



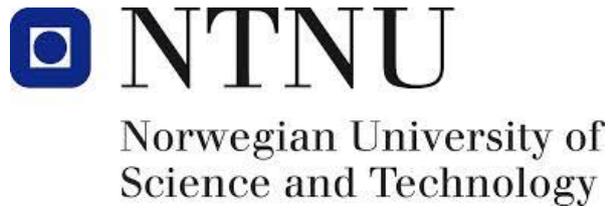
Eline Hansen Næset

When the System Falls Short

A qualitative analysis of challenges and solutions to the problem of violence against women in Norway from the perspective of public management

Master's thesis in Globalization – Global Politics and Culture

Trondheim, spring 2014



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against Women in Norway from the Perspective of Public Management

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Master of Science in Globalization – Global Politics and Culture

Thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology and Political Science

Supervisor: Tanja Ellingsen

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“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace.”

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (United Nations 1999)

Preface

This thesis marks the end of five years at NTNU, of which the last two have been devoted to a Master of Science in Globalization - Global Politics and Culture, hosted by the Department of Geography. After working on the thesis for the last five months, it is time I give recognition to those who have been of importance to me during the process and who have contributed to improving the quality of the final product. Firstly, I wish to thank Tanja Ellingsen, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Political Science, NTNU, who has been my supervisor. She has patiently witnessed me changing research topic and helped me get back on the academic track with constructive comments and valuable feedback from beginning to end.

Further, I am very grateful towards my informants. Not only did they take the time to be interviewed and thereby provide me with the basis for my analysis – they were also very forthcoming, which made the interviewing pleasant and made me feel that I was doing something useful. It was very inspirational to get an insight into the work done by the professionals and the efforts put in by the politicians. Two informants also read through the thesis and gave me some positive and helpful comments, which I greatly appreciated.

This semester had not been the same without the daily company of the lunch girls or the weekly diversions provided by Knips Consulting. Thanks also to other friends who have been cheering on me. Finally, I would like to thank my family. They have all been of support, either through encouragement and talks about the thesis or just by making me laugh in between footnotes, transcriptions and citations. So thank you; Even, Ida, Ole, mamma and pappa.

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Eline Hansen Næset

Abstract

Despite a high level of gender equality and fulfilment of women's rights and human rights in general, violence against women - particularly rape and domestic violence - remains a national public health problem in Norway. Based on theories of public management I investigate why the system of public management falls short when it comes to violence against women, and also what different societal actors suggest as solutions to the problem. The efficiency of the system depends upon its accessibility - the degree to which clients come into contact with the system and make use of the services it provides. By using qualitative data generated through interviews with politicians and professionals who work on the field, I argue that the *accessibility* of the system is low for victims of rape and domestic violence due to 1) certain *characteristics of the system*, 2) a high *threshold* between the victim and the system and 3) challenges with the *interaction* between the victim and the system. When it comes to the suggested solutions, I find that they could have a positive effect seen from the perspective of public management. The informants focus upon the importance of more cross-sectoral cooperation, the need for changing some rules, a different approach on who should be the primary client of the system, the importance of working with children and with children in mind, and improvements in attitudes, knowledge and understanding among both professionals and people in general.

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1.0 Introduction

In April 2014, Norway's Foreign Minister met in the United Nations Human Rights Council for questioning. In what was described as a paradoxical session, Norway was criticized by India for lack of implementation of women's rights related to violence against women (Kalajdzik and Svaar 2014). Considering how far Norway has come on gender equality and women's rights in general, the paradox might actually be that the Indian delegation had a point.

The background for India's criticism was the release of a report in March the same year by the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies on prevalence of violence in Norway (Thoresen and Hjemdal 2014). Numbers on violence against women, both rape and domestic violence, were described as "sensational" (negatively speaking) by the Norwegian Minister of Justice and Public Security (Sætren and Wernersen 2014). Not only did as many as 9,4% of the women report to be victims of rape and 9,2% to have experienced serious domestic violence, but the numbers of both reporting and convictions are very low, and few seek help from the system in general (Thoresen and Hjemdal 2014). The Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion commented that she was "surprised to find that the numbers on domestic violence have not declined when we have had so many plans of action and talked about this for a long time" (Sætren and Wernersen 2014, own translation). This was not the first time Norway was criticized in an international forum on the issue of violence against women. In 2012, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women gave the Norwegian government a reprimand for "insufficient efforts against gender stereotypical prejudice and violence against women" (Arntzen 2012).

Through international human and women's rights conventions, Norway is committed to combat violence against women. The country's challenge with implementing these rights is the subject of the present thesis. Approaching the problem from the angle of political science, I turn the spotlight towards the system that is put in place for that purpose, and ask: *Why does the Norwegian system of public management fall short when it comes to the issue of violence against women, and what do different societal actors suggest as solutions to this problem?* The main part of the analysis is focussed on the first research question, but I bring the discussion forward by looking at solutions suggested by actors who are involved with the

issue in different ways, and how they can be helpful from the perspective of public management.

The World Health Organization (2014b) defines violence against women as:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Rape and domestic violence are both taken into consideration¹, and the system of public management is understood widely as to include the police, the court system and more social service-related agencies, which are all a part of it (Central Bureau of Statistics of Norway 1992:13). Victims of rape and domestic violence are often referred to as clients²; people who “have the opportunity to make use of public services or could possibly be affected by them in some way or another” (Bleiklie, Jacobsen and Thorsvik 1997:302, own translation).

Background information on human rights and women’s rights internationally and in Norway is presented in chapter 2. In chapter 3 I move on to the theories that constitute the framework for the analysis. I outline theory of public management, and based on this I formulate three hypotheses on what challenges the system has on the particular topic of violence against women. In order to find out whether there is support for my hypotheses, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with politicians and with professionals who work on the issue. The choice of this qualitative method and other matters related to the research process are laid out in chapter 4. I then, in chapter 5, analyse and discuss the material generated through the interviews. In the first part of the chapter, I find that there is support for my hypotheses, and I therefore conclude that the system falls short due to low accessibility for the victim of violence. This is a result of characteristics of the way the system is organized, a potentially very high threshold between the victim and the system, and challenges with the interaction between the victim and the system. The second part of chapter 5 is where I look at the suggested means of improvement put forward by the informants. I discuss how these measures, if implemented, could improve the situation from the perspective of public management. Finally, I give some conclusive remarks.

¹ I find the issues to be so related that it makes sense to include both. See definitions in section 2.3.1.

² The choice of the word client is elaborated on in section 3.1.1

2.0 Background on the Issue

2.1 Human Rights and Women's Rights: A Short History

Proclaimed in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was the first document to award everyone basic rights; rights we have simply by the virtue of being humans (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.b). Hilary Charlesworth (1994:58) points to the fact that by the introduction of the UDHR, something previously unseen in the area of international law was provided to all citizens: “It gives individuals and groups, otherwise without access to the international legal system, the possibility of making international legal claims and thus expands the state-centred discourse of international law”. What has later happened within human rights law is often described as generational development, although this is controversial as it implies a hierarchy of rights (Charlesworth 1994:58). When referring to generations of rights, political and civil rights are considered the first generation; the second generation consists of economic, social and cultural rights; and the third of group rights and peoples' rights (Charlesworth 1994:58). The first generation has, in the eyes of Western states which have dominated international politics, been regarded as the most important ones in terms of security on the global arena. Political and civil rights are also still considered by some as the only type of rights that can be universal.

Charlesworth (1994:59) further writes that the rights and formulations within all these generations “(...) are built on typically male life experiences and in their current form do not respond to the most pressing risks women face”. As she also points out, one would think that there is no need for specifying rights especially for women when there are already rights of a universal character. However, since women have been subordinated in a structural manner and since women's human rights have been fulfilled to a smaller extent than men's, rights declarations specifically targeting women have been formulated. The downside of this has been a tendency for bodies working with universal human rights to give less attention to the application of those rights to women. In addition, the bodies created especially for taking care of women's rights are less robust in structure and “have weaker implementation obligations and procedures, the institutions designed to draft and monitor them are under-resourced and their roles [are] often circumscribed compared to other human rights bodies (...)”, states often

reserve themselves from providing such instruments and even if they try, they often fail (Charlesworth 1994:59).

A milestone in the history of women's rights was reached when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, and thereby agreed upon 30 articles describing what discrimination against women implies. Discrimination against women is defined as

(...) any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (UN Women n.d.a)

The Convention concerns equality between women and men when it comes to access and opportunities in the areas of political and public life, health, employment and education. As the only human rights treaty to do so, it states women's reproductive rights. States that have agreed to the Convention should pass legislation and if needed take other temporary measures in order to fulfil what the Convention aims at (UN Women n.d.b). The implementation is supervised by the 23 independent women's rights experts who constitute the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.a).

Another important step in the development of an international women's rights framework was the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, throughout which women's rights are emphasized several places. It is here exemplified by point 18 in section 1:

The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women [in all aspects of life at all levels] and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community. Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation (...) are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated. (...) The human rights of women should form an integral part of the United Nations human rights activities, including the promotion of all human rights instruments relating to women (...). (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1993)

A world conference on women in 1995 resulted in what was named the Beijing Platform for Action (UN Women n.d.a). This was the fourth world conference on women after previous ones were held in 1975 (Mexico), 1980 (Copenhagen) and 1985 (Nairobi). The Beijing Platform for Action presented strategies for how to improve women's rights in the areas of women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl-child (UN Women 1995). The platform has been reviewed every fifth year after its initiation (UN Women n.d.a).

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, the Beijing Platform for Action and other international agreements are the result of “many hard years of feminist struggle all over the world” (Adeleye-Fayemi 2004:44), and provide states with a solid framework for what to aim for in terms of women's rights.

2.2 Women's Rights in Norway

Now that the international legal framework has been laid out, it is time to look at women's rights in Norway. The first section is about the historical developments on the field, with a focus on what has been the main causes forfeited by women's rights activists through the years. In order to limit the scope of it, the overview starts in 1814, the year Norway got its own constitution.

2.2.1 Historic Development

In the Norwegian constitution of 1814, the right to vote was provided only to men of certain groups who were in possession of a certain amount of property and fortune (Østerud 2007). One of the first causes of the fight for women's rights was therefore political; to enhance women's possibility to indirectly influence their own lives by securing them the right to vote. Although women's suffrage was discussed already in 1814, it was when the parliamentary system emerged and political parties and the women's movement were organised during the last decades of the 19th century that it was really put on the agenda (Danielsen, Larsen and Owesen 2013:20). Opinions were expressed that women's nature made them unfit for politics, and it was even proposed that suffrage would make them infertile. Someone said that it could

lead to “disturbance of the home, the successive dissolution of family life, and thus the inevitable fall of morals” (Danielsen et al. 2013:161, own translation). Still, by 1913 there were enough societal voices in favour of it, and also political voices, as women’s suffrage was unanimously passed in the Storting (Agerholt 1973:231). The fact that priests and others started interpreting the Bible in new ways meant that the Christian population no longer considered women’s political participation to go against the word of God – a vital change considering the role of Christianity in the population at the time (Danielsen et al. 2013:215).

After the 1913 breakthrough, what followed in the next decades up until 1960 may be seen as a surprise. There was relatively little activity within the women's movement between 1920 and 1970 (Hellesund 2013:64), and this was a period when women were generally expected to take the role of housewives and mothers. Gender equality at that time meant that men and women had separate tasks in society, but that their tasks should be regarded as equally valuable (Danielsen et al. 2013:219). Despite improvements in the legal framework for women’s rights in this period, giving women formally the right to access educational institutions and to perform most types of work (Agerholt 1973), considerably few women used these rights.

A problem with the housewife system was that women were made economically dependent upon their husbands and generally economically inferior to men. The women who stayed at home had to get money from their husbands, which was not necessarily unproblematic. Those who worked outside the home were faced with lower salaries than their male colleagues (Danielsen et al. 2013:228). The Norwegian Labour movement was a strong political and social force from the 1920s, and their political thoughts and actions were shaped in favour of men in paid labour. The goal of their gender policies was to “relieve” women of the burden of doing paid labour in addition to their tasks at home; giving them the opportunity to be housewives was progress (Danielsen et al. 2013:221). Also, due to the economic troubles in the 1920s and -30s, the Labour movement decided that paid positions should be separated between families. This meant that women were expected to give up their job to unemployed men from other families; a policy which lasted until 1937 (Lønnå 2014).

The period between 1960 and 1990 may be called the long 70s, as social and political developments on the field of women’s rights that are considered products of the 1970s often were initiated in the 1960s and implemented in the 1980s and -90s (Danielsen et al.

2013:275). Labelling the position as housewife a prison, the new women's rights movement fought for women to be "liberated and independent", and for women and men to have "equal opportunity to participate in family life and society" (Danielsen et al. 2013:277). Laws limiting women's opportunities and treating the genders differently were changed or abolished, and in 1972, a Gender Equality Council³ was established as a guide in the area of women's rights. The Gender Equality Act⁴ was passed in 1978 and the Ombudsman for Equality was established at the same time to make sure the law was followed (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2008). Around this time, domestic violence was put on the public agenda by women's rights activists. They initiated an emergency hotline for victims of domestic violence, and in 1978 the first shelter was opened in Oslo (Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion 2013).

As opposed to the previous decades, the Labour Party now wanted women out in the workforce, and many policies were implemented in order to achieve this. Kindergartens were built, single providers were given economic support, people with young children got the opportunity to have more flexible or shorter working hours and you could stay at home from work if children were ill. Furthermore, information on contraception was made more available in what was to become a society where sexual topics were discussed more freely, and women were given more control over their own bodies when the law of abortion was passed (Danielsen et al. 2013:284).

A common slogan for the feminists in Norway and internationally at the time was *the personal is political* (Danielsen 2013a:7). They talked about family affairs and the relationship between men and women as a matter of politics, and used expressions like systemic oppression, force and patriarchy, and "the women's movement made the private public by addressing problems related to the role of women, what lives women were expected to live, what attributes they should have" (Danielsen et al. 2013:294). From the 1970s to the 1980s, there was a change of rhetoric as *freedom* and *the freedom to choose* replaced *equality* as the expressed goal (Danielsen et al. 2013:326).

³ Norwegian: Likestillingsrådet.

⁴ Norwegian: Likestillingsloven.

The work done in the long 70s paid off. In the labour market, the female share of the workforce increased greatly. The same goes for women in politics. The first female Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, came into office in 1981 (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2008). The term *state feminism* has been employed to describe the development that has followed the entry of women into public and political management and how the state has become more “woman-friendly” (Hernes 1987:136). State feminism is “the implementation of gender equality through policy measures (...)”, and is connected with quotas and positive discrimination in employment processes (Hernes 1987:24). With state feminism, Norway has been transformed into one of the most gender egalitarian countries the last couple of decades (Danielsen et al. 2013:331; Schwab et al. 2013). The share of women in politics, working life and educational institutions is high, along with women's life expectancy and access to health service (Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion 2013).

2.2.2 Norway and International Human and Women's Rights Conventions

Through the Human Rights Law; the European Human Rights Convention (1950), the United Nations Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) are all incorporated into Norwegian law (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2013:5). These international conventions have precedence over other laws if there should be a conflict between them (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2013:5).

Despite this, it must be added that the United Nations CEDAW has criticized Norway on many points related to violence against women (Arntzen 2012). Among other things, concerns have been expressed on lack of knowledge of international conventions on the topic among high-level decision makers, lack of knowledge of the issue in general among people who work in the court system, lack of consciousness-raising about criminalization of intimate partner violence, that the penal code on rape is not in accordance with international human rights standards, and the high number of unprosecuted cases and mild sentencing of perpetrators in cases of rape and domestic violence (Arntzen 2012).

2.3 Violence against Women as a Matter of Human and Women's Rights

2.3.1 Conceptual and Legal Definitions

Violence can take many forms, as the World Health Organization (WHO) accounts for in their definitions. Violence is said to be

(...) the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation. (World Health Organization 2014a)

Violence against women is, as presented in the introduction, considered as

(...) any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (World Health Organization 2014b)

When it comes to types of violence against women, intimate partner violence and sexual violence are emphasized as the two most prevalent issues, and as “major public health problems” (World Health Organization 2013).

So on a more specific note, intimate partner violence is defined as

(...) any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship. It includes acts of physical aggression (slapping, hitting, kicking or beating), psychological abuse (intimidation, constant belittling or humiliation), forced sexual intercourse or any other controlling behaviour (isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements and restricting access to information or assistance). (World Health Organization 2006:1)

In the recently published report by Hjemdal and Thoresen (2014) referred to above, the researchers have chosen to focus upon violence of a physical, sexual and psychological character performed by family, partner and other actors. Concerning what can be called domestic or intimate partner violence⁵, the authors state that they have tried to portray the complex reality of who is victimized and who is performing the violence, and the relationship

⁵ These terms will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

between these.

