and monitoring are mobilized (Dean, 2010). Continuous reflection is construed as a desirable and normal practice for the ideal youth recreation leader to engage in and conversely, the one unable to reflect or being disinterested in reflection is considered abnormal and in need of normalization. Now, if the reflection instead or to some extent also would make possible for the students to engage in disclosure of their innermost selves, then technologies of the self is enacted as government.

Besides engaging in reflection as an objectifying practice of assessment, the reflection could also be turned towards the inner self. Thus, we see an operation of a technology of the self – the confession. Here, the youth recreation leaders act upon themselves in self-disclosing ways. The disclosure is not religiously driven as depicted earlier through Foucault (1988) but rather, it is enacted in an education context. The disclosure is enacted as a pedagogical practice through feedback from teachers and fellow students based on a verbalization of the self. In this pedagogical feedback-practice, the youth recreation leader student’s verbalization of personal reflections is up for scrutiny in open discussions with others. Consequently, the current knowledge of the self is made visible to the self. In aiding this verbalization process, the teachers offer specific probing questions as food for thought. These probing questions invoke pondering on one’s own feelings, presumptions, values, intentions, and ‘way of being’ (How can I become fully responsible for my way of being?) as well as the potential consequences these might have on the receiving ends of youth recreation centre visitors. Here, the student is governed in order to
take responsibility for the verbalization of the self, and in doing so, the student participates in
governing others, i.e. by participation in producing the “norm” of good behavior. Hence, through
the reflective practice the self is governed to transform so as to become a new and improved self
(Foucault, 1990), which, in this analysis, is a responsible youth recreation leader with the
competence to be self-aware.

**Previous research in relation to the results**
As stated earlier, the limited previous research on youth recreation leaders in Sweden mostly
contributes with analyses of their everyday professional practice, such as their abilities or
competencies (Kihlström & Roos, 2000), self-understanding and positioning (Trondman, 2000),
doings (Pettersson Svenneke & Havström, 2007), and professional tasks (Tebelius, 2007). From
different theoretical and methodological approaches, these studies take interest in reality ‘as it
is’. Here, Fejes and Dahlstedt (2017) deviate by exploring discourses in youth recreational work
through narratives about youth recreation leader students’ occupational choice.

In this thesis, I strive to identify how a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader
operates, and with what effect. Thus, the interest is not on reality ‘as it is’ but rather as it emerges
through discourse. My contribution to discussions on ideals in youth recreation work generally
and in relation to popular education research specifically, does not concern suggestions on what
to do or how to change and improve the social world in any particular way; i.e. make truth-
statements based in what is good and bad. Instead, a Foucault inspired analysis provides a critical
destabilization of discourse (Fejes, 2006), which, in this case, is a discourse on the ideal youth
recreation leader. Through such destabilization, taken-for-granted ideas can be elucidated and
critically reflected upon.

**Discrepancy in the empirical material**
A final reflection on the thesis’ results originates in what appears to be a discrepancy in the
empirical material concerning the knowledge of pedagogy. Especially in the national curriculum
and local syllabuses for the youth recreation leader programme, there are regularities of
description that relate to obtaining knowledge of pedagogy both in theory and practice. For
instance, according to the learning outcomes of a four-week pedagogy module, the students are
to have knowledge of their own pedagogical foundation and the general role of knowledge in
society. Moreover, they are to be able to analyze pedagogical theories and concepts in relation to
professional practice. However, when turning to descriptions of pedagogical knowledge in the remaining three policy texts and the interview transcriptions, such focus is limited, or even entirely absent. In other words, within the policy texts’ discourse and the youth recreation leader educators’ discourse, knowledge of pedagogy seems to be picked up and mobilized in different ways. As a consequence, this discrepancy influenced the analysis by making the regularity of descriptions on pedagogy appear weak across the empirical material taken as a whole.

Methodological discussion

As in all research, studies have their methodological limitations and so does this one. In the spirit of self-reflectivity, I have gathered some considerations being made throughout the process of this thesis. Below, these considerations are depicted. They concern my positioning in relation to the analyzed discourse as well as issues of synchronous online interviews, convenience sampling, and my relation to the interview population.

Concerning the text in my thesis, it is inevitably a product of discourse while also producing the discourse under scrutiny. By exploring youth recreation leaders in the first place, they are positioned as an important enough occupational category to discuss and in doing so, truth claims are made about them as power is everywhere. But any illustrated narrative is merely one way of telling it and there may be many other ways of telling (Fejes, 2006).

Regarding the interviewees’ preferred choice for the semi-structured interviews, it was the synchronous online software Skype and thus not workplace in-person interviews. Distinct advantages with offering online interviews are that individuals with busy schedules might be drawn to this time- and cost saving digital approach. In such a digital approach, there is no need for interviewees to engage in any logistic considerations or travel anywhere, which, potentially, disperses the population over a larger geographic area (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). Some disadvantages with this specific online approach is that it requires a stable internet connection and moderate levels of digital skills to handle the necessary online software (James & Busher, 2012, p. 179).

