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Perceptions of Gender Equality in a Military Organization

Equality-work Becomes Equality-washing

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Abstract

Title: Perceptions of gender equality in a military organization: Equality-work becomes Equality-washing

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Purpose: To reach a better understanding of how people view gender equality and the equality-work conducted, in a male-dominated and public organization, like the Swedish Armed Forces

Methodology: The study is based upon a qualitative research approach with an interpretative, hermeneutical perspective. Further, this has been done through semi-structured interviews and document studies as methods for constructing empirical material, while following an abductive approach.

Theoretical perspectives: The theoretical framework is based on existing literature and research regarding: gender equality, diversity and equality at the workplace, gender equality in the military, diversity initiatives and image management.

Conclusions: The findings of this study indicate that gender equality is viewed as fundamental within the Swedish Armed Forces, however, there is still a lot left to do. The equality-work conducted after #givaktochbitihop could be seen as equality-washing, due to faulty communication and lack of local relevance and depth. Yet, equality-washing can be a preferable practice in order to gain external legitimacy.

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1 Introduction

This chapter will serve as an introduction to our thesis. The chapter will start with a background where the reader is provided with a presentation of our main concepts and the topic of gender equality, as well as our contribution to the field. Thereafter we will present our research aim and our research questions, as well as a discussion of the limitations and a guide to the thesis outline.

1.1 Background to gender equality

Gender equality has been a well-recognized issue internationally since the United Nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 (UN, a, n.d.) and was from the beginning placed on the agenda by women. Gender equality is according to the UN (b, n.d.) "[...] a fundamental human right", and "a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world" and something that concerns all people in society. Equality between men and women is seen to exist when both parties share an equal distribution of power and influence, and have the same opportunities in life, unconstrained by and independent of their sex (UN, 2005). The empowering of gender equality is also said to benefit societies and humanity at large as well as fuel sustainable economies (UN, b, n.d.).

Despite this continuous aspiration towards equality between men and women, gender inequality is still present at all different levels in society. It can be seen as disadvantageous foremost for women in situations concerning political power, economic assets and cultural authorities, as well as allocation of resources and attributions of justice (Connell, 2005). Gender inequality remains an obstacle to the global development and since gender roles are particularly distinct at workplaces, this issue is outermost important for businesses and organizations (Steiner & Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2018). Implementing conscious actions and initiatives in order to facilitate for gender equality, and thereby prevent and raise awareness toward the topic, is something that we throughout this thesis will refer to as *equality-work*. Beside these initiatives and actions, there are also regulations and legislative requirements that facilitate for an increased representation of women in the workplace (Pinch, 2006).

A concept that we see as closely related to equality-work is diversity management, which according to Konrad, Prasad and Pringle (2009) is a matter of inclusion, respecting and valuing differences regardless of gender, race, or ethnic background. In this thesis, when referring to diversity, it will be in terms of gender, and even though it can be related to different situations (Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2010), we will refer to gender diversity in workplaces. A diverse workforce, is said to lead to advantages that the organization can benefit from, such as increased financial growth and different views and perspectives (Steiner & Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2018). Much of the literature concerning diversity management describe it as specific programs and concrete policies around recruitment, mentoring, training and development (Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2010).

Consequently, we see that the two concepts, diversity management and equality-work, overlap to some extent. One could view equality-work as partly fitting within the scope of diversity management, however with a much narrower focus, only on gender. In addition to this, we see that equality-work includes all conscious actions and initiatives, also unplanned and spontaneous ones, embodying more than just planned and executed concrete policies and programmes. Even if diversity management mostly emerges from a managerial level (Konrad, Prasad & Pringle, 2009), we believe that equality-work can be conducted by anyone within the organization. Furthermore, in our eyes, it is not the end result of equality-work that defines it but rather an action itself.

There is according to Prasad, Prasad and Mir (2010) an institutional pressure on organizations to prioritize diversity. This pressure may lead to organizations following fashions and imitating others when it comes to diversity management, which may result in the implementation of actions that lack local relevance, in hopes of gaining legitimacy (Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2010). According to Vertovec (2012:306), engaging in diversity is seen as "the right thing to do", even if only by managing and promoting a positive image. Conducting equality-work with the underlying intention to only improve the organization's image or make the organization appear in a certain way, is something that we throughout this thesis will refer to as *equality-washing*. Equality-washing can be seen as closely related to the concept of image management and involves the practice of implementing equality-work to make the organization appear more gender equal than it really is. This is usually done to improve, or 'clean', the organizational image. An

example of this is when a minority group in an organization is overly represented through advertisements in such a manner that it does not appear to be a minority to the public. This concept is inspired by an interview we had with Rättviseförmedlingen, where the respondent described the action of organizations 'cleaning' their image by prioritizing gender equality, without the intentions of really doing good. To the best of our knowledge the concept of equality-washing has not been developed in the academic literature.

The issue of equality and diversity is present in almost all organizations today, not least in the public ones (Rennstam & Sullivan, 2018). The Swedish Armed Forces can be seen as an important public organization, which some would argue should reflect the gender composition in society. Since the majority of the employees in this organization are men (Försvarsmakten b, 2017), we find it interesting to study in terms of gender equality. In the next section we will further present how equality-work is conducted in military organizations and more specifically in Sweden.

1.2 Gender equality in the military

Since the 'ideal-picture' of a soldier has, throughout history, been strongly related to a man, it takes time to change and reposition the image of what characterises the military. On the other hand, there is a growing interest in diversity and gender equality within such organizations (Pinch, 2006). According to Goldman (1973, in Harries-Jenkins, 2006), women have an increasingly important role in western armed forces and are nowadays represented at almost every position within the military. Alvesson and Billing (2002) bring up the Swedish Armed Forces as a public organization where there has been an attempt to blurring gender by a demasculinization of a noticeably male sphere. Today, peacekeeping activities are more integrated in the military occupation and this has facilitated recruitment and adaption of women, and led to a demasculinization of the organization (Alvesson & Billing, 2002)

Initiatives around equality-work are not only conducted in businesses, as policies regarding diversity are prevalent in other institutions as well, with the military being one of them (Vertovec, 2012). In 2000, the United Nations Security Council implemented

resolution 1325, which addresses the crucial role women have when it comes to preventing and resolving conflicts, and building peace. The participation and involvement of women is critical in order to achieve and sustain peace and stability (UN, 2000). The committee of women in the NATO forces, CWINF, enforced this by implementing a list of best practices. These practices were developed in order to integrate a gender perspective into all different parts of the NATO nations national policies, legal regulations, procedures and practices concerning military operations (NATO, 2008).

The Swedish Armed Forces is a public organization, outside NATO, answerable to the Swedish parliament and government, led by the supreme commander Micael Bydén, and consists of three military units, the Navy, Army and Air Force (Swedish Armed Forces a, n.d.). The organization has only been open to a female workforce since 1989 (Försvarsmakten f, n.d.) and today, numbers show that women are clearly underrepresented, especially further up in the hierarchy (Försvarsmakten d, n.d.). This is shown in the table below:

Profession	Total	Women	Men
Officers & Specialist officers	9000	600	8400
Soldiers & Squad leaders	5300	500	4800
Civilian personnel	5400	2150	3250
	19700	3250	16450

(Numbers from Försvarsmakten d, n.d.)

The organization is continuously working to improve gender equality, and different initiatives have been implemented in order to make the Swedish Armed Forces a more attractive organization for women. According to its mission, The Swedish Armed Forces exists to protect fundamental human rights, whereby equality is key and it is therefore important that the organization stands up for, and represents, these values (Försvarsmakten c, n.d.). The organization communicates a clear message: everybody should be respected for their competence and knowledge and the aim is to conduct extensive and lasting equality-work (Försvarsmakten c, n.d.). Equality-work in the Swedish Armed Forces is to a great extent based on guidelines from the Swedish

government on the implementation of the UN resolution 1325, the law of discrimination and political goals regarding equality (Försvarsmakten c, n.d.).

According to the World Economic Forum (2016), Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the world in terms of gender, although there are indications showing that some segments of the Swedish society have not reached very far in that regard. In the fall of 2017, 1768 women from the Swedish Armed Forces joined the #metoo-movement under the hashtag #givaktochbitihop (#attentionandbitethebullet) as a response to the discrimination and sexual harassment women are being exposed to within the organization (Dagens Nyheter, 2017). The movement attracted renewed attention to the gender equality debate and the Swedish Armed Forces responded quickly with a statement from the supreme commander, in which he left no room for unequal behaviour in the organization (Svensson, 2017). #Metoo has been a hot topic since the start of the movement in October of 2017 and #givaktochbitihop has only been one of many hashtags from other organizations and industries, upon which women have shared their upsetting stories (Sköld & Ohlin, 2017).

1.3 Contribution and relevance

The literature on gender equality within organizations is comprehensive (e.g. Elliott & Smith, 2004; Ridgeway, 1997; Kelan, 2009), and there are various scholars who have touched upon the topic in the context of the Swedish Armed Forces (e.g. Leikman & Fyrberg, 2014; Niklasson Schöön, 2005; Johagen, 2010). The majority of these are written by scholars at the Swedish Defence University, whereas others have a sociological or political perspective. Although, since the #metoo-movement is a quite recent phenomenon, this has not been explored to any great extent, and especially not in relation to the Swedish Armed Forces. Accordingly, we think it would be important to highlight and investigate this further. As one of the largest public organizations in the country (OFR, n.d.), the Swedish Armed Forces is highly relevant to study from a gender equality-perspective. We wish to develop a further understanding regarding how the organization's equality-work is perceived by people working there, and through that, develop and contribute to the concept of equality-work and present and develop our concept of equality-washing. This understanding could be of importance for the Swedish

Armed Forces since it leads to practical implications of what the organization can change, reflect upon and develop regarding its equality-work. Our findings may also be of value for other organizations, dealing with similar issues, as knowledge and an understanding of equality-work and equality-washing can have positive effects on their way of managing gender diversity.

1.4 Research purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to reach a better understanding of how people view gender equality and the equality-work conducted, in a male-dominated and public organization, like the Swedish Armed Forces. In order to fulfil this purpose, the study will aim to answer the following research questions:

- How do men and women in the Swedish Armed Forces perceive gender equality in their organization?
- How do men and women in the Swedish Armed Forces perceive the effects of gender equality-work being undertaken in the organization after #givaktochbitihop?

1.5 Research limitations

There are some limiting aspects that need to be reflected upon, concerning this study. First of all, we are aware of the narrow scope of our study, affected by limitations in time. A consequence of this was the quite small amount of respondents. Our study is based on interviews with 13 people from the Swedish Armed Forces, which makes it difficult for us to gain an overall understanding of equality-work in the organization. A more thorough empirical material might have lead to deeper knowledge and more comparable and generalizable results. Although, due to the organization's expansion and complex structure, a completely generalizable result would not be possible to reach, and that has not been our ambition. The findings from this research may not be directly applicable to all other organizations, due to the unique structure of the Swedish Armed Forces. The limited scope of our study have also had an effect on the theory selected, since the literature on gender and equality is very extensive, we have chosen what is most relevant

for our study. Consequently, we had to exclude literature that could have given a more nuanced discussion or in-depth knowledge about certain concepts.

1.6 Disposition

Literature Review (chapter 2) - This chapter will give the reader a presentation of the existing research relevant for our study. We will look into different theoretical concepts, such as gender equality, diversity and equality at the workplace, equality in the military, diversity initiatives and image management. The literature that is presented in this chapter will function as a framework in the discussion.

Methodology (chapter 3) - In this chapter, we will present how the study has been conducted and our methodological standpoints. Here, the reader will find a description of how our empirical material was constructed and analyzed, but also a section of reflective considerations regarding limitations and credibility. This will enable the reader to follow our thesis with a deeper understanding.

Empirical Material (chapter 4) - In this chapter, we will present our empirical findings based on different themes we found interesting when analyzing our empirical material. It will mostly consist of quotes from the interviews.

Discussion (chapter 5) - In this chapter, we will discuss our empirical material presented in the previous chapter and connect it to our literature review and theoretical framework. This will be done in close relation to our research questions in order to fulfil our aim in the conclusion.

Conclusion (chapter 6) - In this chapter, the reader can find our conclusions. We will answer our research questions and reach the aim of the study. Further, we will also give a presentation of practical implications and suggestions for further research.

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2 Literature review

In this section we briefly present some of the existing research regarding gender, equality and diversity, gender inequality at the workplace, the view on men and women and masculinity. Touching upon how individuals respond to sudden change and crisis, will later help us analyze our respondents reaction to #givaktochbitihop. Furthermore, we will also look into the debate on diversity initiatives and image management, as this will be relevant for our findings in terms of developing the concept of equality-washing. Approaching these certain topics will facilitate for us when constructing and analyzing our empirical material.

2.1 Gender equality

The concepts of equality, diversity, gender and sex are important to define since there are differences in how people understand and use them. When talking about equality in this study, we will refer to equality in terms of gender. According to one approach, liberal feminism, gender-equality means that men and women should have the same rights, opportunities and obligations in their life and "equal access to the public realm" (Heywood, 2012:234). Social feminism claim that equality also implies that men and women should have equal right to economic and social power (Heywood, 2012).

