Removing the glass ceiling in Swedish wildlife management? A norm-critical study of the potential for more gender-equal moose management groups

Therese Bjärstig & Elin Stark

Published online: 13 Oct 2023.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE   OPEN ACCESS   Check for updates

Removing the glass ceiling in Swedish wildlife management? A norm-critical study of the potential for more gender-equal moose management groups

Therese Bjärstig and Elin Stark

Department of Political Science, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

ABSTRACT

This empirical study investigates how "gender is done" within Swedish wildlife management by identifying prevailing gender norms, and how gender norms can be challenged from a norm-critical perspective, in order to promote women's participation. The basis for the study is an ongoing evaluation of the Swedish Hunters' Association training initiative to increase women's participation in moose management groups. Three main norm categories are identified: performance; social interaction; and hunting as a lifestyle. Recommendations for continued gender equality work include active leadership in gender equality issues, a review of potentially excluding structures, promoting female mentors and networks, and the use of formal and transparent recruitment procedures. An understanding of norms affecting women's participation (or nonparticipation) in wildlife management is fundamental to design effective training, recruitment and nomination strategies in the future.

Introduction and Literature Review

There is a growing interest in gender composition in natural resource use and management (Anderson, 2020; Anthony et al., 2004; Arora-Jonsson, 2014; Sackeyfio & Kaba, 2022; Westermann et al., 2005). Sweden has long been at the forefront when it comes to gender equality. In 1994, the Swedish Government declared in its annual Statement of Government Policy that a gender equality perspective must permeate all aspects of government policy (Åseskog, 2017). While no statutory gender quotas have been enacted in Sweden, government decisions have prescribed gender-balanced representation on public committees, commissions and boards appointed by the government (Freidenvall, 2003). Moreover, most political parties in Sweden have voluntarily adopted gender quotas in their candidate selection (Wide, 2015). This strong norm of gender equality and gender-balanced representation has also spread outside politics and public administration.

Nevertheless, women are both vertically and horizontally marginalized in politics and public administration as well as in the economy and labor market (in Sweden and globally). Vertical marginalization means that the proportion of women decreases higher up in the power hierarchy. Women do not attain the career heights that men do, instead there is

---

CONTACT Therese Bjärstig ✉ therese.bjarstig@umu.se 🏛 Department of Political Science, Umeå University, Umeå 901 87, Sweden

a glass ceiling (Ng & Sears, 2017; Palmer & Simon, 2010). Horizontal marginalization, in contrast, means that women and men are found in different sectors of, for example, politics, the labor market and civil society. One of the most male-dominated spheres in society is hunting, a sphere permeated with traditional masculinity (Anderson, 2020; Borgen & Skogen, 2013; Bye, 2010; Giacomelli & Gibbert, 2018; Jerlström, 2018). The Swedish Government's official investigation *Sustainable moose management in Collaboration* explicitly states, that "The terms of decision-making are shaped mainly by men and there is a need to actively work to achieve a more even distribution between women and men in moose management." (SOU 2009: 54 p.14).

Leisher et al. (2015) showed that the gender composition of forestry and fishery management groups do affect resource governance and conservation outcomes, which makes it plausible that this is also the case in wildlife management. Within social science, only a few empirical studies with an explicit focus on women's participation in hunting and wildlife management are to be found (Kellert & Berry, 1987; McFarlane et al., 2003; Metcalf et al., 2015). These few studies focus mainly on why women begin to hunt, how they are recruited and the socialization processes that favor such development (Larson et al., 2014). These studies take an explanatory approach to why and how women start hunting (attitudes, motivations and socialization processes) rather than studying the prerequisites for women's participation in terms of prevailing discourses and norms influencing the institutional structures dealing with hunting and wildlife management issues from a democracy, equality and gender perspective.

Research has shown that the motives differ as to why men and women choose to start hunting (Heberlein et al., 2008; Stedman & Heberlein, 2001). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that women and men have different views on hunting as well as on wildlife management in general, something that cannot be captured if women are not represented in the institutional structures dealing with hunting and wildlife management. Duda (2001) argue that increased participation in hunting among women is important, and that if more women obtain positions of leadership, their opinions on hunting will become more important in wildlife management and hunting policy. Accordingly, social science studies that examine women's participation and representation in wildlife management are highly justified. We addressed this knowledge gap by reporting on an action-oriented on-going evaluation (2019–2021) of the Swedish Hunters' Association (SHA) gender equality project "Moose management, ecology and people", a training initiative for potential representatives in moose management groups (MMGs) among their members. The aim of this study is to highlight gender bias to provide recommendation for transforming the MMGs to have more equal gender representation. The research questions addressed include: which gender norms are manifested among the participants?, and how they can be challenged from a norm-critical perspective?

Analytical Departure

Representation, Norm-Critical Approaches and "Doing Gender"

In representation research it is stated that political bodies and social structures consisting mostly of men cannot satisfy and represent both men and women's interests on an equal basis (Eduards, 2002). Views are, however, more divided regarding the extent to which

women's presence in politics has an actual impact on policy. Phillips (2000) believes that the sexes can partially represent each other, for example on issues and decisions upon which they are already united, but otherwise, she believes that it is problematic and that men can only partly replace women (the same reasoning extends to the relationship between other privileged and marginalized groups, with regards, for instance, to age and ethnicity). Based on this research, it can be argued that women's interests are not fully represented if there is an unequal gender distribution. Most researchers agree that women's presence has meaning; the debate is rather on how more women in decision-making structures affects the content of the resolutions and the issues raised (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers, 2007; Wängnerud, 2009).

