Understanding Diversity & Inclusion within the Swedish Gaming Industry

A Depiction of Employee Perception.

Louise Fredin
Daniela Baptista

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Abstract

Sweden is one of the leading countries when it comes to the game developing and has for over a decade been a European epicentre for both companies and employees within the industry. However, at the beginning of 2023, the Research Institutes of Sweden (RISE) pointed out some challenges that the industry faces in terms of creating diverse and inclusive organizations, which could ultimately be an obstacle to continued growth. Along the same line, global statistics of the industry do prevail over an overall lack of diversity and inclusive organizational environments. As for the Swedish context, statistics are not as accessible and extensive, although there are signs of similar patterns. Looking at the statistics both nationally in Sweden and globally, researchers are in unison that one reason for the lack of diversity within the industry could be pointed towards the lack of women applicants for STEM careers.

Regardless of the source of the problem, there is a strong consensus amongst scholars within the field of diversity and inclusion concerning the positive outcomes that it has on business when it comes to both performance and organizational well-being. To some degree, the gaming industry in Sweden has demonstrated apparent attempts throughout recent decades to increase the amount of women, and other minoritised groups and introduce efforts of inclusion measurements. But what is rather unexplored within the research of the Swedish context is what the understanding of the phenomena of diversity and inclusion amongst the employees within the industry looks like. This thesis argues that in-depth knowledge about employee perception could be considered a potentially important puzzle bite in supporting organizations in their development and innovation regarding the subject. Hence, this thesis will explore the subjective perception of diversity and inclusion amongst employees within the Swedish gaming industry by using the theoretical framework of inequality regimes by Joan Acker.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, gaming, industry, inequality, organizational change
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>IGDA</td>
<td>International Game Developers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math</td>
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<td>TGA</td>
<td>The Game Assembly</td>
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<td>ABK</td>
<td>Activision Blizzard King</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIPOC</td>
<td>Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour</td>
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1. Introduction

The gaming industry in Sweden has been one of the most dynamic industries in the country in recent years and according to Clement (2023) the gaming industry production value amounted to 22.14 billion Swedish krona (1.92 billion euro) in 2020. With this rapid development, the industry has become a focal point of development, employment and economic growth. However, according to the Research Institute of Sweden AB (RISE) report which highlights current and future developments in the gaming industry in Sweden, one of the industry's key challenges is its ability to increase and develop a diverse, inclusive and sustainable industry moving forward. Having in mind the importance of the industry for Sweden, as well as, the challenges faced stated by RISE (Flintberg, 2023), we decided to focus the following thesis on exploring how diversity and inclusion are perceived by employees within the gaming industry in Sweden. Motivated by our shared interest in diversity and inclusion, and fueled by our own experiences as belonging to minoritized groups in Sweden, we found the challenges the gaming industry is facing intriguing both on an organisational and personal level. Due to our personal experiences, we both are convinced that the subjective perception of diversity and inclusion within the industry could play a vital role in how the challenges within organizations could be understood more deeply. Another driving force behind this thesis is the importance of diversity and inclusion to foster healthy, resilient and innovative companies, and therefore, as RISE addresses, its importance for Sweden to further develop the industry (Flintberg, 2023).

Building from academic knowledge this thesis will be capitalising in the definition of diversity proposed by Roberson (2006, p. 214), which states that diversity is the observable and unobservable dimensions of personal identification markers of the workforce. Moreover, we will also utilise Roberson's (2006, p. 216) definition of inclusion as the degree to which individuals are allowed to deviate from the most persistent norms in our society, often connected to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and more. Having these definitions in mind, we decided to collect data through semi-structured-open-ended interviews that provide an insight into the perceptions of a mixed group of gaming industry employees, spanning from designers, and project managers to programmers, regarding diversity and inclusion in their
organizations. In the following thesis, we will be presenting a background of the industry and a literature review with different theories and concepts that complement the readers understanding. Furthermore, in the theory section, we explore inequality regimes from Joan Acker (Acker, 2006). This, is due to our united understanding that diversity and inclusion are heavily reliant on to what extent exclusion and inequality exist within an organisation. Furthermore, we will use inequality regimes as our main theory to analyse the qualitative data and build an approximation to the perception of diversity and inclusion in the gaming industry. Conclusively, we will present the reader with a conclusion and implications for further research.

2. Background

In this following chapter, we will give the reader an overview of the challenges of the gaming industry as a whole, as well as a contextualization of the industry in Sweden in particular. This chapter aims to give the reader a wider understanding of the industry, present its relation to the diversity and inclusion subject and motivate the rationale of the problem formulation.

2.1 The Gaming Industry

The games industry consists of producing everything from video games, computer games, mobile games and more. Some would argue that video games have filled and replaced the function of traditional games and are now the main activity to fill spare time for both young and old individuals around the world (Baltezarevic et al., 2018 p.72). The gaming industry as a whole reaches out to billions of individuals. In 2022 it was estimated that 3.2 billion individuals play some sort of game with a total spending of 196.8 billion dollars. Meaning that the gaming industry as a whole has a large effect on populations globally, both in terms of what kind of games they put out on the market, as well as, how they foster their organizations in which a large number of employees exist (NewZoo, 2022).
To get an overview of diversity and inclusion in the gaming industry globally we turn to the International Game Developers Association (IGDA), which argues that diversity and equity are central themes in the current discourse regarding the trajectory of the industry. IGDA states that several improvements in the diversity and equity in the industry, such as increment in women and coloured game developers. Nevertheless, the IGDA report states that 74% of the respondents in the Satisfaction Survey 2021, did not feel that the industry was equal in opportunities and treatment. A declining constant trend from 2015, when only 45% reported a perception of unfairness in the industry. 2021 was the year when more people than ever before reported personal experiences of social or interpersonal inequity and microaggressions in the industry (Weststar, et al., 2022 p.3).

Moreover, 80 % of the respondents reported that diversity is somewhat important to the industry. However, the industry seems to struggle when it comes to finding a way to develop in these areas and legitimize the experiences of ill-treatment of people who belong to minoritized groups (Weststar et al., 2022 p.47). The data also demonstrates that occupational segregation by gender has remained stable since 2016, where women are still underrepresented in roles such as programming, whilst more present in roles such as design and art. Similar patterns apply to people of colour, leaving occupational segregation altogether persistent (Weststar et al., 2022 p.46).

Furthermore, IGDA provides a general picture of the demographic composition of the gaming industry, stating that the average age of the workforce is 34 years old, 32 years for women and 36 years for men. Furthermore, 78% of the survey respondents identify as white, followed by 10% as Hispanic or Latino (Weststar et al., 2022 p.10). In contrast, Activision Blizzard King (ABK), which is a union of three companies, reports that on average only 36% of their employees come from an ethnic minority group (ABK, 2020). Furthermore, the United Kingdom Gaming Industry Census conducted by Taylor (2022) reports that in the United Kingdom, only 10% of employees in the industry come from an ethnic minority. The IGDA reports that the countries where the gaming industry workforce seems to be most diverse are;

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1 IGDA is a non-profit membership organization founded in the United States but is now a global community with well over 12,000 members. They are the authors of the report “Diversity in the Game Industry Report 2021”, which aimed to share the latest findings and fuel a critical conversation on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in the business, with both developers and studios giving us a comprehensive insight into a large amount of data concerning developers satisfaction in recent times (Weststar et al., 2022 p.3). The diversity section of the survey was performed by using gender and self-reported ethnic minority status in order to utilize an intersectional lens for the answers, in order to nuance and deepen the results of the data (Weststar et al., 2022 p.46).
the United States (39%), Europe (35% including the UK) and Canada (12%) (Weststar et al., 2022 p.12). In terms of gender, of all the respondents 62% were men and 30% were women (Weststar et al., 2022 p.14), this is very similar to the report presented by ABK (2020), which stated that from all the permanent employees in the US of these three companies, 76% are male, and 24% women. This is also in line with what Taylor states according to the UK industry census report (2022), where 67% of the employees are male, 30% women, and 3% non-binary. In the same line, the IGDA report states that one of the biggest problems is the lack of support for the employees who are the main caregivers of children, as only 4% of companies provide daycare or daycare subsidies (Weststar et al., 2022 p.13). Interestingly, the report states that formal education is still the biggest way to enter the industry, as it was stated by 79% of the respondents. At the same time, the higher levels of university or postgraduate education are reported to identify as women (73%) followed by men (65%) (Weststar et al., 2022 p.16).

2.2 The Gaming Industry in Sweden

According to the Swedish Institute (2022), it is estimated that one in four people in the world has played a game developed in Sweden. The gaming industry therefore has become a contributor to revenue and culture in Sweden. According to the Swedish Game Industry and their Swedish Game Developer Index 2022, the gaming industry has become an essential component of the economy of Sweden, amounting to 4.1% of Sweden's total service exports (Dataspelsbranschen, 2022). Furthermore, in 2020 the Swedish gaming companies generated an annual net turnover of 20.8 billion Swedish kroner (1.8 billion euros), with the biggest company “King” generating 5.5 billion Swedish kroner (48 million euros). In 2021, there were 785 video gaming companies in Sweden (Clement, 2023), from those companies Sweden has established branches in more than 45 countries, with revenue well over 60 billion (Flintberg, 2023 p.16). Culture-wise, 50% of all people regardless of age are engaged in some kind of game. In the ages of 18-35, it is as much as 70% that are playing games. According to the Swedish Game Industry and their Swedish Game Developer Index 2022, the industry is made up of 7,944 people working, 6,169 men and 1,755 women. However, RISE stresses that this number needs to increase to 41 000 people by 2031, to maintain the present fast-paced growth of the industry (Dataspelsbranchen, 2023; Flintberg, 2023 p.16). The gaming industry in Sweden is faced with circumstances of rapid growth and opportunity in the recent decade.
However, in the latest report written by RISE, it was concluded that diversity and employing a diverse workforce is the biggest challenge for the industry to maintain and sustain its rapid growth (Flintberg, 2023 p.24).

Skåne, which is our current area of interest, is the home to 130 game-developing companies, which puts it as the second largest hub of game development in Sweden (Dataspelsbranschen, 2023 p.28). As demonstrated in this chapter, we found that there is a lack of substantial statistics on the subject of diversity, inclusion and the perception of the concepts specific to the Swedish context. Hence, it seemed like a suitable place to explore the current state and understanding of diversity and inclusion and its relation to the industry further.

### 2.2.1 Legal Context of Diversity, Inclusion and Discrimination

Looking at equality, diversity and efforts to create inclusion on an institutional level globally, there are stakeholders as big as the European Union and nation-states involved. The efforts of creating diversity within work life, through inclusion sprung from the understanding that there are indeed inequalities within organisational life and our labour markets. Hence, the EU has played a role in tackling the inequalities (Kumra & Manfreid, 2012 p.20). Some examples of how this has been done is by for example equal opportunity policies and social inclusion, where the European Commission has had the mandate to take action against country-specific national legislation if it is not in line with the standard obligations. Other stakeholders which help to tackle the inequality within the labour markets are the European Trade Union Confederation (Kumra & Manfreid, 2012 p.20-21).

