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## **Gender Integration and the Swedish Armed Forces**

*The Case of Sexual Harassment and Prostitution*

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## **Preface**

This paper discusses different gender aspects of the Swedish Armed Forces with specific references to sexual harassment and prostitution. By using the concept of *Hegemonic Masculinity*, sexual harassment of the women in the Swedish Armed Forces is explained in terms of a need of the men within the organisation to reinforce the notion of women as inferior and subordinate to men, whereby the external hegemony is believed to be restored.

Likewise, male Swedish peacekeepers' demand for prostitution during international peacekeeping missions is explained in terms of a need to confirm manhood and as homo-social bonding.

The paper ends by discussing the gender integration strategy of the Swedish Armed Forces.

**Key words:** Gender Integration, Gender Equality, Swedish Armed Forces, Peacekeeping, Hegemonic Masculinity, Sexual Harassment and Prostitution

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## **Gender Integration and the Swedish Armed Forces: The Case of Sexual Harassment and Prostitution**

### **Introduction**

Traditionally, war, national defense, armed forces, interstate relations, security policy and peacekeeping have primarily been seen as male arena or activity. As such, the impact of militarism and military objectives on women and men, women's and men's identities and the relationship between them, has historically been neglected, or at best, underestimated (Enloe, 2000b, p. 36).

However, during the 1980s and 1990s several feminist researchers as well as women's rights organizations and advocates, have questioned what have traditionally been taken as logical or natural and successfully proven that military training, as well as war it self, are highly gendered activities, linked strongly to notions regarding sexuality, power, masculinity and femininity (Ethic and Racial Studies 1998, p. 19 and Cockburn and Zarkov 2002, p. 31).

Meanwhile, international peacekeeping forces and operations are playing an increasingly important role in global security policy.

Claims have therefore been made for the need of integrating gender and gender equality at all levels of military activity, including peacekeeping operations, that is, in the training and sex composition of the soldiers, in the mandate and task of responsibility of each military and civilian peacekeeping force and in the planning and carrying out of the peace keeping operations.

The base of evidence supporting the need for increased gender integration is substantial and is pointing to the fact that, among other things, the presence of women and the incorporation of a gender perspective have a favorable effect on the outcome of the peace

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keeping operation and the entire peace process (see below) (Olsson and Tryggestad, 2001).

The other side of the gender story of contemporary western armed forces and peacekeeping operations is however less flattering. It includes stories of cases of sexual harassment of female conscripts and officers who have chosen a military career. Moreover, and perhaps even less flattering, it includes stories of male peacekeeping soldiers' extensive demand for prostitution during peacekeeping missions.

Consequently, the peacekeeping missions to the Former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cambodia and East Timor have all, in some very specific ways related to gender, been counterproductive and to a varying degree, contributed to the sexual exploitation of women and children and also to closely related problems such as the spread of HIV/AIDS, organized crime, corruption, sex tourism and trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Cockburn and Zarkov 2002, p. 62, DPKO 2004, p. 1 and Mgathangelou and Ling L. H. M. 2003, p. 135).

Given this introduction, the purpose of this paper is to discuss and analyze the Swedish experiences in these unfortunate areas. To give the full picture, I will therefore start out by offering a historical overview of the experiences of the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) when it comes to gender integration.

This will be followed by an empirical account of the experiences of discrimination and sexual harassment of women in the SAF as well as the evidence regarding Swedish male peacekeeping soldiers' exploitation of women in prostitution during missions to Bosnia and Kosovo.

Finally, following this will be an attempt to explain these practices, and why they are so integral to military organizations, based on Robert Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, which therefore will be presented and discussed in detail.

I will end this paper by discussing the potential of the gender integration strategy of the SAF.

Through out this paper, I will rely mainly on secondary data sources such as academic publications, NGO reports and non-classified investigations and publications conducted and made public by the SAF.

However, I will also present the result of a limited number of face to face interviews carried out during 2005 with Swedish peacekeeping soldiers, for the purpose of my Master Thesis in political science, on the subject of Swedish peacekeeping soldiers' demand for prostitution.

### **Gender Integration and the Swedish Armed Forces: A Historical Overview**

The headquarter of the SAF is deeply committed to the task of recruiting more women to undergo basic military training as voluntarily conscripts, and further, to have as many as possible of these female soldiers to undergo advanced military training to become officers and/or to go on international peacekeeping missions. Clearly, this has not always been the case and although the development so far is promising, several challenges indeed still lay ahead.

The SAF has as a tradition since many hundred years back only trained and employed men as conscripts and officers. The gender ideology behind this arrangement has been based on traditional sex stereotypes that have sex labeled the military profession in favor of men and not women (Padavic and Reskin 2002, p. 40-43).

Consequently, women were/are thought to be essentially softer and more peaceful than men by nature and therefore not suitable for military training and war.

Gender scholars as well as Swedish feminist politicians have, however, long opposed essentialist and normative notions of femininity and stated that aggressiveness is a learned social skill and



not something that men and not women are borne with. Consequently, it has therefore been stated and proven that women can be trained to become just as efficient and professional soldiers as men. (Swedish Department of Defence 2004, p. 14-15).

Along the line of this kind of argumentation, and due to gradual reforms during the 1970s and 1980s, all areas of occupation for military staff are today open to Swedish women.

Further, these reforms are a result of a recurring debate dating back to the beginning of the 1960s on the subject of compulsory conscription for Swedish women. Although this has yet not been realized, women of today have on a voluntarily basis the same rights as men, and therefore at least the same theoretical possibility to pursue a military career as conscripts, officers and peacekeepers.

The most important step stones in favor of gender equality and integration are worth to be mentioned.

In 1980, by the decision of the Swedish Parliament, women were given the possibility to undergo voluntarily basic training in the Air Force, conditioned that they had the ambition to pursue a career as officers. This possibility was extended in 1983 to also include a number of positions within the Army and the Navy.

Finally, in 1989 all restrictions were lifted and women were given access to all areas of military occupation. This new policy was slightly modified in 1994, when women were granted the possibility to undergo basic military training as conscripts without having expressed an initial interest of pursuing a career as officers, something that was required before. ([www.mil.se](http://www.mil.se) 15-08-2006).

