“I have not achieved a feeling of being masculine”

An exploration of masculinities in the Swedish Armed Forces

Sofia Bjersér
Tack till

Er intervjudeltagare som generöst delade med er av erfarenheter, tid och tankar, utan er hade denna studie inte varit möjlig. För mig har det varit en ära att förvalta era erfarenheter och tack vare våra möten har jag blivit en starkare student med mer nyanserad kunskap och djupare förståelse för Försvarsmakten och maskuliniteter. Jag vill tillägga att detta är mina tolkningar av era erfarenheter och kanske drar vi olika slutsatser, oavsett har jag gjort mitt bästa för att ge en så nyanserad bild som möjligt och jag tar fullt ansvar för denna uppsats, eventuella felaktigheter och tillkortakommanden.

Jag vill också tacka min handledare Ane Kirkegaard för inspiration och stöd genom denna process och såklart alla ni som läste, utmanade och uppmuntrade när det kändes omöjligt.

The biggest thanks go to my own personal grammarly and great love, I reach highest with you <3
Abstract

Historically and presently most people employed in military forces worldwide are men. With a focus on peacekeeping and equality, the Swedish Armed Forces (SwAF) aim to recruit more women. But even as gender issues become a central focus of the SwAF, policy is mostly aimed towards women despite most employees being men. This study came about by leaning on feminist scholars’ arguments that men and masculinities need to be examined and involved when working towards positive peace, so that they do not remain naturalized and become unidentified obstacles. To achieve this aim, this thesis draws on semi-structured interviews with Swedish Peacekeepers and present a complex, contradictory puzzle of how masculinities are performed, perceived, and reproduced. Masculinities are admired but ridiculed, used as a tool for battle but an obstacle for rehabilitation, a source for deep emotional bonds and rigorously performed to turn off emotionally, and is mainly existing in the eyes of the beholder but seldom seen in oneself. The results support theoretical complexity of militarized masculinities and confirm that militarism is not inherent or come natural to men but is a performative, social construction.

Keywords: Militarized Masculinities, Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities, Swedish Armed Forces, Peacekeeping
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PACS</td>
<td>Peace and Conflict Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SwAF</td>
<td>Swedish Armed Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Military Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Military Personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Content

1. **INTRODUCTION** ................................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Research Problem and Aim ................................................................................................................................. 2
   1.2 Contribution and Research Question .................................................................................................................. 3
   1.3 Relevance to Peace and Conflict Studies ............................................................................................................. 4
   1.4 Delimitations ....................................................................................................................................................... 4

2. **THEORIZING MEN, MASCULINITIES, AND THE MILITARY** .............................................................................................. 6
   2.1 Masculinity and the Military ................................................................................................................................ 6
       2.1.1 How duty forms gender ..................................................................................................................................... 6
       2.1.2 Militarizing men ............................................................................................................................................... 7
   2.2 Performativity, Hierarchies and Hegemony ......................................................................................................... 8
       2.2.1 Gender Performance ....................................................................................................................................... 8
           2.2.1.1 Performing Masculinities ....................................................................................................................... 8
       2.2.2 Hegemony and hegemonic masculinity ......................................................................................................... 9
           2.2.2.1 Hegemonic Masculinity in the SwAF .................................................................................................. 10
   2.3 Masculinity and Peacekeeping ............................................................................................................................ 11
       2.3.1 Missions, Gender Dichotomies and Change .................................................................................................. 11

3. **METHODOLOGY** .................................................................................................................................................. 13
   3.1 Research Design ................................................................................................................................................... 13
   3.2 Data Collection .................................................................................................................................................... 13
       3.2.1 Selection of participants .................................................................................................................................. 13
       3.2.2 Presentation of participants .......................................................................................................................... 14
       3.2.3 Interviews ...................................................................................................................................................... 15
   3.3 Operationalization ............................................................................................................................................... 15
   3.4 Data Analysis Method ........................................................................................................................................ 19
       3.4.1 Ethical Considerations ................................................................................................................................... 23
       3.4.2 Positioning Myself ........................................................................................................................................... 24

4. **ANALYSIS** ............................................................................................................................................................ 25
   4.1 Masculinity and the Military ................................................................................................................................ 25
       4.1.1 How Duty Forms Gender ................................................................................................................................ 25
           4.1.1.1 Traditional Masculine Military Staff ................................................................................................... 25
           4.1.1.2 Young Masculine Staff .......................................................................................................................... 26
       4.1.2 Militarizing men .............................................................................................................................................. 29
           4.1.2.1 Media Imagery and Mimicking ........................................................................................................... 29
   4.2 Performativity, Hierarchies and Hegemony ....................................................................................................... 33
       4.2.1 Hegemonic masculinity in the SwAF .............................................................................................................. 33
           4.2.1.1 The Perception of Tougher Militaries and of Self .................................................................................. 33
1. Introduction

Born out of an interest and devotion to feminism I have for some time gravitated towards, questions concerning men and masculinities, mostly because of the overwhelming fatigue hearing how women need to fight for equality. I wanted to know more about men’s role in this and their responsibility for equal development and peace, consequently I decided to take a leap and challenge my feminist analysis and preconceived ideas about men and masculinities.

I finalized a thesis contributing to the field of Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities (CSMM) which critically investigates how masculinities and masculine behavior amongst peacekeepers in the SwAF is performed, reproduced, and expressed (Hern and Howson 2020:21).

Central ideas to this research are that men do not have inherent qualities which makes them good soldiers, but masculinity has been militarized through cultural molding and socially constructed genders roles. Consequently, the battlefield is an arena for men to prove themselves valuable in western cultures (Kronsell and Svedberg 2001:158, Goldstein 2006:264-266). However, traditional battlefields have changed and the closest the SwAF come to one are international missions, mostly peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping challenges the gender division that affiliates women with peace and men with war since it disrupts the traditional tasks of soldiers and asks them to perform traditionally feminine tasks like building relations, supplying food and caring for children instead of solving conflict through violence (Wegner 2021:15, Kronsell 2012 p.97, Duncanson 2019:75).

The study’s theoretical framework argues that masculinities are impossible to disentangle from war, and that it is important to understand MS (Military Staff) who are assumed to uphold, perform, recreate and challenge these linkages to provide new understanding of what masculinities mean to peace and conflict (Higate & Hopton 2005:432, Myrtilen, et al., 2014:13). Thus, the study investigates this through semi-structured interviews and present results that give nuance to images of stereotypical traditional military staff. The research confirms theories about masculinities as being performative, complex, and transformational, factors that inflict on how masculinities are performed in the SwAF are age, maturity, generation, regiment, mission, rank and personality. It is also highly contradicting; violence is unwanted but performing or enduring it provides status, simultaneously pursuing masculine qualities like strength is vital but exaggerating it is ridiculed. Masculinities are performed by most colleagues seldom by oneself, which confirms that masculine status is fulfilled from others endorsement (Butler 1988:526, Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2017:10). This descriptive research
contributes to Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) by nuancing the image of military staff to counter faulty stereotypes that reproduce non-peaceful masculinities (Hearn et al., 2021:319-320).

The study will start with presenting the research problem and aim, followed by contribution and research question, relevance to PACS and delimitation. Second chapter will theorize men and masculinities in an intertwined literature review and theory chapter. Third chapter explores the methodology, ethical considerations and positioning of the researcher. Fourth chapter presents the analysis followed by a concluding discussion in the fifth and last chapter.

1.1 Research Problem And Aim

Today, many Western cultures are built on realist security ideas, defending the nation-state, its inhabitants, and borders through militaries and the use of force. These ideas have formed a culture enabling inhabitants, industries, organizations, and social ideals to support and comply with the reproduction of war (Goldstein 2006:331). One method is via binary gender roles with fixed personality traits and duties towards the state; men as aggressive, warring military personnel, and women as peaceful mothers who nurture the home and birth more soldiers for the state to deploy (Elshtain 1995:4). Militaries have created ideals to aspire to; aggression, toughness, and strength, which has influenced the ideals of masculinity, influencing general societal ideals of what good men ought to be (Wegner 2021:8, Baaz and Stern 2011: 567). These norms influence the way people of all genders behave. However, as a Critical Study of Men and Masculinities, this thesis aims to move MS (Military Staff) from being the invisible norm to making them explicitly gendered subjects and scrutinized for their gendered behavior (Howson and Hearn 2020 p.22).

The disentanglable masculinity/military nexus has come about because of the centuries that men have been forced and raised to risk their lives, suppress their emotions, inflict pain on others and themselves to fulfil their gender role in cultures of war (Baaz Eriksson and Stern 2011:573, Goldstein 2006:266-267). This thesis has four starting points; firstly, it builds on the perception that the western cultural molding of men naturalizes qualities such as aggression, toughness, courage, rationality, and strength and signifies them as desirable attributes of “manliness” which are sought after in militaries (Baaz Erikson and Stern 2011:581). These qualities are argued by some to be inherent in all men, which contributes to the militarization of masculinity that justifies men committing and enduring violent actions in war (Wegner 2021:9). However, the second point of departure leans on Goldsteins (2006:253) research which
establishes that if warring was natural to men, they would not need as much training, experience mental distress during and after the battle, or use mind-altering substances during war. This challenges the idea of soldiering as a natural part of men and is an essential key in the demilitarization of men (Goldstein 2006:250, Jordan-Young and Karkazis, 2019:54). Moreover, as far as we know, wars have only existed for a brief part of human history - too short an amount of time to state that it is inherent in human nature (Hogan 2011:56).

Thus, the third, and one of the most pertinent points of departure of this thesis is that, even though organized violence such as war does not come naturally to men, the cultural expectations on men to perform violence has militarized masculinity and created expectations on men to strive for, and society to favor, attributes such as aggressiveness, strength, and toughness in men (Wegner 2021:8).

This is pertinent to examine when striving for peace since feminist scholars argue that militarized masculinities directly prevent feminist goals of peace and equality in all society (Duncanson 2019:469) However, and forming my forth key assumption, feminist critique often lacks a nuanced image of what masculinity in the military entails, and can sometimes reinforce stereotypical images of militarized masculinity and harmful gender roles of male aggressiveness, according to Kronsell and Svedberg (2012:156).

Building on the four key assumptions; men do not have inherent qualities that make them fit for war; certain qualities are culturally privileged and sought when describing masculinities; the favored qualities form civilian men too; and the militarized masculinity ideal is not nuanced enough in feminist research. So, because the popular image of militarized masculinities is not nuanced, this thesis intends to contribute to complexifying ideas of such masculinities. This is important because the image of MS - aggressive, emotionally detached, strong and tough - affects what sort of masculinities are described and aspired to generally.

1.2 Contribution and Research Question

This research contributes to the study of peace and conflict with first-hand experiences of militarized masculinities performed within the SwAF, moving away from relying on default assumptions about how militarized masculinity is performed, towards a nuanced understanding if its nature. It is crucial to examine soldiers and officers’ experiences and to investigate the factuality of the stereotypes and how they affect the employees personally and the SwAF as an organization. To do so, I will be guided by the following question:
“How are masculinities described, performed and recreated in relation to peacekeepers professional role in the Swedish Armed Forces?”.

1.3 Relevance to Peace and Conflict Studies

The attributes favored in militaries become aspirational for civilian men, since the militarized man is seen as culturally privileged in westernized cultures (Wegner 2021:8). Thus, complexifying the depiction of what it means to be ‘a MP’ can give a more nuanced image of what it means to be a man in general. CSMM has significant potential to contribute to PACS normative aim of positive peacebuilding, when reconstructing gender relations and non-violent masculinities. It creates space to question and discuss the deconstruction of men and masculinities and gives the possibility to understand their participation or non-participation in conflict and peace (Hearn et al., 2021:319-320). Howson and Hearn (2020:20) places CSMM as a subfield of feminist-, Women and Gender studies. Gender is historically and still today often a description or study of women; that’s why the word “Critical” is essential in describing this field as a counter pool to other types of masculinity studies which does not aim to decentralize men and masculinities through research (Howson and Hearn (2020:20), Myrttinen, et al. 2014:14).

1.4 Delimitations

Due to limitations this thesis aims only to describe the experience of the military staff interviewed and cannot go beyond the participants to examine the effect different behaviors have on the external work of the organization, or men outside the organization. Still, it aims to nuance militarized masculinity based on contributions of the research participants.

Whilst acknowledging the gender work of the SwAF, I judge a comparison with my research would not be fruitful. The handbooks and base values mainly focus on equality, which is not the focus of this research. However, the concept of softer values will be used.

Furthermore, the data is limited to my 13 informants, and the generalizability of this thesis is low. Nevertheless, it is a qualitative case study, so high generalizability is not the goal (Cresswell 2009:193). The participant group does not include staff with only national experience; a choice was made to focus on peacekeepers. Also, the peacekeeping role offers an interesting gender dynamic which challenges the traditional men/war, women/peace nexus upon which I will explore further in section 2.3 (Eduards 2012:61). This thesis does not aim to
evaluate if MS performing peacekeeping missions are valid actors of peace.

In my interviews and theory chapter, femininity is used in relation to masculinity and contributes with perspectives on masculinity. Accordingly, this thesis is constructed with femininities as a required polarity to masculinity; it is not investigated on its own – a choice I made to keep the scope focused on men and masculinities.

In this thesis, I will not address the imperial implementation of gender and its connection to whiteness and colonialism, which is relevant to cover concerning militaristic peace work performed by the global north in the global south, which is connected to racialized gender binaries and hierarchies between “locals” and MS in peace troops (Thomas 2007:49, Duncanson 2009:76). The choice was made based on the need to keep the thesis focused and centered around the interviewees’ personal experiences, reflecting on their own forces. It is also limited to western culture and theories about masculinities and war since the study is placed in a western setting.
2. Theorizing Men, Masculinities, and the Military

The following chapter is an integrated literature review and theory chapter to illustrate theory through relevant research. I will not present any new theory since the aim is not to test theory but rather to explore and describe my data with its help. Further, the theoretical framework guides the construction of the interview questions and finds patterns in the data to create categories and themes that will be explained and examined in the analysis.

