How Men Cope as Men

Hannes Brandel & Keren Aptroot

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Handledare: John Lilja
Examinator: Stig "Loffe" Elofsson
Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine how men perceive their male identity affects their coping with unhappiness in Sweden. The hypothesis was that men lack positive masculine role models. This study is qualitative in nature with discourse analysis. The study has used three theories as guidelines to the interview questions and as basis for the analysis. The theories used are, Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and Symbolic Interactionism. The results of the study show that it is not clear whether men use particular coping strategies that relate to their masculinity. However, it indicates that they believe that being a man has an effect on which coping strategies they use.

Keywords: Coping, Hegemonic Masculinity, Identity, Masculinity, Men
Thank you

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Secondly we would like to thank our supervisor for being there, for answering our questions.
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1. The First Chapter

1.1 Introduction

Humankind is represented by two sexes, male and female. The differences and similarities between them have intrigued us from time immemorial, there are endless discussions on the difference between them and the power struggle among them. This research will concentrate on the male part of humanity. It has been argued and can be seen that in most societies the male sex is overrepresented in positions of power. For instance in politics, economics, corporations and even in the family life. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender like this “Gender roles are defined as the social and cultural traits that different societies assign to males and females” (WHO, 2013). According to WHO there are more women suffering from poverty, violence and poor health than men. Men’s superiority is very apparent in the global setting. Therefore one might think it is odd to study men in a context of social work. Sweden considers itself and is generally considered by other nations as a very liberal and open society that supports equality among the sexes. However according to different statistical measurements (Statistiska Centralbyrå, 2009) they are a far bigger majority when considering suicide, criminality and perhaps underrepresented when you look at statistics for seeking help in medical and mental matters. Sweden also has a long tradition of gender studies (Hearn, J. 2012). It seems that in the Swedish society the male role is open to different interpretations. It is politically correct to show the man as being weak while at the same time showing the woman as weak is not politically correct. This raises the question of what gender equality is. The global statistics shows that women suffer from inequality, suppression and poverty, while statistics in Sweden and Western societies also show that men are in a risk zone (Statistiska Centralbyrå, 2009). In continuation of these studies this study will try to find out how the Swedish men perceive their male identity and how it affects their coping with mental distress.
1.2 Aim, Research questions, Hypothesis

**Aim**
The aim of this study is to examine how men perceive their male identity affects their coping with unhappiness in Sweden.

**Research Questions**
- How did the Swedish men cope with unhappiness or psychological distress?
- How do the Swedish men perceive their male identity?

**Hypothesis**
Our hypothesis to this study is that men lack positive masculine role models.

1.3 Glossary

This section contains a list of definitions of terms concepts used in the study.

In this study **Coping** is defined as a process that sometimes involves struggle or an effort while trying to solve a problem.

This study is going to use WHO’s definition of gender and sex.

“*Sex*” refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

"*Gender*" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.” (WHO, 2013)

**Hegemonic masculinity** used to describe most generally accepted characteristics of a man. Hegemonic Masculinity is according to “Carrigan, Connell and Lee, Chapman, Cockburn, Connell, Lichterman, Messner, and Rutherford, involves […] subordination of women, […] dread of and flight from women, A culturally idealized form, […] breadwinning and manhood, […] internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent, […] not all men practice it, though most benefit from it.” (Donaldson, M. 1993. P.645)

This definition has been criticized, because it omits the other complex and different types of masculinities that compete with the hegemonic one. Hegemonic masculinity is
understood as a pattern of practice that allows men to continue dominating women, or at least suppress them. Exclusion did also happen for those men that did not fit the hegemonic definition, e.g. heterosexual men vs. homosexual men.

2. Earlier research

In the starting point of this study there was the naïve belief that masculinity research was scarce. However the number of researches of masculinity and different behaviors of men and the relationships between masculinity and behaviors are growing (Mysha et al, 2006). There is an awaking interest of how men seek mental and physical help from professional or social support networks.

Some of these studies are concerned with the social, physical and mental mechanisms that affect the men’s behaviors and how it is studied and measured. They acknowledge that there is a gap between the support such as clinics and professional help available and the rate in which they are used by men (Nobis & Sanden, 2008. Vogel et al, 2013). Nevertheless the research that has been done comprise more often of the “white western male” and to a lesser extent includes the racial/ethnic minorities. Other concerns mentioned are a lack of variety of masculinity measures. The aim of the current study is to try to understand how Swedish men perceive their male identity and how it affects their coping with mental distress, seeking for similarities, concepts and definitions in the earlier research.

Therefore it is helpful to comprehend the way social and psychological research has advanced with this topic. It will help to identify certain patterns or coping strategies in the research data that have been recognized as associated with male identity.

2.1 Research in Sweden

In Sweden different methods have been used. The Swedish point of view is that the increase of interest in male research is due to an unintended effects of the gender equality strive. It is closely associated with Women and Gender Studies. Of all the research done on men in Sweden up until the year 2000, sixty percent was done by women (Hearn et al, 2012). It could be problematic in the sense that it could be engaged in questions of equality, rather than the masculinity measures and its effect it has on men.
The reason Hegemonic Masculinity theory is used in Swedish research can be explained by the researchers need to have a tool to describing power relations, male hegemony and hierarchical relations among men (Hearn et al, 2012).

There has been a long tradition of public debate, gender and gender equality research in Sweden. Three main phases in the study of men and Hegemonic Masculinity in the forty years of Swedish study: 1960s and 1970s prior to the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity. This phase was mainly concerned with the critical sex role in society and the structural gender power. 1980s and 1990s when the concept Hegemonic Masculinity and other concepts imported from the Anglophone theories was adapted in various studies developed in more depth. 2000s indicating change of attitude in the younger generation towards an additional variety of feminist and gender disparagements other than Connell’s theory of Hegemonic Masculinity. In the last decennia in addition to the masculinity theories the Swedish gender male studies used other theories such as queer theory, discource theory, “third-wave feminism”, science and technology studies, post-colonialism (ibid 2013).

Three main sections appear in the Swedish research; (a)Men, Children, Boys’ and Young Men, (b)Men and violence and (c) Men`s Health (ibid 2013).

Men, Children, Boys’ and Young Men; It is apparent that fatherhood is a significant part of manhood. The “involved fatherhood” has evolved in to an important topic for men and the Swedish society. The extent of involvement of men in child upbringing and its affects is discussed. The society no longer sees the man as only career-oriented. It expects the man to engage in upbringing and child care. The earlier research suggests that man and woman have different roles in the child care. Men often tend to spend more time playing and talking to the children rather than the women who take more responsibility for upbringing and household work (Forsberg, 2009).

Boys and the relationships between boys and boys, boys and girls, and boys and teachers’ have also been studied. The question of how masculinity norms are established, how these are learned with in the society and individual level is explored. The phenomena of boys underachievement and the “anti-study culture” (anti-pluggkultur) has also been studied (Björnsson, 2005).