The inclusion of women in the modern SAF has a broad political support and male representatives of the SAF often publicly express their pride about, and support for, the positive change taking place due to the presence of women in the military organization (see below) (Kronsell 2005a).

Once again, this has certainly not always been the case and several male military commanders have over time argued, sometimes forcefully, for the need of keeping women outside the military organization (unless employed as civilians).

For example, the highest commanding officer opposed the reform of 1989 to open all areas of military occupation to women. His arguments were mainly of a medical and economic nature. Consequently, he argued that for example working on a submarine could bring injuries to pregnant women's infants during deep-ocean diving missions. Along the same lines, he expressed concerns that female combat pilots would not be able to withstand as high G-forces as male combat pilots.

Further, he argued that it might not be economically worthwhile to spend money and time on training women to become combat pilots, since a combat pilot active flying career is rather short and coincide with women's fertile period in life.

From an employer's perspective, his reasoning was clearly in line with, what the literature on gender and work terms, *Statistical Discrimination*. That is, discrimination based on the belief that women, in this case due to child bearing and mother hood, will be less productive and cost more than men to train and employ (Padavic and Reskin 2002, p. 49).

However, the research division of the SAF did not share his concern and after having conducted an investigation on the subject, claimed that there were no identifiable obstacles for opening all military areas of occupation for women.

Likewise, the government of the time expressed a strong support for allowing women to be able to pursue the same military careers as men. In cases where there were medical conditions involved, an individual evaluation should be made in each different case. Further, the government pointed to the fact that there was no available study indicating that women could take less G-force than men.

Moreover, in case of pregnancies, the female officers could if needed be temporarily reassigned. Finally, in these cases the government explicitly stated that this should be done regardless of the economic cost ([www.mil.se](http://www.mil.se) 15-08-06).

Over the years a substantial base of evidence has been gathered on the subject of Swedish women's performances and experiences as conscripts and officers, and further, the effect of women's participation in peacekeeping operations.

In summary, the evidence indicates that there is no military area of occupation where Swedish women cannot live up to the requirements. Further, that there are certain positions where some women are actually better suited than most men. Consequently, in the case of peacekeeping, studies from the conflicts in Cambodia, Bosnia, El Salvador and South Africa have showed that women from the local population express and exhibit greater confidence in female than male members of the peace keeping force, be it military or civilian.

Further, female negotiators have been found to understand and articulate the implications of peace processes for women, better than male negotiators.

Moreover, studies have shown that peacekeeping operations with at least 30 percent of the staff being female have a greater success in making local women joining peace committees.

In conclusion, peace keeping operation with a higher level of female participants and a prominent gender perspective will have an increased likelihood to succeed in providing long lasting peace and stability for men, women and children (Swedish Department of Defence, 2004, p. 13).

At the same time, the evidence indicates that there are also a few positions where most Swedish women can not live up to the requirements. Yet, in many other positions no identifiable sex-specific differences can be identified.

Finally, there are obstacles for women in the SAF caused by women's and men's different physical prerequisite. Consequently, most equipment and machinery are designed to fit the average weight and height of Swedish men and may therefore not fit, for example, smaller size women. This causes some women not being able to perform as well as the men, and can in some case completely exclude women from a certain position ([www.mil.se](http://www.mil.se) 15-08-06).

These kinds of obstacles are usually termed structural discrimination and the SAF is at present working to find solutions to these problems, such as providing for example uniforms and boots specifically designed for the female physics ([www.lumpen.nu](http://www.lumpen.nu) 05-09-06).

### **Drawbacks: Sexual Harassment and Prostitution**

The evidence presented above in favor of women's participation in military training and peacekeeping operations has indeed been embraced and welcomed by Swedish politicians, the Swedish Ministry of Defence, by the Headquarter of the SAF and by individual upper-level military commanders.

Moreover, and perhaps equally important, the support for women's inclusion and participation goes far beyond rhetoric and the SAF has taken several different active measures to recruit women for basic and advanced military training, for peacekeeping missions and a future career in the SAF.

To sum up, the official message coming from the SAF is clearly in line with the overall commitment to gender equality that is held in high regard in Sweden.

However, not all male conscripts and officers seem to have welcomed women into the Swedish military community or embraced the message of gender equality and women's rights.

Consequently, the other, perhaps less official side of the gender story is that many female conscripts and officers, as well as civilian women employed by the SAF, are subject to penalties and are meeting a

massive resistance from some of their male colleagues. The most visible sign of this is the extensive scale of sexual harassment that these women are subject to, and further, the unfortunate exploitation of women in prostitution by Swedish peacekeeping soldiers during international missions.

### **The case of sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment of women, regardless where it is taking place is always debated with much interest in the Swedish media and by politicians and other stakeholders. During later years, the most prominent stories of this kind reported in the media have been related to female conscripts' and officers', as well as civilian women's, employed by the SAF, subjected to sexual harassment at their home units and/or during international missions abroad.

The Headquarter of the SAF has taken these reports very seriously and launched several investigations as well as educational campaigns to come to terms with sexual harassments of women within the military organization.

Consequently, a first investigation was carried out in 1999, a second in 2002 and a third in 2005.

The investigation of 1999 showed that 59 percent of the female officers and officer cadets had experienced sexual harassment. So to had 43 percent of the female conscripts and 21 percent of the female civilian employees<sup>2</sup> (FHS 2005).

Based on the result of this investigation, an educational campaign on the subject of gender equality was launched that seem to have had a limited, but positive effect (Kronsell 2005b and Department of Defence 2004, p. 17).

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<sup>2</sup> The time frame used throughout these studies is 36 months for female officers, officers cadets and civilian employees. For female conscripts the time frame was naturally set by the lengths of the conscription (7,5-18 months). Further, sexual harassment was defined in direct accordance with the Swedish law of gender equality from 1998.

Accordingly, the investigation carried out in 2002 showed a drop in the number of female officers and officer cadets who had experienced sexual harassment to 47 percent, for female conscripts to 36 percent and female civilian employees to 13 percent (FHS 2005).