It was not until the 60's-70's that the division between gender and sex became used in feminist studies, a division implying that gender is a socially created division of men and women, founded in the sexual and reproductive relations (West & Zimmerman, 1987). *Sex* is often used to describe the biological differences between males and females, and it often fills the function to explain differences as natural and obvious. In that way, feminine and masculine traits can be understood as natural consequences of differences in sex (Dahl, 2016). Some would argue that men are considerably physically stronger than women (Goldstein, 2001). *Gender* on the other hand, often refers to the roles that society ascribe men and women (Heywood, 2012) and is often used to emphasise the relational and inconstant aspects of the masculine and feminine stereotypes (Dahl, 2016). Feminists usually argue that differences in gender are culturally, socially or politically constructed,

while patriarchy implies that there is a natural distinction between men and women that is rooted in biology (Heywood, 2012).

2.1.1 Measuring diversity

It is not uncommon to look at, and measure, gender diversity in organizations in terms of body-counting. Alvesson and Billing (2002) explain that this dominant approach to treating gender as a variable starts from people's biological sex. However, they continue presenting criticism aimed towards this approach, mainly based on a general questioning of whether the bodily equipment of individuals is the most crucial thing about them, as it is treated that way when counting bodies. Comer and Soliman (1996) argue that merely taking a simple body-counting approach is not sufficient, as it does not supply any information about the quality of intergroup relations. Emphasizing that gender is socially constructed, Alvesson and Billing (2002) explain that there are many women not displaying or exhibiting certain, by society, constructed characteristics connected to feminine behaviour and how a woman should be. Every individual is described to possess a multiplicity of social identities, gender is only one of them and is not always dominant. Alvesson and Billing (2002) then suggest that counting bodies should go beyond the chromosomal dimension of men and women.

2.1.2 Masculinity and femininity

When doing research regarding gender, Alvesson and Billing (2002), present a possible path exploring the cultural forms of masculinity and femininity within organizations. To study how different forms of masculinity dominate in organizations is, by Alvesson and Billing (2002) described as the preferable alternative to gender research by body-counting. Kerfoot and Knights (1996:86) define masculinity as " [...] the socially generated consensus of what it means to be a man, to be 'manly' or to display such behaviour at any one time". Connell (2005) describes how masculinity is a naturally relational concept, that it does not exist unless in contrast to 'femininity'. According to Connell (2005) the modern usage of the term presumes that the behaviour of someone is a consequence of what type of person this individual is. In other words, with this mind set, an 'unmasculine' person would behave differently than a masculine one, being serene rather than violent and passive rather than dominating. Men that are seen as strong masculine exemplars, e.g. a soldier, often feel a pressure to live up to it, whatever the cost

may be (Connell, 2000). This strive for achieving a certain image, to be a 'real man', can according to Acker (1999) become problematic as it may become a motivating force to take on discriminating behaviour.

2.2 Diversity and equality-work in organizations

The study of gender and the imbalance between women and men at the workplace became increasingly popular in the 1970's (Acker, 1999), and according to Harriers-Jenkins (2006) an increased dimension of gender diversity in organizations is nowadays seen as a measure of quality. As many scholars have done research on different types of organizations, Acker (1999) claims that enough similarities have been found throughout this research to be able to make general statements of the gender patterns in richer northern countries. Acker (1999) explains how it is everyday activities and procedures that help promote the creation of an organizational gender divide. According to Acker (1999), many studies on the topic show that it is not uncommon that activities, implemented with the aim of reducing gender inequality, in the end just make the organizational gender divide even bigger. Activities and procedures implemented to handle gender inequality are sometimes enforced as a response to outside pressure. When this is the case, studies have shown that there is a risk that these efforts fail because the men of the organizations oppose them (Cockburn, 1991). Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly (1992) found that men responded negatively to an increased existence of women in their work units.

2.2.1 The view on men and women in an organizational context

Acker (1999) describes how it is not only the activities within organizations that support the persistence of gender inequality. Essential factors in naturalizing asymmetrical power balances is the use of images, symbols and also having certain understandings, e.g. the belief that there are working tasks particularly suitable for women or men due to innate capabilities and skills connected to their gender (Acker, 1999). Acker (1999) frames gender as socially constructed and describes gender images as created within all kinds of organizational structures, e.g in military organizations, where these images usually contain an overtone of masculinity. The use of metaphors and a discourse that is connected to what is stereotypically considered as masculine is often a way to also describe successful and competent organizations. Mean, aggressive and competitive is a

portrayal of organizations that will survive and prosper in a harsh economy. On the other hand, the images considered feminine, such as caring and empathy are rarely what is used to describe a successful organization. (Acker, 1999)

2.2.2 Gender in military organizations

Goldstein (2001) describes how the rarity of women in the military or armed forces may be explained through one of two different cases. The first one being that a state or society that is highly sexist will not tolerate women in combat, while the second option involves a relatively peaceful state, that does not need women within the military and consequently does not prioritize recruiting females. Sweden is then mentioned as an example of the latter. Goldstein (2001) points out that individuals are forced into certain categories and roles based on gender. Pinch (2006) agrees with this, mentioning how women within the military throughout history have been relegated to support and nursing roles. However, Pinch (2006:3), who (together with MacIntyre, A.T.; Browne, P. & Okros, A.C.) has written a study on the military in Canada, argues that "women have made perhaps the most dramatic gains in participation rates in all employment and societal organizations, including the military".

While our biological potentials really support a great diversity, cultural or constructed gender is described as obstructing gender diversity (Goldstein, 2001). This is shown in how the modest biological inclination towards males', in average, higher war capability becomes transformed into all-male war. Subsequently, what was only a potential in biology becomes a mandate in culture and society (Goldstein, 2001). Harries-Jenkins (2006) explains how women, as often being a clear minority in military groups, even are being treated as highly visible tokens, rather than contributing and competent military employees. When it comes to military work, Pinch (2006) explains that there is an ongoing debate revolving around how far gender diversity can, and should, go. As armed forces are organizations dealing with crisis, they must respond capably and quickly when called upon. As a consequence, somewhat of a dissension has emerged, whether it is possible to combine operational military standards, and simultaneously optimize equal opportunities for men and women (Pinch, 2006).

2.2.3 Equality-work initiatives

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It is not uncommon that different initiatives, such as the implementation of diversity programmes, are taken by organizations in order to create a work environment characterized by diversity and equality (Foldy, 2002). Comer and Soliman (1996) even say that consciously managing a changing and more diverse workforce is crucial, and needs to be a part of an organization's overall strategy. Adler (1991, in Corner & Soliman, 1996) also points out the importance of actively working with differences within organizations, as heterogeneity may lead to lower productivity and cohesiveness, if not understood by the organizational members.

One important dimension, addressed by diversity programmes, is gender (Foldy, 2002). Schein (1985) explains how such initiatives may have a relevant and immediate impact on the observable manifestations in an organization, such as the representation of different genders and changes in organizational policies. However, Schein (1985) emphasizes further that the only way to really change an organization, is to implement initiatives that reach the embedded and less visible aspects, touching underlying values and assumptions of individuals. Caudron (1993, in Corner & Soliman, 1996) stresses the importance of also having genuine and long-term commitment to diversity initiatives, as short-term gains oftentimes vanish eventually - leaving employees disappointed with management.

Foldy (2002) describes how diversity initiatives have the potential to even out the playing field for groups that normally are under-represented in organizations. This could be done by relocating resources to members of marginalized groups within the organization, enabling access to decision-making processes and identifying biases and prejudice among managers (Foldy, 2002). According to Avery (2003) diversity can be upheld to a great extent with the implementation of certain diversity recruitment initiatives. Within this area, promoting the organization by using photographs of a diverse workforce in advertisement is described as a successful tactic. This technique will in turn make jobseekers of minorities develop an impression of the organization valuing diversity, and will thus be more encouraged to apply for a job there, in turn making the workforce more diverse (Avery, 2003).

One other common element of diversity initiatives is what Foldy (2002) refers to as diversity training. This is described as a very broad term, including training that ranges

from two-hour introductory workshops, up to week-long retreats. Diversity training has the potential to teach members of marginalized groups to adapt better to the organizational culture, and thereby be more successful. It also has the capacity to show members of dominant groups within the organization how to identify and repel the barriers that they unconsciously are placing before others (Foldy, 2002). This can be seen as very valuable for organizations as, according to McKay and Avery (2005), interpersonal conflicts often occur in diverse settings due to employees not being aware of how their behaviour is affected by stereotypes and subtle biases. Thomas (2005, in Avery & McKay, 2005) explains how stereotyping also leads to having a lower perception of the minority employees' competence, which in turn negatively affects potential opportunities to advance within the organization.

Due to this, Foldy (2002) describes how diversity training plays a key role in getting women a better access to resources and a greater involvement in decision-making, by addressing these interpersonal and individual issues. The training often intends to change behaviour but not attitudes, requiring a certain conduct rather than changing how the employees think. Some training could however be implemented with the aim to reach employees at a deeper and vulnerable level, encouraging reflection on their own prejudice and contributions to discrimination (Foldy, 2002). Meyer and Scott (1991, in Rynes & Rosen, 1995) on the other hand, believe that the main reason for adopting diversity training is to influence employees' attitudes, and for it to function as a mechanism and transmitter of organizational values. Ultimately with the final objective of developing some kind of internalized control among those trained, by assuming appropriate values and norms. Due to its vast versatility, diversity training is a very popular element of diversity initiatives, being a transmitter of both unconcealed and hidden enforcement (Foldy, 2002). However, Avery and McKay (2005) emphasize that diversity training should be accompanied by matching structural changes, e. g. increasing minority representation throughout all hierarchical levels, which consequently may improve minority employee retention and attitudes.

Another common component of diversity initiatives is the formation of employee network groups (Friedman, 1996 in Foldy, 2002). Such groups have certain notable characteristics. To start with, they are established on the basis of some type of social identity, for example gender. Various studies (Brass, 1985; McCaine, O'Reilly & Pfeffer,

1983; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989) have shown that individuals find it more comfortable, and therefore making it more likely, to communicate with others within their own identity group. Furthermore, the networks are intra-organizational and operated by employees and not management. Lastly, the groups are in some way formally acknowledged and recognized by the larger organization (Friedman, 1996 in Foldy, 2002). The purpose of such groups is to provide management with an organized perspective of marginalized groups, learn from each other within the network and provide an access to mentors (Foldy, 2002). However, some (Fine & Johnsson, 1990; Morrison & von Glinow, 1990) argue that networks within organizations may also lead to an asymmetrical flow of information, having those not being part of the network miss important news and knowledge to a greater extent than those being included members.

2.2.4 Critical voices towards diversity initiatives

The use of various diversity initiatives has however been met with some criticism, arguing that it is merely a tool to create the perception that employee and organizational interests coincide, when in reality it is not the case (Foldy, 2002). By implementing these initiatives, the need of having to use visible and coercive forms of power in order to assure that organizational goals are met and to quench resistance, is reduced (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Furthermore, these initiatives may raise organizational commitment among members of marginalized groups, without really making any concrete organizational changes (Foldy, 2002). A study conducted by Rynes and Rosen (1995) confirms this notion, as only a modest percentage of those being subjected to diversity initiatives saw these as successful over a longer term. According to Rynes and Rosen (1995) results of such initiatives are initially perceived as very positive, yet later these are far from sustained in the day-to-day environment.

Comer and Soliman (1996) underline that merely filling an organization with diverse employees does not automatically improve creativity, flexibility and decision-making. Oftentimes, when working with diversity and having a focus on including a specific group, for example based on gender, Foldy (2002) argues that actions are implemented to integrate these individuals into the current culture rather than looking into making structural changes. Consequently, diversity initiatives are often explained to

help the disadvantaged, rather than acknowledging how dominant groups have a responsibility to recognize their own privilege within the organization (Foldy, 2002).

Diversity initiatives are described to possibly, at best, help women adapt more easily to current practices. On the other hand, it might simply yield a cover against charges of discrimination for management (Foldy, 2002). According to Foldy (2002) critics also argue that diversity training only reflects and reinforces the interest of already dominant groups, the same with all components of diversity initiatives. Further, this training is often just a substitute for real organizational changes, for example increasing representation of marginalized groups at higher positions (Foldy, 2002).

Prasad, Prasad and Mir (2010) conducted a study with a focus on the conceptualization and implementation of diversity management, and how it is received by organizational members. When it comes to diversity management, a certain discourse of fashion showed to have a pervasive presence as many initiatives were based on a desire to imitate others. The pursued isomorphism made organizations adopt superficial initiatives that lacked local relevance, thus bringing about a lacking credibility. Managing diversity based on fashions, showed to bring about a dysfunctionality to the certain implemented diversity initiatives and programmes in the study of Prasad, Prasad and Mir (2010). Naturally, fashion and trends are less adjusted to individual organizations and their local dynamics, and mainly correspond with external tendencies (Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2010).