As for the national context of Sweden, there is one law in particular that prohibits discrimination in Sweden is called the Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag). There are seven specific discrimination grounds connected to that act; age, ethnicity, gender, functional ability, religion and belief system, sexual identity and sexual orientation (Information Om Sverige, 2023). Although the Discrimination Act and the appointed authority that handles the discrimination cases have been in place since 2009, the labour lawyer Lena Svaneus together with other legal practitioners has within the last couple of years expressed their concerns regarding the Discrimination Act, saying that it is not necessarily giving the legal protection that it is meant too, leaving as much as 90 % of the reported discrimination cases in 2020 without an investigation (Dagens Samhälle, 2023; Soc Law, 2020).
3. Purpose and Problem Formulation

In this section the purpose and the aim of the research will be presented, followed by stating the problem formulation and lastly, the research question. This, to give the reader clarification of the focus and aim of this thesis.

3.1 Problem Formulation & Purpose

Throughout both our personal and academic life, we have been interested in the subject of diversity and inclusion both on a societal and organisational level. United by our passion for the subject we engaged in hours of long discussions about the phenomenon of diversity and inclusion in relation to innovation and social sustainability in organizations. The drive to explore this subject was developed through our own unique intersectionalities and experiences in Sweden, which we both relate to and share. From this unity, an interest in collaboration on diversity and inclusion topics, aiming to create a positive impact that can contribute with insights, knowledge and possible support to organizations in their development and innovation. Thus, this thesis explores the perceptions of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry among employees. This is with the intent to contribute with knowledge regarding the subject by demonstrating an in-depth analysis painting out snapshots of the understanding of the phenomenons of the industry’s employees.
3.2 Research Question

Based on the introduction and background chapter of the thesis, which demonstrates the importance of the subject for the healthy development of the industry, we developed the following research question:

- How is diversity and inclusion perceived by employees within the gaming industry in Sweden?
  - How can the perceptions of diversity and inclusion be understood through the lenses of inequality regimes?
  - How is diversity and inclusion perceived by the employees to be valuable for the gaming industry?

4. Literature Review

To gain a more comprehensive understanding, we will provide the reader with previous research on diversity and inclusion, how diversity exists within organizations as well as an overview of the research on diversity and inclusion within similar industries and fields.

4.1 Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion have become one of the most popular topics in terms of human resource management, where there has been a high emphasis on communication and collaboration as tools for providing businesses with the opportunity to be creative and develop. Within recent years companies have been even more prone to specifically hiring women and Black, Indigenous and other People of Colour (BIPOC), as well as, gender identities outside of the binary system, immigrant status, religion and language (Ferdam Dane, 2014). One of the reasons for that can be the heavy load of research within the diversity and inclusion field which has the aim to prove a relationship between well-performing firms and
diversity. More specifically, this field of research can be divided into two different lanes. One is more heavily focused on finding evidence between businesses and their application of diversity, and others aim to identify diversity as a phenomenon that brings positive consequences to the firm's results and statistics (Erhardt et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the importance of diversity and inclusion is more remarkable in companies or industries that have a talent pool shortage and a dynamic work environment (Buddhapriya, 2023, p. 599).

Throughout recent years it has become a well-known fact that diversity and inclusion have been proven to foster innovation, allowing companies to react better to markets, consumers and threats, as well as providing more resilient approaches to hard economic periods. Even more importantly, Hunt et al. (2020) emphasise that diverse and inclusive companies surpass in performance to homogenous companies (Hunt et al., 2020, p. 3), and even when it's a matter of social justice, for companies diversity and inclusion become a strategy for growth and performance (Hunt et al., 2018, p. 4). It is also claimed that organizations that embrace the ideas of diversity and enable people to channel their differences are more sensitive to the individual characteristics of employees. This, in turn, makes the employees feel appreciated, and happier and ultimately gives them fewer reasons to leave their company (Theodorakopoulos, et al., 2015 p.6). Important to note is that having a diverse environment does not come hand in hand with having inclusion. Since, inclusion has to be fostered through organizational policies and a healthy work environment (Hunt et al., 2020, p. 6).

4.2 Inequality in Organizations

According to Özbilgin et al. (2009), ‘Equality, diversity and inclusion’ are all relevant to talk about within the work context since the concepts together form a unique dimension that enables the study of power at work. Where equality points to the readings describing power relations at work, whilst diversity highlights the multiplicity of different standards and inclusion directs us toward purposeful and strategic dimensions that investigate the interventions to the relations of power we find within the workplace (Özbilgin, 2009 p.2). Furthermore, although diversity and inclusion are two separate concepts, they have both evolved into becoming an integral part of the equality discourse (Kumra & Manfreid, 2012 p.4).
As workplaces worldwide have increased in diversity, firms and professional associations have had nothing but a choice to pay close attention to equality and diversity. One of the most prominent questions that have been asked, both within and outside of academia is whether patterns of inequality and discrimination decrease or increase with the changed demographics. Historically the focus has been laid on the impact that working agreements such as example promotion processes or occupational regimes have had on diversity, equality and inclusion (Muzio & Tomlinson, 2012 p.455). Kumra and Manfreid (2012) argue that the intersectional aspect of discrimination is important since discrimination within organizations often happens due to more than one protected characteristic of an individual uniquely and inseparable way, the discrimination can be called ‘intersectional discrimination’ (Kumra & Manfreid, 2012 p.8-9).

4.3 Patterns Within STEM and Similar

The diversity within the gaming industry and similar industries has had its challenges. A large majority of the designers, producers, project managers planning visions and directions for games, software engineers, programmers and developers within the gaming industry often come from what is called Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills, which are also likely to have taken a STEM education or career gap. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the lack of women in STEM is a global problem, resulting in the fact that women only make up a third of all scientists within these fields. Not only are women underrepresented, but they are also less likely to be encouraged to go into STEM industries and branches. The socio-economic factor, as well as ethnicity, language and immigration status also play a role in the probability of ending up in STEM careers (FN, 2023). Even when progress has been made, women continue to be unrepresented in STEM careers and professions. Continuously women have reported feeling excluded from social activities and friendships as being ostracized during their professional careers (Cyr et al., 2021, p. 1). For example, the lack of women in computer engineering education in Sweden can be traced back to as far as the mid-1990s when the Swedish government decided to implement five different reform programs to increase women's involvement within the field (Salminen-Karlsson, 2011 p.446).
4.4 Similar Research in the ICT Industry
During the development of this thesis we looked for different studies that had the same aim, similar research question or similar focus on the perspective of employees regarding diversity and inclusion. But, as pointed out by Graham and Wright, there is a lack of research regarding the employee perception of diversity and inclusion practices in organisations (Graham & Wright, 2021, p. 1). However, Graham & Wright (2021), developed a similar research, like this thesis, regarding the perception of employees in the ICT industry of diverse and inclusive workplaces. They begin by defining diversity management as “... the formal and informal structures, methods and programs implemented by an organisation to promote organisational equality for employees.” by Sukalova and Ceniga (2020) in (Graham & Wright, 2021, p. 1). Furthermore, and through the use of interviews, Graham & Wright use the methodology of phenomenology to observe and understand the perception of employees.

In their study, Graham & Wright found that employers are usually not well informed about the perception of the employees regarding diversity and inclusion in organisations. Along the same line, they found that there is a thin line between; a) the employee's perception of a true commitment from the firm to diversity and inclusion, b) the employee's perception that it is only a marketing plot from the firm, c) that the commitment is not real but a manner to compete with other firms (Graham & Wright, 2021, p. 7).

5. Theory

In the upcoming chapter the theoretical framework, which will be used in the analysis of this thesis will be presented. Inequality regimes will serve as the backbone and main theoretical framework. In addition to that, several complementary concepts are added, to help us, as well as the reader of this thesis, to understand the data presented in the analysis.

5.1 Making Sense of Organizations

For this thesis we have decided to ground our analysis on the definition of organizations as established by Bittner (1965), which foretells that organizations are: “stable associations of persons engaged in concerted activities directed to the attainment of specific objectives.” (Bittner, 1965, p. 239).
In more concrete, organizations can be seen as constantly implemented programs of action, which in turn involves a substantial dose of rational and comprehensive planning. The rationality and formality of organizations are identified to enable differentiation between themselves and other forms of organizations (Bittner, 1965 p.239).

In addition to Bittner, to concretise the phenomenon of ‘organizations’, its rationality and its formality, we have chosen to turn to Bolman & Deal (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.6; Bittner, 1965 p.239). The authors describe organizational research as consisting of four different frames that contribute to the understanding of organizations. More specifically, the four ‘frames’ have the intention of approaching organizational issues from four different perspectives; symbolic, political, human resources and structural. Furthermore, they argue that the four frames create a mental map of the circumstances of an organization, where the frames can be seen as the windows on the territory and tools for navigation (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.14).

According to Bolman and Deals, the framing of organizations also gives us the ability to break out of frames that in some ways limit the well-being of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.12). The structural frame can be considered as the frame where measurable goals and strategies are set and where systems and procedures exist (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.46). The Human resource frame is centred around the needs of the people within the organization, and the arena in which the employees are given both power and opportunity to perform their work tasks properly (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.119-120). Within the political frame, the problems of groups and individuals may arise in terms of conflicting agendas concerning organizational matters. This frame is where coalitions are formed, but also where conflicts can be resolved (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.191). Last but not least, we have the symbolic frame, which emphasises the urgency of employees to have a sense of meaning and purpose in their work. Within this frame, the visions, goals and direction of the organization are made clear through ceremonies, symbolic actions and celebrations (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.251).
5.2 Inequality Regimes

As the main tool of our analysis we have decided to capitalize on Joan Acker’s theoretical framework called ‘Inequality regimes’ (Acker, 2006). Inequality regimes are a framework to understand the disparities in an organization, and the differentiated effect that practices, processes, routines and meanings have concerning gender, class and race (Acker, 2006, p. 443). However, the framework recognises that inequalities and disparities can also arise from sexuality, religion, age and physical disabilities (Acker, 2006, p. 445). Acker states the following:

“[...] systemic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasure in work and work relations.” (Acker, 2006 p. 443)

Under the framework of inequality regimes, it is important to note that organizations are not only representing inequalities that already exist within society, they are perpetuating and reproducing power relations in organizations (Acker, 2006, p.441- 442). While equality rarely exists, inequality can vary in its degree and shape in an organization. Some inequalities are easy to notice, others can be more subtle in their delivery, although still very noticeable for the percipient. Such is the case when someone for example is experiencing microaggressions (Acker, 2006, p. 443).

