

GENDER, DISABILITY AND SPECIAL EDUCATION – INTERSECTIONAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Programme, delegates and their contributions (abstracts)



The symposium aims to strengthen networking, cross-national interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration, and to stimulate the dissemination of research in the field of gender, disability and special education.



Keynote
Prof. Deborah Youdell



Keynote
Prof. Sheila Riddell

This symposium was made possible thanks to generous funding from School of Education, Umeå University. The symposium is also part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 647125), 'DISLIFE Liveable Disabilities: Life Courses and Opportunity Structures Across Time'. Additionally, it is part of another disability project funded by the Wallenberg Foundation (*Stiftelsen Marcus och Amalia Wallenbergs Minnesfond*).

The symposium is organized by Associate Professor, Kim Wickman, research leader of Special Education, Umeå University, Sweden together with Professor Lotta Vikström and members from her DISLIFE team, Centre for Demographic and Ageing Research (CEDAR), Umeå University, Sweden and Dr. Veronica Löfgren, head of the Centre for Disability Research (CDR). Umeå University, Sweden. This is the final programme to the upcoming symposium with detailed information.

Background and content for the symposium

In November 2014 a national meeting of researchers on gender and disability was arranged at Umeå University for senior researchers. The aim was primarily to identify current research, discuss future issues and establish a forum for people active in the field. The initiators were the The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM) and the Department of Education at Umeå University. The discussion focused chiefly on what problems schools and society are trying to solve and what normative practices are being addressed on the special education arena. All the participants agreed that there is a great need for visualising how gender and other forms of identity formations are constructed and how the relation between disability and gender is expressed in the special education practice. To further stimulate intersectional and interdisciplinary cooperation within the area of gender, disability and special education, we decided to arrange a lunch to lunch symposium on November 30 to December 1 (2017) to gather international keynote speakers and researchers from different universities in Sweden.

The symposium aims to strengthen networking, cross-national interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration, and to stimulate the dissemination of research in the field of gender, disability and special education. Fortunately, a joint publication can be one important result from the symposium. By that we expect the symposium to make a significant contribution also for those researchers who have no opportunity to listen to the speakers and to take part in the discussions during these two days.

Keynotes and contributors

A limited selection of distinguished researchers are invited to the symposium. All of them have been chosen with special concern to reflect different knowledge areas of the research field. The following keynotes will hold presentations during the symposium:

Professor **Sheila Riddell** is Director of the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. She previously worked as Director of the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research, University of Glasgow. Her research interests are in the broad field of equality and social inclusion, with particular reference to gender, social class and disability in the fields of education, training, employment

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and social care. Sheila Riddell is currently working on projects investigating higher education, lifelong learning policy, and special and inclusive education across Europe.

Deborah Youdell, Professor of Sociology of Education in the School of Education, University of Birmingham. Her work in the Sociology of Education has been concerned with the relationship between policy, practice and inequalities, exploring how inequalities are connected to subjectivities, everyday practices, pedagogy, institutional processes and policy. This research has spanned issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, social class, ability and disability and has been underpinned by engagements with post-structural thinking about power, the subject, space, and the political.

Guidelines for Contributors

Each contributor will hold a short presentation for maximum 12-13 minutes followed by 7-8 minutes of discussion. The presentation is within the main thrust of the symposium (e.g. *gender, disability and special education*). Our idea is that the contributions will bring about different theoretical perspectives and empirical settings that in turn will shed light on in gender, disability and special education.

Programme

Day 1 starts with lunch. In the afternoon the two key note presentations will be held. There will be short breaks between each presentation. After the last keynote presentation we will have shorter presentations from five contributors. This day will end with a dinner at Umeå University.

During **Day 2** five presentations will be held. Like in Day 1 there will be short breaks between each block of presentation. See the page below.

