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“Not focussing on whether it’s a spout or a handle”

an anthropological study on even gender balance among
conscripts in a Norwegian Air Force battalion

—
Nina Hellum

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**an anthropological study on even gender balance
among conscripts in a Norwegian Air Force
battalion**

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Summary

The Norwegian Air and Missile Defence Battalion at 138th Air Wing at Ørland airbase was chosen for an experiment between August 2014 and June 2016 on the initiative of the Air Force. Leaders in the Air Force wanted to gain insights into future development trends by taking 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women into compulsory military service. The percentage of women was expected to increase considerably after the implementation of gender-neutral conscription during the summer of 2016. Even before the experiment, the battalion had an average level of female conscripts of more than 20 per cent.

This report is based on a social anthropological study, in which a social scientist followed the two different cohorts involved in the experiment. Several fieldwork studies were conducted, along with participant observation and more than 70 qualitative interviews. The empirical examples illustrate which mechanisms come into play when there is an equal gender balance in a military unit. "To fit in", especially through humour, is often the key to the conscripts' well-being and their capability of seeing their service through.

Neither gender nor economical position decides who "fits in" in this context. In the military, where everyone dresses the same, lives in the same way, and consumes the same food, personalities stand out more than in other contexts. "Fitting in" entails being able to joke rudely with others, but you also have to be able to take a joke yourself. Our impression is that rude jokes about ethnic minorities are generally accepted, while joking about gender issues or women is not tolerated to the same degree. The conscripts talk a lot about the importance of being able to adapt, to be part of a team. A soldier who is not sociable around other soldiers does not "fit in".

None of the informants in this selection expressed any views about women and men being alike. Differences might be mentioned, but were not emphasised, at least not in a negative manner. Everyone was physically able to perform the tasks and duties in the anti-aircraft Battalion, so no one seemed to highlight whether it was a male or a female conscript that was doing any job. Everything points to personal qualities and skills being the most important grounds for picking out qualified and capable personnel within the Battalion.

The soldiers, living and working closely together, are exposed to each other almost 24 hours a day. In our empirical research, the exposure seems to lead to enhanced understanding and tolerance between the sexes, in addition to reducing stereotypical biases and sexual tension. We did not see any signs of a dominating masculinity culture in the Battalion, and few or no sexual harassment cases are reported. The Battalion's own survey also indicates a high level of well-being and contentment, which widely correlates with the material we obtained.

Sammendrag

Fra august 2014 og frem til juni 2016 gjennomførte Luftforsvaret et eksperiment hvor de valgte ut Luftvern bataljonen på Ørland flystasjon som avdeling. Ved å kalle inn til førstegangstjeneste med 50 % kvinner og 50 % menn, ønsket ledelsen å få et inntrykk av hvordan avdelingen ville fungere med helt jevn kjønnsfordeling. Det var forventet at kvinneandelen kunne komme til å gå betraktelig opp etter innføringen av allmenn verneplikt sommeren 2016. Luftvern bataljonen hadde allerede normalt en kvinneandel på over 20 %.

Rapporten er basert på en sosialantropologisk studie der forskeren har fulgt de to kontingentene i eksperimentet. Det er gjennomført flere feltarbeid, deltakende observasjon og over 70 kvalitative intervjuer. Eksemplene som presenteres gjennom empirien illustrerer hvilke mekanismer som spiller inn ved kjønnsjevnhet i en militær avdeling. Det å «passe inn», særlig gjennom humor, er i mange tilfeller en utslagsgivende årsak til trivsel og gjennomføringsevne.

Hvem som «passer inn» bestemmes i denne sammenhengen verken av kjønn eller økonomisk status. I Forsvaret, der alle kler seg likt, bor samme sted og spiser samme mat, kommer personlighetene mer til syne enn i andre situasjoner. Å «passe inn» betyr å både kunne koddde med andre, men også å tåle å bli koddde med selv. Inntrykket er at det er mer akseptert å koddde med etniske minoriteter enn med kjønn. Soldatene snakker mye om å være i stand til å tilpasse seg andre, å være del av et team. En soldat som ikke er sosial med medsoldater «passer ikke inn».

Ingen av informantene i dette utvalget uttrykker at de mener kvinner og menn er helt like. Forskjeller blir gjerne nevnt, men ikke vektlagt, i alle fall sjeldent i negativ forstand. I Luftvern bataljonen kan alle gjøre samme jobb fysisk sett, så det legges ingen vekt på om det er en mann eller en kvinne som utfører den. Alt tyder på at det er personlige egenskaper og ferdigheter som styrer hvem som blir valgt til hvilke oppgaver innen bataljonen.

Disse soldatene som bor og jobber sammen, eksponeres overfor hverandre nærmest 24 timer i døgnet. En slik eksponering fører til større forståelse og høyere toleranse mellom kjønnene, i tillegg til at det reduserer fordommer og seksuell spenning. I Luftvern bataljonen ser vi ingen tegn til dominerende maskulinitetskultur, og det er rapportert om lite eller ingen seksuell trakassering. Bataljonens egne undersøkelser indikerer høy trivselsrate, noe som stemmer godt med inntrykkene fra vårt forskningsmateriale.

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Preface

Due to a considerable international interest for the findings described in this report, we are presenting an English version of the Norwegian original. This report is basically the same, save for some minor revisions and linguistic alterations.

This report is the result of 18 months of research. The author undertook every fieldwork and every analysis on her own, even though many people contributed in several valuable ways.

First of all, I would like to thank all the soldiers. They welcomed me in an astonishingly open manner and allowed me to interview them and use them as scientific objects. I am honoured to have been among such bright young people, with a stamina and ability to endure all sorts of experiences which are nothing short of impressive. Heartfelt thanks to all you guys who brought me warm blankets and lent me hats and coats when I was the only one freezing in the field. Thank you for the warm-hearted humour I was allowed to take part in and experience, and not least for all the knowledge I encountered. Now all of you have moved on with your lives, but I will never forget you.

I would also like to give special thanks to the leaders of the battalion, especially the officers in charge Per Steinar Trøite and Henrik Fosse. Thank you so much for facilitating my fieldwork, picking me up at the airport, and lending me a warm sleeping bag and sleeping pad. Thank you for allowing me long interviews, and committing to thorough perusals of and feedback on this report. I am ever so grateful to have been enabled to weed out many of the potential errors.

All photographs in the report are my own, taken during fieldwork. The persons in the pictures have all allowed me to publish them in connection with the study. Any remaining errors in this report are fully my responsibility.

Nina Hellum

10th May 2017

Kjeller, Norway

1 Introduction

The main focus of this study is to detect and explain mechanisms that appear in a unit with an even gender balance in the Norwegian Air and Missile Defence Battalion at Ørland airbase. The main objective is to identify the positive and negative effects such a practice might have.

The research questions in the study are:

- What mechanisms come into play in a unit practising an even gender balance?
- How do gender mixed rooms work?
- How does gender diversity affect cooperation during service?
- Does the well-being of the soldiers increase or diminish with the introduction of a higher percentage of women?

The results of this study can at first glance give the impression of being overly positive, and, to some extent, they are. Even though some negative incidents did occur, the results in this study are predominantly positive regarding the success of an even gender balance. From time to time, we will refer to earlier studies which contained negative results, emphasising that they all had a rather *uneven* gender balance. It is crucial to emphasise that the researcher in this study did not look especially for either positive or negative observations, but strived to unveil the effect of various mechanisms. The report is based on thorough research, from participant observation, qualitative interviews, conversations and close contact with the informants.

The findings from this study will not immediately translate to other contexts. The battalion has some traits that are general, but the differences between branches and tasks can still be determining in such a way that the same experiment in another unit could have given different results. For example, the physical demands of the service in this particular battalion are suitable for both male and female soldiers. In certain services and units, it might not be expedient or possible to have an even gender balance because of their more stringent physical requirements. However, some of the findings from this study may nevertheless be relevant in other units. For example, addressing how the soldiers talk to each other and what words and phrases are appropriate to use would be applicable to most units and branches.

It is difficult to decide to what extent the even gender balance is successful in this unit as a result of recruitment policies and how the battalion selected its soldiers. This study has not focussed on the selection process; the soldiers might have been selected based on certain criteria for this particular unit. How the soldiers were selected will have influenced both the culture and the balance, and have played a crucial part in the level of success. The men and women in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion are not necessarily representative of the general population; they might rather have certain characteristics that make them especially suitable for this unit and its culture.

1.1 Structure of the report

This report begins in Chapter 1 with a description of the background for this study and the Air Force's experiment with an even gender balance in this particular unit. Chapter 2 explains and describes various aspects of the social anthropological method used in this study. In Chapter 3, we discuss different ways of approaching gender research, while Chapter 4 describes masculinity cultures and the consequences of an even gender balance, through empirical examples. Chapter 5 summarises our findings and includes suggestions for further research based on the results presented here.

1.2 Background to the study

The Norwegian Defence Research Establishment has done research on women and men in the military since 2008, through the project "Age Cohort Research". Our studies are based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Several of the anthropological studies have focussed on emerging mechanisms between personnel in a military context. This study is an extension of that research. Within the project, we have studied military units with a low percentage of women, a high percentage of women, and with female soldiers only. What happens when the percentage of women and men is similar? How will the unit's environment, service and culture be affected? We wanted to find answers to these questions. The study is financed by the Norwegian Defence Ministry as a part of the project "Age Cohort Research".

1.3 Background of the experiment

The experiment was initiated by the HR management in the Air Force, based at Rygge. Since no official documentation of the experiment exists, we observed some uncertainty among employees and soldiers. We therefore interviewed three central leaders in the HR management unit in the Air Force early in 2015 to uncover the background for the experiment. The head of HR in the Air Force Ken Gøran Bjørk explained how they wanted to prepare for various aspects of a possible situation in which they had 50/50 male to female conscript soldiers:

*The Air Force doesn't basically select on hard physical demands, we actually select on capacity and ability. So I thought we might find ourselves in a situation with gender neutral conscription and a 50/50 % distribution. Out there in the units. And then I thought that we need to try this out immediately. (...) So I decided we needed a long-term strategy, in order to test out what natural selection and 50/50 would mean. What would that entail for the socialisation process out there? (...) Compared to "business as usual", this would definitely be on the plus side of normal.*¹

The purpose of the experiment was to gain some experience of what would happen if gender-neutral conscription resulted in an equal distribution of the sexes among the soldiers. Major Liv

¹ All translations are made by the author.

Strædet from the HR management unit described how they approached the task of selecting sufficient numbers of female conscripts in the battalion. They set several requirements in relation to the candidates' background and abilities:

We have a dialogue with FPVS [Norwegian Armed Forces HR and Conscription Centre] and our recruitment officers, and present some demands; we want local candidates, we wish to recruit them to work at Ørlandet in the future, to be positive about Ørlandet in the future. And of course we want people who score at least 5 on the ability scale, since that makes them eligible to apply for the officer candidate school. We decided on our physical and health requirements. (...) Then things happen as we go, and we were extremely committed to obtaining exactly 50 per cent of both sexes. We definitely were – in order to follow up on how this would affect a unit with bright minds, physical capacity and various abilities, as it were. So, this thing with girls and boys, – will it affect their daily productivity? For that is still our main focus (...); we are committed to delivering air and missile defence. Not focussing on whether it's a spout or a handle.

The interviews with key personnel in the HR management unit gave the impression that gender mattered less than skills and abilities, i.e. that “spout or handle” was irrelevant. Operative capability, what kind of product they are able to deliver, and their performance of the service were stressed as crucial. All three interviewees expressed the fact that the unit's tasks were of such a nature that both male and female conscripts would be able to perform them successfully. The head of Air Support Systems Bjørn Eivind Stai pointed out that having more women changes the dynamics in a unit, and differentiates it from units with no, or just one, woman:

I²: During my first period as platoon leader, I had an exclusively female staff of officers. That was the first time ever; I don't think it had ever happened before. My second-in-command was a woman; I had female non-commissioned officers. That was in 1990. It was quite early; we didn't have any female soldiers in the Air and Missile Defence Units at that time. But I recognised the positive effect they had on the soldiers. Little things, like we didn't have any disciplinary cases in my platoon, while all the others had. And we did just as well at an operative level as the others. So they had a positive effect on the soldiers' performance and well-being. I believe that this is part of my backbone, really, the attitude I have developed since then, and witnessed, regarding the effect women have. And I saw a difference between having just one female officer compared with having several.

R: So, where does the difference lie?

I: The difference might be that, if you're alone, you're very aware that you're alone, and you will possibly try to adjust to the majority. That lies deep within many people. If

² I stands for Informant, R for Researcher. This applies all the interviews in the report. All interviews were conducted by the author.

you are more people in a minority, you might live more naturally. I noticed that they could be themselves a bit more then.

Stai's observation supports the findings of this report. It seems to be a difference between having just one or a few women among many men, and having several, so the minority do not have to adapt to the majority. Kanter's theory on critical mass is relevant regarding the level of impact a minority of at least 20 per cent might have in a unit, department, or organisation (Kanter 1977).³ The exact percentage is not crucial, but the point about a minority having a stronger voice once it reaches a certain size is reflected in our findings.

2 Method

This study is based on the socio-anthropological method of participant observation, which we describe here.

2.1 Participant observation – fieldwork

The most utilised method in anthropology is *participant observation*:⁴ living closely with the informants during fieldwork.⁵ The fieldworker participates in all possible activities, while sharing the life of his or her informants, as far as possible. This is intended to take place without the fieldworker becoming “one of them”, or “going native”, as it were. Fangen problematises the combination of participation and observation, and the importance of balancing those two:

If you go in and become a full member of the group you wish to study, then the research dimension of your presence has become almost non-existent. You have become “one of the natives”, or “gone native”, the anthropological term. On the other hand, you can de-emphasize the participant role by totally committing to the observer role. In that case you will have some difficulty understanding the communication and the internal codes between the actors (Fangen 2010: 13).

In social anthropology, we stress the importance of maintaining a certain distance between the researcher and the informants or the respondents. If the fieldworker becomes a part of the group he or she is supposed to study, i.e. “goes native”, the necessary distance for analytical and critical thinking will critically diminish. The main focus of anthropological research is to gather empirical evidence in order to explain and analyse social aspects, relations and behaviour in a

³ See also Ronnes and Hellum 2013: p. 39.

⁴ We have presented the procedure in earlier reports – see respectively Hellum 2009: s. 10–11, 2010: s.10–11, 2014: s. 10–13, and Ronnes and Hellum 2013: s. 9–12 (all in Norwegian).

⁵ “Informants” is a term for the people the social scientist is observing.

new and comparative light. To be able to identify different mechanisms, it is crucial that someone who can be presumed to be less biased can observe and interpret with new eyes, eyes which are particularly educated for such a task. The fieldworker may not be able to participate in every activity the informants perform, but must strive to partake in as many as possible in order to get a more thorough understanding of what the informants' lives entail. The ambition is to participate, as well as observe.



Figure 2.1 Sometimes the researcher is more tempted to observe than to participate.

I undertook two rounds of interviews with leaders at different levels, one at Rygge and one at Ørland. In addition, I did fieldwork at Ørland on three different occasions, once with the first contingent, and twice with the second.⁶ In all, 71 extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted with recruits, conscripts, officers and leaders at different levels. The interview guide is at Attachment A.

⁶ In addition to the interviews and time in the field, the researcher attended and observed the conscript soldiers as recruits on parade for the opening of the Parliament on 2 October 2015.



Figure 2.2 Ready for new interviews.

As for the scope of the fieldwork, one could arguably claim that they were too limited to draw any conclusions from the findings. However, as Fangen points out, there are some advantages to this particular use of the method:

A possible advantage with shorter fieldwork is that you can process the impressions from single episodes more thoroughly than you might have done during extensive long-term observations. The drawback can obviously be that you don't get to know people properly, in that you're not present long enough to get your interpretations in many different settings. (Fangen 2010 [2004]: 123)

There are many ways of conducting fieldwork. Within the social anthropological tradition, the importance of being present in a culture through a whole year is emphasised. Observing and experiencing all the rituals and cycles during all times and seasons gives a holistic picture of the society. This study is based on approximately three weeks of fieldwork all together. However, 71 in-depth interviews were completed, which is the foundation for the results in this report. Since the interview material is much more extensive than the observation material, the empirical examples will for the most part be presented through quotes from the interviews. The interpretation of what the informants say is made in the context of the observations the researcher made during her stays, along with several years of experience in military culture and social science analytical thinking.