Consequently, Acker (2006) builds on the idea that class, gender, and race, have interlinked effects and they are highly interconnected as inequality regimes. Moreover, she explains that even when they can vary in form and manner from organization to organization, they are usually present and they also have a reinforcement variable, where the inequalities in organization interact and strengthen the inequalities in society. Therefore, gender, race and class, are created and recreated in the fundamentals of the work distribution and the working journal (Acker, 2006, p.444;448)
Although class is not very often discussed within the discourse of diversity and inclusion, as it is defined within this thesis. However, Acker explains that within the theory of inequality regimes, *class* is understood as the relation between the individual and the resources to secure survival according to Acker 2006 and Nelson 1993 (Acker, 2006, p. 444). As the resources to secure provisioning are mostly represented by money and money in turn, is provided by salary. It creates a system and hierarchy within organizations that label all relations of employment to be a class practice. Therefore class becomes intrinsic to organizations and organizational hierarchies (Acker, 2006, p. 444).

In terms of *gender*, Acker refers to the socially constructed beliefs of the differences between men and women, and therefore the ideas that support a differentiated treatment and inequalities of the genders. According to Acker, gender is always present in organizations that historically have placed women in non-management positions and bottom-line hierarchy (Acker, 2006, p. 444). Important to note, is that class and gender have been very interlinked in the past, as the lower paying jobs were taken by women, but even nowadays there are women in high ranks of organizations, there is still a dominating presence of women in jobs such as administration, clerks, service jobs and as care providers (Acker, 2006, p. 444).

Lastly, *race* within this theory refers to the perceived differences based on physical characteristics, outcomes from the past of domination and oppression, as well as understandings of cultural belonging and cultural practices (Acker, 2006, p. 444). To a certain degree ethnicity can be interlinked with race, or stand alone as a basis of inequality. Although gender and race have important intersections, they have worked differently regarding inequalities. The racial dimension of inequality regimes has historically put the white male as a dominator within organizations, and men and women of colour in the outskirts or fully outside of organizations (Acker, 2006, p. 445).

The framework of inequality regimes also states the very degree and pattern of segregation by both race and gender is a determinant factor of inequality. This becomes a very complex phenomenon, since race and gender segregation is hierarchal across both different levels of the class levels of an organisation, across jobs on the same level in an organisation, as well as, within the same jobs. However, the segregation in jobs is deeper than the segregation related to occupations (Acker, 2006 p. 446). This can for example mean that, when men and women have the same occupations, they are very likely to work in different firms and/or jobs.
Furthermore, racial segregation follows gender segregation in its patterns (Acker, 2006 p. 446).

5.2.2 Blind Spots Made Visible

Organizations are different from each other, varying in levels and modes of inequality. The visibility and the understanding of existing inequalities amongst the employees within it may also vary and the understanding can be both intentional or unintentional. It is only in the place of the privileged and advantaged to not see the inequalities that are experienced by the unprivileged (Acker, 2006 p. 452). McIntosh (1995) states in (Acker, 2006, p. 452), that a man tend not to see or understand gender inequality as they have not experienced it and are not used to having it as a part of their own conversation. An example is how gender disparities become invisible in gendered organizations, as they are not part of achieving the goal of the organization and, thus, become part of an invisible structure (Acker, 2006, p. 452). Moreover, class is also invisible, as upper hierarchies tend to not see inequality, and employees in low-level hierarchies may perceive the inequalities but not recognize them as a class issue (Acker, 2006, p. 452). As for race, it is also suppressed, although visible to the eye as a physical characteristic, but invisible to the employees. Race tends to be segregated, or denied altogether (Acker, 2006, p. 452). Commonly it is only visible to the oppressed since the racial inequalities go without notice to the ones in a more privileged position (Acker, 2006, p. 452).

5.2.3 Meritocracy

As complementary to Ackers's framework, we found the concept of meritocracy to be vital for the reader's understanding of this thesis. The definition of meritocracy refers to the idea that resource distribution concerning work is based on merits and equal opportunity amongst populations. However, in this thesis, we will turn to the understanding of the concept of meritocracy as a paradox which is sprung from the understanding that seeks to find out whether meritocratic outcomes and equal opportunities are achieved within organizations (Castilla & Benard, 2010 p.545). DiAngelo (2018) describes the concept as being built on the idea which says that if you put in the work, and work hard to achieve what you want and what you need - you will eventually get what you want. The individuals who do simply not work hard enough (DiAngleo, 2018 p.24). Many scholars investigating meritocracy argue that it is
far from a recent phenomenon that routines and organizational bureaucracies commonly serve as institutionalization and exacerbate both racial and gender inequality within workplaces (Castilla & Benard, 2010 p.546).

5.2.4 Cloning Cultures

To understand the reproduction of class, gender and race in organizations, this thesis will draw from the theory of cloning cultures presented by Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg (2010), which states that cloning cultures can be understood as a reproduction of sameness through systems of kinhood. Furthermore, cloning cultures are deeply integrated into organizations, and society and can be observed regarding the inequality regime of class, gender and race (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1067). Thereby, cloning cultures is a concept that allows us to understand that groups in society tend to unite and form new groups with individuals that are similar as presented by Essed (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1068). Cloning cultures, or the systemic reproduction of sameness, also allows us to understand the contrary effect. Which is that the preference for one’s sameness also implies that to some degree there is a dehumanization of the other, or the perception of others as less valuable (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1069). Meaning that the preference for the sameness is not only constrained to the dominant group or culture, but a phenomenon that takes place even in non-dominant groups (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1070).

In more specific terms several elements accompany cloning cultures, which allows the following phenomenon to take place; a) the notion of existing desirability of certain types, b) the conscious or unconscious necessity to stay with normative standards, c) the comfortability of the familiar, d) the rejection of those different (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1070). Furthermore, the theory explains that shared values, tastes, style and recognizable characteristics provide comfort, therefore insisting that people look for sameness and creating the cloning culture (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1072). Hence, cloning cultures become complementary in our understanding of exclusion and inclusion within organizations.

5.3 Diversity and Inclusion
As mentioned in the introductory chapter diversity and inclusion are fundamental concepts for the aim of this thesis. Nevertheless, academia has not one definition but several ideas of what the concepts entail. In the following section, we will present the most pertinent conceptualizations of diversity and inclusion regarding the thesis objectives. Aiming to provide a clear framework of the concepts to be utilised as tools, for understanding the data presented in our analysis in Chapter 6. As mentioned previously in this thesis, the proximity of the degree to which an organization is diverse and fosters inclusion is dependent on to what degree inequality, discrimination and inclusion exist within the organization. Thus, the main theoretical framework of inequality regimes and the concepts of diversity and inclusion are necessary as a backbone of the theoretical chapter of this thesis.

5.3.1 Diversity

According to Roberson (2006, p. 214), diversity is a concept that has been utilized to describe the demographics of the workforce of an organization. Furthermore, it comprehends the visible and unobservable characteristics of individuals. As visible characteristics, Roberson identifies gender, ethnicity, race and age, while unobservable characteristics comprehend cognitive, cultural and technical differences (Roberson, 2006, p. 214), complementing the concept Larkey (1996) in Roberson (2006, p. 214) adds that diversity is also a framework that comprehends the differences between the way people think. Both observable characteristics and unobservable ones are comprehended in the definition of diversity by Kumra and Manfredi (2012, p. 52) described as the differences between people.

Motivated by the aim of this thesis, we will be capitalizing on the diversity definition of Roberson, as the observable and unobservable differences between people in an organization. Moreover, we will also keep in mind that diversity is linked to the demographics of the organizations and in a broader sense to the differences among the people that conform to an organization (Kumra Manfredi, 2012 p. 52). We argue that the demographics', observable and unobservable differences are a key component for the understanding of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006), since individual diversities can be used both as an excuse and motivator for creating structural differences between individuals.
5.3.2 Inclusion

According to Shore et al. (2011, p.1265) in Shore & Chung (2023 p.2), inclusion is: “The degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group.” Furthermore, inclusion is also related to Pelled et al. (1999 p 1014) in Roberson, (2006, p. 215) stating that inclusion is conceptualized around three main lines: a) the level of interaction and influence a person has on the decision-making of the organization, b) the level in which a person is communicated decisions taken in an organization, and c) the stability of the employment of a person.

Extracting from the literature and for the purpose of this thesis, we will utilize the definition of inclusion proposed by Roberson (2006, p. 215) as the level at which a person feels included and part of the organization. Subsequently, we will consider that even when complementary, diversity and inclusion are different and the existence of one does not include the existence of the other. Inclusion, and its antonym exclusion, are phenomena that directly relate to inequality regimes (Acker, 2006), as the differentiated treatment of an individual due to race, gender and class, affects the capacity of the individual to either feel included or excluded. Therefore affecting its participation and involvement in organizations.

In this Chapter, we have presented the reader with an overview and understanding that different aspects of identity, such as class, race and gender, can be vital in the understanding of the reproduction of inequality within organization. We have also demonstrated concepts which complement the understanding further, by presenting the reader with specific definitions of diversity and inclusion, as well as, concepts that describe how norms can be reproduced.

6. Method
In the upcoming chapter, the methodology that formed this thesis will be presented. To begin with, the epistemological stance and philosophical grounding will be explained. That will be followed by a presentation of the method of data collection criteria, the selection of interviewees, as well as, and an illustration of how the data was analysed. Subsequently, reliability and validity will be accounted for.

### 6.1 Philosophical Grounding and Epistemological Stance

As presented in Chapter 3, this thesis aims to examine how diversity and inclusion are understood by employees within the gaming industry in Sweden. This led the paradigm of this thesis to be suited for the ontological position of constructivism. More specifically social constructivism is one of two branches within the constructivist theory and concludes that knowledge as we know it is created within, through and by individuals (Detel, 2001 p.14264). Moreover, the main concern within this branch lies in what is happening between individuals in everyday interactions, since that is where they together create meaning through social processes. That in turn becomes attached to different events and objects (Pfadenhauer & Knoblauch, 2019 p.4:92). The research within this field seeks to highlight how the human phenomenon is created by humans, through construction (Pfadenhauer & Knoblauch, 2019 p.47:51; Detel, 2001 p.14265; Bryman, 2011).

Constructionism argues that the categorizations that people use to understand nature, as well as social reality, are fundamentally grounded in social products. These categories in and of themselves are created in the interaction between individuals within everyday activity. It is both the categories and the words that are chosen to describe those categories that are of interest to a social constructivist researcher. Thus, this thesis will utilize the constructs of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry, to be able to answer the research question at hand (Bryman, 2008 p.206:8; Bryman, 2011).

### 6.2 Qualitative Research
To be able to make sense of these individual perceptions of the social reality that their organization is in, the research is performed through qualitative research standards. It also aligns with the ontological position of the research in this thesis, since the qualitative research is based on the idea that knowledge is something constructed by people in ongoing processes whilst they engage in and make meaning of experience, phenomenon and activity. Thereby, we collected information that specifically portrayed the perceptions of employees within our field of interest, where the answers were detailed, rich and particular.

### 6.3 Methods of Data Collection

In this research we aimed to have a few interviewees who could provide rich and deep illustrations of the understanding of the subject. For this purpose, semi-structured in-depth interviews were best. This allowed us to have a guiding line of questions but gave us the flexibility to dig deeper into interesting answers and change questions according to the narrative of the respondent. Although we had pre-knowledge about theories and concepts that have helped us understand diversity and inclusion in a deductive way, the semi-structured interviews left room for exploration of what we might find in the employees' understanding. Furthermore, this enabled the study to have a flexible structure, where we could interactively ask follow-up questions while at the same time ensuring that the information reached enough depth (Bryman, 2008 p.206:344), that contribute to an in-depth picture.