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Symposium programme, from lunch November 30 to lunch December 1, 2017, at *Umeå University*

Location: Beeendevetarhuset [Behavioural Sciences Building] 3rd FLOOR C304, Umeå University

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Contents</i>
30 November	11.15-12.40	Arrival and lunch
	01.00-01.30	Welcoming introduction (Kim Wickman with Lotta Vikström)
	01.30-02.30	Keynote Professor Sheila Riddell Gender, Disability and Social Class in Scottish Education
	02.30-03.00	Coffee/tea break
	03.00-04.00	Keynote Professor Deborah Youdell Disorder/difficulty/special educational needs assemblage: food, bodies, brains, subjects, schools
	04.15-06.00	Presentations session 1 (<i>Chair:</i> Veronica Lövgren) a. Kirk Sullivan and Maria Levlin "Of course boys have more language, reading and writing problems!" b. Ann-Carita Evaldsson and Eva Hjörne "The accomplishment of divergent (gendered) forms of 'disability identities' for girls and boys with ADHD in special needs practices" c. Jens Ineland "Applying gender perspectives in human service provision for people with intellectual disabilities. Pitfalls and potentials?" d. Elisabeth Raddock "Supporting students of all abilities on campus: organizing support for equal opportunities at universities" e. Josefine Wälivaara "The Future of Disability: Ableism in Science Fiction Narratives"
	07.00	Evening dinner at the Department of Education
1 December	09.00-11.15	Presentations session 2 (<i>Chair:</i> Jens Ineland) a. Eva Silfver "Students trajectories: a 'figured word' - approach" b. Lotta Vikström "What does it take to call it intersectional analysis?" c. Veronica Lövgren "Supported education for young adults with mental health problems – shouldn't there be more about gender?" d. Göran Widding "Teachers' and parents' cooperation project on special education and gender in school" e. Anette Bagger "The Qual(equ)ity of national assessment in the neoliberal era of testing" f. Kim Wickman "Negotiating space — inclusive transition processes and strategies for participation in Swedish sport organizations"
	11.15-11.30	Coffee/tea break
	11.30-12.15	Summing-up session Lotta Vikström with Kim Wickman
	12.15	Lunch and Farewell

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1) Gender, Disability and Social Class in Scottish Education

Keynote: Professor Sheila Riddell, Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity

Gender inequality in Scotland has, until relatively recently, been understood in terms of male domination of educational space and resources. There has recently been a shift in the discourse, so that the problem of gender inequality now tends to be viewed in terms of male underachievement and female educational advantage, as official statistics point to girls attaining better grades in school leading to higher rates of female participation in post-school education. This paper focuses on additional support needs, using official statistics to explore the inter-connections between gender, social class and disability. While boys outnumber girls in all categories of additional support needs, this pattern is particularly evident in non-normative categories such as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This category is also characterised by significant disproportionalities in relation to social deprivation. It is argued that an analysis of the social characteristics of pupils with additional support needs highlights the importance of inter-sectional analysis, so that one social category is never viewed in isolation from others.

2) Disorder/difficulty/special educational needs assemblage: food, bodies, brains, subjects, schools

Keynote: Professor Deborah Youdell, University of Birmingham, UK.

In this paper I explore a series of productive lines implicated in the making of ‘disorder’, ‘difficulty’ and ‘special educational needs’ in contemporary schools. I mobilise thinking about complex social formations in order to understand these categories as phenomena – working with Deleuzian thinking about trans-scalar and trans-domain assemblages; Karen Barad’s work on intra-action and phenomena; Elizabeth Bennett’s work on the vitality of objects as actants; Elizabeth Wilson’s work on entanglement; and Samantha Frost’s work on the interaction of the cultural and biological in the making of ‘biocultural creatures’. I engage with ethnographic data generated through research in an English school of boys aged 7 to 16 identified as having ‘social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’. Mobilising this thinking about entanglements and assemblage, I follow lines of subjectivation; money; brain imagining; epigenetics; food practices; metabolomics and policy in order to map an SEN assemblage. From this mapping I make a case for an approach to inclusive education that moves from an uncomfortable and uncertain trans-domain biosocial conceptual and political location, arguing for the need to understand the multiple and mobile lines the produce ‘SEN’ and the importance of working across these lines in defining and enacting an inclusive politics in schools.

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3) Of course boys have more language, reading and writing problems!