This chapter is categorized under three main themes derived from the data based on theory: “Masculinity and the military”, “Gender, Hierarchies and Hegemony”, and “Masculinity and Peacekeeping”. These central themes aim to provide the reader with theories and guidance about how gender is performed in general, and masculinity in the military and in peacekeeping in particular.

2.1 Masculinity and the Military

This section will go into how gender roles and masculinities are used to motivate men to perform and engage militarily and thus creates a connection between masculinity and the military. The subthemes are in following order “How Duty Forms Gender” and “Militarizing Men”.

2.1.1 HOW DUTY FORMS GENDER

Masculinity and femininity are gender subjectivities constructed as inter-dependent and contrasting; one is impossible to perform without the other. War culture refers to practicing war in its own right through cultural expressions like decorations, festivities, clothes, music that immerse war and does not use it only as a means to an end (Van Creveld, 2008:73). In war cultures, contrasting genders are created based on myths, memories and roles that play out in complementary symbiosis in peace and war time. It affiliates women with peace and men with war (Elstain 1995:4, Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2017:4). The war system has created a man that protects his nation and the women and children of it; he is a warrior, the women are mothers, wives and nurturers, the beautiful souls who, due to their fragility, ought not to participate in warfare (Elshtain 1995:141, Goldstein 2006, p.266-269). Masculinity is created as the hierarchically dominant actor, above femininity and sub-ordinate masculinities. This hierarchy creates a dichotomy which is foundational to categorize military activities as masculine and
valorize masculine duty over feminine duty (Duncanson 2009:64, Eduards 2012:62).

Since the 1800 the SwAF has practiced mandatory conscription, “Allmän värnplikt”, for all men. Conscription was seen as a democratic security measure to ensure the populations' involvement in security issues. Yet only half the population was included until 2017, when conscription was made obligatory, for men and women, after seven years of voluntary conscription (Kronsell 2015:115). Mandatory conscription endorsed gender roles by dividing and enhancing masculine and feminine duty towards the nation-state (Kronsell and Svedberg 2001:62, Duncanson 2009:64). About 5.800 people are accepted as conscripts and go through military training every year (Rekryteringsmyndigheten skickar ut mönstringsunderlag till 100 000 totalförsvarspliktiga födda 2003 | Plikt- och prövningsverket, 2021). The following section will explore how masculinity has been militarized through traditional masculine duty towards the state.

2.1.2 MILITARIZING MEN

The historical masculine duty to serve as MP (Military Personnel) has led to assumptions that men have biological abilities that make them naturally adapted MS. Goldstein (2006:406) argues that some biological gender differences such as strength and size make men a bit more adept for the tasks of war than women, but the main reason for these qualities being common amongst men is the “cultural molding”. Meaning; men are socialized into performing roles that make it masculine to be protective, brave, active, aggressive, competitive and to take risks so that they can recognize themselves in the role of the MP and be attracted to proving their manhood on the battlefield (Higate and Hopton 2005:434, Enloe 1983:211). The historical majority of men present in militaries globally make the link between military and masculinity seem ‘normal’, but like gender roles, armies and wars are created, and so is the social expectation on men to become MS (Kronsell and Svedberg 2012:2). However, the naturalization of social constructions such as gender and war have a monumental influence on our societies and should not be disregarded. The military is designed to fit the bodies of men, and the bodies of men are trained, drained and challenged to suit the requirements of being a MP (Goldstein 2006:253 Duncanson 2020:468). Subsequently, the cultural molding privileges strong, aggressive men who undergo extensive training – which would have been unnecessary if warring came naturally to men – and motivates men to prove their masculinity on battlefields. Consequently, masculinity becomes militarized (Goldstein 2006:253, Duncanson 2020:468, Wegner 2021:8-10).
Additionally, it is vital to keep in mind that as masculine norms are mostly culturally formed, they have an essential impact on male bodies. While male bodies do not determine the patterns of masculinity (Connell 1998:5), militarized masculinities play an important part in maintaining the cycle of violence and the war culture. As Cockburn (2007:249) puts it: “masculinity shapes war and war shape masculinity”, which illustrates how masculinity and war reproduce each other and that militarized masculine ideals influence masculine ideals of the general society and vice versa. Having explored the militarization of masculinity, moving on, we will investigate hegemony, performativity, and hierarchies of gender structures.

2.2 Performativity, Hierarchies and Hegemony

This section will explain gender performativity and how it creates hierarchic- and hegemonic structures, through the sub-themes: “Performative Gender”, “The Meaning of Masculinity”, “Hegemony and Hegemonic Masculinity” and “Hegemonic masculinity in the SwAF”.

2.2.1 GENDER PERFORMANCE

This thesis will follow a constructivist interpretation of gender that explains gender as socially constructed through the continuous performance of daily tasks. Gender exists only to the extent it is performed (Butler 1988:527). Since soldiering traditionally is masculinized performing, it provides a masculine identity. Hence, the body does not determine your gender, and femininity and masculinity can be ascribed to or denied by all bodies. Performativity—‘acting as your gender’—is reproduced through our own and others interpretations of us, and creates ripple-effects through society. Performing one’s ascribed gender well provides reassurance but doing it wrong leads to punishment (Butler 1988:526). This explains why MS reproduce stereotypical masculinities in the military; complying with the norm is rewarded. Behind the performativity of gender, there is nothing stagnant or inherent in gender identity (Butler 1999:97). However, the social constructs and performances of gender, femininity and masculinity are meaningful, so the next paragraph, will be explore the performative masculinities.

2.2.1.1 Performing Masculinities

When studying the performance of masculinities, one must be aware of the plurality, variation and fluidity of expectations on gender norms. It is important to note, that the construction of gender is not static but changes over time and within cultures, organizations, families,
workplaces and countries (Connell 1998:4). Thus, there exists multiple ways to perform masculinity or femininity within the SwAF; neither is it the same as it was a few years ago or historically. Subsequently, using the plurality of the word is a way to avoid essentializing. It illustrates the impossibility of a purist concept that enables the compliance hierarchical gender structures need to be maintained (to be further explored in section 2.2) (Howson and Hearn 2020:48-49).

However, masculinity and men are often linked to CIS male bodies. So, referring to male/men’s bodies, that will signify CIS male bodies; men who were assigned male at birth and who identify themselves as men (Trans och cis, n.d.). This thesis will utilize that connection as one point of departure when identifying masculinities and choosing research participants. Historically identifying certain bodies as male bodies is a way for militaries to select personnel. CIS male bodies are consequently disentangable from the military (Connell 1998:5, Kronsell 2006:111). Having said this, I acknowledge that people of all genders can be identified as having cis male bodies and serve in the military even if they do not identify as such.

Moreover, something I perceive as challenging in this study is to explore the experience of men and masculinities without playing into rigid gender binaries that are counter-productive when seeking to move beyond binarity and pursuing gender equality (Howson and Hearn 2020:21). Simultaneously, the binaries must be critically investigated to counter them, and this thesis will contribute to such a critical investigation of military masculinities.

Finally, historically militarization of men, affect how people perform masculinity in everyday life. Militarized masculinity is closely connected to hierarchical gender structures, which will be explored in the following section.

2.2.2 HEGEMONY AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

Hegemony signifies the historical way that power is attained and kept. It is not created through force but through consensus and compliance, making it a subtle and all-enveloping hard to contest (Howson and Hearn 2020:44-45). The idea of hegemony or hegemonic masculinity as something stable or even natural is created through the socially constructed consensus, which enables masculine privilege. However, its existence only leans on social constructions and does not exist in any essential way; it is universal on a social level but non-existent, which means that its existence cannot be claimed to be continuous nor encompassing (Howson and Hearn 2020:41). Militarized masculine hegemony is achieved through the naturalization of men as militaries. The hierarchical advantage masculinities have on femininities provides a higher
valorization of the traditionally gendered spheres, the masculinized battlefield over the femininized home (Duncanson (2009:76-77).

2.2.2.1 Hegemonic Masculinity in the SwAF

Historically and presently, men make up the majority of people who work in the SwAF. From about 1865 the SwAF start to upheave the male monopoly of the organization and in 1989 women gain formal access to all roles in the SwAF (Sundevall 2011:211). However, women have performed waged work in the Swedish military since at least the 1800s (Sundevall 2011:207, TILLBAKABLICK PÅ JÄMSTÄLLDHET, n.d.). Despite efforts to attract more women and the fact that women have had legal access to all positions in the organization for 32 years, men make up 79 per cent of the personnel in the SwAF (Försvarsmakten 2021).

Until 2010, the duty to defend national territory, women and children was tied to men and masculinities through law. An example of how hegemonic masculinity was created through legal structures is, only men were obliged to participate, and refusing conscription, or deserting from the military was punished with prison (Persson 2011:28). Any organization dominated by male bodies, legislatively or socially, is hegemonic in its structure. Therefore, the SwAF is an arena of hegemonic militaristic masculinity where norms and expectations of masculinities are created, reproduced, and experienced (Hern 2012:35, Connell 1998:5).

Hierarchies are through ranks an institutionalized part of the SwAF, but status connected to different roles and groups within the military create their separate hierarchical structures of refined masculinity to aspire to. Such groups often have a close connection to battle or combat, which works as an enhancer of masculine warrior ideals which provides status (Wegner 2021:9). This is exemplified through a study about masculinity amongst Swedish rangers (Alvinius et al. 2016). Rangers are seen as the toughest staff, working as an elite force in the organization, doing more challenging things than others. “Ranger's masculinity strives for a ‘better’ patriotic manhood which is purer, prouder, and stronger than others” (Alvinius et al. 2016:42) both in the military and outside it. Their tasks and strive provide them top status of the hierarchy and is confirmed both by them knowing it themselves, and by others in their environment (Alvinius et al. 2016:46). However, according to Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2017:10), these idolized images rarely resonate with the self-image of the ones “inhabiting” them. The researchers argue that institutions conceal the fragile social construction of militarized masculinity. Alvinius et al. (2016:36) also mention how emotion is regulated through “emotional regimes”, referring to how militaries contain strong emotions in morally
challenging situations to perform better. Furthermore, it entails exclusionary groupings (ex. rangers) within the forces, creating loyalty and trust within (Alvinus et al. 2016:25, 42, 44).

As hegemony is difficult to grasp, Hearn (2020:43) and Kronsell (2012:46) argue that we should research the invisible or the silences to see the obvious but unspoken.

2.3 Masculinity and Peacekeeping

2.3.1 MISSIONS, GENDER DICHOTOMIES AND CHANGE

Since the 1990s, more militaries have shifted from nation-based defense to pursuing interests, protecting, and participating in international conflict and peace missions. The global efforts focused on peacekeeping undertake tasks not traditionally connected to the role of soldiering. For example, building relations with the local population, playing with children, preparing, and supplying food, building schools, patrolling, and solving problems verbally (Wegner 2021:15, Kronsell 2012 p.97). The role of a peacekeeper conflicts with traditional soldiering, the aim being peace through non-violence, where violence is seen last resort and a failure (Kronsell 2012 p.79-82).

Peacekeeping is interesting because it subverts the traditionally masculine and feminine spheres of peace and war. Research shows both a feminization of the militaries and tasks connected to peacekeeping – encouraging traditionally feminine behavior and qualities, while simultaneously masculinizing peace, making it tough and honorable for male MP to work towards it. Masculinity ideals connected to peacekeeping are helpfulness, restraint, chivalry, personal drive, enduring boredom, humor and good spirits (Wegner 2021:17, Haaland 2012:70). Some describe the role as more challenging than soldiering and an ideal way of being a MP and, therefore, a man, since non-violent practice is seen as more civilized than using violence (Duncanson 2009:74, Wegner 2021:15).

On the other hand, there are examples of Dutch peacekeepers expressing disappointment in their role as peacekeepers since such did not enable them to prove their masculinity but were, according to them, more suitable for women (the Dutch peacekeepers' disappointment will be used as an example to stir thoughts during the interviews) (Kronsell 2012 p.81-82). Also, Canadian officers have rejected the term because the feminized tasks are seen as lesser than tasks of militaries. They used missions in Afghanistan to re-masculinize their army through fighting to gain more respect from allies after a long time of promoting peacekeeping ideals for their staff (Wegner 2021:13).
Peacekeepers are interesting research subjects since they are described through both gender binaries and often challenge traditional gender roles, even though the peacekeeper role is written off by some feminist researchers as a new way to justify hegemonic militaristic masculinity and continuous warfare (Duncanson 2009:76-77). Duncanson encourages any challenging and exploration of the traditional militarized masculinity since it challenges the dichotomic hierarchy of masculinities and war above femininity and peace (ibid).
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This thesis is a qualitative, descriptive case study based on semi-structured interviews, which provides insight into the experience and performance of masculinity according to a group of Swedish peacekeepers. The qualitative approach provides the possibility to access personal perceptions and experiences of masculinities which gives the analysis possibility to be rich and nuanced (Creswell, 2009:8).

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The choice to research the SwAF was pragmatic reasons for accessibility and cultural knowledge shared with the participants and their professional setting. The participant group was gathered, contacting all 11 regiments across Sweden asking for two staff members, with experience of peacekeeping missions. Simultaneously, I contacted a Facebook group with female employees at SwAF to find participants; these two measures resulted in 5 participants. So, I needed to seek other ways, and I contacted the Swedish Veteran society that announced my request on their social media. I was approached by 33 people (both active and veterans), and I chose eight people to interview on top of the 5 participants I already had. The receptionists at the regiments, the Facebook administrator and my contact person at the Swedish Veteran organization were my gatekeepers (Creswell 2009:125).