#### 6.3.1 Selection of Interviewees

At the beginning of our thesis work, we had the intention of selecting interviewees from any occupational position, in the position of a project leader or project manager, with the responsibility of a small group of employees. This was because we wanted participants who not only had contact with other employees but the ones who also had daily or weekly contact with management and/or top management groups. But when we reached out to different companies within the industry in Malmö, we started to notice that it was hard to reach individuals that had the project manager or middle manager roles.
At first, many of the organizations were willing to participate. But for unknown reasons, there was a lack of people who re-connected with us and followed up. Concerned by the lack of response and the difficulties in finding people within the industry that fit our criteria we decided to widen the criteria for the participating interviewees. That meant widening to anyone above the age of 18, who was currently or had worked within a game-producing company, with an experience of a minimum of 1 year in Sweden. Thereby, all the participants that were interviewed had or were working in companies based in Malmö. In addition to that, we still found it highly relevant to ensure that we reached as much variety in occupational roles as possible where we looked for project managers, developers, programmers, and graphic- and visual designers. A diversity of professional roles decreased the possibility of us catching homogeneity within certain positions within gaming companies. We perceived it as rather difficult to find a larger diversity in terms of ethnicity/race, however, we made an active effort to have representation from immigrant and native backgrounds. We also aimed to have equal representativity in terms of gender, which we accomplished since there was a higher level of presence of women in the industry than of racial minorities.

When we ended up having a struggle to find interviewees for the thesis we additionally turned to LinkedIn to reach participants through posts and messages. With two of the involved organizations the researchers first met with managers with a higher role within the organization, to introduce the project, its purpose and what the thesis needed in terms of participation. Other contacts were found through common connections who knew the researchers and had a personal connection with someone working within the gaming industry. Furthermore, we posted a message through LinkedIn searching for participants. There, we perceived more than 10 answers. However, only three people ended up interested in booking an interview. Important to mention here is that after transcribing those interviews and comparing them to the rest of the collected data material, we later decided to not consider two of the three interviews. As the individuals were working in startups, with a smaller size and nature, Seven of them were done face-to-face and five of them through the communications technology and company Zoom.

There is not an absolute consensus regarding whether digital and/or telephone interviews are only limiting the quality of the interviews, or also contribute with advantages. The
phenomenon of digital qualitative interviews has grown exponentially following the Covid-19 pandemic. However, researchers argue that in-person interviews could be an overall good thing. Thunder & Arnell (2022) argue that some aspects are creating positive outcomes. To do digital interviews can create a possibility where it is possible to collect data when the participant is far away or does not have time to meet in person, which was the case for five of the participants in this study, but the aforementioned not consider cases were part of the digital interviews, therefore this thesis only is considering three digital interviews (Thunberg & Arnell, 2022 p.764). During our interviews, we had five online interviews, and we noticed a reduction in the interactions between the interviewees and us. The depth of the interviews as well as the time that the interviews lasted was different from thrones done in person. Also, it is important to note that digital interviewees created an extra challenge for us to build trust with the interviewees, as they seemed more straightforward with their answers and left little space for follow-up questions.

There have been two researchers engaging in this research project, meaning that the interviews were also conducted by two researchers. As for the way that we experienced performing the interviews as a team of two, we perceived that as we went on with the interviews we started to form a dynamic which seemed implicit. The dynamic made one of us take more charge of guiding the interview, and the other of us being more in the background, observing and putting focus on the answers that were given by the respondent. To maintain the anonymity of the interviewees we selected unintentional pseudonyms.
We believe that providing the table above, with basic information about the interviewees is not only going to provide clarity to the reader through the analysis in Chapter 7, but it will allow having a clear map of the gender, immigrant/native status and if they come from a large or small firm, as is important to note that this factors influenced their perception of diversity and inclusion in their organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>NATIVE / IMMIGRANT</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>SMALL or BIG Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedda</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Small Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Big Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Elsa</td>
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<td>Pontus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
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<td>Elliot</td>
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<td>Hans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laika</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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6.3.2 Interview Design and Interviews

The study included a total of 12 participants, in-person as well as via Zoom. The interviews were recorded with an external digital device, our computers, which enabled us to pay close attention to what the respondents were expressing. Some of the interviewees preferred to be interviewed in a public place, such as a café or bar, whilst others invited us to their organizational spaces. One of the interviewees invited us to his/her home.

There were several things that we had to consider while performing the interviews. For instance, the researchers doing in-depth interviews are prone to biases that can affect the respondents. However, since performing research in line with the social constructivist
stance, this is not merely a negative thing. For the interviews, we prepared a small guide consisting of 15 questions that aimed to provide a full picture of the diversity and inclusion perception of the organizations. Furthermore, the interviews lasted on average between 30 to 60 minutes per participant. All of the interviews were conducted in English except for one of the interviewees, who spoke both English and Swedish throughout the interview.

The recording of each interview was later transcribed through a free-of-charge program, which helped produce a written text. To structure the material in a readable way, ensure that everything on the recording was included in the material and lastly, to get familiar with the material the researchers went through the recordings several times manually and double-checked them with the written material. The end of each interview was finalized by asking the interviewees if there was anything that they felt they wanted to add, to intercept understandings that we might have missed.

One of our main observations from engaging in the interviews was the resistance that we found in a majority of the interviewees. By resistance, we mean that we perceived that they felt like they were objects for the research and interrogation, and sometimes conveyed body language that showed that they were a little bit hesitant in giving us a straightforward answer. Moreover, we do understand that this can partly be because we failed to create an environment that made them feel comfortable enough. It can also have to do with the fact that diversity and inclusion are sensitive subjects, where some of the questions might have given the respondents a feeling of being unloyal to their organizations. We found it very useful to break this resistance, to make sure to the interviewee that there were no wrong answers, as this relaxed their perception of being judged by us and fostered a trusting environment. Another interesting reflection during the interviews was the importance of having an open question at the end for the interviewees, where they could tell us anything that we might have forgotten to ask them.

6.4 Methods of Data Analysis
One can divide the method of data analysis for this thesis into two segments. The first, began from the moment that we started to engage with the literature, the interviews, and later the transcriptions of the recordings, then reading of the transcriptions, we capitalized on our teamwork to have several moments of interactive reflection. As Merriam and Tisdell states, the analysis of data starts from the first moment one begins to engage with the interviews, material and later on themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 191: p. 196). Which for us meant that the analysis of the data was simultaneously performed as the collection of the data went on. Starting with a mindset that the analysis of the data began already from the start, made us perceive the analysis to go smoothly - since the material became an integral part of our everyday thoughts. Additionally, we took at least an hour after each interview to recollect impressions, and ideas and start analyzing the data collected. Leading us to identify common threads or segments that allowed us to build an answer to our research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 203). The specific coding method is understood as the signalling with a particular theme or code to a particular data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 206).

The second part we did was to code the data when we had finalized all the transcriptions, which we chose to do by using a Qualitative Content Analysis. This includes two different ways of performing the analysis, either through a relational analysis or through a conceptual analysis (Krippendorff, 2019 p.18). For us, the conceptual way of analyzing the data was more suitable, due to the way that it determines the existence of frequencies of concepts in the text of relevance.

The final twelve transcripts of the interview were read several times, by both of us with the intent of being able to detect manageable categories. Here, we considered having four researcher-eyes instead of only two, being handy. Since both of us detected things that the other had not yet seen. Subsequently, we systematically performed the categorization, where we created categorial sections and then referred to various larger categories - which we then treated as empirical material (Alvesson & Sköldenberg, 2000 p.204). Additionally, when we did the coding of this thesis we had flexibility, where we also ensured to leave the possibility of adding categories as we went through the material and process. When the coding was finished, we reexamined the analysis and the categories and themes, several times, to see if there was anything left out of the patterns and trends from our transcriptions. This type of selective reduction has severe effects on both reliability and validity since our subjective interpretation is forming the categories, Even the one that happens between the researcher, the
material and the interviewee. Important to note is that the level of analysis which we chose for this analysis is merely focused on themes, and not phrases, sentences or words.

6.5 Reliability and Validity

Even though our study is by qualitative nature, it is according to Merriam & Tisdell (2016) important to consider the reliability and validity of the study, to increase the trustworthiness and the credibility of this thesis. Although the intention of qualitative research is not to generalize, replicate the results or be linear. The reliability of the study was ensured by doing an extensive literature review, as well, as using both theories and concepts which we found that the reader of this thesis could use to increase their understanding of both the data and our interpretation of it. Within the philosophical strand of social constructivism, we the researchers, are a natural part of the research creation through the execution of interviews, transcribing and interpretation of material. However, the components of both background, literature review, and theoretical framework and concepts were used in a way that complemented our interpretation which, in turn, could contribute to an opinion-free interpretation possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 p.240).

Bryman (2012) defines validity in qualitative research as being directly connected to the integrity of the conclusions that the research generates. This is not straightforward in qualitative research, hence, complementary to Bryman, Maxwell (2013) conceptualizes validity as relative, and as something that is neither proved nor taken for granted. To have validity in a complex study of human perception, that is multidimensional by its nature, we collected information on the complex perception of experiences that related to human behaviour in the particular context of diversity and inclusion in the gaming industry and presented an integral, transparent, honest narrative and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 244; Bryman, 2012 p.47). In the same line and according to our understanding, we found that the background, literature review, theoretical framework, analysis, and stories the interviewees shared with us, all complemented each other and formed a holistic integral picture. To our understanding, we found that all of these aforementioned parts, created a coherence, without any alarming contradiction as we proceeded with the research process.
6.5.1 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of utmost importance when performing research and when the data of the study is centred around real-life individuals, it in some ways becomes even more important. In this research project, we have considered the handling of the data as being one of the ethical concerns, since the information which we sought to find was based on the interviewees' experiences, knowledge and understanding. This can be both sensitive and hard to share, in cases where the respondents would have experienced something difficult within their organization. To ensure that there was no harm done to the participants during the interviews, we ensured to give them a clear background about what the research aim and objective was, as well as let them know that they could withdraw or stop the interview at any time they felt uncomfortable. In addition to that, we also provided them with a clear letter of purpose, detailing the thesis aim and the subjects to be covered during the interview, before we interviewed them, and gave them the official consent form provided by the university. Furthermore, we ensured that we acted with full transparency and clarity of our research, aim and procedure, allowing the participants to express themselves and set the boundaries of what they were comfortable with.