Men and violence; the majority of research done on men and violence in Sweden are inspired or originated from radical feminist theoretical framework. Some of these issues raised in these studies are violence in the family, relationship breakup, and men’s violence against women (Hearn et al, 2012).
Although it seems that there is a lack of research on the connection between masculinities and men’s health-related issues, the interest appears to grow (Nobis & Sanden, 2008; Vogel et al, 2013). The facts that there is a difference in health in the different genders are considered to be partly biological factors. There are the obvious differences such as sex genitals, as well as more detailed differences. Thesis from the Swedish medical university Karolinska Institute shows a difference in the brain neurotransmitter among men and women (Jovanovic, 2008). According to the institute, it can affect mental health (Ibid 2008). However, social gender patterns are an important factor (Nobis & Sanden, 2008; Vogel et al, 2013). The Men’s Health section of research also deals with the question of men and risk-taking, lowliness and unwillingness to seek help. The theory of Hegemonic Masculinity has been used in analysis and for recognizing certain patterns and attitudes in men’s behavior (Hearn et al, 2012). It has been noted that there is a change in attitudes concerning the described hegemonic pattern (Nobis & Sanden, 2008).

2.2 Research in the United States

In the United States, several journals of the topic masculinity and men have been founded in the last decennium. The interest of men’s depression and men’s health is becoming more popular in the media and academia, likewise the willingness of spreading knowledge on men’s suffering. The studies done in this realm often used quantitative, statistics and non-observational methods. Therefore, there is a concern with the different methods used in the psychological studies of men and masculinity (Mysha et al, 2006). New theories are emerging regarding social scientific psychology of men and masculinity. There is an attempt to correlate masculinity measures and other variables, reiterating the significance of the awareness in the larger social context. Some of the topics studied are e.g. stress-related to the nature of masculinity socialization, therapy for men with gender role conflicts (the gender role conflicts is discussed in the Hypothesis chapter), gender role stress and masculinity ideology effects. Men tend to avoid seeking help from mental health services. Seeking help is very much dependent on recommendations by friends and family especially concerning mental health. This raises the question whether male friends or male family members indorse other male to seek help from health services (Vogel et al, 2013). Men are less likely to have being referred by other male friends or family to receive help. Up to 2006 the studies done in the United States used mainly quantitative and correlation methods. The diversity of population was perhaps not sufficient in the
sense that in an overall viewpoint the studies were not inclusive enough of all minorities (Mysha et al, 2006).

More so only a few masculinity measures were being consistently used (Ibid 2006). It is important to try to be unbiased and open. It is preferable to collect diverse samples and to use different methods to enhance the identification of patterns in the masculinity-related characteristics (Ibid 2006). The earlier research attempts to find a relationship between manhood and seeking help in health and mental related matters. This is done by analyzing the similarities and differences in the way they behave and the different relationships they have. (Mysha et al, 2006. Nobis & Sanden, 2008. Vogel et al, 2013).

2.3 Hypothesis

In this chapter two hypotheses extracted from themes and results of the earlier research will be discussed. In the earlier research, attitudes and features of men were related to the level of seeking help regarding health-related issues. Some of these features are for example powerful, self-reliant, strong, independent and tough. There is an attempt to relate level of masculinities to levels of risk taking, mortality and self-care (Nobis & Sanden, 2008. Månsdotter el al, 2009).

2.4 Hypothesis 1

According to the first hypothesis, gender has self-evidence effects on the everyday life of the individual. The Hegemonic Masculinity theory describes the man as the dominant in society and of subordinating women. More so it describes masculinity attitudes such as powerful, independent, self-reliant, strong and tough (Nobis & Sanden, 2008).

The Hegemonic Masculinity is the society’s understanding of one type of man that is acknowledged as the general role of man. It entails qualities of “perfection” and therefore it appears to be hard to obtain. In the case of illness a man can experience a decline in his masculinity leading to sadness, anxiety and even fear. Themes identified are body awareness, the creation of self-reliance, and feeling of freedom (ibid 2008).

**Body awareness:** Physical activities, fitness are considered highly important.

Furthermore keeping the body in good shape is a means to cope with life demands and to avoid sickness.

**The creation of self-reliance:** Being able to take care of yourself and be independent is regarded as a significant aspect of men’s attitude. However having friends and family and to be able to talk to them is a means to feel relaxed and regarded to be significant for the creation of self-reliance.
Feeling of freedom: Feelings of freedom and the freedom of choice are a central male feature. More so, it comprises of a conflict. Seeking help can be experienced as an invasion of one’s freedom (ibid 2008).

2.5 Hypothesis 2

The second hypotheses discussed are gender role conflict and stigma. Stigmas here are modified with the version of the Perceived Devaluation-Discrimination (PDD, Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout & Dohrenwend, 1989. Cited in Brohan, 2010). Gender Role Conflict (GRC) is described as strict or overly restraining male gender roles. Four components of GRC: “(a) restrictive emotionality (RE); (b) restrictive affectionate behavior between men (RABBM); (c) success, power, and competition (SPC); and (d) conflict between work and family relations (CBWFR; O’neil et al 1986)” (Vogel et al, 2013. P.2)

The GRC can to some extent explain the low rate of men referring other men to seek support from health services. The relations, attitudes and behavior mentioned above have some affect regarding their health. These are factors that can enhance understanding in their struggle some men have with help seeking. Moreover men that were reported as more GRC associated are also more reluctant to be influenced by stigma in attitudes towards mental health issues (Vogel et al, 2013).
3. Theoretical Perspectives

3.1 Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity used to describe a particular type of man. A type of man that was dominant, a tough man, a violent man and also the bread-winner for the family. This definition has been criticized though, because it omits the other complex and different types of masculinities that compete with the hegemonic one.

Although Connell (1995) states that the term masculinity assumes that one’s behavior results from the type of person one is. He gives examples of an un-masculine person not being oppressive or violent, rather peaceful and equivalent. Not being interested in sexual conquest or sports.

Hegemonic masculinity was originally understood as a pattern of practice that allowed men to continue dominating women, or at least suppress them. Exclusion did also happen for those men that did not fit the hegemonic definition, e.g. heterosexual men vs. homosexual men.

It has since then been reformed to focus more on gender hierarchies and how the different types of masculinity affect each other. Worthy to note is that hegemonic masculinity is very often looked at from a feministic perspective to see the relation and inequalities between women and men.

The concept of which masculinity traits that actually are hegemonic have started to change during the past years. The definition of a man that he should be violent, strong and tough is slowly giving space to other traits.

3.2 Coping Theory – Transactional model of stress and coping

There are two mechanisms of coping. One of them is a conscious effort made to bring about the solution of a problem, the other one is an automatic response based upon previous experience. As quoted by Murphy, his definition of coping is “a process, involving effort, on the way toward solution of a problem, as contrasted on the one hand with ready-made adaptational devices such as reflexes or, on the other hand, with complete and automatized mastery and resulting competence” (Pargament, 1997. p.87).

Everyone has different strategies when coping with stressors (definition: demands by external and internal environment that upsets the balance inside of us. This affects our physical and psychical well-being), these strategies have been based upon our earlier experiences in life, our knowledge and how we have handled stressful situations before.
There are three functions of our coping responses, they are to modify situations, control the meaning of situations and to control the stress (Antonovsky, 1979. p.194). We use our coping strategies to decrease the intensity of the stressors as well as to change the situation.