Kirk Sullivan, Professor of Linguistics Umeå University *E-mail:* kirk.sullivan@umu.se

Maria Levlin, Ph D and Lecturer of Linguistics Umeå University *E-mail:* maria.levlin@umu.se

Research indicates that boys are more frequently referred to speech and language therapists for assessment of their language, reading and writing skills than girls. This is in line with theories that posit that a genetic explanation predicting a difference, and with earlier studies that suggest that boys have a larger standard deviation in reading ability than girls. This would predict that more boys should be referred and that more boys should be exceptional. As part of a larger study all pupils in year 2 in a Swedish municipality were assessed for reading ability and this assessment showed a more even distribution of reading difficulties that might be expected. Assuming that this complete population screening reflects the national population, we need to question whether there are contextual factors beyond reading difficulties that result in boys being more frequently referred for assessment than girls (and thus labelled), and what impact this may have on boys' and girls' schooling in the longer term. In our presentation, we will present and discuss the assessment package used by the municipality and the results of the screening. We will then turn to some possible interpretations, suggest some possible contextual factors, and educational implications before opening up for discussion.

4) The accomplishment of divergent (gendered) forms of 'disability identities' for girls and boys with ADHD in special needs practices

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Eva Hjörne, Professor of Education and Special Education University of Gothenburg
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In this presentation we will show how gender-differentiated forms of identities, based on neuropsychiatric and essentialist dualistic notions are accomplished for one girl versus some boys with ADHD in everyday special teaching practices. Drawing on ethnomethodological work on members' understanding of social categories the focus here is on the local social process through which divergent gendered forms of disability identities are accomplished, done and indexed in everyday interactional practices (see Evaldsson, 2014, Hjörne & Evaldsson, 2016). The selected data draw on video ethnographic work of everyday classroom practices in special educational needs practices with children diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Instead of treating biomedical explanatories such as ADHD as natural, essential properties of individual children, here such categories are explored as participants'

resources' for conducting the daily and institutional business at hand (Renshaw, Choo, and Emerald 2013). We will show how dualistic biomedical categories for Boys versus Girls with ADHD are invoked in everyday practices to make sense of and manage troubling classroom conduct, which here also becomes the grounds for invoking other forms of identity practices. We are particularly concerned with how the recognition of the boys' unruly classroom behaviours as mainly 'disordered, aggressive and hyperactive' while the girl's problematic conduct as mainly 'emotional, withdrawn and introvert' disguise the complexity of identity categories achieved for children in everyday classroom contexts.

5) Applying gender perspectives in human service provision for people with intellectual disabilities. Pitfalls and potentials?

Jens Ineland, Associate Professor Department of Education, Umeå University *E-mail:* jens.ineland@umu.se

Leading an on-going research project at Umeå University – ORGID; Organization and Intellectual Disabilities – I have conducted a number of empirical studies on working conditions, job satisfaction, prevailing norms and values within human service organizations in Sweden. More explicitly, the project aim to analyse policy, leadership and direct care support to people with intellectual disabilities in schools, social services and public health-care. Even though different scopes and research strategies has been applied in different studies, the empirical analysis was collected through a digital web-based questionnaire (Google Drive) which included both standardized questions (Likert-Scale) and open-ended questions. Number of respondents: 421 (response rate: 71 %). In my presentation, I draw on some on the published studies and present to you a brief overview of main findings and conclusions.

To be able to differentiate between experiences and opinions within the broad area of welfare provision, the project has drawn on three different institutional contexts: schools, social services and healthcare (an unusual approach within Scandinavian disability research). To be able to address and analyse the relations between professional experiences and organisational context, we apply primarily theoretical concepts from organisational institutionalism (an unusual approach within Scandinavian disability research). However, gender analysis in social disability research in Scandinavia is scarce. It has typically focused on issues faced by woman or that woman with intellectual disabilities face both gender-related and disability-related discrimination, often referred to as a “double disadvantage”. At the same time, people with intellectual disabilities have often been represented as without gender, as asexual. Before being acknowledged as a woman or a man, they are primarily viewed as ‘disabled’.

