**Abstract**

The thesis examines refugee women’s experience of intersectional inequalities. It has its point of departure in the topical debate about equality and inequality between different groups and individuals. Following the 1998 Amsterdam Treaty, the EU and its member countries have broadened their equality perspective and committed themselves to combat discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial and ethnic origin, disability, age, religion, and sexual orientation. It is, however, clear that inequalities are still very real for people positioned in these social categories. The inequalities experienced by these groups are often structurally rooted resulting in the creation of barriers in relation to equal opportunities; i.e. access to the labour market and education, childcare, health services and equal pay.

Refugee women do not only experience inequalities relating to one social category. They experience inequalities because of their position in several categories, i.e. gender and ethnic origin as well as their status as refugees. As such, they are positioned in the ‘intersection’ of these social categories. The concept of intersectionality provides a unique perspective on the equality/inequality debate because it does not treat social categories such as women or ethnic groups as homogenous but pays attention to differences both between and within groups. That is, intersectionality suggests that people’s position in two or more social categories create unique experiences of inequalities as these categories are enmeshed and constructed by each other. Intersectionality is, thus, not the sum of the inequalities that people face but the intra-action of these.

Despite evidence of refugee women’s difficulties in obtaining equal opportunities, research shows that the women are not necessarily aware of the extent and nature of the inequalities they face. Although the women in the given research explained their absence from the labour market with childcare issues and bad health and described incidences of discrimination, they did not connect these factors to inequalities embedded in society. In light of the women’s lack of awareness of structural inequalities, it can be assumed that they are also not aware of the fact that they face inequalities that are shaped by their position in the intersection of various social categories. This is problematic since it may hinder the women in finding adequate solutions for overcoming inequalities. Subsequently, the thesis seeks to examine ‘how refugee women experience intersectional inequalities and what can be done to overcome these inequalities’.

The UK represents an interesting case for examining refugee women’s experience of intersectional inequalities both because of its long history of immigration and subsequent diverse ethnic composition and because of the country’s extensive equality framework. However, different regions in the UK have different experiences of migration and, consequently, of securing equal opportunities for e.g. refugees. Scotland only recently started to receive a constant inflow of asylum seekers and refugees when Glasgow became a main dispersal area for asylum seekers in 1999. Scotland has, therefore, had to develop new methods of integrating asylum seekers and refugees and differs from the rest of the UK in this respect, although the region is still encompassed within the UK-wide equality framework. Hence, findings of refugee women’s experience of intersectional inequalities in Glasgow may be unique to this region, but they may also suggest successful ways of overcoming such inequalities pertaining to the Scottish method of integration.

A qualitative method is adopted to examine refugee women’s experience of intersectional inequalities. Qualitative interviews with seven refugee women in Glasgow who are struggling to obtain equal opportunities form the empirical basis for the research together with one interview with a refugee woman who has succeeded in overcoming structural inequalities; the latter will be used as a reference from which possible solutions can be found. Furthermore, contextual analysis is important when conducting intersectional research as lived experiences and political and social contexts affect how inequalities are perceived. Consequently, the women’s previous experiences of equality may explain the women’s understanding of inequalities and the Scottish political and social context further adds to this understanding.

The research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the inequalities faced by refugee women in Glasgow from an intersectional perspective. Additionally, it aims to facilitate the implementation of measures better equipped to deal with intersectional inequalities and, thereby, to resolve the problems related to structural inequalities for both the society and the individual.