According to the Transactional model of stress and coping there are 5 phases in a coping situation (Glanz et al, 2008. p.214-215). The first one is to identify the stressor (the emotional threat). The second one is to estimate the intensity of the stressor. The third phase is to review all of the available coping responses that are suitable for the situation. The fourth phase is to implement the chosen response. The fifth and final phase is to evaluate how effective the response was, if it worked or not. If it did not work then one will go back to the third phase and repeat until the emotional threat is gone.

At first we try our different coping strategies on a new situation sub-consciously, everything that we have done until now and learned by experience will work in different situations (Glanz et al, 2008. p.217-219). Though not all coping strategies fit every situation, which is why each person has different strategies to cope with different situations. Stress symptoms can be compared with our immune system. If we feel stress then our automatic coping strategies haven’t worked and they have failed to cope with the infection (uOttawa, 2012).

There are two types of coping, active and passive. When one actively copes with a stressful situation e.g. a bad teacher one takes action, talks to the teacher, talks to the teacher’s boss, try to communicate with people who can actually make a change in the situation. If one would passively cope with the same situation (ibid 2012) one would talk to friends, classmates and close ones of how bad that teacher is (to get it out of your system) but make no other effort to change the situation.

There are coping strategies that only work to mitigate the emotional stress for a short-term period. Like in the last example with the passive coping, the symptom will be taken care of by getting all the feelings out of one’s system. But in the long-term the teacher will still be there and will still continue to be a significant stressor. The active example however is much more suited for a long-term solution since an effort is actually made to talk to the teacher and the teacher’s boss.
3.3 Symbolic Interactionism

The theory of Symbolic interactionism is very useful when trying to understand how humans perceive themselves in their surroundings. The theory provides some explanation of the way humans are able to reflect on themselves and how the society is affecting these reflections. People create meaning to the way they behave, to their environment through their relationship to each-other. It is expressed by the way that we have different symbols for different people for example father, carpenter, or a lawyer, homosexual, divorce or married.

These descriptions could be interpreted in many ways depending on symbols they represent for the ones interpreting them. We perceive the world through attaching labels to other things and other people, co-worker can be labeled as lazy, loyal or helpful. The ways we relate to that person depend on the label we gave to him or her, and that in turn depends on the general symbols built around these behaviors (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism is concerned with the way these labels are created and explains that it is shaped by language and socialization. These labels are created by us but then we perceive them as reality.

The process can be divided into three sections, the first is; (a) Meanings of objects such as table, mug or flower. (b) Meanings of social objects such as a father, a student, a partner, an enemy or a friend. (c) Abstract objects such as moral value, philosophies, and beliefs. Secondly is the social interactionism process the communication among people. Finally it is the way the individual understands and interpret the society understanding. The individual is engaged with communication among each other and creating symbols through their whole life (Blumer, 1969).

Another important aspect is the description of the “I” and the “Me”. According to the symbolic interaction approach the self can be divided to two parts the “I” and the “Me”. The “me” is the opinions and attitude of people around me, how they think of me, it is the collective understanding that is accepted and adopted by society.” the nature of the “I” which is aware of the social “Me”” (Mead 1972 [1934]) is to process this knowledge and established individuality end self. Mead1972 [1934] asks if it is possible for a single self to exist, he identifies the self as a certain organic existence and feeling-consciousness and referring to them as objective. This can give the impression that the single self does exist.
Nevertheless we understand ourselves through our perspective of our surrounding environment. That is to say that the self can have an opinion on its own experience and it will affect the way the self understands its world. The collective other creates the “me” it is the society’s tool to control the individual and is essential to preserve the structure of society as society is made by people (Mead 1972 [1934]).

4. Methodology
4.1 Preliminary understanding

When choosing the subject for our study we knew we wanted to make a study about men. We both had thoughts of how men think and how they are perceived by others as well as by themselves. During our education two years ago we did a study together about alcoholism. During our participation in an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) meeting we noticed that there were more men than women present. One of us is working part-time in custody and it was also very apparent that there are more men in custody than women.

We questioned why commercials and tv-shows like Simpsons, Svensson Svensson depict men as stupid while depicting women as smart.

The authors of this study are a man and a woman with a big age difference and different life experiences. Different contemplations contributed to the discussion prior to the study. The man has been questioning his role in society because of his experience when accounting different expressions about men. He noted the majority of them were negative and felt a sense of hopelessness in his faith to the male role-model.

This makes us biased in the sense that we started the study with a lot of feelings and judgments on how men are and how the society constructs our opinions on men and women. We wanted to do a qualitative study to have the human contact while allowing us to see the interviewees face-to-face, enhancing the human interaction experience.
4.2 Research design

This study attempts to learn how Swedish men perceive their manhood and how it affects the way they cope with unhappiness. The research is based on the opinions and experiences of the men interviewed. The goal was to use their perspective to try to learn more of the way society is structured. As the study was going to use the objects’ point of view it felt helpful to use phenomenology as a theoretical perspective for the framework of the research. Phenomenology is one of the perspectives that aim to understand the meanings in scientific knowledge and research (Patton, 2002). Phenomenologists are classically interested in recording the person’s experience life world phenomena (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009. p.14). However the researchers felt a need to look deeper within the data collected and implementing broader tools to analyze it, focusing on the words and concepts used. Thusly the Hermeneutical theoretical perspective was introduced in the study’s outline. Hermeneutics is a complex perspective and includes different methods of analyzing which seeks depth and meaning to a given viewpoint (Patton, 2002. Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

The aim of the study can be divided into three topics. The first theme is men, focusing on one gender and therefore requiring a theory that can apprehend and describe certain masculinity natures. The second theme is identity; here the theory selected will help to detect the role that society has on the individual. The third theme is the cognitive coping and therefore coping theory was chosen.

The research was done in a qualitative method using in-depth interviewing. The purpose of choosing this method was to try and gather data text given by different men, with the attempt to get deeper descriptions of their life apprehensions. Discourse Analysis was used to analyze the results (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009. p.226). Throughout the research process there was a flowing dialog between the researchers.
4.3 Mode of procedure

The qualitative research interview tries to comprehend phenomena from the subjects’ perspective to “unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their life world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009. p.1). This research collected data by interviewing the subjects focusing on their description, thoughts and their stories. This can give the impression of a simple straight-forward process of gathering stories, reading them and documenting them. On the contrary, qualitative research interview is far from being simple. It is a process that contains many challenges from choosing the aim to understanding the results and analyzing them and finally theorizing them (Patton, 2002. Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Interview questions were selected from theories and earlier research to fit the aim. After selecting the questions we tried them on each other. That was done to try to feel what experiences arose from the questions, testing whether they were too inquisitive or not. These mock-interviews also had the purpose of allowing the researchers to practice their art of interviewing (Patton, 2002).

4.3.1 Sampling

Since the study is about how men perceive their identity and how they cope with mental stress it was apparent that the main interest is of the male psyche. Therefore early in the planning of the study the goal was to interview only men. When planning the study many questions arose and long discussions on which kind of male should be in focus. To make the study possible it was necessary to decide on what to direct the study on. Since we live in Sweden and the study is done in Sweden it was decided to focus on the ethnic Swedes.

This choice was not taken lightly as many questions, such as how can a healthy functioning individual contribute to social work research. We decided that by doing in-depth interviews trying to gather up-to-date meaningful thoughts and feelings of individuals can contribute to human knowledge and therefore are useful for Social work research.