On the other hand, management fashions could also be seen as having a functional role, as a tool to facilitate and further workplace reforms that certain organizations normally would have been more hesitant to adopt (Prasad et. al., 2006). Eriksson-Zetterquist, Müllern and Styhre, (2011) argue that, being dedicated to follow managerial fashions should be seen as a rational choice for organizations. Fashion puts pressure on organizations to invest in diversity programmes and initiatives, due to an underlying fear of seeming outdated and old-fashioned. Keeping up with certain fashions oftentimes grants the organization with a certain legitimacy and credibility that may shield and protect the management from scepticism and disapproval (Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2010). Other possible advantages from superficial diversity efforts may, according to Comer and Soliman (1996), be a boosted public image or the improved ability to attract minority job seekers, who in turn expect to be treated well and be appreciated.

Prasad, Prasad and Mir (2010) explains how the act of following management fashions can generate a slight paradox, possibly enhancing the legitimacy of the organizations in the eyes of external and internal stakeholders, while the lack of local relevance of the initiatives may decrease the internal legitimacy over time and create an organizational cynicism. Furthermore, even if fashions may be a driver of needed change in an organization, that change tends to lack in real substance and be superficial.

2.2.5 Change, crisis and fear in organizations

Times of change can be very stressful for both employees and managers, regardless of its underlying cause (DuFrene & Lehman, 2014). Feeling neglected, threatened and to fear what the future holds is very common, according to DuFrene and Lehman (2014). However, Rostek (2013) explains that there is no better time for implementing new solutions, than during an organizational change or crisis. DuFrene and Lehman (2014) describe how the biggest challenge for managers during times of change, is to keep employees continuously productive, happy and inspired, while simultaneously dealing with new procedures and expectations. One way of doing so is for the management to keep an open and honest communication with employees, as this is often expected and needed in times of uncertainty. It is described as very important that management regularly communicates the vital information to the employees, so these do not have to rely on news media or social media as sources (DuFrene & Lehman, 2014). DuFrene and Lehman (2014) also claim that it is during times of change and uncertainty that an organization reveals their real values, by the way management communicates with employees.

2.3 Image management

Alvesson (2013) argues that the interest in change and many change initiatives are highly sensitive for what society thinks. Having this perspective, aiming attention to how the organization is perceived by others, is by Hatch and Schultz (2000) defined as focusing on the organizational image. For bigger and public organizations, the public and media are oftentimes demanding and scrutinizing forces, providing stringent pressure to keep up with general norms and put effort into image management. According to Alvesson (2013), this pressure contributes to an increased emphasis on surface work, encouraging

imitation and following fashions in order to improve the appearances of the organizations. Further, Alvesson (2013) describes this focus on superficial aspects of an organization, of what is visible from a distance without deeper knowledge, as a vital part of running an organization. According to Alvesson and Spicer (2016), the real outcome of the implementation of certain policies matters very little, as long as it appears as though everything is running smoother than before. Avery and McKay (2005) on the other hand, encourage substance by raising the example of how an organization with low minority representation, should not display an extensive diversity in their external communication. The consequence could be that minority recruits feel mislead and some form of backlash is probable (Dineen, Ash & Noen, 2002).

The area of diversity and such initiatives are, by Alvesson (2013), described as usually being attractive, but superficial investments, sending clear value signals to the outside world, but lacking or even having a negative connection with core operations. Avery and McKay (2005) describe how the financial justification of diversity, e.g. creativity, increased market shares and access to minority consumer markets, urges organizations to adopt a short-sighted and superficial view on diversity.

In the context of diversity management there is, by Alvesson (2013) explained to be an illusionary arrangement, which is the key quality of an inevitable but nevertheless common discrepancy between the image level and everyday level of an organization. Alvesson (2013) continues by arguing that work in general operates more smoothly among individuals that share common views, values and ways of thinking. A lack of women in an organization would, according to Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly (1992), not necessarily be a problem. Even if a diverse workforce often is described as beneficial in terms of completing tasks involving creativity, some studies have shown that homogeneous work forces are more likely to be well-integrated, as well as experiencing lower turnover and higher satisfaction among employees (Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992).

Despite this, diversity management is nowadays something organizations are expected to work with; it has become a fashion that demands action particularly from organizations with extensive public exposure (Alvesson, 2013). This may lead to many initiatives solely being implemented in order to avoid problems and to signal that gender equality is taken seriously in the organization alongside with proving to be a good employer

(Alvesson, 2013) and avoid legal scrutiny (Avery & McKay, 2005). According to Thomas and Ely (1996), diversity initiatives may then become increasingly revolved around diversity recruitment, merely focusing on numeric targets of acceptable representation. It is not uncommon that an overly positive image is painted by the organization, displaying a diverse workforce and a supportive diversity climate, in order to entice job applicants. However, if the workplace does not live up to what has been communicated and expected, newly hired individuals may feel mislead and leave the organization, making it troublesome to retain minority groups in particular (Avery & McKay, 2005).

Alvesson (2013) mentions how the beautiful world of diversity is coveted but not easily achieved. Organizations may create diversity policies, mentorship programmes, build or allow certain networks and implement diversity training and recruitment, and even if these actions could facilitate for a more gender equal workplace, it is according to Alvesson and Spicer (2016) rarely the case. Limited local relevance of diversity programmes and the fact that diversity also can be characterized with conflicts of interest and antagonisms, might hinder the potential success of diversity initiatives. These are initiatives that, according to Alvesson (2013), usually include a fair amount of grandiose promises.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter gives an overview of the existing literature relevant for conducting this study. The literature review contains a broad conceptual background to gender equality, the difficulty in measuring this and a presentation of the masculinity and femininity debate. This is followed by a section focusing on diversity and gender equality in an organizational context, and then more specifically in military organizations. Thereafter we present different dimensions of diversity initiatives and some critical voices against them, followed by how fear may be a response to changes and crisis in organizations. The last section of our literature review is based on the concept of image management, which we in our discussion will relate to the practice of equality-washing. This chapter constitutes a foundation for the analyzis of our empirical material, in chapter 5. Next, we will present our methodology and give a description of how our empirical material has been constructed and analyzed.

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Lovisa Röjd

3 Methodology

In this chapter, we present our methodological standpoint and describe how our study has been conducted. First, we will introduce our research approach, followed by an explanation of how our empirical material has been constructed, and thereafter give a description of our approach for interpretation and analyzis of the material. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with some thoughts regarding reflexivity, limitations and the credibility of the study.

3.1 Research approach

In this study, we are interested in understanding how men and women within the Swedish Armed Forces perceive equality and the equality-work conducted by the organization. In order to gain this understanding, the study is based on a qualitative method, which enables us as researchers to interpret and analyze the empirical material in-depth (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Since the respondents' view concerns their own thoughts and feelings, we have taken the ontological starting point of the world being socially constructed, where reality is dependent upon individual perception (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The epistemological position in this study is ascribed to the traditions of interpretation, where the world is constructed through our ability to attach meanings to actions and objects (Prasad, 2005). We have thereby not searched for one single truth, but rather several realities that contribute to our understanding of how the Swedish Armed Forces' equality-work is perceived.

Within the interpretative approach, we also turn to the practices of hermeneutics, which enables us to go deeper, beyond the surface, and interpret underlying meanings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Prasad, 2005). This approach allows the researcher to have a pre-understanding and complement with new understanding. Although, to gain new understanding, the researcher needs to understand the relationship between the *parts* and the *whole* (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Prasad, 2005). Hence, in order to get a proper understanding of what is said during an interview, we need to understand and put that in relation to the organizational context. During the research process, we have been moving back and forth between a theoretical framework and the empirical material, which is in

line with the basic hermeneutic circle and in accordance with an abductive way of conducting research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In this way, we have been able to direct our search for empirical material based on theoretical findings, and also develop our theoretical framework, based on the outcome of the empirical material. The next section will give a description of how the empirical material was constructed.

3.2 Construction of empirical material

To get a more nuanced picture and a broader understanding of how people perceive the equality-work conducted within the Swedish Armed Forces, we saw it as important to acquaint ourselves with empirical material from a diverse group of people. Our primary source for this study is therefore semi-structured interviews with both men and women at different hierarchical levels and locations, working in the organization. We also conducted an interview with the Swedish non-profit organization Rättviseförmedlingen and studied documents from the Swedish Armed Forces website.

3.2.1 Sampling

The Swedish Armed Forces is a large organization, with formations all over Sweden and with an extensive hierarchical structure (Försvarsmakten a, b & d, n.d.) and since we wanted to gain understanding from, and interview a broad group of people, we got in contact with participants in different ways. To gain initial access, we contacted people we knew, who are working at different locations and hierarchical levels within the organization, and through them we got further contact with other participants. The combination of convenience and snowball-sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2013) was an efficient way to find respondents who were willing to participate. The snowball-sampling enabled us to get in contact with a wider range of people, that we otherwise would not have reached. Further on, we used social media to get in contact with people that we thought could be of interest for the study. Both through writing directly to people who had signed #givaktochbitihop on Instagram, but also through posting a question, saying that we were looking for respondents, in a Facebook-group for people who are supporting the movement. Since we wanted to catch a wide spectrum of perspectives and perceptions, we strived to have respondents representing a diverse group of people in terms of gender, with an even share of men and women, and a mix of recruits and people on higher hierarchical levels. In the text we will refer to the latter as managers, which

mean that they have some kind of personnel responsibility. There were thirteen people who showed interest in participating, seven women and six men, which we saw as sufficient. Four of them were recruits, being quite new in the organization, and nine were managers. None of the respondents had a civilian employment in the Swedish Armed Forces. All names have been changed to pseudonyms and respective roles or titles are not mentioned, in order to ensure anonymity. The thirteen interviews were made with the following respondents:

Pseudonyms	Sex	Position	Time in the organization
Herbert	Man	Manager	30+ years
Christian	Man	Manager	20+ years
Peter	Man	Manager	30+ years
Niklas	Man	Manager	10+ years
Olof	Man	Manager	10+ years
Allan	Man	Manager	30+ years
Sandra	Woman	Recruit	< 5 years
Saga	Woman	Recruit	< 5 years
Ulrika	Woman	Manager	10+ years
Doris	Woman	Recruit	< 5 years
Ingrid	Woman	Manager	30+ years
Josefin	Woman	Recruit	< 1 years
Emelie	Woman	Manager	10+ years

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The following section will give a more profound presentation of how the interviews were conducted. Since we wanted to understand and gain insight in people's perception about equality-work within the Swedish Armed Forces, semi-structured interviews were most suitable. These kinds of interviews made it possible for us to cover broad themes and to enable an open conversation, where the respondents had the chance to describe and exemplify their answers. Talking around broad themes made us flexible and allowed us and the respondent to grasp and develop different thoughts that came up. In Kvale (1996: 5-6), semi-structured interviews are defined as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain

descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena", which we see as a complete description of what we aimed to do. In preparation, we developed an interview-guide (appendix 1), where the questions were focused on four different themes: values and culture, the recruitment-process, gender equality initiatives and #givaktochbitihop. The interviews were conducted by both researchers, where one had the role of asking questions and make the conversation fluent and the other one took notes, did the audio-recording and asked follow-up questions.

During the interview-process, we found some of the themes more interesting than others, which made us revise and rewrite some of the questions. When interviewing managers, we adjusted and added some questions, in order to catch their specific perceptions. Three of the interviews were held at the respondents' workplaces, two were held in their homes, three via Skype and five via telephone. The interviews were conducted during two weeks in March 2018, and lasted between one and two hours. Every interview were recorded (after asking the respondents about permission), and since Swedish is the respondents native language, that was the language being used during the interviews. This is important to have in mind, since the quotes used in chapter 4 are translated. Even though the translations are done as precise as possible, there are some Swedish words and expressions that do not have an English counterpart, and therefore the quotes are not always the respondent's exact words. This is a common problem related to translation of interview-data (Xian, 2008 in Bryman & Bell, 2013).

In order to gain contextual empirical material about equality-work in male-dominated organizations, we conducted an interview with a representative from Rättviseförmedlingen. This is a Swedish non-profit organization, working with issues around inequality and imbalance of representation in organizations (Rättviseförmedlingen, 2018). The interview gave us insights in how to work with gender-inequality and problems that could be related to it. Rättviseförmedlingen focuses most of its work on gender inequality, which made us believe that this interview could contribute with knowledge regarding the field we are studying. Apart from this interview being based on another set of questions, it was conducted in a similar way as the other ones.

3.2.3 Document study

In order to understand the organizational context, to get an overall view of how the organization work with issues around inequality and to grasp what the Swedish Armed Forces communicates externally about its equality-work, we studied documents available at the organization's website. When using triangulation to compare data from different research methods, the researcher can, according to Bowen (2009) support or dismiss findings, and thereby we have been able to outline whether there are any misalignments between what the interviewees perceive and what we found in the documents. In this regard, it is however important to acknowledge that a simple awareness of potential problems will not necessarily lead to a legitimizing function, the researcher has to use triangulation in a reflective way in order to minimize biases (Alvesson & Schaefer, 2017). The studied documents might have been produced to fulfil a purpose, and thereby be influenced by the organizational context (Bowen, 2009). Yet, this may show how the organization has chosen to portray itself to its external and internal audience, which we see as interesting and valuable for our study. We also looked into what the organization communicated to their workers during the initial state of this movement. In the next section, we describe how we have analyzed our empirical material.