Although we are applying somewhat new strategies and research perspectives in the ORGID project, I believe that gender perspectives might be beneficial to further scrutinize the experiences expressed by our informants. Off course, I believe that the applied theoretical framework is relevant for our type of inquiry. However, it would be interesting to discuss with you the rationale to apply “gender-neutral” (organizational) theories to analyze professional experiences in such female-dominated professions as those studied (92 % of our respondents

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were woman). Further, to what extent it is possible to argue that notions about gender is a “non-issue” in these (gendered) professions and organizational activities? Finally, what could be appropriate research strategy in order to recognize that we primarily report on female experiences?

6) Supporting students of all abilities on campus: organizing support for equal opportunities at universities

Elisabeth Raddock, Ph D and Lecturer in Religious Studies Umeå University *E-mail:* elisabeth.raddock@umu.se

Studying at the university sometimes involves unnecessary obstacles for students with disabilities, and faculty are often unprepared for the tasks their jobs, and Swedish discrimination law, mandate. Over the last few years an increasing number of students with various types of disabilities study at University. The most common disabilities include dyslexia, ADHD, and Asperger’s syndrome. Meeting these students led the author to questions regarding support for this student group. This paper is based on a survey done with students with disabilities at Umeå University. The purpose of the survey was to identify the hindrances in the university milieu that students experience as disabling or problematic. Some of the conclusions include: the importance of organizing in order to make studying easier for students with disabilities; to make other students aware of what disability means in a University context; and finally that clear instructions regarding the support we offer are not always given to individual students.

Keywords: Disability, discrimination, pedagogy, survey, university, students

7) The Future of Disability: Ableism in Science Fiction Narratives

Josefine Wälivaara, Postdoc. Culture and Media Studies Umeå University *E-mail:* josefine.walivaara@umu.se

The aim of this paper is to investigate if, and how, physical disability has been depicted in popular narrative fiction involved in speculations about the future, and to discuss why it is vital that these narratives include characters with disabilities. Moreover, what types of futures are commonly evoked through the inclusion or exclusion of disability? The focus of this paper is narratives directly dealing with imagined futures, most of which belong to the science fiction genre. Without going into a debate on genre definitions this paper assumes a broader approach to narratives invested in imagining futurescapes. The paper uses film analysis guided by the theoretical approach of crip and queer temporality (Kafer 2013; Edelman 2004) in order to investigate these futurescapes. While I will not go into any lengthy analysis of specific films or television series, the paper instead takes a broader approach through highlighting examples, including *Star Trek* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Through studying disability in imagined futurescapes in popular science fiction film and television series I found that futurescapes tend

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not only to favour abled-bodied characters but more importantly, they often exclude characters with disabilities. I argue that inclusion is important because imagined futures say something about the present and narrative fiction is connected to issues in society. Moreover, exclusion and stereotypical ways of depicting disability perpetuate ableist normativity.

8) Students trajectories: a ‘figured word’- approach

Eva Silfver, Associate Professor Department of Education, Umeå University *E-mail:* eva.silfver@umu.se

In my presentation I use data from a future ethnographic study on national tests in mathematics in school year three to which I add interview data more recently conducted with some of the students now in school year nine. The aim is to explore students’ identity work in relation to school mathematics, and specifically in relation to the “test situation” – a situation, quite significant because it demonstrates the ongoing disciplining of students (Foucault, 1977). Students’ identity work involve different performances and take on different meaning depending on the norms, practices, values, and demands of the setting and the enabling and constraining aspects of history and larger social structures. I want to explore different aspects of, and the connections between, students’ social contexts and how norms and practices celebrate certain subject positions while marginalizing other, and how these positions are gendered, classed, (dis)abled, raced and so on. I draw on Holland et al. (1998) who conceptualize the classroom as the interweaving of “figured worlds” and as a metaphor for understanding the enabling and constraining aspects of the classroom.