4.3.2 Snowball sampling

No special criteria was discussed but there was a preference for men over 27 years old. That is because there is an interest to hear men that have experienced being an adult for some time.
Snowball sampling is basically contacting people who will then help the researchers get into contact with other people suitable for the research. The sampling was done in a random snowball way as described by Patton (2002, p.237). However only one organization was contacted as there was no need for the organizations expertise, that is to say it was just a means to get in contact with men that were willing to share their ideas and feelings.

Contact was established with a representative of an organization by email. This organization is an open social forum only for men. An e-mail was sent to the representative, in the letter the purpose of the study was explained, the ethical guidelines were outlined. The representative forwarded the letter to his companions that generated two interviewees.

### 4.3.3 Opportunistic sampling

There was a need to have more interviewees and therefore other strategies were considered. One interviewee was enlisted in the train station by one of the researchers. The man was casually known to the researcher and was very positive to take part in the research.

The last interviewee was the neighbor of one of the researchers.

### 4.3.4 Interviewing

A combined form of standardized open-ended interview and an interview guide was used during the data collection (Patton, 2002, p.343-348). The interview guide was prepared in such a way that there were some questions that we definitely wanted answers on, or rather we wanted the interviewees to share their story and point of view about their life and experiences that they had. We had some specific core themes to the question that was coping, identity of man, ideals, pressure.

The researchers asked the same questions to all of the interviewees while the standardized open-ended interview was used in such a way that probes could be used based upon the answers of the respondents. So that if there was some part of the question that wasn’t fulfilled or something that needed to be clarified the probes were improvised on the spot.

The narrative interviewing technique was needed because the research question was based upon how the subjects themselves feel that their identity as a man has influenced their coping strategies. So we wanted them to be able to tell us their story about how
they have handled problems they have faced in their every-day life and if they feel that their identity influenced their actions.

The interviews were carried out in various settings, sometimes in a setting the interview was more familiar with such as a home or at work and sometimes the interview took place in a more neutral environment such as the university library.

It could be possible that an interview with a 46 year old woman can yield different answers than with a 24 year old man.

### 4.3.5 Transcribing

The interviews were conducted with only one of the researchers present and no notes were taken, the researchers relied solely upon the recorded audiophiles. The researcher focused on observing the body language of the respondent so as not to miss anything vital being conveyed by the respondent. All interviews were done in Swedish and they were transcribed to Swedish. The transcriptions included as much as possible from the respondents narrative, the occasional “eh” and “err” were omitted because it would take time to translate every sound the respondent made. Every word that was said was transcribed though and when the “eh” and “err” was vital to convey what the respondent wanted to deliver in his message it was also transcribed. Interrupted sentences and grammar mistakes made by the respondent was transcribed and not changed to keep the authenticity of the interview.

The time constraints placed upon the researchers did not allow them to send the transcriptions back into the field for a review by the interviewees themselves. And when names did turn up during the transcription they were changed into some other name to preserve the confidentiality of the persons mentioned, and to make sure that ethical considerations were taken into account (Patton, 2002. p.407). After the study was completed the recorded interviews were discarded.

### 4.4 Tools of analysis

**Coding and Discourse analysis**

Kvale (2009) cites “the organization of language into certain kinds of social bonds” (Parker 2005. p. 88). The language and the words used by any kind of organization, group or society could be very revealing in the attempt to understand the sources of impacts of that society. The language develops and is constantly changing reflecting on the society’s attitudes, beliefs, ideology and the relationships between the people. Discourse analysis also attempts to highlight the contrasts among the discourse and
within it. Similar to dialectics though the Discourse analysis seems to claim that a change or development in society is due to a contradiction (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Therefore it tries to extract the discourse from the data aiming to uncover the sources of change and the effect of it. It tries to distinguish the way a discourse affects views and dogma.

These perspectives can be used to analyze data such as interview, story or a description of an image. It can give the researcher another tool in identifying different metaphors that relate to the subjects environment. It is a way to recognize how the discourses influencing the subjects or even recognize discourses created by the subjects. Since discourse analysis is mainly interested in what the reason is and the meaning of the given text, what is the reason for saying this? Why is it being said? How can we understand the text? Are there different ways of understanding it? (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) Is there anything in the text that can suggest a power struggle such as an ideology or relationships between the people and so on?

When planning the study the authors were not so aware of the processes associated with the Discourse analysis. Therefore the questions asked in the interviews were guided by the theories rather than adding the consideration of discourse interview methods. Discourse interview methods are designed in such a way that will inspire struggles or confrontations between different discourses in the subject response (Ibid 2009).

The transcriptions were read many times and to enhance validity the first step of analyzing, reading and coding was done separately by the two researchers. We began with reading the text as a whole to understand what it is about and taking notes. First major themes were recognized and they were related to a discourse. Then smaller codes were established by highlighting parts of the text and words and commenting about them noting analytical ideas.

The themes were reviewed again. The discourse analysis process began when the themes and the key words were associated with different discourse. Attitudes, beliefs or ideology that were contradictory to one another were emphasized to find out what discourse is most significant for the research question. Then the researches met and finalize the analyzing of the data. Together the researches were looking for relationships between codes, grades of importance and conflicting codes also for the themes relationship to the earlier research, theories and the research question.
4.5 Essay credibility

4.5.1 Validity

To validate a research is to question its credibility and whether it has addressed and answer the research questions in a valid way (Grinnel, 2001). Kvale & Brinkman (2009) describes the process of validating as a procedure that follows the researcher through the whole study. A research is a long route that begins with careful planning and considering of aim. Then matching reliable theoretical assumptions and adding supporting valid theories to come up with the research questions. Selecting the appropriate methods that will produce the data needed to answer the research questions. The valid ethical perspective is to ensure that the knowledge produced by the study is valid and is contributing to humanity and avoiding harming people. This ethical perspective was highlighted when considering social work research (Grinnel, 2001). These considerations mentioned above were thought about and reflected upon and were used as guidelines throughout the planning and performing of the study. The methods used were qualitative. The level of validity of a qualitative data gathering can be argued. The qualitative interview is based on human experience and is depending on time and place. It is not static, rather organic and shifting. However the interviews were designed thoroughly, based on the theory chosen and the earlier research. The interviewers encouraged the subjects to reflect and to give a deeper answer. This was done by giving them time to think and asking follow-up questions to ensure the quality of the interviewing (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The data collection produced valid answers as the questions were formed in a way that would deliver answers of perspectives and experiences, which they did. The interviews were done in Sweden, in the Swedish language. The interviews were transcribed word to word and furthermore they were listened to by both researchers (ibid 2009). However since the research is done in English the data had to be translated to English. This could have affected the reliability of the data since the translation was done by the researchers and could have allowed for different interpretations. Validation includes the credibility of the researcher and whether the report produced answers for the research questions (ibid 2009). In the study process the researchers were trying to maintain objectivity by reflecting and discussing with each other. The researchers discussed and reminded each other of the possible different points of view. The researchers took great effort in making notes of all the different stages in the process of the study. Thus the report did generate valid answers that answered the study questions and aim.
4.5.2 Reliability

Kvale & Brinkman (2009, p.327) defines reliability as whether the findings in a research study can be replicated by other researchers at another time following the same procedure. Is every action taken during the research made in such a way that the knowledge produced can be considered to be reliable?