My research participants were required to have gone on a mission after 2005 and served as soldiers or officers. I chose to have a broad research group to get more perspectives and make finding participants easier. It was crucial for me to hear from women in the SwAF since masculine norms ought to be more prominent to women than to men. Conversely, the focus was always on men and masculinities. Having a majority of male interviewees reflected the gender division in the SwAF realistically and gave me a more extensive scope on men's experiences. I did not put a lot of weight on whether participants had left the forces or not since the important point was that they had been on a mission. Some had gone abroad many years ago and were still in the forces, and some had been away more recently and had left. Differences
between soldiers and officers are not in focus in this thesis so I will include both positions when referring to staff, MP, or MS. However, I did look for differences between staff with fighting/non-fighting positions. This study will as all qualitative research, have limited generalizability but might contribute to a deeper insight from personal experiences of Swedish peacekeepers.

3.2.2 PRESENTATION OF PARTICIPANTS

I interviewed 13 people in total, six soldiers and seven officers, four women and nine men. The majority of them still work for the SwAF, and therefore I will not describe the participants individually but the group in general as a measurement to protect their anonymity.

Participants had experience from six out of eleven regiments and many different positions; fighting, administrative and supportive. They are officers and soldiers in fighting positions, paramedics, weapon/bomb technicians, communicators, in personal protection, robot drivers, and human resources. Their age range is between 23-55 years, and they are mainly ethnically white, however I will not address ethnicity as a factor. Quotes are anonymized but will be assigned unique codes made with letters and numbers according to this table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Quote number to find order and translation in Appendix 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-32</td>
<td>M (man)</td>
<td>F (Fighting)</td>
<td>1-110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W (woman)</td>
<td>N.F (Non-fighting, supportive or administrative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Example: Personal number/Binary Gender/Position/: 1/Woman/Fighting/2*

Since voluntary participation was crucial to the study, I was only in contact with people who contacted me. The participant group can be assumed to have had some sort of interest in the topic. By voluntary participation, it is hard to reach people who are completely uninterested in the subject or reluctant to talk about it. However, I do not believe that this created any particular biases.
3.2.3 INTERVIEWS

All 13 semi-structured interviews lasted between 1h and 2.5h and were conducted in Swedish; the researcher’s and assumed native language of all participants were transcribed in full. All interviews were audio-recorded (a total of ~22h of recorded audio), and all but three were transcribed in full in a Microsoft Words dictation function and corrected by me; one was transcribed by hand.

Interviews were conducted over video-call (6) and phone call (7), and it was up to the participant to decide the tool they were most comfortable with. I found phone interviews to be more comfortable because it was easier to listen, take notes, and it took the social edge off, as needing to mimic behavior or keep eye contact while taking in all the information and coming up with follow-up questions was challenging. Simultaneously, there are negative aspects of not seeing the participant, such as not allowing me to read people's facial expressions and hence get a deeper understanding of how they related to their answers (Bernard 2011:306).

3.3 Operationalization

Based on the theory, I created an interview guide as a mind map to give initial structure to the interviews. Mind map A was used, and is a short version of mind map B. Both are presented in their original versions.
Figure 1: Mind map A
Despite the level of detail of the guide, it only served as support. Part ("del" in Swedish) one included terms and conditions, part two is a warm-up, part six for rounding up and the one in the corner subjects I wanted to be sure to cover. The first question ("del 3") builds on the theory from “Masculinity and the Military”. “Duty according to gender roles” is operationalized by presenting the traditional perceptions of women as peaceful and men as warriors and asking for the participants reactions. “Militarizing men” is used to challenge this idea and exemplified by Goldstein’s research which illustrates that military qualities are not inherent, accompanied by the facts on women performing soldering as well as men. To analyse this, I scanned my data for descriptive accounts about how masculinities are performed, where the images stem from, the participants' own responsibility in it, and accounts about how others perform masculinities.

The second question ("part 4") lean on the theory from “Masculinity and Peacekeeping” and explores challenges peacekeeping pose to the gender dichotomy. Since it removes the traditional tasks of the masculine warrior and requires them to perform tasks that, by some, are seen as feminine. To answer “Missions, Gender Dichotomies and Change” (see parts 3 and 4 on the map). I look for answers in participants lived experience of missions, their gendered perception of self and others and how accounts from different years illustrate change.

The third question about “Gender, Hierarchy and Hegemony” ("del 5") was only used sporadically or if the topics did not arise naturally. “Hegemony and Hegemonic Masculinity” was approached through addressing the historical domination of men in militaries globally and in the SwAF and asking if participants experience that the male majority forms the MP in specific ways. “Performative Gender” and “Performing masculinities” is approached by asking if their idea of masculinity or how they perform it has changed during their time in the military. However, I tried to avoid direct questions about this theme. As stated in theory, power relations and hegemony are sensitive and difficult to grasp, so asking straight questions made it hard to get illustrative answers. Instead, I allowed this theme, and the subjects in the bottom right corner, to arise naturally in the interviews and it gave me clearer illustrations of the theme, making it possible for me to examine what I wanted and provides my research with high measurement validity (Chambliss 2019:37).

With that as my starting point, the participants led the conversation where they wanted and allowed me to ask follow-up questions. I asked open ended questions to avoid social desirability bias (Chambliss 2019:100, Frauk et al., 2008:847-865). Silences and normalized assumptions
will be investigated by asking obvious follow-up questions like: “What is masculine?” or “Why is it masculine to be strong? (Kronsell 2006:115).

While this study is not representative of all of the SwAF, it will offer nuanced research about my case at this specific point in time. Using more quantitative methods like surveys would not give me the depth provided in semi-structured interviews. The value of qualitative studies resides in the questions it poses and the results it yields, the indications and tendencies one might otherwise have overlooked. As such it might inspire to further research on the theme, both qualitative and quantitative.

3.4 Data Analysis Method

Moving on, the data derived from the interviews were analyzed quantitively in the program Nvivo, deriving categories both deductively and inductively, to see what categories were most prominent, from which I derived sub-themes (Bernard 2011:430). This is not a part of my result, but quantitative tools used to create a well-supported qualitative analysis. Here are the categories created (the table is translated, and the original table can be found in Appendix 1, the word tree was unfortunately not possible to translate):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Number of coding references</th>
<th>Aggregate number of coding references</th>
<th>Number of items coded</th>
<th>Aggregate number of items coded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Reason to apply</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Reason to apply\Adventure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\right person in right place</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Fallenness for war\Men as better soldiers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Fallenness for war\Men as better soldiers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Women\Better than men</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Women\Better than men</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Feminine women</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Women in battle\Women on mission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\check this\women\Women in battle\Women on mission</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\check this\women\Women about women</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Gender roles</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Gender roles\Change: Gender in the defence</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Gender roles\Social change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Unwelcome</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Unwelcome\Behaviour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Unwelcome\People</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\position</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes Check this\Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Check this\Education\Hierarchy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity\action heroes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity\Behaviour and peace</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity\Biology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity\Caring stuff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity\Their qualities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Masculinity\Men treating women bad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Qualities in a soldier</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Family bonds</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Strength (mental and</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Physical)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Parents\mums</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Parents\Dads</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Gender</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Generation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Mannishness</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ non-masculine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Emotion</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ masculinity in relation to the public</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ masculine women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ masculine women\Fitting in, asserting oneself</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ masculine women\Fitting in\Sexual abuse</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Softness</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ The myth\</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>The myth\Others image</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ The myth\Facade</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ The myth\Films</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ The myth\Expectations</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ The myth\afterwards</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ The myth\Identification</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Men on mission</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Men’s way of doing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Men’s way of being</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ reasons behind</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Positive masculinity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Voice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Sexuality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Destructive masculinity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Masculinity \ Language use</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The categories were later turned into sub-themes based on their relevance to the research questions, frequency in the text and intrigue, which made it possible for me to explore essential themes even though they have a lower frequency (Williamson et al., 2018:463). Visualizing the categories through “Word Trees” made it easier to see the amount of scope in each category and deduct themes: The bigger the box, the more scope was found under that category.

**Table 2: Coding scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Masculinity</th>
<th>Traditional qualities</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Tougher positions +</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>masculinity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Tougher positions +</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>masculinity +</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testosterone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Looks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conscription</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Older men</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Menstruation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about women</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Word tree, Masculinity**
Within the umbrella category masculinity, another word tree shows the most relevant categories more clearly by items coded:

![Figure 4: Word tree, breakdown of Masculinity](image)

The main themes: “Masculinity and the military”, “Gender, Hierarchies and Hegemony,” and “Masculinity and Peacekeeping” were developed in symbioses with the sub-themes and theory and worked to guide this thesis forward.

As I wrote my analysis, I contrasted supportive quotes with negative cases to create a more balanced data set, counter my biases, present alternative experiences, and maintain transparency in my research (see Bernard 2011:436). Transparency is critical in research, so the following section will disclose some other ethical considerations encountered during the writing process.

### 3.4.1 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This thesis has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Council at Malmö University. The interviewees are not representatives of any vulnerable group, and no intimate questions were asked. However, as soldiers and officers, on peacekeeping missions, some of the participants have experienced and conducted challenging and tragic acts, which calls for me as a researcher to reflect on the emotional burden I might have exposed during interviews. I tried my best
always to be respectful and not ask invasive questions. To protect their integrity and honor their trust, I have removed possible identifiers such as age, name, exact years active, positions, names of missions and geographic locations. With the participants’ permission, I recorded the interviews, and use their gender and professional role when quoting. Some participants requested to check the quotes used before publication, and I agreed to it. All participants could withdraw their participation at any moment until the hand in and then all data on them will be destroyed and removed immediately. This measurement is taken so that participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous. Before the interview, I sent out an interview consent form to all participants with conditions and rights of participation (See Appendix 2).

To avoid misinterpretations and increase the credibility and transparency of the research, I build my analysis on quotes carefully derived from the participants' accounts (see Roller 2020:8).

3.4.2 POSITIONING MYSELF

Acknowledging my personal biases as a researcher is crucial to create transparent and high reliability research since, as a researcher of a qualitative study, I am the primary instrument for interpretation and data collection (Creswell 2019, 267). I have continuously questioned my ideas and prejudice during this process. The topic was chosen based on my interest in feminism and the belief that men and masculinity need to be a more significant part of the discussion to move toward equity.

The most challenging thing studying the SwAF was questioning my skepticism towards military organizations after many years of nurturing a critical approach towards organizations that practice violence. As a strategy, I have approached my participants as reflecting, feeling persons, not as military staff, and aimed to understand them and their stories sincerely without prejudice. The most important thing for me conducting this research, was for my participants to be comfortable, respected and for my critical ideas about military organizations not to misrepresent the participants. Having finalized this thesis, I can say that my participants have made my understanding of the performance of masculinities more nuanced and contributed to my growth as a student and researcher and has made me see military staff are valuable contributors to PACS.

Having presented and tied together my research problem, aim and question, theory, and method, we will now move on to the analysis.
4. Analysis

The data is presented and analyzed thematically, in the following order: “Masculinity and the Military”, “Gender, Hierarchies and Hegemony”, and “Masculinity and Peacekeeping”. The sub-themes explored in the theory chapter are explained through illustrative-sub-themes derived from the categories. Themes, subthemes, and illustrative-sub-themes might overlap and exist in multiple sections, allowing this is a conscious choice to evolve themes in different perspectives.

The analysis is demonstrated with translated quotes; repetition, grammatical mistakes, and filler words will be removed to attain clarity. A selective number of quotes is presented, but all are put in Appendix 3; please read simultaneously for more supportive and rich material.

4.1 Masculinity and the Military

In this section I explain “How Duty Forms Gender” through the sub-themes “The traditional Masculine Military” and “Young Masculine Staff”. Then, “Militarizing Men” will be illustrated through the sub-theme “Media Imagery and Mimicking”.

4.1.1 HOW DUTY FORMS GENDER

4.1.1.1 Traditional Masculine Military Staff

I begin this analysis by exploring the participants' perception of the traditional male staff member to illustrate stereotypes (see also: 21/F/N.F/2, 29/M/F/3, 30/W/N.F/5):

It’s the traditional; they have been brought up with not being allowed to cry when they get hurt, they see weak feelings like fear or nervousness like something a man doesn’t bother/deal with because you are supposed to be able to do carpentry, fix the car and be fast and strong. (M/F/O/1)

The participants described a very narrow sort of masculine person with interests like football, cars and fixing things while emotions were not to be associated with and keeping a straight face was important (see also: 25/M/N.F/6):

It’s a bit like this; always professional face on, speaking like, “yes! No! understood!” it’s that square way of being, keeping within the structures and only joke and talk about vehicles,
hunt and football. What you would generally consider as the stereotypical masculine was increased in our environment because it was incredibly masculine. (22/M/F/7)

These descriptions resemble the traditional image of MS presented by Wegner (2021) and Goldstein (2006). The participants explained that this stereotype was still alive within the military but belonged mostly to past or older generations who has or will retire.

Before it would be considered feminine [to be emotional] like,” shut up and bite the bullet, no one is really interested in why you feel bad”. Today we care about each other, the environment has changed, and there has been a generational shift; many of the older officers, the fogeys, have retired now. (22/M/F/8)

Even though, many said that these behaviors belonged to the past, they also thought that it was primarily young male staff who reproduced and seemed to seek the masculine ideals that were supposed to be eliminated with the retiring of the older generation. So traditional masculine norms can not only be a generational question even though many interviewees viewed it as one:

It’s like I said earlier in this interview; it will be at least half a generation until we have it [macho behavior] figured it out [it will be eradicated]. (27/M/N.F/9)

I have the impression that it’s a social change and that masculinity is developing to something more than Rambo hiding in the dirt and cutting the throats of Vietnamese people. (25/M/N.F/10)

According to the participants masculinities in the SwAF are going through necessary change to reduce unwanted or problematic qualities, evidencing a critical approach towards masculinities from within the organization. I will continue exploring the nexus between age and generation in the chapter below.