In addition, women may be systematically disadvantaged by organizations and/or institutional structures in the selection process, consciously or unconsciously (Acker, 2011). Previous studies of political representation have shown that invisible selection and nomination processes, without formal guidelines and criteria, tend to discriminate against women (Norris et al., 1996). However, the explanation may not necessarily be found in the organizations' nomination processes, i.e., in the organizations' "demand" for female candidates. It could, equally, be found in the "supply" of female candidates, i.e., women with an interest and will to engage. Political parties may explain the low female representation in politics by the lack of women to nominate or disinterest. For example, studies from the United States show that fewer women than men express an interest in political positions or are prepared to accept a political position if asked. Women also consider themselves to be sufficiently qualified to a lesser degree than men do (Lawless & Fox, 2010; Paxton & Hughes, 2007) and feel like frauds or impostors (cf. the impostor syndrome, Feenstra et al., 2020). Is this a valid explanation in the recruitment of women to the MMGs in Sweden?

A norm-critical approach is applied in this study, interrogating "values and ideals that regulate human interaction by defining what is desired or expected in certain situations and thereby what is undesired, unexpected, and deviant" (Tengelin et al., 2019, p. 26). Norm criticism can be understood as a concept with roots in gender and queer studies and critical pedagogy since it focuses on the origins and consequences of marginalization, power, and of what is generally accepted as "normal" and "true" (Tengelin et al., 2019). At the core of the norm-critical perspective is the effort to "think differently" about what we generally accept as "normal," which could help identify and address inequities arising from normative constructions of individuals and groups (Tengelin et al., 2019). A starting point, according to Tengelin et al. (2019), is the assertion that socially constructed conventions determine that certain ways of being are both privileged and marginalized in society. Accordingly, understanding norms is essential to understanding the construction of unequal relationships and representation in wildlife management.

Following Acker (1990, 2011), the SHA is studied as a gendered organization, which means that "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (Acker, 1990, p. 146). Our assumption is that hunting organizations can be understood as gendered, in the sense that alignment with hegemonic practices of masculinity occurs (cf. Borgen & Skogen, 2013; Bye, 2010; Jerlström, 2018). Furthermore, gender inequalities may not be discernible to those advantaged by the inequality. Some may also consider inequalities to be legitimate or acceptable, thereby reducing the potential for change (Acker, 2011). It is thus important to examine and

interrogate prevailing gender norms critically. While acknowledging the power asymmetry produced within gendered organizations, Acker recognizes that organizations are marked by the surrounding societal context and that they do not produce inequality in isolation (Acker, 2011). Bird and Rhoton (2011) state that many institutionalized organizational structures demonstrate such inequities; for example, work hours disadvantageous to family involvement, male-conducive promotion structures, and information networks that marginalize historically underrepresented groups. Gendered organizations can thus be understood as products of both internal and external social processes.

In line with West and Zimmerman's (1987) conceptualization, gender in this study is understood as a product of social activities – as constituted through interaction. We are interested in gendered structures embedded in the SHA, more specifically *how gender is done* through gendered interactions within the organization. Drawing partially from Nentwich and Kelan's (2014) topology of "doing gender," gender norms identified in the empirical material are categorized into different aspects of doing gender as: *"doing structures;" "doing hierarchies"*; and *"doing identity"*. In this study, "doing structures" is understood as the process in which gendered organizational structures enforce gendered interactions, in this case a "doing of masculinity." "Doing hierarchies" is understood in terms of "practices of subordination and domination," where activities gendered as "masculine" are ascribed a higher status than activities gendered as "feminine." The "masculine" is associated with more professionalism and competence than the "feminine" (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). Finally, "doing identity" refers to performing tasks and activities in ways that are compatible with dominant gender norms. These three facets of "doing gender" are intertwined but to some extent highlight different aspects. By asking the participants whether alignment to a "male" norm occurs, we also aimed to investigate their interpretations of what constitute such norms.

Methodology

Swedish Moose Management – Introducing the Case

Since the first Hunting Act in 1938, the moose management system in Sweden has changed several times (Hansson-Forman et al., 2021). The current 2012 management system, with the instigation of moose management areas (MMA), was an attempt to bridge the governance gap between the local and regional levels and to improve the ability of the actors involved (landowners and hunters) to manage an entire moose population on ecosystem level (i.e., ease conflicts and achieve sustainable management) (Hansson-Forman et al., 2021; Johansson et al., 2020). Each MMA has an MMG. The MMG is responsible for creating management plans for the MMA and coordinating, commissioning and evaluating monitoring activities. They also act as an advisory body in relation to moose management units (MMU) (Bjärstig et al., 2014). Each MMA is steered by a group with a responsibility to establish moose management plans on an ecosystem level to achieve a sustainable moose population and viable management. The MMGs are appointed by the County Administrative Boards after nominations from hunter and landowner organizations.