This study is of a qualitative nature and is making use of narrative inquiries, hence it is important to note that the results are based upon the respondent’s experiences and view of our world. Another factor affecting the reliability of the study is that the researchers weren’t professional researchers but in fact students at the time the study was made (Patton, 2002).

Since leading questions were not going to be used as an interview technique the researchers have been very cautious when making the interview questions. Since the interviews were going to be made in a narrative way the questions were more aimed at producing knowledge of life-experiences and feelings from the respondents own point of view (See syllabus for interview questions).

The interview questions were discussed and analyzed at great length to avoid having any leading questions that might influence the respondent’s answers. To fully understand what were being said follow-up questions was asked to ensure that the interviewers had understood the response as the respondent intended.

The interviews were made with only one researcher present and were recorded using a recording-device. It should be noted that the fact that the interviewers were of a different sex and of a different age could have affected the reliability of the data.

The interviews were then transcribed by one of the researchers, the reliability of these transcriptions could be increased by having more people transcribe the interviews and then compare the transcripts (Kvale & Brinkman 2009. p.185).

The analysis has been made by the researchers themselves and the reliability could also here have been further increased by having a third party analyze the findings so that the findings could be cross-checked.

4.5.3 Generalizability

To undertake an inquiry of this magnitude and investigate persons, perhaps breaching their peace of mind and not generalizing the findings seems reckless and unfair. Therefore it was important for the authors to argue that the findings of this study are generalizable. Kvale (2009) describes Stake’s explanation of generalization. Stake
(2005) gives three types of generalizations; Statistical, Naturalistic and Analytical. This study was conducted in a qualitative manner, four persons belonging to the same gender and the same ethnic group was interviewed. These samples cannot be generalized in a statistical way nor was it the purpose of the research in any given time. However the Naturalistic generalization as Stake describes it can be used. The results are based on the subjects experience and expectations that can be “verbalized, thus passing from tacit knowing to explicit propositional knowledge” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009. p. 262). The authors hope that the results of this study can be a contribution to written knowledge concerning men’s experience of their coping and identity. Another probable way to generalize these results is the Analytical method of generalization which is based on analysis and consistencies and variances. One can support an opinion or en experience through theory and make them clearer (ibid 2009). In this case a theoretical basic generalization is applied. When using symbolic interactionism as an accepted theory, and adding hegemonic masculinity and coping theory to verify the data and analyzing the relationship between the theory and results, the study can be generalized in a naturalistic and analytical manner.

4.6 Ethical standpoints

The ethical issues were considered in the starting point of the study. All studies have the obligation to conduct a research in an ethical manner (Grinnell, 2001). The ethical guidelines of the social work profession were adopted (Parker, 2005) in all of the study’s planning process and in the performance of the study. In the planning of the study finding an aim that could contribute to the social work and human knowledge was an important issue (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Social work research unlike other associated disciplines has no particular theme or methodology. Hence the social work profession has a “unique commitment to a contextual understanding of people, an explicit value base that emphasizes human rights and human dignity” (D’cruz & Jones, 2007. p.17). The aim of the study was carefully considered and it was done to avoid unnecessary intrusion of people and their personal lives. As the topic of this study is highly personal the wellbeing of the interviewees was prioritized. The interviews were conducted in en empathic manner (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interviewees were informed of the studies aim and of its concept. Before beginning the interviews the subjects were told that they will be anonymous. Furthermore they were told that they can stop the interview at any given time if they feel uncomfortable in any way. The
protection of the interviewees’ confidentiality was prioritized and was taken into consideration in all levels of the study (ibid 2009).

5. Results and Analysis

This chapter will present the results and analysis of the study. First by giving a background of the interviews and the interviewees and then presenting the results and analysis in three separate sections. The sections will include one of the theories chosen. The interview questions of the study were designed to produce answers that could be viewed from the theories chosen. After gathering the data the answers were divided to their corresponding theory. Some answers could be used with all three of the theories, but to make it simple in the report the same answers weren’t used in two different theories. The first theory was used to describe different masculine behaviours and attitudes. The second theory was used to analyze the way that the men coped and which strategies they used. The third theory was used to understand the way the interviewees saw themselves as a part of society. Discourse analysis was then used to extract opposing discourses within each theory.

Background of interviewees

Interviewee A
Work: government employee working with client service
Age: 33 years old
Family situation: Living with his female partner, no children
Family history: Parents divorced when he was young and they had new partners, 3 siblings and several half-siblings

Interviewee B
Work: Physician – Surgeon
Age: 37 years old
Family situation: Divorced, 3 children
Family history: 2 siblings (1 brother, 1 sister)
**Interviewee C**

Work: Lawyer

Age: 48 years

Family situation: Married, 2 daughters

Family history: 1 younger brother, many relatives, raised on the countryside

**Interviewee D**

Work: Carpenter - Unemployed

Age: 47 years

Family situation: Divorced, 1 son, sole custody

Family history: 2 siblings (1 brother, 1 sister), raised on the countryside

### 5.1 Hegemonic Masculinity Theory

Hegemonic masculinity is an abstract concept and is very hard to understand why and if it has such a strong influence on how men perceive their identity. According to Antonio Gramsci (1905) hegemonic is a “common sense” collective understanding. For example nobody goes with two different socks. We all agree that one wears same coloured socks, which is the collectively accepted understanding. Another example he gives is the acceptance of different power structures in the society, we all agree on the authority of a judge to sentence someone. Gramsci in his time believed that it was the high society that defined these rules.

Our opinion is that today one can say that in Sweden it will be the big companies with a lot of power and the media, probably also the academia that defines the hegemony.

D gives an example and describes what he thinks is a good male role model.

"One can look up to some people it can be done, one can do that. But that's mostly because one watches television. Some journalist that seems to be... like Leif GW Person he has much intelligence ... he makes people uncomfortable yet he does it his way. Him I can say I admire a bit if one can say so. As a people's journalist, I think.” – Interviewee D

The interviewee continues to explain that Leif was in live tv-program when he promptly resigned from the show because he stands up for himself. D thinks that this was great that he stood up for himself, he admires this.
"With clothes and stuff...like that... but sometimes you feel like putting on a pink shirt, because it was fashionable it was a little cool to have a pink polo shirt on or something like that." – Interviewee A

This is a good example of the understanding of a hegemonic masculinity can change and how it is in this case influenced by clothes companies.

This example shows how a feminine colour is taken and adapted into something masculine by making a statement by wearing what you want, no matter what someone else might think. However it represents two discourses. First, the man is masculine when he goes his way. Second, can a colour be gender-defined.

A says that his partner says “if we have a daughter together, you cannot buy her pink clothes”, however A thinks that buying pink clothes for a baby girl is rather awesome. Although these two discourses are not necessarily competing, they are however struggling against each other. Whether one should do what one want to, to preserve their manhood or I give it up for the benefits of the so called gender-colour.