4.1.1.2 Young Masculine Staff

The participants placed generational shifts as a reason for less traditional masculinities arising within the SwAF. They also described new generations as more knowledgeable about gender equality and having wider views on masculinities:

If you are taught about it [alternative masculine norms] in school and know about it, you might not fall into the trap, but some probably didn’t listen to that lesson or to that teacher
or their friends or might not care about it because you are more drawn to the masculine ideal and the warrior than listening to friends talking about non-masculinity and such. (32/M/F/11)

Most still expressed that it was the younger men who aimed to achieve traditional military ideals such as strength, toughness and other qualities mentioned in the section above:

I don’t know what happens with the masculine norm when they step inside the gates here. I believe we continuously explain the rules and how to behave, so I really wonder how it comes that people think it's okay to adopt a specific jargon when conscribing. (20/W/F/12)

This jargon was a common topic and often entails competitiveness in strength and sports but also certain language use, which is described as mannish (see also: 30/W/N.F/15, 23/M/F/16):

It’s a sort of “guy thing” that it’s cool to conscribe; you have a uniform, weapons, you feel cool, and you adapt to a certain jargon. (27/M/N.F/13)

The jargon is further described as:

It can get heated seeing who is going to win and who is going to do things. A lot is about winning, being the fastest, being the best; it can get a bit loud and […] people can wrestle for fun when they are bored, but that's nothing strange (23/M/F/14)

This behavior was often ascribed to young men’s immaturity, insecurity, and lack of self-awareness, but also a consequence of biology and testosterone. A hormone often wrongly described as the “male sex hormone” and an explanation of aggressive behavior, athleticism, strength and sexual desire even though it is found among all sexes and has many functions, one is ovulating (Jordan-Young and Karkazis 2019:54). Just like Goldstien (2006:250), the participants described biology as one factor. Still, the general consensus was that the main factor was socialization into gender roles even among the people who saw biology and testosterone as one explanation (see also: 26/M/F/18, 31/M/N.F/19, 20/W/F/20, 22/M/F/21, 23/M/F/22):

It’s the younger insecure people who question people's masculinity; it’s often because they are insecure in their masculinity, their lives and their actions. […] From what I can see when I meet others in the organization is that at its core, it’s about socialization. Men have a more natural aptitude for aggressiveness, and we know that from studies that it is the testosterone that kicks in for certain stuff for good and bad, but it’s understandable since it is the male
hormone as well as other biological advantages like men being bigger and stronger. So that’s that part; there are biological advantages that speak for men being better soldiers, but I don’t really like generalizing like that. (23/M/F/17)

There is a dissonance between the hope in the new generation as more knowledgeable about gender roles than previous generations, whilst also viewing them as most eager to achieve the traditional masculine military ideals. An explanation for this was the participants accounts about how they, at an older age (above and around 30) or as they became parents, started to reflect more on their behavior and question macho tendencies (see also: 22/M/F/24):

For me, it was a maturity thing; when you got the head above the surface after some years and became good at what I did, then I got a bit more energy over to reflect on things instead of just doing things. That was one thing, and I also started talking to people with other experiences than mine. [...] Then I saw things from different perspectives, and it was easier to be more critical towards things and question even myself and people around me. No one wants to be a person who contributes to something negative or make people feel bad, but [if you are not vigilant], you risk doing it anyway. (26/M/F/23)

Age, maturity, and generation might be determining factors to how progressively defense staff approaches masculine ideals. Even if younger generations have alternatives to how masculinities are performed, traditional military norms greatly influence them. The younger generation consciously or unconsciously might want to re-enact militarized masculine norms as they enter the defense since those norms, as Duncanson (2019:470) and Wegner (2021:9) state, are closely connected to what it means to be a man in the military and, therefore, a man in a war culture. Participants were aware, but lacked understanding, of why some military norms were re-enacted:

Yeah, that is a good and interesting question about expectations because we create them ourselves, but why do we do that? From where do we create them? Are we even conscious about the expectations we take part in creating? (26/M/F/25)

It is also a reminder that masculinities are not static in organizations or over generations (Connell 1998:4). One participant tries to explain the difficult nexus between age and generation and the performance of masculinity in this account:

The younger generation has another idea of things, but they still encounter the same sort of norms. But previously, maybe only the norm excited and there was no alternative or
resistance to it, but today the younger generations have the norms but also alternatives or resistance. (26/M/F/26)

This makes me ask; if younger staff are not taught to enact masculinities in the SwAF but bring these behaviors themselves, why do they think it is appropriate to behave as such in the military? As explored above, I found that traditional masculine imagery comes from the older generations of staff, furthermore, the cultural “Militarization of Men” and how the influence of the public and media shaped participants view of self will be explored.

4.1.2 MILITARIZING MEN

4.1.2.1 Media Imagery and Mimicking

There was a consciousness around the prominent role that pop culture, and especially the movie industry for the role it plays in creating the image of the MP and expectations on peacekeeping missions amongst the participants. They expressed how the industry makes ideals for militaries and men to live up to, which influences the way officers and soldiers think about their service, and it has also motivated some to conscribe (see also: 31/M/N.F/29, 32/M/F/28):

[The] view you have of the military stem a lot from American Hollywood movies where they scream and shout all the time, and yeah; unfortunately, I think that is the picture many people have of officers. (31/M/N.F/27)

The participants also expressed critiques about movies being unreal and not reflecting reality:

I think it’s almost comical to watch war movies now, like when people run around screaming, and it’s a high tempo and chaos because something has gone terribly wrong if it looks like that [on a mission]. The goal of being a good soldier is to be a sensible part of the defense and [missions] to be as unexciting as possible. (25/M/N.F/30)

Further on, two characters especially figure in the accounts of toughness connected to their military achievements Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone as Rambo (see also: 28/W/N.F/32):

When I grew up, it was a lot of Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger and that sort of action heroes and male role models in media, movies and series and such. It was a lot of
muscles and performance, and there wasn’t really a lot of other references [to masculinity].

(26/M/F/31)

These two characters exemplify masculine ideals and the masculine warrior ideal; they are strong and tough fighters. As one participant said, it was one of the only images they had of masculinity growing with little to challenge it, meaning that their image of masculinity was directly connected to militaries (Wegner 2021:8). Other masculinities - fathers, Santa, teachers - were made invisible. Participants aspired to militaristic masculinities, which endorse Connells’ (1998:5) and Cockburns’ (2007:249) ideas that masculinity and military are disentangleable that war and masculinity shape each other.

With a more diverse media and social media, it is possible to diversify images of what it means to be a man and a MP than when Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger were most exposed. This is exemplified by a soldier account of how he learned about gender norms and such through social media:

So, in that way, social media has played a role; I think it started with #MeToo to really get into other things connected to sexual assaults, gender identity and gender norms.

(25/M/N.F/33)

Nonetheless, they also talked about peers who could not withstand the temptation to re-enact the ideals. Many staff members take photos that they can later present to others as proof of their braveness and as a memory of the mission no matter if they were ever in a dangerous situation or not (see also: 29/M/F/36, 28/W/N.F/37, 28/W/N.F/38, 28/W/N.F/34):

I don’t know if you’ve seen that on social media; people have their insurgent photos for like 20 years or profile pictures from when they were in Lebanon 1968. Half of the people I went on a mission with […] still have profile pictures from then. There is a huge mythologization of the toughness of the mission. I think there is a consensual lie amongst people who go on a mission that it is super tough even though you haven’t really done anything or even had your pulse increase because of fear; still, some go around scared all the time, even though nothing is going on. (29/M/F/35)

Performing masculinities is ridiculed if done by others, but the same people still choose to perform it themselves and together. Militarized masculinities are based on intangible myths which are reproduced and sustained when MS accept and perform them instead of rejecting them (see also: 28/W/N.F/39):
[On a day off] we took the opportunity to take off the uniform jacket and sweater, put on body armor, and take pictures when we were posing cool with the weapons. It has nothing to do with solving a task or anything […], but it feels like a thing that is a typical “guys in the military”- sort of thing. (25/M/N.F/40)

The reason to take photos might have been to sustain the mythical image of MP abroad and consciously or unconsciously attain a higher status in the hierarchy of militarized masculinity through battle (Connell 2000:217, Wegner 2021:9). As stated in some of the above quotes, even if they were never in danger, people will create an illusion of their mission as challenging or even dangerous since it is a measurement of status. Some missions were dangerous, but one participant was doubtful that people who endured the worst were the ones who made the most noise:

29/M/F/41 Some have seen really tough shit. I think they keep a pretty low profile whilst others who have not seen as much think very highly of their performance as veterans.

Reasons behind taking tough militaristic pictures and experiencing highs when reenacting films on the mission was described both as “sort of satire” and connected to acceptance and proving themselves to others and to the general Swedish society which was described as uninterested in the histories of MS, leaving a distance between the general public and the SwAF. This might mean that even though militaries influence what qualities to aspire to, the organization itself do not have a high status in the general society (see also: 25/M/N.F/43, 29/M/F/44):

There are quite short moments when you live that mythical ideal. […] and I remember that the memory book was super important, it’s a book with pictures and texts […] it was through that the story was told […] [the story] that you live the traditional masculine ideal with strength and courage, traditional masculine things. (28/W/N.F/42)

Wanting to fulfil the stereotype of the military at the same time as keeping a critical distance was a common path for the military staff to balance. Some might think that being conscious of stereotypes makes one unable to reproduce them and, therefore, they fall for the temptation to embody the ideals of childhood heroes. The ideals of militarized masculinity are being reproduced by people who would not admit to aspiring to them. Nevertheless, consciousness around stereotypes does mean something, but even though the values of the people in uniform change, the physical manifestations, like soldiers in uniforms, must also change for peace to
happen. Violence is experienced between bodies; peace cannot occur only in the head of MS (Connell, 2000:218).

However, the classic aesthetic of the SwAF draws attention, and the SwAF’s recruiting arm knows how to use that. One example is the participant who watched commercials about the air force and wanted to join; other examples are (see also: 26/M/F/46):

[... we know that we attract a majority of 18-year-old boys [...] We don’t have a problem filling our spaces because what they see at ours is battleships, the berets, a lot of gear, people doing advanced stuff like stopping bleeding, shooting with a specific system or going fast in a boat. So that’s how we market ourselves; cool stuff – how else are we supposed to do it?
(22/M/F/45)

So, the imagery critiqued in the movies for being unreal or misleading about what war or mission entails is consciously used when marketing the SwAF. It is one example of how the SwAF knowingly reproduce the attractive image of war and the military and rendering the less attractive parts of the profession invisible, like in this instance:

When the news media is filming, it is the tasks that are being filmed, never when we are just sitting in the lodgments and talking. Like on a mission, no one films when I open the door to my soldiers’ room, and he is sitting there, 19 years old, crying because he is emotionally drained. Those moments are never filmed or written about in the same way as the tasks; people only ever write about the task. (26/M/F/47)

When investigating this, I used Kronsells (2006:115) theory on silences and imagine moments like this are kept secret and made invisible when marketing or taking “myth-pictures” because people prefer the myth about the military over the actual experience. Even though there is a consensus amongst the staff that the reality is not like the movies, the reality is by choice made invisible when mythical pictures are being reproduced, unchallenged, sent home and shared on social media. This is a way for the SwAF to sustain the carefully crafted image of militarized masculinity. To understand why this choice is made, I have a quote that illustrated the protective space the military provides for their staff:

Many in green would probably think it would be onerous to be exposed [in media or such], because it’s a very good feeling to be emotional, but I think that doing it amongst militaries provides protection and creates a bond between comrades, revealing those experiences to the outside, I think many would see as being stripped bare. […] But I think that the relation
between the defense and the public would be better if the stereotype of “the emotionless soldier” were updated. They could see that we are just people even though we carry weapons.

(26/M/F/48)

According to one officer, a reason not to expose the reality is to protect the integrity of the staff, which creates an excluding emotional wall against the external world (Alvinius et al. 2016:2). Additionally, another officer (22/M/F/45) stated that a reason to reproduce it is to attracts recruits, and so is the traditional military ideal reproduced.

The image of military staff in movies, traditional and young, reproduces images of militarized masculinity. Non-militarized masculine role models are not as prominent in accounts about masculinities, which might indicate that militarized masculinities are more aspirational. At the same time, I want to give my participants the benefit of a doubt and not assume they did not see other masculinities, but they might have adjusted their answers since the topic of the interview was masculinities in relation to militarization.

The following chapters will explore militarized masculinities in relation to gender, hierarchies, and hegemony.

4.2 Performativity, Hierarchies And Hegemony

In this section, I will investigate the second main theme, “Gender, hierarchies and Hegemony”, through “Hegemonic Masculinity in the SwAF” and “Gender Performativity”. I will exemplify them through the subthemes: “The perception of tougher militaries and of self”, “Emotional Regime”, and lastly, “Motivated by Masculinity”.