Since the identity of the interviewees was essential for this research to be able to use our theoretical framework, where if an interviewee for example had an immigrant background, her or his answers were tainted upon that fact and therefore her or his perception was analysed having her or his background in mind. It made it somewhat of a tricky balance in not revealing their identity but providing a full picture of the data. Thereby, to ensure the safety and anonymity of the participants we chose to create pseudonyms for the participants and erased any connotation that could give a hint to their identity and/or their organisation's name. Lastly, another consideration that we had to face was whether or not we would reveal the identity of the two non-binary individuals in this study. But, since these individuals themselves identified and presented themselves as non-binary, we considered that their non-binary identification was an intrinsic part of their perception of diversity and therefore important to the reader. Moreover, we decided to identify them as non-binary, not revealing any other information about their persona and choosing random gender-neutral pseudonyms.
7. Analysis

In the following section, we will present the themes that emerged during the analysis of the interviewees performed in this research. The most prominent themes discovered in our analysis are the interviewees' understanding of diversity and inclusion, policies and initiatives of the interviewee’s organizations, the application, recruitment and promotion processes, as well as a closer look at the homogeneity within the industry. At the end of each section, the reader will be presented with a small summary of our interpretation and findings.

7.1 The Understanding of Diversity and Inclusion

For each of the participating interviewees we asked them what diversity, and what inclusion means to them. Moreover, we asked them to elaborate through follow-up questions on how they perceive the phenomena within their organizations and/or previous organizations within the industry. A generality of several of the respondents was that they had vague answers that we interpret as a lack of understanding. For example, we can see Elliot answering: “It is just, the considerations to people who are not necessarily like you.”. Others, like Johanna, were somewhat more aware of the problems within the organization: “Yeah we are very aware that we are not (diverse)”. We perceive that Johanna, who was one of the few native Swedish who was conscious of the lack of diversity within her organization, has to do with the fact that she works in a large organization where diversity has been discussed. Also, she is working with programmers and she is the only woman in a large team. In contrast, we detected that individuals who came from smaller organizations and were presenting as an individual belonging to the Swedish majority did not perceive that there was a lack of diversity, but rather the opposite. They thought their organizations were really diverse. For example, Elliot coming from a small organization reiterated the importance of diversity and his perception of the company as very diverse, but further on, he shared this story that demonstrates a resistance to diversity in his organization: “Because when we were smaller we had to consider not hiring people who don't speak Swedish. We had people in the company who were not comfortable with speaking English, in the office because of course we were gonna wap languages if someone who did not speak Swedish joined the office, and it was a concern if
anyone had any concerns about swapping language come to us and we will prioritize the people that we have over the people that we could bring in.” (Elliot)

But, when we gave them some more time to reflect, and think deeper about the question regarding diversity and minority representation, most expressed that there was a lack of diversity.

7.1.1 Diversity

When asking the interviewees about their perception of diversity, it was very clear that people perceive diversity as the variety in physical and non-visible characteristics which is according to the definition of possible diversities presented by Roberson (2006, p. 214), as we can see in the following comment from Hedda: “For me diversity is, I think on the one hand you have diversity when it comes to background, which could be like nationality, gender identity, sexuality, and also just like gender. But then, on the other hand, I think you have diversity in, well, I guess they both go a bit hand in hand, but like diversity in how you think like different people, like different genders, think differently and people with different backgrounds think really differently”. (Hedda)

This ability to localise unobservable and observable characteristics is also demonstrated in the following comment from Hans: “It's about everything really. It should be that you have both the gender of course, but also age, but also the way you think and act.” However, we find it important to note that all the respondents identified diversity as having gender and sexual diversity, where they gave a second place to other types of diversity. The marked idea that diversity is regarding gender can be observed in the following answer from Lisa: “[...] different genders, we have more women here than in my previous place. And we have, that I know of, two trans people. We have people who aren't white, Yeah, I guess based on those, like race, gender, and what would you say sexual orientation and gender Identity. ” As expressed in other places of this analysis, we perceive that this has a lot to do with the fact that gender inequality is fairly integrated into the Swedish mainstream discourse.
Another frequent threat we saw was the usage of a demographic concept of diversity in the organization as we can see in Elsa's definition of diversity, where she also makes a remark where she puts more weight on the visible characteristics: “Basically a representation of people from different demographics in the company. That is not all basically we may not have the same argument from the same origin. They are basically a mix of people. I don't really count sexual orientation for this one, because while it is definitely a demographic, you don't really see that from outside.”(Elsa)

Furthermore, some of the interviewees gave a diversity definition more oriented to organizations, exemplified by the following comment from Antonio, where he also talks about the need to have diversity vertically in the organization: “Diversity for me is to have a lot of different backgrounds in the same place and in different levels of decision making, management, whatever.”

### 7.1.2 Inclusion

In terms of inclusion, the character of the answers was different from the ones given in relation to diversity. Overall there was a higher rate of uncertainty in the answers from most of the respondents, expressing the broadness of the term. As we can see in the following definition provided by Elsa: “For me, inclusion is basically It's a one it was one of those very broad terms that are hard to put in one whole sentence is basically not discriminating people based on their attributes such as sex, gender, skin colour, ethnicity, background, all those, all those things are age.” Also, in the comment from Elsa, we can see that they related inclusion, or an inclusive environment, with not discriminating people. Furthermore, we could see that when asked about inclusion most interviewees referred to the lack of discrimination in their own organization. This can be observed in the following comment from Lisa: “I just don't think there's ever been a situation where anyone got excluded from any event or stuff like that. I haven't seen any barriers to that, it feels inclusive. People can talk freely about stuff like inclusion and diversity and stuff like that, hasn't been a problem. So far at least.” (Lisa)

As we can see in the following paragraph, Elliot demonstrates how the inclusion within his small company dynamic is dependent on their homogeneity: “[...] you just feel at home in space because someone's thinking about you, because we don't have a lot of diversity in that
way that would require a lot of inclusivity, it's not so noticed. I think if we had more widely diverse people at the company then it would be a greater effort to maintain that inclusivity.” Interestingly, Elliot reflects on how inclusion becomes challenged with bigger groups and especially with a more diverse workforce. We also recognize that most of the respondents come from what we perceive as fairly homogenous organizations, centred mostly around white male Europeans. This is something that we would point to as an aspect that influences their understanding and experiences of inclusion. In contrast, respondents who come from bigger, more diverse organizations seem to be faced with inclusion and inclusive environments in a different, more obvious way. As Antonio retells from his large organization: “The way I see it, we can have a diverse environment without having inclusion when, for instance, we don't include these diverse people into the decision-making process.” Consequently, meaning that even if an organization is fully and actively engaging its staff with inclusive initiatives, the environment and workforce demographics will serve as a role in how the organizational dynamics will play out.

### 7.1.3 The Range of Diversity

When the respondents were asked to define what diversity meant to them, the answers from the majority of the interviewees reflected diversity as a gender issue, especially about the lack of women and parity between genders. This can be illustrated by Johanna's statement: “Yeah, I think the major thing is reducing the gender gap and everything from rules and just including people.” When the answers went further to discuss other diversities the second most talked subject was sexuality. We perceived this pattern to be fairly consistent, except for the interviewees who belonged to a marginalised group and Elliot which gave us a bigger range of diversities including race and ethnicity. Elliot, who is a Swedish native, gave us some perspective on race and ethnicity: “I'm still missing some of the racial diversity and, um, the religious diversity because unfortunately, we default to what we know.” Throughout all of the interviews, there were only three respondents who talked about the racial aspect of diversity, and two of them had an immigrant background.

### 7.1.4 Gender Regimes
Through our conversations, it became apparent that there was a clear segmentation between the genders in terms of occupation roles. This can be exemplified by the following comment from Hans when he is asked about the type of management at his organization: “HR is a woman as it should be in a normal way”. Moreover, Laika tells us: “[...] project needs, like booking trips and sorting out the workspace. Yeah, all that. It's like standard female jobs. And there is also more sort of like, uh, cultural and racial diversity in those. So it's more common that they would hire Indian folks to work for the office management.” This perception of the ideal type of worker being women for certain administrative roles is more notable when talking about top management, as it seems that the only women who achieve top management are still constrained by the perception of their gender and the roles that are pertinent to occupy, this can be observed in the industry in the following quote from Antonio: “Of [Name of Big Company], all swedes. I think we have two women. One, and again, completely administrative chief areas.” This observation is strengthened by the following comment from Laika: “[...] It's enormous for Sweden and it has like one, two female leads and there are never female directors and never CEOs, like an HR director, that can be a woman.” It was a common thread that women occupy most of the administrative related positions in these organizations. Furthermore, the interviewees had the notion that this phenomenon was not only natural but also obvious. All of them except Antonio, had never thought about this but assumed that administration and in particular HR are womanly jobs.

7.1.5 Interpretation of Findings

In this section a picture was drawn of the perception and knowledge about diversity and inclusion from the interviewees. When a person is in a privileged or advantaged position he or she is likely not to see the inequalities or the unprivileged of others (Acker, 2006, p. 452). In line with the understanding that Acker provides, we perceived that the interviewees expressed an unintentional omission of diversities that might not be as present in their mainstream culture or organizations. Based on the interviewees' responses to the question of diversity in their organization, we also perceive that this might be an implication that the centricity around gender could have to do with a general lack of people of colour within their organizations.

Furthermore, in the context of the research, some of the interviewees refer more to the concept of diversity in organizations, and their comprehension was more based on the
demographic composition of the workforce, therefore, reinforcing the ideas expressed by (Roberson, 2006, p. 214). Moreover, several of the respondents gave answers where they gave examples of everyday interactions, happening on their lunch break or similar. We perceived this as enforcing our perception of some of their understandings of inclusion based on small organization activities. During the interviews, it was clear to us as researchers that individuals coming from small organizations tend to relate inclusive environments more to the feeling of home and kindhood, which we argue is intrinsically related to the rather homogenous workforce.

Ultimately, as Acker theorizes, women tend to occupy more gendered positions such as administration and human resources (Acker, 2006, p. 444). Furthermore, Acker also explains that class and gender are interlinked, where low administrative jobs that normally are less paid in the organization tend to be done by women (Acker, 2006, p. 444). We notice that Ackers's theory adds value to the understanding of the segmentation within the respondent's organizations since they hold most of the administrative jobs. Moreover, according to our interviewees, this is also the only career path for them to achieve top management positions. In the same line, and according to the interviewees, we noticed that in the gaming industry, women are also more concentrated, almost achieving parity, in areas of art and design, in contrast, there is a big gender gap in maths-related careers like programming. Similar to what was demonstrated within the section surrounding top management, the interviewees expressed little or at times no further resonance or consideration regarding this gender segmentation. It was clear to them that it existed, but they did not show any signs of reacting to this subject.

Conclusively, we perceived that the minoritized groups participating in this thesis had a clearer perception and reflection on inequalities and diversity, whilst the interviewees belonging to the white majority did not resonate on issues such as race, ethnicity and class in a similar way. We argue that this could be understood by looking at DiAngelo who argues that individuals who are white often put themselves outside of the racial hierarchy (DiAngelo, 2018 p.24). Similar to what Acker addresses, the most privileged individuals do not naturally see the unprivileged of others (Acker, 2006, p. 452).
7.2 Policies and Initiatives

All of the interviewees in this study were asked about policies and initiatives, regarding diversity and inclusion, that they recalled within their organization. Although it is not in our scope to analyze the actual structural framework of their organizations regarding diversity and inclusion, we argue that it fills an important function to capture the perception of the structural framework from the respondents. In accordance with Bolman and Deal's structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p.21), rules, initiatives and policies are important for organizations to decrease organizational chaos and troubles. Thus, we found the interviewee's perceptions and understanding of their organizational policies and initiatives connected to diversity and inclusion as vital for our research objectives.