Figure 2.3 The researcher followed the recruits on parade in the main street of Oslo for the King and Queen during the opening of the Norwegian Parliament.

2.2 Doing fieldwork in a military setting at Ørland air station

Doing fieldwork in the military entails living closely with the informants in shared rooms in the barracks, tents or cabins, following them closely day and night. The researcher cannot participate in activities she is not qualified for, such as driving a tracked vehicle or shooting down missiles. She can still be present and observe, however, provided it is physically possible and her security clearance is at the appropriate level.

The experiment with an even gender balance had a time limit and only involved two contingents. Fieldwork and interviews were conducted with both, and we found some differences between the two. The first contingent had some practical challenges, in addition to much attention from the media, while the other contingent could focus more on the tasks in hand. The Air and Missile Defence Battalion had different battery leaders for the two contingents, which also might have impacted on the soldiers differently.

2.3 Describing the field

The airbase at Ørlandet is one of two main air stations in the Norwegian Air Force. It is located in Ørland municipality in South-Trøndelag. The air station operates F-16 fighter planes, Sea King rescue helicopters and E-3/AWACS reconnaissance aircrafts. The station also accommodates the Norwegian Air and Missile Defence Battalion and is a part of the NATO Response Force.⁷

The camp is sited near Brekstad, a small town with about 2000 inhabitants. All conscript soldiers live in the barracks inside the camp, while most of the officers live outside, either at Brekstad or in Trondheim. Many staff members commute between Ørlandet and Trondheim by boat and bus every day.



Figure 2.4 MK C, The Battalions' barracks at Ørland air station.

The conscript soldiers in the battalion live in the same barracks. The barracks has three stairways and two floors and a basement. Each room houses six soldiers, and has bunk beds, sinks, a table and six chairs, and double wardrobe closets. In the basement the soldiers have bathroom facilities, washing machines and various practical rooms. All rooms are gender mixed, but the sanitary facilities are separate for men and women.

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%98rland_Main_Air_Station



Figure 2.5 Details from a regular room for six soldiers.

Meals are taken in a mess for the enlisted soldiers and an officers' mess. The conscripts seemed to be generally content and positive about the food. The reason for mentioning this in this context is that diet and the social aspect of meals seemed to matter quite considerably in relation to the welfare and motivation of the soldiers.⁸ This might, as a consequence, affect their performance.

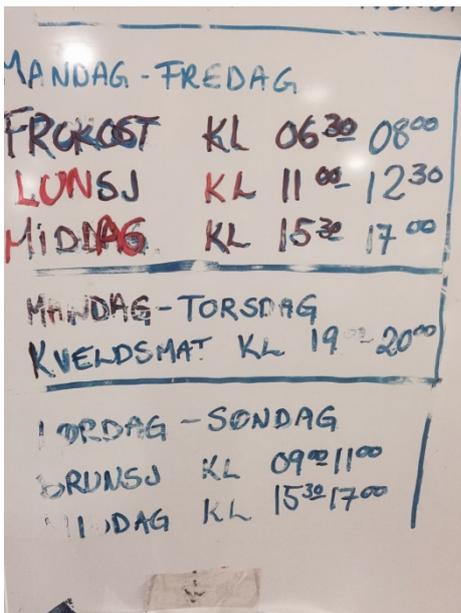


Figure 2.6 Monday–Friday: breakfast, lunch, dinner. Supper. Meal timetables. Important not to miss.

⁸ During earlier fieldwork, the researcher was made aware that “good food was part of the welfare program”, to keep the crew happy and to avoid them getting cabin fever (Hellum 2010).

2.4 Positioning

It is quite impossible to be part of a social setting without affecting others, or being influenced yourself. It is impossible to avoid such mechanisms, even as a fieldworker. Although he or she might just be observing at times, standing idly on the sidelines, that rarely goes unnoticed. In many cases, this will affect the informants' behaviour.

At Ørlandet, the soldiers were given a short briefing about the study and an explanation of why the researcher was there. However, it was through conversations in the barracks, the rooms, the mess or in the field that she could explain more thoroughly who she was, what she did exactly and why she was there. That does not mean that all informants had a deep understanding of what exactly they were a part of at all times. Therefore, it is crucial that the fieldworker reflects on her own role and contributions in the field, in order to protect her informants. It is her responsibility that the informants are not misunderstood or "hung out to dry" in any way.

During interviews in earlier fieldwork, several informants spoke candidly about a conflict in a gender mixed room. They all had their own version, and it was important for them to share their opinions with the researcher. However, given that the material doubtless would have hurt several of the parties involved, the researcher decided to leave out all quotations about this conflict. In anthropology, it is of utmost importance to assess the ethical implications of the research, especially since the method entails knowing intimate details of the informants' lives. Without the trust of the informants, there would be no research at all, so respect for their privacy and integrity is vital.

Since this study deals with relationships and mechanisms concerning gender, it is relevant to point out that the researcher is a female in her forties. Although she might not express her personal opinions on every given situation and topic, she is still a bearer of meaning just by being a woman. A man doing the same task would have got somewhat different results. He would have affected the field just by how he behaved, in addition to perceiving observations, interviews, conversations, approaches and behaviour in a different way to a woman. The personal characteristics of the fieldworker affect the sort of material he or she is able to obtain. That is why we describe our role in the field, so the reader can make his or her opinion about how the fieldworker might have affected the material. Sex, age and physical attributes are examples of characteristics that may influence the relationship between researcher and informants. What kind of empirical material is gathered, and how it is analysed and emphasised, often depends on the personality of the researcher.

3 Doing gender research

3.1 Anthropological gender research

Research on gender issues is an important part of anthropology, although perhaps not as important as in sociology. Eriksen, Ødegaard, and Fagertun explain why anthropologists for a long period focussed on the holistic society, rather than stressing a gender perspective; presumably, a focus on women made the research less relevant:

Gender research was regarded as the study of women, with the consequence that the object of research was seen as a less important topic than society or culture (...). The consequence was that, while feminist-orientated anthropologists might have had ambitions to analyse big topics such as culture, society and social organization, their analyses were still regarded as less relevant for a general understanding of social issues. (...) In other words, it might seem that gender analyses were less characterised by the ambition to create theoretical models explaining how gender is constructed and can work as structuring, and more characterised by the fear of essentialising, reducing or neglecting the complexity of social life (Eriksen, Ødegaard, and Fagertun 2007: 77).

This is one of the reasons why a large part of anthropological literature on gender refers to sociological material and theories, rather than anthropological ones. During a certain period, several anthropologists chose to completely avoid a gender perspective in their studies.⁹ This study will present the topic from different angles, referring to more than one discipline, based on relevance for the theme.

3.2 Gender as a research area

Gender research is a vast field, with contributions from many different disciplines. We do not have room in this report for a thorough review of the various disciplines or theories, but will focus on a few relevant features. There are multiple perspectives on gender: one particularly salient one is Kimmel's emphasis on gender as a multifaceted issue that cannot simply be reduced to a simple dichotomy:

Gender is not simply a system of classification, by which biological males and biological females are sorted, separated, and socialized into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men. When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference (Kimmel 2004: 1).

⁹ One example of this is how the author of this report, in her 2001 thesis, wrote about mistress enterprises in Russia as an economic survival strategy, but avoided a gender focus (Hellum 2001). Even though gender dynamics were the focus of the study, other, more general, angles were stressed, as they were regarded as more serious at the time.

Kimmel stresses how it is important to explain both difference and dominance (not equality) (ibid: 1). He asks why “virtually every single society differentiates people on the basis of gender?” and why it is that “virtually every known society is also based on male dominance?” (ibid: 2). The military is, as a part of society, no exception. The organisation has to a large extent been dominated by men, but this is about to change considering the growing percentage of military women.

First of all, the term “gender” is not carved in stone. There is not a general agreement on the definition. Gender roles and stereotypes are interpreted differently by different people. In our society today we have individuals who do not fit in to the traditional perceptions of what a man or a woman is. We grew up with the conception of two different sexes, and that they, all in all, were diametric opposites. Most people have a comprehension of what being “feminine” or “masculine” entails. However, these comprehensions are not identical, but may vary from person to person. Through what we embody of tradition, culture, adolescence, school, values and home upbringing, most people have a strong sense of gender roles being “right” and “natural”. Not acting accordingly to such expectations differentiates some people as “left out”, “different”, or “weird”. To exemplify, not many years ago, a woman who wanted a military career would be considered “different”, since the military domain is traditionally connected to men. This is about to change. In autumn 2016 in Norway, the first gender-neutral cohort was enrolled into conscription service (regjeringen.no, 04.11.14).

How we can “integrate” women in the military system is often discussed. But using the term “integrate” emphasises that women are basically something unknown, something from outside, an anomaly. It is important to underline that gender is both a biological and a social construction. There is a debate evolving over how to define and use the gender-related terms. As Simone de Beauvoir wrote: “one is not born, but rather one becomes, a woman” (De Beauvoir 2014). In 2010, a Norwegian popular science television series called *Brainwash* presented different views on gender issues within various disciplines. This caused a big debate in Norway concerning the terms “sex” and “gender”, what lies within us biologically, and what affects us socially as human beings.¹⁰ The dispute illustrated how “gender” is not a certain form or size, but that different environments relate to the term in opposing ways.

Kimmel explains the matter as a debate between “biological determinism” and “differential socialization”; that is, either you explain everything through biology, or you explain everything through socialization processes (Kimmel 2004: 2). Several research studies have been done concerning gender differences; some research shows that gender is a social construction, while other research shows how men’s and women’s brains are constructed differently and work differently.

The psychologist Fine refutes what she calls myths from poor research. Among them is the stereotypical attitude that women are less well suited to understanding mathematics than men (Fine 2010). In a mathematical experiment, women were divided into various groups and given

¹⁰ For a more thorough look into the debate, see (in Norwegian) <https://hjernevasksamla.wordpress.com/2010/03/20/hallo-verden/>.

different information concerning the background to the experiment. The women who were informed that the test had been done on thousands of people and that it had shown no gender-related differences, did much better in the test than those who were not informed of anything in particular concerning gender differences. Fine's opinion is that the myth of women being poor at mathematics influenced the test subjects to underachieve. However, the women who were told that men did better in the test, but only because of a dissimilar cultural background, scored equally well in the test as the women who were told there were no gender-related differences. Fine indicates that this shows how easily stereotypical attitudes towards gender differences can be justified when substantiated by biological differences (ibid). Emphasis on biological gender differences makes it somewhat harder to argue for equality, especially in a workplace dominated by a masculinity culture.

The philosopher and author Vincent underlines in her experiment that women and men relate to the world differently in many situations. For 18 months, she lived as a man, changing her name, appearance and behaviour (Vincent 2006). Her experiment ended in her depression and an admission to a psychiatric hospital. The strains of being something she was not for such a long time proved to be too overwhelming and complicated. This tells us something about the complexity of performing gender roles. One of Vincent's discoveries with respect to gender roles and gendered culture came when she was Ned, her male alias, and joined the guys at strip clubs. Being a lesbian, Vincent was familiar with being attracted to women in her regular life. However, her reaction to, not to mention her perspective on, naked women at the strip club was somewhat different from the men's (Vincent 2006: 62–91):

Despite not wanting to know the truth about what goes on at strip clubs, most women think they know nonetheless. Popular films show women half-clad shaking it suggestively on stage, which some of them do in the tamer clubs. But the women in these first few clubs I visited were naked and there was nothing artful about their striptease. There was no tease, just cunt, bald and raw. The women on stage were usually naked within the first minute, and they didn't hint at some dreamed-of consummation, they just auctioned their merchandise at close range (Vincent 2006: 67–68).

Vincent describes her experience with the female strippers as in stark contrast to the men's, and points out how men and women have different sexual feelings and needs. She was the only one at the strip club looking at a female stripper in the eye, searching for something enduring, but what she saw was just a mask: "Her eyes were intentionally repulsive, and I looked away" (Vincent 2006: 65). Vincent meant that she was looking at the strippers with her *head*, while the men were looking at them with their *bodies* (ibid).

Women's sexuality has been patronized and condemned as either sinful or absent for millennia, in contrast to men's. In today's Norway it seems that women in most layers of society are allowed to have a sexual side, when it comes to both desire and conduct. Conscript soldiers are almost the same age as their closest commanders; sometimes only a year or two divide them. Therefore, it would not be so unnatural if romantic or sexual feelings emerged. Several of the male conscripts talked about some of the young female officers as "fit" and "sexy". This goes for both sexes: the men talk about the female officers, and the women talk about the male

officers. In this study, no inappropriate relations between conscripts and officers were revealed, but it has been a topic in earlier studies.

It may seem inexpedient to claim that women and men are alike. For example, is the fact that women give birth and men do not an indisputable distinction between the sexes? A gender role pattern cannot necessarily be turned around and mean the same. Women do not successfully achieve equality by being given permission to put up pictures of naked men on their walls. Like the example with Vincent and her reaction to strippers, men and women are likely to be different in ways which just cannot be turned upside down.

The English language has two words for distinguishing men and women: *gender* and *sex*. The first describes the social aspect; the second describes the biological. In Norwegian, we do not have this distinction: the term *kjønn* represents both the social and the biological meaning, in addition to describing the reproductive organs, i.e. *kvinnekjønn* (the female sexual organs) and *mannkjønn* (the male sexual organs). The fact that the Norwegian word *kjønn* also describes the genitals demonstrates how closely linked sex and gender are. Connell explains why the connection between sex and gender is accentuated in such a dominant way:

In our culture the reproductive dichotomy is assumed to be the absolute basis of gender and sexuality in everyday life. This is not true of all cultures. But it is so strongly marked in ours that biological or pseudo-biological accounts of gender relations have wide popular credibility (Connell 1992: 66).

The young men and women in our study do not seem to think that gender, or sex, is a decisive factor, especially when it comes to soldiers' deeds and how they perform their tasks. Nevertheless, no one expresses the view that men and women are alike or the same. Many male soldiers say they appreciate women being there: they feel it makes a big difference. The same goes for many of the women, who say they appreciate having more women there, because it is so nice having "someone like yourself to talk to", and "who gets what you talk about and you don't have to explain how things work". The informants do not seem to think that gender differences *do not* exist, but that they do not matter very much in this context. As long as rights, duties and opportunities are the same, as they appear to be in this battalion, the focus is not on gender.

4 Gender and culture

4.1 Masculinity culture

It is natural to discuss the topic of masculinity culture in connection with social science research into the military. But what is a masculinity culture? Does it have a set meaning, or does the term have various connotations for various people? The difference between diverse institutions and organisations can determine how people in these places perceive what masculinity culture is:

Masculinities do not exist in social and cultural vacuums but rather are constructed within specific institutional settings. Gender, in this sense, is as much a structure of relationships within institutions as it is a property of individual identity (Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell 2005: s. 8).

One can easily presume that many people have their personal interpretation of what masculinity entails. Initially, we can think about it as a set of manly characteristics being organised into a scheme. But, as Rones points out, a vast amount of research shows that there are plenty of ways to perform and execute masculinity (Rones 2015a: 66–67). I discussed the problematic aspects of masculinity being the “natural gender” in the military system in my report “Make-up Crap All Over the Sink” (“*Sminkedritt over hele vasken*”) from 2014 (Hellum 2014). Bourdieu points out how women and men have been categorised as absolute opposites in the same way as wet/dry, cold/warm and night/day (Bourdieu 2001: 10). He stresses that:

The biological difference between the sexes, i.e. between the male and female bodies, and, in particular, the anatomical difference between the sex organs, can thus appear as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the genders, and in particular of the social division of labour (Bourdieu 2001: 11).