Moreover, the investigation showed that women's trust and confidence in and knowledge of how to use the military organization in cases of sexual harassment had improved. However, the investigation further found that these improvements first and foremost were an effect of structural changes within the SAF, such as new policies and regulations, rather than a change in the organizational culture of the SAF with regards to gender related social standards and values (FHS 2005).

Finally, the latest investigation of 2005 shows that the figure for female officers and officer cadets who have experienced sexual harassment, has continued to drop and is now down to 35, 9 percent. Less fortunate, however, is that the figures for female conscripts and civilian employees remain at the same level and amount to 35, 7 percent and 13, 2 percent respectively.

Likewise, the confidence of women of the military organization when it comes to matters related to sexual harassment, seems to have decreased somewhat. First and foremost, this can be seen by the fact that fewer women use the formal line of conduct of the military organization when it comes to dealing with experiences of sexual harassment (FHS 2005).

Gender inspections undertaken at Swedish forces stationed abroad have further proven the problem of sexual harassment also to be substantial in these environments. For example, in the spring of 2004, eight of the total 40 female peacekeepers serving in the Swedish battalion in Kosovo reported their male colleagues for having sexually harassed them. In each different case, between one to ten men were accused (Mattar 2004).

### **The case of Prostitution**

A broad base of evidence has long suggested a strong correlation between the presence of foreign soldiers and the sexual exploitation of local women and children. The most prominent and well researched aspect of this phenomenon is perhaps the American military presence in South East Asia during and after the Second World War (Lin 1998, Enloe 2000a, Enloe 2000b and Moon 1997).

Further, during the 1990s Human- and Women Rights Groups as well as different agencies within the United Nations on several occasions sounded the alarm on peacekeepers' use of women in prostitution in countries where the United Nations had mandated an intervention. Especially the peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, but also the missions to East Timor, Slovenia, Cambodia and Mozambique have on numerous occasions been connected to the rapid growth of organized crime, prostitution and trafficking of women and children (Mendelson 2005, p. 1 and Ekberg 2004, p. 1198).

Also Swedish officers and lower ranking soldiers have on several occasions been found guilty of visiting sex clubs and bordellos while serving as peacekeepers. Most of these cases have been related to peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo.

However, apart from the SAF' own classified investigations of individual cases of soldiers suspected of sexual misconduct, few systematic and publicly available investigations and studies on the subject of Swedish peacekeeping soldiers' demand for prostitution exist.

Consequently, most of the stories available are found mainly in news magazines with a varying credibility and integrity, which makes them questionable to use for academic/scientific purposes.

Nevertheless, these stories have led to heavy condemning reactions by Swedish politicians, representatives from Swedish women's organizations and by the Headquarter of the SAF.

It is therefore not surprising that the question of Swedish peacekeeping soldiers' demand for prostitution has become very sensitive and made it difficult to obtain information with high reliability.

Further, as a result, most representatives from the SAF are not prepared to participate in any kind of academic study, out of what seems to be loyalty to the SAF and possibly a fear, realistic or not, of being subject to reprisals.

In the following, I will, however, present some limited, but nevertheless, first hand data, obtained through interviews that I conducted with Swedish peacekeeping officers and lower ranking soldiers during 2005.

The purpose of these interviews was to understand when and how Swedish peacekeepers buy sex, and to evaluate the gender integration strategy of the SAF.

Out of a contact list with the names of over fifty Swedish soldiers with experiences from peacekeeping missions to Bosnia and Kosovo, only five agreed to be interviewed.

Further, two of the soldiers interviewed requested to remain anonymous and they have therefore been given the falsified names *Larsson* and *Nilsson*. These soldiers were interviewed at the same time at the city library in the city of Kristianstad, in the south of Sweden.

Accordingly, as sergeant Larsson states<sup>3</sup>:

“It is a good thing your research...people should know what is happening...we have been thinking of writing in the paper about it....but you know if you want to go on a future

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<sup>3</sup> Peacekeeper Larsson, whose real name will not be revealed, due to his wish to remain anonymous. Larsson has served in Kosovo 2003/2004 (Ks 09). His main area of responsibility has been operating armed vehicles on patrolling missions in the area of responsibility specially assigned to the Swedish peacekeepers. The Interview was carried out face to face in Kristianstad 17 Maj 2005.



mission you do not want any one to be pissed at you...it is good to be able to be anonymous...I would not have done this otherwise”.

Sergeant Nilsson seems to reason in a similar way<sup>4</sup>:

“It is a good thing that you are giving us false names...I mean some of the guys are my best friends...I hang out with them all the time...we have so much in common...it is a special thing...you have to have served as a peacekeeper to understand...so you do not want anyone to know that you are telling...you would lose your friends if they found out”.

According to sergeant Larsson and Nilsson, the Swedes do not buy sex in the area of the mission in Kosovo because the Swedish soldiers are constantly guarded by their superior officers:

“I have never seen anyone of my friends buy sex in Kosovo...it is not that easy you know...you always have to tell your commander where you are going and what you are going to do and all that”. (Larsson 17 May 2005)

Nilsson agrees:

“It is not that easy to buy sex...even if it has sounded like that in the papers...there are investigation units and all that shit and you don’t want to get caught...you are a loser if you get caught ...so fucking embarrassing you know.” (Nilsson 17 May 2005).

Yet, they do agree that Kosovo has a well developed sex industry, aimed at catering both peacekeepers and local men:

“It’s like every town I have visited had its own bordello...you did not have to drive many meters before you

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<sup>4</sup> Peacekeeper Nilsson, whose real name will not be revealed due to his wish to remain anonymous. Nilsson has served in Kosovo 2003/2004 (Ks 09). His main area of responsibility has been to operate armed vehicles on patrolling missions in the area of responsibility specially assigned to the Swedish peacekeepers. The Interview was carried out face to face in Kristianstad 17 Maj 2005.

came across one....they are not always easy to spot... not with signs and all that...but everyone knows that they are there”. (Larsson 17 May 005).

Also other sources indicate that during later years the SAF has been successful in preventing their soldiers from buying sex in the area of the peacekeeping mission.