B gives examples of other men that make him feel ashamed of being a man himself. He tells of other couples that went through separation where the man acted in a despicable manner using their role in the relationship in a negative way. He also describes the negative behaviour of one of his distant friends:

“he wants to be dominant, he likes gadgets he likes being the one who brings home the money and preferably his wife is dependent of him and bababababa much power .... which I think is unsympathetic”. – Interviewee B

B admits that it is very likely that he judges men harder than women and even notes that that could be a male-chauvinistic attitude in itself. However he says that in the examples he brought forth the men have acted much worse than the women. This represents one discourse describing a negative image of man defined by the interviewees. The discourse according to the data gathered says that some men are dominant, abusive towards women, don’t do a lot of housework.

However through the data another discourse appears depicting a positive image of masculinity. Describing qualities such as humble, kind, chivalrous and protective.

“I always go first down the stairs and that is a sort of thing that, as I have been told that it is a typical gentlemanly thing to do. Because you should go before the lady when going downstairs in case she falls she will fall upon the man, and then walk behind her when going upstairs. A little silly though. But one should help anyone.” – Interviewee A
After this statement A goes on to explain how important it is to help anyone you can as part of being a gentleman.

Here B admits that he might judge men harder than women and that raises the question why. Does that mean women lack something, do they need more protection? Or do we not expect them to be the one at fault. One can relate that theory to the second quote also that is to say whether you describe masculinity in a negative aspect or a positive aspect. The feminine is in a sense the weaker gender. Is it so that chivalry according to the second quote includes caring for the whole society and not necessarily women?

5.2 Coping Theory

The interview questions were formulated in a way that didn’t generate sufficient data deep enough to analyze the actual coping process as presented in chapter 3.2 according to Glanz et al (2008). Antonovsky (1979) mentions three functions of our coping responses, these are to control the stress, control the meaning of situations and modify situations. The data did give provide knowledge about why certain coping strategies were taken. More so it provided data on whether it was passive or active coping strategies the interviewees used (uOttawa, 2012).

Pargament (1997) describes coping as an effort made to find the solution of a problem. This process can either be reflexive responses based upon what has worked in similar situations before, or trying an altogether new strategy when the reflexive response failed to yield positive results.

B talked about his divorce, he described a crisis in the marriage that occurred a year and a half ago. His wife had thoughts about a divorce. Now it came up again and ended with a divorce. B comments on how hard it was for him and he mentioned that his wife thought he should seek professional help. He went to the company health care and got to speak to a psychologist, he met him three times but felt that it didn’t help him anyway.

“I was thinking hmm I don’t know how I will react to this and I haven—...I can’t have a breakdown. So it’s maybe best to go and speak with someone, in an early stage.” – Interviewee B

What he described that helped him instead was talking a lot with his wife. And also talking with friends and going to meetings in an organization that he is a member of (an organization exclusive to men only). He also mentioned that the final divorce was not a shock and was not felt as emotional as a year and a half ago. Therefore he could approach it in a more analytical way. Since he had been in a similar situation before, his
reflexive response this time was to utilize a strategy that he knew was more effective. Although this could be understood as a passive coping strategy as described by uOttawa (2012) it is probably the most effective coping strategy in this situation because the separation was a fact and couldn’t be changed.

A tells of a conflict he had at work with his boss, he says that his boss often does not understand him and he feels that he is being judged unfairly. This has happened several times. When it does happen A goes home and updates his CV and thinks about searching for a new job. The next day everything feels alright again, however he says it hasn’t happened for a long time it might happen again.

“But there was a period when I felt at least once in a week that “this is it, I am leaving”. But...then it passes.” - Interviewee A

This could be understood as a passive strategy in the sense that nothing is done to change the situation. He felt better after a day but the situation kept coming back.

A describes another situation where he had problems cooperating with a co-worker. He booked a meeting with the colleague once every other week to drink some coffee to have a chat.

“And then he got to know me and it became easier to work with him after that, much easier. But I believe in speaking your mind, I am not a bully I rather show my weaker side and show that I...am not so dangerous.” Interviewee A

This is an example of an active coping strategy which actually changed the situation to solve the problem. Furthermore A states that this is a coping strategy that he continues to use because it provided the positive result he wanted.

The data yielded examples of coping strategies, such as:
Sleeping, drinking alcohol, talking about the problem with friends and family, not talking about the problem, moving on.

D described how he lost a chance at gambling and nearly won 2.5 million SEK but didn’t because he was lazy and didn’t turn in a ticket.

“No no no, I just chilled and then I just moved on. It took about a week.” [...] “Most of the time I slept. I slept it away. Yes, I slept most of the time.” – Interviewee D
B described one time he drank excessively while he was coping with the divorce.
"I have kind of in one situation for example drunk alcohol in a way that I haven’t done in many years.” – Interviewee B

C describes who he talks to when he faces dilemmas.
“Obviously with colleagues and yes with family sometimes. That is it. Those who are around you simply. It can also be colleagues you don’t work together with but that you meet as to speak. Not every day but sometimes.” – Interviewee C

"My basic beliefs is that you should share such things with others I can’t imagine not talking about it with someone if it is important.” – Interviewee C

D’s response to the question if he talks to someone when feeling sad or upset.
“Gosh... I never talk to anyone. No no no. I prepare myself. I never speak to anyone, never. Never done and never will. I talk to myself.” – Interviewee D

D was asked if he wished he had coped differently in the past.
"No, one cannot dig in the past, it doesn’t work. One would go crazy” – Interviewee D

All of these coping strategies whether they are active or passive are not necessarily to do with the fact that these persons are men. Even women could use all of these strategies. Although the objects could describe ways of how they dealt with problems, they couldn’t necessarily relate it to their masculinity. One of the respondents did however describe how he copes with different problems as a man.
"Yes it could be...as simple as changing a car-light as a man-task or changing wheels and everything. You just have to manage it,You just do. There are other things like...typically....manly shit-things. But...you just take it.” – Interviewee D

"...when one was married, then one had to be sort of the strong one psychically and mentally or physically also. And handle things. And...it worked. You can cheat through the situation. You can lie and act as if you know. Until you know how to do it. And that’s how it works. You should lie a bit and then you learn to fix it anyway. So...I can lie. You can lie to make it look good, to be a man.” – Interviewee D

All of the respondents talked about the need to share their problems with others, often meaning that they would share these problems with the closest to them such as family, wife, brother, or a very close friend. One could divide the respondents answer into two
groups, two of the men distinctly said that they find it hard to talk about what is bothering them but admits that they do speak to close friends or family. The other two said that they don’t find it hard to share their feelings with others, they thought it was essential to be able to cope.

This raises two discourses, one discourse represents the importance of sharing your feelings and not holding them back while using other people for feedback.

"I don’t go around not telling anybody about something you think is difficult share it with others instead that will make it easier." – Interviewee C

The other discourse represents the opposite, not talking to people in case one can get hurt by them. By holding information to yourself you strengthen your position.

“Because I spoke to people in the past and they talked behind my back. I don’t give them that.” - Interviewee D

5.3 Symbolic Interactionism

This part of the analysis will try to explain the meaning of what it is to be a man for the interviewees. In the data many clear symbols came up of the meaning of social objects such as “bread-winner”, “father”, “manly” and also symbols of abstract objects such as gender equality, kind, gentle, chivalrous, chauvinistic. These symbols could be used to try to analyze the interviewee’s perspective of their male identity.