The biological and physical differences between men and women are regularly referred to as the main reason why military tasks should be distributed differently between the sexes. Even the difference between male and female genitals has been used as an argument for why women are not well suited as soldiers, for example because they use more time going to the toilet during field operations as they have to move further away from the others and undress more than men do. This dominance of a masculinity culture seems to have faded away in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion (if it were ever there). In earlier research on military units with a low percentage of women, we have seen women adapting to a masculinity culture and to male dominance (Totland 2009; Harsvik 2010; Hellum 2010, 2014; Rones and Fasting 2011; Rones and Hellum 2013). In the battalion in this study, there appears to be no dominating masculinity culture to adapt to. Women do not need to be integrated into any particular culture. The various roles the soldiers perform (Goffmann 1992) seem to be rather based on personality than on gender or sex. One of the male soldiers told me that the battalion is not characterised by any particular masculinity culture the people were so different, and this is what he felt the military is in need of:

It's very mixed, I'd say. There are some cautious people as well. Some of that type, you know. As I've understood it, the military wants more serious people now. Not just people who can carry a large backpack, but ones that can do other tasks as well.



Figure 4.1 Sometimes gender is less visible and relevant.

4.2 Masculinity patterns

Connell describes masculine hegemony as a form of cultural dynamics in which men both demand and sustain a leading position in the social context (Connell 2005: 77). This happens in spite of there normally being very few men who have access to influence the hegemony. The gender aspect plays an important part in such a pattern, as it is of vital importance that the man is a dominant actor and the woman a subordinate one for the sustainability of the masculine hegemony.

Hegemonic masculinity can 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 2005: 77).

In empirical cases where the percentage of women is low and the masculinity culture is strong and dominating, we see such a pattern of gender role performance (Harsvik 2010; Hellum 2010, 2014). A dominating masculinity culture has been prevalent in the military for a long time, and, within the organisation, many have advocated that men's physical abilities make them more suitable as soldiers than women (Totland 2009; Hellum 2010, 2014; Gustavsen 2011; Ronnes and

Hellum 2013; Sand and Fasting 2013; Rones 2015a and b). Lilleaas and Ellingsen describe this phenomenon as “homosociality”, i.e. men demanding to be the most significant part of a group:

When only one or a few women are physically present in a whole-male group, the homosocial culture can only be consistent and last if the women adapt to the symbolic arrangement and to the men’s communication and interaction patterns (Lilleaas and Ellingsen 2013: 75).

Women have a tendency to adapt to the existing culture when the female percentage is low (Hellum 2014: 26–28). Connell describes four types of masculinities: *hegemonic*, *subordinate*, *complicit* and *marginalised* (Connell 2005: 77–81).

In connection with women in the military and their role in it, it is interesting to see how such patterns of masculinity are formed. A group can support and retain a hegemonic culture of masculinity through complicit masculinity. The men in such a group feel loyalty and solidarity to the men in power, even though they themselves might be both marginalised and suppressed. Through their behaviour, these men are complicit in upholding a masculine hegemony. Connell describes these mechanisms only with male behaviour (Connell 2005: 79). However, women can also support and uphold a hegemonic masculinity culture in this way. Rones describes how military women contribute to preserving such hegemony by defending the need for hard physical demands, something that clearly favours men (Rones 2016).

In our FFI studies of units with a low percentage of women, most women express the view that they are not bothered by nude pictures or dirty talk; they enjoy being “one of the guys” and having “plenty of backbone”, as it were. Many say they feel comfortable with the jargon, the culture and the behaviour (Hellum 2010, 2014). Through accepting this culture, the women also become “complicit” in maintaining it. Connell explains that this kind of behaviour derives from the “accomplices” expecting the culture to profit them in some way as well as the men in charge (Connell 2005: 79). For military women, accommodating and supporting a masculinity culture might secure them acceptance as “one of the guys”, and a feeling of belonging.

Female soldiers interviewed in this study have all stated that they are positive about the high number of women in the battalion. None expressed a strong urge to be “one of the guys”, as we have seen in earlier studies (Hellum 2010, 2014), but rather appreciated not being the only chicken in the coop:

R: *Did you know that there would be so many girls here? In advance?*

I: *Yes, that was partly the reason for me coming here. Because there were so many girls.*

R: *Why?*

I: *It’s..., it’s easier for me to relate to girls than boys.*

R: *Is that your impression after you came here as well?*

I: *I'm so glad there are a lot of girls here. We connect in a much better way. There are so many girls here and..., yeah. It's easier to..., well, yeah, you're a girl, so you get how girls work. With boys, it's a bit different.*

(...)

R: *Would you have felt any differently if you had been say only four girls in the platoon?*

I: *Well, then I would kinda've been like..., I'd have to be like one of the guys, kinda. But now I can just be one of the girls instead.*

R: *And that's ok?*

I: *He, he, he, yeah, that's ok.*

R: *Do you experience any difference in how male and female soldiers are treated here?*

I: *No, I don't. Not that I've noticed anyway. We have to carry just the same amount and everything, so...*

R: *You're given the same tasks?*

I: *Yes. We are.*

Earlier research has shown a tendency for women in the military to want to be “one of the guys” (Harsvik 2010; Hellum 2010, 2014; Ronnes and Hellum 2013). In this present study, however, the women seem to appreciate not being the only one in the group. They do not express any need for extra attention from the men; the empirical material suggests that very few of the women in this particular battalion have any needs in that direction.

The reaction to nude pictures on the walls, or just the possibility of them, differed from the research findings from our earlier studies in the Norwegian military. Neither men nor women in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion supported these practices; they were surprised that other units still allowed them. In the report “Make-up Crap All Over the Sink”, an example of the soldiers' own “newspaper”, the so-called *Toilet Paper*, which is put up on the toilet doors, was presented, including pictures of semi-clad women, posing in sexualised positions (Hellum 2014: 27). When the soldiers in this study were shown pictures from earlier studies, their reactions, without any exceptions, were that “this would never be permitted here!” The two examples of *Toilet Papers* in figure 4.2, respectively from the Air and Missile Defence Battalion and from an

army battalion with few female soldiers, show a stark contrast between seemingly different cultures. The *Toilet Papers* are produced by local representatives elected by the soldiers.¹¹



Figure 4.2 Contrast between a Toilet paper in a unit with a high percentage of women (left), and in a unit with a low percentage of women (right).

After several field trips and in-depth interviews, one of the main impressions is that a 50/50 division of gender seems to be *both* female and male friendly. The unit seems to have gone through a sort of “normalisation” process concerning gender issues, which has probably taken quite a long time. There were few, or no, signs of a dominant masculinity culture or homosociality based on gender differences, as referred to by Lilleaas and Ellingsen in their study from 2013 (Lilleaas and Ellingsen 2013: 75).

The Air and Missile Defence Battalion has had a higher percentage of women than most units in the military in the last couple of years – higher than 20 per cent. Therefore, it was rather surprising to find some instances of an unwanted and old-fashioned masculinity culture still lingering, and that none of the informants, neither soldiers nor officers, seemed to take the cases very seriously. One of the examples was mnemonic rules for the use of compass, weapons or messages, based on sexual derivations. None of our informants expressed any indignation in relation to these rules, which in itself might be seen as quite extraordinary. A female officer distinguished sharply between nude pictures and sexually based mnemonic rules:

I: Yes, that [nude picture] would never have been accepted here. That goes for both the boys as much as the girls, but if we just think about the girls, well, that's “... oh my god, it's so unnecessary for going to the toilet. You should be able to go to the toilet in

¹¹ In Norwegian, this representative body is called “tillitsvalgtordningen” (TVO).

privacy without having to see naked women everywhere and all that. Cos that's your home, this is where you live, and no-one is supposed to go around sticking pictures like that on the walls. Unless you really fancy it, but you're not allowed anyway, well, but... But when it comes to remembering stuff, well, it's important to be a bit... yeah... to be able to joke around a bit, you know.

R: To have a sense of humour about it?

I: Yes, cos you can't enter the military thinking you can change the whole system, cos a lot of things have become like they are, and, like, super-simple measures like not allowing people to stick nude pictures on the walls in the loo, that's something you can carry out really easily. We have a lot of these rules, and I find them hilarious, but they do help.

R: It doesn't offend you?

I: Not in any way. Like with the map, showing different squares, in order to find coordinates: "into the knickers, up in the fanny".¹² I remember the weapons' rule: "Berit shags everyone she knows".

R: No, oh my god, haha.

I: You see, the first letter in the word is the rule. And then you have two variations of it: "Brazilian porn of the highest quality".¹³ They're both about the weapons' rule, you know. And for message duty it's "the French knickers got a hole almost down below". And it's always little things like that, but... if you arrive here and have a bit of this kind of humour, then...

It might only be when the environment is no longer characterised by a negative culture based on male traditions that practices with for example mnemonic rules can function in a new and different way. From being an internal socialising mechanism among men, it might change into an internal socialisation mechanism among *all* soldiers, regardless of sex or gender. The soldiers look past the sexual content and keep the practice as an internal joke. It is as if they are saying, "this is OUR thing". Consequently, the division between US (the soldiers) and THEM (civilians) is consolidated even further. But it is important to notice that it is only when the culture and the environment are in this sort of "normal state" for both sexes that it is possible to assess this as a unifying, and not a dividing, practice.

Phraseology is vital, and can play an important part among the soldiers. We have had examples of women leaving the military as a result of inappropriate use of humour and unsuitable use of

¹² Expressions like this are hard to translate precisely; a more traditional version of this mnemonic rule is "into the house, up the stairs".

¹³ In Norwegian, the first letter in every word will spell out the first letter in the list of rules to remember. Example: Berit Puler Alle Hun Kjenner, and Brasiliansk Porno Av Høyeste Kvalitet – BPAHK. The soldiers are meant to remember the letters BPAHK.

words (Eriksen 2015). The leaders of the Air and Missile Defence Battalion underline their wish to make the soldiers aware of how they express themselves and how they behave. The battery commander from the second contingent describes it in this way:¹⁴

I: I haven't had any specific cases of bullying or harassment, something which is quite rare. If no one complains or approaches you, then you have to investigate a bit on your own, because I don't experience this in everyday life. But when you ask around a bit in the troops, when you ask people face to face, then you get more insight into their everyday life. But I haven't experienced any cases of harassment based on gender issues or differences. What we've talked a bit about and worked on is use of words and language, that someone can experience unnecessary use of certain words as harassment. This happens both among the staff and among the conscripts. It can be quite challenging for some of them. So we have tried to focus on choice of words in different situations.

R: It's hard to know when you've crossed a line?

I: It is. But, on the other hand, when we're at work, we need to have a more formal language than when we're home with our friends. And, obviously, the conscripts are not just on duty here; they are working whilst being with friends all day. So that makes the boundaries a bit more... Of course, when you gather so many new people, they need to be given a bit of time to settle in, to understand what's ok and what's not. So we need to create arenas where they can address these issues and mature.

In a battalion with few female soldiers, they will often feel the need to accept and join in with the masculine sense of humour. When women apparently accept and allow a practice which in itself is degrading towards women, then it is a clear example of what we earlier described as “*complicit masculinity*” (Connell 2005: 79). The women thus contribute to upholding a dominating masculinity culture, rather than protesting or working against it. Also, we notice a gender difference in the use of mnemonic rules, i.e. that this practice for the most part entails descriptions and references to female genitalia and female sexuality. Building awareness around these mechanisms can help the leadership to work actively in changing such practices. The female soldiers are not responsible for altering the culture; it is a protracted process, in which the leaders must make the necessary adjustments and take responsibility for them.

4.3 An even gender balance reduces an “us against them” mindset

Human beings have an urge to categorise each other. We have done so since the beginning of mankind and we will continue to do so. Berreby describes this line of thinking as a “tribal mind”; it is all about group identity. He explains:

¹⁴ This interview was conducted at the beginning of June 2016, just before the second contingent was to be discharged.

My argument is that grouping people is an inborn, automatic, involuntary activity of the mind. It's like learning to walk, or talk, or recognize faces. It can't be shut off. It's not evil. It's not good. It is just there, a mental faculty we can't help using, with rules different from the ones used by other parts (Berreby 2005: xiii).

One of the first distinctions we make is to categorise each other in gender categories. Most of us are born and raised with the dichotomy man – woman. The differences are often emphasised; thinking in an “us/them” dichotomy enhances the sense of group cohesion. For some, this might be all-encompassing, or at least very profound and important. You might find such group cohesion attachment in examples such as football teams, ethnic groups or even among pregnant women. Affiliation can be created through one or more common features or interests. Rozenblit points out that groups of people will feel the need to gather around a mutual interest to strengthen the ties between them, thus marking their distance from other groups:

As human social organization advanced and social cooperation was enacted between non-relatives, a means of bonding individuals into cohesive groups was required. Initially, shared activities would have formed these bonds. The more significant the activity, the stronger the bonding effect. People's most essential activities are related to survival and reproduction (Rozenblit 2008: 27).

For some people, such an “us/them” distinction means “it's us against the world!” Not until knowledge about “the others” emerges more clearly can the groupings dissolve and people interact more freely across the group borders.

When female soldiers have their own barracks or serve in their own troops, it causes a sharp division between men and women. Such segregation creates a distance, and less understanding and knowledge about “the others”. Cooperation between two segregated groups will be less successful than if the two were more closely connected and integrated in each other's lives. Our study shows that, when male and female soldiers live and work closely together, a higher understanding and more knowledge about each other is created, which leads to better teamwork and improved operational ability.

An even gender balance seems to reduce the importance of gender in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion. Though there were still signs of small frictions based on gender in both contingents, the soldiers underlined that gender mixed rooms prevent this to a large extent. The impression is that a harmony is created in both social and professional relations and interactions, in which gender almost becomes irrelevant. The explanation, most likely, is that there is no majority or minority affecting the balance between the sexes, consequently making the topic almost insignificant. Gender seems to be a more prominent aspect in situations where there is a majority of either men or women. The soldiers themselves regarded gender as less important in the military context, nothing to “fuss” about; they were used to there being equal numbers of each sex at school. This did not feel like anything exceptional for them.

4.4 Righteous women or Queen bees?

The “*Queen bee theory*” came into prominence about 40 years ago, as a by-product of the fight for gender equality. It describes how women with strong career ambitions, rather than helping other women, use master suppression techniques¹⁵ of minimising and degrading their efforts. These “Queen bees” want to be the only women to have success, thus gaining and retaining power and authority in a patriarchal working culture (Drexler 2013). The theory describes how women gain powerful positions by demeaning other women in order to elevate themselves: “The ultimate Queen Bee is the successful woman who, instead of using her power to help other women advance, undermines her women colleagues” (Cooper 2016).

The counterpart to the “Queen bee” is the “Righteous Woman” (Cooper 2016). The “Righteous Woman” supports and helps other women to achieve success in the labour force, through guidance, networking and actions such as promoting other women and delegating tasks to them. If we choose to divide military women into these two archetypes, the women in this study’s unit (with a high percentage of women) can mainly be described as “righteous”.¹⁶ This female soldier describes her view of the even gender balance in the battalion, of which she was unaware until her arrival at the Ørlandet airbase:

It was really a positive surprise. Girls have a special kind of bond between them. And they have a few more common interests. I’m interested in hunting and motorcycles and things like that, but you can’t talk to boys in the same way as girls. At least not like it was when we were recruits, the boys on our team were very, like, macho, and were playing tough and things like that. And some girls cried and were in pain and homesick, stuff like that. And later on we heard the boys talking shit about them. Then you don’t feel like hanging out with those boys. But after we finished the recruit period, when we were divided into different troops, I shared a room with three guys who are all really good guys who you can go to with all your problems. But in the beginning, before you get to know one another, it tends to be like girls sticking together and boys sticking together. (...) The boys who had talked shit during the recruit period left after that, they weren’t allowed to join us in the troops, nor have further service in our battery.

This female soldier could be described as very “tough” and with a “lot of backbone”. Still, she underlined the importance of solidarity and unity between the women, as something special. Her opinion was that women need women, and that it is vital that they support each other. As in all qualitative research, we need to stress the fact that we only illustrate *tendencies*, not unambiguous truths. Undoubtedly, some military women will read this and feel alienated. But even more will probably have feelings of recognition, and that is our main point in this study.

¹⁵ For a short explanation of the meaning of such techniques, originally a Norwegian-developed term, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_suppression_techniques.

¹⁶ This does not mean that women in units with a low percentage of women automatically can be described as “Queen bees”.