Beside domestic violence, rape is the other type of violence against women that is in focus in the present thesis. In the Norwegian penal code §192, rape is defined as

(...) obtaining sexual intercourse by use of violence or threatening behaviour, or having sexual intercourse with someone who is unconscious or for other reasons unable to put up resistance, or by violence or threats make someone have sexual intercourse with someone else, or to perform equivalent actions to oneself. (Hjemdal, Thoresen and Holth 2014:32, own translation)

An issue brought up in the plan of action against rape from 2012⁶ is the fact that as opposed to how rape is defined in some other European countries, and how it is defined according to the European Council's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Kaatee 2014), lack of consent is not sufficient for an incident to be defined as rape in Norway. This has been discussed several times (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2012:27), and Norway has – as mentioned earlier – been encouraged by the UN CEDAW and the UN Committee against Torture, alongside human rights organizations in Norway, to change the penal code (Amnesty International 2013).

2.3.2 Support in International Framework

Although domestic violence for a long time has received relatively little attention by organizations working for human rights (Roth 1994:327), there is no doubt that international human and women's rights conventions include articles that cover those kinds of crimes. Violence against women is mentioned in many of the conventions presented above. Kenneth Roth (1994:327) refers to Article 7 and 9(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which say respectively that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment” and “everyone has the right to (...) security of person”. Both articles are violated in the case of rape or domestic violence.

Also the Norwegian institution Krisesenteret (shelter for victims of domestic violence) argues that violence against women is a violation of human rights. They list human rights stated in international conventions that should protect women from such treatment:

⁶ This plan will be outlined in section 2.4.1.

- a) The right to life
- b) The right to equality
- c) The right to freedom and personal safety
- d) The right to equal protection by law
- e) The right to be free from all types of discrimination
- f) The right to the highest possible standard of physical and mental health
- g) The right to fair and favourable working conditions
- h) The right not to be subjected to torture or to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (Krisesenteret n.d.)

If a woman is raped or is a victim of violence of some other kind, these rights are not upheld, and hence violence against women is a matter of human and women's rights.

2.4 Rape and Domestic Violence against Women in Norway

2.4.1 What Has Been Done?

There have indeed been political initiatives on violence against women in the last one and a half decade, in order to make sure that we follow the international obligations outlined above. Most of the plans have focussed upon domestic violence.

Plans of Action on Domestic Violence

In 1999, the government presented the plan of action "Violence against Women", which laid out strategies to combat domestic violence (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 1999). The importance of collaboration between different institutions that work on various aspects of the problem was emphasized, and the plan was developed with input from various actors with experience from the field of concern. One step was to give the Ministry of Justice and Public Security a lead role, under the supervision of somebody with a particular responsibility for this work. Representatives from different ministries were to be gathered in order to coordinate the work of each of them. Further, the plan included other institutions like municipalities, the police, research institutions and shelters for victims of domestic violence (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 1999).

The Plan of Action from 1999 was followed by a new one in 2004. Its main points were that

- 1) The ability to cooperate between different actors in the system should be increased, along with their knowledge.

- 2) Violence in close relationships should be made more visible and prevented through a change of attitudes.
- 3) Victims of violence in close relationships should be sure to get the necessary support and protection.
- 4) The spiral of violence should be broken by means of a strengthening of the treatment services offered to perpetrators. (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2004)

“Turning Point”⁷ was the name of the plan of action for violence against women released in 2008. Seven main goals were expressed, of which five were taken from the last plan.⁸ The new additions to the plan were the following:

- 1) Victims should be offered to meet the abuser in facilitated circumstances.
- 2) Research and development work should be initiated. (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2008)

On the international women's day, 8th of March 2013, the Stoltenberg II government's white paper on prevention and combat of domestic violence⁹ was accepted in the Ministry. It contained background information like data on the extent of the problem, and presented a rather thorough discussion of important measures to be taken in the next years. The main areas of focus were the following:

- 1) Knowledge and prevention, with emphasis on reaching out to everyone.
- 2) Having holistic assistance programmes that are adjusted to each individual.
- 3) The health system.
- 4) Assistance programmes for those who use violence.
- 5) The police and the legal system.
- 6) Cooperation and coordination. (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2013b)

Their white paper was followed by a plan of action, which was developed with the white paper as a guiding tool. It differed from previous plans of action in that it suggested more focus on preventive work and had a section on the legal perspective in cases of domestic violence (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2013a).

⁷ Norwegian: Vendepunkt

⁸ Goal 2 from 2004 was separated into two in 2008: Violence in close relationships should be made visible and violence in close relationships should be prevented through a change in attitudes.

⁹ Full title in Norwegian: Forebygging og bekjempelse av vold i nære relasjoner. Det handler om å leve.

Plan of Action on Rape

The plans above concern domestic violence. There have been fewer initiatives of this kind on the problem of rape, but a plan of action against rape was released by the Ministry of Justice in 2012. It contained strategies for what to do the next two years when it comes to preventive work, assistance to victims, investigation and treatment in the court system, facilitated dialogue between victims and offenders and cooperation between the different societal actors who work on it (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2012). It was noted that Norway is committed through international conventions, and the United Nations Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is stated to be “the most important instrument for the protection of women's rights in Norway” (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2012:8). This shows that international conventions are considered to be of high relevance for those who work for national implementation of women's rights.

2.4.2 Violence against Women – A National Public Health Problem

As stated by the World Health Organization (2002:89), “intimate partner violence occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural group”, and despite the efforts put in and the plans that have been developed, rape and domestic violence remain a national public health problem in Norway too. In early March 2014, Norwegian Centre on Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies¹⁰ (NKVTS) released a national survey on violence and rape in Norway. The report, edited by Siri Thoresen and Ole Kristian Hjemdal, revealed numbers showing that a significant part of the Norwegian population are victims of violence and sexual abuse, and that women constitute the most frequently victimized group. It is emphasized that this is a serious problem and goes against both Norwegian law and basic human rights (Thoresen and Hjemdal 2014:13).

When it comes to domestic (partner) violence, 9.2% of the women in the survey said that they have experienced a serious form of this, and 20.7% of them that they have experienced partner violence of any degree of severity (Thoresen, Hjemdal and Myhre 2014:119/120). The researchers further present that 9.4% of the female respondents reported to be victims of rape (Thoresen et al. 2014:106). In 86% of the cases, the rapist was someone the victim knew already, and most times this was a friend, colleague, neighbour or acquaintance. The second largest group of assailants was partners and ex-partners (Thoresen et al. 2014:107). Girls in

¹⁰ Norwegian: Nasjonalt kunnskapssenter om vold og traumatisk stress.

their late teens and early twenties constitute the most vulnerable demographic group, and Thoresen et al.'s findings are supported by different studies which find that between 50 and 60% of rape victims are young women (Kruse, Strandmoen and Skjørten 2013:43). Almost a third of the female rape victims had never told anyone about it (Thoresen et al. 2014:106). Only 10% of the female rape victims said that they had reported the incident to the police, and the amount of women who had sought medical help in close proximity to the event was also 10% (Thoresen et al. 2014:122). Of those who reported the rape to the police, 3.5% of the women had seen the perpetrator be convicted (Thoresen et al. 2014:101)¹¹. As Vigrestad (2004:10) points out, low numbers of conviction signals to society that those who rape are very likely to get away with it, and that the court system is not capable of dealing with these types of cases.

The experience of victims of rape and domestic violence in Norway has been documented through research within various disciplines. In 1995, the Norwegian journalist Gunnar Ringheim published the book "Hysterical Women. When women report violence". Asking why so few women report rapes, he used the stories told by 17 victims as the basis to show how distrust and negative experiences characterize the relationship between the women and the police. They did not feel taken care of, and told him that they would not want to go through the process again if they should experience the same later in life. Anne Iren Vigrestad (2004), referred to above, wrote her graduate thesis in criminology on rape victims' meeting with the court system. Through interviews with victims who reported the incidents she detected weaknesses in how the system is constructed and how victims are met by the different actors that make up the system.

Unfortunately, there are no comparable statistics on prevalence of violence against women in Norway and the rest of the world.¹² Hjemdal, Thoresen and Holth (2014) still refer to some studies from abroad in order to give a certain groundwork for comparison. Looking at the world as a whole, the differences are large. In an international study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) on violence against women in 48 countries, between 10% and

¹¹ The percentage of male rape victims is in the same study reported to be 1.1%. As the focus of this paper is women's rights, rape against men will not be discussed, but this is not at all to say that it should not be taken seriously. Also, it should be added that there is a chance that taboos and shame lead to a high degree of under-reporting by male victims (Kruse, Strandmoen and Skjørten 2013:44).

¹² As data can only be compared if the same questions have been asked the samples in different countries, Norway would need to be a part of European studies on this, but as we stand outside the European Union, this is not the case.

69% of the women reported to have been exposed to physical violence by their partner (World Health Organization 2002:89). Keeping in mind the methodological challenges of comparing these numbers, the prevalence of around 20% in Norway, as referred to above, places us far below the worst cases but still not as far down as one might expect.

If we want to compare Norway to other countries, it is more useful to look at countries with similar cultures and women's rights situations. In a European context, Norway has been found to be in the lower part of the list if we look at conviction rates when it comes to rape, and also to be one of the countries where the average number of years that rape perpetrators are sentenced to is the lowest (Kelly and Regan 2001:23 and 19). Further, in the Danish participation in the International Violence against Women Survey 2003, 9% of the women reported to be victims of rape (Balgvig and Kyvsgaard 2003 in Hjemdal et al. 2014:38). A study from the Netherlands concluded that 5% of Dutch women have experienced rape as adults (de Vries & Olf 2009 in Hjemdal et al. 2014:38). Through the National Women Study carried out in the USA, a 13% lifetime prevalence of rape has been detected among adult women (Hjemdal et al. 2014:37). These numbers indicate that the situation in Norway is quite “normal” for countries it is natural to compare with. At the same time, Norway ranks higher (number three) in the Global Gender Gap Index Ranking for 2013 than both Denmark (number eight), the Netherlands (number 13) and the USA (number 23) (Schwab 2013:8), and one could therefore expect the state to perform better at this issue as well, which is not the case.

3.0 Theoretical framework: Public Management and the Clients

In the last chapter I outlined challenges in Norway on the issue of violence against women. Fundamentally speaking, this is a matter of the state's sovereignty, the degree to which the state has "the ability to carry out actions or policies within a territory independently from external actors or internal rivals" (O'Neil 2010:22). Max Weber defines a state as "the organization that maintains a monopoly of violence over a territory" (O'Neil 2010:22), which illustrates that military security is considered one of the most, not to say *the* most, essential aspect of a state. A state apparatus ideally consists of more than a military apparatus; it is made up of institutions that develop policies and take care of "laws and regulations, property rights, health and labour, environment and transportation" (O'Neil 2010:23). This is the system of public management. International conventions like those ratified by the United Nations are created in order to make sure that the security of the member states' populations is taken care of. Security is then defined broadly, as in feminism, where it can be defined as "the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, economic, and ecological" (Tickner 2008:270).

Interestingly, although Norway is a well-functioning democracy in which the state is able to fulfil both basic and less basic tasks (Malik 2013), the problem which is discussed here in fact concerns the most basic function; protecting the security of the inhabitants, and the most basic aspect of sovereignty; monopoly of violence. Despite Norway's high degree of internal sovereignty, the state struggles when it comes to protecting the rights of women who experience rape or domestic violence. In this case, therefore, internal challenges outweigh international obligations, and it is the victims of violence who have to pay the price.

A central term within theories on the relationship between the system of public management and the clients is accessibility. Accessibility can be defined as the degree to which, and how, clients come into contact with public management and get access to the goods¹³ it distributes (Bleiklie, Jacobsen and Thorsvik 1997:307). The state's ability to do something about the problem depends upon this accessibility. There is no use in the institutions that offer service to those who are affected if the service does not reach or help them.

¹³ *Goods* is understood widely as any type of service the state provides and that the inhabitants may make use of.

Accessibility is determined by three main factors; 1) the system of distribution, 2) the clients, and 3) the interaction between the clients and the system (Bleiklie et al. 1997:304). Thus the three main pillars of the theoretical groundwork, which form the basis of the hypotheses, are the following: Characteristics of the system, characteristics of the client's situation, and challenges with the interaction between the client and the system. Before elaborating on these, I define terms that will be used throughout the rest of the thesis.

3.1 Defining Central Theoretical Terms

3.1.1 Users or Clients?

Firstly, a choice must be made on what word to use about women who are victims of rape or domestic violence in their relationship to the system of public management. *Users* and *clients* are the most relevant options. Rønning and Solheim (1998:21) define a user in this field very broadly as “someone who makes use of a public service”. They state that this definition is useful if the main task of the public management system is considered to be provision of services that the people need and want. A client can be defined as “someone who seeks assistance from a lawyer, doctor, social worker, etc.” (Klient 2010). In theory of public management, clients are defined as those “who have the opportunity to make use of public services or could possibly be affected by them in some way or another” (Bleiklie, Jacobsen and Thorsvik 1997:302, own translation).

According to Rønning and Solheim (1998:22), the word *client* brings more negative connotations to mind than *user* does. Although I see how client can be negatively perceived, I disagree with their claim, and personally I find that in the context of public management the word *user's* closeness to *abuser* brings more negative associations to mind. Also, whereas a user sounds like a person who picks and chooses among different services after his or her own needs, a client sounds more like a person who interacts dynamically with someone who has a say in deciding the outcome of the meeting. As I regard the latter description to be closest to reality, the word client will be used most frequently. Here, the clients in question are women who are victims of rape or domestic violence and who potentially could make use of the system to get support of some kind. This could for example be shelters, the police or the court system.

3.1.2 Potential Clients versus Actual Clients

Looking at the term client, there are some sub-denominations that should be defined. One is the difference between *potential* and *actual* clients, where potential clients are people who theoretically could make use of a service, whereas the actual clients are those who in fact do so (Bleiklie et al. 1997:303). This distinction is highly relevant in the current thesis, as one aspect of the challenge in Norway is that many women who are victims of violence remain potential clients rather than becoming actual clients.

3.1.3 Direct/Primary Clients versus Indirect/Secondary Clients

Another distinction can be made between direct and indirect clients. In a direct client-system relationship, someone is officially defined as a client of a service. In an indirect client-system relationship, someone indirectly makes use of or is affected by a service without officially being regarded as a client (Bleiklie et al. 1997:303). Rønning and Solheim (1998:28) make a similar distinction, but call them primary and secondary users. They state that the service could actually be shaped according to the needs of the secondary user. In the current thesis, the terms primary and secondary clients are employed instead, for reasons outlined above. When it comes to domestic violence, for example, children could be considered indirect or secondary clients if their mother makes use of a service.

3.2 Characteristics of the System

3.2.1 The Ideals of Bureaucracy

The most famous account of modern bureaucracy must be the one offered by Max Weber (1978). Modern bureaucracy is, according to him, characterized by the following:

1. The different parts of the system have official “jurisdictional areas” set by “laws or administrative regulations”.
 2. The system is separated into hierarchically organized offices and “channels of appeal”.
 3. Written documents are preserved and form the basis of office management.
 4. Offices are usually run by officials with specialized training.
 5. The official devotes his or her full working capacity to the office.
 6. The office is run on “more or less stable, more or less exhaustive” rules that the officials learn.
- (Weber 1978:958)

In addition to describing characteristics of how public management is organized, Weber (1978:973) discusses the “technical superiority” of the system as compared to previous arrangements, which is a result of the way the system is organized. My assumption is that some of the points he lists are not as ideal when it comes to the issue at hand in the current thesis.

As violence against women is a very complex issue, I expect the two first points on Weber's list to cause some trouble in this context. Violence against women may demand more cooperation between offices than the current organization facilitates. The third point, about having written documents as the basis, is connected with the hierarchical organization, and I suspect that this kind of organization could have a negative effect on the pace of the implementation of plans.

The fourth characteristic, specialization, is also related to the point on jurisdictional areas, but is discussed separately because I am more concerned with specialization on the individual level rather than the systemic level in the analysis. Here, one could expect to find that there is too much specialization among those who work in the system, and that this has a negative effect on their ability to deal with these types of cases. There could also be a wrong kind of specialization, so the point on this characteristic is formulated less decisively in the hypothesis below.

I do not expect point 5 to have any negative influence on the issue, and that point is thus excluded. The sixth characteristic, on the other hand, I expect to be problematic if the rules were not made with these types of cases in mind, and that as the rules are quite stable, it could be difficult to change them into more suitable ones.

3.2.2 Standardization

In the meeting with potential clients, civil servants reduce the complexity of cases in order to process them more efficiently. Michael Lipsky (2010) has described this phenomenon. Current cases are treated with the experience from previous cases in mind. Generalizations are made, and there is less room for exceptions and divergence. What Lipsky (2010:83) emphasizes is that the implication of such a way of working is that street-level bureaucrats in fact shape policy. There is room for manoeuvring within the framework set by national or local authorities, and the result is that the civil servants are left with the power to control what

the policies ultimately imply. I imagine that employees in the system of public management work with many types of cases that together create their frame of reference, but that this frame of reference not necessarily fits cases on violence against women.