4.2.1 HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN THE SWAF

4.2.1.1 The Perception of Tougher Militaries and of Self

This chapter will investigate the participant's perception of other staff, especially the ones who have experience in the so-called “mythical” regiments. Usually, the regiments with the highest physical demands. These regiments are believed to attract people who want a tough physical challenge, and staff from other regiments think of them as traditional masculine figures (see also: 21/F/N.F/50, 21/F/N.F/51, 27/M/N.F/52):
I think especially about K3, Amf1 and Amf4 when I think about regiments that express masculinity norms, as we talked about, that it’s cool to fight since it is their primary task. I mean if you applied for K3, Amf1 or Amf4, it’s because you like to fight. (25/M/N.F/49)

Presented above, are ideas within the military that certain positions and regiments are more masculine. I connect these accounts to Alvinus et al. (40-41) and Wegner 2021:9) research about how physical challenges can provide masculine status. While the people within the “mythical regiments” seem aware of the reputation, they do not appreciate or associate themselves with it; they might even see it as silly or trying to fight against it, which again indicated that masculinities are problematized (see also: 20/W/F/53, 29/M/F/55):

The regiment has their own stories about it being specially chosen staff that must solve the toughest challenges. But it is entirely regular people who have those tasks, mostly football guys, some ice-hockey people, it’s not as special as they want it to seem. There are very few real heroes, but there are, of course, some extreme people, but you don’t have to be an extreme person to go through a ranger’s education. (29/M/F/54)

With some consensus, military staff mythologize strength, creating status for people in more physically challenging roles, and providing higher masculine status than staff with lesser physical challenges. Masculinization of strength can exclude and sub-ordinate weaker men and often also women. This is a traditional view of strength, and when an officer described what was non-masculine, he had troubles not contradicting himself:

But if you say that men have more strength and better physic to handle the military, I would not say that it is unmanly to be weak. I wouldn't say that anyway, then I'm contradicting myself a bit actually. (32/M/F/56)

The traditional idea of strength as masculine changes as gender roles evolves. Still, the masculinization of strength is hegemonic and exclusionary, the officer (32/M/F/56) exposes and questions these ideals, which challenges the consensus that maintains hegemonic ideals and idealizes strength (Howson and Hearn 2020:44-45).

If physical strength and endurance measure masculine status in the SwAF, the tougher regiments are higher on the ladder. Simultaneously the staff in those regiments might not see it as such. Probably because, the hierarchy becomes invisible or silenced when on top of it and the elite might not be aware of upholding it (Connell 2000:83). For example, a staff member
unable to express what mannishness entails even though he used it to explain an atmosphere that appears when women are not around:

Can’t it be traced to, it’s hard to put it into words what mannishness really is... [10s silence] yeah... [13s silence] it... but yeah no I can’t quite...

[Interviewer asks]; but how does mannish guys act then...?

Ehm, yeah... [23s silence] “typical mannish like that” [10s silence] Here it is… No, I don’t really have a good answer for that... (24/M/F/57)

This illustrates how gendered performance and hegemony is intangible and constructed but, at the same time, all-surrounding since he knows that it exists but cannot explain what it is (Howson and Hearn 2020:41,44,45 Howson and Hearn 2020:44-45, Butler 1988:527).

Investigating the silences, the long pauses can illustrate what he never questioned but consented to (Kronsell 2006:115).

There seems to be a dissonance between the image of tougher regiments and the people's experience within them. The staff outside it seem to think the reason to apply is that the regiments are more masculine. However, people in those regiments did not seem attached to these ideals. Even if participants of tougher regiments admitted having aspired to masculinity ideals before, they did not seem to have gotten the ideals fulfilled on a mission, or the ideals had appeared as a hindrance in the rehabilitation process after missions (see also: 26/M/F/59):

I thought I would feel more like I did something cool, but that feeling never accorded. I guess I have to look further for that experience. The first time I left, it was a lot more dramatic, like “now I’m going to war”. Now it feels pretty jaded [...] I have still not achieved a feeling of being tough or masculine because of what I do. Because it just becomes a regular job. [...] (29/M/F/58)

This resonates with Eriksson Baaz and Sterns (2017:10) explanation of the dissonance between the imagined life of militarized masculinity and the actual conditions, which fails to enforce the imagined self-ideal. However, there are examples of getting that fulfillment from others, which shows that performativity is projected externally.
It’s interesting, my brother studies to become a cop now and has a classmate who had me as officer. My brother told me that his classmate said that the soldiers perceived me as the “archetype” of a MP, looking experienced with my beard and having gone on missions like someone who knows, can and done. At that time [when the classmate had him as officer] I strived for that ideal and having it confirmed. But today with a bit of distance I laugh a bit at the situation. I don’t have the same ideal today, but I can see the younger me standing taller and feeling like he reached his goal. (26/M/F/103)

It also seems like these ideals have a motivating function to get staff to perform on the battlefield (see also: 30/W/N.F/61):

[…] “by doing this, I will be manly, and then I will dare,” and then [masculinity] is a tool to be able to handle fear and do dangerous things and feel masculine because I do scary things. (26/M/F/60)

This implies that masculinity is more than individual and reflecting performances but also has a way to motivate groups of people to do frightening tasks, as described by Goldstein (2006:265) and Duncanson (2020:467,468) masculinity is proved on the battlefield. Illustrated by the participants by following order and not shying away from dangerous tasks. Further hierarchical structures amongst MS are explored later under “Missions”, but first emotional regimes will be explored.

4.2.1.2 Emotional Regime

Some participants were affected by masculine military ideals, thinking they were supposed to man up, not admit emotions, and suppress their experiences after being on a mission, which alludes to the traditional view of militaries; having a hard time expressing themselves emotionally, keeping things bottled up or even being cold-hearted. However, most participants explained that it was a matter of handling their emotions, not suppressing them in order to work in battle, as discovered by Alvinius et al. (2016:39) (see also: 32/M/F/63 25/M/N.F/64, 22/M/F/65):

You need to be able to handle your emotions, which sometimes means I need to suppress them to control them and then later, you can take care of them. They will not help you here and now, but that you feel them and experience them but claim you did not; that’s just stupid. Let them out instead and talk about it with someone you know. (23/M/F/62)
The SwAF has an extensive system of mental care for the people returning from missions. They have both psychiatric meetings in groups and individuals and the possibility for further support. The idea that MS are expected to keep possible traumas in and “man up” is an old faulty idea based on the participants’ accounts. Still, some had a hard time reaching out to these forums or finding their place in them (see also: 29/M/F/67):

I hindered myself from talking to someone during a years’ time even though I knew where the support was. There is a very well-constructed support system for us who have been on missions, you can call, and you can book a meeting, and they informed everyone about the system, but I still needed to reach out myself. I had a lot of thoughts about: “am I the sort of person who needs to ask for help about this?”, “should I do it?”, “will I be a lesser MP if I do it?”, “will it affect my leadership?” (26/M/F/66)

This safety system is most likely created because they see the toll that missions take on staff; from the start of the education, conscripts practice evaluating their performance and talking about their experiences. These practices and the tough challenges are pretty unique to the SwAF as a workplace. They create strong bonds filled with compassion between colleagues, contrary to some common beliefs. Some participants even said that military staff is probably more equipped to handle emotions than most civilians since they are put in such extreme situations being expressive about how you feel; is the only option for survival (see also: 22/M/F/70):

Some soldiers and officers suffer from masculine ideals and try to live up to them, but when you belong to a unit under a lot of outside threat you come to a certain limit and then you melt together. You might be in the field for weeks, and then you have to take care of each other, then those ideals disappear, and the façade is wiped away. But there is probably a need for an extensive treat, be it physical or phycological, for the façade to peel off. If the treats are not big enough, you can maintain the façade. (32/M/F/68)

Instead of hiding your feelings like you don’t have them, I handle them by bringing them to light and taking care of them. In the general public, it’s like, “no, no one feels hate, no one gets angry or pissed off, aggressiveness doesn’t matter” [...] We can’t act like we don’t feel things. (23/M/F/69)

The room for emotion is exemplified in how some expressed that the most profound bonds and emotional connections are with their military colleagues. This is said with an awareness of the unusualness this poses to some masculine ideals (see also: 23/M/F/72):
It’s a bit contradictory me talking about masculinity and macho culture as something negative at the same time as the closest bonds, and the most open emotional experiences I have had are with people from this environment. (26/M/F/71)

4.2.2 GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

4.2.2.1 Masculinity as Motivational Tool

Something that came up in multiple interviews (26/M/F/60, 30/W/N.F/61) was, how masculinity was used as motivation to fight, being brave and a way to control troops. It was also expressed as a way of approaching tasks in a particular masculine manner (see also: 32/M/F/74):

[about an optional marching competition] … A lot of these very mannish, very tough soldiers instead of carrying their AK5, which weighs 4.2kg like the rest of us, wanted to bring a machine gun instead, only the machine is 40kg and with the barrel is 60kg. (30/W/N.F/73)

I would say that these are prime examples of what Butler (1988:527, 1999:97) describe as performing masculinity. Doing gender, a certain way, but not knowing why, or being aware that doing it in a gendered way will allow you to enhance or fulfill your masculine status, illustrating the ripple effect of performativity. You perform tasks in a masculine way, and it reflects on others and through them back to you. As quote 26/M/F/60 and 30/W/N.F/61 accounts, masculinity ideals are a way to make staff perform in battle and could be necessary to achieve war goals. However, staff who are too driven by these ideals are criticized for not solving the tasks in a good way or not making decisions based on reality but on what will increase their masculine status (see also: 32/M/F/75, 29/M/F/77):

… The masculine [way to solve a task] is to be a bit macho as with war; being cool and looking cool, there should be blood, sweat and tears. It is rather female colleagues who just go in for solving the task in the best way. (25/M/N.F/76)

Moreover, as masculine ideals of toughness are idealized, there is a thin line between doing things considered to be masculine and doing things considered stupid, which is an expression of traditional military performance being challenged. It can be connected to the rangers’ ideals of creating refined, better men and staff that can perform finer masculinity and militarism.
(Alvinus et al. 2016:42). This also confirms the image by feminist scholars who imagine masculinity as something destructive and an immediate obstacle to peace because of violent ways to perform tasks (Duncanson 2019:469). The final part of the analysis will shift focus more explicitly towards peacekeeping, exploring how traditional tasks and values change, meet and disturb modern tasks of peacekeepers.

4.3 Masculinity and Peacekeeping

Another difficult balancing act is the gendered experience of peacekeeping, a supposedly masculine job that has become feminized through its range of tasks. This will be explored leaning on the theoretical section “Missions, Gender Dichotomies and Change” that has been split up in two sections: “Missions” (which will among other things further explore hierarchies) and “Change”, which is illustrated through the subthemes “Debunking the Toughness Ideals of Militaries” and “Qualities of Modern Staff”. “Gender-dichotomies” will be touched upon more explicitly.

4.3.1 MISSIONS

Many participants chose to go on missions to practice their profession in real situations. This produces expectations; some people desired to live the lives of action heroes such as those portrayed by Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Nonetheless, my participants make it clear that this is not to be expected from a mission. Instead, it is described as dull, long and tiresome. This is something that the responsible need to prepare their staff for before the mission (see also: 22/M/F/79):

When I go down with my soldiers I'm extremely careful to bring down their expectations on because it leads to a lot of, I don't know if the word cognitive dissonance is right but... your imagination and your preconception and then what happens down there... it can be quite boring and monotonous and ah it wasn't as cool as you thought at the time and you might not see that you are making a difference and rather you are doing the opposite because the locals are against you and there are bombs and civilians are dying. (32/M/F/78)

Even though the SwAF states that they act for peace and security when going abroad, missions have a unique status for many in the SWAF, and some seek it to perform or achieve masculine
ideals through warlike scenarios, even though, as stated above, the reality seldom able to provide that (see also: 32/M/F/80, 20/W/F/82, 32/M/F/83):

I think it’s one of the biggest drives amongst Swedish soldiers that go on mission.

Interviewer: What is?

To get a receipt on how tough you are. Yeah, there is this idea of it being dangerous or manly or whatever it is connected to masculinity at least. I think, it’s almost like you get receipt on that you are a real man going on mission. (29/M/F/81)

There, seems to be a consensus between at least some of the military staff that other colleagues think the mission is the ultimate ordeal to prove oneself as a masculine MP and reach a special status. However, only one of the participants admitted to believing so, but most said that others thought so; the question is why. Nevertheless, there is still a status difference between the people who participate in battle and those that don’t (see also: 25/M/N.F/86):

After some had been in battle it was like it was worse for the ones that hadn’t, they felt like they missed out. There was a want or a wish to know what you were able to do and that it’s developing to be in really difficult situations. (28/W/N.F/84)

I don’t remember which mission it was, but it was one when things were happening all the time and you couldn’t leave the camp without a battle contact. That has become the ideal mission for Swedish soldiers, and they think and hope that they will experience something really cool. If one of the soldiers that did participate in those violent missions comes into a [SwAF] workplace and people find out they’ve been on the famous missions, they get idealized. So, it has also created like hierarchy if you’ve been on a “real mission” where stuff has happened or just been on a small patrol or sitting on the camp all the time. (29/M/F/85)

So, the hierarchy is built so that the more violent missions have a higher status. Therefore, staff who served during more violent missions have a higher status within the forces and a higher token of masculinity (Wegner 2021:13-14). It goes back to building the image of the MP abroad; the mission might have been calm, but the experience is so mythologized - just having done it is a receipt of manliness and toughness. Like we can see in quote 28/W/N.F/32 the person feels like Arnold Schwarzenegger at their new job because they have been on a mission.
Simultaneously as Swedish MS are prepared not to be disappointed, the mythical status is still achieved and upheld within the forces when they come back. One participant stated that as:

Most that come home from a Swedish mission they live a shared story about how cool it was, and maybe it was it’s not for me to say that my experience what I or we experienced is the right one. But I don’t think I know anyone who can really admit… Sometimes someone says that it was pretty boring because they had to be on the camp a lot, but they don’t reject their own token of masculinity you get from being abroad. (29/M/F/87)

Of course, not all people agree to this and oppose the idea that missions would be an arena where masculine ideals are fulfilled because of the challenges. As this account portrays, achieving masculinity through destructive, violent actions is not causational:

I don’t really understand how you are supposed to prove your masculinity on a mission, because what is particularly masculine on a mission? Did people want to kick down doors and shoot people in the face? Is that masculine or is it patting each other on the back and talk shit about certain stuff, or what was the masculine they did not get to prove? I can’t really relate to those thoughts [wanting to prove one’s masculinity], and therefore I can’t see what you would be disappointed about. (24/M/F/88)

Many also take in what they are told and go down with the goal of having a calm mission (see also: 32/M/F/90):

I would say that the majority of my colleagues went in with the attitude that the best mission is the one where we don't shoot at all and don't have to use lethal force. (25/M/N.F/89)

There are disagreements concerning the connection between masculinities and missions. Still, some claim that it does something special to the people who endure it, especially those who experience combat. Perhaps the people with the more violent experiences are not the ones indulging in these ideals since they might experience the flipside of pursuing masculine ideals, such as mental distress, trauma, physical injuries, and PTSD (Goldstein 2006:269). No interview participants thought it was masculine to go on missions and were unsympathetic to the Dutch soldiers who went on a mission to prove their masculinity (Kronsell 2012:81-82). Simultaneously, there were multiple accounts about how other staff (themselves excluded) went abroad to prove their masculinity through pictures and participating in battle and a certain awe for those with battle experience. Few people will probably ever admit that they went to prove
their masculinity but going on a mission and participating in battle can mean wanting to climb the social hierarchy, trying to achieve a purer form of masculinity. Moreover, I sensed a difference in tone between staff with fighting experience and without when talking about battles and violence. Personnel with fighting experience spoke slower, with a more serious undertone and chose their words more carefully, while personnel without fighting experience could talk almost banteringly about it. This might indicate that battle loses its prestige when facing the violence, it entails, and it becomes more important for those people not to misrepresent or ridicule it. Moving on, we will explore changes in the SwAF, both in how staff talk about the profession and what is required from modern militaries.