3.3 Analyzis of empirical material

As in line with the abductive approach that we used throughout this study, we have been able to alternate between our empirical material and theoretical framework in order to develop and deepen our material and literature review (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In the initial phase, we did a brief literature review to gain knowledge about previous research within the field, both concerning gender-theory and gender in the Swedish Armed Forces. This became the basis on which we constituted the questions for our interview-guide. During the first interviews, we found interesting aspects that we developed further during the remaining ones, such as the actions following #givaktochbitihop, but also how the organization manages its image. Having conducted all the interviews, the first step when interpreting the empirical material was to transcribe them and to identify themes and subthemes (production of equality-work, perception of equality-work and initiatives following #givaktochbitihop), in order to get a broad overview of opinions and perceptions. This was done by looking for repetitions, similarities, differences and theory-related material etc. (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Having decided which themes that were of importance in order to answer our research questions and undertake an interesting analyzis, we continued to develop our literature review, based on the empirical material (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). At this point, we also turned to the documents and compared our empirical material with what the organization itself communicated about its equality-work. During the analytical process, we found ourselves moving back and forth between the empirical material and the theoretical framework, in order to avoid misinterpretations and to deepen our analyzis. The empirical findings are presented in chapter 4, largely based on direct quotes from our respondents. A further analyzis of the empirical material, linked to the theoretical framework can be found in the discussion, chapter 5. In the next section we will reflect upon the limitations and credibility of our study.

3.4 Reflexivity, limitations and credibility

This section will start with a discussion about the limitations that we have encountered due to our choice of method and research approach, and thereafter some reflections about our role as researchers. Lastly, we will present and problematize some aspects regarding credibility.

3.4.1 Reflexivity

Qualitative studies are in general characterized by subjectivity, which rely upon the researchers pre-understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2013). Since we have taken the ontological starting point of the world being socially constructed, where reality is dependent upon individual perception, we are aware that our findings cannot be generalized or replicated, as they are attached to the social context and interpreted through our own lenses (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). To counter this, we have reflected upon how our assumptions and pre-understandings have affected the way we interpret our empirical material and conduct our analyzis. With this in mind, we have been open-minded and reflective throughout the process. To stay somewhat open during the interviews, and to avoid guiding our respondents, we developed questions based on our theoretical framework and used our interview-guide. Having done the interviews we transcribed them all completely, in order to manage the empirical material and find exactly how the respondents expressed

themselves. This also helped us avoid misinterpretations when conducting the analyzis. According to Kvale (1996) it is important to consider how far we, as researchers, interpret our empirical material. This was done by processing the empirical material separately, before discussing the findings, to not influence each other. Being two researchers has helped us be more reflective since we interpret things differently, and do not have the same preconceptions. When reflecting upon our own role in relation to the study, one has to bear in mind that we are younger women, who believe that gender equality is fundamental right. With our methodological approach of interpretive hermeneutics, construction of the empirical material is dependent on the researcher (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), consequently other people would probably interpret the same material differently.

3.4.2 Limitations

As empirical material sometimes is taken out of its context, when collected through interviews, there is a risk for misinterpretation and distortion of what the respondents actually have said. Although, there is a possibility that the results might be meaningful when the researchers interpret, categorize and reflect upon them (Bryman & Bell, 2013). With this in mind, we do not aim to give a completely descriptive picture of how the equality-work is being conducted within the Swedish Armed Forces, but rather use the empirical material to deepen our understandings and gain nuanced insights in how this is done. We are also aware that our sampling is not representative for the population of the Swedish Armed Forces and that it only contains a subset of the entire selection. We are therefore conscious of the difficulty in generalizing our findings (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

Another limiting aspect could be a possible language barrier and a knowledge gap between the researcher and the respondent (Dutton & Dukerich, 2006). During our interviews, we overcame this by avoid using vague, theoretical terms, and instead converse with an ordinary language that could be related to the context in which the respondents were familiar.

3.4.3 Credibility

In order to achieve credibility, it is essential to engage in 'source criticism', which according to Alvesson & Sköldberg (2009) could be used by the researcher to reduce

limitations and distortions, and to develop awareness of the sources. There need to be a balance between trust in what the respondents say and careful source critique, since there are different factors that will influence the outcome of the interview (Alvesson & Schaefer, 2017). There are several aspects possibly making empirical material from interviews less reliable. The respondent may not know how to answer certain questions, he or she might be unwilling to tell us due to shame, loyalty, political factors or fear. There might also be difficulties to communicate personal and complex questions, due to a formal setting and the researchers being complete strangers (Alvesson & Schaefer, 2017). To minimize these risks, we have been engaging in intrasource critique, which means that the researcher has to pay attention to the intentions and to "carefully interpret and assess a specific interview in its entirety" (Alvesson & Schaefer, 2017:8).

When conducting the interviews, we noticed that some of the respondents were expressing a political correctness and answering many of the questions in a quite impersonal way. We saw this as a possible consequence of their position or a way to protect the organization. In order to get more nuanced answers from these respondents, we tried to reframe the context and ask different questions around the same subject, which gave us answers from different angles. In our study, we cannot know if the respondents participated due to a genuine interest or if some of them felt obliged to participate because of their personal contact with one of the researchers. However, we know that one respondent got advised by colleagues not to participate, due to our topic being seen as sensitive.

We believe that ensuring the respondents anonymity, led to more reliable and credible sources. It was important for us to create an honest and open relation with the participants, in order to make them feel less stressed or more comfortable with the interview-situation. All interviewees have been assigned other names in chapter 4 and 5. Neither their position nor their location is mentioned, since that would be too revealing. This was something we made clear in advance, which we know was crucial for some of the respondents in their decision to participate.

3.5 Chapter summary

We have in this chapter presented our methodological standpoints and how our study has been conducted. Our empirical material was constructed through semi-structured interviews and documents. The interviews were held with thirteen men and women at different hierarchical levels in the Swedish Armed Forces and the documents are mainly collected from the organization's website. This qualitative research method, together with a subjective, hermeneutical approach, allowed us to interpret the empirical material. By following an abductive method throughout the research process, we were able to alternate between our theoretical framework and empirical material, which contributed to interesting findings. During analyzis, we identified different themes and linked them to the literature review. Lastly, this chapter contains a section on reflexivity, limitations and credibility where we reflect upon source criticism and our own role in the study. Next, we will present the findings of our empirical material.

4 Empirical material

In this chapter we present the Swedish Armed Forces and its equality-work, based on empirical material from both documents and interviews. We will begin by giving a brief background regarding the Swedish Armed Forces and a short presentation of what it communicates regarding gender equality, on its website. The chapter will be structured around different themes, found in our empirical material. These are based on how gender equality is perceived and produced in the organization.

4.1 Background - The Swedish Armed Forces

The Swedish Armed Forces is a body answerable to the Swedish parliament and government, led by the supreme commander, Micael Bydén. Even if the organization is subject to ministerial power when it comes to directing operations, the government has no jurisdiction to intervene in how the Swedish Armed Forces applies the law or exercises its authority (Swedish Armed Forces a, n.d.). The organization's presented mission is to "defend Sweden, its interests, its freedom and our right to live how we chose" (Swedish Armed Forces b, n.d.). The Armed Forces consists of three military units, which are the Navy, Army and Air Force, together (Swedish Armed Forces a, n.d) established at around 70 different locations all around the country (Försvarsmakten b, n.d.) This entire government agency contains approximately 20 000 full-time employees, (Försvarsmakten d, n.d.) making it one of Sweden's largest public organizations (OFR, n.d.), and with 23 ranks from private, which is lowest, to general, the highest, (Försvarsmakten e, n.d.) the Swedish Armed Forces could be considered a very hierarchical organization.

The main tasks of the Armed Forces are to detect and fend off violation of the country's territory or any form of military attack, primarily through the organization's ability to carry on armed conflict, as well as contributing to a robust society and support its citizens in times of crisis. Furthermore, mission-based units are participating in peacekeeping and conflict prevention outside the Swedish borders, in alliance with other countries. (Swedish Armed Forces c, n.d.)

The core values officially presented by the organization is a unification of three words, or key concepts: openness, result and responsibility. The openness regards a will and ability to co-operate, to be honest and trust each other. Result refers to delivering, creating and having a perpetual clarity throughout all actions. Lastly, responsibility concerns giving, taking and having demands on peers. (Swedish Armed Forces d, n.d.)

4.1.1 Background - Gender equality in the Swedish Armed Forces

Historically, only men were allowed to join the organization, but with waves of change going through society and saturating the political agenda, pressure was put on the organization to make changes and undertake a more inclusive and gender equal attitude. In 1975, the Swedish Armed Forces started working towards opening up recruitment policies, making it possible for women to apply to certain positions. Step by step this change permeated different areas and lastly, in 1989, also covered positions in submarines and combat piloting. Thus, Sweden became the first country in the world to open up all military positions for women, including those in combat. (Försvarsmakten f, n.d.) However, in 2016 the supreme commander Micael Bydén expressed his surprise about the lack of progress in the organization since the gender reform in the 70's, and voiced his disappointment in the insufficient ability to recruit and keep women in the organization (Pettersson, 2016).

Today, the Swedish Armed Forces is an organization dominated by male employees, with 17 % female employees throughout the different areas of work. Within civilian work, the share of women is substantially higher, reaching 39 %, while at officer positions, more specifically the ten highest military ranks, the share of females is 7 % (Försvarsmakten b, 2017; Försvarsmakten d, n.d.). This is a number that in 2007 was 4,6 % (Försvarsmakten, 2007).

On the official organizational website it is explained how gender equality is something the organization needs to prioritize and work actively with, as it is one fundamental component of the country's democratic principles which are based on every individual's equal value. Various aims and actions are formulated when it comes to the work done internationally during missions abroad, supported by resolutions from the UN. For the equality-work within the country's borders, the UN resolution 1325, the Swedish gender

equality goals and the Discrimination act are brought forward as vital pillars for guidance. (Försvarsmakten c, n.d.)

On the Swedish Armed Forces' website, dedicated to their gender equality-work, one could react to the choice of words as the organization declares that it should be *perceived* as an organization that treats all individuals equally. Further, the organization describes the importance of becoming and being *perceived* as an equal organization, in order to be seen, by both society and employees, as a responsible and attractive employer. The organization expresses its belief in concrete actions when it comes to equality-work. The example brought forward is the organization's participation in the Stockholm Pride parade, where the supreme commander took part in marching both 2013 and 2014, to signal that everyone is welcome in the organization. Conclusively, it is explained that the work being done to advance the gender equality intends to improve the organization and make it more powerful and productive. (Försvarsmakten c, n.d.)

A document published at the Swedish Armed Forces' website contains a formulated action plan for gender integration, concerning what to be done during years 2015-2018. Gender integration is described by the organization as a strategy to improve the quantitative and qualitative equality. In order to do so, the strategy contains three perspectives, which all actions and changes connected to gender equality will be aligned with: the perspective of rights ensures that human rights for men, women, boys and girls are present during all the Armed Forces' operations. The personnel provision perspective involves competency development, creating a position as an attractive employer and broaden the recruitment base. The personnel provision also entails having men and women develop throughout all areas and levels in the organization, in order to produce a credibility both nationally and internationally. Lastly, the operational capability perspective is strengthened by the organization's ability to recruit the most suitable candidates out of a broad selection. In this case capabilities refer to the individual's capacity to perform and act, based on his/her knowledge and previous experiences. Even if such capabilities can be shaped and enhanced by the organization, it is believed that an individual possessing desired capabilities from the start, is more likely to improve the operational effect. By recruiting men and women the organizational view broadens, and the Swedish Armed Forces is believed to get a deeper and more extensive understanding of the needs of these groups. (Försvarsmakten a, 2015)

Aligned with the three perspectives mentioned, various actions, planned to be implemented in 2015-2018, were presented in the document. Among these were: to map out wages, investigating how reported harassments are managed, implementation of a survey regarding discrimination and the creation of a handbook of equal treatment. (Försvarsmakten a, 2015) An anticipated long-term effect of the integration plan is that the organization will reflect society's composition in terms of the share of men and women (Försvarsmakten a, 2015). Succinctly, applying this strategy is expected to make an overall gender perspective permeate all decision-making, on all levels and processes throughout the organization (Försvarsmakten b, 2015).

In this document (the action plan for gender integration), a SWOT-analyzis is applied (Försvarsmakten a, 2015), which according to Helms and Nixon (2010) is a strategic tool that normally is used by businesses to analyze and position themselves on the market. This is done by identifying strengths and weaknesses internally, as well as opportunities and threats externally. If applied on non-profit or public organizations, the objective has mainly been to assess certain services provided to the public (Helms & Nixon, 2010). One example of the threats presented in the SWOT-analyzis of the action plan by the Armed Forces, is the risk of the possible developments in the surrounding area of the country, potentially changing the Swedish security policy and requiring rearmament. If that would occur the long-term goals connected to gender integration would, according to the plan of action, inevitably be down-prioritized. Furthermore, it is explained in this document that softer value issues, such as gender equality, is perceived as contradictory in relation to an efficient armed force. This view is something deeply embedded on a very general level, in turn potentially becoming something that organizational members do not care about or actively reflect on. (Försvarsmakten a, 2015)

4.1.2 #Givaktochbitihop

When the #metoo-movement reached the Swedish Armed Forces in November 2017, 1768 women unified under #givaktochbitihop (Dagens Nyheter, 2017). The movement was a response to the discrimination and sexual harassment women have been, and still are, exposed to within the organization. The female respondents explained that in the Swedish Armed Forces, the movement started as a closed group on Facebook, where only

female employees (present or former) were invited. Testimonies were shared in the group and eventually, the administrators compiled a text and a list of everyone who wanted to sign #givaktochbitihop, which was published in the Swedish newspaper, Dagens Nyheter. Neither dates nor locations were shared, neither in the group nor when published, since that would have made it possible to connect the shared stories to certain people.