Bleiklie et al. (1997) describe two main branches concerning the meeting between people and the public management system. One of the perspectives is connected to the characteristics of public management laid out by Lipsky (2010) and presented above. Equal treatment of clients and strict adherence to rules is problematic because there is no room for exceptions. As characteristics of each case are reduced to fit into the “normal”, and earlier cases are used as templates, the particular is lost into generalizations. In the other perspective it is stated that there is room for exceptions, but that this is played out differently depending on who the client is and which part of the system she is in contact with. The cases of the most disadvantaged clients are dealt with in the lower parts of the public management system, which is where the space of manoeuvring is the smallest, and where the room for making exceptions and adjusting to the particularities of each case is the least. The second perspective therefore differs from the first one in that it does not consider the system to offer equal treatment to all clients. What the two branches have in common, on the other hand, is that they consider the system of public management to favour the most advantaged in society (Bleiklie et al. 1997:306). I expect to find that characteristics of the problem of concern in the current thesis make the clients, women who are victims of violence, disadvantaged in this context.

3.2.3 Hypothesis 1

From the theory above, I formulate a hypothesis with three branches of characteristics that I find to be closely related. The first branch is called *the fragmented and hierarchical structure*, and is a combination of Weber’s three first characteristics; the separation of jurisdictional areas, the hierarchical structure and written documents as the basis for organization. The second branch is called *the lack of flexibility* and concerns Weber’s sixth point, on the stable rules of the system, and the standardization described by Lipsky. The third and last branch is called *issues of specialization* and is based on Weber’s fourth characteristic. This is my assumption:

For women who are victims of violence, the accessibility of the system of public management is low as a result of the following characteristics of the system:

- a) The fragmented and hierarchical structure*
- b) Lack of flexibility*
- c) Issues of specialization*

3.3 Threshold

From looking at the system itself, I now move on to the victim of violence. It was stated by Bleiklie et al. (1997) that one of the factors deciding the accessibility of the system is the client herself. Here, this is taken to mean the various characteristics of the situation the client finds herself in, which decide whether or not she contacts the system. This – crossing the gateway – is the first step in a potential client's process towards becoming an actual client (Schaffer and Huang 1975). The gateway, from now on called a threshold, is thus used as one of the indications of accessibility in the present thesis.

The transition from being a potential client to becoming an actual client would, in a perfect administrative system of distribution, be “unproblematic” (Bleiklie et al. 1997:316). However, the threshold that stands between – especially the disadvantaged – potential clients and the system of public management has been identified in many fields of research, from sociology of law to social medicine, general sociology and political science (Bleiklie et al. 1997:316). Two main requirements must be fulfilled in order for the client to pass the threshold.

3.3.1 Realise Own Need and that the System Can Help

The first condition for the client to pass the threshold is that the client “realises that he or she has a need and knows that the public management system can help him or her out with it” (Bleiklie et al. 1997:314, own translation). In their summary of challenges related to threshold, Bleiklie et al. (1997:317) state that the information about a service and the potential clients' familiarity with this information may not be in sync. The clients may be unaware of the service, or be aware of the service but not that they themselves are eligible to make use of it. To add to the problem, the more disadvantaged someone is in the first place, the bigger is the need for themselves to take an initiative in order to get hold of the information they need, and consequently be able to make use of the service. In this thesis, such a barrier could for example imply that the woman is unaware that what she has experienced is in fact violence. Alternatively, she could perceive it as violence herself, but be uncertain whether the system does so.

3.3.2 Fight Barriers

The second condition that must be met for the client to pass the threshold is that she “fights the physical and social barriers and gets to the support system” (Bleiklie et al. 1997:314, own translation). Theories and previous research identify potential factors standing in the way of this.

One of those who have written about threshold is Barbara Nelson, and a perspective she offers is that status can play a role in whether someone chooses to contact the system. She points out that if someone chooses to take the step from being a potential client to an actual client of a social service, this is likely to bring about “a fairly durable status”, a status which is below their current one (Nelson 1980:178). Naturally, then, the decision will be difficult to make. I expect such considerations to affect the decision-making of victims of violence.

Further, shame is a factor that could influence the decision of a victim of violence on whether to seek help from the system or not. Potential clients might perceive it as stigmatizing to apply for or receive public support (Bleiklie et al. 1997:317), and if they are ashamed of the issue they need help for, they may choose not to do it, in order to avoid such stigmatization. Shame is therefore something I expect to be relevant for my research question.

Moreover, those who have information about a service and consider whether to try to make use of it may have negative expectations of it (Bleiklie et al. 1997:317). They may, as a result of perceived attitudes among other people or of their own previous experience with the system “not expect to get help” or “perceive the application processes and the interaction with civil servants as difficult and uncomfortable” (Bleiklie et al. 1997:317). Based on how I have seen cases about violence against women (especially cases about rape) are being portrayed in the media – where we often hear about perpetrators who are not convicted and cases that are dropped – I imagine that women who consider whether or not to report rape might have negative expectations of what will happen if they do.

Another potentially relevant factor in the problem with violence against women in Norway is incrimination. According to Rønning and Solheim (1998:13), clients of the public management system often experience incrimination by the people they interact with. As the authors point out, this is particularly damaging in the kinds of situations that this concerns,

since the clients tend to come to the system of public management when they are going through a crisis and are more vulnerable than usual. Whether the issue they need help with is of an economic, social or psychological character, being met with suspicion might leave them worse off than when they came, and “it will be misleading to use the word help [social service]” in such a case (Rønning and Solheim 1998:14, own translation). Rønning (2005) refers to the same phenomenon, and describes many clients' meeting with the system as characterized by humiliation and lack of dignity. I expect to find indications of such incrimination in my study.

Related to this, Valkenburg (2007:31) describes a shift in mindset among people in what thoughts they have on why people need help from the state, and writes that “unemployment and related problems are no longer regarded as a consequence of social and economic developments (blaming the system), but as a consequence of the actions of the individual citizen (blaming the victim)”. The individualization he discusses includes that “the welfare state turns into a distrusting welfare state permanently screening individual benefit claimants for the extent to which they are assuming responsibility for their lives” (Valkenburg 2007:31). Here, it could for example be that women are criticised for staying with an abusive husband.

Finally, it is noteworthy to add that not only the victim herself, but also actors around her have an effect on whether she moves from being a potential client to an actual client. Rønning and Solheim (1998:26) name “national political authorities, local political bodies, civil servants and professionals, relatives and friends and the applicant him/herself” as actors with influence. The role of political and professional actors is mentioned elsewhere in the analysis, so in the section about other people's influence on the threshold, I focus upon the role of friends and relatives.

3.3.3 Hypothesis 2

The theory on threshold results in the following hypothesis:

For women who are victims of violence, the accessibility of the system of public management is low due to a high threshold between the victim and the system resulting from

- a) the victim not realising her own need or that the system can help, and*
- b) physical and social barriers.*

3.4 Interaction

From discussing the system itself and the threshold between the potential client and the system, I now move on to the interaction that happens between the client and the system. The section is separated into one part on interaction on the individual level; interaction between a client and professionals, and interaction on the systemic level. In the latter, the focus is upon prioritization – prioritization within agencies and political prioritization and influence.

3.4.1 Interaction on the Individual Level

In order to make use of a service, the client has got to meet the officials who work on her case, referred to by Schaffer and Huang (1975:23) as “the counter”. This might involve challenges with the interaction between the client and the people working in the system.

Universal, Emotionally Neutral Treatment?

The ideals of the type of bureaucracy that Max Weber describes are summed up by Katz and Danet (1973:14) as a universal handling of cases and a client-civil servant relationship characterized by emotional neutrality. I would assume that when the issue is as sensitive as this is, complete emotional neutrality is not necessarily the best way of dealing with clients. Of course, civil servants do not necessarily act with emotional neutrality just because Weber described it as the ideal. Still, I would not be surprised to find that those who work on these cases lack sufficient understanding of how it feels to be in the client's position, and that this could have a negative effect on the quality of the service.

Expectations of the Interaction

In a perfect administrative system of distribution, as described by Schaffer and Huang (1975), there is no discrepancy between what the involved parties expect. However, problems might appear because of insecurity related to rules for prioritization and eligibility, the rules on who is allowed to take part in the interaction, and on the degree to which each participant in the interaction is supposed to be actively engaged in the process. When it comes to the second point, on the involved parties, Bleiklie et al. (1997:321) mention doctors as a type of actors that could potentially intervene on behalf of the client and be of decisive influence. In the analysis, I focus upon differences in what the clients believe is expected from them and what the ones who work in the system actually expect, and on the discrepancy between what

outcome the clients expect from the interaction and what the ones they are in contact with expect.

Get Accepted as Eligible

A condition that must be fulfilled in order for a client to make use of a service is that he or she “presents his or her case in a way that gets him or her to be accepted as eligible” (Bleiklie et al. 1997:314, own translation; Schaffer and Huang 1975). This happens during the interaction between the client and the system. It is not sufficient that she actually has been exposed to violence, her own presentation of the matter plays a role as well. When it comes to violence against women, this is particularly important in cases where physical evidence is lacking. I therefore expect to find such interaction challenges to be of relevance.

3.4.2 Interaction on the Systemic Level

Another side of the relationship between the victim and the system is the interaction that happens on the level of agencies and politicians and that concerns whether the issue is prioritized within agencies and by politicians.

Prioritization within Agencies

The civil servants who consider whether someone is eligible may have strategies in order to avoid clients they consider unfit to receive social support, or to protect themselves from pressure arising from a large amount of clients (Bleiklie et al. 1997:318). This kind of prioritization within agencies can result in cases being dismissed because of perceived difficulties or unsuitability. Problems of prioritization could be related to how applications are assessed, to the fact that the service might be limited and that there is not room for all potential clients to become actual clients, or to a situation where the service is completely or partly run by someone else but the state. The underlying issue of all these prioritization problems is that “the judgement of the civil servants and the clients' resources and activity might affect the prioritization outcome” (Bleiklie et al. 1997:319). The factors emphasized by the civil servants will in cases like this be decisive. As Bleiklie et al. (1997:319) write, a third party may intervene on behalf of the potential client and affect the outcome to the clients' advantage.

Relating this theory to the topic of interest in the present thesis, I suspect that if I find that the system has a problem with handling cases like this, this could also cause those who work in the system to give them less priority.

Political Prioritization and Political Influence

The theory presented above concerns the meeting between the client and the system. Other questions concern whether or not the problem is prioritized by politicians and those who work in the system, and the degree to which clients influence the policies that are formulated and carried out.

Bleiklie et al. (1997:321-322) describe two ways of looking at the process that determines the outcome of this. One perspective is that traditionally, the opportunity to shape the content of policies has been left to civil servants and experts rather than to those who make use of the services. Later adjustments have then been aimed at improving the clients' ability to make themselves fit into the system, rather than changing the system to fit the clients. The second perspective, forfeited by the authors themselves, is that the policies to a greater extent are shaped by a wider range of actors that interact over a longer period of time. They do emphasize, however, that different groups in society will have different amounts of influence on how the policies turn out, depending on whether they speak out or not, and how loudly they do so. Resources and knowledge are key words in this regard (Bleiklie et al. 1997:322). I suspect women who are victims of violence to be a group that to a small extent affect policy development.

Resources and knowledge have already been mentioned as vital in the process of influencing policy making, but three additional factors need to be in place if a group of clients wish to influence public policy:

1. They must participate or be represented in *channels of participation* that offer actual opportunities to affect the final content of the service.
2. They must participate or be represented in the *phases of decision making* that offer actual opportunities to affect the final content of the service.
3. They must participate or be represented *as clients* or *as representatives of clients*. (Bleiklie et al. 1997:324, own translation and emphasize)

As the numbers are as high as they are, I do not doubt that someone in both channels of participation and phases of decision making are victims of violence, but I expect the third point to be the most challenging on this issue.

Bleiklie et al. (1997) list other conditions that should be present, including that

- there must be organizations that represent their interests,
- those organizations must be included in decision-making processes,
- actors in the system of public management must share the interests of the client group, and it is an advantage if they are supported by a group of professionals who are more concerned with the well-being of the clients than of security, predictability and control, and
- the part of the system of public management that the client group interacts with must deliver, not receive, policies. They must have the power to shape policies, and not just pass on policies that someone higher up in the system has developed. (Bleiklie et al. 1997:325)

I expect that issues mentioned above in relation to threshold, like shame and status, can cause problems also when it comes to political representation and influence on the issue of violence against women.

The expression “political poverty” should be mentioned in this connection. When the Norwegian political scientist Knut Dahl Jacobsen introduced the concept in 1967, he emphasized the importance of knowledge and other resources in the relationship between clients and the system of public management. He stated that political issues “as a result of social interaction affect and are affected by political action and the distribution of political influence in society” (Dahl 1967:8, own translation). This implies that everyone will not be equally influential in politics, and that the access people have to what the system of public management offers is not given, but rather depends upon their own ability to get access to it. Disadvantaged groups in their most basic form are defined by Bleiklie et al. (1997:303) as “groups and individuals that have a low score on income, status and knowledge, and that to a small extent are able to promote their interests in the current political-administrative system”. They do, however, emphasize that disadvantage can be a result of characteristics of an interaction process rather than characteristics of the clients themselves.

Tripi (1974) has documented agency among clients of social services, showing that if a client group has the resources to unite politically, they can have an impact on the system they

interact with. “As such they have become competing "para-professionals” and are seen to interfere with organizational routine as well as struggles to legitimize professionalism among welfare officials” (Tripi 1974:441). Theory presented above makes me suspect that the interaction process will contribute to making women who are victims of violence disadvantaged and “politically poor” in this context, and that they will not exercise such agency as Tripi (1974) describes.

At the end of their discussion, Bleiklie et al. (1997:327) state that there is a need for researchers to analyse “those forces that in practice shape the relationship between the service system and the clients”. Through this thesis I offer a modest contribution to such an analysis.

3.4.3 Hypothesis 3

The theory on interaction leads me to formulate a third and last hypothesis, separated into two branches with three main points each.

For women who are victims of violence, the accessibility of the system of public management is low due to challenges with the interaction between the victim and the system

a) on the individual level (more specifically related to the universal, emotionally neutral treatment of cases, divergence in expectations of the interaction and the victim’s problems with getting accepted as eligible), and

b) on the systemic level (more specifically related to lack of prioritization within agencies and of political prioritization and political influence).

4.0 Methodological Matters

Before moving on to the findings, I offer a description and justification for how I conducted the study and why. Throughout the whole research process, my decisions were made with the concepts of validity and reliability in mind. Aksel Tjora (2010:179) defines validity as “whether the answers we get through our research actually answer the questions we are trying to ask”. Further, reliability concerns whether data, analysis and conclusion are connected in an apparent way, and that this connection is made without too much influence from characteristics of the researcher herself, like political beliefs or personal convictions (Tjora 2010:201). In the following presentation of methodological aspects of the study, I comment on what I did to enhance the validity and reliability in the various steps taken. Transparency is said to be a means to reliability (Tjora 2010:175), and this overview is an effort to create such transparency.

4.1 A Cross-Disciplinary Thesis from the Global to the Personal

As this is a somewhat cross-disciplinary thesis written as a part of a cross-disciplinary master’s degree, a note on which fields it stretches across seems appropriate. The political science aspect is obvious in that the main theoretical framework of the thesis is theory of public management. Women’s rights can also be said to be a matter of politics. As David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (2010:7) state, there are two main perspectives on how to define *the political*. Firstly, some refer to certain public institutions, and the actors they consider a part of this are governments and those who work to affect them (Marsh and Stoker 2010:7)¹⁴. Individuals are in this view political in their voting and other directly political behaviour. The second definition includes a much wider array of processes and institutions. Politics is seen as to include “uneven distribution of power in society, how the struggle of power is conducted and its impact on the creation and distribution of resources, life chances and well-being” (Marsh and Stoker 2010:7)¹⁵. As feminists have been claiming, the personal is political due to the fact that it entails use and abuse of power (Danielsen 2013b:44). What we see is that the struggle over power is central in both definitions. When it comes to women’s rights, this is

¹⁴ Behaviouralists, institutionalists and rational choice theorists generally share this definition (Marsh and Stoker 2010).

¹⁵ This definition is employed by Marxists, constructivists and feminists (Marsh and Stoker 2010).

about making the power balance between men and women more equal, and about increasing women's power in their own lives.

Even though theory from political science is the starting point for the research questions and will be in the centre of the analysis, also topics that can be categorized as matters of sociology of law, general sociology and psychology are touched upon. When something is discussed in light of these disciplines, this unfortunately does not happen with an ideal amount of depth. This is due both to the fact that it is political science that is my main field of competence, and due to limitations of space and time. However, their importance for the issue in question makes it necessary to include them, in order to secure the validity of the analysis. I hope that the superficiality with which they are dealt with is excused by the point that it would be a greater weakness to the thesis if they were ignored.