One of the slanderous stories I was told during one of the periods of fieldwork at Ørland was about a female soldier with very ambitious aspirations. On discovering some fellow soldiers drinking alcohol in the barracks, she reported them to the officer on duty. According to the other soldiers, she did this in order to be appointed “wing soldier”.¹⁷ But, instead of becoming so, she was disliked by many soldiers in the battalion for being disloyal. Her behaviour could be described as “Queen bee” behaviour. She was seen as someone not “fitting in”. In other words, “Queen bee” behaviour was punished by the other soldiers in the battalion. We will describe in more detailed later in the report the significance of “fitting in” in the military context.

4.5 An even gender balance affects the culture

Earlier studies in the research project “Age Cohort Research” show that both even and uneven gender balance within a unit affect behaviour and social relations (Hellum 2010, 2014; Rones and Fasting 2011; Rones and Hellum 2013; Rones 2015a and b). Rones describes how male officer candidate students in the Medical Battalion handled being the minority in the unit. To demonstrate their masculinity, they turned to unwanted behaviour:

The officers in charge explained this situation as one where the men were in a threatened position, since there were so many women in the troop. They explained further that the men had reacted to the situation with actions which can be interpreted as an attempt to reconstruct their symbolic dominance, for example by demonstrating physical superiority and resorting to bullying and harassment of the women (Rones 2015b: 85–86).

The dynamics were affected by a female dominance to which the men reacted negatively. They felt that their roles as men were being challenged and tried to regain their “domain” by using master suppression techniques. In several studies, we have observed units with a high percentage of men. The few women serving in these units have to a great extent adapted to the masculinity culture. The women had to have “plenty of backbone” (Hellum 2010), and Harsvik describes how they had to be “one of the guys” (Harsvik 2010). A common feature in units with either male or female predominance is gender issues being stressed as a theme affecting the environment and culture, often in a negative way. This is not the case in the unit with an even gender balance, where gender issues do not seem to matter at all.

On the basis of interviews with informants from the female Hunters troop, consisting of about ten female conscripts (for special operations), Rones explains that the dynamics of being exclusively women works perfectly well in this unit.¹⁸ In some of our earlier studies we have frequently observed highly competitive military women (Rones 2015a and b). These can, in

¹⁷ “Wing soldier” («Vingsoldat») is a rank within the Air Force which up till now has only been given to conscript soldiers. When a new personnel structure is introduced in the Norwegian military system, only grenadiers will be able to obtain this rank.

¹⁸ Nina Rones carried out several periods of fieldwork and qualitative interviews with the Norwegian female Hunters troop in 2015 and 2016. The material will be published in 2017 as part of the research project “Age Cohort Research”.

many cases, be categorised as “Queen bees”. In addition, the myth still lives on vigorously that “a lot of drama” can be created in rooms with female soldiers only (Hellum 2014). Based on empirical statements from earlier informants, it would be natural to expect “drama” and “Queen bee” behaviour in a unit just for women. And this unit was supposed to include only the strongest and toughest women in Norway, both physically and mentally. However, Rones’ informants expressed in their interviews contentment and happiness over the fact that they were all female. Some even stated that as the main reason for applying. They would not have signed on for a conventional special operational unit, as they would have expected a dominating masculinity culture there in which they would not feel comfortable. Rones also observed behaviour among the women which can be described as “righteous women” behaviour. They behave in a “righteous” and solidary way; they support each other, and help and guide each other through harsh exercises and tough tests.

To sum up, the mechanisms at play relating to gender balance and imbalance seem to vary. It is hard to say precisely what works best, since there are different factors affecting the outcome in different units and situations. Nevertheless, we see a tendency towards an even gender balance generally being expedient in reducing prejudice and sexual harassment, while also building a solid foundation for collaboration during service.



Figure 4.3 The women in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion are mainly “righteous women”.

Many of the earlier studies from the “Age Cohort Research” have shown what mechanisms come into play when you have many men and few women. The tendency of “Queen bees” has been observed, but not studied deeply. The results from this study of a unit with an equal number of men and women show very few, or no, examples of “Queen bees”, but rather more “righteous

women”, see section 4.4. During interviews, the female soldiers say they are happy that there are so many women present. A female soldier points out:

I'm really happy about us being many women. Cos then we stick even closer together...I'm glad I don't have to pretend to be interested in masculine stuff, but can just be myself. Around the other girls.

Having more women creates a fellowship, and they do not feel alone in the situation. It helps them combat insecurity and provides them with the confidence they need to manage their tasks. Whether it is the service, or the type of person selected into the Air and Missile Defence Battalion, is hard to know for certain, but the female conscripts interviewed in this study do not display a competitive instinct exceeding their feelings of friendship and team spirit. On the contrary, the women show a strong sense of solidarity, strong friendship ties and strong team cohesion. This loyalty is not limited to the female soldiers, but stretches out between the sexes as well.

Between the two contingents, there was one difference. In the first, we saw a strong feeling of cohesion across gender borders, but also an example of polarisation. Some of the physical surroundings and conditions may have contributed to this gap. For example, the male soldiers had a sauna in their basement locker room, while the female soldiers did not. The process of customising the sanitary facilities for the female soldiers was slow. In the first contingent, many of the guys developed a tradition, a ritual; they met more or less every night in the sauna, talked and played around, even shared pizza there sometimes. This ritual strengthened the bond between the guys involved. However, it also created some envy in the female soldiers. This led to a couple of the women joining their fellow male soldiers in the sauna one night, as they wanted to be part of the fellowship. According to the rules, no women were allowed in the male sauna, and, when discovered, some interpreted the case as an act of sexual desire. However, the men and women I interviewed who were present in the sauna that evening claim that the act was all about *belonging*; it had nothing to do with sexual desire or physical intimacy. It was about being “one of the guys”. Living and working this closely, the soldiers feel that unequal allocation of benefits is both unfair and unnatural. The men and women in this unit expected as equal treatment as possible, and they expected the same rights and duties.



Figure 4.4 Female soldier ready for exercise.

In several earlier studies, we have described the existence of many myths surrounding women in the military (Hellum 2010, 2014; Ronnes and Hellum 2013; Ronnes 2015a). When we started the project “Age Cohort Research” in 2008, we were met with the perception that women created “a lot of drama”. This perception still lives on in the organisation to some degree. It can seem like it has more to do with how women are treated and considered rather than how they actually behave:

(...) despite studies showing that men engage in indirect aggression like gossiping and social exclusion at similar or even higher rates than women, it is still widely believed that women are meaner to one another (Cooper 2016).

The perception of women as more dramatic, gossiping and socially excluding is not necessarily true, but it still lives on very well in parts of the Norwegian military. The empirical knowledge from the social anthropological research within the “Age Cohort Research” project in no way implies a more “diva-like” behaviour among the female rather than the male soldiers. Personal

differences are more significant than gender differences (Hellum 2010, 2014; Ronnes and Hellum 2013).

4.6 Having a laugh

Earlier in our research we underlined the importance of “having a laugh” or “kidding” (taking the piss) between the soldiers as a socialisation mechanism (Hellum 2014: 35). Having a laugh or kidding or joking around is a way of showing people that you “fit in”. It is part of how to be “one of the guys” (Harsvik 2010). Kidding also works as a method for getting to know each other and forming closer relationships, as jokes can take the edge off the embarrassing aspect of an intimate situation (Totland 2009). Our findings from several years of empirical research show that many military women expect to have to endure a lot of hardship because of their gender when engaging in military service. Coping with crude jokes is a part of this. Bjerke describes in her master’s thesis how soldiers of both sexes utilise humour as a “coping mechanism”, i.e. as a method of handling embarrassing situations (Bjerke 2016: 66–74). She calls them “joking relationships” (ibid).

Another example of humour as a tactic to disguise uncertainty and embarrassment is Vincent’s description of men joking around, especially in connection with their relationship with women:

My bowling pals had been as full of the same off-color jokes as Phil and his dad, full of the same know-it-all insouciance that betrayed exactly how much, not how little, women and the esteem of the women actually meant to them (Vincent 2006: s. 64).

One of the interesting findings from the study of the Air and Missile Defence Battalion is that the jokes seem to be less “raw” and crude concerning girls and women than our earlier empirical examples from units with a significantly lower female ratio. We observed less sexualised humour at women’s expense than we had witnessed before. However, we were given the impression that “having a laugh” at the expense of other minorities was more accepted. This might be a consequence of women no longer being a marginal minority, and therefore not a group to “mess with”.

One observation from this study, which also correlates well with earlier studies, is that it seems to be more accepted to joke around with people of ethnic backgrounds other than Norwegian. The joking is not based on knowledge about different ethnic groups, but is rather targeted at people with a dark complexion. For example, two of the researcher’s informants referred to themselves as “negroes”, in spite of their parents being from respectively Asia and the Middle East. Calling someone with other than a light complexion a “negro” [Norwegian: “neger”] seems to be quite normal among young people, despite all the debates, discussions and restrictions in Norwegian society condemning the use of this expression. As a woman, in some circumstances it is possible to “blend in” or hide. But for a person with a dark complexion it is almost impossible. There is a constant flow of jokes and “funny” comments aimed at people with ethnic backgrounds other than Norwegian, predominantly towards dark-skinned soldiers. Reporting this is not so easy, and for some it becomes important to be the first one to joke about

it, to take the sting out of it. This can be seen as a disarming technique and a defence mechanism. But the humour is only accepted within the “group”. One male soldier states:

I: Ok, we kid a lot. But to me it gets offensive when it's people I don't know taking that ..., well, telling that “negro joke”, so to speak. I don't have a problem with people I know well having a laugh at my expense. I can do that myself all the time. But when it's someone I don't know coming in and just saying some bullshit, then I get... a little offended. A bit upset.

R: Keep it in the gang, kinda?

I: Yeah, well, I think you need to know each other a bit before telling jokes like that. And not just presume that “if he can joke like that, so can I”.

This kind of joking being more accepted than joking about women might be explained by the increasing percentage of women in the military, while there are still a very small number of soldiers with dark complexion. In this context they stand more out visibly than female soldiers. It does not seem to matter much where that person is from, whether the person is born in Norway, is adopted, is an atheist or religious, or what kind of ethnic background the person has. The colour of the person's skin seems to be the determining factor, with a dark complexion visible among many pale ones, and hence the person becomes part of a marginal minority. This study has not focussed especially on racist or xenophobic attitudes or behaviours, so we cannot claim to have any conclusive findings. Nevertheless, some of our examples might demonstrate that this kind of humour exists in the Norwegian military. This next soldier, himself dark skinned, said that several in his platoon had limited knowledge of dark-skinned people:

I: It might happen, if I'm in a good mood, that I present a “negro joke” about myself. But I don't find it ok when it's... right after entering a new platoon, we were in the tent, when two, three of the guys from the platoon started talking, bringing out their mobile phones, finding “jew”, “negro”, and “babydeath” jokes. Then I had enough and just left the tent. And I told them how I really didn't care for that sort of thing.

R: You said it when you left, or later?

I: I told them last week, he he.

R: Oh, so you told them a long time afterwards?

I: He he, yeah, I told them much later.

R: So, how did they react to that?

I: No, it was more like “well, yeah but it's hilarious, though!” And I told them I wasn't into listening to that shit there and then. My opinion is that many of the people here

come from so-called “Blenda-white” environments, where they are divided into the “Norwegian” and the “not-Norwegian” people, meaning “the darkies”.

During the interview with this soldier, it became apparent that he took on a large responsibility for his own minority; he took care to ensure that the joking was of the exactly “right” proportion. He used humour as a disarming and defence mechanism. We have seen signs of this kind of humour among military women in units with a small percentage of female soldiers. One of the male dark-skinned soldiers told us he often made fun of his own complexion. Nevertheless, he still felt a need to draw a line, even though this was frequently crossed by his fellow soldiers. He took on the responsibility of how he and others were portrayed, when those that surrounded him were joking about non-Norwegian ethnicities, often out of ignorance:

I: Yes, it’s often that I usually tell them in hindsight that “no, I’m not usually like that”. I joke around about being from “the ghetto”. But if they are way off, and it gets rude, I usually just tell them “no, that’s not how it is”. Just a bit of Paki-jokes and stuff. So..., sometimes I clean it up, other times I just let it go. They just have to experience it for themselves and figure it out. Comes a time when they might get into trouble for it, you know. If they walk around Grønland¹⁹ doing jokes like that, they’ll definitely feel it. Some way or another.

R: Do you reckon people here have prejudices?

I: Yes, I’d say so. For the most part, I think the prejudices come from them not experiencing things themselves. Ignorance. Prejudice can come from... for example, when I went to secondary school among many who were not Norwegian-ethnic, I kinda had a prejudice against some of the people I was around. Others have a prejudice against the same people without knowing them. That’s two different things, in my opinion.

This soldier sees a distinction between judging someone on an experiential basis and judging someone based only on preconceptions. Research shows *exposure* as a mechanism to separate those two notions. Exposure towards a group or a person, particularly over time, leads to a certain degree of higher understanding, and also a higher tolerance for that particular group or person. In their research on diversity and discrimination in work life, including a study of soldiers, Finseraas et al. found that male soldiers increased their tolerance towards female soldiers when they had exposed to them for a given period (Finseraas et al. 2015).²⁰ In addition, the exposure enhanced the female soldiers’ career opportunities:

¹⁹ Grønland is a district in Norway’s capital Oslo. The district has one of the highest percentages of non-European immigrants in Norway (<https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/attachment/184456?ts=146dc7a9e90>).

²⁰ For a more thorough analysis of diversity in the military, see the report from *Østlandforskning* written by Eide, Lauritzen, Ølsvik, and Stokke: <http://www.ostforsk.no/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1420141.pdf>.

We find that discrimination disappears if we expose male soldiers to female peers in an environment that is relevant for the leader position. (...) We have shown that the glass ceiling that prevents female candidates from obtaining leader positions in a masculine context can be broken by exposure (Ibid: 17).

It seems apparent that exposure towards the other sex reduces stereotypical attitudes. An increase of military women can in this way reduce unwanted masculine behaviour and attitudes in the military, just like ethnic diversity can reduce xenophobic attitudes. According to Beadle and Diesen, it is still hard to predict the consequences that an increasing ethnic diversity will have on society, especially in the military since ethnic minorities up till now have been poorly represented in the organisation.

The Defence has so far experienced little effect of the increased ethnic diversity in Norwegian society, since very few people with a minority background have done military service (Beadle and Diesen 2015: s. 34).

It might seem that soldiers with a complexion and an ethnic background differing from the traditional Norwegian are “the new women” in the military; the position as a vulnerable minority opens up as the female percentage increases. In his study of ethnicity in the military, Finseraas underlines that “there is a predominance of soldiers with a minority background reporting being harassed” (Finseraas 2015: 16). He also stresses the importance of this topic being the focus of more research in the future.

4.7 Exposure

The mechanism of exposure often leading to higher tolerance and understanding is described in a study of Indian women’s changing economic prospects. The economics professor Robert Jensen wanted to see whether improved economic opportunities for women in rural India would change how parents treated their daughters. He recruited women from different, randomly chosen villages for a three-year engagement, studying whether this resulted in parents changing their behaviour and attitudes towards their own daughters. One of the consequences he saw was:

Seeing women work in call centers allowed parents to imagine a different future for their own daughters. While the number of women newly working in call centers was relatively small (an increase of 2.4 percentage points), even this small possibility challenged parents’ beliefs and their stereotypes about what women can accomplish (Bohnet 2016).

The parents’ attitudes altered after being exposed to a new way of doing things, differing from what they were used to and grew up with. This example shows how exposure towards new situations and experiences over time can lead to changes in attitudes and to a broader understanding. We see in several studies in our “Age Cohort Research” project that exposure to women in a military context frequently reduces prejudices towards military women. Studies of

gender mixed rooms show this especially (Hellum 2014; Hanson, Steder, and Kvalvik 2016: 30–34). Changing attitudes takes longer than changing behaviour.

Professor of behavioural economics Iris Bohnet refers in her article²¹ “How can we promote gender equality in the workforce” to change patterns as “*behavioral design*” (Bohnet 2016). She stresses how we can acquire knowledge of various methods – both adequate and effective – concerning improved diversity and equality among different groups. Bohnet questions how we can know that a specific design (pattern/procedure/method) will be effective in improving gender equality. She explains:

We can try different strategies and measure their impact. We can examine the effectiveness of behavioral design much like we evaluate the impact of a new drug, running a clinical trial in which people, schools or even villages are randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. The goal of random assignment is to create groups that are as identical as possible so that any change in behavior can be attributed to the “treatment” (Bohnet 2016).