The choice of convenience sampling may be questioned as this way of selecting interviewees in qualitative research is debated (Patton, 2015, p. 309f). In short, one side of the debate argues that this sampling type is unstrategic, too convenient, and largely useless. This
argument is based on an idea that the most easily available interviewees by definition are information-poor. By contrast, the other side argues that the convenience is a strength and a pragmatic sampling choice in a world where access, cost, and time are relevant factors in people's lives. Moreover, convenience sampling is common in social research. In my study, the main reasons for this choice were pragmatic.

Regarding my relation to the interviewed population, that is, youth recreation leader educators, it may be asserted that since I myself am a youth recreation leader educator, then this familiarity of the occupation and context by necessity creates a problematic analysis bias. Indeed, I have been aware of this bias-potential throughout the research process and to this end strived to counter the closeness by actively distancing myself. For instance, actively distancing myself by means of constantly being very cautious in accepting the analysis and its underpinnings. But rather, reflect on them, over and over again, by asking what they are founded in and keep making certain there really is a stable ground in the empirical material (Bryman, 2016). This can be seen as an example of self-reflectivity and, accordingly, a sign of quality in discourse analysis in line with Bolander and Fejes (2015, p. 111f). Moreover, in practice, the contextual familiarity may be more of an asset than a burden in creating a nearness of understanding to the interviewees’ professional conditions and conceptualizations.

Future research

This study set out from shore with the aim to identify how a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader operates, and with what effect. Having ‘sailed in theoretical and empirical waters and returned from a rewarding but at times intense journey’, the Foucault inspired analysis has generated a curiosity to explore further within this approach. Therefore, the suggestion I have for future research concerns an elaboration of the present study.

An elaboration of the present study could be carried out in numerous ways and I will here illustrate two of these. One potentially fruitful way is to increase and broaden the empirical material, i.e. interviews and policy texts. Such an increase might involve more of the same type of interviewees, i.e. youth recreation leader educators, but also individuals from other social groups. These social groups might encompass, for instance, youth recreation leader students, youth recreation leaders, visitors at youth recreation centres, politicians or staff at the Swedish Public Employment Service. Furthermore, the policy texts could be expanded to include
additional books, documents, and research based articles relating to youth recreational work. Another interesting type of text is youth recreation leader job ads where requirements and qualifications are listed. Taken together, or separately, these expansions may add vivid nuances to a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader.

Another potentially fruitful way to elaborate on the present study is to add complexity and problematization. This could be accomplished by, for instance, employing a genealogical analysis (Foucault, 1991) to relevant documents. These documents may be of fairly recent dates such as the three previous national curricula for the youth recreation leader programme - from 1983, 1991, and 2000 - but also older government reports on youth work from the first part of the 20th century and onward. Such an analysis can add a meaningful historical perspective to a discourse on the ideal youth recreation leader, as discourse changes in space and time. The added complexity here consists of problematizing concepts and ideas being produced in previous times, and how they have been produced.
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Appendices

Appendix A. Interviewee recruitment letter

[The letter is translated from Swedish by the author. Anonymizations are marked with “---”]

November 10, 2017

Seeking youth recreation leader educators for a study on youth recreation leaders
Hello! This academic year, the undersigned writes a thesis in the master’s programme in Pedagogical Practices at Linköping University. The aim of the thesis is to study which ideals that are created about the youth recreation leader within the context of the youth recreation leader programme in Sweden.

I am now seeking at least ten youth recreation leader educators wanting to participate in an individual interview where your lines of reasoning constitute a part of the empirical material. The interview will last about half an hour and is carried out in the weeks 50-51, primarily via Skype, but if possible at your workplace. With workplace visits it is, for pragmatic reasons, preferred to have several individual interviews during the same visit.

The dates/times during the weeks 50-51 are:

- Monday December 4, between 9.30 AM-4:30 PM
- Monday December 11, between 1:30-5 PM
- Tuesday December 12, between 1-5 PM

Your participation can be of value to the research field of Adult learning in general and to the knowledge development on youth recreation leaders in particular. Participation in the study is voluntary and your name/workplace will be anonymized for ethics reasons. Moreover, to ensure high reliability the interviews are recorded.

Interested in participating? Questions? Please get in touch with me! I am best reached at ---@student.liu.se but to some extent also mobile number +46-73----.

Best regards,

Andreas Ruschkowski
Appendix B. Interview guide

Introductory question

How come you are a folk high school teacher?

What made you end up at a youth recreation leader programme?

Main questions

What do you think a graduate from your youth recreation leader programme must know?

Who or what is the youth recreation leader working at the youth recreation centre?

In what ways does the programme prepare the students for what you say they must know or be?

Follow-up probes for clarification or deepening of descriptions

Could you please tell me more about…?

Is it possible to elaborate on what you just said about…?

Earlier you said…, should I understand that you are saying that…?

That which you said about…., could you provide examples to illustrate it?

How do you think I should understand the meaning of…?

What does… mean to you?