9) What does it take to call it intersectional analysis?*

Lotta Vikström, Professor of History Umeå University *E-mail:* lotta.vikstrom@umu.se

The recent decades, intersectionality has established itself as an analytical tool for recognizing how human characteristics intersect to define people’s position in society (Crenshaw 1991; Wilkinson 2003). While scholars and particularly within the gender studies see the benefits of incorporating intersectional analysis, the methodological means have been debated (Grönvik & Söder 2008; McCall 2005), e.g. regarding the categorizing of people. Although disability has received increasing recognition as a social category on a par with gender, age, class and ethnicity, disability research is still limited to institutional, medical and educational practices whereby disabled people are treated as one defined minority as opposed to an ‘able’ majority. As a result, the diverse experiences of disability have been neglected in research. Using death as an example, this presentation shows the outcomes from statistical life course analyses (Cox proportional hazard models) to identify the impacts disabilities had on individuals’ survival historically and under the influence of other characteristics, and particularly gender. The

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purpose is to discuss whether this analysis helps to differentiate the impacts disability can have on human life, both past and present. What are the benefits and drawbacks with employing statistical analysis to identify the most significant and determining factor(s) for the event under study in a model said to adjust for other factors/variables, or intersecting characteristics? Does the mortality outcome really show results based on intersectional analysis? The results concern some 35,000 individuals in 19th-century Sundsvall region, Sweden, about 500 of whom were found to have sensory, physical or mental disabilities in young adulthood (15-34 years of age). The issue is to estimate the effects these disabilities had on their survival using statistical life course analysis. Swedish parish registers digitized by the Demographic Data Base, Umeå University, are used to identify people the ministers defined as being impaired, and to construct a reference group of non-disabled persons. The findings demonstrate that disability increased the death risks to a most substantial and significant degree, and among men much more than women. Further, disability ruled out the effects of many other characteristics shaping people's survival in history and some types of disabilities were particularly associated with untimely death.

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10) Supported education for young adults with mental health problems – shouldn't there be more about gender?

Veronica Lövgren, PhD and Director of Umeå University and Umeå Center for Disability Studies Umeå University *E-mail*: veronica.lovgren@umu.se

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With this presentation, I take the opportunity to get input after realising that I might be a (unwilling) contributor to an absence of gender perspective in a research field. I'm currently working in the project *A working life on the horizon - Supported education for young adults with mental health problems*. Supported Education (SEd) is an intervention that supports functioning in varied academic environments and helping young adults to develop career goals. The three-armed project includes 1) a research overview, 2) a focus group study and 3) an intervention built upon the results from study 1 and 2.

In the overview, we searched for descriptions of several aspects of (SEd), and with 44 included articles we are pretty sure to have covered the field. The articles were thematised according to; needs among students, descriptions of the intervention (including essential components), outcomes, implementation strategies and so on. We also noticed if and how the studies treated/discussed age, ethnicity and gender. It showed that 22 out of the 44 studies use sex/gender as a demographic variable. Three (3) of the 22 studies presents few results according to sex but none of these actually address gender or contextualise the results with theory on gender structures. It was surprising, not at least in accordance to how gender structures in other ways are visible in studies on work, education and mental health. Besides being surprised, I'm also worried about the future of our project. Alongside with, and building upon, the analysis we have conducted several focus groups interviews. These have given a rich material – but even here is gender absent. As I see it, we cannot repair this – but how should we proceed? Study 3 have to start soon and there is a risk that we will further contribute to the absent of gender perspective.

11) Teachers' and parents' cooperation project on special education and gender in school

Göran Widding, Ph D Department of Education *E-mail:* goran.widding@umu.se

The study investigate parents and teachers' approaches to curriculum objectives that involve shared responsibility between home and school, regarding children in need of special support. Based on semi-structured interviews with 13 parents and teachers, the meaning of gender in home-school relationships were examined. The overall aim was to conduct an exploratory study on the importance of gender in the home-school relationship. The study focused on the experiences that teachers and parents have with regard to the practical consequences of home and school cooperation concerning special educational support. The theoretical approach is feminist poststructuralist theories and discourse analysis. The study's main results shows that gender has great importance in home school relationships: Women/mothers bear the overall responsibility for engaging in cooperation, while this responsibility is largely made invisible in the research. In concrete home and school practices, the responsibility is also mostly not problematized. Additionally, the result indicates that, both parents and teachers activated a discourse about female care that is fundamental to the work of pupils in need of support. Collaboration was initiated between home and school, which was conducted in two discursive practices, one with the teachers in the school and the other with the parents at home. The