4.2 Perceptions of gender equality in the Swedish Armed Forces

In this section we present some of the main perceptions regarding gender equality in the Swedish Armed Forces, which were found during the interviews. First, we give a description of how the respondents perceive gender equality and thereafter we present what the respondents saw as problematic and as obstacles, hindering gender equality from prospering.

4.2.1 Reflections on gender equality

During the interviews, several respondents explained that the organization has made great improvements during the last 20 years when it comes to gender equality. These improvements were seen as consequences of changing attitudes in society, both when it comes to the view on diversity, but also in behaviour and jargon.

> *It is a completely different culture now, a different understanding. I think it's more common to talk about these things [equality and diversity] in society today, it has totally changed. There are still regiments working with these issues, but it feels like we have come far. -* Emelie

When talking about the perception of what gender equality is, our respondents had different views, which we do not find surprising due to the complexity of the concept. Equality was described as: respect for other people, the possibility to have influence, rights and obligations, the relation between men and women, equal opportunities and equal treatment. After having explained their view of equality, we asked the respondents if they saw the Swedish Armed Forces as equal in terms of gender. When putting the organization in relation to their own definition, most of them did not see the organization as gender equal.

The managers don't see us as individuals, they rather think 'hmm, how can we work to reach our targets and recruit more people?', they do not care about us, we are only a small part of a greater plan. - Doris

This indicates that the Swedish Armed Forces does not make a difference between men and women. Everyone is instead primarily seen as soldiers, something that multiple respondents agreed upon.

Something I really appreciate with the Swedish Armed Forces is that we are all treated equally. Everything is done under the same premises, as during basic military training we didn't sleep separately, and they did not view me differently because I am a girl. I think that is unique for this organization and it is a good prerequisite when conducting equality-work. - Sandra

Even though equal treatment is worth striving for, some respondents saw this approach as quite problematic. They argued that there is at least a biological difference between men and women and when the organization overlooks this difference, e.g. when it comes to equipment, it causes frustration. However, all respondents agreed that equal treatment in active operations of combat is inevitable, since you participate on equal conditions, regardless of what sex you have.

The positive effects that follow from a diverse workforce, was something that all respondents agreed on. Ingrid argued that a more diverse workforce would lead to a greater operative ability and a stronger army, which was also expressed by Niklas, who further explained the important role of female soldiers during international operations:

You (females) have access to the entire population. Women are often excluded when men operate, we cannot talk to them, depending on which country we operate in. Therefore, when I decide to send more women to garrison troops, I know I increase the effects of what I do, the message I want to send or the information I want to gather. We miss out on 50 % of the population when we go to Afghanistan or Mali if not including female soldiers. - Niklas

A diverse workforce, with a mix of men and women, can thereby be seen as important for the operational effect in the organization, in order to achieve good results. However, an increased number of women being present at the workplace, was also explained as positive since it leads to a softer and more open working climate at the regiments, where the jargon and culture otherwise can be quite rough and crude.

We handle problems in different ways, but having women in the group… well, they also know how to express themselves… *laugh*, but female colleagues make the atmosphere more cordial and open, we talk about other things, which is positive. - Christian

However, Christian also pointed out that it is difficult to really identify what a more gender equal workplace in terms of quantity, would entail:

I have never been in the Swedish Armed Forces with a share of 50/50 or even 30/70, and therefore I don't know what the consequences of having a more diverse workforce, would be. It is difficult to say if we would have been more efficient in our operations, or not, I have no idea. - Christian

Even if many of our respondents hope, and prefer, that the equality-work conducted stems from a genuine place of interest from managers higher up in the hierarchy, the root motive is difficult to identify. Everyone agreed that this is a public organization and therefore a subject to a lot of pressure from society. When asking our respondents about this, Niklas brings up the carrot and stick as an example:

The older people I have contact with, are mostly my managers, or my managers manager, and I don't know what they prefer to work with. But I do know that the stick is always present, and therefore I guess they want to work with it [gender equality], since it is actually possible to get people willing to work with a stick as well. Even though carrot might be better… - Niklas

Christian argues that this is a complex situation, since the organization always has to be careful and one step ahead, but at the same time create substantial equality-work, which takes time.

I hope that people are aware that the Swedish Armed Forces is a public organization, acting in the interest of the country and the people, but due to this, media is interested in everything we do and say and if something is handled badly - this will be on the frontpage. - Christian

All our respondents expressed that there is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to equality, in order to really make it substantial. During the interviews, we found several underlying reasons for why the organization can be perceived as unequal, and the main ones are presented in the next section.

4.2.2 Obstacles to gender equality

The first obstacle is connected to the historical aspect. When talking about gender equality in the Swedish Armed Forces, some respondents expressed that the organization was not ready when women entered the workforce in the mid 80's.

Women started to enter the organization, before the organization even knew they needed them. It was not ready, but it couldn't say no. Of course it was great having women on board, a benefit. It was nice for the organization, it looked good, and the organization couldn't say no. - Emelie

Emelie argued that the organization's uncertainty in handling women, is still present, and that the rough and masculine culture has made her elbow her way forward. A majority of the female respondents, who have been in the organization for a longer period of time, agreed with this view. However, not only from a negative perspective, as they were aware of the culture before becoming part of the organization. All of them saw that the integration of an equality-perspective at every organizational level is too slow, not least when it comes to the development of equipment. Female respondents who joined the organization more recently, also addressed the problem with equipment only being adjusted for a certain body-type. Doris pointed out that some parts of the organization still have a very out-of-date view on women.

"I have a female colleague who started working at a unit with only men, and it was quite tough for her in the beginning. Especially when her commander talked to her and the guys, saying that they cannot have sex with her and she cannot have sex with them, if that would come to mind. - Doris

Most respondents argued that a prominent obstacle to gender equality within the Swedish Armed Forces is connected to the small number of female employees. Even though the organization has made progress in its recruitment of women, there is still a distinctive numerical imbalance between men and women. When asked about this, the main conception was related to deeply rooted traditions and culture.

The uneven distribution stems from traditions and that men are historically seen as warriors. This stereotypical picture belongs to both men and women, and that is a challenge and it leads to a lack of female applicants, which is beneficial for men. - Herbert

Further, Christian argues that this traditional view is problematic, since the organization is not even able to reach out to women in the same extent as it does to men, leading to a lot of competency being missed:

The consequence and the problem is that we don't have access to 50 % of the capacity in society, that is problematic, to not be able to reach women, since somewhere, in these 50 %, there is a person who we need and want. - Christian

This, together with the following quote implies that women might not view the organization as an attractive employer, in the way that men do. According to the respondents, women have a higher turnover rate, which shows that retaining women is troublesome for the organization.

If the organization wants a more diverse workforce, with a greater number of women, the younger recruits need role-models to look up to, to show them the way, to motivate them and to make them realise it is possible to do this. - Emelie

This issue could then be seen as a catch 22, since the small amount of female applicants results in an absence of women on all levels, leading to a lack of female role-models, and in the end a difficulty to retain younger female recruits. It was quite clear that the respondents saw this issue was something that the organization did not really know how to manage.

> *They have asked me continuously since I started here 'why did you apply?', 'how can we recruit more women?' 'how can we retain women in the organization?', and I answer that 'sorry, I don't have the answers to that', [...] There has to be someone else working with these questions, someone working specifically with questions around gender or something.* - Saga

Ingrid argued that creating a culture where women feel comfortable to stay, is not a quick-fix, but takes quite a long time and requires different initiatives and thorough actions.

Another obstacle for the organization, when it comes to conducting equality-work and establishing a more diverse workforce, is the hierarchical system. The Swedish Armed Forces is an organization with clear roles and a distinct chain of command, and this was something that the respondents described as inevitable for the core-operations.

> *One needs to understand that this organization is operating at two different levels and we are trained for crisis and war. And in those situations, things happen fast, and there is no time to discuss softer values around equality and such. But in 95 % of our time, we work like all other public officials.* - Herbert

Although the organization is dependent upon this system when it comes to certain situations, some argued that the hierarchy at the same time could be seen as an ineffective resistor when striving towards gender equality.

> *The hierarchical culture that we talked about doesn't favour diversity, which we need now more than ever. We are extremely good at reporting back to the political level when different actions are taken or initiatives are being made.*

> *However, there is a huge gap between various levels, a knowledge-gap between highest level and lowest level of what is actually going on.* - Ingrid

This situation was something that Herbert argued is quite common for larger authorities and businesses, having an outstanding equality-work on paper which does not represent reality. Since the Swedish Armed Forces is such an extensive organization, it was believed to be difficult for top-level to get a real grip of what is going on at the regiments. The disconnection between highest and lowest level, in combination with a focus on achieving results, have caused some problematic attempts of equality-work. Ingrid describes this through a metaphor:

> *Although, we do not question what the actions are for, we just buy new shower curtains, and then we see it as having achieved the gender equality goals. [...] We need to start from the top and discuss the purpose with the core values, ethic, morale and equality-work. If we start from there [...] then we will even understand what colour the shower curtains should have.* - Ingrid

The hierarchical system was also described as troublesome from a communicative perspective, where some of the respondents saw equality-work as being highly prioritized at the top-level, but getting stuck along the chain of communication.

> *I am quite convinced that this is something the organization works with at central level and at the military formations, we have 32 formations and they are also on to this. The challenge are the middle-managers, that's where we are now.* - Herbert

Internal communication has to pass many filters from the very highest to the very lowest level, and even though equality seems to be highly prioritized at some locations, it is described by Ulrika as "[...] always about managers".

When asked about whose responsibility it is to ensure gender equality and that the organization is free from discrimination and sexual harassments, most respondents

answered that everyone has to act according to the core values, but it is up to managers to enable openness and engagement around these issues.

> *I think we need someone to work with these questions, someone to coordinate and support equality initiatives and keep everything going. Today most regiments have HR-people doing this, but they have too much other work, leading to questions around equality and sexual harassments coming second. If we are serious about this, we need to have certain posts for it.* – Herbert

Since the organization is scattered throughout the nation, it is difficult to reach all levels. Surveys and questionnaires are used in order to gather information about how the employees view issues around gender equality, although it is questioned whether this approach really is efficient.

> *We have a lot of employee surveys and questionnaires, although, the most important values are not even possible to measure like that. How do you measure trust? Or confidence in others? It's not possible.* - Ingrid

Another issue that was raised by some respondents, also related to the hierarchical system, concerned the position of dependence that people further down may end up in.

> *Within this hierarchy, you are always in a position of dependence to the upper level. If you want to advance to next level, you are in a position where someone else always takes that decision. There is also a constant feeling of wanting to be someone, to be a part of, and belong to, the group.* - Ingrid

None of the respondents had been exposed to, or experienced discrimination or sexual harassment, but when asked about it, many agreed that the dependence may lead to difficulties in reporting issues to higher instances. Some of the respondents highlighted the culture within the organization as an underlying reason. The process when raising one's voice may involve consequences such as finger-pointing and leer. The respondents saw this as a result of inadequate leadership.

[...] the trust for the system is way too extensive, assuming that the line is working would be naive, because it does not. It is the result of raising your voice that is problematic, rather than the reporting in itself. - Ingrid

This can be seen as a clear signal when the hierarchical system is not facilitating equality, since there are situations where people do not even dare to raise their voices. The culture of silence, as some respondents referred to it, is not only present when it comes to reporting certain issues, but also in general within the organization. Olof argued that there would be consequences if one questions what the organization stands for.

We cannot have a serious, critical conversation about these things [gender equality], since you will be negatively labelled and you'll have to talk to the managers who will question whether you are with them or against them. This way of handling things makes people scared! - Olof

According to Olof, the way the organization is handling opposing or difficult questions, seems to be a reason for why people avoid bringing up issues around these somewhat complex and sensitive questions.

You have to be ready to take a conflict, to be confronted. Stand up and believe in what you say. You need to have support from your managers, otherwise you will never make it. It is not enough being engaged, if you don't have your manager on your side. Otherwise, you are way over your head, and it will affect you negatively, both in your work environment, but also in a psychosocial way, since you will be a subject for oppression from the surrounding. - Herbert

However, there were some respondents who argued that a hierarchy has the possibility to facilitate for equality-work:

A hierarchical organization ought to be better at handling bureaucracy, if that's what it is; having routines and rules for how things should be handled. In a flat organization, with only one manager, it would have been more difficult to keep track of everything. A hierarchical organization is much

more appropriate when it comes to these questions [gender equality]. -
Niklas

Even though the hierarchical structure may be an obstacle, most respondents explained that the hierarchical levels are less distinct today than before, and that they have good relations with their closest managers.