As discussed in the section below, the interviewees perceived diversity and inclusion initiatives to be used as a showcase and symbolic matter. But what we also observe from several of the interviewees is that they perceived that when their organizations do have initiatives in the form of policies they seem to touch upon the subject of diversity and inclusion in a superficial manner. For example, when Antonio was asked about the management training that he had received within his current organization, he answered: “Yes, they mentioned diversity there, but just more in the meaning of don't be an asshole.”. When we dug deeper into the diversity and inclusion content of the policies and training, we stumbled upon the generalized perspective that the main message of the policies as understood by the interviewees was a basic idea of acceptable workplace behaviour. This is illustrated in the subsequent comments from Laika, referring to the main idea that the training and policies convey: “[...] keep it decent at all times”

Our interpretation is that the respondents perceive the policies and mechanisms of diversity and inclusion within their organizations as a set of behavioural rules, which refers to a system where they can submit formal complaints of harassment. This is exemplified by Kim when he retells when he had read the diversity and inclusion policy in his organization: “[...] because I remember reading more like this, you know, more rules of conduct sort of thing when I started.” On the same subject and in line with the previous answer from Kim, Laika says: “It's more, no, it's just like, go and talk to people and you need this form and you need to talk to this like any person in HR [...]” Furthermore, the simplicity of the diversity and inclusion
policies was perceived as even simpler by respondents that had an immigrant background, since we perceived them to be more aware. This is illustrated in the answer by Antonio: “[...] I guess, central European regular Joe that, yeah, don't give a shit about it. But I think for us, that came from another culture. It's kind of implicit in most cases.”.

One of the reasons why we interpret that the respondents’ perceptions demonstrate an overall picture of some of them having been given only basic training within their organizations is because in cases where the interviewees had gone through management training, they expressed concerns that this training was not enough. Laika foretells: “I have enough knowledge, but I just want to kind of see that the job is stressful and I might need some additional training”, and Kim: “I have requested to get more leadership or, you know, through training, because I haven't had that before.” We interpret that the tools that the training provide them, are not necessarily enough for the challenges that they might face, especially considering that Kim and Laika are coming to managerial positions.

On the other hand, respondents from small companies had the shared perspective that diversity and inclusion policies should only be in place after a negative experience occurs in the organization. This way of proceeding with diversity and inclusion subjects is showcased in the following comment of Elliot when he elaborated further on the existing policies at his company: “So I think the way that things operate here is that until it becomes a problem, it's not something that we need to put rules on. Because there's no need currently.” Here we argue that Elliot perceives that his organization has not been impacted by a negative incident, nor does the organization treat people unequally. This perception is contradictory to information provided by other parts of the interview where it is demonstrated that his organization refused to hire a non-Swedish-speaking person to the company due to other employees feeling uncomfortable speaking English. Therefore, we argue that Elliot’s perspective on the organization is based on the way it treats him and not how it treats others.

Another clear pattern amongst a few of the respondents was that they perceived that their organisations talked a lot about diversity and inclusion but did not put the necessary resources or focus into making the initiatives and policies effective. As Antonio explained: “[...] they're starting to have so many initiatives, all that, but you'll be honest, they're not really putting their money where their mouth is. So it's more to showcase.” Furthermore, this gave us the implication that the organizations were rather promoting diversity and inclusion, than
developing, following up and implementing result-driven activities. Although our intention is not to explore whether this is true or not, our understanding is that it can be assumed that there is a clear dissonance. This can be further demonstrated in the quote from Pontus: “I think they have to have it in their core value and really live it and work with it. Not just some quotes on the wall.” Furthermore, this perception of diversity and inclusion used as a symbolic objective and not as a real structural policy was reinforced by the following comment from Laika: “They count how many cultures they have and count how many countries and nations and how many women they have that are represented within the organization. So it exists on paper, but I wouldn't say it's really well thought through [...]”.

Furthermore, we asked the interviewees if their organizations had a diversity and inclusion officer, or a person designated to lead the subjects. In big companies, it was common that they had one person responsible and then we proceeded to ask them about their perception of the work these persons do. Antonio further explains: “It's not necessarily this exact title. She is raising awareness for all the issues that we have, but it's still on it, in its infancy. And honestly, I never saw any results of it.” The respondents answered in line with Antonio's response and provided the impression that even when they do have a person in charge of the subjects, their impact on the daily work life of the interviewees is limited or invisible, leading them to express scepticism.

### 7.2.1 Interpretation of Findings

As Bolman and Deal suggest (2008), it is important to pay attention to the four ‘framers’ to tackle organizational challenges. One of the key findings under sub-section 7.2 is that we perceive that there is a clear dissonance between the perceived structural framework of their organizations, i.e. policies, initiatives and rules, regarding diversity and inclusion, and the perceived actions and initiatives of the organizations. In other words, the respondents perceived that organizations promoted and talked about diversity and inclusion, but at the same time, they felt that it did not translate into real actions or resources.

Furthermore, this chapter allows us to understand that the interviewees perceived their diversity and inclusion policies to be more a set of basic rules of behaviour, aiming to provide guidelines to act, as Laika says, “decent”. However, the policies and trainings were
insufficient in some cases regarding the level of responsibility that the respondents had, and at the same time were simplistic when the respondents had a more aware background to diversity and inclusion.

7.3. Applying, Recruitment and Promotion

All of the respondents were asked if they considered their organizations diverse, as well as how they perceived their organization's recruitment and promotion processes. This since, recruitment and promotion processes are a vital aspect of producing equal opportunity for individuals within the industry. However, important to note is that applying was not contemplated in our questions, but became a recurring subject when talking about the diversity in their organizations. It became apparent that there was an important discovery on the subject of the type of person that usually applies to the industry.

7.3.1 Applying: Entering the Industry

When we asked Hedda about the diversity within her organization, she presented one of the strongest themes that we had stumbled upon within the interviews: “I think now of course like it could be more diverse, but I do understand that it's like a lot of people who are applying are one type of person [...]” We interpret her answer, in line with several of the other respondents, as giving us a pure example of the profile of the average worker in the industry, which is typically identified as being a young, white, male, and commonly heterosexual, with a background in STEM, particularly programming careers. What we have observed is that the average person in the industry is also the average person who applies and gets selected by the gaming schools. Another thing that we perceived from both Hedda and Elliot, is that their answers implied that there is a complicity and/or neutrality to the fact that their organizations are white male dominated: “I would say that there is a large portion of white cis males, but that's just because the industry is so saturated around that category but even like, I would consider that those people who fall into that category are not part of the problem”. We perceived that - to them - it is nothing more than a fact, an uncontroversial fact.
When asked about the recruiting and application process to get into the industry, most interviewees commented that there is a strong necessity to hire people with experience, as Lisa demonstrates: “I don't know if that's the biggest I think the biggest challenge right now is to find people that already have experience. So that would be definitely a challenge but finding a diverse group of people that has experience might be difficult.” Moreover, we interpreted that there is an overall lack of diversity amongst the applicants to the industry. Laika in the next comment provides a narrative statement of the homogenous type of applicant: “[…] I remember I was also struggling to hire people because when you want to put together a diverse team, there are just no applicants. There is like first you have a few, very few qualified applicants [...] all three of them are just like white guys.” This notion is strengthened by the reflection of Asim, which leads us to understand that even when most applicants are white men, is more common to have another diverse non-white race/non-northern European ethnicity man than to have women: “[...] in development in general, there's very limited diversity but that is only if you take a look at diversity where it's how many women are there, compared to how many men how many people of colour are there, how many minorities in general, are there in the teams It's, it's kind of it's one of the fields where there is a high majority of males [...]” Regardless of the different backgrounds of our interviews and especially, Asim, Laika and Lisa, all of them had the perception and experience that most of the applicants to the industry are white and male.

During our interviews, we stumbled upon the notion of some of the interviewees, that the lack of gender parity in their organizations was a result of a lack of women in heavy maths STEAM careers. This notion was strengthened by our literature review, where we found that there is a systemic lack of women in STEM, particularly in careers such as programing. Subsequently, there is a lack of women candidates for the backbone positions of the gaming industry. This can be exemplified by the comment from Antonio: “I don't think it's more or less receptive for women than other companies that I've worked on. But mostly I would say, because it's tech, there's a hard entry barrier for women.” When taking a deeper look at the phenomenon, we perceive that the problem begins in education. This can be seen in the following comment from Elsa also commented: “But for some reason, the programming doesn't seem to find women, or women don't find programming.”. Furthermore, the exclusion of women in heavy math-related careers was shared for other diverse groups as Elliot exemplified in the following comment: “I've always been really bad at math. That's like the one queer stereotype I fit into gay, gay men can't do math.”. As we can see in the literature
review the male stereotypes in STEM careers are not only affecting women but other non-conforming groups. We perceive and recognize that the lack of diversity within the organizations springs from a larger structural phenomenon that starts from early education. Our perception is therefore that diversity within one organization within one industry or sector, is dependent on the levels of diversity and inclusion within another sector.

7.3.2 Recruiting
During our interviews it was important to us to collect data on the perception of the interviewee's recruitment process. This is to understand how they perceive that their organizations attract and process new hires, to see if they are transparent and if they were perceived as providing equal opportunities to all candidates. Like Acker describes, recruitment is a vital part of dividing and reproducing inequality regimes, thus, is considered important in the production of equality. One recurring theme throughout a majority of the interviewees in this thesis was that their organizations recruited employees through referral bonuses. A referral bonus means that every time an employee refers somebody for a position and if the organization considers that candidate a successful hire, the employee who referred the 'new hire' gets a financial bonus. This practice can be illustrated in the comment made by Elsa and later asserted by all the other interviewees as a standard practice: “[...] we can always refer people based on if we think that the person who will be good for the position, we can always call them, we can refer this person and there's actually a system built for that, there is a bonus that comes with that if you manage to refer somebody successfully, there's actually a compensation.” The reference bonus works through connections, as a person inside the organisation has to actively refer somebody they know from the outside, for a position in their organization. Even when it is not automatic to have the position only because the candidate was referred, the organisation gives them priority and puts more attention to referred candidates. This mechanism to enter the industry strengthens the notion of the importance of contacts within the industry.