Bohnet suggests comparative research, in which the researchers set different groups up against each other, in order to measure the effects of variable parameters. These parameters can already be present in the field: they do not have to be constructed by the researchers. The arrangement with gender mixed rooms can function as such a parameter. Through research on how such rooms function and what mechanisms work in the situation, the researchers can say something about whether the arrangement is efficacious or not.

4.8 Gender mixed rooms

Gender mixed rooms in the barracks involve male and female conscript soldiers living together in the same rooms. In the Air and Missile Defence Battalion, the conscripts start out with separate quarters, but are redistributed into new rooms after a couple of weeks, making all the soldiers live in gender mixed rooms. Earlier studies have mainly shown positive consequences in units practising such living arrangements (Hellum 2014; Lilleaas and Ellingsen 2013). At Ørlandet, the arrangement seems to function well, in spite of certain challenges – especially for the first contingent, as is later described in this report.

Living together is not plain sailing. The soldiers live on top of each other every day for almost a year, practically without any opportunities for privacy:

F: *I guess there is no privacy here?*

I: *No, there isn't. You get that pretty quick. It was quite a culture shock, really, coming up here knowing that wherever you are, you're never by yourself. You can't even go to the john by yourself, there's always someone sitting there and... well... yeah. So that*

²¹ Bohnet refers to her own book: “What Works: Gender Equality by Design” from 2016.

took some getting used to. Now I count being alone in my bed as having some privacy, you know. That's all the private life you'll get around here.

Concerning interests and personal preferences, the researcher has during her various fieldwork experiences has yet to unravel many differences between the soldiers which are clearly based on gender difference. That is what we see in this study as well. However, there is the odd exception, for example the popular evening and weekend activity of *gaming*. Gaming involves sitting together in a room playing computer games (on laptops mostly). Our observations of *gamers* during our fieldwork reveal only male participants. There are female gamers as well, but in our study they are all men. A female non-commissioned officer told a story from her own conscript duty just two years earlier in the Air and Missile Defence Unit. In spite of her not being one of the conscripts, her story is relevant as she was still an employee of the unit at the time of this study. Her story illustrates how important leadership is when it comes to gender roles and responsibility, particularly concerning what she and the other informants call *mixrom*.²²

We had a room for six, but were only four in each. So we said that "ok, we can live in a mixrom". And that is... it could have worked out ok, but what was stupid was how the platoon leader deliberately chose who he put us up with. It was with those guys with somewhat poor social skills, you know, with bad BO (body odour) who needed to be pushed out of their shells. Cos he'd obviously gathered that we were proper girls who didn't mind speaking our minds and would like things to be in a certain way."²³

The other girl, she lived in a room with the two worst smelling in the whole battalion. So, they didn't take care of themselves at all. And never washed their clothes or themselves, and that... beard... the least trimmed beard I've ever seen. And they were not very good with people, talking and joining in and stuff. And I lived with the biggest gamers I've ever seen! And I was really like: "ok, we're both girls and boys here now, that's ok, this is going well, zero problem". So we made some ground rules. And I thought: "well, if they are gaming, I don't really give a shit". How I spend my time is my own business. And those boys were great guys. But what they did, like, in our troop we were 14 people, and ten of them were sitting and gaming eight hours every day. And they came into our room and made a fucking long table, and I went away and did a lot of other stuff with the other girl. And when I returned, been gone all day, there are ten people in my room. Of course, it was the two other's room as well, so I did have some understanding for them being there. But they were there ALL the time. Can't we have some kind of arrangement; can't you hang out in any of the other's rooms as well? "No, it's best hanging out here." "Ok, fine." And then..., we could have been in the other girl's room, but it was stinking there, you know, so no way we could stay there.

²² *Mixrom* is the *emic* term, that is, the term the informants use themselves. An *etic* term means the technical term used by the researcher, in this case: gender mixed rooms.

²³ Notice that female soldiers were voluntary conscripts up to autumn 2016, when Norway introduced gender-neutral conscription.

So, we became quite good at doing other things, then. But in the end, I got so fed up, like when I got back one o'clock in the morning or something, and wanted to sleep, and everybody just sat there "gaming". I said "ok, guys, I'm gonna sleep now". Meaning: "you can all go to bed now, cos you've been playing all day". The answer: "no, no, no, we're not done yet—good night!" And then I say: "I'm brushing my teeth now, now I'm getting under my covers. Good night, lads!" They: "yeah, yeah, good night." And then it was like; "ok, doesn't anyone get that you guys have to leave now? Can I turn out the lights"? "Yeah, yeah...." They all had lights on their keyboards, right? The lot of them. And in the end they left, like, about two, three in the morning. And the next day we had like 70 empty pizza boxes and chocolate crumbles all over the floor, right? And I was the one having to clear everything up. I was so pissed in the end. And the other girl, she reached her limit as well, for those two in her room, you couldn't live with them. It smelled so bad. She had told them and everything. So we went to our platoon leader and said: "well, we can't really say it was fun as long as it lasted, but at least we tried! And now we would really like to move. We are changing rooms, and into someone else's room, that's fine, cos we can't live as we do now." And that really just led to her moving into my room and my boys moving into the other room. But then the platoon leader said he had hoped it would work out, and that it was a shame it didn't, since he deliberately had placed those boys with us thinking that would help them in some kind of way.

This example shows a leader seeing social challenges among the soldiers, trying to handle it in a flexible manner. However, instead he shoved the responsibility over to other soldiers, in this case female ones, having to handle smelly and "gaming" boys. Serving as conscript soldiers entails learning to live closely and intimately with other people, people you normally never would engage with. Coping constantly being around people in unaccustomed and frequently challenging and difficult situations is part of the experience. In this case, however, most of the learning process is put on the female soldiers' shoulders, seeing as the male soldiers were regarded as "social cases", something for the women to take care of. The female soldiers were given the role of "mothers" by the officer in charge. This is grave de facto discrimination, so a position which the military would hardly seek to enforce.

The problem in this case is not that the female soldiers are unable to "bring up" or "educate" their male co-soldiers; nor is it that they cannot handle them. The problem is rather the leader shoving his responsibility over to his subordinates, in a misguided attempt to delegate tasks. The officer in charge should have taken on the responsibility of addressing the male soldiers directly, providing them with education on hygiene and social conventions.

However, some of the empirical cases from this study also depict an opposite side: male soldiers in no need of "education" from the women on how to clean. During one of the fieldwork experiences, the researcher was denied the opportunity to contribute to the morning cleaning of the room. One of the male soldiers in the room (both male and female conscripts lived there) insisted on total control. He did not trust anyone else to clean as thoroughly as himself, not even an almost middle-aged anthropologist. There was little evidence to support the claim that men

took tasks like this less seriously than women. In this field also it seemed like personality dominated behaviour, effort and attitudes. The gender aspect appeared less relevant in this context. Nevertheless, several soldiers expressed contentment with gender mixed rooms; they said it improved the environment. One female soldier said that living separately would have created bigger differences between the sexes:

I believe this thing with mixrooms has been so much better. Or it will work much better. Cos you get to be more of a pal with the lads. Ya'know, if it'd been only girls' rooms, then the guys would've been a bit more, yeah..., nosy, ya'know. It would've created a separation. But now, we're kinda..., now we girls are part of the boys, yeah? We're only seen as mates, and there's less of that..., ya'know, for example groping and name-calling and things like that. I really believe that.

This soldier claims there is less unwanted behaviour such as groping when the soldiers live in rooms independent of what sex they are. Figures from the Air and Missile Defence Battalion show very little sexual harassment among the conscripts.

4.9 Sexual harassment

During the qualitative interviews (60 of them with conscript soldiers), very few soldiers reported cases where they have felt sexually harassed. The few cases that do exist mainly involve verbal harassment; i.e. “kidding” or “joking around” crossing a line into the unacceptable. Those reporting this were female soldiers only, but none of them found the harassment “serious”.

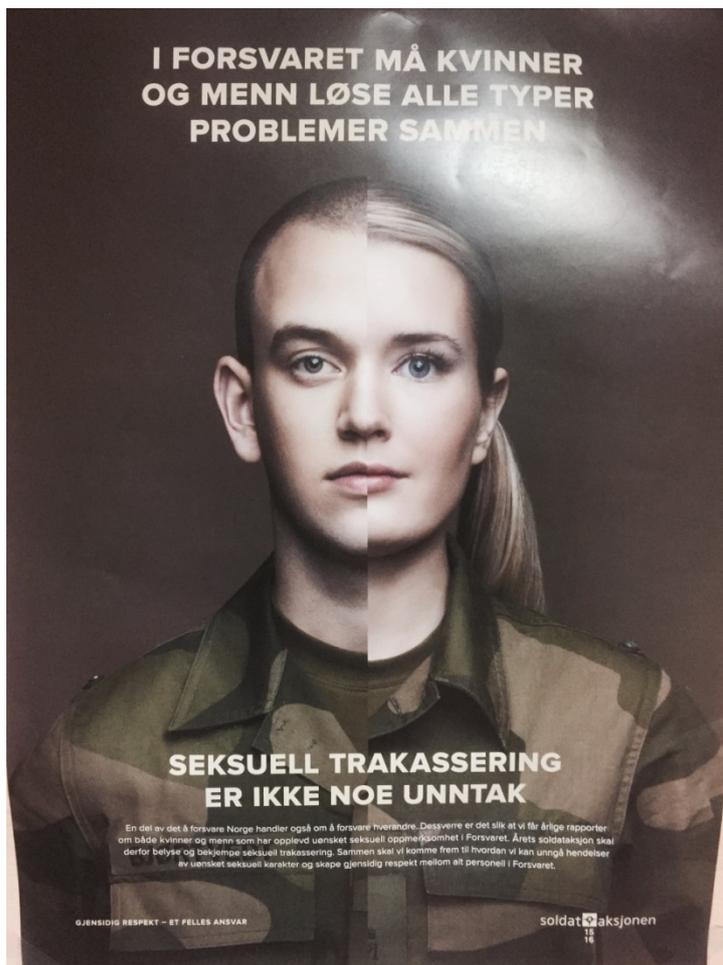


Figure 4.5 From the soldier union's campaign in 2016: "Mutual respect – a common responsibility".

In the Air and Missile Defence Battalion, a poster intended to prevent sexual harassment was hanging just inside the entrance of the barracks. The soldiers in this study seemed to be frequently reminded of sexual harassment as neither legal nor accepted. The theme was brought up several times by commanding officers; conscious use of words and terms was discussed and gone through, there were no signs of acceptance of, nor culture for, treating others disrespectfully based on sex or gender. In the few cases where informants reported sexual harassment, it involved unwanted comments presented in a "humorous" manner.

The impression of how this manifests itself in the battalion is that ongoing continuous work on attitudes and use of words is being undertaken, and that the soldiers and officers are hurting each other through bullying or sexual harassment to a very small degree. Nonetheless, people react to and perceive situations differently, and every now and then there will be a case. Putting almost 100 young men and women together to work and live will naturally generate some friction. That being said, the Air and Missile Defence Battalion seems to function very well practising an even gender balance. When women no longer act as a small minority, when no

gender is in the majority, it affects the social balance and it is no longer acceptable for one group to feel above the other. The men and women in this study are exposed to and integrated in gender mixed teams and rooms, reducing gender as a stereotyping tool and promoting the importance of personalities instead.

Numbers from the 2014 Conscript Survey (Veien 2015) show that 7 per cent of Norwegian conscripts say that they have been sexually harassed. Among men, the number is slightly increasing from 2 to 3 per cent. Of the women, 17 per cent answered that they have experienced sexual harassment. It is worth noticing that only 1 per cent of the 17 per cent reported the harassment as “serious” (Ibid). The following year, the numbers from the Conscript Survey show a slight change; a total of 6 per cent answer that they have been sexually harassed, with 18 per cent female and 2 per cent male conscripts (Veien 2016). The numbers are significantly higher for women than for men. However, basing conclusions solely on these numbers must be done with some caution, since the response percentage is between 30 and 40 per cent in both surveys. Nevertheless, the surveys show a stable tendency concerning the number of conscripts claiming to be submitted to sexual harassment. The female ratio among conscript soldiers was 25 per cent in 2014 and 23 per cent in 2015.

4.10 “Fitting in”

One of the most important aspects of military life is the sense of community. The importance of phrases such as, “a team isn’t better than its worst member”, and “everybody needs to pull in the same direction”, is emphasised both by soldiers and officers. Everyone has to do their part, in order for everything to go smoothly and efficiently. The soldiers complement and depend on each other. Even though diversity is generally regarded as positive by most military personnel, the service or culture only supports this to a certain degree. In order to obtain a sense of community, “fitting in” is crucial. In units with a low percentage of women, the female soldiers have to adapt in order to “fit in”. Yet, “fitting in” to a specific gender-based culture at Ørlandet did not appear to happen at all. At the same time, there were certainly other types of behaviour that categorised people as “fitting in” or not.



Figure 4.6 Good vibes while buttoning the tent together.

This next male soldier describes the importance of “fitting in”. A fellow soldier not “fitting in” is not necessarily bullied or treated badly by the others, but he or she will not be joining the “inner circle” either. The common attitude among the soldiers is that “if you don’t fit in, you shouldn’t be here”:

I: Some sorts of people just don’t fit in. Or maybe it’s best that they’re not here, right?

R: Is anyone taking the piss out of them?

I: No, or... depends on what the deal is, I guess. If you’re someone who whines all the time and ruins the atmosphere, well, yeah, then you’ll get badmouthed. And it goes around, people do talk. There’s a lot of talk about people being “tragic” or “unreliable”; fellow soldiers not participating with the rest of us due to medical reasons, when there’s really nothing wrong with them physically. And you really have to see that response coming. When the whole platoon is out doing some physically demanding service, and all the time one person only does the fun and easy parts, never anything strenuous. When he regards himself as equal to the rest of the group, the atmosphere turns really sour. And then people talk.

R: How about the other “tragic” or “unreliable” ones? Those who aren’t being taken the piss out of? Or badmouthed?

I: *Yeah, well, I don't know. Some people just are like that. You just have to accept that some don't really fit in. But I feel that they disappear quite early, kind of, you notice very early in the military, as early as during the recruit period, when they select and discharge people and all that. So you should see from the start who doesn't fit in, just get rid of them; nip it in the bud, so to speak.*

F: *But they aren't taken the piss out of or teased? Do people feel more sorry for them?*

I: *Yeah, it depends. If it's a proper pacifist, or..., yeah. Well, there was this guy I heard some rumours about, I'm not sure how true the story is. One of our recruits couldn't stand the sight of weapons. He just couldn't cope: he couldn't handle being around weapons. And every time the platoon did anything with weapons, had a weapons lesson or something, he just sat in his room. And when it's like that, then I feel really sorry for the bloke: he just fucking don't wanna be here. Then just send the guy home, if it's that bad.*

F: *Was he sent home?*

I: *Don't know, I haven't heard any more about it. I think he was discharged, yeah. But people like that aren't bullied or taken the piss out of. He just feels bad around weapons, and then you just accept that he doesn't handle weapons. It's ok.*

Kidding around is a very strong and important part of “fitting in”, as described in Chapter 4.6. Those not getting the jokes do not “fit in”, are not “one of us”. Again, the distinction “us/them” is relevant. Since so much can be at stake in a military context, the soldiers are interdependent; they have to be able to trust each other in every situation. Individual differences and qualities are welcome, but having a strong sense of fellowship and community among people you trust is regarded as fundamental for a successful unit. There is no place for an individualist ignoring fellow comrades in a critical situation. The soldiers express a need for them to be of “a certain type”; for example, features like being sociable and flexible are highly valued. Earlier studies have shown that having “plenty of backbone”²⁴ is important to being a good soldier and “fitting in” (Hellum 2010). The Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth wrote that being part of an ethnic group entails possessing a certain set of qualities:

Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity (Barth 1969: 14).