According to Sonesson, who has served twice as a military police officer in Kosovo, with a special responsibility for intelligence and security issues relating specifically to trafficking and prostitution<sup>5</sup>:

“It has been my responsibility to investigate the security aspect of prostitution and trafficking...and to identify possible threats to the peacekeepers....because the girls who are prostituted attract the same men who are dealing with drugs and guns....and peacekeepers who get involved in these environments can get themselves and others in trouble...it can be a threat to the security of the mission... I have therefore routinely patrolled many bars and sex clubs.... and I have found many men in the wrong place...especially French and Russian peacekeepers...but I have never found a Swedish peacekeeper at any bar or brothel...I don’t think the Swedes buy sex in the area of the mission ” (Sonesson 16 May 2005).

Also Wetterskog talks of Swedish peacekeepers’ visits to brothels and sex clubs as something exclusively carried out during so called *short leaves* to Hungary, Greece and Italy<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Peacekeeper Ulf Sonesson has served as a military police officer at the Swedish battalion in Kosovo 2001/2002 (Ks 05) and 2002/2003 (Ks 07). His main areas of responsibility have been intelligence and security issues with a special focus on trafficking and prostitution. The Interview was carried out face to face in Kristianstad 16 Maj 2005.

<sup>6</sup> *Short leave* is the term used for leaves given to soldiers that last at maximum a couple of days. Usually, the soldiers stationed in Kosovo and Bosnia use these leaves to go to Italy, Hungary and Greece for rest and recreation, and purchase new supplies for the battalion.

According to Wetterskog<sup>7</sup>:

“There was a much more unsound culture before 2000....There were frequent visits to bordellos outside the area of the mission....like in Hungary...it was like this 1991, 1995, 1996 and 1998...it was no question about it...short leave undoubtedly meant prostitution...it was a part of the peacekeeping service”. (Wetterskog 1 April 2005).

To follow up this line of evidence, also sergeant Larsson and Nilsson were later asked to share their observations and experiences from their short leaves.

Although Larsson states that he does not buy sex himself, he certainly claims to have visited several bordellos with his fellow Swedish peacekeepers, including peacekeeper Nilsson:

“We have been twice in Greece together...it is always the same...it is all about sex...I mean it is not illegal there...but I don't buy sex...I hate that...it is more like I follow the other guys there...not everyone buys sex...I mean you can watch the show...dancing and all that...you don't need to buy sex”. (Larsson 17 May 2005).

Although these quotations are limited in their scope and coverage, and thus can and should not be made a general truth, they nevertheless indicate that the problem of Swedish peacekeeping soldiers' demand for prostitution during short leaves remained substantial as late as 2004.

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<sup>7</sup> Peacekeeper Captain Lars Wetterskog, who is a military instructor at the international division of the Swedish Armed Forces. Wetterskog has served twice in Bosnia (BA 06 and BA 10). His main areas of responsibility have been commanding observation posts and patrolling. In addition to this, Wetterskog is responsible for implementing Resolution 1325 and for training Swedish peacekeeping soldiers in gender related issues such as prostitution and trafficking. The interview was carried out face to face in Uppsala 1 April 2005.

## **The consequence of sexual harassment and prostitution for the SAF**

Several different perspectives and point of views can be taken on the sexual harassment of women in the SAF and the Swedish peacekeepers' demand for prostitution. Apart from the obvious violation of the women affected, these discriminatory practices are further clearly in direct violation of the gender equality standards deeply rooted in the Swedish society and celebrated officially by the headquarter of SAF.

Seen from an organizational of goal oriented gender integration perspective, the practice of sexual harassment and prostitution by male Swedish soldiers is a substantial failure for the SAF. Moreover it poses a substantial obstacle to make the organization more friendly and welcoming to women.

It is therefore not a surprise that the Swedish Department of Defence has expressed its concern that negative and discriminatory gender attitudes and practices within the SAF will have a deterrent effect on Swedish women's willingness to pursue a military career. Further, these concerns seem not groundless and despite an outspoken commitment to women's inclusion and an active recruiting policy, women today only make up 3, 6 percent of the total number of officers in the SAF (Department of Defence 2004, p. 16).

The statistics regarding the conscripted military force is just as disappointing and only 2, 4 percent of the conscripts of 2002 were women. Further, the figures of 2003 and 2004 show little improvements and amounts to 3, 1 and 3, 5 percent respectively, all according to the official statistics of the SAF. ([www.pliktverket.se](http://www.pliktverket.se) 05-09-06).

Given the outspoken commitment of the SAF to recruit more women, the figures presented above truly represent a substantial failure. One may therefore ask why the gender equality and women's rights commitment so prominent in the Swedish discourse have not penetrated the SAF to such extent that it prevents male soldiers from sexually harassing their female colleagues or to exploit women in

prostitution. Why are these old-fashioned gender practices constantly being produced and reproduced within the modern SAF?

What function do they play that makes them so integral to the Swedish military community and so resistant to change?

In an attempt to answer these questions I will use the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity, which I believe is particularly suitable to use in the analysis of different gender aspect of military organizations.

## **Introducing the Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity**

### **Hegemonic Masculinity: A Social Theory of Gender**

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been developed by Sociology Professor, Robert Connell, at the University of Sydney and can be said to be a product of his critique of the biological determinism, essentialist notions and claims of universality of the early scientific studies of masculinity (Dementriou 2001, p. 339 and Wetherell and Edley 1999, p. 336).

As a point of departure Connell starts out by stating that different cultures and different periods of history have constructed gender differently. Hence, Connell defines masculinities and femininities not as something normatively given but as something socially constructed due to an interaction between gender, race and class. Accordingly, in gender studies, the emphasis should be on what people actually do, and not what they are expected to do according to normative notions. Or, in the words of Connell, gender is “*configuration of practice*” and should not be seen as a fixed set of social norms but rather as something that is constantly being produced and reproduced in daily social interaction. As such, there can be a diversity of masculinities and femininities within multicultural societies, a given culture or even an institution (Connell 2002, p. 34, Connell 1995, p. 76, and Dementriou 2001, p. 340).

Acknowledging the presence of several masculinities and femininities and taking into account the power relations involved both internally

and externally is central to Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hence, according to Connell, the power between and within genders in the western world rests upon a single fact, namely, "the global domination of men over women" (Connell 1987 p. 183).