Another theme that we could detect throughout several stages in our interview sessions, was an inherent belief in fair and equal opportunities amongst the respondents when it comes to recruitment, even when it meant contradicting their own experiences of diversity and inclusion in the everyday practice of their organizations. When Hans was asked about recruitment within his organization he answered: “I don't think it's so transparent, but I think
everyone has a fair chance to get what they deserve.” When Pontus is asked about the recruitment processes within his previous organization, he also expresses the same strong belief in a fair and opportunity-rich organizational system: “Mostly men, absolutely. Women too. They were looking for people with the best skills. So, they never just purposely recruit only men” We also want to highlight how we perceive that Hans, as well as Pontus, are strong believers in the individualistic and separatist idea of meritocracy. But as DiAngelo emphasizes, the ideology is closely knitted with the racial hierarchy. Hence, it becomes important to note that Hans and Pontus provide a perception from the point of view of the “ideal worker” which is comprehended as white and male (Acker, 2006, p. 449), therefore, Hans and Pontus’s point of view could be sustain by their experiences of being white and male.

7.3.3 Promotion

The respondents gave us the notion that the promotion process is something that is given to you if you are good at your job. But at the same time, most of them illustrated promotion processes that were based on a “pick and choose” system dictated by the management teams. Hedda for example, when she was asked about the promotion process, she replied saying: “I would assume it's the bosses who like first hand pick out the people who work there and stuff.” Our interpretation is that this could be related to the previous finding amongst a majority of the interviewees having a strong belief in the meritocratic system, where we perceived that their answers illustrated a notion based on the understanding that success is merely dependent on individual accomplishments, and has little or no influence from societal history, systems and laws. This can be also be illustrated by Hans: “I don't think it's so transparent, but I think everyone has a fair chance to get what they deserve.”

Moreover, a majority of the respondents expressed themselves in a way that implied that the promotion process heavily relies on networking and decision-making from top management. This can be observed in the following comment of Laika where she talks about the promotion process and how competent people can be passed for promotion for not connecting and socialising with top management: “[...] also not only by, you know, very competent people being overlooked because that maybe doesn't happen outrageously often, but mostly by completely incompetent people getting roles. So maybe there was nobody else more
competent for that role, but I know that this person is incompetent and I know that they are just kind of rubbing each other, right [...]” However, all of the interviewees gave us the perception that networking and contacts are more fundamental for higher management positions. Antonio explains when he was asked about the promotion process in his company: “For management positions, it's a bit different depending on how high up in the chain the person is, it's usually a networking case. So it's a person who is known by someone.” We perceive that sameness with decision-makers seems important in the promotion process overall. Laika provided us with the impression that a certain kindhood between high positions is necessary to further the career: “Some people not ready to go out and like, be friends with directors and make this kind of impression that, oh guys, I also read good books and watch good movies and appreciate the wine and like, just kind of being overlooked for, for years, years in past.” The dependency on networks, friends and kindhood, gives us the perception we interpret as that there is a likelihood of several of the organizations engaging in recruitment and promotion processes which decreases the diversity.

Furthermore, the interviewees also told us that the further up in the hierarchical ladder within their organizations, the less diverse there were. This can be presented by the following description of top management provided by Laika: “[...] it's a cloud of cool dudes.” and Hans: “[...] they are not diversified in age or in gender or in culture. Then they are just like one.” When asking more specifically about the diversity in top management, we were met by a unison picture of the white cis male. Laika commented on the management in her organization: “Oh, that's terrible. It just, it just dudes, it's always dudes. It's, um, like starting like directly from, uh, middle management, usually, you have maybe like one or two. Like, I mean if we, I know if we talk about the company like size yourself, [Name of large organization]. It's enormous in Sweden and it has like one, two female leads and there are never female directors and never a CEO, like an HR director, can be a woman.” (Laika)

We conclude that the unison picture presented by the interviewees about top management was even less diverse than the overall white male homogenous workforce. This was demonstrated by all of the interviewees, however, the interviewees belonging to a marginalized group were presenting it as a more problematized phenomenon whilst interviewees such as Pontus, being a white cis male told us about it in a more factual way. When Pontus was asked if the top management within his organization consisted of males he said: “I would say 95% men.”
When we ask him to clarify if they were diverse or predominantly white, he said: “I would say 90% also.”

7.3.4 Interpretation of Findings

Like Acker foretells, bureaucracy, salary distribution and hierarchies within organizations are all techniques that are used to replicate and strengthen both inequality and class structures (Acker, 2006, p. 448). Our interpretation of the interviews, however, demonstrated that this is true. However, there was a lack of knowledge regarding the significance that these techniques had in the distribution of equality and opportunity. Rather, the respondents gave us the impression that they had a strong belief that the recruitment and promotion processes are distributed fairly. This is in line with the ideology of meritocracy (Castilla & Benard, 2010 p.546; DiAngelo, 2018 p.24), whilst they at the same time, gave us a contradictory picture of the promotion and recruitment processes being heavily reliant on networking and sameness.

Important to note, is that the fundamental role of top management to choose and pick personnel for promotion or recruitment can be perceived to allow for the effect of the phenomenon of cloning cultures. In addition to that, we argue that this seemingly recurring practice of recruiting and hiring people through social networks, especially the bonus practice, maintains and strengthens racial and gender inequalities (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1076; Acker, 2006, p. 450). Furthermore, it also allows cloning culture to occur, as individuals existing in the organization will recommend candidates who make them feel comfortable and/or whom they have a kindhood with. Which in turn leads them to know and relate with people who share sameness (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1074).

We observed, through the interviews, that network and connections are useful to enter the industry and they are key to getting promoted into higher management positions. This observation corresponds with our perception that there is more diversity in lower ranks and a bigger homogeneity in top management positions, as it will be discussed in the next section of this thesis. Therefore, we interpret that there is a cloning culture in the industry that is more notorious in top management positions.
7.4 A Closer Look at the Homogeneity

In this upcoming section we will demonstrate the general description of the homogeneity within the interviewees’ organizations, which circled an individual that was white, young, heterosexual, and male. This was perceived by all of the interviewees when they were asked about the diversity within both the organization in general, and within top management.

7.4.1 Homogeneity in the Industry

In the first approach, when we asked them about the diversity in their organization the native respondents strongly suggested that there is a wide diversity in their organizations. When asked about the diversity in top management, they reflected further and took the same line as the other respondents, telling us that there was a lack of diversity as a result of the domination of white heterosexual males. We can see this in the following comment of Hans, a white native man, when he is describing top management at his organization: “[…] they are not diversified in like in age or in gender or in, uh, in culture. Then they are just like one.” This correspondent and related to the type of person that applies to the organizations. For several of the interviewees, in particular the ones that had an immigrant background there was visible dissonance between the internal workforce of the industry and the demographic composition of the city of Malmö. As for the other respondents, we perceived that this dissonance did not exist or was not visible. Antonio, who has an immigrant background, shared his perception: “It's kind of reflecting the overall population. It does not reflect the Malmö population though, because Malmo has a lot of immigrants. This city and the area where most immigrants are in Sweden. If you look at The Game Assembly or any other university, you don't see that diversity. It's again, just white men, men and women. “ This can also be showcased in the following reflection from Asim: “[…] I can see already there are some underrepresented kinds of groups… there are a lot of Middle Easterners and Arabs in Malmö, but there are not a lot of Middle Eastern Arabs in any video game company […]” who also have an immigrant background.

During the interviews, we could see that beyond the notion of a homogeneous ideal worker, we also found a certain narrative was used to provide shelter. This narrative was putting attributes to a character or type of individuals which we perceived would provide an excuse
for the character's behaviour. Elliot demonstrates: “[...] Just sitting in that room or like in that hole, with everything being said all the jokes all you know kind of male banter [...].” Furthermore coming from an immigrant background, Laika explains how the masculine homogenous work culture creates an unwelcome environment for diversity, as we can see in the following quote: “I never really appreciated it. I don't want to be a part of this like, nerd culture. Not because it was invented by guys, it's just because I'm like, I'm interested in different things. [...] It's always gonna be some post-apocalyptic fantasy bullshit.” Additionally, we can also see, as Laika points out, that the dominant narrative can also lead to a homogenous product. Elliot similarly elaborates on how diversity plays on the products that they create: “We have a diverse workforce in the greater pool of the game industry. We see more stories that have not been told yet. I know it's been a big shift as of late with a lot of games here, and having a lot of voices. We can finally tell stories that maybe weren't considered before when the only games out there were macho action heroes killing things. But now we get emotional stories. Where like, I think the last of us is a fantastic example of this, because the game in 2014, I think, or the original one, had queer characters that die off-screen. You didn't get to know much about them and their relationship was bad it's basically, oh fuck you, I hate you. I'm going up to stealing your car and now I'm dead off-screen”

We perceived that most of the interviewees replied to the importance of having diversity and therefore, a less homogenous organizations. Most of the interviewees connected the necessity of diversity with the importance of having more innovative and different products. This relates to the aforementioned business case, where not only importance is placed on diversity but the inference is that homogeneity does not allow the industry to foster a wider creativity.

### 7.4.2 Networks, Connections and Friends

To succeed within the gaming industry, our respondents demonstrated a unison picture in which we strongly suggest that networks, connections and friends are essential to both enter, excel and climb the hierarchical ladder of organizations in the industry. Kim elaborates deeply on this matter, by answering this when we asked how he ended up in the industry: “I think it's pretty important to get certain roles. I was very privileged and lucky the way that I knew one of the managers from before he started the company. They opened the role for an animator
and then posted an ad for it. He basically asked me, and then we had a sort of internal interview [...] I got to skip that entire thing, because I knew him and because he knew me and what I could. So I feel like having connections is fairly important to get roles in that way. Especially higher-up roles [...]” (Kim)

One important theme that came out often was the close friendship and connection between the men that conformed to top management within the organizations represented by the interviewees. Hedda illustrates that the relationship between the top management group goes far from working and is actually founded in friendships: “They studied together also, so they have really good communication with each other and work really well together. And you also get the sense that they are really good friends also, like outside of work too.” The interviewees, especially Laika, perceived the importance of a relationship more related to a friendship than to work as a fundamental part of the professional ladder to top management; as is illustrated by Laika in the following quote: “The problem is not that they're dudes, the problem is that it's a hangout, they are having a barbecue together. They live on the same street in their gated community or wherever they live. And they all just kind of like rubbing each other the right way all the time” Furthermore, Laika expressed in follow-up questions the importance of sharing tastes, class, and similarities to be included, and she relates the observation from an outsider looking in: “[...] You know, they all sort of like the same school, same background, same nationality kind of thing and the same level of income. It's very hard to feel included in those people. And they're like hanging out and discussing, you know, it's like restaurants and how they appreciate good food and good wine and stuff like that.”Laika, who is an immigrant and a woman, moreover, even expresses how this makes her feel excluded. Which we perceive could be the same for other individuals who are deviating from the norm of the dominant ideal worker.

### 7.4.2.1 Hierarchies - The Power Trip

Another pattern that can be connected to inequality regimes is our perception that the some of the interviewees experienced their organizations as hierarchical. This can be observed in the following comment from Elsa: “So I appreciate our leads. That said, sometimes they are having a bit of this power trip [...].” In this comment, she discusses the power relationship with her bosses in a small studio dynamic. In contrast, we can see how for Pontus, coming
from a large organization, hierarchies are more present and identifiable: “Then I felt that the industry was not for me…It was too much, too much gaming and a lot of hierarchies.”. We do recognize that most organizations are inherently hierarchical, but what we want to point out with our interviewee's perceptions is that they emphasised the fact that their organizations had hierarchies that were negatively effecting the work environments. Which we perceive affects their experiences of inclusion.