The proportion of women taking a hunting exam in 2020 was 24% along an increasing trend, and the proportion of female landowners was 38% (Skogsstyrelsen, 2021; Svensk Jakt, 2021). However, the proportion of women in leading positions in

hunter- and landowners' organizations as well as in public Wildlife Management Delegations is far below these numbers. As an example, the MMGs had only 7% female members in 2012 – and in many of the MMGs there were only male representatives (ATL, 2012). In 2018, the numbers had decreased; at that time there was only 5% women in the MMGs (County Administrative Board Jönköping, 2018). Attempting to increase the number of women among the hunter representatives in the MMGs, the SHA initiated the gender equality project "Moose management, ecology and people", a training initiative for potential representatives in MMGs, among their members. The MMGs can be seen as a very worst case of gender-balanced representation in wildlife management, such that the policy area is at the very core of masculinity and the process of candidate selection is invisible and informal (Anderson, 2020; Bye, 2010).

Material and How the Analysis Was Conducted

Empirical material was gathered through action research (cf. Small, 1995) conducted in the form of an on-going evaluation during 2019–2021 of the SHA gender equality project. The first author was engaged as an external researcher, evaluating the whole project, but was also involved in the training initiative, being responsible for the part of the education that focused on equality and representation. In connection to this, the participants were asked to write and reflect on three open-ended questions and share their perceptions and experiences of equality in hunting and wildlife management. The first question was: Are there female and male characteristics? If so, are they biologically derived and/or socially constructed? The second question was: Is there adaptation to a male norm to "fit in"? Some of the answers to this question included specific descriptions of what are perceived to be male norms in hunting contexts and what type of adaptation to these may be considered to take place. Other answers concerned adaptation to male norms in society more generally. Finally, the third question was: Is it correct to assume that the work in MMGs/MMUs is affected by the composition of the participants in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, etc.? If that is the case – in what way? Do you have experiences of your own? It was voluntary to answer the questions and possible for the participants to answer one, two or all three of them. Furthermore, the participants also had the opportunity to exclude their answers from the action-orientated research. This study follows the Swedish Ethical Review Authority guidelines, to protect the individual in research. Accordingly, participants were provided with information about the objective of the study, in case of acceptance to participate, they were requested to sign the Free and Informed Consent Term that authorizes the collection, use and publication of the data obtained.

The participants' written answers were systematically collated by the authors and qualitatively analyzed based on how gender is "done" (i.e., see the operationalization of structures, hierarchies, and identity presented in the previous section on analytical departure) and a norm-critical approach used to give an overview of what norms they expressed. Our analytical procedure can be described as empirically based theorizations in an inductive manner as we interactively considered the analytical departure and the written answers. Then, norms identified in the participants' accounts were sorted and thereafter organized into three categories: performance, social interaction and hunting as

a lifestyle. We use quotes to illustrate this, and the quotes are reproduced as the participants wrote them.

Results – Gender Norms and "Doing Gender" within Hunting and Moose Management

Fifty out of 73 people who completed the training (44 women and 29 men), answered all three questions. Among these, two male participants explicitly stated that they did not want the answers to be used for research. In total, there were 21 participants, of whom 13 female and eight male participants chose not to answer the questions at all; there was no obvious difference between the sexes in relation to choosing not to complete this voluntary assignment. Therefore, this study is based on 50 participants' responses, of whom 31 were women and 19 were men, largely reflecting the sex composition in the training initiative. SHA designed the training initiative to have more women accepted and attending; from onset it was a goal to have more women participating than men and that women should be in majority (at least 50% of participants). In total 92 participants were accepted, 56 women and 36 men.

Nearly half (46%) of the participants provided answers suggesting that adaptations to male norms occur. This viewpoint is slightly more prevalent among male participants than female participants (10 out of 19 men compared to 13 out of 31 women). On the other hand, specific accounts regarding how gender "is done" were provided almost solely by female participants. It was also stated that norm adjustment is a natural part of human behavior and that it does not necessarily entail adjustment to male norms – adaptation to a female norm can also occur or be expected. One male participant (M7) argued that norm adjustment is less prevalent within the context of hunting than in society at large. Though differing from the material as a whole, this viewpoint is in contrast to the image of hunting and wildlife management as characterized by male dominance and a culture where a male code prevails. Several participants argued that norms are changing toward becoming more inclusive and gender equal, but viewpoints differed regarding the extent and pace of that change.

Another difference between male and female participants was that only female participants (albeit merely a few, 5) argued that the extent to which norm adjustment occurs depends on the individual. It was also implied that there are two categories of women, and these are valued differently by other women. Women who make obvious adjustments to a male norm are considered inauthentic and constrained. This was in contrast to women who were considered to naturally exhibit behavior which aligns with male norms. While some participants stated that the extent to which norm adjustment occurs depends on the individual, others argued that the degree of norm adjustment is tied to context and social climate. In the material, risks associated with extensive norm adjustment are raised. This includes not making use of the knowledge and experience of different individuals within a group. An argument raised by female participants was that diversity drives further diversity. More specifically, prevalence of women or diversity in general contributes to greater tolerance of differences.