In addition to crossing disciplines, the range of the thesis is actually from the global; international human rights conventions, to the personal; victims of violence. The focus, however, lies in between, on the society and system that stands between the global level and the personal sphere, and which functions both as a channel and an obstacle for implementation of the rights.

4.2 The Choice of Research Design and Method

4.2.1 Research Design: A Case Study on Norway

The research design of the thesis is a case study. Matthews and Ross (2010:128) write about case studies that “the case may be a person, an organisation, a situation or a country, but the study must relate to a particular aspect of the case as demonstrated in your research question”. Here, the case is Norway and the “particular aspect” is the problem of violence against women. A characteristic of case studies is also that “it takes a holistic approach to the study, as the relationship between the component parts of the case and the case as a whole – the social context – are all of interest to the researcher” (Matthews and Ross 2010:128). This is very true in the present paper, as different parts of the social context and their connection with and effect on the problem is central.

Further, the case can be said to be a revelatory case, which means that it “has the potential to shed light on the research topic” (Matthews and Ross 2010:128). Since the situation in

Norway when it comes to women's rights is as good as it is, generally and relatively speaking, a study of Norway can potentially reveal some basic characteristics and challenges of the problem.

4.2.2 Method: Why Qualitative Interviews?

In choosing a research design and method for the thesis, the nature of the research question was, of course, the most important factor. With that consideration in mind, using qualitative methods stood out as the most sensible approach. I was not aiming for numbers and statistical inference, which would be generated by use of quantitative methods (John 2010:268). Rather, the goal was to investigate the perspectives of various kinds of societal actors that have something to do with the work against domestic violence and rape of women in Norway. I knew that I wanted to get hold of the viewpoint of both politicians and professionals. Document analysis was one option, but background research made it clear that the available documents would not provide sufficient information, and that not all the actors of interest had published directly relevant documents. Interviewing was therefore judged to be the most appropriate method for obtaining information that would make my conclusions valid. As stated by Tjora (2010:91), the semi-structured in-depth interview is useful if you want to get to know the informants' "opinions, attitudes and experiences". All of these were relevant for the current thesis, especially the former when it comes to the politicians and the latter when it comes to the professionals. Data would therefore be generated through semi-structured interviews with relevant societal actors.

In making this decision, I knew that the thesis would have to be based on the experience of relatively few people, due to restrictions of time and space. A criticism of qualitative interviews as a means of gathering information is that the data is made up of subjective experiences and therefore cannot be considered a representative image of the world, or more specifically of the topic of interest in each study. Generalizations cannot be made to the same extent as when a higher number of informants or respondents are included. However, Steinar Kvale is among those who argue that this is one of the strengths of qualitative interviewing; the variance in how the informants describe the topic allows the researcher to portray a more realistic image of the world, a world which is indeed manifold (Kvale 1997:23). What was of particular importance in my case, then, was to be careful to choose as relevant informants as possible, in order to strengthen the validity of the study. This brings me over to the process of

choosing and sampling informants. Before the actual informants are presented, I justify why a potential group of informants was *not* chosen.

4.3 The Choice of Informants

4.3.1 Why Not Talk to the Women Themselves?

When it comes to choosing an approach for the study, it would be natural to look at it from the perspective of women who are victims of violence, or even to focus on men who make use of violence. However, the main reason why I chose otherwise was that I wanted the angle to be that of the systemic and political level. The starting point of the thesis was the globalization perspective; international human and women's rights; and the thought that also in Norway, there are challenges when it comes to implementation of these, although we think of Norway as an advanced country in this regard. This particular focus; *the implementation process*, was what caught my interest. I was therefore eager to learn about the topic from the perspective of the actors who are on that side of the table. Also, as I found previous research on the topic looking at the issue from the perspective of the victim, as presented earlier in the paper, I thought that it would be useful to choose a different angle. Many have written thoroughly about violence against women, of which a recently published book edited by Kjersti Narud (2014) is an example, but I consider it a strength of this thesis that I look so directly at the fundamental structures of the system and the mechanisms that prevail.

Secondly, my own inexperience with research and particularly with this topic made me reluctant to interview victims of rape or domestic violence, or people who use violence. I felt that to interview someone about something as sensitive and emotionally challenging as this would demand more knowledge and experience than I have, mainly for the sake of the informants' well-being¹⁶.

4.3.2 Sampling

As the intention of the study was to investigate the challenges on the topic of rape and domestic violence against women in Norway from a public management perspective, the

¹⁶ Still, the victims of rape and domestic violence became central after all, as the relationship between them and those who in different parts of public management work for the implementation of women's rights became the focus of the paper. However, the focus is on aspects of our society and characteristics of the problem, and how this affects the women, and therefore the perspective is more indirectly rather than directly on the women themselves.

natural interviewees were people working with the topic in the system in different ways. I wanted both people working directly with the issue and politicians, who actually have the power to create policies for tackling the problem. The first informants from institutions were contacted based on my own and my supervisor's knowledge about who would be relevant. A couple of them gave me names and contact information of people they believed would be able to provide me with relevant information, of which one became an informant, and thus the so-called snowballing effect (Tjora 2010:202) played in as well.

From branches of the system of public management, I interviewed two people who work with the issue within the police¹⁷, one from a shelter for victims of domestic violence, one lawyer and one from a regional resource centre on violence, traumatic stress and suicide prevention. The lawyer was one with particular experience from working with women who have been victims of violence. Although I could have talked to more professionals, I had to limit the number due to the already mentioned restrictions of time and space. As I wanted to hear about experiences from different parts of the system, I found it important to have someone from both the police, the court system and also from agencies dealing more directly with victims of violence; the shelter and the resource centre. In that way I feel that it was a good sample, and that the information they could provide me with was both broad enough for me to get a holistic impression of the problem and at the same time specialized enough not to be too superficial. Their direct experience on the field made me confident that what they told me would in fact answer my research questions; that the validity would be intact.

In the case of the political parties, I contacted the regional secretariats. They either gave me the contact information of someone they considered to be the right person for me to talk to, or they contacted the relevant people for me, who then contacted me themselves. I imagined beforehand that the representatives from political parties to some extent would have the same type of knowledge on the topic, and that they in a way belonged to the same group of informants despite their different ideological affiliations. Therefore I did not consider it vital to get hold of someone from *all* the biggest political parties. Due to lack of response from some secretariats, the parties that are represented in the thesis are the Labour Party, the Progress Party, the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Liberal Party and

¹⁷ Both have positions directly aimed at work on the issue of violence.

the Green Party. All the representatives hold offices of some kind for the municipality or county municipality branches of their parties.

It should be stated that I do not include in my hypotheses any expectations to find different opinions between the professionals and the politicians. This is not a comparative study. I rather consider them as informants with complementary sets of knowledge and experiences. In the analysis, I sometimes point out specifically whether this and that group of informants supported an argument, but this is just to show nuances or whether the issue of concern was experienced by people in different parts of the system.

The age of the respondents ranged from 29 to 63 years, the average being 48. Demographically, one characteristic stood out as particularly striking. Out of the 11 informants, only 2 were men; one politician and one professional. Since the total number is as low as it is, I should be careful to draw conclusions, but this could still indicate a gender based difference in the degree to which people are concerned with the issue, and maybe who are *expected* to be concerned with it.

In the analysis, I use numbers to refer to the informants, in addition to a short indication of which institution or group of informants s/he belongs to¹⁸. This is the full list of the informants:

Informant 1: An employee in the police working on this particular field

Informant 2: A representative from the Progress Party

Informant 3: An employee in the police working on this particular field

Informant 4: A representative from the Christian Democratic Party

Informant 5: A representative from the Conservative Party (with experience from working on the field as a professional as well)

Informant 6: A representative from the Liberal Party

Informant 7: An employee working for the shelter for victims of domestic violence

Informant 8: An employee at the regional Resource Centre for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention

Informant 9: A representative from the Green Party

Informant 10: A lawyer with particular experience from working with female victims of violence

Informant 11: A representative from the Labour Party

¹⁸ In order for the reader to get a certain understanding of what type of experience the statement originates from.

I interviewed one more politician than professional, but as the interviews with the latter group lasted longer than the former, those interviews generated more data.

4.4 Practical Matters

4.4.1 Interview Situation

One interview was conducted over telephone because of geographical distance, and the rest face-to-face. All but one of the face-to-face interviews took place in the office of the informants or in meeting rooms they had access to. The last interview was conducted in a quiet café. The informant did not seem to be bothered about being interviewed in public space. I always let them decide time, and they all suggested place without me having to ask for it. It was important to me to be of as little trouble as possible, and I made sure to express my gratitude for their participation.

The interviews lasted between 20 and 92 minutes, with an average length of 38 minutes. Interviews with professionals were longer than the ones with politicians. Transcribing them resulted in 94 pages of material to analyse. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, but the quotes have been translated to English, of course.

4.4.2 Interview Guides

The semi-structured interview is supposed to be rather similar to an ordinary conversation, in the way that the researcher follows up on what the informant says, and by doing so allows him or her to have an impact on the direction the “conversation” takes. At the same time, the informant probably expects the researcher to take the lead (Tjora 2010:94). I needed to hear the informants’ viewpoints on all of the most central points in order to be able to answer the research questions properly. The use of interview guides can therefore be said to be a means to strengthen the validity of the thesis.

The questions in the interview guides are quite broad, and I believe that this also contributes to the validity. I did not use the word threshold, for example, but the informants still described problems related to this, which shows that this really is a problem.

Due to assumed differences in what the two groups of informants would be able to speak about, because of their different connections with the topic, I had two main interview guides. They are attached to the thesis as appendices. This adds to the transparency, and thus the reliability of the analysis.

4.5 Ethical Considerations in the Study

First and foremost, the study was notified to the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research, and the ethical precautions I outlined in the presentation of how I would conduct the study were accepted. The interviews were not about the informants themselves on a personal level, but rather about their opinions and experiences about a topic they to different degrees are concerned with in their professional lives. It was still decided that the informants would be anonymized in the transcribed interviews. They could happen to say something they would not want their name attached to anyway, and I decided to anonymize all of them.

The informants were handed over or e-mailed a consent form in order to secure that they were properly informed about the study before they were interviewed. In the form, the purpose of the study was explained and they were provided with information about their rights as participants. It was also stated that the interviews would be recorded. For the most part, the informants did not have any objections to the form. Some of them only signed after asking if they could be shown how I would employ their statements, that is; what argument I would use their quotations to support. I agreed to this. Someone also only agreed after being assured that their statements would not be taken to represent the whole institution they work for, but that it would rather be emphasized in the thesis that what is expressed is only the experience of one representative rather than the whole institution. So to be clear: What my informants have said does not necessarily reflect the official opinions of the political parties or institutions they represent.

4.6 On an Epistemological Note: The Researcher's Effect on the Researched

Perspectives on the impact of the researcher on her research ranges from the positivists' claim to objectivity to the constructivists' claim to subjectivity. It is, however, possible to believe that scientific knowledge can be generated in social sciences without saying that the researcher has no impact at all on the outcome of the study. Being in that intermediate epistemological position, it is important to point out the ways in which the researcher may be

affecting the data, and outline what this means for the conclusions that are drawn. This transparency contributes to the reliability of the analysis, as mentioned earlier. As stated by Maithree Wickramasinghe (2010:55), the researcher's "beliefs, thoughts, emotions, experiences, assumptions, intentions, imaginations and consciousness" may all affect the research that is conducted. She emphasizes the importance of reflexivity in the research process, meaning to "engage critically with the conceptual, cerebral and emotional aspects of the research process as far as it is consciously possible" (Wickramasinghe 2010:57). In that regard, there are some aspects that should be discussed in the present thesis.

Firstly, my own thoughts on the topic of women's rights are not insignificant. After reading up on the topic, I had some expectations and some opinions of my own, and I realised that there was a danger that these expectations and opinions could shine through in the way I conducted myself during the interviews. At least this made me conscious and aware of the danger, and looking at the interview transcripts, I believe I successfully avoided asking leading questions, for example. There is a challenge innate in the fact that the researcher must balance between on the one hand; having a set of theoretical perspectives and a set of expectations to what she will find, and on the other hand; having to be open to the unexpected and to getting results that contradict her presumptions. This is discussed by Håland (2008:28, own translation) who points out that the interview and what results of it should still be "a mutual construct between the interviewer and the respondent".

Secondly, my research experience was, before this, limited to the bachelor thesis, practice from methodological courses and some work as a journalist. Also, I have no experience from the kind of work that is done in the various institutions, and all my knowledge of it was therefore of a theoretical nature. This may have weakened my ability to understand how their reality is and to make suitable questions. On the other hand, being too much of an "insider" could make me less able to put an objective light on the work that is done. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:3) state that "the research interview is not a conversation between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the situation". Although this is correct, I would say that in the interviews conducted in this project, the power was not so clearly in favour of the researcher. The interviewees were people with much more experience with and knowledge of the issue, and people who are used to being interviewed and used to presenting their viewpoint. I was still the one to ask the questions, but I believe that the qualities of the informants combined with my lack of experience made the balance of power more equal than

it often is during research interviews. This could increase the reliability of the data if it means that I had a smaller effect on what was said during the interviews. It could also enhance validity, if it means that the things they said are more accurate descriptions of reality than they would have been if I had pushed them into the framework I had in mind beforehand.

4.7 Evaluation of the Chosen Method

All in all, I am satisfied with the choice of method and the way the data was collected. Ideally, the number of informants would have been higher, but I did what I felt I could do within the limits of a project like this. I have made remarks on questions of validity and reliability during the presentation of methodological matters, but I have some final comments in that regard, as this is an important part of evaluating whether I have answered the research questions in a proper manner. I also discuss generalization.

Tjora (2010:179) states that one way of testing validity is to compare one's own findings to findings in previous research and previously formulated theories. The problems that I detected through my analysis correspond to a great extent with issues outlined in the plans of action referred to above, which is a sign of validity.

Tjora (2010:179) further writes that “the most important source of high validity is that the research is conducted within frames of professionalism, anchored in other relevant research” (2010:179). I have attempted to do this to a sufficient extent. A challenge on the field of violence against women, which will be discussed in the analysis, is its complexity and cross-sectoral nature. The same has been a challenge in this research project, as theory from different fields could be said to be relevant. In order to enhance the validity, I have tried to be explicit in the description of my focus, and in that way be clear on its scope and limits.

In his discussion of reliability in social sciences, Tjora (2010:178) focuses upon the importance of presenting “the context of the research”. I have already explained how I chose my informants and described where the interviews took place. I can add that even though I have been active in a political party, the representative I interviewed from that party was not someone I knew beforehand. Thus, I had never met any of the informants before the time of the interviews.

In the same connection, Tjora (2010:178) mentions that for the sake of reliability, it should be made clear how citations are chosen, and “what they represent in comparison to what the informants have said that has not been cited”. Of course, the theoretical framework highly influenced what I chose to quote. My strategy for analysing the transcribed interviews was to focus on the aspects that were mentioned by many of the informants, but at the same time include nuances and arguments put forward only by individuals in order to convey their experiences and opinions in both a representative and holistic manner. The analysis was conducted manually.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, I also have a note to make on generalization. As Tjora (2010:180) states, we have to think differently when it comes to generalization in qualitative studies compared to quantitative studies. One could also argue that generalization not necessarily needs to be a goal, although it is normal to aim for it in some way (Tjora 2010:180). The current study can be said to be the kind that does not need generalization, as it is an investigation of a practical problem related to one case. Still, what Tjora (2010:181) calls *moderate generalization* might be employed here, meaning that the findings can be generalized to similar cases; countries with systems and cultures that are similar to those of Norway. In addition, it must be taken into consideration that the study has been conducted in just one Norwegian municipality. It is not a given that the results can be generalized to the rest of the country. However, it was stated by more than one informant that they perceived their municipality to have come quite far compared to others. I therefore conclude that it is likely that the problems experienced in this municipality are very likely to be found in other places as well, probably even to a higher extent.

5.0 Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Based on the theory presented in chapter 3, three hypotheses were formulated, and they can be summarized like this: For women who are victims of violence, the accessibility of the system of public management is low, due to a) characteristics of the system, b) a high threshold between the victim and the system and c) challenges with the interaction between the victim and the system. The three first parts of the analysis are devoted to the hypotheses.

5.1 Characteristics of the System

Characteristics of the system itself constitute the first factor I expect to have a negative effect on the accessibility of the system of public management. Weber (1978) and Lipsky (2010) led me to believe that such a negative effect might result from difficulties related to the structure of the system, lack of flexibility and issues of specialization.