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teachers' discursive practice was organised around the school's special education for two purposes: a) through a dedicated special education to the entire student group, b) developing the abilities of the weak-performing students while developing the entire social interaction of the entire student group. The parents' discursive support practice strengthened the teachers' special educational support of the children at school, teaching and planning according to children's schoolwork. Since the teacher's special educational support in the whole class largely is based on female responsibility and care, there is a risk that this practice repeats a power structure in the classrooms, where the woman / girl is subordinate to a so-called anti-study culture, consisting of traditional beliefs in power relations that are based on stereotypical assumptions that girls should perform and behave well at school whilst boys not need to. However, because the teachers do not risk cooperation with the home, they avoid their curriculum assignment to challenge traditional gender patterns, both in teaching practice and in contact with the parents. At the same time, the teachers has several teaching tools that can be integrated into their special education practice to counteract traditional gender patterns and enhance student performance, such as the activities of schools' boys and girls groups.

12) The Qual(equ)ity of national assessment in the neoliberal era of testing

Anette Bagger, Ph D and Lecturer in Science and Mathematics Education, Umeå University
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This presentation focuses aspects of national assessment in mathematics connected to social justice and equity. Quality and equity are understood as constructed within a neoliberal governing of schools and through the power of numbers (Bagger, 2017). This is for example visible when results in tests are handled as a measure of quality in education (Lundahl, 2009). High scores are rated as high quality and low scores as low quality. Following from this, students in need of support and disadvantaged groups of students are used as measures of low quality in education (Bagger, 2017). Furthermore, assessment in mathematics functions as a gatekeeper and has a governing dispositive (Björklund, 2017). Issues of equity in the opportunity to display knowledge thereby affect children's identities in mathematics and their future prospects in mathematics and education. The identity of the disadvantaged student who is kept outside the gate, guarded by the national assessment, is connoted to gender, socio-economical and geographical background and disability. The disadvantage is also intertwined with the opportunity to display knowledge, accessibility and participation. I will discuss and elaborate on the Qual(equ)ity of national assessment in mathematics through the experience of multilingual students in the ninth grade. This concept is developed to make it possible to analyse the quality of equity and the equity in quality for disadvantaged students in national assessment in mathematics.

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13) Negotiating space — inclusive transition processes and strategies for participation in Swedish sport organizations

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A clear goal of the Swedish Sports Confederation (RF) and Parasport Sweden is that sport should be made more available for sportswomen and sportsmen with disabilities, but what is done about this in practice? The aim of the present study is to describe, examine and analyse from a norm critical perspective the process that has started in the Swedish sports movement with the aim of including sports and sportswomen and sportsmen with disabilities in different Special Sports Federations (SFs). It is thus a matter of an organisational change that in practice implies a closing-down of the Parasport Association and an inclusion of sports, sportswomen and sportsmen in SFs. A change that raises new and different demands for resource allocation, availability and new knowledge and experience flows in the sports organisation. The purpose of the present study is to reach a deeper understanding of how active association representatives at the national level conceive and understand inclusion and how they work operatively to enable a change. In a first step the purpose is to a) interview general secretaries, sports managers, chairpersons and other key persons involved in the inclusion process from eight SFs, These are: the Swedish Dance Sport Federation, the Swedish Floorball Federation, the Swedish Football Association, the Swedish Judo Federation, the Swedish Ski Association, the Swedish Athletic Association and the Swedish Table Tennis Association. At present all associations and federations are involved in the inclusion process and have been selected by Parasport Sweden. We also intend to interview RF's board. b) In addition, the purpose is to implement a content and resource analysis of strategy and policy documents regarding the inclusion process of the selected SFs. The result will form the basis of further strategic development work for increased inclusion in the Swedish sports movement. The overarching goal is that the knowledge the project contributes to will develop sports activities and make them more available for girls/women and boys/men with disabilities. The study will form the basis of a more extensive longitudinal study focusing on inclusion.

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