Norms Regarding Performance

One issue raised was that there are certain expectations about the competence and skills of women. These expectations can be depicted in terms of *norms regarding performance*, which

may be associated with higher demands on women than on men in hunting and wildlife management. One female participant (F22) stated that "a woman has to be so much more knowledgeable and have much more substantiated arguments when she makes a statement," and that a man considers himself important "as a person," while a woman becomes "important through her performance." One male participant (M3) argued that men have been conditioned to overrate their own abilities, whereas women have acquired a sense of having to be absolutely certain about their abilities before taking on a task:

> Men are happy to throw themselves into new roles/projects/challenges because it is exciting, challenging and flattering and maybe also because "increased power" can be discerned at the end of the tunnel. This, irrespective of how suited they actually are for the task. [...] Women, on the other hand, before they accept a nomination, want to feel that they really *know* the issue and really *can* contribute to the matter at hand, practically or knowledge wise. [Participant's italics]

Another male participant (M19) raised similar issues regarding gender differences when it comes to perceptions of one's competence. He described how he has experienced "clear differences" between the involvement of female and male representatives within moose management. The participant argued that male representatives manifest a sense of self-entitlement, while the female representatives are more ambitious and do not take their positions for granted:

> A lot of the male members [in MMGs] do not add anything to the work of the group but attend as yes-men, they just agree with the person who has done the work and has a proposition to present. Female members more often spend the time necessary in order to bring suggestions of their own. The difference may be because the female members do not take their seats for granted, the way male members often do.

A statement from a female participant (F14) confirmed these viewpoints. She wrote that she "is hesitant" to get involved as she has "heard that you need to have a thick skin and tons of knowledge in order to prove your worth." Furthermore, she added that she had declined suggestions to get involved, having thoughts such as "[t]here must be someone more competent." Another female participant (F24) emphasized the role of women in challenging this norm, arguing that "us women also need to take responsibility and step forward and believe in ourselves and take up more space." She did, however, recognize that this is easier said than done and that she does not necessarily practice what she preaches. Yet another female participant (F6) argued that while organizing separate female hunting groups may improve women's self-esteem, it also accentuates the idea that there is a difference between male and female hunters. Instead, she asserted that the way forward is to "pave new ways where men and women go together," for instance by providing media attention to co-parenting, making it possible for both parents to hunt; or sons hunting under their mother's supervision.

One female participant (F6) described a "special treatment where I, to a large extent, receive assistance and expectations of me are fundamentally low." Along the same lines, another female participant (F13) stated that there is a notion that "women are incapable and do not have the same interest as men (that women have to be trained in order to fit in among men in their arena)." An alternative performance norm can however also be discerned from the same participant. In her account, the norm manifested is that women

Table 1. Doing gender and identified norms within hunting and moose management.

	Norms regarding performance	Norms regarding social interaction	Norms regarding hunting as a lifestyle
Structures	Gendered organizational structures enforcing gendered patterns of involvement	Informal nomination practices in moose management groups may reinforce gendered interactions Composition and organization of hunting teams may affect the extent of "macho" language used	Gendered structures for commitment in the organization reflecting life circumstances of men, which may deter women from engaging in hunting and moose management
Hierarchies	Competence and skills of women perceived as inferior to those of men	"Masculine" leadership styles held in higher regard than "feminine" leadership styles	Female hunters being considered sidekicks to male partners (i.e., subordinated) as opposed to hunters in their own right
Identity	Women taking a more active role than men Women "exaggerating" their knowledge	Women using interactional strategies to adhere to a macho norm Women adopting "masculine" leadership styles	Men and women adhering to gendered division of labor at home, where women are considered to have a more caregiving role or responsibilities and stay at home when the children are young instead of going hunting

are expected to perform on a similar level as men, disregarding the fact that their pre-requisites may differ.

Female participants also described how masculinity is enacted by attempting to meet – or exceed – perceived demands and expectations. In response to the special treatment mentioned above, the participant (F6) declared that she has experienced a need to "assert myself to show that I am also skilled". Another participant (F31) stated that "I probably make a bit more of an effort [...] am a bit more active just to show that I too am able". Both participants, albeit to a varying extent, emphasized the weight of their own perceptions and demands on themselves, rather than explicitly expressed external expectations. Another participant (F28) argued that there is a performative element to female hunters' norm adjustments: she claimed that some of them "try to 'prove themselves' to have a higher level of knowledge than they actually possess".

Collectively, norms regarding performance can be interpreted as *the doing of structures*, where gendered organizational structures enforce gendered patterns of involvement. On a related note, the issue of placing higher demands on women than on men in hunting and moose management can be understood in terms of *the doing of hierarchies*, where the competence and skills of women appear to be perceived as inferior to those of men. Participants argued that women feel a need to "prove their worth," whereas men express a sense of self-entitlement. The same theme can also be described in terms of *the doing of identity*, where gender norms are manifested and reproduced as women take it upon themselves to "do the work" while men take a more passive stance. Another manifestation of doing identity is apparent in the allegation that some female hunters try to exaggerate their knowledge. The reluctance toward organizing all female hunting groups raised by a female participant can be interpreted as a subversion of gender differences, where she argued for an approach that does not emphasize differences between female and male hunters. A contradictory argument is made by another female participant, which can be understood as a call for increased awareness of the different prerequisites for men and

women, thus emphasizing gender differences. The performance norm is internalized by women within hunting and moose management, resulting in women being hesitant to get involved, and putting in a lot of effort when they chose to do so (Table 1).

