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Danish Female veterans

NORDEFKO



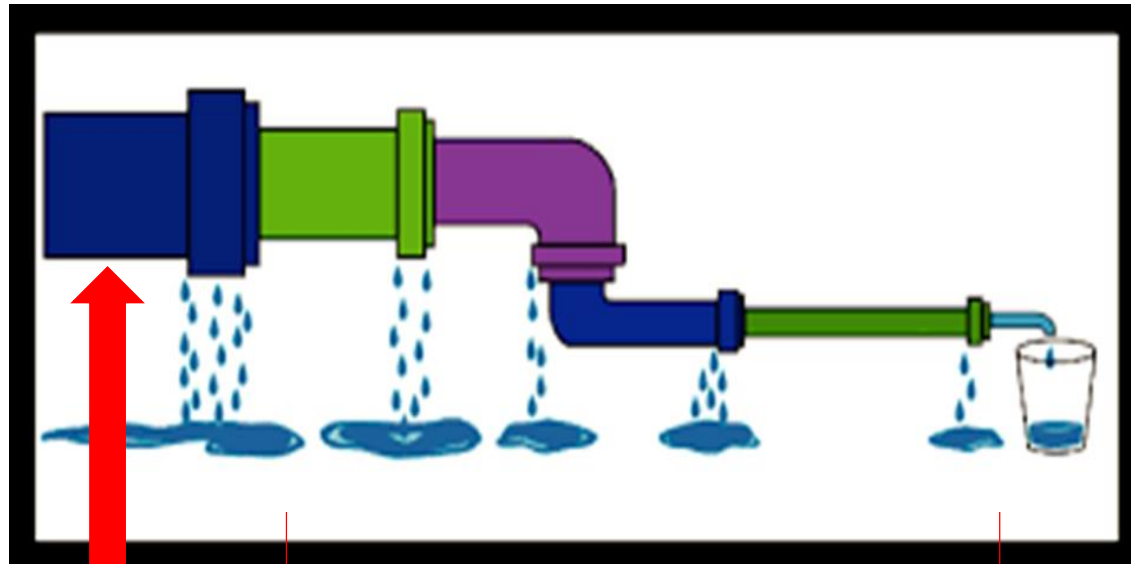
Female Danish Veterans: what can we learn from their experiences?

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‘Female Veterans’ research project sep.2022-march 2023 (project background)



26,8% volunteer female conscripts in 2022

Women on military contract 9,3% in ‘22

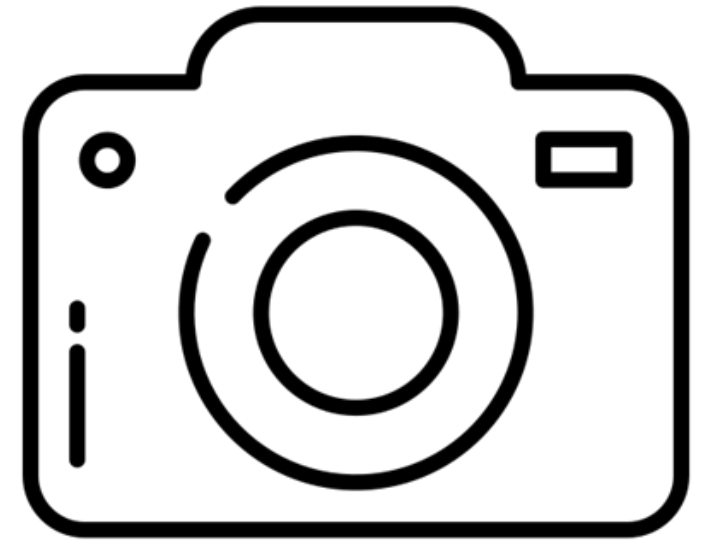
”undersøge, hvordan militære udsendelser påvirker kvindelige soldater og deres ønske om at forblive ansat i Forsvaret efter deres udsendelse”

Med kvalitative metoder...

”Undersøgelsen skal være med til at sikre, at vi opnår en øget forståelse for, hvordan det er at være kvinde i forbindelse med en international udsendelse med Forsvaret. Samtidig er det et håb, at undersøgelsen kan danne grundlag for yderligere forskning med fokus på kønsaspektet, i relation til rekruttering og fastholdelse.”