5.1.1 Problems with the Fragmented and Hierarchical Structure

Weber (1978) accounts for modern bureaucracies and their superiority, but what the informants told me indicates that the characteristics he describes are not as suitable when it comes to the issue of violence against women. As formulated in the first of his characteristics of the ideal bureaucracy, the system is separated into parts that have their own jurisdictional areas with their own laws and regulations. As pointed out by an informant, this is a challenge: *But the problem structurally speaking is that the child welfare agency works based on the law on children and the law on children and parents and have one set of rules. While we, we work based on the penal code and the laws on public management. (...) We have professional secrecy, but we also have an obligation to report. And then we're obliged to prevent new incidents, in some cases. And so there is, or have been, a kind of a vacuum in what we're allowed to tell and not, and I think that it's starting to turn into a good, logical, rational cooperation to the best of the child or the woman, at least here in [city]. But of course, there's no good overall structure on that cooperation when we always have to relate to our own laws. (01, police)*

The difficulties encountered in the meeting between those who work primarily with the children in mind and those who to a greater extent look at the family as a whole was emphasized by another one of my informants:

Sometimes the result can be somewhat unwanted because the children's welfare agency might react in a way that leaves us a bit in despair, because we have more aspects in mind than what's being discussed there and then. And we'd like the chance to express some wishes on what we think the family needs, but here in Norway the children's welfare agency holds the power and works with the children and have that responsibility. I'm not saying that they shouldn't take and have that responsibility, but I'm thinking that the cooperation could be better. (07, shelter)

The separation is not just a challenge on the question of which client group they are concerned with, but also when it comes to the professional angle from which they look at the cases.

I think part of the key lies in that we have to keep getting better at seeing the whole family and the whole problem, and not just the criminal law aspect. (01, police)

It became clear to me that these are cases that require a very holistic perspective, but people working in each part of the system can easily get a more narrow vision. Ultimately, it will be the victims and their families who suffer from the inadequate cooperation.

Weber's (1978) third characteristic of modern bureaucracies is that they are run based on written documents, which was described by my informants as something that can create obstacles along the way to implementation of strategies. This is connected with the second characteristic; the hierarchical organization.

I think this is a structural problem, because the way public agencies are governed in Norway is through top-down planning. You produce a certain amount of plans, and then you expect the organization to get it started. So the distance between those who make the plans and those who are supposed to carry them out is too large. And you see this in big organizations in other countries as well, that you have this organization through documents and plans, rather than working closely and having a practical interaction, and that's one of my strongest criticisms of how this work is run. (01, police)

So I see that even if good plans are made, they are not necessarily carried out.

Then there's always the dilemma, with plans and drawers and taking them up again and burying them and forgetting it. Well, it's a well-known phenomenon. (03, police)

This bureaucratic challenge was mentioned by politicians as well, showing that both the political actors and the civil servants are aware of the discrepancy between how it ideally should be and how the system actually works.

We use big words, and say that things will be done. Then we leave it to the system of public management to see it through. And then it turns out that it's not always as easy as we say. And then they might not work out when we're finally starting up. Then nagging is needed, but it's a fact that what's hot for the media is also the hottest for politicians. (06, politician)

5.1.2 Problems with Lack of Flexibility

The second branch of the first hypothesis concerns the lack of flexibility which results from certain characteristics of the system; the stability of rules (Weber 1978) and standardization (Lipsky 2010).

Stable Rules

Weber's (1978) sixth point on modern bureaucracies concerns how officials do their jobs based on rules that are quite stable and exhaustive. A statement from one of the informants working in the police indicates that the rules of the system are *too* stable.

I'd say that there haven't been made many changes to the police the last hundred years. (...) It's not taken into consideration in the system that violence is not supposed to be a private matter. And that's the thing – when we're working in the closest relations, there's a much higher degree of complexity, and we have to be careful. It's simply difficult for the police to work on cases like this. Because they have rights, too, on not having to testify because of the close relationship [to the perpetrator]. (...) I'm not questioning whether we should work on them, (...), but I'm questioning the way we choose to do it. (01, police)

The informant emphasized that there has been a tremendous development on the field in terms of attention and various initiatives that have been made within the police. However, the overall structures and rules have remained very stable. Lack of reforms after the police started working on these types of cases makes the officers stuck in a system that is not built with this kind of complexity in mind. The same goes for the court system, where an example is the way the state is always officially considered as victim during a trial, rather than, in this case, the woman who has experienced violence.

The moment the case is taken to court, the state takes the role of prosecutor, and the offended is pushed a bit aside, really. And to many, that's not quite OK. (...) And although the old, primitive blood vengeance mindset can't go on, there's something to it when it comes to having a feeling of ownership to the problem. (10, lawyer)

This example shows how an old procedure, which may be a logical arrangement under other circumstances, can be more problematic when the topic is of such a personal character as violence against women is.

Further, a different rule that makes sense in general, but that causes trouble in cases of rape, is the need for physical evidence.

So, I often say that the court system isn't designed for these cases, because of the mechanisms that prevail. If you want to win in court, you need evidence. You have to be sure that you have the right man in front of you and that what has happened, happened. And then you fall short, because in the end it's word against word. (05, politician)

The psychological aspect of being the victim of a crime like this makes it less likely that the required evidence is preserved.

The police prosecutor considers the hard evidence, and the question of whether or not it's likely that they'll lead to a conviction. And if there's technical evidence like DNA-tests and the likes, then there's no problem. But very often there's not, because it's quite usual for many women who are exposed to this to almost burn the clothes they were wearing, or at least wash them very thoroughly, and wash themselves thoroughly, and have a feeling that they'll never be clean again. (...) And then they wash away evidence. So in too many cases, it depends upon the trustworthiness of the woman. (10, lawyer)

Another problem related to rules, pointed out by the lawyer, is in the way rape is defined legally. As explained earlier in the paper, it has been discussed whether lack of consent should be considered reason enough for something to be characterized as rape. Today, you have to have protested unless you're unconscious, but as explained by an informant, women who live in abusive relationships might be so suppressed that they are unable to do so.

I meet quite a few women who, when they explain their own behaviour in the relationship, I get the feeling that I'm talking to a robot. (...) They're so suppressed and deprived of personal will that they're not able to protest physically. It's out of the question. And that's a serious flaw in how rape is defined. (10, lawyer)

The definition is therefore not built on a comprehensive enough understanding of how being abused can affect someone, and how this changes their ability to express what they really want and do not want.

A recent case in the media about a woman who gets a considerable smaller amount of economic support from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration when her husband is in prison for serious domestic violence has been presented as an example of how the system is not suited for these cases. It was stated by the leader of Legal Counselling for Women that “the legislator has chosen a principle of equality where there is no room for individual evaluation, but when you look at single cases you see the great weaknesses of having a general and objective legal system” (Moltubak 2014). My findings support this statement.

Standardization

Lipsky's (2010) theory on standardization in the system, meaning that civil servants use experience from other cases in order to treat current ones, was supported by how the informants described how things work.

In my experience, the criminal law system isn't designed for cases of domestic violence. It's designed for one type of case, where something is proven or not, and you get a punishment, and there's no connection between the one who did it and the victim, and the parties are not listened to, and the state owns the conflict. (01, police)

The system is created in a very general manner, with standard ways of looking at a problem. This point of view was supported by the lawyer.

We have to get better at making individual evaluations, I'd say. We probably think too much according to standards. (10, lawyer)

As stated earlier, people who are employed in the system tend to work on many different types of cases within their field, be it the police, the court system or another branch. I see that their experiences from the other cases therefore necessarily contribute to the frames of reference they automatically use when they treat cases on violence against women, which can be a disadvantage if it means that relevant factors that do not fit into the template are dismissed or ignored. This is connected with the question of universal treatment of cases, which is elaborated on later.

Ideally, everyone who comes into contact with women who have been victims of violence should have plenty of knowledge and experience, and a strong ability to judge each case for itself, but I found that this is not necessarily so in reality.

It's knowledge, and of course people are different, you interpret things differently, you perceive things differently, you judge cases you only have a limited amount of information

about, but then there's more you should have known, and then you make decisions that aren't so good. So I'd say that it's about knowledge, but it also depends upon each person. (07, shelter)

And since those who handle the cases are unable to get a complete picture of each case, they will judge based on previous experiences, and try to follow standards. Thus, both the perspectives on standardization outlined in section 3.2.2 have a point on this issue. The strict and stable rules create less room for manoeuvring, which is negative for victims of violence. Then sometimes the civil servants need to judge based on their previous experience, but this room for manoeuvring tends not to be to the advantage of the victims, who are left disadvantaged in both cases.

5.1.3 Problems with Specialization: Specialized Training – but of the Wrong Kind?

Specialization is the fourth point on Weber's (1978) list, and the discussion above on the way the system is organized showed that there are some challenges connected with the fact that the system is separated into parts with their own special focus. However, I also found that there is a challenge in Norway with lack of specialization, or what I would describe as the direction the specialization takes. Specialization is traditionally to a large extent based on professional fields. The police have their focus, and so does the court and others. However, specialization is to a smaller extent based on the type of case.

These laws and penal sections you're supposed to know something about are very complex, and the way we work in the police in Norway – we're generalists. We don't have a high degree of specialization. (01, police)

So, at the same time as the police to a large extent have a specialized perspective; on crime, they lack specialization in violence against women in particular.

We're not in a situation where we can give police officers specialized training in order for them to be able to take care of everyone who arrives at the police station at any time. (01, police)

In this way, specialization can be both a blessing and a curse, and the conclusion on this particular bureaucratic ideal is therefore not definite. Some specialization creates problems, while there should be more of another type of specialization. In a report on the meeting between victims of violence and the system, Grøvdal, Saur and Skaalerud (2014) find that specialization within each agency is not as important as having knowledge on the issue itself,

from different professional angles. They give the example of a police officer specialized in investigative work who is unable to help a victim with legal questions (Grøvdal et al. 2014:95). This corresponds with what I see in my study.

5.2 Threshold

The second hypothesis concerns aspects of the victim's situation, and my assumption is that there is a high threshold between the potential client and the system of public management.

5.2.1 Problems with Realising Own Need and that the System Can Help

A requirement listed by Bleiklie et al. (1997) for a threshold to be passed is that the potential client must realise that she has a need for help, and that the system can give her just that. What the informants told me, however, shows that there are several reasons why victims of violence might not fulfil this requirement. The first factor I discuss was outlined in the theory, and concerns the victim's uncertainty on the system's requirements. Two other – and in fact somewhat contradictory – arguments were put forward by my informants.

Uncertainty on Requirements

Many of the informants described insecurity among potential clients concerning the question of what is considered violence, like in the quotation below, where the issue is non-physical violence.

What's more difficult is to go to the police and say that "he doesn't bring his cell-phone with him", or "he never has money for food", but that can be just as difficult to live with, and just as harmful". (01, police)

Doubt can also be a problem when women have experienced sexual encroachments that are not completely in line with what people generally think of as rape.

I think many are not aware that what has been done to them is rape. (01, police)

Rape in close relationships is an issue that complicates potentially already blurred lines.

Mostly we deal with women who have been raped in a close relationship, (...) but we often experience that she doesn't consider herself a victim of rape, although we do. (07, shelter)

In this context, cultural perspectives on the relationship between women and men are worth a note. The informants have experience with immigrant women and their perspective on violence, and convictions prevalent in some cultures contribute to increasing the threshold.

They say that it's usual in our culture. That's how it is in our culture. That the woman is her husband's property, that the man has the right to beat and raise both children and his woman. (03, police)

In instances where violence to a higher degree is accepted as a natural part of raising children, for example, then other types of violence may also be accepted more easily.

They [immigrant women] often have a higher threshold for characterizing something as violence, harassment and deprivation of freedom. (07, shelter)

I see that women might not believe that what they have experienced is violence, nor realise that the system considers it so, even if what they have experienced in fact is defined as violence.

Negative Side-Effects of Gender Equality

The first of the problems that I did not find in the employed theories, but which the informants identified, concerns negative side-effects of gender equality. Norway scores high on gender equality, and one would think that this would be solely positive when it comes to preventing violence against women. In the interviews, however, it was expressed concerns that some aspects of this development in fact cause problems.

Well, we've had these rounds of freedom fight, sort of, for women. Fight for rights and freedom on all areas, sexuality and so on. And we've kind of worked our way through it, and now we're supposed to have equality. But then maybe new problems have appeared. (...) In the wake of the liberation, we're not quite sure where we are, how to treat each other, there are no clear rules on how we're supposed to behave, how women are supposed to behave. When can you say no, what is no, who's allowed to be angry, who sets the boundaries. Maybe the boundaries disappeared, and we have to rediscover boundaries or rules of social interaction that have been vague for a long time. (09, politician)

Input from the media can also create insecurity among people on where the limits go, and when the boundary is crossed for what is allowed and not.

It's not easy to know that for young people today – what's OK. Because everything's OK, if you watch TV and Internet and media. (09, politician)

Changes when it comes to prevalence of different types of rape can also tell us something about how gender equality could have negative side-effects.

We see that the number of party-related rapes increases greatly. (...) Young people don't drink more than earlier, but girls drink as much as the boys. Right, equality – we should be

able to drink as much [as the boys], and dress the way we want. And we want it to be like that, but then we see that the drunkenness increases the risk and vulnerability for rape. (...) And then we find ourselves in a situation where the victims are more or less unconscious and might not even know that it happens, maybe that's why they don't report. Maybe they're embarrassed. It can be a kind of shame, that they haven't taken care of themselves, don't know what's happened to them and think it's embarrassing. (01, police)

The alcohol not only increases the vulnerability for rape, but it can also make the women unsure of what really happened and then doubt whether they are eligible for getting help.

Gender equality can also lead to thoughts like the ones expressed here:

I think many women feel that the gender equality is so strong that they think that they should just take this, but that's very, very wrong. But there's a taboo, because "you should have known better", and then they don't dare to report it. And maybe they don't dare to stop while it's about to happen, because it's so often people they know, right. If you've said A, it feels like you have to say B. And you don't. (04, politician)

The image of women being independent and strong, which has become more and more prevalent with increased gender equality, can lead women into thinking that they should just take it.

It says something about the work that is to be done. Both when it comes to young people, both girls and boys, on boundaries. But also when it comes to the more grown-up generation, because there's a reason why this isn't – for example isn't reported, so it's natural to think that some attitudes are signalled, consciously or unconsciously, that "you should just accept it", "you caused it yourself", because it's strange that so few talk about it and report it. (04, politician)

A higher degree of individualism leaves more responsibility on the shoulders of each person, and what the informants said showed me that unclear rules might make it hard to know how heavy that load should be.

This openness around sexuality and with the culture among youths being different, at least from how it was 50 years ago, I think that's got something to do with it. That there were more social boundaries, a framework and stronger social control. (...) And that we're left to ourselves in a different way now. We have to take responsibility for and consequences of what we do in a different way than before (...). (07, shelter)

As many of the party-related rapes are done by someone the victim knows already, this could further increase the insecurity on their behalf when it comes to responsibility, and to what degree they could be blamed themselves.

Or they could be friends, it could be acquaintances that have done it, and they find it uncomfortable and then they don't report it, because they don't quite know how to deal with it. (01, police)

A Relapse in Gender Equality? Gender Roles and Expectations

At the same time as we have seen that gender equality can pose some challenges and contribute to raising the threshold, as a contradictory argument it was emphasized by some informants that lack of equality is also a threat, and that although we have come far on this field, there is still work to be done.

Through history there has been a legitimation – when women didn't have the right to vote and the man was supposed to be the ruler (...). The relationship of power was sort of legitimized in society. And now it's not like that, we have gender equality. (...) I believe that there are historical remainders of this –, that it can be useful still to look at society as a whole. (08, resource centre)

According to some, there might even be a relapse.

As far as I'm concerned, it has regressed. The women's rights fight and the way women are looked upon have reversed. I feel like I see that when it comes to sexuality, to looks and appearance, young girls – I mean, you can't go to a store to buy gender neutral clothes anymore, which I find shocking. And that's something we got rid of [in the 70s]. (...) But I find it obvious that this sex pressure, the worshipping of violence both in media, movies and TV, things like that, it's gotten much stronger. (...) This is about gender roles, the way I see it. That's the basis, and when they get more apparent, the differences grow, then this means something in the context of violence. (03, police)

If women get the impression that a different type of role and behaviour is expected of them and men, they might be more inclined to accept infringements.

There's a male role and a female role, and the man's role is aggressive and dominant and macho and all that, and that's the thing – to have power and control, and that's kind of the core of it. (...) Internet and the availability of pornography, lots of things. The pornographic representation of sexuality. (03, police)

These elements shape the way people think, and what they expect of themselves and of others.

On many areas in society where we think we have gender equality, we see that we still have different expectations of men and women. And in this case, the final and dramatic effect is rape. (04, politician)

Not only could this affect men's behaviour, and result in rape as pointed out in the quotation, but I find that it could also raise the bar for what women consider acceptable behaviour, or at least what they think they *should* accept. This then affects whether they consider themselves to be victims of a crime or not. So in conclusion I see that there are challenges we need to be aware of related both to lack of equality and increased equality.