As we also see in the military, “fitting in” and belonging are vital denominators in group dynamics. It is the ability to adapt to the group which make people part of it. If a member breaks the set of rules and traditions constituting the group's existence and the upholding of it, it is the same as leaving the group. Changing the group itself takes a lot of effort, and is normally a very

²⁴ In Norwegian, the expression is “*bein i nesa*”, which directly translates as having a “bone in your nose”.

long-lasting process; the goal is to create a distinction between the group – *us*, and everyone else – *them*. “Fitting in” entails being part of a group and feeling affiliated to it, by being *suited* or *eligible*. Fitting in is, according to Keesing, widely based on the choices a person makes, rather than the person’s unchangeable personal qualities:

Who belongs to a group is seldom neatly defined by some cultural principle like being descended from the same ancestor, or being the right age or social class. Such membership in a social category usually defines eligibility for membership in a group. Whether an eligible person actually takes part in a group is likely to depend on the circumstances of life history, on economic interests and resources, and on personal choice (Keesing 1975: s. 10).

As Keesing sees it, affiliation to a social group is first and foremost based on how the person is, that is – behaves, rather than external attributes. During the conscript period, the recruits get to know each other while in uniform. Since in the beginning everybody shares the same kind of uniforms, the same kind of quarters and the same kind of diet, there is little room for individual excesses. The soldiers are constantly in uniform for the first couple of weeks and get to know each other without the normal personal external features. Many of the soldiers describe how they reacted to seeing their fellow soldiers in “civilian” clothes for the first time. Several were surprised by their co-soldiers’ personal “style” or “type”; they had got to know each other based on personality and behaviour, not reflecting too much on what group affiliation the other person would have in the civilian world. Economic background was, for instance, not visible at all when the recruits wore uniforms. Much of the foundation for unity and cohesion in the later service is shaped during this first period. The soldiers base their impressions of each other through observing actions, behaviour, attitudes, and, not the least, sense of humour. Those who use their sense of humour as a method of keeping up morale when the going gets tough are quickly popular among the other soldiers:

R: *What makes you popular, then?*

I: *I think being nice to people is what helps the most, really. Just being nice to everyone you meet, too, but also having the opportunity to take the piss and joke around and be funny. If you’re funny, everybody loves you, kinda. That is how it seems to be, at least.*

When a group establishes a set of internal jokes over time, the group builds up a fellowship and a feeling of affiliation and cohesion through culture-specific humour. Those not joining in with this kind of humour will not “fit in”.

In his “Self-presentation of Everyday Life”,²⁵ Goffman describes how a “*modus vivendi*” in the interaction, i.e. the content of behaviour and communication between people is not the most important factor. The most important is that the members of a group agree on the framework for the group:

²⁵ This report refers to the Norwegian edition; “*Vårt rollespill til daglig*”.

All present members contribute to a common general definition of the situation, which in reality is not a genuine consensus about existing, but rather a genuine consensus on what assertions are made concerning questions presently accepted (Goffman 1992 [1959]: 18).

Thus consensus regarding rules of conduct is more important in a military unit than the goal itself. The goal can be reached in many ways, and the way a group cooperates and works together is significant for the result. In certain military situations, there is little room for individual conduct: the actions of the group must be prioritised before individual desires. To follow the unit's conventions is to "fit in".

One interesting observation is how much talk there is among conscripts about farting. Being able to fart freely and loudly in your own room, while also sharing jokes about it seems to be important for some of the male soldiers in order for them to thrive and feel comfortable. However, several male soldiers express relief when there are women in the room, claiming that their presence reduces the "dirty talk", which they do not appreciate. Others say that gender mixed rooms are fine, but they miss being able to fart freely. It is interesting to note the importance of this aspect to so many of the soldiers. If a female soldier is "in on" this "farting humour", she is really one of them, "fitting in" perfectly. Nevertheless, a male soldier told me about his strategy to fit in to this culture, and how adapting to others is a big part of it. It does not matter who you are, but how you adapt:

I used to kid around with... one of the girls in our room. She's a very open person. A bit..., I don't know..., a bit masculine, maybe. She's the kind who burps loudly and things like that. And I said: "I don't like it when you burp. Mostly because you're a girl, but I just don't like you burping. And don't fart! I don't like you farting!" And I told the rest of the room as well. They know that... and then they went on with it for just a short while, and when they did it less I found it ok. So I guess that was a bit of development, then, on my part. That I learned to tolerate it. And I don't fart in the room, but burping and things like that; I've learned to handle it now. So I have grown. I can't say it's negative that I've learned to handle it. Now I handle it, and it's up to each and every one. That's why I think exposure is important. You learn to know one another. And again, prejudices you have fade away.

This soldier points out how knowing each other more closely reduces prejudice and biases. The respect towards each other grows, and the soldiers need to adapt to one another. His roommates toned down the farting and the burping, which made him feel he could also adapt to and live with a conduct he initially was not very comfortable with. This example also shows how diverse personalities manage to live together. Some women burp and fart, but are often described as "a bit masculine". Burping and farting is frequently associated with a masculine culture, despite the fact that these bodily functions also exist in the female body.

4.11 Sex and lust

It is quite natural to expect a high frequency of sexual activity among soldiers, especially since they are at their presumably most libidinous while sharing living quarters. The empirical material in this (and earlier studies: Hellum 2010, 2014) shows something different. Exposure towards each other not only reduces prejudice, but also sexual tension (Hellum 2014: 20–25). This is because of several aspects; one is that many soldiers claim to feel a sort of sister/brother-relationship living and working so closely and intimately. Others point to the strict rules in the battalion: no form of fraternising is allowed inside camp and no sexual or intimate contact. One of the rules concerning barracks conduct was the prohibition of male and female soldiers sitting or lying on the same bed watching a film on a laptop or hanging out or reading a book, or for any other reason. If the officer on duty discovered two people of the opposite sex in the same bed, all dressed and proper, they would be told to move. The researcher noticed some soldiers who broke this rule, but only in order to watch movies on a laptop in the evening. While watching a film on a laptop, sitting on separate bunk beds is very inconvenient.

Another argument the soldiers mention for not having sex with fellow soldiers in the battalion or at least the platoon, is that seeing each other in so many different and unflattering situations, means that sexual desires are reduced significantly. One of the male soldiers explains the lack of groping and sexual encounters like this:

R: What would be a good way of handling girls and boys together in the military in order to avoid sex and groping and things like that?

I: I don't think there's a simple solution. Basically people will have feelings and want to..., well..., yeah..., shag, for example.

R: But is it mainly kept out of camp, or what?

I: Yes. It's like if someone you share a room with is lying making out with someone, it gets pretty uncomfortable for the others. Normally, you would've told them to "go get a room". But when there's people living in all the rooms, it gets a bit difficult... and it's not allowed either, there's a penalty, you'll get a fine if you're caught. So in that way it's best to keep it professional.

In a few cases, close cooperation and sharing quarters develop into romantic relationships. In the Air and Missile Defence Battalion the numbers were not high. In June during the first contingent, there were reportedly four romantic couples among about 90 soldiers. That means that 8 soldiers were romantically involved with someone in the battalion, while 82 soldiers were not. Both this and earlier studies indicate that situations involving sexual tension and conduct between soldiers mainly occur outside camp, most commonly while intoxicated with alcohol.

The researcher only heard of one incident involving sexual activity inside camp. One of the officers told this story, which was repeated many times to the researcher by other informants:

After the last dimmefest²⁶, we heard all kinds of weird things. Cos they know we can't punish them for what they did months ago. A couple, not boyfriend and girlfriend, more "friends with benefits", had gone home from the party and locked themselves in one of the bathrooms. And placed someone outside to guard the door. And then the officer on duty came, of course knowing that the Air and Missile Defence Battalion had their dimmefest that day. So he went down the corridor and couldn't understand why these girls were standing outside the bathroom. Cos if they waited in line for the toilet, they would've waited inside. So he asked them "well, what's going on here?" "No, we're just waiting for a friend who's at the loo". "Ok, why are you waiting outside here, then?" And then he tried opening the door, but it was locked. So he knocked on the door once and identified himself as the officer on duty. "So you have to open", he said. Then a girl wrapped in a towel opened the door. The officer asked "is it only you here?" "Eh, yeah, sure", she said she was the only one there. "Are you quite sure?" And she was a bit pissed after the party, but she answered that yeah yeah, she was the only one there. Then the officer went further into the bathroom: "are you sure you are the only one here? I am going to have a look around in here, and I'm hoping you're telling the truth". "Oh no", she said, she was alone. Then he finds a naked bloke standing in the shower. The officer then drags both of them with him to his office, and they were almost stark naked. The officer was so bloody mad. He had definitely caught them in the act.

This example of course shows soldiers not abiding by the rules. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that this happened after the *dimmefest*, when those involved presumably did not give a damn, which they probably would have in a normal situation. With the reservation that the researcher might not have got the whole picture, this was the only concrete case of sex in the barracks that she heard about. However, she was also told that the incident seemingly did not have any repercussions for those involved. Some informants expressed the view that this was unfair; among others, this female officer:

Yeah, if it turns out that there are no consequences, then everyone can just go around fucking whoever. Just as they please.

At the time, the researcher did not discuss this case with the leadership, so it is not possible to say here why there were apparently no repercussions. There might have been some form of disciplinary reaction or punishment not visible to anyone other than the parties involved.²⁷ The impression is that there is a strict zero tolerance policy for sexual conduct inside camp, and that

²⁶ "*Dimmefest*" is a party the conscripts arrange for themselves, to celebrate finishing their military service. It is known to occasionally get out of hand.

²⁷ After rounding up all her fieldworks, the researcher communicated with one of the leaders of the unit. He informed her that the incident *did have* consequences for those involved. There were disciplinary proceedings, but the result was not made public in the unit. According to this source, this was done in accordance with the guidelines for this kind of case. The result being that, since the other soldiers were not informed of any disciplinary action, it hardly had any general preventative impact. On the other hand, a disclosure of the incident and the subsequent punishment could be disproportionately devastating to the two young people involved.

this to a great extent is complied with. A male soldier explains why there is so little fondling and groping, particularly inside the camp where they live:

Yeah, I have “fooled around” with two. Two of my fellow [female] soldiers. (...) But not in the barracks though. Just while partying. Here they talk about the infamous “NATO-glasses” – the longer you stay in the military, the better looking the girls get. It’s a phenomenon. But if you live very closely with someone, for example if you live in the same room as someone, and you get a problem, then the opposite might happen. We get more of a brother-and-sister relationship then, especially within the room. But if it’s someone you kinda see every day but you don’t get to speak to them and get to know them properly, then they might seem fitter and fitter to you as time goes on.

Many of the conscripts also mentioned the strict camp and barrack rules as playing a big part in why they did not fraternise inside the camp. It is probable that there would be more intimate conduct between male and female soldiers if the rules had not been as clear and strict as here. The units decide themselves what rules to apply. A female soldier tells us that the soldiers respect the rules, especially in the beginning:

No, I think in the beginning, at least during the recruit period, and a bit afterwards, people were mostly afraid, cos it wasn’t allowed, right? It’s not really allowed, and you can be reprimanded and fined if you do it. But now, after a while, I believe it has happened a couple of times, where there have been no reprimands or consequences. What stops people now, I think, is that hooking up with someone feels pretty awkward quite fast, unless you get more seriously involved afterwards. And rumours spread like this [she snaps her fingers] instantly. Then the whole platoon knows, and I think that is the main reason people don’t do it.

One of the battery leaders explains why he thinks that there will be no particular increase in sexual encounters between the soldiers when they are more women. He thinks it is more natural for romantic relationships to occur:

I don’t share the opinion that, when young people come together, having sex is the first thing they do. I don’t think it works like that. And especially when it comes to co-workers, it’s not natural that sex is the first thing you engage in. But, when you put a lot of people together, relationships develop, and that is not unnatural at all. It would be unnatural if it didn’t happen, I think. And that goes for everybody. No matter whether you’re in the military or you’re in some other work place.

In a romantic relationship, people often talk about “keeping the romance”; knowing each other too intimately reduces the mystical image we have of each other. For some couples that leads to a decline in excitement and passionate feelings, not to mention their sex life. We observe some of the same dynamics between men and women living closely together in the barracks. They have practically no private life, and for most of the soldiers the physical attraction plummets after seeing each other in all sorts of unflattering situations. In the field, sleeping in cramped tents is even more intrusive and intimate. Sexual feelings might still occur, the researcher

experienced herself during fieldwork two conscript soldiers engaging in some kind of sexual activity right next to her in the tent. This is quite an accomplishment, considering the fact that all the soldiers in the tent are sleeping more or less on top of each other. The general point here is that men and women do not normally seek out situations where their partner appears as less attractive, such as toilet visits, being unwashed for days or while throwing up. Not many people want anyone to see them in that kind of situation, let alone a romantic connection.

4.12 Myths, gossip and rumours

After working on the preliminary results from the first contingent through the fieldwork in April 2015, the researcher went on fieldwork again in the unit in September 2015, studying the second contingent. She was met by claims and rumours about the first contingent, that it had been total havoc among the soldiers at the end of the year, with lots of sex and fraternisation. Seeing as this did not comply very well with the impression from the empirical material in April, the researcher was tempted to investigate these allegations a bit closer. Through conversations with some of her main informants from the first contingent (now civilians), and a couple of officers still working in the unit, she found that all the fuss and rumours was really just down to the one example that she already knew about: the two soldiers having sex in the bathroom after the *dimmefest* (as described in 4.11).

In the first contingent, there were four romantic couples known to the researcher in April. One informant indicated in September that it had been between four and six. Lacking the opportunity to investigate this more thoroughly, our conclusion was that the claim about “total havoc” was an exaggeration. We only found out about four relationships and one case of sex inside the camp. Since most of the soldiers who could have shed some light on the topic were scattered all over, we found it difficult either to debunk or to confirm this matter any further. Having about five or six romantic couples in a battalion of more than 80 people, taken its equal gender ratio into account, is neither scandalous nor unnatural.

In a military camp, myths, rumours and gossip erupt very easily. Many of the military personnel – conscripts, officers, or other personnel – live and work closely together in what Goffman describes as a “total institution”. A total institution is an institution where more or less all aspects of life are affected by the institution a person lives, works, and has social relations in:

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (Goffman 1961: s. xiii).

The military is certainly such a total institution, particularly to the conscript soldiers who have to live inside the camp, abiding with a strict set of rules of conduct, both professionally and privately. In a “mini-society” such as this where almost everybody knows everybody, gossip and rumours about people and happenings from within the institution quickly occur. The researcher experienced this herself during fieldwork, being confronted by a troop leader with rumours that she would take some soldiers out to get “pissed” during the following weekend.

She was told that, if this was correct, it would be “unfortunate”. It is hard to tell how this rumour emerged, but most likely a comment about a beer in the sun turned into “getting pissed with the troop”. Apprehensive about not being taken seriously, the researcher went to the battery leader, underlining that the rumour was false, and that she felt uncomfortable with the assumption that this is how we conduct anthropological research. However, participant observation entails following the informants around, doing what they do to the extent of what is possible. Experiences such as this are useful reminders of the mechanisms that come into play in such a special, occasionally closed, community. It is easy to imagine how tough a year in a place like this can feel like for a person not “fitting in”.

4.13 Potential for conflict

As among most people living on top of each other while working closely together, conflicts will occur among the soldiers. However, it seems that the culture is mostly positive in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion. During the interviews and the informal conversations, everyone was asked whether they felt a high level of conflicts in the battalion, and whether any conflicts sprang out of personality, gender differences, both, or neither. The impression from the empirical material on this question was that conflicts between the soldiers rarely occurred based on gender differences, but rather emerged out of personality clashes.

Kimmel underlines that most people possess both female and masculine qualities and traits, and that few of us belong to the stereotypical categories of gender that we are surrounded by. Who we are is rather affected by what position we are in, or what arenas we attend:

It turns out that many of the differences between women and men that we observe in our everyday lives are actually not gender differences at all, but differences that are the result of being in different positions or in different arenas (Kimmel 2004: s. 10–11).

On the other hand, through the years of qualitative research and fieldwork, one particular theme has emerged where male and female soldiers seem to have differing needs. They do not seem to have the same sleeping pattern. This male soldier describes the difference like this:

What I’ve noticed in our battalion is that the girls go to bed much earlier than guys. They are much less active in the evenings. Myself, I like for the most part just lying in bed with my phone or computer, listening to music and sleeping. But most of the guys are more sociable in the evenings.