Hegemonic masculinities, according to Connell, thus embody the strategy through which men's global dominance over women is achieved and constantly upheld. Hegemonic masculinity can therefore be defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 1995, p. 77).

Hence, placed in the centre of the system of gendered power there is a hegemonic form of masculinity whose advocates (individual and collectives of powerful men) work to uphold the present gender order of global domination of men over women (Connell 2002, p. 36).

However, since the men do not constitute a homogenous group, certain masculinities can themselves be subordinated by the hegemonic practice and gender order and this is strongly connected to the logic of the global domination of men over women. In summary, hegemonic masculinity is therefore not only constructed in relation to women but also to subordinate masculinities and thus generates dominance over women as well as men belonging to subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity thus links relations within genders as well as relations between genders together and can therefore both be described as hegemony over women (external hegemony) as well as hegemony over subordinate masculinities (internal hegemony). (Dementriou 2001, p. 341).

### **External Hegemony**

The external hegemony can, according to Connell, further be differentiated into three different structures of gender relations namely *power*, *production* and *cathexis*.

The structure of the power relations is also commonly named the *patriarchy* and is characterized by the overall subordination of women and dominance of men. This also allows men to control the means of institutional power in, for example, the state and the military.

The structure of the labor relations is built on a gendered division of labor, which gives men several advantages such as higher wages and better education. This is something that Connell also calls “*patriarchal dividend*”.

Finally, cathexis refers to that men’s emotional life in relation to women usually turns into superiority and violence rather than reciprocity and intimacy. Incorporated in cathexis is also the sexual desire of men. In this case, Connell subscribes to the Freudian school, where sexual desire is to be understood as emotional energy that is attached to an object. The practice that shapes and determines the nature of the sexual desire is thus an aspect of the external hegemony. Sexual desire is thus given a political meaning and we can gain important knowledge about gender relations by asking questions about the relationships involved, that is, whether they are consensual or coercive and whether pleasure is equally given and received (Connell 1995, p.74).

### **Internal Hegemony**

The interaction of gender with race and class, also leads to the social construction of multiple masculinities, such as black, white, upper-class, middle-class and working-class (Connell 1995 p. 76 and Connell 2002 p. 35). Because of this, as stated above, hegemonic masculinity also leads to internal hegemony, that is, hegemony over other masculinities. This relationship can be characterized in three ways, by subordination, marginalization and complicity (Connell 1995, p. 78-81 and Dementriou 2001, p. 341-342).

In the case of subordination, hegemonic masculinity gives certain men or collectives of men the opportunity to exercise power over other men. According to Connell, the most prominent example in the contemporary Western world is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men. Hence, homosexual men

are subordinated to heterosexual men in several ways, such as in terms of social status, allocation of material resources and due to legal, political and cultural discrimination. However, homosexual masculinity is not the only subordinated masculinity. Also heterosexual men and boys can be expelled from the privileged community of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell, this process of exclusion is often marked by the abusive use of a scornful and diminishing vocabulary, such as wimp, nerd, sissy, arse fucker, ladyfinger and mother's boy (Connell 1995, p. 79). This type of masculinity can also be named effeminized masculinity.

Hence, men not found to qualify as real men worthy of hegemonic masculinity, are being effeminized and thereby placed at the bottom of the gender hierarchy amongst men.

In the case of marginalization, Connell draws on the fact that gender also interacts with other social structures, such as race and class and thereby also creates other masculinities. Thus, race and class also become an integral part of the internal hegemony. Hence, in the case of the construction of a white elite masculinity, the presence of lower-class and black masculinities will also play an important role. Hegemonic masculinity will then position itself in the top of the hierarchy by marginalizing men belonging to what is believed to be inferior masculinities (Ibid p. 80).

In the case of complicit masculinity, Connell points to the fact that many men, although they gain from the benefits ascribed to them by the patriarchal dividend, do not act according to the hegemonic model. These men have, according to Connell, a complicit form of masculinity that holds a fundamental position in his model. Hence, since the actions of the majority of men do not correspond to the hegemonic practice, hegemonic masculinity is thus rather a cultural ideal upheld and promoted by the civil society through the production of exemplary masculinities that are in line with the reproduction of the patriarchy. Complicit masculinities can therefore still benefit from the patriarchal dividend without being the most outspoken advocates of the patriarch (Connell 1995, p. 79 and Dementriou 2001, p. 342).



## **The Connection between the External and Internal Hegemony**

Given the presentation above, we can now stipulate the single most important theoretical principle underlying Connell's model stating that, "*the relationships within genders are centered on, and can be explained by, the relationship between genders*".

This means that the structural dominance of men over women also determines the conditions leading to the presence of differentiated and hierarchically ordered masculinities and femininities. Hence, the internal hegemony is upheld and practiced so as to guarantee the reproduction of the external hegemony. Patriarchy is thus simply not only a question of men's global domination of women, but also a structure determining the relations between different forms of masculinities and femininities. Internal hegemony is thus a means for achieving the external hegemony rather than an end in itself (Connell 1987, p. 183 and Dementriou 2001, p. 343).

According to Connell this leads to men subordinating certain masculinities, because they represent a configuration practice that is not consistent with the accepted strategy for the global subordination and domination of women. This is particularly obvious in the case of homosexual masculinities. Homosexual men are therefore subordinated to the hegemonic masculinity, because the object of their sexual desires (other men) undermines the institution of heterosexuality and thus does not work in favor of the reproduction of patriarchy.

## **Hegemonic Masculinity and Military Organizations**

### **The Military as the Most Prominent Institution of Hegemonic Masculinity**

The hegemonic structure credits certain men with more power than other men. However, the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity may not always be the most powerful men. Further, individual holders of institutional power and wealth may not always act according to the hegemonic ideal in their personal lives.

According to Connell, whether or not hegemony is established depends therefore on if “there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual”. Hence, “So the top levels of business, the military and government provide a fairly convincing corporate display of masculinity, still very little shaken by feminist women or dissenting men ” (Connell 1995, p. 77).