5.2.2 Physical and Social Barriers between the Victim and the Support System

The second requirement laid out by Bleiklie et al. (1997) concerns the barriers that stand between the potential client and the system if she fulfils the first requirement and realises that she has a need for help and that the system can help her. Also here, there are many indications in how the informants describe the issue showing that this is problematic when it comes to violence against women. Status, shame, negative expectations, incrimination and the role of other people are all outlined in the theoretical section above. The first factor I discuss, dependence, was emphasized by the informants and is a supplement to the factors outlined in the theory.

Physical, Economic and Emotional Dependence

My informants' descriptions of how women in abusive relationships act, show me that there can be a high degree of dependence between the victim and the perpetrator, as the victim loses her free will through suppression.

It can be small things, it can to a great extent be psychological violence and control, which paralyses them and makes them dependent both in decision making and other situations (...) and captivates the victim in a circle of violence that they don't get out of, and that's what's so hard to seize. (01, police)

(...) it's that regime of psychological violence, and that's also the most difficult, perhaps, to uncover, and that's where the biggest challenge is in reporting to us. (01, police)

I see that if someone loses their free will, they are less likely to seek help from the system of public management. It could also be less clear to themselves, if it happens gradually.

If you discipline and punish, because there's something you don't like, and you exercise control, unreasonable control over another human being – that's difficult to pin down.

Because it's not beating and kicking, it's not rape, but it's the start of diminishing a person, in a way. Get them down, under your shoe, so you can do what you want to them. (07, shelter)

Women who are stuck in this kind of a situation might not even be aware how bad it is, but even if they realise that they have a problem that the system can help them with, the psychological dependence upon the perpetrator could make it hard for them to cross the barrier and seek help from someone.

Financial dependence is another variant of this barrier. Economic factors can also be an obstacle for women who are in a situation where they consider whether to contact the system.

Using the fact that you [the abuser] are the one with the economy. If it's unequally distributed, that one of them has a job and a good economy, and you [the victim] are economically dependent. (01, police)

The fear of how life will be if she leaves, how she will support herself and potentially children, could still be an important factor, even though women are better off economically in Norway today than earlier. The economic aspect is particularly relevant when it comes to immigrant women.

Generally speaking, I can say that what we saw among Norwegian women in the beginning of the history of shelters, where they had no job, education or money of their own or possibility to manage by themselves, that's where we meet the immigrant women now. (07, shelter)

Dependence resulting from psychological suppression and economic factors are not the only forms of dependence that contribute to strengthening the barrier, also emotional ties in the form of love have a lot to say.

I think that many women actually choose to live with a certain amount of violence, which is not good, but they think that the person is so amazing, and they get so much out of [the relationship], and they lose so much by leaving him, and they choose to live with and in it. (...) But what they don't consider, is that for each time the circle [of violence] turns, she gets a bit weaker. A bit more traumatized, a bit more frayed, a bit more anxious. (01, police)

It is evident to me that love becomes just one factor in a mix of feelings and thoughts, and it can be hard to tell where one starts and the other ends, but the result is an intricate set of dependence factors.

There are some mechanisms that are similar from case to case. (...) Among other things when it comes to the dependence on the abuser, the belief in a better future, a destroyed self- image, lack of confidence in being able to manage by oneself without husband, common children.

You feel that you have more control over the children when you're together with the father than after a divorce when you might have to send the children to a father you can't control. Shame. Shame and love. (...) There can be kind of a disturbed connection which makes it almost impossible to get out of an abusive situation. (05, politician)

As Bleiklie et al. (1997) state, being disadvantaged in some way or another increases the required effort the potential client has to make herself in order to get hold of the information she needs and then consequently make use of a service. The worst case scenario here, would be to be psychologically suppressed, economically dependent and emotionally connected to the perpetrator, and at the same time be an immigrant without a thorough knowledge of what possibilities there are for someone who is a victim of violence to seek help. The initiative required of them is then likely to be challenging, and if the visibility of what help is out there is low, many might choose not to try.

So of course if you need to look it up, if you have to dig a lot to find information, then maybe it stops you from seeking help. (...) So visibility may be a key word. (09, politician)

Material Values and Status

A side-effect of the wealth we have in Norway is that our society has become quite focussed on material values and status, and this can also contribute to increasing the threshold.

(...) there's something about the fact that we live in a rich and materially oriented society; we have a society where it means a lot and there's a status in having a career, in having nice houses, having a good economy. (...) You might be willing to stay in a relationship in order to keep up the façade, and also some material goods. (...) After living some years abroad, I kind of feel that I see the Norwegian society from the outside, and I'm thinking that at least it doesn't help when it comes to revealing domestic violence that we have a society that I interpret this way. (01, police)

What I understand from this is that even if women generally are able to provide for themselves if they leave an abusive husband or get help from the system of public management in some way, the relative decline in material wealth and the decline of status it potentially brings along give them an incentive to stay. Therefore, what Nelson (1980) has written about change in status as a factor increasing the threshold is relevant in this context.

Shame

Shame was pointed out by many of the informants as a factor that can contribute greatly to the social aspect of the threshold.

What I immediately think is that there seems to be a threshold for reporting [rape]. That there's a threshold for telling, probably also when it comes to domestic violence. It's hard to see any other reason than that it's difficult to talk about, and that it might be something they're ashamed of, and that these are incidents that make them feel guilty. (02, politician)

It's connected with guilt and shame. (03, police)

I think one thing is that it's connected with shame and that the victims blame themselves. That they shouldn't have done this and that. (04, politician)

Bleiklie et al. (1997) write that receiving public support can be perceived as stigmatizing, and the shame these women experience can contribute to such a feeling of being stigmatized.

Negative Expectations

Negative expectations was mentioned by Bleiklie et al. (1997) as a factor that can prevent a potential client from taking the step to become an actual client, and this seems to be of relevance on the present issue.

I think it's also about a lack of trust in investigation and the police, because there have been so many cases in the media where the burden placed on the victim is so heavy, but there's no conviction anyway, so the costs are too high. (04, politician)

The authors point out that the process you have to go through and interaction with the civil servants may be perceived as difficult and uncomfortable, and there is no doubt that this can be the case for those who are considering to contact someone about rape or other violence.

Without having been through the process oneself, negative expectations can appear as a result of knowledge about what it will imply to bring one's case to court or another part of the system.

Firstly, being exposed to such abuse is terribly connected with shame, it's not something you easily talk about. And then, when you at the same time know that going through the legal process, or a questioning for that matter, is quite upsetting. (10, lawyer)

Through a media coverage with a high focus on the difficulties connected with these types of cases, the impression people get can contribute to the formation of negative expectations.

I'm thinking that the media, too, has a great responsibility in how to present cases. (...) The way it is now, you hear a lot about the lost ones. (04, politicians)

If the majority of cases presented in the media are examples of women having negative experiences with the system, then women who consider seeking help might easily not expect

to get help if they choose to do so, which Bleiklie et al. (1997) also state as a contributing factor to the threshold.

Incrimination

Connected with or maybe even a cause of the shame described above, there is incrimination. Like Rønning and Solheim (1998) write, clients of the system of public management tend to be exposed to incrimination. During the interviews it became clear that such incrimination often happens to women who experience violence, and this will raise the threshold.

Victims of rape or other violence are blamed for what happens to them, just like the tendency described by Valkenburg (2007) of people to blame the recipients of social service themselves rather than circumstances around them.

We just have to admit that we still sometimes have the debate on whether women are to be blamed themselves for being raped. Especially within relationships. (...) You start doubting, “did I cause it myself, was I not clear enough”, and then there’s the debate on how you were dressed, what you did yourself to prevent it, did you speak up or did you just let it happen – so often, or maybe too often, the victim is incriminated too. (02, politician)

Very often, questions are asked about what the woman herself did in order to “put her in that situation”.

If we had a greater respect for women to be treated equally – and all that rubbish on “she probably deserved it, she probably asked for it”, and all that nonsense, those are clear signs of unacceptable attitudes. (10, lawyer)

If these attitudes are widespread in our society, then the women themselves are likely to feel the incrimination, and this increases the social barrier they need to cross in order to seek help from the system. It was pointed out that the debate on a political level has come a long way and that the situation is far better than it used to, but that it still happens that people, through media, say things that incriminate the victim.

In my experience we have come far down this road, but then sometimes there's a shiver from the past. (...) Statements about girls having to think about how they dress, right. And then we're right back to the past. (11, politician)

Threshold for Others to Act

One thing that stood out in how the informants described the problem was their focus upon the threshold for other people to act if they suspect that someone is being abused. Although the main focus here is on factors preventing women themselves from acting, the way others are reluctant to act is very central, and it indirectly affects the women. The Norwegian society is described as one in which the private sphere is indeed considered private.

I think that in Norway, we've had a very positive image of the family, and that we'll be protected. When we're inside our own house, no one should care. Neither the woman next door nor relatives or anyone like that. They'll take care of it themselves, the families, if there are any problems. (06, politician)

There are expectations to how we are supposed to behave and treat each other.

You're not supposed to be a gossip, and you're not supposed to give away someone. (02, politician)

People sense that something is wrong, and might try a little bit, but then there is a barrier for them to cross in order to actually take responsibility.

Friends, family and neighbours still tend to, like, "we've tried talking her into reporting, but she doesn't want to". (...) But the threshold for reporting should be low, and I feel maybe that the threshold for close ones, family, friends, colleagues, has become too high, because you see some things, and you don't trust that there's something wrong, or it's too much of a taboo to talk about, or you feel that it's too close, too private (...). (01, police)

It got clear to me that the tendency to stay out of other people's business is particularly prevalent on issues like this, as you not only relate to the potential victim but also to a potential abuser. If you have a suspicion towards someone you know, like friends or family, you will still have to relate to both of them after you have taken action, and even if you contact the police or someone else directly, you might feel bad about accusing someone you know, of a crime.

(...) We have respect for each other, right, and everyone is like "you let someone this close, but not completely", and you automatically respect that, and you want to have respect for someone wanting to make decisions in their own lives. (...) And to go into someone's life and say that "I know best in your life", I think that seems very dramatic both for me who know a lot about it and for others out there (...) And I think there's been a threshold for people, not just the police: "Yes, we can report, but what if there's nothing wrong?" And then you're more afraid to raise a false accusation than to let someone innocent keep living in an

undignified situation. (...) You take greater responsibility for the abuser than the abused. (01, police)

In that way, the benefit of the doubt is awarded to the potential perpetrator, and the result is that a woman who is exposed to violence stays in the abusive relationship.

The threshold seems to be high for people to talk to a group that could be affected by the violence as well; the children.

I have the impression that you almost need a Ph.D. in order to talk to a child. (...) We shouldn't professionalize this so much that no one dares to do something. (05, politician)

Rather than doing something about the signals they pick up from children, people are afraid to say the wrong things, even if it is likely that lack of action is more harmful.

Pressure from Others

As stated in the theoretical section above, relatives and friends are among the actors who have an effect on whether a potential client becomes an actual client. I have already discussed the cultural threshold for many people in Norway to take action on behalf of someone else even though they know or suspect that they are being abused, and in that way indirectly contribute to the continuation of the crime. Friends and family can also have a more direct effect, by pressuring someone into staying in an abusive relationship. This is particularly relevant in some immigrant families.

They [immigrant women] ask questions and try to get out of it, but then they receive lots of threats in the phase when they are starting to speak out about not wanting to live like that. So they are threatened, both by their partner, by his family and by their own family. Because the institutional aspect of the marriage and cohabitation is so strongly rooted in the culture that it's difficult to break those laws and conventions. (07, shelter)

Even if they know that the way they are being treated is wrong, they might take it in order to avoid losing their family.

They say that "I've stayed so long because it's a part of our culture", and "I'll be excluded by my family, by my national affiliation", be excluded because leaving is not accepted. (03, police)

Honour is a key word in that respect.

We shouldn't make generalizations (...) but it can be a dilemma that honour is a challenge [among immigrant families]. The honour of the family, and that more people are

perpetrators. (...) when honour is an aspect, it can be both an aunt, uncle and cousins who perform the violence. So then I think you need other strategies for solving it. (05, politician)

It was emphasized by the informants that there are as great differences among immigrant families as among culturally Norwegian families, but that this is a recurring pattern.

5.3 Challenges with the Interaction between the Victim and the System

The third and last hypothesis states that the accessibility of the system is low due to challenges with the interaction between the system and the victim. Theory concerning this relationship indicated that there might be problems both on the individual level and on the systemic level.

5.3.1 Challenges on the Individual Level

On the individual level, the informants described problems related to how cases are treated, the expectations of each party, and to the fact that the victim must present her case in a manner that makes her appear eligible.

Sensitivity versus Emotionally Neutral Treatment of Cases

In their summary of Weber's ideal modern bureaucracy, Katz and Danet (1973) state that the relationship between bureaucrats and clients is characterized by an emotionally neutral treatment of cases. This sounds like something that could come into conflict with empathy and understanding. Although the theory is on bureaucracy, the discussion is more relevant here in the section on interaction.

When one of the informants in the police talked about cooperation with other agencies, it was expressed that the degree to which people are forthcoming when it comes to these cases is not equal irrespective of whom they contact.

It's very individual, varies from person to person, I'd say. (03, police)

This means that for each case handled at the police station, the degree to which the client indirectly gets help from other agencies depends upon whom the police happen to come into contact with on that particular occasion.

One of the informants that has observed how women who are victims of violence are treated by people they interact with in the system, has noted that it has a lot to say who the women meet.

Interestingly, I've met people who come in as substitutes, who normally do patrolling, who have outstanding abilities, in a good sense. So part of the problem is that there are limits to how much you can do with knowledge. Personal qualifications are as important. Are you the right person to give the woman a sufficient amount of trust so she manages to convey what she needs to tell? (10, lawyer)

Further, those who work in one part of the system can be worried about the individual qualities of the ones they send the clients to.

The shelter could say that "we've got no one to send them to". The case can also be sent back to them, and then there's the problem that you're not sure whether the one who needs help is sent to someone with really high competence on the field. (08, resource centre)

They fear that the ones who receive the clients are not familiar with the field, and that they will treat the cases as if they were any other type of case, rather than taking the problem's nature properly into consideration.

So although emotional neutrality is the ideal, theoretically, it became clear to me that these cases require empathic abilities; an ability to put oneself in the clients' shoes and see the situation from their perspective.

"Yes, but she's just going back to him anyway, this is the last time she's getting that restraining order", right. And then if you don't understand how it is to be stuck in that circle of violence, and where there might rather be a need to be close to the abuser in order to be in control, because the police is unable to follow up on protective measures, then I think there's a need for more thorough training. (01, police)

Lack of understanding and emotional recognition on the part of men, especially, was also emphasized.

I think that men's understanding of the depth of going through something like this is too small. Because this isn't first and foremost a question of physical pain, but of the enormous violation of integrity. There's something about intruding oneself upon someone's most personal domain. (...) I don't think the male actors understand this properly. (10, lawyer)

I conclude that if what this informant says corresponds with reality, then men are in particular danger of not being able to look at these cases in light of their special characteristics, but rather to treat them as they treat cases with a different level of complexity and delicacy.

During the interaction, misunderstandings and misinterpretations can appear if the civil servant does not have enough knowledge on the field. What Bleiklie et al. (1997) write about incrimination and how the system could sometimes add a new stone to the woman's burden is relevant in this context.

Then you need knowledge about domestic violence as a phenomenon. If not, you easily get annoyed and think “why doesn't she just leave, why does she choose a man like him again”, and in the end the woman gets the blame because you think everything is so strange. (05, politician)

It takes some understanding on the part of the civil servant to make the interaction as good as possible.

Because [at the police station], that's where the women meet their first barrier. (...) I have to say that I've been to hundreds of questionings, and met many skilled police officers who have a very nice approach and understanding, but I've also met others who should not be on such cases. Especially one case in particular where my client almost experienced the questioning as a new assault, not due to bad intentions on the part of the police officer, but because of a complete lack of understanding of the situation. (10, lawyer)

The example above shows how interaction between women and the system can weaken the accessibility greatly for further contact with the system, and supports the findings of Rønning (2005) on the humiliation experienced by clients.

Cultural sensitivity is also important during the interaction.

You'll have great difficulties trying to get a woman from an Asian culture, for example, to understand that rape can happen within the institution of marriage. Because she's the man's property. He can do what he wants with his property. If you're not aware of such differences, it gets pretty hard to get a hold of what's really happened. (10, lawyer)

The civil servant might not know of these cultural differences, and the woman might not know that her perspective differs from that of the civil servant, and thus the confusion is not discovered. Or they are aware of the other person's standpoint, but not able to understand the other person anyway.