Norms Regarding Social Interaction

Among norms related to social interaction, a macho norm could be discerned, where the existence of a "male, 'coarse' language," which was described by a male participant (M19) as "not always constructive but can often act destructively." One female participant (F9) stated that she believes that "within the hunting context in particular there is generally a harsher tone and women in this arena assume more manly behavior, intentionally or unintentionally." The participant furthermore argued that the extent of this type of language may be particularly rough in the type of hunting teams "where, as a general rule, the members know each other, are related or have 'inherited' their position in the team and perhaps there is a high proportion of, or actually only, male hunters." The matter of institutionalized group constellations and established forms of social interaction within hunting teams can be related to another aspect of norms regarding social interaction, namely nomination practices within MMGs. While ruling out affirmative action as such, one female participant (F19) argued that "[in] a group such as hunters, where a lot of nominations take place via [social] connections, there is a need for more support of minorities in order to increase diversity in the groups."

Another expression concerns "masculine" leadership. One female participant (F22) argued that "women need to adopt 'the masculine style' in their leadership in order to be successful in male-dominated organizations." The participant distinguished between masculine and feminine decision-making, where she described the former in terms of issuing "military commands" and the latter in terms of "open dialogue," disregarded by men as "chatter" that is not worth listening to. With respect to the hunting context specifically, she argued that "the historically 'old-mannish' aspect of hunting and wildlife management is discouraging for many women who simply do not want to embrace that manner of getting ahead on leading positions in boards, hunting management or elected office." The intersection between age and gender was also raised by another female participant (F9) who stated that in her experience, "it takes a great deal to break the pattern of the informal leaders." She argued that age and gender mutually undermine the opportunity to one's voice to be heard, especially when it comes to matters which the older men feel passionately about. The participant, however, did add that she believes that there is greater openness within MMGs than within the hunting teams. She argued that MMGs are composed of "people who 'want more' and are driven by development and renewal and are open to new thoughts and ideas to a greater extent than the individual hunters in a team who have been hunting in the same area with the same people for 30–40 years."

The existence of coarse language and a harsh tone can be interpreted as *the doing of identity*, where certain interactional strategies (e.g., in terms of tactics, techniques, or approaches to communication) are used by women to adhere to a macho norm. Norms related to social interaction can also be understood in terms of *the doing of structures*, where the composition and organization (for instance the degree of external member additions and the proportion of female hunters) of the hunting team may affect the extent of "macho" language used. Another manifestation of the doing of structures with regards to norms

related to social interaction is the nomination practices within MMGs. As for the issue of gendered leadership styles, this can be interpreted as the doing of identity. It can also be interpreted in terms of *the doing of hierarchies*, resulting in women adopting a leadership with "masculine" connotations – or refraining from getting involved – since a "masculine" leadership style is held in higher regard than a "feminine" one. In the doing of hierarchies, gender may intersect with age, where being a younger woman may prove challenging when it comes to making oneself heard by elderly men (Table 1).

Norms Regarding Hunting as a Lifestyle

One female participant (F24) pointed out the impact of the division of labor at home on the opportunities for involvement in MMGs: "... I have the biggest responsibility in the household when it comes to children, pets, etc. [...] Consequently, there simply has not been time for getting involved with different groups." Along similar lines, another female participant (F22) wrote that it is "typical that while the children are young it is the woman who foregoes hunting for a number of years and the man who gets to spend time on his hobbies." She argued that in order to enable women and parents of young children to participate, a certain flexibility within the organization is necessary:

> In any context of working within an association you must allow those stepping forward to spend varying amounts of time doing work for the association during certain time periods. Then others must be able to step up and help with the task. If you are a woman and a parent of young children, for instance, other priorities must be able to take precedence without one being disqualified from participating in the group. The attitude must be somewhat flexible in order to get people to volunteer. If the framework is too strict, people are excluded from participation.

A norm depicting hunting as primarily a male activity and a sideline for women can also be discerned in accounts of female participants regarding reactions to the fact that they do not have a (male) partner who hunts. One female participant (F26) stated that she is often asked the question whether her husband hunts and that when she replies that this is not the case "it becomes very strange for the questioner to grasp how that can be." Another participant (F6) wrote that she is mainly received "with joy and interest" during hunting, but that there are also "many who question underlying factors about why I hunt, is it my interest or is it connected to someone else, such as a boyfriend?." A viewpoint raised by one male participant (M18) was that men and women differ when it comes to values in relation to hunting and forestry: "Women often think differently and appreciate other values in hunting and forestry than men. For instance, I believe that women often prefer to adapt forest management so that more food is produced for ungulates!."

The material suggests that household duties are given lower status than hunting, and that a subordination of women occurs when they stay at home while men hunt. This can be understood in terms of *the doing of structures*, with a mutual reinforcement between gendered structures at home and gendered structures within hunting and moose management, demanding a commitment which is difficult to fulfill while carrying out the role as the primary caretaker at home. Men and women adhering to gendered structures regarding household and family can also be interpreted as *the doing of identity*, where women are expected to take a more caregiving role than men (both regarding the children at home, but also with respect to hunting dogs and/or in terms of how hunting is conducted in an ethical

manner). Furthermore, norms regarding hunting as a lifestyle can be understood in terms of *the doing of hierarchies*, with hunting being depicted primarily as a male activity and merely a sideline for women, where female hunters are considered sidekicks to their (male) partners rather than being seen as hunters in their own right (Table 1).

Discussion – Challenging Gender Norms and Undoing Gender?