Clearly, this makes the concept of hegemonic masculinity especially interesting and valid to use in the analysis of national defense organizations, such as the SAF (army, air force and navy). Hence, organizations dealing with military defense and security issues have historically been an arena exclusively by and for men and men’s bodies which has influenced the politics, policies, practices and norms produced by these institutions in favor of masculinity and heterosexuality. According to Connell, the military is therefore the single most important institution when it comes to promoting hegemonic masculinity (Kronsell 2005a and Connell 1995, p. 213).

In the specific case of the SAF, the institutional power has clearly been working in favor of men through the practice of universal (compulsory) male conscription to meet the need for manpower. Hence, it is men and not women who have been required to undergo military training and, in case of war, protect the country. The image of men as the nation’s defenders has therefore successfully been maintained throughout the history of the SAF and has thus made the connection between (heterosexual) masculinity and the military defense seem natural (Kronsell 2005a and Kronsell 2005b).

As such, due to the high degree of correspondence between a cultural ideal of men as warriors and defenders, and the institutional power manifested by the universal conscription of only men, the SAF is indeed an institution/organization that can be studied with great relevance by using the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

## **Hegemonic Masculinity and Homophobia in Military Organizations**

Hegemonic masculinity and homophobia seem to be an unavoidable component within military organizations and training. This is an outcome of the logic of the hegemonic masculinity. Accordingly, homosexual masculinities are subordinated to the hegemonic masculinity, because their object of sexual desire works counter-hegemonic, that is, undermines the institution of heterosexuality, which is fundamental for the reproduction of patriarchy and domination of women. Hence, according to Connell, hegemonic masculinity rests on the notion that there is only one sex (women) that is legitimate as a sexual object and because of this, men who sexually desire other men must be subordinated (Donaldson 1993, p. 645, and 648 and Dementriou 2001, p. 344).

In order to restore and maintain the external hegemony, the internal hegemony therefore works to subordinate homosexual masculinities by effeminizing homosexual men, which in turn explains the widespread homophobia in military organizations (Donaldson 1993, p. 645 and Goldstein 2001, p. 374).

Hence, because homosexual men are perceived as feminine, their presence in military organizations threatens the homo-social unity, which holds the military organization together (Kronsell 2005b). Homophobia then becomes a central organizational principle in military organizations against which the hegemonic masculine identity is defined. That is, to be a man is not to be an effeminized man such as a sissy and weak homosexual. This strongly effects the actions of and relationship between heterosexual military men and the fear of being perceived as a homosexual by other men leads to a never-ending quest for manhood. Heterosexual men therefore have to be constantly prepared to prove their manhood and act carefully not to do anything that can make them come off as effeminized men, that is, show feelings, being too affectionate towards women and men of other races or turn down an opportunity of heterosexual intercourse (Broad and Kaufman 1994, p. 131).

As we shall see, this has strong implications for how men in military organizations act against female colleagues and when the opportunity of prostitution is presented.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexual Harassment of Women in Military Organizations**

Institutions of hegemonic masculinity, due to the external hegemony, produce a masculine identity that is based on the subordination and depreciation of women. This has strong implications for the military training of male soldiers and for the gender relations within military organizations. To become a real warrior and a man worthy of the status of hegemonic masculinity, the soldier must therefore be stripped of all his feminine attributes. Hence, acceptable masculinity is thereby created by degrading femininity (Moon 1997, p. 55).

Military drill instructors therefore use epithets such as *faggot*, *pussy* or simply *women* to describe and feminize the recruits who do not measure up and hereby make clear that not becoming a soldier means not becoming a real man (Goldstein 2001, p. 265).

The presence of women in military organizations therefore poses a challenge to the norms of hegemonic masculinity. Aggression, sexual and otherwise against women, therefore often becomes an integral part of military training and in the bonding of soldiers (Marshall 2004, and Brod and Kaufman 1994, p. 166).

As a consequence, women in military organizations are often subject to sexual harassment to reinforce the notion of women as inferior and subordinate to men, and to restore the external hegemony (Kronsell 2005a, and Hearn, Sheppard, Trancred-Sheriff and Burrell 1993, p. 35).

### **Peacekeepers' Demand for Prostitution as Confirming Manhood and Homo-social Bonding**

As stated before, western military organizations are the most prominent historical and contemporary institutions of hegemonic

masculinity. As such, they offer an arena primarily for and by men where a masculine identity is promoted based on degradation of women (external hegemony), subordination of homosexual men (internal hegemony) and marginalization of men belonging to ethnic minorities (internal hegemony). The archetype of masculinity that contemporary national armed forces draw on, is thus created in relation to a feminine complement in such way that female attributes come to represent everything that is unwanted and bad in military organizations, in individual soldiers and in troop community (Enloe 2002, p. 23).

For male soldiers, taking on an acceptable masculine identity therefore means that they have to get rid of all in them that can be perceived as feminine, and that they constantly have to be prepared to prove their manhood. Naturally this has a strong implication for how sexuality is being expressed and shaped by military organizations and individual soldiers.

For peacekeepers, buying women in prostitution then becomes the ultimate test and proof of manhood, hereby making clear that you commit to the external hegemony, by sexually dominating women in prostitution (Harrington 2003, p. 5). Hence, prostitution then becomes a strategy for individual peacekeeping soldiers to show that they are real men who know how to take care of their “*natural*” bodily needs, that they can take control over their environment, that they are not effeminized or sissy homosexuals and that women’s bodies are there for the sexual gratifications of men (IOM Dec 2003, p. 18). Prostitution thereby becomes the utter most visible sign of the fact that the masculine ideal promoted in military organizations makes some men believe that their sexual needs, pleasures and gratification are worth more than women’s right to independence, health, sexual self-determination, sexual pleasure and integrity.

Further, military organizations have also been found to be strongly bounded. This boundedness is manifested in several ways, such as by remotely located and well guarded military training camps, by the training of military violence and killing and by sustaining a sharp gender binary (Brod and Kaufman 1994, p. 169).