What happens during the process can also be interpreted different ways, and reduce the accessibility and lower the chances that the woman will contact the system later on.

It's an unfortunate fact that quite a large proportion of these reports are dismissed, and of those that go through court that don't lead to a conviction. And that will for these women be interpreted as if people don't believe them, and that it was really their fault. (10, lawyer)

While in fact there could be weaknesses in the system or other circumstances that cause the process to end in a different way than what the client had wished for, the interaction could leave the client feeling that she has not been believed, causing a lasting distrust in the system.

Expectations

In what they write about interaction, Bleiklie et al. (1997) focus upon the expectations of each party. The example below shows how the client's impression of the expectations from the system shapes what she tells them, even though other information could be useful as well.

Where we see that we have a challenge, is in capturing the pattern of psychological violence in our questionings; to be able to press the right buttons in order to focus on that pattern. And it's not just about the police asking the right questions, it's also about the ones who come in. I would say that in my experience, those who come [to the police] think that they have to present something very serious and physical, and then that's the focus also for the one who comes in to report. (01, police)

The informants working in the police talked about the expectations of women who go to the police because of domestic violence.

Those who come here and report, they're not concerned with penalties, they're concerned with getting peace. That's their – they report because they want help to get peace, help to get rid of the violence and get peace, from the abuser. (03, police)

(...) Those who call and contact me for advice and guidance, they don't want to go through criminal court. All they want is peace. (01, police)

Those in the police who interact with these women may have a different perception of what they expect, which could make the interaction more problematic – especially if the signals that are sent out change during the process of interaction, like in the example below.

It's quite usual that a woman calls the police and wants help to get rid of a violent husband under influence of alcohol. And then when the police is there, she might want to report him. She speaks out about what has happened, and about what situation she and her children have to endure. Then a day or two passes, and she doesn't want to say anything. Then she pulls

back her testimony. She can't withdraw the charges, but she can pull back the testimony. Then she won't contribute to getting the case to court. Many women don't want to get the abuser convicted. They want peace. So the police is a means to get peace. (05, politician)

The woman finds herself in a difficult position, due to issues already discussed above in the section about threshold, and she might not feel that the system is able to help her exactly the way she needs. At the same time, the police officers may not know enough about the topic, and get annoyed that her expressed wishes change this way. The accessibility of the system will thus be lower in the future because of a potential unwillingness on the part of the police to take such inquiries seriously, and perhaps the woman also feels bad about the situation because of the dissatisfaction expressed by the police.

Get Accepted as Eligible

One of the obstacles constituting the threshold, as presented by Bleiklie et al. (1997) and which is relevant for this section on interaction, is the fact that the potential client has got to present her case in a manner that makes her appear eligible. The nature of the issues of concern here makes this barrier prominent.

And because the victim of violence often develops many problems, they, well, can be perceived as unclear, self-contradictory, staggering. And when you observe this, without knowledge of what it means to experience violence, what happens to a person who is abused, I think that many end up thinking that it's the woman's fault. (05, politician)

Those who observe the woman and are going to decide whether she is “eligible”, that is, whether she in fact is the victim of a crime, might not understand what mechanisms that operate.

I'm thinking that we're quite stuck in how a trial works, and that there's little knowledge among judges and lawyers about the fact that when someone has been exposed to violence, they're not functioning normally, cognitively speaking. And the mechanism that sets in when you're in a court hall, it disturbs the victim's thinking, and weakens her ability to express herself in a way that makes others perceive her as trustworthy and kind of the “right victim”, in a way. It takes knowledge to understand that being in front of the counterparty and being interrogated by a lawyer [is upsetting]. This is on the lowest level of the court system, and it doesn't exactly get easier higher up in the system. (07, shelter)

The interaction can also be impeded if the woman censors herself in order to avoid being looked at unfavourably.

I've experienced plenty of times that girls, when they're going to talk about abuse say that "I don't want to talk about it, because I'm afraid that you'll think poorly of me, too". (08, resource centre)

As discussed above, the increased numbers of party-related incidents of rape can make women unsure of what really happened and whether what they experienced was something criminal or not. If they find out that they believe it was so, and they choose to report it, it can then be difficult for them to present their case in a convincing manner in the interaction situation.

(...) it's party-related and there's a lack of boundaries to different extents, and alcohol and narcotics may be involved, and signals and statements get blurry. And the other person interprets this the wrong way, and I think that's why so many cases are dismissed. Because you get difficulties with proving that this was intended, an act of will, and done on purpose. (07, shelter)

Finally, the women's credibility may be weakened by manipulative partners who have the ability to appear more trustworthy than them.

In my experience, many of those who have been stalked by previous partners, they experience difficulties with being believed in the system, because it's in the nature of the perpetrators to manipulate the system, too. (05, politician)

5.3.2 Challenges on the Systemic Level

The focus in the discussion about interaction on the systemic level is upon prioritization within agencies and on political prioritization and influence. Political prioritization and influence are discussed separately, although they were presented together in the theoretical section.

Prioritization within Agencies

This section concerns prioritization within the police and the court system, as they are the agencies that have a varied set of cases to prioritize amongst. Both the police and the court have cases on many different issues to deal with. Therefore, prioritization within agencies will also affect how much effort is put into combating these types of problems. It was expressed that within the police, for instance, there is a hierarchy of cases, in which violence against women is not very high up.

To be honest, I feel that working with domestic violence doesn't have the highest status internally here. (01, police)

This concerns how those who work there rank the cases. When it comes to prioritizations made by the management, it was expressed that what might be considered a fair distribution of resources not necessarily is fair if the nature of the problem is included in the evaluation.

I don't feel that we're given less priority, or, I feel that they're trying to distribute resources equally, that everyone gets some. But I don't feel that we're prioritized according to how serious our cases are. (01, police)

The question of resources in the form of time is also a central element when it comes to prioritization within agencies, and although they would wish more time being given to cases on violence against women, there was an understanding for the pressure the court is under.

I'm not that familiar with how the District Court works, and I know that they experience a high demand. Many cases are waiting, and there's a long waiting line and so forth, they too have considerations to make. (07, shelter)

At the same time, it was expressed that many in the court system have an approach to these cases that is too conservative.

I suspect that the police and the state attorney are too careful when it comes to bringing cases to court. [A woman wrote a detailed diary about sexual abuse she was put through by her husband.] That didn't help either. So something is seriously wrong, and I want to ask the question of whether the police and the state attorney are being too careful. That there's some kind of a prestige in this, or a matter of resources. (10, lawyer)

I find this interesting seen in light of what Bleiklie et al. (1997) write about how civil servants strategically can avoid clients that they consider unfit, or as a means to relieve themselves from pressure resulting from having too many clients.

Political Prioritization

None of the representatives from political parties were of the opinion that what happens behind closed door is not the public's business. I found that all the parties consider violence against women a very important issue, and the representatives also perceived other parties as concerned with it.

When we discuss cases with this kind of an issue, there's a consensus, which I think is good, that this is a problem that should be taken seriously. (02, politician)

The report also seems to have awoken the attention of those who are in government today.

I think it was very good that as soon as the new NKVTS-report was published, both Erna [Solberg, Prime Minister] and others in the Conservative Party's management went public saying that they were shocked and want to do something about it. This, well, this is prioritized. Having the will to prioritize is very, very important. (05, politician)

Plans of action have been laid out above, so it is clear that things are being done in order for the situation to improve. There are still some challenges from a political perspective when it comes to prioritization. Even though everyone agrees that the issue should be taken seriously, it can still drown in the multitude of other cases that are important to each of the political parties.

Some informants were missing initiatives from the politicians to learn from those who work directly with the women and who have knowledge from that perspective.

In my experience, this issue is a bit marginal, but when the spotlight is on it, there's a broad political agreement saying that this should be supported and maintained (...). Although we're asked, I'm thinking that they could have been more eager to hear our opinions, that each of them had spent more time – (...) I'm not being categorical, but I'm thinking that after 30 years we have a lot of experience, and also wishes and knowledge, which I think should be asked for and given attention. (07, shelter)

Furthermore, plans of action on how to combat the problem will not be put into action unless a satisfactory amount of resources are distributed.

The backside is that they [the Ministry of Justice and Public Security] give us a lot of tasks but no resources. Little resources, at least. (01, police)

It was also commented that even though everyone wants an improvement on the issue, it is so complicated that it might be difficult for politicians to know just what will help.

We need an engine starting in the Storting [Norwegian parliament] with some commitment. The problem is that often it ends with the words. (...) There are good intentions, but maybe we're all a bit helpless, since there's no simple answer. You have to spend some time looking for the good answers. And in that helplessness, a lot of time passes, and all that's left are the words. Not necessarily followed by action. (04, politician)

Violence against women is a violation of basic human rights. When asked why it has not been focussed upon to a greater extent compared to more “superficial” women's rights, the challenging nature of the problem was pointed out.

It's not about how serious it is, it's about how easy it is to solve it. You can say that a board must have a gender balance of 40% of each gender. That's easy. It's easy to count, and easy to make demands. We can disagree on whether it should be 30, 35 or 40, but it's not difficult. (...) When it comes to what we're talking about here, this is to a great extent invisible to the public. The public has little possibility to "count", or make adjustments, sanctions, besides convictions, of course, in the processes. (...) If there was a really good measure that we were pretty sure would work effectively, I'm sure there would be political agreement and a law on it as soon as possible. But we're lacking those measures, and that's why change takes so long. (04, politician)

Also, it might not be sufficient that politicians on the national level are concerned with the issue. The municipalities have to be on board, and the types of attitudes that have been discussed earlier in the analysis can be found also among politicians.

It was decided that each municipality should have a plan of action on violence against women, and then some municipalities said that "that doesn't occur here, we don't need such a plan of action". (...) And I'm thinking that if you're met with such attitudes, if you live in a certain municipality and you're exposed to violence and the attitude of the municipality is that it doesn't happen in our municipality, then what do you do? It just makes it worse. (11, politician)

Some informants stated that there is a tendency for the plans of action not to be properly prioritized when it comes to evaluation, an issue that was mentioned in the discussion on how bureaucracy works, but the experience on this was not equivocal.

Based on my experience as a project manager, the demands have been clear on both reporting and evaluation. (05, politician)

An interesting note to make on the issue of political prioritization is that when I asked the politicians to name important causes for their party related to women's rights, only one representative (from the Labour Party) mentioned violence against women. This does not necessarily mean that the others do not prioritize it, but it might be an indication of how the issue disappears among other causes.

Political Influence: The Lack of Active Client Group

A problem on this issue when it comes to political influence is the lack of an active client group. On the one hand, the high number of victims implies that their occupational group

(politicians) is not exempt from these issues.

And when we're gathered in City Council tonight, there will statistically be many who are both victims and perpetrators in that hall. It's as easy as that. But it's uncomfortable, and it shouldn't be. (02, politician)

The two first preconditions described by Bleiklie et al. (1997) for client groups to influence policy are that they are represented in channels of participation and in the phases of decision making in which the final content of the service can actually be influenced. Assuming that also politicians are victims of violence, these two preconditions are likely to be fulfilled.

The third precondition is that if they are represented in channels of participation, they must be represented *as clients*. First and foremost, however, politicians represent their parties, and as described in the quotation below, it is not given that politicians who are victims of violence speak up about this on the political arena. The opposite could in fact be the case; that they are less likely to do so if they have prominent positions in society and politics:

And maybe, if you're a public figure, the threshold for telling people about it is even higher. And I've experienced that there has been focus upon this, but that the debate gets a bit quiet, because you're afraid to stamp on the abuser's toes, as well. But I don't share that view. But you can easily imagine that girls, if they live in manipulative relationships, don't raise their voices. But it's probably an issue that has been too much of a taboo. (02, politician)

There could therefore be a barrier for politicians who have first-hand experience with this to come out as representatives of that group, but also for other politicians to discuss it openly because of the issue discussed above about the threshold for people to enter what may be perceived as the private sphere. I find taboo to be a key word in this regard. The following extract illustrates a problem with discussing this kind of topic.

And there it is again, kind of historical, that you don't want to hear about sexual abuse, not hear about, well, abuse of women. It's kind of something disgusting, something we don't want to relate to, it's hard to relate to it, hard to think about it. I'm thinking that such unconscious or half-conscious attitudes are there and create some resistance. But at the same time, there are many clear voices. On all political levels, as far as I'm concerned. (08, resource centre)

The last couple of sentences show that despite the challenges, those who actually moot the issue of violence against women tend to be clear.

So, if politicians who are affected by this do not advocate on behalf of this group as victims, then someone else must do it. There are organisations and professionals to represent the

interests of victims of violence¹⁹, which is mentioned by Bleiklie et al. (1997) as an important condition. Still, these act on behalf of victims of violence. It is more rare the a victim stands out and fights for political influence herself. One of those who work with the topic professionally and therefore are among those who have to fight on behalf of the victims described this challenge:

Informant: The four last Ministers of Justice and Public Security have been here and been informed, for example, about the centre and how we run service for victims, without any action on their part [to bring it on to other cities]. (...) The police has wanted to spread it all over the country, but there isn't a will to do it.

Researcher: What do you think is the reason for this?

Informant: It requires money. And we kind of don't have a client group to promote it, right. If there's a client group at the Minister's office, advocating, it has a completely different impact than if a few people say that "this is very good". (03, police)

Also politicians pointed out the lack of activism for political influence among this client group.

The women who are victims of this haven't been so much "out there" [promoting the cause]. (06, politician)

There's got to be someone to promote the cause. Who chooses to put their name and face on it, and then keeps working on it, rather than changing focus after two years, one year, or less. So I'm not sure if we have someone who put their face on it. (09, politician)

The potential described by Tripi (1974) for clients to unite politically does not seem to be taken advantage of to a high extent in this case.

Shame and guilt were central in the discussion about threshold for potential clients to contact the system for help, and the same feelings prevent victims of violence to promote the cause politically.

And the whole issue is often, to victims, tainted by shame and guilt and taboo, so it's the strongest of the strong who come forward. The shame makes you want to hide and be invisible. So it's the exception, I guess, that comes forward. But I'm thinking – you can't expect it. (08, resource centre)

¹⁹ Landsforeningen for voldsofre (English: National organization for victims of violence) and DIXI Ressurssenter mot voldtekt (English: DIXI Resource Centre against Rape).

You're trying to protect yourself by hiding it, because you feel that it just gets worse. And I'm thinking that you're scared. It can lead to a lot of attention. But praised be those who come forward. (08, resource centre)

The way I see it, there is a vulnerability connected with any type of public promotion, and once you have gone public with a cause, there is no way back. What is also special about this issue is that since violence against women very often happens in close relations, a woman who speaks out as a victim of violence will at the same time tell on her partner or someone else she knows, which is likely to make it even more difficult, even if she has been abused.

Political poverty, as described by Dahl (1967) implies that there is something that makes some groups less able than others to influence politics. In this case, there is explanatory power in the comment from Bleiklie et al. (1997) on how the political disadvantage of a group can be the result of characteristics of the interaction process between the clients and the system rather than characteristics of the clients themselves. The incrimination and the taboo that surrounds the issue of violence against women make them a disadvantaged group on the political arena. Thoresen and Hjemdal (2014) conclude that vulnerability for being exposed to violence is negatively correlated with socio-economic status. This implies that in many cases, the victim is not only politically poor in terms of the interaction process, but also in the sense that Dahl (1967) focussed upon – doubling the challenges.

For those who meet the women through their work and who have experience and knowledge to share with the politicians, there was a feeling that the politicians might not be thorough enough when it comes to listening to these experiences and taking the knowledge into consideration.

But that's how I experience it from our point of view. That they go through it a bit quickly. Listen to the ones who speak loudest. (01, police)

If other client groups are more directly active and other cases are higher up on the agenda, the voices of victims of violence, carried through by professionals or organizations that work on their behalf, might not be so loud.

5.4 The Suggested Solutions: Helpful from the Perspective of Public Management?

Though the analysis, I have found support for all three hypotheses. There are characteristics of the way the system is organized which cause problems when the issue it has to deal with is violence against women. Further, there is indeed a high threshold between the victim and the system, and it is caused by problems with realising that she needs help and that the system can help her and with physical and social barriers she needs to cross. Then finally there are also challenges relating to the interaction between the client and the system, both on the individual level and on the systemic level.

The section above answered the first part of the research question; *why does the system fall short on this issue?* In the last part of the analysis, I move on to second part of the research question; *what do different societal actors suggest as solutions to this problem?* I discuss how the changes suggested by my informants can have a positive impact from the same perspective as I have looked at the challenges – the perspective of public management.

5.4.1 Changing the System

Two of the changes that the informants suggested are directly related to problems outlined in the analysis; the separation into agencies with different jurisdictional areas and the unfit rules. Moreover, they emphasized two factors that are related to the issue of primary versus secondary clients, and direct and indirect clients.