Conflicts or disagreements between the sexes concerning this topic erupt from the women wanting to go to bed earlier than the men. The reason behind this phenomenon is hard to identify. But the women express fear over being too tired the next morning, while the men do not seem to be concerned about this to the same degree.²⁸ A longitudinal study from the

²⁸ The neurologist Horne, from the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University (now professor emeritus), has for many years done research on how the male and the female brains work differently, including when it comes to sleeping patterns. The female brain requires more restitution than the male

Naval Postgraduate School on sleeping patterns among military cadets found that men and women differed in how much sleep they needed:

Our study also found significant sex differences in sleep patterns. Males sleep less than females in every condition, whether fall or spring, day of the week, weekend, or school night (Miller, Shattuck, and Matsangas 2010: 1623).

The scientists present some possible explanations for the observed difference, but no conclusive cause has yet been proved. This is an area which would benefit from further research.



Figure 4.7 The soldiers can easily have discussions regardless of sex, but are often out of synchronisation when it comes to bedtimes.

Gender research is a vast area, especially concerning differences, with many areas for discussion. There is not sufficient space in this report to cover this whole field, but the difference concerning sleep patterns is directly relevant to our study. As mentioned above, the

brain; it works in more complicated patterns. *“The more of your brain you use during the day, the more of it that needs to recover and, consequently, the more sleep you need. Women tend to multi-task – they do lots at once and are flexible – and so they use more of their actual brain than men do. Because of that, their sleep need is greater. A man who has a complex job that involves a lot of decision-making and lateral thinking may also need more sleep than the average male – though probably still not as much as a woman”* (Prof. J. Horne in Elkins 2010). See also Horne’s homepage for further information: <http://jimhorne.co.uk/>.

theme about “bed times” has distinguished itself as the only one where gender differences became significant in our field studies. We must underline that this did not apply for all soldiers, but, generally speaking, this was the only aspect where gender differences really seemed to have negative consequences of conflicts and disagreements in the room. Several of the soldiers, regardless of sex, stated different bedtimes and sleeping patterns as the only reason why they might prefer a gender-separated room.

4.14 Body

Military service entails living intimately, in tents or in barracks, performing all kinds of tasks in all kinds of weather and situations. It is an intimate community with masculine traditions (Totland 2009: 67–75). For some, being this intimate can be a challenge. It is a fine line between what is useful to the service, and what is still being done only because of old principles and traditions. The body is a vital tool in many military tasks. The male and the female body have differing symbolic meaning, hence represent different things (Rones 2015a and b). In certain cases, this might result in uneven treatment of male and female soldiers. As one female soldier told it:

I don't think anyone's embarrassed, but we don't stand in the room changing in front of each other. We do have doors on our lockers, so if I have to change or undress or put on a t-shirt for bed, I just go behind the locker or change under the covers. We're not making a big deal out of it. And the guys come up from the shower²⁹ wrapped in just a towel, right? They just put on the boxer shorts under the towel. (...) The guys walk around in just their boxers, right, but so do the girls. He, he, he, I've been caught by the officer on duty a couple of times, they don't think it's alright that... well, like when I come up from the shower, cos the showers are quite cramped, we only share one bench, so I bring as little as possible, then there's room for more people. I usually don't bring more than a pair of clean knickers and a clean sports-bra. And then, if I walk up the stairs from the shower, wearing just a towel around my waist, the officers can tell me to “get dressed”. But they never tell the guys the same thing. (...) They're used to guys knocking about in their underwear; I guess they've been doing that since the dawn of time, so to speak. Well, we girls haven't.

This example shows that the female body still represents something “unfamiliar” in a military context. It is still an anomaly, something not quite fitting in, or “a matter out of place”, as the anthropologist Mary Douglas described it (Douglas 1994 [1966]). Women have to cover up more than men. The male body belongs to the military world in a natural way, while the female body represent something unknown and threatening. However, the soldiers in this study relate to their own and each other's bodies in a more pragmatic fashion.

It seems like very few regard the intimate fellowship as more challenging than they can handle. Some of the informants said that they had a much more complicated relationship to sexuality

²⁹ The showers and toilets are in the basement of the barracks.

and body prior to joining the military. Showering naked next to fellow soldiers of the same sex was no problem here, but doing the same at school had been challenging for several of the informants. Some said they even showered in their underwear at school, but now they were a bit older, and felt much more secure and comfortable with their bodies. This explains why most of them could live in gender mixed rooms with such apparent ease, having quite intimate living arrangements, without putting any sexual connotations on it. When part of the soldiers' mandate is to be ready to die, it is a bit of a paradox that, for some, getting naked is more frightening. Many soldiers describe their bodies as a tool, and they get used to exposing themselves to each other. This female soldier finds the bodily pressure to be less present in the military than in society as a whole:

I think many feel this body pressure. You get exposed to it all the time in the media. You have to look like this or that to be good enough. But here it doesn't seem like a very big problem. I think it's because we have to get used to it. We have to change and shower together all the time in front of other people. In the end, you consider the body as a tool, then, more than something to look at. Cos we use our body, it's more important that it works than what it looks like.

It seems like most of the soldiers interviewed in this study feel quite comfortable with their bodies. We see particularly three reasons for this: 1) the soldiers feel more mature and not so insecure anymore, 2) their bodies are important tools, so that functionality is more important than appearance, and 3) they get used to being exposed, normalising the naked body.

4.15 "Sexless" uniformity

The sight of a soldier in uniform does not always give a correct indication of gender association. In several cases in the field, the researcher could not decide whether the soldier was male or female, were it not, for example, for the braided ponytail sticking out beneath the uniform cap. Few of the uniforms are especially adjusted for women, and military clothing makes most soldiers look a bit shapeless. This actually erases gender differences based on dress codes, which in civilian life is a dominant indicator of identity. When this indicator, which we are so familiar with, is removed, it seems to reduce some of the significance of gender identity as well.

The transgender issue does not, however, seem to be especially advanced in the Norwegian defence. It is also a quite new topic in Norwegian public debate. In this study, the soldiers were asked what they thought about transgender persons in the military, but it seems like the issue is seldom debated, and quite unknown to many soldiers. Some soldiers know of transgender people from their civilian life, but few express any particular knowledge of what the issue entails. During fieldwork at Ørlandet, only one person claimed to know a military transgender person. This was a young non-commissioned officer, who had heard about an officer who had gone through gender change surgery. Since astonishingly little information was found on this topic during this study, there is little point of debating it further here. However, the topic is a serious and important one, which merits more research.

4.16 More challenges for the first contingent

It turned out that the two contingents had several differences. The first had many challenges concerning EBA (Property, Buildings and Construction) and PBU (Personal Clothing and Equipment). Among other things, the barracks had to be rebuilt to adapt sanitary facilities for both sexes. The first contingent was subjected to high pressure from the media, and several of the soldiers were interviewed. Two of the soldiers even went to Oslo, presenting their experiences for the Norwegian Defence's annual Equality Conference in 2015.

Few of the soldiers from the first contingent had any prior knowledge of the female quota being equal to the male, so that gender had a bigger focus than during the second year. The second contingent was in a more privileged position, i.e. the way was already paved, and they could get on with their daily routines. For them, it was "business as usual". Owing to the large media attention during the first year of the experiment, and more comprehensive information from the battalion itself, most of the soldiers in the second contingent were aware of the even gender balance in the unit. However, when it came to room-sharing, the expectations were more or less the same.

During the first contingent, the image in the media was that men and women sharing rooms was voluntary. However, this is not how it was perceived by the soldiers. They felt it as a kind of "voluntary compulsion". You could say "no", but in that case, you had to present a special and valid reason. The leadership maintained that it was voluntary, although admitting to putting on a certain pressure. They wanted the soldiers to try it out first, and then notify the officers if the living conditions did not work out. However, it takes more determination to ask for a change to an already set arrangement than to be part of deciding how it should be from the start.

The battery commander of the first contingent described the practice of gender mixed rooms this way:

I: We started out separated. And then we tried to "praise" the advantages of mixrooms, and in some platoons they started sharing halfway through the recruit period. Or, in one platoon, I think. And in two platoons, they didn't share. And then we told them that we wanted gender mixed rooms after the recruit period, and we tried talking that up.

R: How did you do that?

I: No, for example, we referred to some research. And used earlier experiences from the unit. And said that this is the way we want to do it. We met quite a bit of resistance, but I understood it more as a protest against them getting to know each other and that's why they didn't want to be separated from their friends. After the first eight weeks, we usually throw the whole department up in the air, and land it again in new platoons. In new teams. And then people are split up anyway. In new rooms. So that's what we did. Not over-communicating that "you are in on this making your own decisions". But communicating what we deliberated in our leader-group – "are there any special needs

or requirements here? You know the soldiers, if anyone of them says that this isn't working out, then we'll be ready to respect that". But those needs never came up.

Several of the informants confirmed in the interviews that they were upset and sad about changing rooms, but that the reason had less to do with staying in a room with someone of a different gender than not being allowed to live with the people you have got close to. Nevertheless, most of the soldiers were happy about the arrangements after just a short period of time.

In the media, the room sharing was portrayed as voluntary. This created some disturbance with some of the girlfriends back home. A small number of male soldiers spoke about conflict arising between them and their girlfriends back home, since the media had stated that all soldiers stayed in gender mixed rooms voluntarily. So when the male soldiers claimed that this was not something they did voluntarily, they got into trouble with their girlfriends, since the media had said something else. Some of the girlfriends did not see the point of gender mixed rooms and, when their boyfriend soldiers said they did not have any choice, the girlfriends could refer to the media and what was written there. In the first contingent, most of the soldiers were unaware of the experiment and of the high female ratio. Along with how the information was portrayed in the media, this created some challenges for some of the soldiers at a personal level. One of the male soldiers describes the situation like this:

R: What did you imagine before you arrived here, did you picture it being so many girls? Or did you consider it a "guy thing"?

I: I knew nothing about it being so many girls. Thought it might be as many as five or ten in the whole battalion. So that was quite a shock! And if I'd known earlier that it would be fifty-fifty here, I might have chosen something else. Simply because..., yeah... well, I had a girlfriend at the start of the year, and..., well, you meet some different problems. Like..., you're supposed to share a room with girls. Well, I have a mate here in the military who had to share a room with three girls, and it wasn't really "all that"... yeah.

R: Not particularly popular with his girlfriend, then?

I: No. They obviously don't get the point of why it's like that.

R: But if you explain that "this is not something I can choose"?

I: Yeah, and we told them. And they get that, that we didn't choose this ourselves. But then it has been stated in the media that we actually DID get a choice. And that we chose for ourselves to stay in mixed rooms. And that's not correct.

R: So the fact that the media stated this as voluntary has actually affected personal relationships for some of you guys?

I: Yes, as a matter of fact. The media includes what the interviewees say. And the thing is that the battalion commander said that girls and boys moving into the same rooms was voluntary. It was just said that “yes, no we’re doing this”. The first four weeks we stayed in gender separated rooms, and we were told after about two weeks that we would have gender mixed rooms during the recruit period if we were interested. And what really happened after four weeks was that they told us that “yes, now we’re moving and changing rooms, now girls and boys are going to share rooms”. One single person opposed for religious reasons, and his wish was granted. But the rest of us..., well, yeah, we didn’t have very serious reasons for not sharing rooms with girls, so...

R: But did anyone say that they didn’t want to live with girls or with boys?

I: Yes, within the platoon, yes. But for us it was mostly about us not getting the chance to say what we felt about it before it happened. But we had a meeting about it.

R: Why would they say it was voluntary if it wasn’t?

I: I think it has to do with reputation. Like, they are supposed to be so good at facilitating gender equality and... well; it’s supposed to be no problem.

This example shows us the importance of thorough information prior to events, in addition to clarifying facts to the media. The conflicts between girlfriends and boyfriends in this context seem to be more about how the ones sitting at home handle insecurity than about the actual rules and regulations. It is not unlikely that the girlfriend back home would have reacted differently to gender mixed rooms if information about this had been communicated clearly and unequivocally before the enrolment. However, there were many things that had to be tested with the first contingent. How to implement gender mixed rooms was one of them, and this had to be evaluated continuously.

The leaders, officers and non-commissioned officers, interviewed said that they spent quite a long time selecting the soldiers they wanted to continue to serve in their unit beyond the recruit period. They were downsizing from about 115 recruits to about 90 soldiers. They had added about ten soldiers, expecting a number of women to drop out. This was quite normal, since until 2016, women served in the military voluntarily and had 30 days to decide whether to quit or continue. Therefore, there was usually a larger drop in female soldiers than male during the first 30 days:

Our mission was to educate 72. And then we were given ten more because of the expected drop-out of girls. It is a higher drop-out percentage among the girls. In such a transition I was supposed to educate ten extra soldiers, and then an additional eight, so we ended up with 90 soldiers (Battery commander, first contingent).

Concerning the gender ratio after the selection, the soldiers and the leadership did not seem to have the same perception of randomisation and whether gender was taken into account or not during the selection process. None of the soldiers being interviewed in our study believed the

leaders when they said that the soldiers were selected on skills, not because of gender, and the fact that numbers ended up at exactly 50–50 was completely random. Among several others, this female soldier was convinced that less-suited female soldiers were selected to stay in the unit because of their sex, meaning that better-suited male soldiers had to be sacrificed:

I: To me, many strange things happened then. Because many were really good, especially boys, who were sent away, who didn't get into the Air and Missile Defence Unit, to the benefit of girls. Who might not have been as good. Just because they had to fulfil this 50–50 thing. (...) One guy in my team was really good, he was one of the best in my team, and he was kinda sent away. And nobody understood why. And we never got any explanation.

R: Did he?

I: No. He was really disappointed. It was a big shock. No one had expected that. He'd participated in all the exercises, marched all his marches and carried all his own stuff. Did everything he had to do, but still that wasn't good enough? And then again there are girls who didn't participate in certain exercises since they couldn't make it, and they've had other people carry their stuff. And who had a bad attitude and so on. So I think it's a bit weird. Many people have commented on this. There are several from the unit which were not sent away without us understanding why at all. For the benefit of others who actually were sent away. (...) I reckon it's because they needed 50 per cent of the soldiers to be girls.

It was a common apprehension among the conscript soldiers in the first contingent that the distribution of men and women was not random, but that the different people were selected on the basis of their gender. The leadership, on the other side, described a process in which suitability for further service was emphasised. The battery commander of the first contingent explains the selection process like this:

R: How did you select the remaining 90 soldiers? Because there were exactly 45 boys and 45 girls, right?

I: It turned out that way. We had about seven, eight criteria, like cooperation, for example. Robustness. Physical condition. Professional skills. Several criteria like that which we used to make a mathematical case out of, with different values. But also after written assessments of each soldier. Which made us able to sit and decide and select after those eight weeks as recruits. Those who want to stay in our unit can come to us and present their wishes. In our department, we start building a feeling of unit cohesion right from the start, so everyone wants to be in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion. I only had one guy applying for another department, while the rest wanted to be here. And the way we did it this year, we distributed and selected soldiers, and we stopped when we reached 90. And then we counted gender. So we never distributed or selected on the basis of gender. But it actually turned out 45/45. That was random. Because we had a bit of a dialogue with Rygge. We didn't completely agree at first that we should

have 90 soldiers without any additional resources. But that was what we ended up with. And would the distribution have been that even if we had selected 82 soldiers instead? I don't think so. Because I know that several of the last ten, eight, , of those selected, many of them were women. Who wouldn't have made it to the last 82.

R: But they were good enough to be among the 90?

I: Yes, but then we had to stretch it up to 90. We didn't have any opportunity to say that we only wanted 82.

R: But some boys were sent away, what about the girls who stayed...?

I: We have a couple of girls in the battery today who may have been better off somewhere else. But we had to fill up to 90.

R: Why didn't you fill the last places with boys, then?

I: No, the girls who stayed were better suited than the boys we sent away. No, no one is selected because of gender here, no way.

R: Many of the soldiers I've been talking to have been wondering about that. Some have expressed the view that they felt that many well-suited boys were sent away for the benefit of not so well-suited girls.