In this environment, prostitution has been deemed to play an important role in the homo-social bonding between soldiers at war and during peacetime (Harrington 2003, p. 3). As such, prostitution becomes one of many official and unofficial manhood making rituals commonly used in military organizations to bind the soldiers together (Goldstein 2001 p. 265). The use of prostituted women by peacekeepers can thus also be explained as a strategy, deliberate or not, to create a spirit of community. As such, prostitution becomes the final integrative act one of many manhood and homo-social bounding rituals that soldiers have to go through during their military career (Assuming Manhood 2000, p. 14).

Further, the social pressure on soldiers and peacekeepers to participate in the common act of prostitution has been found to be substantial, leaving no one insecure of what it means to be a man and a soldier (Moon 1997, p. 37).

Making soldiers in groups use prostituted women thus plays an important role in promoting and upholding the heterosexual ideal that institutions of hegemonic masculinity are dependent on.

In summary, given the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity, sexual harassment of the women in the SAF by their male colleagues can therefore be understood and explained as the need of these men to reinforce the notion of women as inferior.

In similar terms, male Swedish peacekeeping soldiers' demand for prostitution can be explained in terms of a need to express and display manhood and to confirm homo-social bonding.

It is against this background I shall finally discuss the gender integration strategy of the SAF.

## **The Gender Integration Strategy of the Swedish Armed Forces**

The SAF has publicly admitted that the organization has a problem with sexual harassment and prostitution and has adopted a zero-tolerance policy with respect to these kinds of misbehavior by anyone employed by the organization.

Consequently, the SAF is since some years back seeking ways and means to come to terms with these problems, which have been identified as the main obstacles to making the organization more welcoming and friendly towards women.

Over the years a gender integration strategy has therefore been developed, which, apart from solving the problems described above, also aims at increasing the Swedish peacekeeping soldiers' understanding of how gender and armed conflicts are connected in order to make them better and more efficient peacekeepers.

Although no official documents exist regarding the gender integration strategy of the SAF, the different parts of the strategy can be pieced together using different sources.

Accordingly, the strategy can be said to be based mainly on education and leadership, and targeted recruitment practices aimed at making more women willing to pursue a military career.

### **Education**

The first steps towards a comprehensive gender integration strategy were taken in 1996 when the SAF started to include more "softer" topics in the training of the becoming Swedish peacekeeping officers and lower ranking soldiers. This was mainly done by inviting the Swedish division of the NGO, *Save the Children*, to lecture 30 minutes on the subject of the impact of armed conflicts on children.

In 1999 the Swedish Armed Forces also included gender related issues into the training by initiating cooperation with the Swedish department of the NGO, *Woman to Woman*. The goal of this cooperation was to increase the Swedish peacekeepers' understanding

of gender, conflict, prostitution and trafficking. The soldiers, both officers and those without rank were therefore initially all given the same lecture.

In 2004, after it had become increasingly clear that Swedish peacekeeping soldiers not only sexually exploited local women in prostitution during peacekeeping missions, but also sexually harassed women within the SAF, the educational concept was broadened and the strategy changed somewhat.

Consequently, sexual harassment of the women in the SAF is therefore today discussed in the same way, in the same forum and at the same time as exploitation of women in prostitution. The SAF is therefore making clear to all the men and women within the organization that sexual harassment or exploitation of female colleagues or local women residing in the area of a peacekeeping mission, or for that matter, women found at sex clubs in countries visited during short leaves, is not acceptable in any way or during any circumstances (Gustafsson 2005).

## **Leadership**

Further, the educational concept was also changed in favor of a more leadership based approach, only to include men and women who had a commanding position. The purpose hereby was to make each man or women in a commanding position responsible of carrying the message of gender equality further to the lower ranking soldiers under his or hers command. Apart from decreasing the distance between the messenger and the receiver, this new approach also serves the purpose of implementing the gender policy at all levels of the military commanding chain.

This is further explained by senior military personnel officer, Yllemo<sup>8</sup>:

“We provide the officers who are about to take on a leading position in field with the tools they need to understand the

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<sup>8</sup> Peacekeeper Fredrik Yllemo is a Senior Military Personnel Officers at the Headquarter of the SAF. He has served three times in Bosnia (BA 02, DB 01 and DB 02) and once in Kosovo 2001 (Ks 04). The interview was carried out face to face in Uppsala 1 April 2005.



relationship between conflicts, gender and prostitution. You see, in the end Captain Wetterskog and I are not coming with the soldiers on their missions. We will not be there to discuss these issues when it is the most needed in the field...But what we can do is to prepare other officers operating in the field for this task...The key to success is to use the leadership at all levels of the Swedish military. To make the leaders understand that they have the power and responsibility to affect the men in the right direction...They have to become exemplary role models, it has to start already during the training of conscripts...And we need to look at these problems from a broad perspective...I guess you know that in the 2002 and 2003 it became obvious that many of our own women, our own officers and conscripts too were subject of sexual harassment. Since 2004 we therefore discuss this in the same way and room as we discuss prostitution....We make clear that sexual objectification of women is not acceptable, not here in Sweden in our own ranks and not during peacekeeping missions”

The gender integration strategy has also had an impact on the organizational level of the SAF and the highest commanding officer at every military unit has been or will be trained to deal with gender related issues. It is therefore his or hers individual as well as common responsibility to pursue a line of action that serves to increase the gender equality of the force.

In support of this mission he or she can also make use of the specially trained gender equality unit, PERSDIR. This unit can further be used for targeted educational campaigns to solve individual problems of sexual harassment within a specific unit.

Each unit also has an official administrator in charge of handling general matters related to gender equality and specifically cases of sexual harassment. Among other things, these include carrying out investigations and offering support and rehabilitation to the women or men who have been subject to sexual harassment (Försvarsmaktens Jämställdhetsplan 2006).

### **Targeted recruiting practices**

The third leg of the gender integration strategy comprise of an outspoken commitment to recruit women to undergo military training as conscripts, and further to have as many as possible of these women to undergo advanced military training to become officers, and possibly, to go on international peacekeeping missions.

Needless, to say, coming to terms with predatory gender practices such as sexual harassment and prostitution is therefore perhaps the most urgent task at hand.

However, perhaps as equally important is to make the military profession be more attractive to women by more direct initiatives.