4.3.2 CHANGE

4.3.2.1 Debunking the Toughness Ideals of Militaries:

To change structures and stereotypes, they ought to be investigated and challenged. There are strong hegemonic powers recreating and militarizing masculinities, and thus the hegemony of masculinity and the military remains. This thesis challenges these structures, and when investigating, I found the participants also breaking down the ideals (see also: 22/M/F/94, 25/M/N.F/95, 29/M/F/91):

I think a lot of civilians have an image of how you are as defense staff, but when you enter the forces, that image disappears pretty quickly and especially when you notice that the ones that are supposed to be soldiers are the same average high school students with pimples you graduated with. At least I had the image before I started that a soldier is a fit man. I can’t say that it is a faulty image, but it’s not the only one because you don’t have to be a fit or man to be a soldier. (25/M/N.F/92)

I mean, no one goes: “being a soldier is so idly, the only thing you have to think about is the task whilst someone else plans your schedule, cooks and does the laundry for you”. [...] All project mums who quit their jobs would think it’s like a drop in the ocean with all pampered [soldiers] who just get driven around, carry their weapons, protects a bit, patrols a bit. They don’t have to think about all the everyday stuff like P.E bags and buying macaroni year after year. (28/W/N.F/93)

What is shown here is a critique and honesty around the real conditions in the military. One staff member thinks the workload is easy compared to a mother’s work, and another states that soldering is not hard, but it’s hard to do it well. As stated earlier in the quote 29/M/F/54 it is
mostly ‘hockey’ and ‘football’ (i.e., ‘normal’) people in the troops, the same teenagers struggling with pimples, who believe they fulfil masculine ideals through caring heavy things. In this study, I have come to find differences between what staff imagine the militarized masculinities to be like, what it is and how they portray it. The quotes above strengthen that finding because saying that soldering is lazy goes against the imagery of the MP as brave and competitive (Goldstein 2006:287). Of course, there are many different roles in the military, and everyone does not have to be a muscular man, but the image persists. The critical accounts are valuable to nuance the image of their experience and challenge the hegemonic militarized masculinity myths that exist and is sustained in the organization and by the public.

4.3.2.2 Qualities of Modern Staff

The traditional-, young-, tough- and task solving MP all perform expressions of masculinity in the SwAF based on the participants' accounts. Some of the performances are critiqued, whilst some are utilized to solve military tasks. However, the participants critique and disagree with traditional images of militarized masculinities and soldering. The modern staff is described differently from the traditional, which is explored below (see also: 22/M/F/97, 25/M/N/F/98, 29/M/F/99, 25/M/N.F/100, 23/M/F/101, 29/M/F/102):

My impression is not that masculinity plays a huge role in the defense force but that the good parts of the masculinity norms like aggressiveness are adopted by skilled colleagues no matter gender. The less beneficial features, like not being able to express feelings, are not picked up by most of my colleagues. (25/M/N.F/96)

Through these quotes, another military takes form, one that consciously rejects negative aspects of masculine stereotypes and utilizes those supposedly needed to perform well, for example, aggression. In today's SwAF, one must be self-aware, responsible, take the initiative and know how to use aggressiveness and emotion in a controlled way. Many of these qualities are, described by the participants as, softer values connected to femininity and peacekeeping, which indicated that softer values are being given a higher status amongst military staff (Kronsell and Svedberg 2001:161, Duncanson 2019:75). Being emotional, caring, and humble are considered softer values by the participants and are also a part of the SwAF value base. Traditionally they might have been seen as feminine, but now they are crucial qualities of a modern staff member.
5. Concluding Discussion

In the preceding chapter, I have presented an analysis that allow me to answer the research question of “How are masculinities described, performed and recreated in relation to peacekeepers professional role in the Swedish Armed Forces?” Yet, because of the complex plurality and intangibility of masculinities the answer is not uniform. Thus, my results are complex and contradicting; presented below in the clearest way possible.

Militarized masculinities are admired but also problematized and ridiculed when performed by others, yet people perform it themselves both seriously and satirically. Because doing things in a traditional militarized masculine way is seen as stupid or even dangerous, and qualities like stoicism are labelled as inappropriate to handle the emotional burden staff endure on mission. Many participants pointed this out, suggesting that some traditional military qualities are unapplicable and inappropriate wanting to perform well in service.

Some regiments are mythologized based on their masculine atmosphere and tasks – sometimes by themselves but mostly by other staff, individuals inside the regiments deny any mythically enhanced existence and want to erase the image. This illustrates how hegemonic structures become invisible to those on top, and consequently sustain power through others consensus about their superiority.

Moreover, staff get prepared for dull missions, but some go imagining they will fulfil masculine ideals and hence suffer disappointment when coming back without achieving it. Contrast this to participants of violent missions, or with battle experience, who receive admiration from colleagues but stop striving for militarized masculine ideals, when undergoing the real conditions of battle. It is hard to say if they stopped striving because they, through battle, reached the top of the hierarchy or experienced the reality as too gruesome. Furthermore, staff that do not participate in battle feel worse than the participating colleagues because they did not get to test their abilities. Simultaneously as, staff without battle experience can come back and be perceived as a pop-cultural war hero and assume that role This illustrates how violence and battle provides a higher status in unofficial social hierarchies but also how masculinities are reflected between staff and ascribed to others but hardly achievable within oneself (Butler 1988:526, Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2017:10).

These results sub-ordinate both non-violent masculinities and over-violent masculinities and might show that there is an aim for a masculinity in-between. One that can perform and endure challenges and violence but is not looking for masculine self-fulfillment through violence; participants described this as an ability to perform controlled aggressiveness.
The contradictions within my results can be interpreted as different types of masculinities being performed in the SwAF simultaneously and changes depending on person, age, maturity, and generation, the inconsistency confirms that masculinity is constructed – neither static nor inherent (Connell 1998:4). It can also be interpreted as a transformation of militarized masculinities as well as an illustration of the difficulty to separate militarism from masculinities.

Following I will describe how two traditional stereotypes might be reproduce even though the participants did not endorse them. Firstly, that militarized masculinities are transforming is based on results exemplifying mainly a shift in attitudes but also in behavior, but to achieve positive peace it can not only be a mindset (Connell (2000:218). Thus, reproduction of traditional aesthetics like “myth-pictures” might occur as an obstacle to achieving positive peace since it reproduces and glorifies war despite the person in the picture thinks war and violence is unnecessary and horrible and took the picture as a joke. Secondly, the untraditional image of the emotionally intelligent and present MS is protected behind an exclusionary wall (Alvinius et al. 2016:2). The wall hinders transformations of general masculinities since, through protecting the staff’s integrity, it hides the open emotional atmosphere in the SwAF and the stoic image of MS remain.

Nonetheless, the results point to those militarized masculinities are transforming which probably is more likely than masculinity being completely disconnected from the military. Positive ethical implications of this research are nuancing and complexifying the understanding of militarized masculinities and a revision of masculine stereotypes for the SwAF and on individual and political levels. Academic implications for future research are a more intricate point of departure about militarized masculinities in the SwAF and could explore questions like: does a more nuanced image of militarized masculinity change general masculinity norms? What might an emasculation of the military look like? What would a demilitarization of masculinity look like? And how would a demilitarization of masculinity or an emasculation of the military inflict upon how war is performed or not performed?
Reference list


Howson, R. and Hearn, J., 2011. The End of War. McSWEENEY’S BOOKS SAN FRANCISCO.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Number of coding references</th>
<th>Aggregate number of coding references</th>
<th>Number of items coded</th>
<th>Aggregate number of items coded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Anledning att söka</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Anledning att söka\äventyr</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Anledning att söka\äventyr</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Annat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\bäst lämpad på bäst plats</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Citat myten</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Fallenhet för krig</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Fallenhet för krig\Män som bättre soldater</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Kvinnor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Kvinnor\Bättre</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Kvinnor\Feminin kvinna</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Kvinnor\Kvinnor i strid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Kvinnor\Kvinnor i strid\Kvinnor på mission</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Kvinnor\Kvinnor om kvinnor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Könsroller</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Könsroller\Förändring kön försvarat</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Könsroller\Samhällsförändring</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Ovälväntance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Ovälväntance\Beteende</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOilla detta\Ovälväntance\Personer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOlla detta\position</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOlla detta\Utbildning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\KOlla detta\Utbildning\Hierarki</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\action hjältar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Beteende och fred</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Biologi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Bära saker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\DERAS EGENSKAPER</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\dåligt behandlade av män</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Egenskaper soldat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Familjanknytning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Fysisk styrka</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Foräldrar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Foräldrar\mammor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Foräldrar\Pappa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Gender</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Generation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Grabbighet</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Nacke-manligt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Känslor</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\masculinitet i relation till det Civila</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\maskulin kvinna</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\maskulin kvinna\Passa inhävda sig</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\maskulin kvinna\Passa inhävda sig\Sexuellt ofredande</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Mjukhet</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten\Andras bild</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten\Fasad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten\Film</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten\Förväntninga</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten\I efter hand</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Myten\Identifikation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Mäns på mission</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Mäns sätt att göra</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Mäns sätt att vara</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Orsaker</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\positiv maskulinitet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Röst</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Sex</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\skadlig manlighet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Språkbruk</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\TRADITIONELLA EGENSKAPER</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Tyngre positioner + manlighet</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Tyngre positioner + manlighet\testosteron</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Unga män</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Utseende</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Vapen</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Vapen\Materiel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Värmplikteb</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Manlighet\Åldre män</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\Mens</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes\om kvinnor</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Informationsbrev

### Projekttets titel (obligatoriskt):
Arbetstitel: Experiences of masculinity in the Swedish defense force.

### Studieansvarig/a: (student/er)
Sofia Bjersér

### E-post:
sofia.bjerser@gmail.com

### Datum:
16 april 2021

### Studerar vid Malmö Universitet,
Fakulteten vid Kultur och samhälle
205 06 Malmö, Tfn 040 665 70 00

### Utbildning:
Peace and Conflict Studies

### Nivå: Kandidatexamen

### Mitt namn är Sofia Bjersér och denna kandidatuppsats kommer jag skriva min sjätte och sista termin på kandidatprogrammet Peace and Conflict Studies på Malmö Universitet. Min kandidatuppsats är handledd av Dr. Ane Kirkegaard ane.kirkegaard@mau.se.


Detta brev är ämnat för personer som frivilligt skulle vilja delta i studien som intervjuadtagare. Intervjuerna kommer att vara ca en timma långa och av respekt av deltagares tid kommer jag inte efterfråga mer men om personen i fråga tycker att intervjun är intressant och vill fortsätta efter en timme så erbjuder jag detta som en möjlighet. Intervjuerna anordnas mellan mig och de som önskar delta, via videosamtal eller telefonsamtal beroende på deltagarens preferenser. Intervjuerna kommer utgå från en relativt fri struktur och ge möjlighet för deltagare att avgöra vad han vill dela med sig av och inte. Om ämnen upplevs känsliga kan deltagaren välja att inte svara eller att dra sig ur processen när som helst utan förklaring. Detta för att säkra att deltagarna känner sig bekväma och att deras frivilliga medverkan respekteras och värderas högre än forskningsresultaten. Inga speciella kunskaper om ämnen, policies eller strategier nämnda i tidigare styrken krävs eller förväntas av deltagare.
När intervjun äger rum kommer viss information repeteras samt upplägget för intervjun kommer att delges mer i detalj, deltagare kommer även tillfrågas om de godkänner att intervjun spelas in för att senare transkriberas.

För denna studie har jag sökt manliga och kvinnliga soldater och officerare med utlandserfarenhet och har varit i kontakt med alla regementen i Sverige för att fråga efter frivilliga. Utöver detta har jag sökt soldater och officerare genom andra nätverk så som kontakter, organisationer och internettforum. Det viktiga för mig är att ha en balans mellan könen och sen önskar jag även ha så bredd från olika poster och erfarenheter.