Three main categories of gender norms were identified in the participants' accounts. In relation to these norms, we identified how gender is done through the doing of structures, hierarchies, and identity. By applying a norm critical approach, it is possible to challenge identified norms and take steps toward "undoing" gender (cf. Ely & Meyerson, 2010; Nentwich & Kelan, 2014), and highlighting the perspectives of marginalized groups, in this case female participants, as those negatively affected by inequality may discern such inequalities more effectively than those advantaged (Acker, 2011). In our study, this argument was supported by the fact that the specific accounts of "the doing of masculinity" are provided almost exclusively by female participants. However, it should be noted that this study focused on hunters who are members in SHA, i.e., these female participants were already within the organizational structure of the hunting activity, that is, they managed to overcome the first obstacle or barrier to practice the activity. Potential limitations for other women to become incorporated is beyond the scope of this study but should be addressed in future studies. Also, accounts off resistance were not articulated in this study since it was voluntary to apply and participate in the training initiative, indicating some awareness and interest in gender equality issues from onset among the participants.

Challenging Norms Regarding Performance

When it comes to *the doing of structures*, in relation to norms regarding performance, organizational structures need to be scrutinized to gain a sense of their role in reproducing gendered patterns of involvement. This may involve interrogating how tasks are distributed between representatives from the SHA and how the opportunity to speak during meetings is determined (Aries, 1976). As for *the doing of hierarchies*, where the competence and skills of women are devalued in relation to those of men, training initiatives regarding gender equality, such as the one taken by the SHA, play a pivotal role in challenging assumptions that are taken for granted regarding the performance of male and female representatives. As Feenstra et al. (2020) argued, it is important to address the impostor "syndrome" not as insecurity among individuals belonging to a marginalized group (here women), rather focusing on the role of the environment in eliciting the impostor feelings as well. By doing so, more structural, and effective solutions can be offered. With regards to *the doing of identity*, investigating organizational structures, and initiating gender equality training once again constitute crucial measures for challenging norms regarding performance (see also Anderson, 2020). In this respect it is important that the training initiative becomes mandatory, since it can be presumed that the individuals who are already aware of and reflect upon gender inequalities are the ones who apply for the training, while those who consider gender issues and equal representation unimportant may tend not to – even though they might

need to expand their competence in this respect the most. A delicate balancing act when attempting to challenge gender norms and undo gender, evident when considering accounts from different female participants, is to emphasize similarities – rather than differences – between male and female hunters, without making the doing of gender and the reproduction of gender norms invisible (Acker, 2011).

Challenging Norms Regarding Social Interaction

With regards to *the doing of structures* in relation to norms regarding social interaction, the results indicated that the composition and organization of hunting teams may affect the extent of "macho" language used. It is reasonable to assume that the same applies to MMGs, even though it was suggested in the material that the social climate within MMGs is more open and accessible than within hunting teams. Therefore, it is important that recruitment to MMGs is undertaken with diversity in mind. A related aspect worth noting in relation to the doing of structures is nomination practices, which we argued need to be scrutinized and to be more formalized and transparent. Otherwise, nominations via social connections may result in MMGs taking on a "men's club" character, where women are excluded, and important conversations take place "beyond the boardroom" (Pesonen et al., 2009; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). When it comes to *the doing of hierarchies* in relation to norms regarding social interaction, the results point to a higher status for "masculine" leadership styles than "female" leadership styles (Faizan et al., 2018). Once again, education efforts and training in norm critical approaches are important measures to challenge assumptions to shed light on power relations and how men and women are perceived within male-dominated organizations (cf. Schlamp et al., 2020). Following this doing of structures and hierarchies with regards to norms regarding social interaction, women may adopt certain strategies, adjusting to a macho norm (cf. Giacomelli & Gibbert, 2018) and to "masculine" leadership styles. To resist such adaptations and *doing of identity*, mentors and networks for women within hunting and moose management may constitute support systems. However, as already stated, separation between men and women, and focusing on gender differences rather than similarities may at the same time result in supporting the prevailing gender norms in MMGs. It is, therefore, important to work actively to give both women and men norm critical tools, to be able to reflect upon their role in challenging prevailing gender norms and promoting more gender equal representation in Swedish MMGs.

Challenging Norms Regarding Hunting as a Lifestyle

As for the matter of *the doing of structures* and *the doing of identity* in relation to norms regarding hunting as a lifestyle, gendered division of labor at home regarding household and family matters is an issue which extends beyond hunting and MMGs. Historically, the stereotypical hunter has been a man, and still, this view permeates the hegemonic practices of masculinity in hunting and wildlife management (cf. Borgen & Skogen, 2013; Bye, 2010; Giacomelli & Gibbert, 2018; Jerlström, 2018). However, reinforcement of such gendered structures within MMGs may potentially be avoided by scrutinizing structures and expectations for commitments, allowing for flexibility and understanding to a larger extent. In this respect, shedding light on prevailing masculine gender norms becomes important in order to undo gender. With regards to *the doing of hierarchies*, as stated previously, raising norm

awareness, and building competence within norm critical approaches constitute important measures to challenge norms where activities gendered as "masculine" take precedence over activities gendered as "feminine." This way, the idea that hunting and activities related to hunting and moose management are more important than matters of the household, that men should be prioritized in performing such activities, and that women are mere sidekicks may be contested.