The SAF has therefore launched an ambitious information campaign aimed at young Swedish women. The purpose of the campaign is to inform about what the SAF has to offer and to discuss questions that young women may have with regards to military training in general, including for example concerns of sexual harassment ([www.mil.se](http://www.mil.se) and [www.lumpen.nu](http://www.lumpen.nu)).

Further, the gender integration/equality goals for the immediate future, as well as the means believed necessary to achieve them, are presented in the gender equality plan of the SAF released in 2006.

Accordingly, in order to increase the number of female officers, women are to be given priority when new positions are to be filled, given that they live up to the minimum requirements needed for the position in question.

Moreover, the salary system is to be mapped out and possible discriminatory salary practices shall be identified and eradicated.

Finally, the SAF have realized the importance of making it easier for men and women to combine a military career and parenthood. A number of measures have been suggested and will be put to the test during the coming years. Among other things, these include campaigns aimed at changing negative attitudes among colleagues and employers/commanders towards men going on parental leave,

scheduling military exercises so that men and women with younger children can participate and present the opportunity of flexible working hours (Försvarsmaktens Jämställdhetsplan 2006).

## **Conclusions and a limited evaluating note**

Although military training and war long have been seen as primarily male activities, gender scholars have successfully proven that these activities are highly gendered and connected to notions regarding sexuality, power, masculinity and femininity.

It has therefore been deemed as essential to include more women in military training and armed conflicts, including peacekeeping operations.

In Sweden, the first steps towards the inclusion of women in the SAF dates back to the beginning of the 1980 and today women's participation in military training and peacekeeping operations have the unconditional and outspoken support of Swedish politicians and the headquarter of the SAF.

Yet it has proven substantially difficult for the SAF to recruit women to undergo voluntarily military training as conscripts, pursue a career as officers or to participate in peacekeeping operations.

During the later years, Swedish women's limited will to participate in basic military training, pursue a career as officers and/or to go on a peacekeeping mission, has mainly been explained by the numerous cases of sexual harassment of women in the SAF and male Swedish peacekeepers' exploitation of women in prostitution during peacekeeping missions, that have been reported in the media.

Consequently, it has been claimed that these predatory gender practices create an environment that is so hostile towards women that most Swedish women lose interest and exclude the possibility of a military career.

It can therefore be questioned why the gender equality and women's rights discourse so prominent in the rest of the Swedish society has not yet penetrated the SAF to such extent that these unfortunate gender practices are being ruled out completely.

In an attempt to explain why sexual harassment and demand for prostitution is so integral to military organizations and resistant to change, this paper has made use of the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity.

Accordingly, the SAF exhibit every needed aspect of being an arena dominated by hegemonic masculinity, giving that the institutional power, through the practice of universal male conscription, has served to perpetuate the notion of the Swedish man as the nation's only defender.

As a logical outcome of the hegemonic masculinity dominating the organization, women are being perceived as a threat to the gender order, and are therefore being subject to sexual harassment to reinforce the notion of women as inferior and subordinate to men. Consequently, sexual harassment of women is deemed necessary in order to restore and maintain the external hegemony and the global domination of men over women.

In similar terms, peacekeeping soldiers' demand for prostitution can be explained by a constant need to confirm manhood and by homo-social bonding. Or put in other words, the hegemonic masculinity dominating the SAF promotes a masculine identity based on the degradation of women and everything that can be perceived as feminine, as well as subordination of homosexual men. To be accepted as real men and worriers, each man within SAF must therefore act in such a way that he is not coming off as feminine or homosexual. Visiting prostituted women, together with other peacekeepers, then becomes a strategy for men within the SAF to show that they are "real" heterosexual men who know how to take care of their "natural" bodily sexual needs.

It is against this background that the SAF has launched a gender integration strategy in order to come to terms with the problems of

sexual harassment and prostitution and to make more women wanting to choose a military career.

This strategy can be explained as a three legged strategy based on education, leadership and targeted recruiting practices.

The educational and leadership based approach seems not to have had any greater effect so far and the evidence available indicates that sexual harassment as well as the problem of Swedish peacekeepers' demand for prostitution remained significant also during 2004 and 2005.

Nor do the targeted recruitment practices seem to have had any greater success in making more women choose a military career and the proportion of female conscripts and officers remains at a low 3,5 to 3,6 (2005) percent respectively.

It may therefore be argued that the effect of the gender integration strategy is yet to be seen, giving its infancy. Keeping this in mind, it may therefore instead at this point of time be of more interest to discuss the future potential effect of the gender integration strategy from a strictly academic perspective, that is, to compare the initiatives taken, and the ones scheduled to be taken in the nearest future, against what the research on gender integration have found efficient means.

Accordingly, education campaigns have elsewhere been found a most efficient mean to make men within a traditionally male dominated profession, welcoming women into the ranks.

Further, in male dominated organizations, the chances for women to succeed have been found to largely depend on how supportive and positive the male supervisors and managers are (Department of Defence 2004, p. 17).

Moreover, many work settings have been found to have an informal workplace culture that do not support men or women to take parental leave, despite the existence of formal leave policy and regulations (Padavic and Reskin 2002, p. 170). It is therefore promising that the SAF are planning to launch several family/parental responsive

initiatives in the nearest future, including flexible working hours and scheduling military exercises according to a 08:00-17:00 Monday to Friday agenda, giving women priority, regardless if they have children or not, when it comes to filling new positions and eradicating discriminatory salary practices (Padavic and Reskin 2002).

### **Can hegemonic masculinity be challenged within the SAF?**

The gender integration strategy of the SAF seems to have every potential to be efficient in making the organization more open and welcoming towards women. Yet it can be questioned if the hegemonic masculinity and its predatory gender practices can be challenged and changed after several hundred years of male domination.

I will therefore end with the comforting words of Connell himself:

“When the condition for the defense of the patriarchy change, the basis for the dominance of a particular masculinity is eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. The dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women. Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation.” (Connell 1995, p. 77).

Or put in other words, hegemonic masculinity and structures of gender relations are constantly formed and transformed over time. Change can come from outside gender such as through technological change or class dynamics, but can also be generated from within gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity is thus always open to challenge and change (Hearn 2004, p. 49, Connell 2002, p. 36-37 and Connell 1995, p. 82).

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