B, C and D expressed that they are not sure what it means to be a man, saying that it is obvious that they are men and that it has an effect on their behaviour. But they have difficulties describing the specific behaviours that relates them to the male gender.

“Yes it is very hard because I am a man heh. I have never tried anything else and the opposite is being a woman as to say. And I definitely believe that it is [...] I am convinced that the fact that I am a man influences my actions and my behaviour in certain situations and so this I definitely believe. But I am not sure that I can give any examples to be honest.” – Interviewee B

"Obviously I am like everybody else affected by traditions and my environment my upbringing and so on. But I try not to think about gender. So I don't have a clear understanding no clear answer on this question.” – Interviewee C

D answered the question of how do you see yourself as a man.

“I don’t really know. In my younger days I felt that I wanted to be a man.” – Interviewee D
The results show that a man is a symbol constructed by tradition and society and even though this symbol is agreed upon by society the individual can find it hard to define. It also shows that having a label put upon you as a man or a woman, strong or weak doesn’t mean that you feel the part. The interviewees found it easier to describe others through a given symbol and harder to describe themselves as a symbol.

One can explain this with Meads (1972 [1934]) “I” and “Me”. If the “I” is what I think I am and the “Me” how I should think I am, then we can see a gap between the way men perceive themselves the “I” and how the society perceives them their “Me”. “I” don’t see myself as a man, but the “Me” sees myself as a man.

According to the theory the only way we can interpret other symbols is when we are self-aware. The researchers felt that the men interviewed showed high levels of self-awareness, but the word man was not easily used to define themselves. Instead they often used symbols to describe themselves. For example they saw themselves as a person, as a surgeon, as a father, as square or super-sociable. They also found it easier to describe themselves with abstract objects defining their values to express who they are.

”Err I perceive myself as a rather modern man in the sense that equality is important for me.” – Interviewee B

“I think it is very important for me to be an active father for example.” – Interviewee B

“Well I don’t try to be dominant, I don’t wish that. But at the same time I can be very self-confident and very assertive. In a way that makes other people back down.” – Interviewee B

However it was easier for A to describe other males behaviour as an example and explain what he didn’t want to be like.

“If you take my father for example, he isn’t so humble. He is a know-it-all and doesn’t show feelings and such. And I’ll be damned if I will be like that.” – Interviewee A

A says that men find it hard to admit that they are wrong as opposed to women.

”My female bosses kind of admit directly ”ah this is my mistake, ah but I should have said that”. So they’ve got it, that I haven’t heard from my male bosses. Anyway they don’t directly admit it.” – Interviewee A

C described different male-types.

”I can see that there are many types so to say they range from macho-types on the gym to some other extreme closer to somewhat transsexual or some such.” – Interviewee C
A and B seemed to have an image of what is a man, however they didn’t see themselves as fulfilling that image.

“Oh no but I am not the most manliest of men in some peoples opinions.” – Interviewee A

“ But at the same time I don’t always do as I say.” – Interviewee B

C and D see themselves as persons and not as men.

“But for my own sake I want to see humans as individuals and not as men or women.” – Interviewee C

”I don’t know damnit I really don’t know.. I don’t feel as a man but more as a person if you like.” – Interviewee D

There are two discourses coming from these four statements, the first discourse is that there is such a thing as a man. It has it’s distinguished characteristics both positive and negative. One can strive towards the positive characteristics such as gentleman, kindness, taking care of others, brave, being practical and fixing things. Or take a stand against the negative male characteristics such as chauvinism, dominance, power-abuse, pride. However this discourse admits that there are two genders that are distinctive and you can belong to one of them.

The second discourse says that there isn’t any distinctive way of describing what a man is, that it is only the understanding and the making of society. Therefore an individual does not necessarily feel like a part of a group that is a gender.

Symbolic interactionism argues that there is no easy way to separate the individual from society. It also argues that the society is made of individuals and therefore both of these discourses are legitimate. An individual could perceive themselves as a person but however in the eyes of society they are either man or woman. Because we are part of society, we have created this understanding ourselves.

5.4 Summary

The empirical data of the study shows that the interviewees had some ideas of how a man is expected to behave, they spoke about different categories of men. They also described men’s behaviours that they think are negative but also behaviours that they think are honourable and responsible. The data also showed an experience of pressure based on preconceptions of masculinity.
According to this study the Swedish men cope with unhappiness and psychological distress by talking to family and close friends. They could also cope by frequently going to meetings in a supportive organization for men. They could seek professional help if necessary. Also other measures were used such as alcohol, sleeping and not talking to anybody.

The study’s results show that the men don’t dwell on the past but rather choose to leave it behind and look forward instead. And they believe they did their best with coping with the situations they described.

The data also showed that a man sees himself as a person while being aware that they are affected by their society and their upbringing, however they found it hard to describe what it feels to be a man, saying that they had nothing to compare it to.

The discourse arrived from the answers were the first discourse whether gender can have a colour and whether this affects what we can wear and buy. The opposing discourse is that a man is a man when he does what he wants to and what he feels like and therefore he can wear what he wants.

The second discourse is about talking to people when experiencing difficulties and the opposing discourse is not talking to anybody and by doing that withholding ones control.

The third discourse is that there is such a thing as a man, it is describable with its certain characteristics which opposes the discourse that the man is made up by society and can be unmade.
6. Discussion

This chapter will bring up the researchers reflections on the data gathered, the hypothesis found in the earlier research, the researchers own hypothesis. This research was done by two students, one of them was a female 46 years old and the other a male of 24 years old. In the discussion we will try to express the different point of views that we have of the results.

Male 24 years

First of all I have to admit that I myself have had a lot of thoughts about my own role in society as a man. I have trouble finding out who I really am. There has been several images depicted in this research of a man and foremost of them I feel have been that of the tough, dominant and macho man. That is the one I feel I am having trouble living up to. I have always felt that I have never fit any of those images. I have always been a kind, humble and gentle man that cares for others.

I have often felt that I haven’t met the expectations of a man, both my own and that of others. This is part of what made me interested in doing a study specifically about men and their identity.

My interpretation of the data that we have gathered is that these interviewees feel that there is a certain image of a man. Expressions such as “I am not the most manliest of men” or “I don’t see myself as a man” makes me think that even though they are happy with the way they are as men, there is a certain image they feel that they don’t live up to. Whether it is a positive one or a negative one. They have mentioned a strive not to be judged by other men’s actions, it is a sentiment that I share with them.

Female 46 years

It was a great advantage to be a male and a female with a big age span doing this research. It allowed different ideas, different perspectives and elevating the discussions during the research. The question of “what is a man?” is of course just as interesting as the question “what is an individual?”. However for a woman, it is inspiring to learn of how men think and express themselves. We all have different history and experiences and although I’m a mother of two boys and I live with a man and have two brothers, still I feel that it’s not always easy to understand how they think.

My interpretation of the data is that there is definitely a difference of the level of expectancy that men have of themselves. That there is a sense of pressure to what it means to be a man and there is a strive to a role of a “man”. Stressors such as bread-
winning, problem-solver, strong image, handyman. Hegemonic masculinity can provide certain explanations for their role-taking, however the meaning of manhood is far more complex.