Konfidentialitet säkras i undersökningen genom att ingen obehörig får ta del av materialet. Materialet förvaras så att det bara är åtkomligt för mig som är undersökningsledare. I rapporteringen av resultatet i form av en examensuppsats på Malmö Universitet eller i annan form av publicering kommer informanterna att avidentifieras så att det inte går att koppla resultatet till enskilda individer, med deltagares godkännande kommer konsidentitet och arbetsroll(soldat/officerare) möjligtvis framgå men detta skulle främst vara vid direkta eller indirekta citat, detta kommer diskuteras under intervjun och deltagaren kommer få möjlighet att ge sitt godkännande eller neka det då. Alla är välkomna att delta oavsett om man vill delge arbetsroll och kön eller inte. Ålder, namn, uppdrag, årtal för utlandstjänst eller vilken geografisk position den medverkande hade kommer aldrig att framgå. När uppsatsen är klar kommer den att publiceras som en kandidatuppsats i Peace and Conflict Studies på Malmö Universitets Databas MUEP om den publiceras någon annan stans i annat format kommer deltagare informeras, samma identitetsskydd som i uppsatsen kommer att garanteras.

Du tillfrågas härmed om deltagande i denna undersökning - se ’Bilaga 2’ för att lämna samtycke.
**Samtycke från deltagare i projektet**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projekets titel: (fylls av student)</th>
<th>Datum: (fylls av student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arbetstitel: Experiences of masculinity in the Swedish defense force.</td>
<td>16 april 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studieansvarig/a: (fylls av student)</th>
<th>Studerar vid Malmö Universitet, Fakulteten Kultur och samhälle, 205 06 Malmö, Tfn 040 665 70 00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia Bjersér</td>
<td>Utbildning: Peace and Conflict Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Din E-post</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Sofia.bjerser@gmail.com">Sofia.bjerser@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jag har informerats om studien och tagit del av bifogad skriftlig information i ’Bilaga 1’. Jag är medveten om att mitt deltagande är frivilligt och att jag när som helst och utan närmare förklaring kan avbryta mitt deltagande. Personen som genomför studien kommer att sträva efter konfidentialitet genom att ingen obehörig får ta del av materialet som samlas in. Materialet kommer att förvaras på en säker plats och bara användas i denna studie. Jag är medveten att min tillståndelse att bli ljudinspelad och att användning av identitets faktorer (arbetsroll/kön) kommer att efterfrågas vid intervjuutlöftet och ingen ljudupptagning kommer ske innan dess – signering av detta dokument är inte ett godkännande till ljudupptagning eller användning identitets faktorer enbart samtycke att delta som intervju deltagare.

Jag lämnar härmed mitt samtycke till att delta i ovanstående undersökning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Datum:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…………………………………………………………………………………………………...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Deltagarens underskrift: | …………………………………………………………………………………………………...               |

Sida 3 av 3
Appendix 3

M/F/O/1 It’s the traditional; they have been brought up with not being allowed to cry when they get hurt, they see weak feelings like fear or nervousness like something a man doesn’t bother/deal with because you are supposed to be able to do carpentry, fix the car and be fast and strong.

21/F/N/F/2 I experience men who were educated in the old school/long ago as churlish, it has to be their way, and they can’t see new ways of thinking

29/M/F/3 It is probably based on the old invasion defense from the cold war when you mostly needed to follow orders and not take initiative or responsibility.

30/W/N/F/5 In general, wherever I am in the world, there are many, especially older men who would like to believe that they know a lot about military history and soldiers and how those things work overall.

25/M/N,F/6 …the norm is kinda being big, masculine, aggressive, authoritarian, macho and absolutely not; listening to others weaknesses, emotions or fear.

22/M/F/7 It’s a bit like this; always professional face on, speaking like, “yes! No! understood!” it’s that square way of being, keeping within the structures and only joke and talk about vehicles, hunt and football. What you would generally consider as the stereotypical masculine was increased in our environment because it was incredibly masculine

22/M/F/8 Before it would be considered feminine [to be emotional] like,“ shut up and bite the bullet, no one is really interested in why you feel bad”. Today we care about each other, the environment has changed, and there has been a generational shift; many of the older officers, the fogeys, have retired now.

27/M/-/9 It’s like I said earlier in this interview; it will be at least half a generation until we have it [macho behavior] figured it out [it will be eradicated].

25/M/N,F/10 I have the impression that it’s a social change and that masculinity is developing to something more than Rambo hiding in the dirt and cutting the throats of Vietnamese people.
32/M/F/11 If you are taught about it [alternative masculine norms] in school and know about it, you might not fall into the trap, but some probably didn’t listen to that lesson or to that teacher or their friends or might not care about it because you are more drawn to the masculine ideal and the warrior than listening to friends talking about non-masculinity and such

27/M/-/13 It’s a sort of “guy thing” that it’s cool to conscribe; you have a uniform, weapons, you feel cool, and you adapt to a certain jargon.

23/M/F/14 It can get heated seeing who is going to win and who is going to do things. A lot is about winning, being the fastest, being the best; it can get a bit loud and [...] people can wrestle for fun when they are bored, but that’s nothing strange

30/W/N.F/15 I think I liked to fall into this sort of mannish jargon where you sort of mocked women or made fun of people or tried to make cheeky jokes and stuff like that.

23/M/F/16 18-19 year... old guys have a lot of hormones, no matter if they are in the military or not, and if you put 60 guys in one place, it’s going to be a lot of testosterones.

23/M/F/17 It’s the younger insecure people who question people's masculinity; it’s often because they are insecure in their masculinity, their lives and their actions. [...]From what I can see when I meet others in the organization is that at its core, it’s about socialization. Men have a more natural aptitude for aggressiveness, and we know that from studies that it is the testosterone that kicks in for certain stuff for good and bad, but it’s understandable since it is the male hormone as well as other biological advantages like men being bigger and stronger. So that’s that part; there are biological advantages that speak for men being better soldiers, but I don’t really like generalizing like that.

26/M/F/18 We create different limitations for different people; it’s not the actual ability of different genders that creates the limitations or possibilities; it is the idea about what they can and cannot do. -

31/M/N.F/19 I fully believe that the skewed gender division [in the SwAF] is due to our social roles – roles we made up. Many people talk about biology being behind it, but there are strong girls, and there are weak boys, but that’s not the thing.

20/W/F/20 Why do some individuals have to bring other people down to feel better themselves? I think it’s grounded in bad self-esteem. I have a hard time seeing a strong individual with strong self-esteem feeling threatened by someone else.
22/M/F/21 I don’t know if it’s anything genetic really, I think you formed by your environment.

23/M/F/22 both men and women can be good soldiers; some biological factors speak in favor of men when it comes to physical size and, therefore, fewer worries about injuries. Then there is a clear aspect of socialization that generally hinders women from becoming the best soldiers they can be; when you let go of the social aspect, they evolve very quickly.

26/M/F/23 For me, it was a maturity thing; when you got the head above the surface after some years and became good at what I did, then I got a bit more energy over to reflect on things instead of just doing things. That was one thing, and I also started talking to people with other experiences than mine. [...] Then I saw things from different perspectives, and it was easier to be more critical towards things and question even myself and people around me. No one wants to be a person who contributes to something negative or make people feel bad, but if you are not vigilant, you risk doing it anyway.

22/M/F/24 I can look at myself and see how I changed as a person. Since I became a parent really, I have changed my perspectives a lot. I’ve also gotten older and don’t get impressed anymore by shit people do like when I was younger; I thought it was cool and wanted to imitate; those things are not as cool today.

26/M/F/25 Yeah, that is a good and interesting question about expectations because we create them ourselves, but why do we do that? From where do we create them? Are we even conscious about the expectations we take part in creating?

26/M/F/26 The younger generation has another idea of things, but they still encounter the same sort of norms. But previously, maybe only the norm excited and there was no alternative/resistance to it, but today the younger generations have the norms but also alternatives/resistance.

31/M/N.F/27 [The] view you have of the military stem a lot from American Hollywood movies where they scream and shout all the time, and yeah; unfortunately, I think that is the picture many people have of officers.

32/M/F/28 One should not underestimate media and movies, the masculine ideal you see in movies of soldiers and officers as someone fearless.

31/M/N.F/29 The air force had a commercial before the cinema started, and there was a lot of airplanes, and I wore glasses at that time, so I knew I could not become a pilot. But in the
commercial, there were some guys with a dog and some weapons, and I thought that looked really cool, so I applied.

25/M/N,F/30 I think it’s almost comical to watch war movies now, like when people run around screaming, and it’s a high tempo and chaos because something has gone terribly wrong if it looks like that [on a mission]. The goal of being a good soldier is to be a sensible part of the defense and [missions] to be as unexciting as possible.

26/M/F/31 When I grew up, it was a lot of Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger and that sort of action heroes and male role models in media, movies and series and such. It was a lot of muscles and performance, and there wasn’t really a lot of other references [to masculinity].

28/W/N,F/32 Working for the municipality [after the mission], I become a bit like - I’m exaggerating, but it’s a bit like [I’m] Arnold Schwarzenegger.

25/M/N,F/33 So, in that way, social media has played a role; I think it started with #MeToo to really get into other things connected to sexual assaults, gender identity and gender norms.

28/W/N,F/34 There are quite short moments when you live that mythical ideal. So, I experienced that people happily took pictures where that ideal was demonstrated to show people at home.

29/M/F/35 I don’t know if you’ve seen that on social media; people have their insurgent photos for like 20 years or profile pictures from when they were in Lebanon 1968. Half of the people I went on a mission with […] still have profile pictures from then. There is a huge mythologization of the toughness of the mission. I think there is a consensual lie amongst people who go on a mission that it is super tough even though you haven’t really done anything or even had your pulse increase because of fear; still, some go around scared all the time, even though nothing is going on.

29/M/F/36 But they take the opportunity to take what we call “myth pictures” where they pose with weapons somewhere and make it look like they are solving a task they really are not.

28/W/N,F/37 I think people take a lot of pictures that help build the myth
28/W/N.F/38 You know you take a picture with a bandolier or a weapon or pose with the Americans’ weapons, so it looks cool

28/W/N.F/39 I remember that I got to go in a Humvee once and was like,” It doesn’t get bigger than this”. -

25/M/N.F/40 [On a day off] we took the opportunity to take off the uniform jacket and sweater, put on body armor, and take pictures when we were posing cool with the weapons. It has nothing to do with solving a task or anything [...], but it feels like a thing that is a typical “guys in the military”- sort of thing.

29/M/F/41 Some have seen really tough shit. I think they keep a pretty low profile whilst others who have not seen as much think very highly of their performance as veterans

28/W/N.F/42 There are quite short moments when you live that mythical ideal. [...] and I remember that the memory book was super important, it’s a book with pictures and texts [...] it was through that the story was told [...] [the story] that you live the traditional masculine ideal with strength and courage, traditional masculine things.

25/M/N.F/43 In my case, it was not necessarily that we thought it was cool but more like; it was not satire either, but more in the direction of satire of this: it’s “tough with weapons and uniform.” [...] I do not know if it can be connected a bit with masculinity norms: that power is masculine and to then belonging to an organization that has sort of a monopoly on violence is a very big thing [...] If it in you want to take part of it even more by really showing and posing like; now I'm a soldier, so I'm cool, so I have power, so I'm masculine if that's the thing maybe?

29/M/F/44 That's why you take such mythical pictures so that people really have to see how cool it is, even though it's a huge difference between what it looks like and how it really is, most of the time, I should say. [...] Yes, it can be such a thing that Swedish veterans cultivate their own image of toughness, and the fewer people care, the more you have to cultivate that image of toughness.

22/M/F/45 [...] we know that we attract a majority of 18-year-old boys [...] We don’t have a problem filling our spaces because what they see at ours is battleships, the beret, a lot of gear, people doing advanced stuff like stopping bleeding, shooting with a specific system or going fast in a boat. So that’s how we market ourselves; cool stuff – how else are we supposed to do it?
26/M/F/46 So the draftsman showed me a cool picture of young men with weapons Infront of a helicopter and said:” Don’t you wanna do something like this?” and as an 18year old it was easy to say yes to that.

26/M/F/47 When the news media is filming, it is the tasks that are being filmed, never when we are just sitting in the lodgment and talking. Like on a mission, no one films when I open the door to my soldiers’ room, and he is sitting there, 19 years old, crying because he is emotionally drained. Those moments are never filmed or written about in the same way as the tasks; people only ever write about the task.

26/M/F/48 Many in green would probably think it would be onerous to be exposed [in media or such]. Because it’s a very good feeling to be emotional, but I think that doing it amongst militaries provides protection and creates a bond between comrades, revealing those experiences to the outside, I think many would see as being stripped bare. […] But I think that the relation between the defense and the public would be better if the stereotype of “the emotionless soldier” were updated. They could see that we are just people even though we carry weapons.

25/M/N.F/49 I think especially about K3, Amf1 and amf4 when I think about regiments that express masculinity norms, as we talked about, that it’s cool to fight since it is their primary task. I mean, if you applied for K3, Amf1 or Amf4, it’s because you like to fight.

21/F/N.F/50 People experience that men in the army are the ones that do the most demanding work. […] What can you say: Because it’s heavier, it’s supposedly fancier/better. While people in the air force or marine seemingly doesn’t have it as tough and are therefore not as cool.

21/F/N.F/51 I think some positions in the SwAF are more attractive for some men, like a lot of young men probably want to be rangers and positions which demand that “little extra” that proves that “I am not like the rest” “I have it” because “I achieve things and I get to belong to a certain group”. I think that is important to some men.

27/M/-/52 What makes those units attractive is how mythological they are. Some have pretty high physical demands to join the unit. […] They are out in the forest to create a tight group, and their own jargon emerges; the tougher, the better, and I also think it is a way to vent. Their service is so challenging people crave a break which the jargon and the toxic masculinity provides.

20/W/F/53 We have many physical demands on our units, and physical strength gives status, and I think that is the situation in many places within the defense force. […] I’m in a unit
with extremely few women that also have a bit of a reputation of being macho, and I’m working really hard to get rid of it [the reputation and ideals].