4.3 Production of equality-work

In this section, we will present the empirical material regarding how the Swedish Armed Forces conducts its equality-work. We will introduce some concrete initiatives that have been implemented by the organization in order to reduce gender inequality, and how these have been perceived by the respondents.

4.3.1 NOAK - Network Officer Employed Woman

NOAK is a network for women within the Swedish Armed Forces that was created in order to establish a platform in which women could meet and connect with others, also from other locations in the country (Petersson, 2012). According to the organization's website, this network welcomes anyone who actively wants to work with gender equality and improve the work climate for co-workers, in turn making the Swedish Armed Forces a more attractive employer (Pettersson, 2016). NOAK is present and operates on a local, regional and central level in the organization (Pettersson, 2016).

The main objective is to make the organization more gender equal, as one of the issues presented by the organization is the continuous difficulty in attracting women to, and keeping them in, the organization. A more diverse force in terms of gender is by the organization believed to solve any task more efficiently, it is not just a matter of justice. (Pettersson, 2012)

The general perception of NOAK that emerged during the interviews, implied that everyone saw the network as a somewhat useful tool in promoting gender equality. When asked about how the Armed Forces worked with equality, all respondents mentioned this network. However, how the respondents talked about the activities of NOAK differed, and we could see some indications of patterns in how positive individuals were to the

network, connected to their gender and age. Women who had been in the organization for a longer period (10+ years) highlighted the significance of such a network.

> *Through the network us older girls have realized the importance of us being there for the younger ones, that is so important. Because as a girl, historically, or from when I started, you had to fit in and adapt to the guys. And that was how you earned your respect.* – Emelie

Among the younger women, who have spent less time in the organization the opinions were more scattered. A majority of them did not display such interest in the network and had a different view than the older women of what the purposes of the network were.

> *[…] and this NOAK, I guess you've heard of it? Yeah, that is what they are working with, very successful in developing stuff and mainly the equipment for women. At least that is how I have understood it, I haven't been to that many meetings.* – Doris

Even if the knowledge about the network's existence is extensive, there are not many men attending these meetings, since the network is seen as a venue for women in an otherwise rather male-dominated organization. Some of the respondents believed that only women were welcome to these meetings, indicating some unclarity regarding this network and its activities.

> *NOAK, well, that is an active action that has been implemented, and they have their meetings, I have no idea about how often that is, but they have their meetings, sitting there discussing.* – Christian

4.3.2 The external communication of The Swedish Armed Forces

Just like the vast majority of organizations, also the Swedish Armed Forces uses a variety of external communication channels to reach out to the public. The most recent campaign started in April of 2018 and was called 'Many have many questions'. In an article from Svenska Dagbladet (2018) marketing director Robert Forss described how the campaign aims to attract attention and curiosity to what the daily work of the Swedish Armed

Forces entails. This campaign had in a short time generated a variety of reactions from the public, and one advertisement in particular was claimed to be seemingly provocative:

"Do you need to be able to do two things at the same time, or can guys also apply?"

Playing with existing gender stereotypes, is something that Forss describes as a good way of sparking an interest and catching the attention from the receivers. However, it was claimed in the article that some argue that this advertisement is sexist and should not be financed by Swedish tax-payers. To this Forss responds that the ones in charge of the marketing in the Swedish Armed Forces, made the judgement that the target audience of this campaign is mature enough to catch the underlying humour of this advertisement. Forss further defends the campaign by explaining how the organization has an honest desire to increase the gender equality in the organization. (Svenska Dagbladet, 2018) In addition to this, the common knowledge about what the Swedish Armed Forces do on a daily basis, is very low, Forss explains. As the organization normally is not present in the society, there is consequently a great need for showing the public what the organization does, and this campaign is a way of doing so (Naess, 2018).

Further on, since the external communication has been focused on increasing the number of female employees, women have appeared in their marketing. This was something that was brought up during the interviews, and the respondents had different opinions about it.

Commercial campaigns and that stuff, I don't know if it maybe has become too focused on women. I don't think we have analyzed how we really should advertise and display ourselves. Everything shown on tv and when we are out informing, it is women giving that information. I don't know if that is the proper way to go, maybe we should give a more accurate picture. Having two guys and two girls would be more accurate. Right now I think it is exaggerated, and like always, it is taken too far. - Christian

In my view, the Swedish Armed Forces are using women in advertising and campaigns only to give the impression of that everyone can do this, everyone

is welcome. I think this is necessary in order to change the stereotype of military-work. – Sandra

Attending fairs and visiting schools is seen as a means to attract new recruits and present The Swedish Armed Forces as an attractive organization to work for. Doris explained that she has been at several fairs, representing the organization.

I don't see it as a responsibility because I am woman, but I think they are happy if I do it, since I may attract more women to the organization than a male representative would do. It is a smart move to let me represent the organization. – Doris

4.3.3 Other equality-work initiatives

According to our respondents, preferential treatment is used at several military units in order to fill positions where women are underrepresented. This concept is applied when appointing people for certain missions or military education, and having the potential candidates be similar in competence. When this occurs, the one representing a minority should be selected. The idea of preferential treatment has overall been accepted among our respondents.

I don't think it is good to give anyone any special treatment, but what the hell are we supposed to do. And that is what is boils down to.. As long as there is consistency, if people have the exact same merits and identical grades, and only then chose the underrepresented gender. – Ulrika

In order to get women higher up in the organization, it is a possible solution. But this requires having two exact identical individuals in front of you to choose from, and I'm not sure that exists. – Doris

When discussing how fair it is to base such decision on gender, some respondents do not see it as something that has to be taken into consideration when choosing employees for operations.

In this case there is a task that needs to be solved and instructions that need to be followed. It is up to me to solve this in the best way possible, and then justice doesn't matter. In those cases, the task is the main objective. – Niklas

The preferential treatment has for some regiments been a source for confusion, sometimes being mistaken for a quota system. The importance of clear communication in these cases, is highlighted by respondents. However, for some it proved to be a sensitive topic to raise.

People are upset and irritated and then claim quotas, but that is not the case. It's preferential treatment, yes it might irk some people, but that is how it has to be. - Peter

It is crucial to understand why something is done, to create incitements before taking action so it is not just perceived as pressure from the top, but that you actually do choose the right person. And managers on lower levels need to understand the purpose, but also have the ability to discuss the purpose. – Ingrid

I was in a meeting with the chief of regiment when I expressed that the regiment had failed with the communication regarding the preferential treatment, as many people were very upset, and we needed to talk about it more. I thought that was carefully put, but just the following day I got called to my boss'. This means that these things are extremely sensitive, it is not possible to raise these questions and have an intellectual conversation about them. So what has been described as preferential treatment, is not what it has become in practise unfortunately. – Olof

When asked about the equality-work done within the Swedish Armed Forces, none of the respondents mentioned the 2015-2018 gender integration plan. However, many referred to the organization's core values. When further asked about these values, all respondents knew about them and told us that they were communicated a lot and had been discussed during their military education.

This Openness, Result and Responsibility is always talked about. And every time you come to a new formation, these values are used as some kind of test to make sure you're attentive. – Saga

When the core values and the code of conduct were implemented, a lot of focus were put on communicating this throughout the entire organization. Many of the respondents expressed how a lot of the organizational communication is one-sided, from the top-down.

The first time I heard of the core-values were in 2007, and everything was so wrong, because we got all fed up with them. When mentioning the core-values today, people say 'noooo', and I agree. Although, I think we're on the right track, having the same content, but a different approach, and my perception is that people receive the core-values differently. – Emelie

In general I think the organization has an overblown belief that all good comes from higher up in the hierarchy. This means that we are just expected to sit and wait with open mouths and be fed with what managers higher up think is good. – Peter

Furthermore, the quantity of directions and other orders communicated, were by some seen as redundant. This gave us the impression that a lot of the organizational communication is more about sending than receiving.

This organization has won all championships there is when it comes to giving directives and orders. There is probably no other public organization producing so many directives and orders, and has such an extensive intranet with areas for cooperation and documents you could drown in, there is so much out there. There are directives, orders, check-lists pumping out, and programmes that managers or co-workers have to attend, which leads to no one being able to take it anymore. Instead of embracing it, we are pushing it away, thinking 'not another thing…', and then there is an opposite effect. This organization is great at getting out information, receiving is the problem, no one can handle it. - Ingrid

We got the impression that the organization's seemingly flawed approach to communication, in the end also affected the understanding of the equality-work conducted.

I think you can summarize the gender equality initiatives of the Swedish Armed Forces as obvious but vague. It is obvious that the organization should work with it, but it is unclear what is really done. - Olof

4.4 The Swedish Armed Forces response to #givaktochbitihop

In this section, we will present how the Swedish Armed Forces responded to #givaktochbitihop, both in terms of what actually happened, what concrete actions were made, but also in how the respondents perceived the movement and the equality-work that followed.

When #givaktochbitihop was revealed and published, the organization was according to Ulrika in shock, and this triggered denial, aggressions and disappointment among the employees. Most respondents told us that the different stories and testimonies did not come straight out of the blue, also emphasizing they never imagined the magnitude of the problem. The headquarters reacted quickly and communicated a statement that managers at every location had to read to their personnel within 24 hours. The supreme commander, Michael Bydén, also responded with a short video message, stating that people who are perpetrating fundamental human rights, and the organization's core values, have no place in the Swedish Armed Forces (Försvarsmakten a, 2017).

4.4.1 Actions and reactions
Shortly after #givaktochbitihop was revealed, the respondents explained that a telephone helpline was established. This was done by the Swedish Armed Forces HR-center and can be used by employees who do not want, or dare, to turn to their closest manager with such sensitive or complex issues (Försvarsmakten a, 2017). Another thing the respondents saw as a direct response to #givaktochbitihop, was that some people, also at higher levels, had to leave the organization as a result of various stories coming to light.

He [name] has been great, and has had a solid support within the organization. A man of honour, really! But suddenly, an old incident from ages ago was brought up, from when he were at some event in [location], and got accused for touching a girls' butt. The charges were dropped back then, but now media chose to bring it up again… - Peter

Other examples of actions made after, and as a response to, #givaktochbitihop, has been to separate individuals due to their genders, as a solution to prevent any sexual harassment. Both managers and new recruits have shared stories about how a new group of recruits, starting around January 2018 were to be living separated, men from women, in the barracks. When the decision first came to Peter, he was surprised as they already had made an initial grouping, mixing men and women like they usually do.

And then the chief of the regiment decided no. And it is very unusual that they give orders on such details, and it is extremely uncommon that girls have to live separately in their own barrack. And you could… yeah, we are used to following orders, so I guess we did that without reflecting: 'Yes, sir!' - Peter

One female recruit, Josefin, who was subjected to such a gender separation in January 2018, felt it had to do with the organization not yet having a clear strategy on how to deal with #givaktochbitihop. It was clear that she, together with her female colleagues, did not appreciate this action, and after a lot of 'nagging', the women were finally allowed to live with the men, in pairs.

It's like going 30 years back in time, like in the old days, when women lived on the attic. It just felt so wrong, and they have totally misunderstood what #metoo is all about. - Josefin

Now they've been pretty afraid that us women would experience any incidents, almost as they are walking on eggshells. So we are placed in the barracks in pairs of two girls in each group, so we would not be alone. And that is the measure they've taken to make us feel safe. - Josefin

Peter says that as a man nowadays, especially after #givaktochbitihop, has to think more about one's actions, and that men in general are a bit more worried. During a recent exercise in the forest there were some concerns from the company commander about the making of a simple forest sauna, something that is usually very enjoyed by the recruits when having a break from their ongoing training.

> *Earlier, which we have never really reflected on before and that has never been an issue, nor in gender mixed units, you did it [enjoyed the sauna] without clothes. But this weekend our company commander said "put on a towel, so we won't get any shit for this afterwards." So of course we have had to reconsider and think more in some contexts and also a woman's voice is valued much higher than. or it is worth a lot, and as a man you have to.. you will be questioned much more.* - Peter

4.4.2 Reflections and feelings

A majority of the respondents argued that the organization has always worked with questions around equality and diversity, but without any major impact.

> *This is something that the organization has been working with for 20 years, but now, suddenly, it is much more popular, and it is actually bothering me that all of a sudden, every manager emphasise this - why? Well, simply because media has reacted.* - Herbert

This indicates that managers, after #givaktochbitihop, pays more attention to these issues, even though the intentions may not stem from pure genuineness, but rather pressure from the outside. However, some respondents referred to the movement as a catalyst for change, where one important aspect was the widespread awareness.

> *The movement was useful in order to make everyone in the organization aware that these problems do exist, although, people with some relation to reality probably already knew. But overall, I guess it might have some kind of catalytic effect.* - Christian

When discussing if #givaktochbitihop possibly could lead to any negative consequences we got the impression that the movement has not only been a catalyst for change, but also a catalyst for fear and especially among men. Rash decisions have been made in hopes of keeping free from any blame. Some decisions have seemingly not been well thought through, lacking positive effects and has sometimes been seen as counterproductive.