*Both of Us*

The study results did produce some answers to some coping strategies of men. Though it didn’t provide answers to why there is such a high percentage of men in jails or why more men commit suicide than women. The study showed the resilience of men, it showed how the pressure of being the man actually strengthened them in some ways. It is very interesting to try and analyze the data with symbolic interactionism and discourse analysis, it is very abstract that there is a concept such as feminine and masculine. These concepts entails an abundance of symbols, for example a female is understanding, soft, motherly or bitch. And the male is responsible, strong, masculine and a chauvinistic pig.

Although there were only four interviews there was a lot of data gathered signifying a deep and diverse source of ideas and thoughts of what it is to be a man. We feel we couldn’t do the interviewees justice because we had to limit the length of our report.

Three themes are mentioned in hypothesis 1.

*Body awareness*, this study did not produce data that could strengthen the hypothesis of body awareness. None of the interviewees have spoken about keeping fit as means to coping.

*The creation of self-reliance*, having friends and family to talk to has come up as very significant for coping but was not connected to self-reliance.

*Feeling of freedom*, three of the interviewees saw nothing wrong with seeking professional help and did not describe it as a breach of their freedom.

The data found supported one of the themes from Hypothesis 1, the other two themes were supported indirectly by the interviewee’s answers.

Hypothesis 2 relates relationships between men as a factor of the willingness of men to seek help. This study did not focus on whether men seek help or not but three interviewees (A, B and C) mentioned that they would not have any problem to seek professional help. A even says that he looked forward to meeting a professional psychologist when he enlisted in the army. B told of his experience going to a psychologist and C said that he never had the need to visit one but if he would have to
he would go. A, B and C also expressed the importance of maintaining a communicative relationship with others. A and B participates in an organization where only men meet. This strengthens the theory that men that have good communicative relationships with each other are more likely to seek professional help.

The results of the study produced several positive masculine role models. It also provided several negative models as well. According to the results these men have negative role models as well as positive ones. For example interviewee A and B describes negative characteristics and uses them as descriptions of how not to be. A, B and D also describes positive characteristics that they would like to relate themselves to. So the study cannot prove our hypothesis.

6.1 Limitations of the study
The study has been conducted by two bachelor students both of whom are inexperienced as researchers. The data gathered through the interviews might have been different if they had been conducted by researchers more experienced in conducting interviews.
Due to the researchers inexperience the lack of knowledge of different theories and methods also became apparent. The process of reading up on them and a motivation to find the most suitable ones fitting for this study took was a process consuming both energy and time.
This study has in common with a lot of research studies the major limitation of time. The time limit hindered the researchers from pursuing a more diverse selection of interviewees, for example incorporating people with different ethnical backgrounds, from different classes in the society, people with different education and work. The interviews were done in Swedish, while the research was done in English. The data had to be translated and it was hard to translate slang while keeping the proper meaning of the words. A more diverse research could have been made to for example try to see if a pattern based upon these different factors could be found.

6.2 Methodological discussion
One of the theories that was used, namely Hegemonic Masculinity felt abstract and was maybe too focused on the man as dominant, oppressive and chauvinistic. That might have overshadowed other types of masculinity, which made it more likely to miss other
nuances of manhood. For example the strong opinions of the importance of equality that the interviewees had.

The fact that the study was done by a man and a woman might very well have influenced the data that was gathered. Especially since the interviews were divided among the researchers and performed with only one of the researchers present. The interviewees might have given different responses to the different researchers. Specifically when considering the age difference between the researchers. Some of the interviewees might have been more inclined to give more detailed but not as personal answers to the male researcher since they were both of the same sex. While on the other hand they might have been more comfortable with the more experienced female researcher and shared more intricate personal answers.

One difference to be noted regarding the answers of the interviewees is that the male researcher got more information about the childhood and upbringing. Whereas the female researcher got answers that were more informative on the subject of which ideals exist for men and what they felt about it.

It is possible that a man feels more comfortable sharing more intimate details with a middle-aged woman rather than a young man. One of the explanations of this could be the complicated relationships between men and men, and the importance of keeping up appearances in front of the younger researcher.

This might have been influenced by the personal interview styles of the researchers as well.

The male researcher’s style is very cautious and careful while the female researcher’s interview style is more straightforward. That could be due to the female researchers age difference and working experience.

7. Suggestions for future research

To highlight the difference in the way men cope as opposed to how women cope it would be good to do a comparative study of men and women coping strategies. Another option is to widen the subjects and focusing on taking other factors such as education, ethnicity and work into account.
8. References

- Gramsci, A (1905): *En Kollektiv Intellektuell Uddevalla*: Bo Cavefors Förlag
9. Appendix

9.1 Letter of information

This is the letter that we sent to the organization trying to recruit interviewees.
Till alla som berörs:
Frågorna kan vara känsliga i den mening att vi kommer att fråga frågor som t.ex. Kan du berätta för mig om någon gång då du var leden och nedstämd eller mentalt orolig och hur du hanterade det?
Självklart kommer vi att göra allt vi kan för att försäkra anonymiteten för dom som blir intervjuade. Det är också mycket viktigt för oss att dom intervjuade skall känna sig bekväma och trygga och att dom inte behöver svara på några frågor som dom inte vill.

MVH,
Hannes & Keren

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English version

**How Men cope as Men**

To all it may concern:
Hello, we are two students working on our bachelor thesis. We study the international social work program and our education is in English. We are very interested in “male-
research”, that is to say how men cope with hardships and in which way the fact that they are men affects their decisions and actions. We gladly like to interview 6 men over 25 years old and we believe that each interview should take about 1 hour. We are both flexible regarding both time and location. The questions can be sensitive in the regard that we will ask questions such as “Can you tell me about one time you felt sad or distressed in any way, and how you coped with it?”.
Naturally we will do everything we can to ensure the anonymity for the interviewees. And it is also very important for us that the people we are going to interview will feel comfortable and feel pressured to answer any questions they don’t want to.

Sincerely,
Hannes & Keren
9.2 Interview guide

Preparation when meeting the interviewees. Because this interview might be experienced as sensitive and requires a high level of intimacy we decided to prepare the interviewees by informing them the aim of the study. We will inform the interviewees of their right to answer only what they feel comfortable with and we will inform that they can terminate the interview if it feels uncomfortable. Furthermore we will inform them that they will remain anonymous and that these interviews are highly confidential.

- Bakgrundsfaktorer (Age, family situation, occupation, family history)

Main question:
- Can you tell me about a time when you felt sad or distressed in any way?

Follow-up question: *How did you cope with it? Was it a feeling or was it something you did? Did you get support from someone? Can you tell me about this support?*

Main question:
- Do you remember another time you were sad or distressed and you coped in a different way?

Follow-up question: *Was it a feeling or was it something you did? Did you get support from someone? Can you tell me about this support?*

Main question:
- Do you think being a man influenced you when coping with distress or sadness?

Follow-up question: *In what way?*

Main question:
- Do you think you should have done it another way?

Follow-up question:

Main question:
- Have you ever felt sad or distressed and not talked to anybody?

Follow-up question: *Why?*
Main question:
- Would you have wanted support in another way?

Follow-up question: *How?*