29/M/F/54 The regiment has their own stories about it being specially chosen staff that must solve the toughest challenges. But it is entirely regular people who have those tasks, mostly football guys, some ice-hockey people, it’s not as special as they want it to seem. There are very few real heroes, but there are, of course, some extreme people, but you don’t have to be an extreme person to go through a ranger’s education.

29/M/F/55 I did not experience it as anything special, and I think people have an idea that you go harsh when in the defense force, but that is a contextual thing. When I was up north, it wasn’t strange to go without food for 70 hours, so people might think I can still do it, but I can’t even set up a tent today or go 6 hours without eating. Many of those things are contextual, and when you step out of context, they don’t apply anymore.

32/M/F/56 But if you say that men have more strength and better physical to handle the military, I would not say that it is unmanly to be weak. I wouldn’t say that anyway, then I’m contradicting myself a bit actually.

24/M/F/57 Can’t it be traced to, it’s hard to put it into words what mannishness really is... [10s silence] yeah.. [13s silence] it... but yeah no I can’t quite...

[Interviewer asks]; but how does mannish guys act then...?

Ehm, yeah... [23s silence] “typical mannish like that” [10s silence] Here it is... No, I don’t really have a good answer for that...

29/M/F/58 I thought I would feel more like I did something cool, but that feeling never accorded. I guess I have to look further for that experience. The first time I left, it was a lot more dramatic, like “now I’m going to war”. Now it feels pretty jaded [...] I have still not achieved a feeling of being tough or masculine because of what I do. Because it just becomes a regular job. [...]

26/M/F/59 I struggled with being vulnerable and breaking through the facade to be the person *participants name* and not the “stone-cold military-name”, so that’s where my journey begins going from being “military-name” to being “name-the-person” in everything I do. [after my mission] I was hindered [seeking psychiatric treatments] by my ideals of “what is masculinity”, “what is toughness”, those kinds of questions. I got a dose of the negative aspects of being in the SwAF and the ideals it can bring out of you.
26/M/F/60 “by doing this, I will be manly, and then I will dare,” and then [masculinity] is a tool to be able to handle fear and do dangerous things and feel masculine because I do scary things.

30/W/N.F/61 I think the defence force probably needs a way to control their soldiers and create unity, so they work well together and care for each other. I think the macho culture or the image of how a man or a soldier is supposed to help the soldiers function well in battle.

23/M/F/62 You need to be able to handle your emotions, which sometimes means I need to suppress them to control them and then later, you can take care of them. They will not help you here and now, but that you feel them and experience them but claim you did not; that’s just stupid. Let them out instead and talk about it with someone you know.

32/M/F/63 I can absolutely turn off in situations when I must, but that does not mean that I don’t have feelings at all. You can still feel for a partner or a friend, and I can cry and be very emotional; simultaneously, I can go on a mission and be in difficult situations and shoot at people without feeling bad about it. Those are two different things, but people don’t understand that.

25/M/N.F/64 Showing emotions and being open about how you are feeling to a college is a great support, especially on missions when stuff like homesickness hits most people sooner or later.

22/M/F/65 We are supposed to create a war machine that you can switch on and off. When switched off, it’s; “yeah” [the soldier being cool and chill], and when you switch on, you have to deal with the task until it is solved

26/M/F/66 I hindered myself from talking to someone during a years’ time even though I knew where the support was. There is a very well-constructed support system for us who have been on missions, you can call, and you can book a meeting, and they informed everyone about the system, but I still needed to reach out myself. I had a lot of thoughts about: “am I the sort of person who needs to ask for help about this?” “should I do it?” “will I be a lesser military if I do it?” “will it affect my leadership?”

29/M/F/67 Really, I am the person that says, “it is super important that we share our emotions”, but I have a really hard time doing it myself, but we do it all the time at work, and I try to be more of a facilitator then. But I don’t really have anything to say about those things. Still, I perceive it as there are many forums to talk to and that every time we come
home, we have an after-action review in groups and individually. I feel like there is almost an inflation of places to discharge, and talking so much about things can even feel silly. I think those forums are good when you need to talk about something specific and extremely heavy, but the long-term stress and the small revolting details don’t fit into that kind of context.

32/M/F/68 Some soldiers and officers suffer from masculine ideals and try to live up to them, but when you belong to a unit under a lot of outside threat you come to a certain limit and then you melt together. You might be in the field for weeks, and then you have to take care of each other, then those ideals disappear, and the façade is wiped away. But there is probably a need for an extensive treat, be it physical or phycological, for the facade to peel off. If the treats are not big enough, you can maintain the facade.

23/M/F/69 Instead of hiding your feelings like you don’t have them, I handle them by bringing them to light and taking care of them. In the general public, it’s like, “no, no one feels hate, no one gets angry or pissed off, aggressiveness doesn’t matter” [...] We can’t act like we don’t feel things.

22/M/F/70 When we create strain through drills or situations where there is a lack of sleep or food, what happens then is not that people get closed off or introverted but that you need to take more care of each other and express more feelings and care by hugging and warming each other. That’s what increases when we are in those situations. People think we grow fangs, horns and say UGGAH UGGAH, but it’s the complete opposite. I think it’s sad that people often have a different perception about how we are in the defense force.

26/M/F/71 It’s a bit contradictory me talking about masculinity and macho culture as something negative at the same time as the closest bonds, and the most open emotional experiences I have had are with people from this environment.

23/M/F/72 I have seen a lot of what you think as of very manly men; big, super buff men who from the outside seem to only want to go to the gym and are half cavemen sit and discuss napkin folding [...] I have seen the same individuals discuss very deep emotions and how they experience things.

32/M/F/74 Amongst the conscripts that I’m educating right now, we have a group that is a prime example of this; they have a bit too much man complex, and it doesn’t work; they do dangerous things and the wrong things [...] You make a decision based on the category you belong to; “because I am a man, I will do it this way. Solving it like that is not masculine!”.
If you have a boss that is hugely driven by masculinity and masculine ideals, then it becomes, I should not say, a destructive group. I have seen many groups that are motivated by these ideals, and it doesn’t work because you make decisions on a too narrow view of the situation.

... the masculine [way to solve a task] is to be a bit macho as with war; being cool and looking cool, there should be blood, sweat and tears. It is rather female colleagues who just go in for solving the task in the best way.

The English word to describe them is grunts: people that solve tasks in an unintelligent manner, without considering if there is a better way of doing it. They do it the toughest way and struggle their way through it.

When I go down with my soldiers I'm extremely careful to bring down their expectations because it leads to a lot of, I don't know if the word cognitive dissonance is right but... your imagination and your preconception and then what happens down there... it can be quite boring and monotonous and ah it wasn't as cool as you thought at the time and you might not see that you are making a difference and rather you are doing the opposite because the locals are against you and there are bombs and civilians are dying.

Sweden as a nation and the Swedish Armed Forces we have had a pretty good idea of what we should do in general and then there are always those who have thought something else that is a little too much international adventurers and will go off and kind of romanticize foreign service as going abroad war mission special forces blah blah blah - stop it. That's not why we're here, we're here for a mission given to us by the UN and it's not about being cool wearing tough sunglasses - like that's not why we're there.

It's probably one of the top three to five reasons why men, guys feel bad after foreign service. Expectations of what you're going to do are not being met, expectations that you're going down and make a difference or that you're going to end up in combat and that you're going to get to do, what do we call it? Tough stuff, cool stuff, manly stuff so you can come home and be some kind of war hero. I'm being a bit ironic now and exaggerating.

I think it’s one of the biggest drives amongst Swedish soldiers that go on mission.

Interviewer: What is?

To get a receipt on how tough you are. Yeah, there is this idea of it being dangerous or manly or whatever it is connected to masculinity at least. I think, it’s almost like you get receipt on that you are a real man going on mission.
20/W/F/82 Everyone is not Rambo who goes abroad, and I don’t know what image they have of the task really [to believe that].

32/M/F/83 Um, and this particular thing, there’s probably also an expectation of manhood in this, that you should come back and be even more of a man, there are a lot of people who suffer from that. A lot. Again, the groups that feel best when they get home, they don't have those notions before, during or after.

28/W/N.F/84 After some had been in battle it was like it was worse for the ones that hadn’t, they felt like they missed out. There was a want or a wish to know what you were able to do and that it’s developing to be in really difficult situations.

29/M/F/85 I don’t remember which mission it was, but it was one when things were happening all the time and you couldn’t leave the camp without a battle contact. That has become the ideal mission for Swedish soldiers, and they think and hope that they will experience something really cool. If one of the soldiers that did participate in those violent missions comes into a [SwAF] workplace and people find out they’ve been on the famous missions, they get idealized. So, it has also created like hierarchy if you’ve been on a “real mission” where stuff has happened or just been on a small patrol or sitting on the camp all the time.

25/M/N.F/86 Yes heard some rumors about Afghanistan missions in particular. I think it was FS21 or around FS20 that it was quite turbulent in Afghanistan and there were combat contacts very often for the Swedish soldiers who were down there. And that on some missions that came after there were real battle-dicks [militarys who like to fight] who mostly wanted to go out and shoot and who felt that when they did not end up in combat it was boring because they couldn’t do their job properly.

29/M/F/87 Most that come home from a Swedish mission they live a shared story about how cool it was, and maybe it was it’s not for me to say that my experience what I or we experienced is the right one. But I don’t think I know anyone who can really admit… Sometimes someone says that it was pretty boring because they had to be on the camp a lot but they don’t reject their own token of masculinity you get from being abroad.

24/M/F/88 I don’t really understand how you are supposed to prove your masculinity on a mission, because what is particularly masculine on a mission? Did people want to kick down doors and shoot people in the face? Is that masculine or is it patting each other on the back and talk shit about certain stuff, or what was the masculine they did not get to prove? I can’t really relate to those thoughts [wanting to prove one’s masculinity], and therefore I can’t see what you would be disappointed about.
25/M/N.F/89 I would say that the majority of my colleagues went in with the attitude that the best mission is the one where we don’t shoot at all and don’t have to use lethal force.

32/M/F/90 You don’t solve wars by shooting people, you do it by educating. I didn’t believe in that from the beginning. I thought it was nonsense, but I understand now that there is quite a lot in that.

29/M/F/91 It’s very easy to learn how to be a soldier, but it’s very difficult to become a good soldier and if you become good or not depends a lot on what kind of person you are. I think people think you have to know a lot and be very tough, but that’s not the case. There is space for everyone as long as you have an inner motivation and is not scared to get some exercise. I think there is an overexaggerated idea about or how good soldiers actually are.

25/M/N.F/92 I think a lot of civilians have an image of how you are as defense staff, but when you enter the forces, that image disappears pretty quickly and especially when you notice that the ones that are supposed to be soldiers are the same average high school students with pimples you graduated with. At least I had the image before I started that a soldier is a fit man. I can’t say that it is a faulty image, but it’s not the only one because you don’t have to be a fit or man to be a soldier.

28/W/N.F/93 I mean, no one goes: “being a soldier is so idly, the only thing you have to think about is the task whilst someone else plans your schedule, cooks and does the laundry for you”. […] All project mums who quit their jobs would think it’s like a drop in the ocean with all slackers [soldiers] who just get driven around, carry their weapons, protects a bit, patrols a bit. They don’t have to think about all the everyday stuff like P.E bags and buying macaroni year after year.

22/M/F/94 Caring a grenade launcher for ten months is very cool for some, but really?! You are caring something for ten months! You are sleeping in a wet hole, and then you get up and continue caring your stuff! It’s hard, and you can brag about it, but honestly, you might as well carry a box.

25/M/N.F/95 The modern soldier rarely needs to carry anything heavy, like heavy in an objective sense like lifting 200kg, more often you need to do something challenging in relation to your own body, run or walk far for an example. […] The times we have had to carry something really heavy, there have always been multiple people there to do it, or there have been field trucks.

25/M/N.F/96 My impression is not that masculinity plays a huge role in the defense force but that the good parts of the masculinity norms like aggressiveness are adopted by skilled
colleagues no matter gender. The less beneficial features, like not being able to express feelings, are not picked up by most of my colleagues.

22/M/F/97 We always work to make you a physical specimen so that you have the capacity to do what you must do. Not because you need to be strong, but to manage, you need to be in good shape. At the same time, you need to be incredibly humble and have respect for other people; the classic: treat people like you want to be treated yourself. I think we, in the SwAF, are moving away from the stereotypical view of masculinity in a very good way.

25/M/N.F/98 My impression was not that the important part of getting through the military was to be physically strong but rather a state of mind, a mentality, competence and calm. -

29/M/F/99 Today in professional defense, you have to own your task, be able to take the initiative and cooperate in a way that’s beyond the conscripts during the cold war. You need to be able to navigate the whole organization, take care of your material and vehicles in a reasonable way and maintain contact with all technical units.

25/M/N.F/100 So, in that way, I would like to say that we’ve taken the positive with some masculine norms and said: this is a good soldier but then also looked at what a man is not necessarily as well and added that.

23/M/F/101 I’ll say it like this; an important part in the SwAF and being a good soldier is controlled aggressiveness.

29/M/F/102 My workplace was a bit different and had completely different demands than most units; you had to have basic gender knowledge to get hired because we couldn’t have people speaking badly because we worked with people high up in the ranks of the defense and society

26/M/F/103 It’s interesting, my brother studies to become a cop now and has a classmate who had me as officer. My brother told be that his classmate said that the soldiers perceived me as the “archetype” of a MP, looking experienced with my beard and having gone on missions like someone who knows, can and done. At that time [when the classmate had him as officer] I strived for that ideal and having it confirmed. But today with a bit of distance I laugh a bit at the situation. I don’t have the same ideal today, but I can see the younger me standing taller and feeling like he reached his goal.