I: No, they weren't. But we kept some who maybe should not have been here. But that is, well, if we are to go through the selection process, we are not really supposed to do that, it is normally done by FPVS.³⁰ But we select more soldiers than we need. And then we need to send some of them away. Some that we for various reasons do not need to keep. And that is a tough message to hear for a soldier; "you can't stay here". And then we have tears, and slandering the rest of the year. Some times. Between the divisions, for example. Because some of the soldiers we send away stay at Ørlandet, they just move into another division. I know that this has been the reason for some disturbances between divisions here. Because they feel they are better suited than the ones we choose to stay. With us. So they are disappointed, right? Extremely disappointed.

This battery commander clearly explains the approach used in their process of distribution and selection of the soldiers in the unit. He leaves no doubt that the leadership carefully went through every single soldier, and ended up with a gender distribution of 50 per cent, without taking any particular measures to reach that number. Nevertheless, he points out that the last to be selected were women, several less suited than the other selected soldiers. He says that these women would not have been selected for further service in this unit if they were to have fewer soldiers. He also underlines that the men sent away were less suited than these few women. This

³⁰ FPVS: The Military Personnel and Conscription Centre (*Forsvarets personell- og vernepliktssenter*).

might have been communicated more clearly to the soldiers, preventing some misapprehensions.

In the second contingent, they cut down on the number of soldiers from the beginning. After the recruit period there were 80 soldiers: 39 women and 41 men. The second battery commander describes his approach to the experiment like this:

We've had focus on..., it was much more focus on the experiment the first year. And after that it has somehow turned into normality. I haven't given it too much thought, really, except for when I'm asked to brief someone about it. Then I give it a little thought. And I've been thinking about it while you've been here, of course. But during our everyday life it's a very..., the thought of it as a project it quite distant to me. Because we have challenges in our daily routines which are far more challenging.

The second battery commander clearly shows that, as soon as the majority of the external obstacles were cleared, the battalion could focus on delivering anti-aircraft defence instead. Relating to gender issues was seen as secondary. It seems like the second contingent experienced a “normalisation” of the situation.

5 Summary and further research

The experiment of 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion seems to have been successful. It works because the service is not too demanding physically, and can be performed by both women and men. The experiment also goes along well with the culture that already existed in the unit. We found no dominating masculinity culture, but rather a strong acceptance of gender differences as natural. This culture entails recognising differences between men and women, without placing emphasis on gender defining whether or not a job is well done. *Gender* does not separate good soldiers from bad, according to soldiers and officers at the Air and Missile Defence Battalion.

However, what really determines whether the soldiers thrive in undertaking their conscription service is whether they “fit in” or not. Not “fitting in” does not necessarily entail bullying, teasing or harassment, but more often compassion and that the person in question does not feel that he or she is “part of the gang”. In a few cases, it entails being shut out and talked or gossiped about. Humour and use of particular language plays a large part in “fitting in”. If you are not in on kidding around, it means that you are not “with it”. And here we see another important culture; a *monoculture*, a homogeneous culture in which adapting to the fellowship is crucial. There is little room for an individualist in the military. The tasks are of such a nature that each component, each soldier, has to play its role in accordance with the rest of the team and unit.

The “raw” sense of humour based on female sexuality and “dirty jokes” is far less prominent in this battalion than we have seen in our earlier studies. The impression is that, when women are no longer in a minority, they are not the object of jokes and gags anymore. It seems that joking about people with an ethnic background other than Norwegian-ethnic, or with a dark complexion, is more accepted, since they are still quite a small minority in the Norwegian military. The issue of ethnic minorities in the military is complex, and it is difficult to predict how this will evolve in the coming years. Therefore, doing research on this topic in advance will be essential in attempting to make the process of a potential increased ratio of ethnic diversity in the Norwegian military as smooth as possible.

The women in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion do not seem to prioritise their own careers at the expense of cohesion and teamwork. Instead, we get the impression that they use the high female ratio precisely to build up team cohesion, backing up one another. On the basis of that, we would categorise the majority of the women in this unit as “solidary” rather than “Queen bees”. In this regard, the high female ratio seems to have a very good impact.

The empirical evidence shows that ongoing exposure towards the other sex reduces stereotypical biases, sexual tension and harassment. Some point to the “sibling feeling”; the soldiers experience some kind of brotherly or sisterly relations with each other. Others underline the respect for rules about zero tolerance of fraternisation inside the camp and barracks. A third reason seems to be that the soldiers simply do not “fancy” each other to the same degree after living so closely and intimately, and seeing each other in a number of unflattering circumstances. The exposure often enhances the respect they have for each other, but rarely the sexual tension.

The success of an even gender balance in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion does not necessarily translate well into other units or branches. It is dependent on the unit’s expectations and culture. In this battalion, both male and female soldiers said that they might not have expected a 50/50 distribution, but also that they did not expect a dominating masculinity culture or that there would only be men there either. A couple of the male informants stated during their interview that they felt slightly disappointed at first when they arrived at Ørlandet and saw all the female soldiers. They said that this disappointment quickly disappeared when they got to know the women and got used to the idea.

The strong myth that many women together equals “drama” did not seem to have any particular impact in this unit. There are examples of disagreements, but not as a result of gender characteristics. More research on why so many people seem to believe that women are more “dramatic” than men would also be very interesting and useful in this context. Is this attitude largely accepted in society as a whole, or is it more rooted in male-dominated organisations such as the military? As the female ratio in the Norwegian military will increase, it would be expedient to follow this issue further.

One important point to stress here is that this is a Norwegian study, based on Norwegian soldiers and culture. There is little evidence to say that this knowledge can automatically be translated into units in other countries. The soldiers’ background is of great importance.

Norwegian young people have expectations of equality, equal worth and equal treatment, and, they do not expect gender discrimination when they go into conscript service. This might be different in many other countries. There is a growing interest from abroad in how such things are done in Norway, which underlines the need for more comparative international research to identify the mechanisms influencing the culture of and attitudes in various countries' defence forces.

The kind of people that the military recruits and selects significantly affects the culture, well-being and service. We already have a comprehensive screening process in the Norwegian military. Of an age cohort of more than 60 000 people (Køber 2016: 9), the military has a need for fewer than 10 000 conscripts (Køber 2014: 16, figure 2.7). This means that more than 50 000 people in an age cohort will *not* be drafted into conscription service. The majority of the conscript soldiers in Norway wanted to serve, and a large proportion of them are highly motivated for duty. Even though it might seem that some of the conscripts in the Air and Missile Defence Battalion are selected on the basis of gender, in order to fulfil the female quota required, most signs point to personal qualities as determining who gets selected. These are personal qualities enabling the people in question both to respond adequately to and handle challenging situations, and to be indifferent to an even gender distribution. The issue is not necessarily about *how many* of each sex are included, but rather *what kind* of personal and professional skills they embody. For capacity reasons, this issue has not been scrutinised very closely in this study; given that we can assume that this is a matter of great importance, it would be appropriate to examine it in further studies.

As the example of Norah Vincent showed, gender roles cannot just be turned upside down. She experienced a large gap between her female identity and her male identity. It is of the utmost importance that the military can identify the principal dissimilarities between men and women, in order to approach soldiers in an appropriate and justified manner, for example by bringing into effect sufficiently long toilet breaks for both male and female soldiers, and by making differentiated rules concerning bedtimes in the barracks. A soldier's everyday life is about being well equipped to adapt to every kind of situation. All in all, military life is to a great extent about being able to adapt to different people and circumstances. Therefore it would be unfortunate to rule out gender mixed rooms on the basis of men and women's varying sleeping patterns, for example. The findings in this study show that the positive experiences with this arrangement far exceed the negative.

Appendix A Interview guide

Interview guide Ørlandet³¹

For the conscripts:

Well-being and motivation:

- How do you like it here?
- Why are you here? (Voluntarily?)
- Did you want this particular service?
- Do you like your tasks?
- Would you like to stay in the military?
- Why? Why not?
- What would it take for you to stay in the military?
- What alternative option to a military career do you have in mind?
- How did you experience the “midway-talk”?³² Did you regard the talk as useful to you in any way?
- Do you ever think about how your service statement will be? Does it mean anything to you?

Gender mixed rooms, gender relations:

- Do you live in a mixed room?
- How do you feel about that?
- Advantages?
- Disadvantages?
- Are there other arrangements you believe would have worked better?
- Do you have many friends of the opposite sex?³³
- Did you have many friends of the opposite sex before you came here? For example in school? Or during some afternoon activities?

³¹ The interview guide is a document to which only the researcher has access. She asks the questions as in a conversation; the guide is meant to be a support, in order to make sure the different subjects are covered. The questions are rarely asked as schematically as presented here during the interview. It is more of a loose conversation where the interviewee also steers the conversation in different directions. The researcher does not read out the headlines for the interviewee.

³² This is a talk the commanding officer has with each conscript soldier halfway through the conscription year. However, different units have different routines, and not all soldiers go through it. The talk is supposed to contain feedback and advice, how the soldier is doing his or her work, and to what extent the soldier is fitted for a further career in the military.

³³ In this context, we decided to work with two gender categories, seeing as transgender issues still are quite unknown. We do, however, acknowledge the complexity of gender categorisation.

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- How do you feel about girls/boys?
 - Is there any difference between living in gender separate and living in gender mixed rooms?
 - How do men-only rooms work?
 - How do women-only rooms work?
 - How do you feel about being 50/50 men and women?
 - Does it matter?
 - If so, how?

Social relations:

- Are there any conflicts here?
- What would they be about?
- What is the best thing about being here?
- Do you guys feel united?
- Did you experience anyone saying or doing something that made you sad or upset while being here?
- Did you yourself say or do anything that made anyone else sad or upset while you've been here, that you know about?
- If so, how did you handle it?
- How did the other person handle it?
- Do you guys joke/kid around a lot?
- If so, how? What about?
- Do you find it ok?
- Do you yourself joke around a lot?
- If so, how? What about?

Sex:

- Is sex talked about and joked about a lot?
- How do you feel about that?
- Can you tell me something about your generation's relationship to sex and body (image)?
- How does that work out?
- Is there much sexual tension between the soldiers?
- How do you solve such things?
- Is there anyone here who has an orientation other than heterosexual?
- How is that (would that be) received?
- Is it ok to be gay, lesbian or bisexual here?
- Do you know any transgender persons here? (Or at all?)

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- How do you think a transgender person would be welcomed here?

Ethnicity/religion/equality and equity:

- Is there anyone here with another ethnic background than Caucasian Norwegian?
- Does ethnic background matter here? If, so, how?
- Do you ever discuss or talk about religion and faith?
- Are you treated equally?
- Do you get equivalent treatment?
- Do you think men and women should abide by the same rules?

Differences between men and women (boys and girls):

- Is there a difference between boys and girls?
- Do men and women perform their duties the same way?
- Do you believe men and women think differently?
- Do you think more women in the military is a good idea?
- What is positive about an increase in military women?
- What is negative about an increase in military women?
- Are there any differences between male and female officers?
- If so, what?
- Are military women very competitive?

Personal background and interests:

- How are you friends back home?
- What kind of leisure interests do you have?
- Is exercise (working out) important to you?
- Is the "right diet" important to you?
- Is sex important to you? Do you spend a lot of time thinking about it?
- How do you relate to alcohol? Or other substances? Drugs?

Culture:

- Do you guys from the same platoon go out together?
- What's that like?
- Has something unfortunate or unwanted happened off duty?
- Did you notice any discrimination between the troops?
- How do the different troops get on?
- Are the other battalions more male dominated?
- If I were to say that the military is dominated by a masculinity culture, how would you respond? How do you feel about it? Do you agree? Disagree?

Relationship with officers and non-commissioned officers/cohesion/trust:

- Is there anything you would refrain from talking to an officer about? Something too sensitive, perhaps?
- Is there anything you would keep to yourself, thinking it was too insignificant to tell an officer?
- Would you always approach the closest officer in rank, or could you approach the platoon commander as well? Or the battery commander?
- What do you consider good teamwork?
- What do you consider poor teamwork?
- What does it take to get people to work well together?
- Do you believe people who are alike work better together than people who are different?
- What would be a common platform in the military for successful diverse cooperation?
- How many demotivated people in a group do you need in order to get the whole group demotivated?
- Do you trust (have faith in): (optionally: Is there anyone in the military organisation you don't trust or have faith in?):
 - Co-soldiers?
 - Roommates?
 - Team members?
 - Closest commander?
 - Commanders of higher rank?
 - Top military management?
 - Political leadership?
- How do you define trust answering the last question?

Other:

- Would you recommend this kind of service to others?
- What thoughts do you have regarding gender-neutral conscription?

To officers and non-commissioned officers:

50/50:

- What is the thought behind this experiment?
- Why did the military want to go through with this?
- What has gone according to plan?
- What has not gone according to plan?
- What has surprised you?
- What surprises were positive?
- What surprises were negative?
- What did you have to change?

Gender mixed rooms:

- How did gender mixed rooms come about?
- Why did you not choose gender-segregated rooms?
- How is it working out?
- How do women-only rooms work?
- How do men-only rooms work?
- What kind of arrangements will you keep in the future?

Recruitment and retention:

- What do you think about the retention of female personnel?
- Do you picture a 50/50 ratio among conscripts here in the future?
- Do you believe the approach will lead to an increase in female recruitment?
- How many, and what kind of, soldiers do you wish to keep?

Skills/characteristics:

- What skills and characteristics are you looking for?
- Are there any tasks or jobs women cannot perform in your unit?
- Are there any tasks here which no women, up till now, has been able to perform?
- Are there any tasks only men can do?
- What role do you believe gender has in military life?
- Do gender differences matter?
- Is everybody treated the same?
- Are the soldiers ever treated on an individual basis?
- Is there any difference between how men and women do their jobs?
- Is there any difference between how men and women act socially?

Culture:

- How would you describe the culture here?
- What has changed since the implementation of the 50/50 experiment?
- What positive mechanism do you see?
- What negative mechanisms do you see?
- What should stay the way it is?
- What should change?

“Queen bee” theory:

- What do you think – is there an advantage with women?
- What is positive in an increased female ratio?
- What is negative in an increased female ratio?
- Do you experience any difference between how male and female soldiers perform their duties?
- Are there any differences in male and female officers?
- What kind of friends do you have?
- What kind of leisure activities do you engage in?

Gender-neutral conscription:

- How do you feel about gender-neutral conscription?
- What would be a better arrangement?
- What do you regard as positive about it?
- What do you regard as negative about it?

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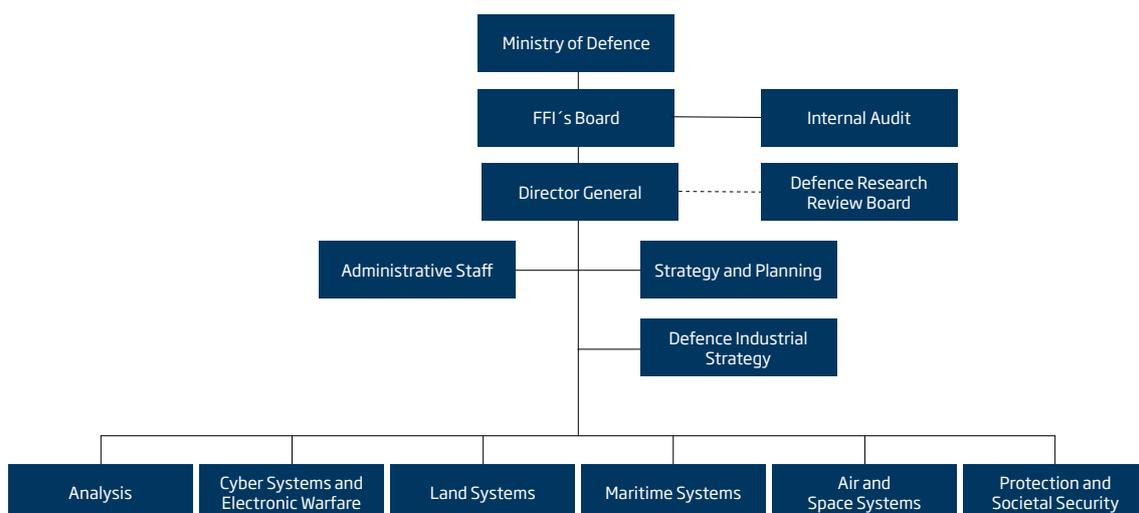
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