Moreover, we had the impression that some of the interviewees did not recognize the barriers and challenges for individuals outside of the norm of the dominant narrative, to rise on the hierarchical ladder. Therefore, we perceived that they somewhat created a narrative that excused or legitimized the lack of representation within their organizations. This can be observed in the following comment of Lisa: “I think so. It would be great, of course, with more like maybe a woman and one trans since we have those people in our companies. Well, the problem is all of us are a bit new in the industry. So we haven't really worked up the ranks yet. I'm hopeful, there's nothing that I can see that would work against that.” Lisa's perception is that marginalised groups have the same opportunity to reach management positions. Moreover, we would like to shed light on how we perceive that this could be related to the overall strong belief in a meritocracy within the organizations, which in turn, also contradicts the stories that are illustrated surrounding diversity and inclusion. This can also be illustrated in the answer from Elliot: “I don't think it's something that's looked at really. Because if someone does a damn good job, but they happen to be diverse or normally prosecuted by race or ethnicity, then it's not really a consideration because their work is so damn good.” Here we also interpreted that the position in which Elliot is situated in the racial hierarchy could play a role in the way that he perceives race and ethnicity to be insignificant in the judgement of merits within his organization.

### 7.4.3 Education

Following the last sections, we went deeper into the background of the interviewees and their perception of the average background of the people working in their organizations. We could observe that there is a marked educational path, especially in Sweden, monopolized by few schools. This is showcased in the following answer from Hedda, where she elaborates on the background of her colleagues: “[...] almost everybody who is from Sweden and has studied
either Malmö or Stockholm has gone to TGA.” This observation and the comment from Hedda are strengthened by the following comment from Hans “[...] there are a few people that have reached us other ways, but I could say like 80% or more is from The Game Assembly”. This school came up in all of the conversations that we had throughout the data collection of this study, which we perceive could be related to the problem of lack of diversity in the workforce who apply for jobs. The networks, connections and friendships seem to play a role in the recruitment and promotion processes within each of the four organizations.

Furthermore, Kim shared his perception and experience of the selection and segmentation process that happens concerning the educational system and specifically to TGA. Kim perceives that the school that most people go to is not diverse. On the other hand, he later illustrates that there are several aspects of the school process that create barriers for individuals to get in on the same conditions: “And you had to go through both like portfolio and interview stages to be picked to start there. And there were like, multiple, like, hundreds of people that applied. So I had to apply twice, because the first time I got all the way into the interviews, but I was so nervous. I had never done an interview before. So I sort of flopped that one. So yeah, I feel like most people have to play it multiple times to even get in there. So it's, it's difficult.” (Kim)

Although it was expressed by a minority, it was frequently commented on an opposite perspective that at times contradicted the perspective and experience of the respondent. As exemplified by the following comment of Elliott: “And so I think the games industry is extremely diverse in that way and that people who normally wouldn't maybe have a shot because of what they look like, to get their work put in the forefront, even if they didn't have the formal education or anything.” In turn, we perceived that this contradiction between an overall homogenous organizational workforce and a perceived diversity could be related to the respondent's inability to see the homogeneity within the organizations that they work within.

7.4.4 Interpretation of Findings

Our perception is that all of the respondents presented us with an idea that supported our understanding of a dominant structure of the organizations, with white, heterosexual males
dominating and concentrating in top management. Important to note, that Acker (2006, p.444), explains that an inequality regime in an organization reinforces and interacts with inequalities in society. Therefore the lack of correspondence between the diversity in the gaming industry in Malmö and the diversity of the city is a more complex reflection of the inequality in the general society as well as the lack of diversity within STEM careers in particular. Within top management, this dominant narrative was even more consistent, making up nearly every top management team of the included organizations.

Furthermore, we perceive a persistent idea of a typical worker that in most cases conforms to the workforce from these organizations. This “ideal worker” goes in line with the notion proposed by Acker as male and white. We perceive that the ideal worker is not only present in the industry as a reflection of the aims of the industry but as a consequence of a systematic phenomenon, where the ideal worker is the only type that applies. We also perceived the same problem inside the organizations, since the ideal worker was concentrated in top management, retailing the same systematic problem. During the interviews, it was also clear to us that the hierarchies were more prominent in big organizations and they were according to existing classes in society, in contrast, hierarchies and classes are less notorious in smaller organizations, but still exist and are noticeable regarding the power relations between the bosses and employees (Acker, 2006, p. 444).

We recognize that the problem of the majority of persons in the industry being male and white to some extent lay outside of the organizations, and we understand that the lack of diversity within the organizations in which we have interviewees is facing complex challenges. From the education to entering the industry and to achieving top management positions, we can see how the groups conformed and created comfort through sameness (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1074). Friendship among equals creates a cloning culture, where they tend to reproduce at high levels the sameness (Essed & Goldberg, 2002, p. 1070-72). Our overall interpretation is that the interviewees with a native background had a direct perception of their organization as being diverse, however, contradicted themselves when asked follow-up questions about the top management, and the educational programs for the industry. They illustrated a homogenous environment both in education and in top management. Leaving us with the perception that their understanding of diversity and inclusion somewhat refers more to an idea or objective than to describe the representativity existing in their organizations.
8. Conclusion

Aiming to understand the perception of diversity and inclusion by interviews on a diverse range of workforce in the gaming industry, gave us the insight that it is not a practical nor an academic universal understanding of diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, in our interviews the perception of these matters seemed to commonly rely on personal experience, which was related to their dimensions of diversity. One of our most important findings, that permeated through all the research, was that there is a strong notion that diversity and inclusion are first and foremost concerning gender, and to some extent to sexuality and ethnicity/race and age. This is something that we see as a possible reflection of the Swedish society being generally aware of the gendered aspects of inequality that exist. However, we perceive that at the same time contributes to the present inequality regimes, as it does not shed light on other inequalities and maintains the focus only on gender. Furthermore, the respondents perceived diversity and inclusion more by daily small activities, and in contrast, had little notion of diversity and inclusion incorporated into the structural level of the organisation, such as the ones concerning policies, rules and regulations.

Another finding was that the individual intersections of the respondents seemed to not only affect the depth of their definition of diversity and inclusion but also the attributes that they were exemplifying when asked to define diversity. In our reflection, we conclude that the recognition of a person's individual diversity creates a bigger awareness of that diversity in other people. Hence, the sameness will help individuals detect different aspects of diversity that can contribute to exclusion within the inequality regimes. Allowing the individual with a deeper awareness of inequality within the organizational context such as the gaming industry. Thereby, to increase the understanding of diversity and inclusion, which can affect the industry’s profitability, we find it necessary to ensure an overall increase of the knowledge about the inequality regimes, which all individuals can face within organizations but that deviate from their specific characteristics.

Another consistent finding throughout the whole analysis was a dissonance between the diversity in the gaming industry and the city of Malmö. The dissonance was very present in
the interviewee's understanding of diversity and inclusion and in contrast their perception and experience of the demographic composition of the city of Malmö. On one hand, the interviewees expressed that in general organizations are making an effort to increase diversity within the organizations, but when further reflection took place, the interviewees expressed the dissonance between the perceived diversities existing in Malmö and the diversities fostered in their organizations.

A repeated theme throughout our interviews was the dominant portrayal of white, male and young, reproduced everywhere within the industry as the ideal worker. We saw, in line with the background of this thesis, the homogeneity within the industry. However, our finding here is that there is a heavy blindness to what homogeneity means for diversity and inclusion. The interpretation is that the employees express little, or no, reflection regarding the dominance of the ideal type containing all of the leadership, management and CEO positions within their organizations. Moreover, we also see that the reproduction of the ideal type is a process of cultural cloning. We perceived the finding that there seemed to be a lack of diversity awareness in the recruiting and promotion process. Where the interviewees' perceptions demonstrated that the processes were heavily based on networks, groups and connections especially when it came to top management positions, therefore creating a cloning culture. Strengthening the cloning cultures, we also found that there was a strong belief that the industry was consistently meritocratic. This meritocratic belief was contradicted by their own experiences of both promotion and recruiting.

Furthermore, we found that the process of reproduction of the ideal worker does not start with the industry, but with education. From a lack of women in STEM careers, to homogeneity in the classrooms and the specialised schools, the interviewees expressed a picture of a lack of diversity from the beginning. In the same line, most interviewees commented on the importance of education to enter the industry, not only for the formative reality but for the connections and friend groups that are conformed during this stage. The ideal worker notion is not only created by the industry but formed and selected through education.

Although it is somewhat outside of the scope of this thesis, we want to mention that our perception is that there is a lack of efforts and initiatives to tackle these issues on a larger scale by the schools. Along the same line, studies (FN, 2023) have shown the lack of women in particularly heavy math-related STEM careers like programming is intrinsically related to
the masculine stereotypes of the profession, that we did not perceive the organizations were tackling, but the opposite as their male-dominated culture is accepted and in some cases justified.
9. List of References


Flintberg, B. J. N. (2023). Kraftsamling Dataspelsbranchen En rapport om svensk spelindustri. RISE.


10. Appendix 1

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- Diversity, Inclusion and the Gaming Industry in Sweden

Research Question:
"How diversity and Inclusion are understood by middle managers in the gaming industry?"

Target Group Criteria:
Middle Managers and/or Project leaders within the Gaming industry in Malmö.
Middle managers, supervisors or project managers. In charge of managing personnel and with a certain extent of decision-making power.

Brief Introduction of the intention of the Study:
The objective of the study is to investigate how diversity and inclusion can be understood within the gaming industry in Sweden. These will be

General Introductory Questions
1. What educational background and how did you end up in the gaming industry?
2. What does a regular day at your job look like?
3. Have you ever had leadership/management training?
4. To your understanding, is there a diversity and inclusion policy in place within your company, if yes, what did that include?
   1. Is there a specific person that works with diversity and inclusion within your organization?

Diversity
0. Would you agree that your company has a diverse workforce?
   a. What is diversity to you?
0. Describe your team within your company.
   a. What kind of people do you work with (nationality/ethnicity/education etc)?
0. Describe the top management team?
   a. Do you feel the top management team represents the company?

**Inclusion**
0. Would you describe your company as having an inclusive environment?
   a. What is inclusion to you?
0. Do you perceive that everyone’s opinion is valued and respected within your company?
0. What do the promotion processes look like in your company? Do you feel opportunities in your company are available and transparent to everyone?

**Industry and Organization**
0. What is the average age of people in your organization?
0. Do you perceive that your organization is facing any challenges when it comes to diversity?
0. Do you perceive that your organization is facing any challenges when it comes to fostering inclusive environments?
0. Do you consider diversity and inclusion as an asset for the gaming industry?
0. Is there anything else that you feel is relevant?