> *When looking at my own organization now, it is a scared organization. It is like 'now you can't say anything' and 'now you can't do anything', there is no nuance, and that is negative.* - Herbert

The respondents describe the response of #givaktochbitihop as characterized by silence, fear and insecurity, although mostly among men. There were also elements of sarcasm and denial.

> *I think that people are being more careful when interacting with each other, this goes for both men and women. Sometimes, jokes are told about the fear of giving compliments after #metoo, but I hope those are mostly jokes.* - Allan

> *I can tell that most of my male colleagues think that this is extremely uncomfortable, and why? Well, when it comes to sexual harassments, there is a scale, where every men has done something, and every woman has experienced something.* - Herbert

Herbert did the comparison to a witch-hunt, as well-supported and competent individuals have been forced to leave the organization in order for the Armed Forces to, in the eyes of our respondent, set an example.

> *To speak metaphorically; in the 15th century, witches were burned, and those were enlightened, savant women that people were scared of. Today, men are burned as a result of being unenlightened. Men are extremely afraid today, and when this group gets pushed into a corner, they might become dangerous.* - Herbert

Jessica Nordqvist
Lovisa Röjd

According to the respondents, the weeks after #givaktochbitihop consisted of some diversity training, such as seminars where equal treatment and diversity was discussed. However, the common perception among a majority of the respondents was that the debate faded quite rapidly and that there were no drastic changes following after #givaktochbitihop.

We had two days of seminars and talked about it on 'APT', but after that I think the debate faded. We got back to ordinary work quite soon, which I think is quite strange actually... - Ulrika

Another respondent, Saga, who were at the end of her basic military training when #givaktochbitihop was exposed, explained that her group focused on finishing their education, and thereby, this movement was only brought up briefly under a few seminars and gatherings. Her manager encouraged the recruits to take own responsibility if they wanted to discuss these issues in small-groups. Further, Saga also pointed out that her present manager at her new workplace has not even mentioned #givaktochbitihop.

Even though the debate faded, most respondents saw the movement as a chance for the organization to really improve and make structural changes.

It is extremely important now when we have the chance to not be satisfied and say 'now we're all good' and move on, since this is something that we continuously have to work with. And it is not only the question of equality, but an organization that leans back with a mindset of 'now, everything is perfect', will never be a good organization. - Allan

Olof explained that the way the organization reacted to this movement was how it always responded when something similar occurs.

First, there is a public reprimand [the letter], and then, a few months after there is an educational package, which hasn't come yet, but it will. This educational package will be obvious and self-evident things, how to behave and treat others, and as usual, further reflections and discussions are banned.
- Olof

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, a picture of how the respondents perceive gender equality in the Swedish Armed Forces is presented. We could see that the respondents view gender equality and diversity as important in order to achieve better results, and to create an open jargon and culture at the workplace. Further, we present the main obstacles hindering an increased gender equality, where the hierarchical system, the lack of female applicants and the history and traditions were brought up. We introduce some concrete initiatives that have been implemented by the organization in order to reduce gender inequality. We found that the network for female employees, NOAK, were most appreciated by women who have been in the organization for a longer period of time and that men in general were not equally knowledgeable about the network's activities. The respondents viewed the external communication as not giving an accurate picture of the organization, as a lot of women are featured in the external advertisement, however, this was by some respondents seen as necessary to attract more female soldiers. The last section of this chapter is ascribed to the presentation of our respondents' perception of #givaktochbitihop, and how the organization responded the movement. In the next chapter, we will discuss the empirical findings, with the help of our literature review.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, we discuss and analyze our empirical material further with the help of existing literature and research. Having the two research questions in mind, the discussion will start with an analyzis of the equality-work initiatives conducted by the Swedish Armed Forces, combined with how this work is perceived by the respondents. We argue that the equality-work to a great extent is characterized by image management, which in turn becomes what we will refer to as equality-washing. This concept is then discussed further in connection to organizational legitimacy. Throughout this chapter we aim to discuss how our findings connect to the literature, as well as making a contribution by further developing the concept of equality-washing.

5.1 Equality-work: "obvious but unclear"

It is very clear that the Swedish Armed Forces has tried to manage, and partially struggled, with gender equality within the organization for many years. This struggle consists of a persistent presence of gender inequality, both in terms of body-counting but also by the difference in how individuals are treated based on their gender. Even if the organization has come a long way and is going through continuous change, and a demasculinization (Alvesson & Billing, 2002), it is evident that there is still much left to do.

When women first entered the organization in the 1980's, it was described by our respondents as "not ready" and that women started working in the Armed Forces before the organization knew they needed them. One could believe that the organization should be ready by now, to serve as an employer for women the same way it does for men. However, basic matters to facilitate for employees to actually execute their job, such as adapted equipment, have not been a priority. We found this as striking, as this may send certain signals to women. For a woman coming in to the organization for the first time, one of the first things she will encounter is the gear and clothes. Subsequently she will understand that these are measured and sewn to fit a man. Immediately one may feel that this is an organization more welcoming to men than women, not really detached from the

historical view explained by Goldstein (2001), of women not seen as needed to the same extent.

The matter of equipment becomes even more remarkable if one compares the Swedish Armed Forces to other western countries, such as the US, Great Britain, France and Canada. All of these have adapted equipment to the female body to ensure maximum protection and functionality, in compliance with NATO's best practices to improve the organizational gender balance (NATO, 2008). For an organization like the Swedish Armed Forces, being the first in world of its kind to open up for women at all positions, and claiming to prioritize gender equality to such extent, one could maybe expect more. However, updating and adapting equipment is probably quite costly and would be a change only improving the working environment for women, and probably only noticed internally. Even if scarce resources are put on improving the equipment of hired women, a lot of effort is put on the external communication to attract more women into the organization (Försvarsmakten a, 2015).

When it comes to the external communication of the Swedish Armed Forces, many of the respondents agreed that a lot of what the organization presents is not aligned with how the organization really works and looks. In contrary to Acker's (1999) claim to the images and discourse usually portrayed by military organizations being overly masculine, there are according to some of our respondents, many women featured in the campaigns of the Swedish Armed Forces: a percentage apparently much higher than the actual 17 % working within the organization. In accordance with Avery and McKay (2005) as well as Dineen, Ash and Noen (2002) this can become problematic, as the image that the organization communicates externally to attract new recruits, especially women, does not mirror the organization at all. This may, according to Dineen, Ash and Noen (2002), lead to the minority, when becoming a part of the organization and realizing that it does not reflect the communicated image, feeling mislead and leave. An inaccurate image may consequently become an issue of retention, which is a present problem within the organization. However, Avery (2003) described how using photographs featuring women in advertisements, to attract female employees, is a successful tactic and some respondents did express that it necessary in order to make the organization more gender equal. It is not the correct image communicated, but communicating an authentic image would not be a better option. The external communication can be seen as somewhat

exaggerated when it comes to how men and women are portrayed in the organization's marketing, specifically in the most recent advertisement campaign. When trying to attract more female applicants, it is at the expense of men, in a somewhat degrading manner implying that they are not able to do two things at the same time. In a reversed situation, highlighting negative gender stereotypes regarding women, we believe it would have been seen as much more provocative and debatable.

#Givaktochbitihop dismayed the organization and put it, and some of its employees, in a state of unclarity and fear. This is however not uncommon, as times of change and crisis may make individuals feel neglected, threatened and fear what the future holds, according to DuFrene and Lehman (2014). The hashtag brought the gender equality within the organization to light, making some respondents react, as this issue had never gotten such attention before, even if different types of equality-work had been conducted for many years. This supports the claim of Prasad, Prasad and Mir (2010) that certain fashions are strong sources of encouragement for organizations to take action. The aftershocks of the movement were featured with quick, and seemingly not thought through, decisions from the top. An underlying fear of women reporting harassment, and the organization "getting any shit", seemed in some cases to be the worry rather than someone having unpleasant experiences. We see the example of what was said in the context of creating the forest sauna as a clear illustration of what Foldy (2002) describes as initiatives simply yielding a cover against charges of discrimination and might even be a tool to create a perception of organizational and employee interest coinciding, when that in reality is not the case.

Drastic changes from how things operated before, such as now separating women from men in their living spaces, surprised the employees. This decision could be seen as extra remarkable if one has DuFrene and Lehman's (2014) notion in mind, of organizations showing their real values in times of such crises. With an attempt to make women feel safe and protected, the change instead created an unpleasant feeling of not belonging and being treated differently. This confirms Acker's (1999) suggestion, that many initiatives with the aim of reducing gender equality instead make the gender gap even bigger. The equality-work of the Swedish Armed Forces can be seen as lacking local relevance in many cases. Decisions are made above the heads of local managers who receive certain directives on how to conduct their work. In the case of the women having to live in separate barracks, it was something that was not requested by those affected by the

decision, it was a change that was not needed and led to disappointment and confusion. Hence, this decision lacked local relevance.

There seems to be an indubitable acceptance of the instructions and directives coming from higher ranks, which is something that permeates the entire organization. Even if one is hesitant towards a decision coming from a manager above, there is rarely any open questioning as a result. We identified two main reasons for this. Firstly, in accordance with what the organization itself explains, with the main work and purpose of the organization being war and military protection of the state, if something were to happen, the softer values and issues such as gender equality could not be prioritized (Försvarsmakten b, 2015). This indicates a difficulty in combining the hierarchical military efficiency with discussing and reflecting on gender issues, something that also Pinch (2006) saw in the Canadian military. There is an expectancy within the organization to just take what is given. Questioning and reflecting takes time, something that this efficient organization does not seem to have plenty of.

Secondly, the topic of gender equality appeared to be extremely sensitive to deal with and discuss. It seemed as though raising a question concerning gender equality could immediately be seen as questioning the organization as a whole. This can be viewed as very problematic as open and honest communication often is really needed by employees, in times of crisis and uncertainty (DuFrene & Lehman, 2014). One possible reason for why gender equality is such a sensitive topic to discuss might be the history and tradition of the organization, being very harsh and for decades only consisting of warrior men. This legacy corresponds badly with the modern societal values in Sweden. The organization seems to be, especially after #givaktochbitihop but also before, wanting to break free from the old image and create a new one that is not associated with, or tainted by, the characteristics of the past.

We could see how the risk of being labelled and becoming subject of oppression kept some of our respondents from raising their voice in this issue unless they were supported by a manager of a higher rank. The existing sense of dependence on those of higher ranks was by some considered a silencing force. However, while there were men from different regiments expressing how sensitive the topic of gender equality is within the organization, another respondent, a young female has continuously been asked for advice

on how her regiment should approach and work with gender equality. These were questions she was surprised to get and could not answer. Here it seems as though the power embedded in the hierarchical structure as well as gender attributes, possibly dictate what is acceptable to talk about, and who is allowed to talk about it. It also could indicate an uncertainty from within the organization, not knowing how to successfully conduct equality-work, reaching out for help among employees.

Avoiding or not daring to open up about concerns and ambiguities might create a wedge between those giving directions and those being affected by them, allowing for misunderstandings to occur and make the equality-work and its purpose unclear, which it is, according to some of our respondents. Furthermore, making any changes in an organization probably becomes increasingly more difficult if underlying values and assumptions of individuals are not reached and changed, as stated by Schein (1985). By consciously, or subconsciously obstructing a clear and open communication, touching on such deeply embedded aspects seems impossible. We believe that if an organization is genuinely concerned about issues such as gender equality, more effort should be put on obtaining a cohesive understanding among all organizational members of what the organization aims to do, and how to reach there. Having our respondents referring to the core values when asked about the equality-work initiatives, instead of the gender integration plan the organization promotes on the website, shows that the organization creates directives that publicly are claimed to be followed, while employees seem to be unaware of their existence.

NOAK, which in accordance to the required characteristics presented by Friedman (1996 in Foldy, 2002), is an employee network, but also an example of equality-work that was initiated long before #givaktochbitihop. Among our respondents the knowledge about this network was vast, however the view on how useful it was and awareness of what it entails, differed between individuals. The general pattern we identified could be explained by the fact that the women who have been in the organization for longer, have experienced a much tougher climate than the one of today, and had no female role models when starting their careers. These experiences and the common background, in combination with a current sense of responsibility to be role models, may have created the foundation for the development of a sub-culture among these women. There can be distinct values and expectations shared by the members of a sub-culture (Alvesson &

Sveningsson, 2016), which in this case can entail participating in the network. For the women entering the organization today, the circumstances are completely different, thus also the needs of the women. Men, on the other hand, did not express any need for participating in network meetings or other network related activities. Neither did the men express any negative consequences of the presence of such a network, opposed to the risks Fine and Johnson, (1990) and Morrison and von Glinow (1990) presented connected to asymmetrical flows of information.

Conclusively, many equality-work initiatives with which we became acquainted, that followed the #givaktochbitihop-movement, seemed to be about retaining a certain image of the organization, or at least not suffering from a negative one, more so than making real changes in depth.