Summing up, how are these identified gender norms to be challenged, and by whom? We argue that it is important that SHA continues the work they initiated on increasing female representatives in the drive to create more gender equal MMGs. The training initiative should be developed and be open to all members, and mandatory for all their representatives in MMGs. The SHA should also evaluate the numbers of female representatives in the MMGs over time, to determine whether and how their training has had an impact on women wanting to engage; they should continue to work on their nomination strategies to increase female hunting representatives in the Swedish MMGs. By undertaking these activities, the SHA will be able to challenge prevailing gender norms on an organizational and structural level. Simultaneously, it is important that gender norms are critically reflected upon by individuals, both men and women. Individuals have a responsibility to reflect upon their own perceptions and consider how this affects the way that they think and act, as well as how it affects their interactions with others in hunting and wildlife management. Finally, to pave the way for more gender equal MMGs in the future where more women are represented, there is a need to continue to study both internal and external social processes that affect how gender is (un)done.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The increased focus on gender equality in the aftermath of the #metoo movement (cf. Grubbström & Powell, 2020; Johansson et al., 2018) has undoubtedly changed society as well as hunting and wildlife management. However, there is a need to progress from merely talking to actually doing in order to be able to break the glass ceiling and change prevailing gender norms in MMGs. In this respect, it is important to also identify and handle resistance among hunters (both male and female) in future research. Among some strands in the hunting society there are outspoken resistance toward gender equality training initiatives and feminist inspired research, as an example the funding of a research project on gender equality was heavily criticized (Jaktjournalen, 2021). Also, a recent study on attitudes on gender equality and sexism indicated a backlash against gender equality in the form of rising modern sexism among young men in Europe (Off et al., 2022). Giacomelli and Gibbert (2018) concluded in their research on hunting in Italy that men will accept women in their "preserve," but not for equality reasons, rather because it becomes a new opportunity to perpetrate their domination on the other gender and uphold hunting as an arena for male hegemony. Hunting needs to adapt to contemporary social realities in order to survive (von Essen & Allen, 2018), i.e., to be more ethically informed, ready to welcome new urban hunters and younger hunters since demographic transition is essential, and also to include new social groups (such as women and immigrants). This adaption will challenge the traditional structure and organization of some hunting cultures, and in this respect increased gender equality will be crucial.

The SHA training initiative is one concrete step in the right direction to increase the number of female representatives by unpacking and questioning prevailing gender norms in wildlife management, and as a next step also to change and undo gender in the organization and in the MMGs. Still, while the SHA continues this ongoing work, it is important that gender equality and ways of unpacking gender norms through norm criticism are truly integrated in all parts of the training initiative. Further, the training initiative should be open to all members, and mandatory to those who represent the SHA in MMGs. Over time, the training should be evaluated to see what effects it has had on gender representation and equality (cf. Andersson & Johansson, 2022; Lidestav et al., 2011). We also suggest a formal statement on zero tolerance of sexism or harassment in the organization, creating an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for *all* representatives. This requires an active leadership and continued education efforts. In addition, increased representation of women in MMGs and other leading positions in wildlife management could be facilitated by having women as mentors and/or providing support networks, working to increase recruitment and retention of more women. We also suggest a review of potentially excluding structures in hunting and moose management contexts. Closely connected to this, is the need to use open and formal recruitment tools rather than relying on informal social networks and referrals to fill positions (cf. Anderson, 2020).

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Therese Bjärstig (iD) http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6845-5525

References

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, and bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society*, *4*(2), 139–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002

Acker, J. (2011). Theorizing gender, race, and class in organizations. In E. Jeanes, D. Knights, & M. P. Yancey (Eds.), *Handbook of gender, work and organization* (pp. 65–80). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Anderson, W. S. (2020). The changing face of the wildlife profession: Tools for creating women leaders. *Human–Wildlife Interactions*, *14*(1), 15.

Andersson, E., & Johansson, M. (2022). *Tio år med jämställdhet på agendan - Nationell uppföljning av skogligt utbildades villkor på arbetsmarknaden* (Arbetsrapport 4). Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, Institutionen för skoglig resurshushållning.

Anthony, M. L., Knuth, B. A., & Bruce Lauber, T. (2004). Gender and citizen participation in wildlife management decision making. *Society & Natural Resources*, *17*(5), 395–411. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920490430179

Aries, E. J. (1976). Interaction patterns and themes of male, female and mixed groups. *Small Group Behavior*, *7*(1), 7–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/104649647600700102

Arora-Jonsson, S. (2014). *Women's studies international forum 47*, 295–308. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.02.009

Åseskog, B. (2017). National machinery for gender equality in Sweden and other Nordic countries. In S. M. Rai (Ed.), *Mainstreaming gender, democratizing the state* (pp. 146–166). Routledge.

ATL, L. A. (2012). *Få kvinnor i älgförvaltningen*. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from http://www.atl.nu/skog/fa-kvinnor-i-algforvaltningen/

Beckwith, K., & Cowell-Meyers, K. (2007). Sheer numbers: Critical representation thresholds and women's political representation. *Perspectives on Politics*, *5*(3), 553–565. https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759270707154X

Bird, S. R., & Rhoton, L. A. (2011). Women professionals' gender strategies: Negotiating gendered organizational barriers. In E. Jeanes, D. Knights, & M. P. Yancey (Eds.), *Handbook of gender, work and organization* (pp. 245–262). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Bjärstig, T., Sandström, C., Lindqvist, S., & Kvastegård, E. (2014). Partnerships implementing ecosystem-based moose management in Sweden. *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management*, *10*(3), 228–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/21513732.2014.936508

Borgen, O., & Skogen, K. (2013). Gutta på jakt. Jakt som arena for reproduksjon av arbeiderklasse-kultur. *Tidsskr Ungdomsforskning*, (13), 3–30.