Cross-Sectoral Cooperation for a More Holistic Approach

One of the informants in the police talked about a new tool for them to work with domestic violence; Spousal Assault Risk Assessment guide (SARA):

What's interesting about it is that it makes our organization more able to work with the other side of the family issue, not just the investigation, but it gives us some routines and tools to work with protection and prevention. And SARA then challenges us to approach the rest of the service system and the victims' families in order to take advantage of the different areas we work on, sort of. (1, police)

Another way of making the system more adjusted to cases like this, which the same informant referred to, is the Karin project from Sweden. There, doctors, psychologists, lawyers, representatives from shelters and children's welfare agencies and other relevant actors are

gathered in the same building, working on the same cases of domestic violence. They talk to and help both victims, abusers and children. As stated by the informant:

Then we're getting closer to a responsible way of dealing with these cases. (1, police)

It was further suggested by the lawyer among the informants that psychologists or other professionals should be used in court to give a proper and more correct evaluation of the women's credibility, as those who are the judges of this tend to lack sufficient knowledge to do so properly.

This cross-sectoral approach goes against what Weber (1978) wrote on separation of jurisdictional domains in deal bureaucracies, and supports the argument that characteristics of the system Weber described are not ideal for these types of cases.

New Rules for a More Suitable System

On the issue of the system's rules, two main points stood out; the requirements for evidence in court and the way rape is defined.

My impression is that today, you need a lot of evidence in order to sentence someone. And I'm in doubt whether – maybe we're too strict before we sentence someone. (6, politician)

So in my opinion, it should be discussed whether the threshold of evidence is too high in these cases. (10, lawyer)

Concerning the definition of rape, the lawyer suggested that lack of consent should be considered enough for something to be defined as rape from a legal perspective.

Changes in the evidence requirements could lead to more convictions which then again could give other victims more positive expectations from their potential interaction with the system. A change in how rape is defined legally would not only send out signals to the population about how to define boundaries. It would also include women who have been stuck in a manipulative and abusive relationship so long that they are not capable of protesting, and in that way recognize that what they experience is also a crime.

Who Should Be the Primary Client?

As pointed out by many of the informants, the system is currently much more concerned with reparation than prevention. This means that the victim of violence, much more often than the perpetrator, becomes the primary client of the system's services. Related to the incrimination

that has been described earlier, the women themselves become the focus of attention by those they meet.

[There are] stories from women who have been exposed to violence who go to a psychologist, where the psychologist starts going deep into her childhood, and it can be very uncomfortable for her, because you feel that “oh, there was something wrong with me after all”. (08, resource centre)

However, the actual cause of the violence is not the woman herself, although some women are more vulnerable for being exposed to violence.

Many are concerned with protecting the girls, which is good. But far fewer think about protecting boys from exercising [violence]. (03, police)

There's a lot to gain from looking at the psychology of the perpetrator. (08, resource centre)

The reasons why men use violence is not directly the focus of this thesis, although what has been discussed about attitudes, unclear boundaries and historic remainders of power relations are relevant in that regard. Still, seen from the perspective of public management, it is striking that the victims to such a great extent have to carry the burden of the violence.

What we might have to work with in the time to come, is that, for example, it's currently the victim who needs to hide on a secret address. Who needs to watch out, who needs to move. Change school, or whatever. I think we need to investigate how to put the burden on the perpetrator to a greater extent, rather than on the victim. (05, politician)

An interesting perspective was provided by the lawyer, when he emphasized the fact that having shelters where people can hide from domestic violence is publicly accepted as a way of dealing with the problem.

It's the same type of attitudes that lead us to, as a matter of course, establish shelters in Norway in 2014. Even make a law on shelters [giving everyone the right to a place in a shelter]. It reflects an attitude that's despicable. It shouldn't be necessary in a civilized society to have shelters for women and children because they're being abused. We take it as a matter of course. To me it's not a matter of course. To me it's tragic. And what worries me, is that no one asks questions – is this necessary? Is this how we want it to be? (10, lawyer)

Only a minority of the informants, two of the politicians (the representatives from the Progress Party and the Liberal Party), expressed a wish for higher maximum sentences as a means to improving the situation. The dominating view was that it is more important that the sentences that are available today are put to use more often, and that men to a greater extent are made primary clients through an alternative use of the court system:

Use the court to force someone into treatment, for instance. (...) I don't believe in more severe punishment, but I believe we have to think differently. (...) Because signing up for anger management courses, for example, if that's the solution – that's a long way to go for many, who then need that extra push. (5, politician)

A new approach to the question of who should be primary clients is therefore an important part of the changes suggested by the informants.

Focussing on Children as Indirect Clients

A striking similarity among how both professionals and politicians talked about justifications for why they themselves and people in general should get involved in other people's personal sphere was the focus on children.

The UN conventions on children and on equality are at the core of our work all the time. (01, police)

We've got to dare to do something. And this is first and foremost for the sake of the children who grow up in this. So in that way, it's very easy for me to legitimize political action to improve the system on that level [the personal sphere]. (05, politician)

Related to this, it was mentioned as important that people who work directly with children have someone to go to if they suspect that the children witness domestic violence.

And that they [employees in kindergartens and schools] can discuss their worries with someone who has experience and can ask them the right questions (...). (07, shelter)

In this way, thinking of children as indirect clients if some or both of their parents should be put in contact with the system is a way of lowering the threshold for others to take action.

5.4.2 Lowering the Threshold

When it comes to solutions to the problem of threshold, I identified two main points made by the informants that could have a positive effect in this regard; that we need to work to change attitudes in the population and that working with children is of great importance.

Attitudes: Getting Rid of Incrimination and Taboo

A change in attitudes in the population was mentioned by all the informants as a vital step towards a better situation when it comes to violence against women in Norway. This could both increase the likelihood that a victim of violence understands that what she has experienced is a crime, and lower the social barriers she needs to pass.

All the informants were very clear when talking about the incrimination that we see today. They expressed that it is unacceptable to blame the victim, and that such attitudes should be changed. This could be achieved by getting rid of the taboo that still exists, as taboos prevent knowledge from being spread. Bringing it out in the open through campaigning was suggested as a means to taking away the taboo. It could spread knowledge to those who need information about what rights they have and where they can turn for help, and also make others think about the issue by bringing it out in the open.

I know that abroad, public campaigns have been run more often, (...) with numbers you can call and places to go, conveying a message to those it concerns that it shouldn't be like this, we take you seriously, and more information that reaches those that we don't know are suffering. Making it more public. (01, police)

When asked which actors that are central in this work, many informants mentioned that it is important that someone high up in society fronts it.

Basically, it's the responsibility of each and every one of us. But as we humans tend to act as sheep, in reality we depend upon our leaders taking the lead and showing us the way. (10, lawyer)

It's often important to have famous people on board. (...) Famous people who can go public with their stories, breaking down the barriers to talk about this. (02, politician)

It was also suggested that to focus upon this in the workplace could have beneficial effects on attitudes among people.

I think that many workplaces, most workplaces, could use to have this issue put on the agenda. (04, politician)

If there could be less of a taboo connected with violence against women, achieved through such openness and focus, the threshold described earlier in the thesis would be lowered. The potential knowledge generated in the population as a result of this could diminish the incrimination, which could have a positive effect both on the threshold and on the interaction process.

Starting Early: The Importance of Working with Children

A point made frequently by the informants was that in order to change attitudes in the population, we have to start with the children. By professionals visiting kindergartens and schools, talking about sexuality, boundaries, what is criminal and such questions, not only would the children become more able to make right decisions later on and be less inclined to

abuse someone, but they would also, in the case that they are abused, be more capable of realising that what they experience is in fact a crime. This would increase the accessibility of the system as their knowledge could lead them to contacting the system, whether it be in the form of reporting it to the police or seeking help in some other way. Talking to children about the importance of telling people if they see something wrong was also highlighted.

5.4.3 Improving Interaction: Specialization and Knowledge

The introducing of the position as coordinator for domestic violence in the police was mentioned by some of the informants as an important step in creating a more specialized system by which the focus and competence on the field have been improved. It was suggested by an informant that there should be a special service offered to victims of rape, other than the emergency reception at the hospital. It was shown earlier in the thesis that the system lacks this kind of specialization. More knowledge on the field among those who are involved with cases like this was also emphasized by the informants, especially when it comes to police officers and judges and other people in the court system.

(...) Because I think that this to a great extent is about – not necessarily attitudes, but it's a lack of understanding that makes you misunderstand things. (...) This problem is so serious that we have to give it an equal status; get it into our routines, in training and practice (...). (01, police)

Lack of knowledge can also create bad attitudes, and there was an agreement among the informants that knowledge is a key word in order to make the system more successful on these cases. The concept Arranged Dialogue²⁰ is a service offered to victims of sexual abuse who knows who assaulted them and who wants to meet the perpetrator in arranged circumstances in the presence of professionals. This service does not replace the formal reporting and the court, and the lawyer was of the opinion that in the future, the legal handling of such cases could be a mix of the two types of approaches.

5.4.4 When the System Falls Short: A Responsibility beyond Public Management

The challenges innate in the problem were made clear from how the politicians described that this is an issue on which they to a great extent depend upon others in order to improve the situation.

We just have to admit that we're unable to reveal things like this without help from the police,

²⁰ Norwegian: Tilrettelagt dialog.

non- governmental organizations and these skilled officials in the municipalities, that we need advice on this, because we can't handle the situation. To us, it's hidden. (06, politician)

In addition to non-governmental organizations, doctors were pointed out as a group of important actors who should be more concerned with contributing on the field, as was also mentioned by Bleiklie et al. (1997). Furthermore, scientists were emphasized as someone with the power to promote the cause and bring knowledge out, both to politicians and to the rest of the population. More use of external evaluation and research, rather than just internal governmental reports, was mentioned as a measure which could improve the work that is being conducted. Their work can set the agenda for politicians, as illustrated by the following quotation:

(...) It [the recently published report on violence in Norway] provides a reason why we have to work on this. (05, politician)

Also the media are put forward as a central supplement to what the state can offer.

We're totally dependent upon teamwork. The three branches of government plus the fourth one, which is the media. (06, politician)

When it all comes down to it, it is up to every single one of us to become more conscious about how we choose to act.

There's got to be a process inside of [the victim] in order for change to happen, but we might get that process started. (07, shelter)

What strikes me after reading this report is that yes, we can always do a better job, but this is to a much greater extent a responsibility for society far beyond the police. And I'm not just thinking of public management and in departments like the child welfare agency and health. I mean as fellow human beings. (...) When I read this report, I'm thinking that violence is definitely a private matter in Norway today. (01, police)

By being more aware of our own attitudes we can contribute to making a society where the accessibility of the system of public management increases. Bleiklie et al. (1997) write that interaction problems could lead to a situation where a service is run by someone else but the state. Here, the system depends upon society in general to do their part, even though the services are run by them.

6.0 Conclusive Remarks

Through the analysis, I demonstrated that the accessibility of the system of public management is low for women who are victims of rape and domestic violence in Norway. The fragmented and hierarchical structure and lack of flexibility challenges the system on these types of cases. Specialization is to a too great extent based on professional field rather than particular issues, meaning that those who deal with cases of violence against women are unable to look at them from a holistic perspective. There is a high threshold between the victim as a potential client and the system, caused by problems she has with realising that she needs help and that the system can help her, and by physical and social barriers that stand between her and the system. Finally, there are challenges with the interaction between the client and the system, both on an individual and systemic level. The solutions suggested by my informants touch upon all these challenges, and their main points are on cross-sectoral cooperation, new rules, a different approach to who the primary client should be, a focus upon children as indirect clients, a change in attitudes and improving interaction by means of a more useful type of specialization and more knowledge and understanding among people. I believe that the most important conclusion to draw from my thesis is that the challenges I have discussed are very fundamental. The governmental plans of action I presented early in the thesis aim for many changes that go along with what the informants emphasized, but I miss more of a discussion of whether some basic characteristics of how the system is organized should be changed. According to what I find in the present thesis; they should.

I have found that the challenges present for women in general can be amplified for those who have a different cultural background, and this is an aspect that could be investigated more thoroughly by others. Standardization and lack of flexibility implies that the system is even less suited for cases of rape and domestic violence against women in Norway from other cultures. Further, cultural variations may cause victims of violence to have other perceptions of what violence is, when they should seek help, and in what ways the system of public management can help them. Influence from others in the form of pressure might stand in the way and enhance the threshold. If the accessibility of the system is low for people without these extra challenges, then it is undoubtedly low for those who face them. As I mentioned earlier, other researchers have investigated the experiences of victims of violence, rather than having focussed upon how the system works, like I have done. Further studies could use the same theories as I have had as framework, and ask women questions more directly about the

mechanisms I have described, which I do not believe has been done to a great extent previously. This could contribute to our understanding of the ways in which the system currently falls short.

Personally, I find it grave that so much of the burden is put on the victim with the way the system of public management works now, and that the victim most times is made primary client – with the negative implications this has for her life. If I were to continue working on this topic myself, I would be tempted to explore this issue, along with possible ways of improving the system in this regard. From a more political angle, the challenge with obtaining political influence for clients on a case that is not only personal, but also tabooed, is something I find very interesting. Violence against women is a breach of basic human and women's rights, and its basic nature is part of the reason why the victims are left so vulnerable. Groups need political influence in order to achieve fundamental change, and I would like to go more into depth in the political aspect of why the system is still not more adjusted to this issue, despite its severity, so many years after the personal became political.

What I also find to be missing is a sufficient focus upon attitudes. The informants called for public campaigns. Attitudes leading people to play down violence against women prevail among people in general but also those who work in the system. A case that was recently brought to the public's attention exemplifies the state's failure to protect the security of the inhabitants. A young woman reported her ex-partner to the police for violence and threats. Her requests were not taken seriously. The shelter she had been hiding at believed she did not need to stay there. On the 14th of October 2012 she was found dead – he had killed her (Thorenfeldt 2014). As Wiese (2014) writes:

We need threats to be given higher priority by the police. We need women in danger to be taken seriously to a greater extent. We need the measures put in place to provide them with safety to aim at the men who threaten them. (...) every woman who must live in fear or is threatened to silence is a humiliating defeat for our democracy.

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Interview Guide for Interviews with Representatives from Political Parties

Give information on the aim of the project and their rights as a participant through a consent form.

Introduction

Age?

Which political party do you represent?

For how long have you been an active member of [party]?

To what extent is the topic of women's rights something [party] is concerned with?

What do you consider the most important cases on this field?

Norwegian Centre on Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies recently published a report of prevalence of violence in Norway. [Give them a summary if necessary.] What is your immediate reaction to these results?

Part 1: Why Such a Big Problem?

Why do you think this problem is as prevalent in Norway as it is, despite a high degree of gender equality and fulfilment of human and women's rights in general? What challenges on the issue, from your perspective?

Key words to look for in their answers and to follow up on:

Attention and focus?

Resources?

Resources for right kinds of initiatives?

Attitudes in the population? Cultural differences?

Young girls most commonly exposed. Weakly represented group politically?

Sentencing (maximum/minimum) of perpetrators.

The violence often happens inside homes. Politically controversial?

Taboo?

[Otherwise, follow up on what they say.]

Part 2: How to Achieve Change?

What needs to be done?

Who should do something? Main responsibility and other actors? Who has failed so far?

[If they mention attitudes as a problem.] What can be done to change people's attitudes?

Do you believe that you have enough knowledge of the issue to develop efficient policies?

Contact with professionals to learn?

Are there limits to what politicians can do something about, and if so, is that limit visible on this particular topic?

Conclusive Questions

Do you have anything to add?

Any questions?

Interview Guide for Interviews with Professionals

Give information on the aim of the project and their rights as a participant through a consent form.

Introduction

Which agency?

Age?

How long have you worked here? Other relevant experience?

Part 1: The Work They Do

How do you work on this field (violence against women)?

How do you define violence?

What type(s) of violence do you see they highest prevalence of?

Norwegian Centre on Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies recently published a report on prevalence of violence in Norway. [Give them a summary if necessary.] Reaction to the results they presented?

What roles do international conventions play in your work, if any? International cooperation of any kind?

Part 2: Why Such a Big Problem?

Why do you think this problem is as prevalent in Norway as it is, despite a high degree of gender equality and fulfilment of human and women's rights in general? What challenges on the issue, from your perspective?

Key words to look for in their answers and to follow up on:

Attention and focus?

Resources?

Resources for right kinds of initiatives?

Attitudes in the population? Cultural differences?

Young girls most commonly exposed. Weakly represented group politically?

Sentencing (maximum/minimum).

The violence often happens inside homes. Politically controversial?

Taboo?

[Otherwise, follow up on what they say.]

Part 3: How to Achieve Change?

Do you miss anything in recent plans of action (if you know of them)?

Who must do something? (Main responsibility, other actors, who has failed.)

Political will and effort? Improvements?

Enough knowledge among politicians?

How does cooperation with other agencies work out?

Conclusive Questions

Do you have anything to add?

Any questions?