Data set and methods

- ❖ 25 qualitative interviews
 - ❖ with recently (2018-2022) deployed
 - ❖ female Danish soldiers
 - ❖ conducted Sep-Nov 2022
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- ❖ Using photoelicitation methods
 - ❖ Asking (a.o.) about deployment experiences



Gender blind organisations?

”In the Danish Armed Forces there is only one gender: soldiers!”

BUT: what happens when gender is flagged anyway – sometimes by circumstances outside the influence of DAF?

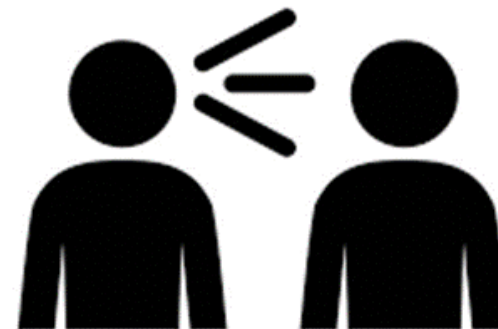
Key finding: gender (re)appears as a significant factor in unexpected ways during deployment!

Gender ‘blindness’ leads to inaction – also when and where action is required!



The report at a glance

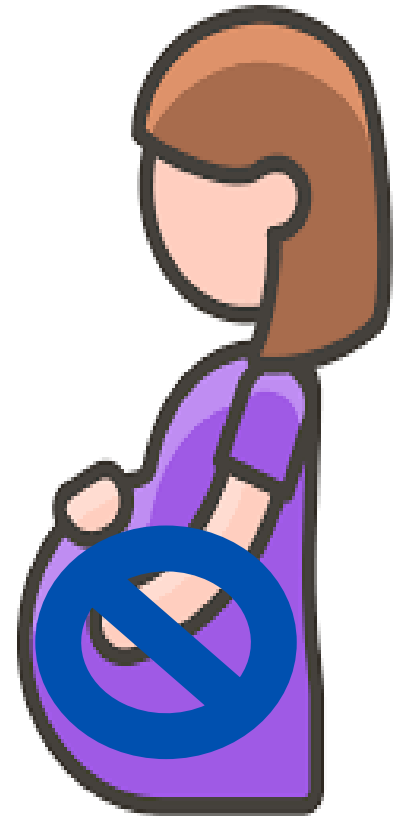
1. Physical work environment and the body at work
2. Psychological work environment and tone
3. The harassment debate and trust in leadership
4. A career in the armed forces



Findings: great support for ‘gender blindness’

- Yes to shared accommodation
- Yes to same physical requirement and tests
- No to any kind of ‘special treatment’

I think there is pressure in relation to... you really want to perform at the same level as the men, because you want to be... equal... we have to be equal. But if you then go and have a child, you're nine months pregnant, then there are certain things you're not able to do. Then you also have to give birth to a child, and go on maternity leave [...]. And if I become weak, that is, ask for special treatment, then it's just a long way to come back.



Findings: great frustration with gender segregation

I was given a phone, so I got a little Nokia, because I lived in the women's building, so that's how they got hold of me. They couldn't come in, or... I don't actually know, at least they had to shout 'man on the floor'. [...] So they could always contact me and then sometimes, when these attacks happened at the camp at night, I had to give a message that I was okay, because they had to pass on messages.



Findings: 'A lighthouse in the desert'

And I was really, I was never afraid in [country 1]. But the fact that there was such a clear difference between men and women in [country 2] made you feel uneasy in a different way. And it was so clear. Men and women bathed together in [country 1]. So it was the same place, and then there was a small booth that you went into. [...] it was natural in another way, it wasn't so messed up. Whereas in [country 2] there was a lock on the door, where only the women knew the code, that made it ugly. So it was... well, it's because I'm well aware that .. well... look at me, so blonde and [young]!... I'm well aware that I light up like a lighthouse in a damn desert!



Findings: The protection in being 'one of the crowd'

We lived in an American base, it's like... women live in one place and the men live in another place, we don't get together. But I was just super cool, I had already said before I left that I had absolutely no desire to sleep alone in those big tents, and especially not because there must be fire signs on the doors. Which means that everyone can go and look, 'well, there lives one woman inside... that person is alone'. So, we got that sorted right away



Lessons learned

- The constant attention
- Paradoxically mixed with official gender blindness

=> no safe haven

=> insecurities ('was I really exposed to discrimination??')



Questions? Comments? Debate!



Full report available for download from
the Danish Veterans' Centre's webpage