5.2 Equality-washing

As a public organization, the Swedish Armed Forces is exposed to considerable external pressure to strive towards obtaining gender equality. Several respondents pointed out the importance of representing and reflecting Swedish society, in order to gain legitimacy from the taxpayers. According to Alvesson (2013), such pressure may persuade the creation and retention of a certain image, emphasising surface work and following fashions (Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2010), encouraging the implementation of actions often lacking depth and capacity to make substantial changes (Alvesson, 2013). The examples presented in the previous section indicated that some of the Swedish Armed Forces' equality-work revolved around an underlying concern of how the organization appears in the eyes of the public. This continuous interest in the external appearances, in combination with a seemingly flawed authenticity, lack of local relevance in decision-making and a disconnect with internal matters, made us view the image management of the Swedish Armed Forces, as what we refer to as equality-washing. As mentioned before, this entails the practice of making the organization appear more gender equal than it really is, and is usually done to improve, or 'clean', the organizational image. Hence, equality-washing can be a possible consequence, or response to, outside pressure or the organization's own desire to follow certain fashions.

This is evident in the external communication and advertisement of the Swedish Armed Forces as, according to our respondents, a high percentage of the individuals featured are

women, while this group is a clear minority in the organization as a whole. Based on the reaction of our respondents, we believe that equality-washing may be damaging for internal legitimacy, as it appears to be very difficult maintaining a certain image that does not represent reality, without employees noticing. Gender equality being such a current matter, in combination with a large portion of the equality-work initiatives being a response to the recent #givaktochbitihop movement, we see that the Swedish Armed Forces' equality-washing also is closely linked to following fashions. Much like the management of fashions presented by Prasad, Prasad and Mir (2010), we argue that equality-washing consists of the same slight paradox – capable of creating, or increasing, legitimacy among external stakeholders, while the same activity might decrease internal legitimacy.

A valid point raised by one of our respondents is the fact that no one really knows how the organization would change and what kind of improvements would follow, if the share of women in the organization would increase to about 50 %, as that has never been experienced before. Even if a clear majority of our respondents advocate a more gender equal organization, there is no unified answer to be found in the literature to what is preferable in terms of diverse workforces. According to the financial justification of diversity, a diverse workforce is desirable as it enhances creativity and innovation (Avery & McKay, 2005). However, these are not vital components of the everyday operations of the Armed Forces. To present this argument when promoting gender equality in this organization, would consequently not be preferable. Yet, some respondents saw women as more useful than men in certain contexts, for example during international missions, in order to be able to approach and communicate with the local population. Furthermore, adding more women to the organization was believed by some, to improve and soften the otherwise crude atmosphere. Others saw the change towards a more compassionate and gentle organizational culture, as a consequence of attitudes changing in the entire society. According to Alvesson (2013) operations run more smoothly if the workers share values, views and ways of thinking, and Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly (1992) argue that a homogeneous workforce equals higher satisfaction and lower turnover. In other words, there is no common understanding or best practise when it comes to diversity and work. Hence, it could be seen as quite difficult to identify what exact impact an increased share of women will have on the Swedish Armed Forces.

As women are a clear minority in the Swedish Armed Forces, they may, according to Harries-Jenkins (2006) be treated as tokens, validating the equality-work of the organization. Even though numeric targets would be reached, and an acceptable representation achieved, it does not mean that there necessarily is equality present between the genders in terms of treatment. However, from an equality-washing point of view, external legitimacy could have been gained from this and if that is the case, one can argue that it has been very helpful for the organization. As mentioned previously, the Swedish Armed Forces is in the public eye and constantly scrutinized by media, therefore the external legitimacy plays an important role in order for the public to have trust and confidence in the organization. Compared to other public entities, the general knowledge about the Swedish Armed Forces appears limited among the country's citizens and is presumably mostly based on what media reports or what the organization itself communicates. This is also one of the main reasons why we were interested in gaining further insights and understanding about the organization. Even if the intention behind equality-washing might not be considered as completely pure, we believe that its effects surely can bring advantages and be an efficient tool in creating external legitimacy.

We do not believe that equality-washing exclusively needs to be a conscious decision or act, it can also be the consequence of the equality-work lacking depth, even if management does not realize it. In the case of the Swedish Armed Forces, it is quite difficult for us to know exactly how aware the absolute top of the hierarchy, based at the headquarters in Stockholm, is when it comes to the employees' understanding of the equality-work conducted at the different regiments. Our study has however shown a disconnection and lack of communication between managers and employees locally, possibly something that persists higher up in the hierarchy.

The Swedish Armed Forces, is a unique organization due to its size, mission, structure and core operations. We argue that this is one of the fundamental reasons for why traditional organizational theory might not be completely applicable, or necessarily useful in an identical manner, in the Armed Forces. Some might argue that image management is illegitimate and empty, as it often glorifies the surface of a hollow interior. However, we see equality-washing as necessary in the case of the Swedish Armed Forces in order for the organization to gain legitimacy in relation to their external environment. For an organization being under constant pressure from taxpayers that generally knows very

little about the organization, the equality-washing that the undergoing equality-work entails may be beneficial to gain trust from the Swedish society.

6 Conclusion

In this final chapter, we present our main findings and reach the aim of our study. First, we start with a presentation of our conclusions regarding how gender equality, and the effects of the equality-work conducted after #givaktochbitihop, are perceived in the Swedish Armed Forces. This is followed by our theoretical contribution, where we develop and contribute to the concept of equality-work and present and develop our concept of equality-washing. Thereafter, we will discuss the practical implications of this study, and finally give examples of future research.

6.1 Main findings and contributions

The purpose of this study is to reach a better understanding of how people view gender equality and the equality-work conducted, in a male-dominated and public organization, like the Swedish Armed Forces. The following two research-questions have been formulated in order for us to achieve the purpose:

- How do men and women in the Swedish Armed Forces perceive gender equality in their organization?
- How do men and women in the Swedish Armed Forces perceive the effects of gender equality-work being undertaken in the organization after #givaktochbitihop?

We found that the organization has conducted equality-work for an extensive period of time, however, with mixed results. The respondents described how there is still gender inequality present in the organization today and a lot left to do, as many desired an equal organization reflecting the societal gender composition. There was a sense of unclarity overshadowing the equality-work initiatives made by the organization and especially after #givaktochbitihop. Our findings showed that the equality-work was characterized by rash and superficial decisions, seemingly with the aim to improve or retain a certain image of the organization. Gender equality appeared to be a very sensitive topic to discuss openly, narrowing the will to communicate in an organization already featuring very one-sided, top-down communication. The way our respondents perceived the organization's equality-work, made us identify it as equality-washing, under the scope of

image management but also connected to following fashions. It seemed as though the organization implemented actions in order to make the organization appear more gender equal than it really is.

While some might argue that such image management is empty, we claim that some degree of equality-washing is necessary for an organization, such as the Swedish Armed Forces, in order to gain external legitimacy. As a public organization operating at a distance, almost isolated, from the general public, we see that the organization needs to put an extra effort in conveying a certain image to external stakeholders, an image that otherwise is shaped by media. Even if the organizational budget is determined by the political situation outside the Swedish borders, the Armed Forces is, as an employer, dependent on the Swedish people. However, it seems to be a struggle combining the core-operations involving war, while at the same time conducting in-depth equality-work. One can then reflect upon whether it is desired that the latter will be prioritized if it is at the expense of the former. Conclusively, equality-washing could be considered a suitable practice for an organization like the Swedish Armed Forces in order to gain necessary external legitimacy.

6.2 Practical implications

The main contributions this study provides have an empirical character, as our findings to a large extent are based on our reflection and interpretation of practices and lived experiences at the Swedish Armed Forces. The Swedish Armed Forces is a unique organization, with a distinct hierarchical system and a male-dominated workforce, features on which our main findings are based upon. However, the study also has practical implications that may be of interest for other organizations, since gender equality is a question affecting most organizations today, especially after the #metoo-movement. To be aware of the practice of equality-washing may be useful for other organizations, relying a lot on external legitimacy, while at the same time struggling with combining in-depth equality-work with their other organizational activities.

6.3 Future research

One suggestion for future research is based on findings from the empirical material, indicating that the hierarchical system contributes to a gap between top-level managers and the lowest levels, with the consequence becoming a faulty communication. Therefore, it could be interesting to find out more about how, and if, top-managers value and support equality-work, as well as in which part of the chain the communication fails. Since some decisions about equality-work seemed to be made on top-level, at the headquarters, it would be interesting to see how these questions are discussed and implemented, as we have realised that such initiatives are not always received unproblematically. Another suggestion for further research could be to broaden the concept of equality-work and equality-washing to involve other diversity aspects than gender, such as ethnicity, race and age.

In order to expand and make the concepts of equality-work and equality-washing more generalizable, it would be interesting to conduct research of similar issues, but in other kinds of organizations, that do not hold the same characteristics as the Swedish Armed Forces. We believe that equality-work can be found to some extent in almost all organizations, however, it would be interesting to investigate whether there is a difference in the equality-work conducted in public versus private organizations. Additionally, such study would enable a further discussion about equality-washing and open up for questioning whether the concept can be seen as an equally useful tool in other organizations, to gain external legitimacy.
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Jessica Nordqvist
Lovisa Röjd

Appendix

Interview-guide

Introduktion
- Berätta gärna lite om dig själv, vad heter du och hur länge har du arbetat inom Försvarsmakten?
- Vad är din roll/yrkesuppgift inom Försvarsmakten? Har du arbetat med andra uppgifter tidigare?
- Varför sökte du dig till Försvarsmakten?
- Vad har du för utbildning?

Kultur/värderingar
- Vad är det som gör att du trivs att arbeta inom organisationen?
- Hur är arbetsklimatet på din arbetsplats? Hur skulle du beskriva jargongen?
- Har ni frekvent kontakt med de som står ovanför er i hierarkin? (Vad består den här kontakten av?)
- Hur behandlas åsikter/klagomål? Är det lätt att komma till tals (ge exempel)?
- Vad har Försvarsmakten för värderingar? Och vad betyder dessa för dig?
- Hur tror du utomstående (personer som inte jobbar på FM) ser på Försvarsmakten?
- Kan man (som högre upp i hierarkin) styra folks värderingar?
- Vems ansvar är det att en organisation är jämställd och fri från diskriminering?
- Vilka egenskaper skulle du säga är viktiga att besitta för att jobba inom försvarsmakten?
- Vad skulle du vilja förändra på din arbetsplats?

Rekrytering och andra processer
- Vilka egenskaper passar inte för att jobba i Försvarsmakten?
- Hur såg din rekryteringsprocess ut? Vilka tester behövde du genomföra innan du blev anställd? Vilka av dessa var jobbigast?
- Har du behövt genomföra ytterligare tester/prov för att avancera i graderna?
- Var testerna anpassade efter individer?
- Tror du att dessa tester kan avskräcka folk från att söka sig till organisationen?

Jämställdhetsinitiativ inom Försvarsmakten
- Vad betyder ordet jämställdhet för dig?
- Känner du att du har haft någon fördel av att vara man/kvinna? Några nackdelar?
- Vad tror du att fördelningen i andel män och kvinnor beror på?

- Vad tror du att den ojämna fördelningen män/kvinnor beror på? Vad får det för konsekvenser att en organisation är så pass mansdominerad? Är det ens ett problem?
- Hur kan man förändra att det är en sådan fördelning i andel män/kvinnor i organisationen? Hur når man ut/kommunicerar man detta? Hur jobbar man med att få kvinnor att stanna?
- Hur ser du på kvotering/positiv särbehandling? Är det något som förekommer inom Försvarsmakten? Skulle du se det som en lösning på fördelningen mellan män/kvinnor? välja bort män? problem?
- Är detta ett ämne som berörs ofta/berörts någon gång?
- Hur skulle du beskriva Försvarsmakten ur ett jämställdshetsperspektiv? Arbetas det aktivt med jämställdhet - hur?
- Vem upplever du prioriterar frågan? (alla/chefer - män/kvinnor)
- Har jämställdheten förändrats under tiden du jobbar på organisationen? På vilket sätt? Ge gärna exempel på då och nu!
- Anser du att alla (kvinna/man, ung/gammal) på din arbetsplats har samma förutsättningar/möjligheter? Hur skiljer det sig?
- Tror du det är någon skillnad i hur män/kvinnor känner när det gäller att marknadsföra organisationen?
- Tycker du att den externa marknadsföringen representerar hur organisationen ser ut? Om nej: Kan det vara problematiskt?
- Är Försvarsmakten en jämställd organisation?

#givaktochbitihop
- Vad var din roll under #givaktochbitihop?
- Vad tänkte du när du fick reda på #givaktochbitihop? Kom det som en blixt från klar himmel?
- Vad gjorde man på organisationsnivå när denna rörelse uppdagades? Har du märkt av att man på din arbetsplats arbetat på något speciellt sätt efter denna rörelse?
- Tror du det finns ett stort mörkertal när det kommer till att anmäla händelser av diskriminering? Finns det en tystnadskultur inom FM, eller varför tror du att man inte vågar anmäla? Beror det på hierarkier?
- Vilka negativa effekter kan en sådan här händelse ha?
- Vilka positiva effekter kan en sådan här händelse ha?
- Tror du denna händelse kommer leda till bestående förändringar? Varför?

Outro
Har du något mer att tillägga som du kommer att tänka på gällande detta, som vi inte redan berört?