Bye, L. M. (2010). Masculinity and rurality at play in stories about hunting. *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, *57*(3), 145–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/00291950310002125

County Administrative Board Jönköping [Länsstyrelsen Jönköping]. (2018). *Statistik över män och kvinnor i landets älgförvaltningsgrupper* (Report No. 2018:22). County Administrtive Board Jönköping.

Duda, M. D. (2001, November). The hunting mind. Women and hunting. *North American Hunter*, 35–37.

Eduards, M. (2002). *Förbjuden handling: Om kvinnors organisering och feministisk teori*. Liber.

Ely, R. J., & Meyerson, D. E. (2010). An organizational approach to undoing gender: The unlikely case of offshore oil platforms. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *30*, 3–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2010.09.002

Faizan, R., Nair, S. L. S., & Haque, A. U. (2018). The effectiveness of feminine and masculine leadership styles in relation to contrasting gender's performances. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, *17*. https://doi.org/10.17512/pjms.2018.17.1.07

Feenstra, S., Begeny, C. T., Ryan, M. K., Rink, F. A., Stoker, J. I., & Jordan, J. (2020). Contextualizing the impostor "syndrome". *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 3206. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.575024

Freidenvall, L. (2003). *Women's political representation and gender quotas: The Swedish case*. Dep. of Political Science, Stockholm University.

Giacomelli, S., & Gibbert, M. (2018). "He likes playing the hero–I let her have fun shooting". Gender games in the Italian forest during the hunting season. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *62*, 164–173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.08.005

Grubbström, A., & Powell, S. (2020). Persistent norms and the# MeToo effect in Swedish forestry education. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, *35*(5–6), 308–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/02827581.2020.1791243

Hansson-Forman, K., Reimersson, E., Bjärstig, T., & Sandström, C. (2021). A view through the lens of policy formulation: The struggle to formulate Swedish moose policy. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *23*(4), 528–542. https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2021.1888700

Heberlein, T. A., Serup, B., & Ericsson, G. (2008). Female hunting participation in North America and Europe. *Hum Dimens Wildl*, *13*(6), 443–458. https://doi.org/10.1080/10871200802294265

Jaktjournalen. (2021). Ledare av Daniel Sanchez. "Jägarnas pengar ska inte gå till feministisk kvasivetenskap". Retrieved September 3, 2023, from https://www.jaktjournalen.se/ledare-jagarnas-pengar-ska-inte-ga-till-feministisk-kvasivetenskap/

Jerlström, J. (2018). *Fyra skott för framtiden. En litteraturstudie om jämställdhet inom jägarkåren och professionella jaktyrken.*

Johansson, M., Dressel, S., Ericsson, G., Sjölander-Lindqvist, A., & Sandström, C. (2020). How stakeholder representatives cope with collaboration in the Swedish moose management system. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, *25*(2), 154–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2019.1698081

Johansson, M., Johansson, K., & Andersson, E. (2018). # metoo in the Swedish forest sector: Testimonies from harassed women on sexualised forms of male control. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, *33*(5), 419–425. https://doi.org/10.1080/02827581.2018.1474248

Kellert, S. R., & Berry, J. K. (1987). Attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors toward wildlife as affected by gender. *Wildl Soc Bull 15*(3), 363–371. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3782542

Larson, L. R., Stedman, R. C., Decker, D. J., Siemer, W. F., & Baumer, M. S. (2014). Exploring the social habitat for hunting: Toward a comprehensive framework for understanding hunter recruitment and retention. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, *19*(2), 105–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2014.850126

Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2010). *It still takes a candidate. Why women don't run for office.* Cambridge University Press.

Leisher, C., Temsah, G., Booker, F., Day, M., Agarwal, B., Matthews, E., Roe, D., Russell, D., Samberg, L., Sunderland, T., & Wilkie, D. (2015). Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes: A systematic map protocol. *Environmental Evidence*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13750-015-0039-2

Lidestav, G., Andersson, E., Berg Lejon, S., & Johansson, K. (2011). *Jämställt arbetsliv i skogssektorn* (Arbetsrapport 345). Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, Institutionen för skoglig resurshushållning och geomatik. https://pub.epsilon.slu.se/8672/1/Lidestav_G_etal_120329.pdf

McFarlane, B. L., Watson, D. L., & Boxall, P. C. (2003). Women hunters in Alberta: Girl power or guys in disguise. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, *8*(3), 165–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/10871200304309

Metcalf, E. C., Graefe, A. R., Trauntvein, N. E., & Burns, R. C. (2015). Understanding hunting constraints and negotiation strategies: A typology of female hunters. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, *20*(1), 30–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2015.957366

Nentwich, J. C., & Kelan, E. K. (2014). Towards a topology of 'doing gender': An Analysis of empirical research and its challenges. *Gender, Work and Organization*, *21*(2), 121–134. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12025

Ng, E. S., & Sears, G. J. (2017). The glass ceiling in context: The influence of CEO gender, recruitment practices and firm internationalisation on the representation of women in management. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *27*(1), 133–151. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12135

Norris, P., et al. (1996). Legislative Recruitment. In L. LeDuc (Ed.), *Comparing democracies. Elections and voting in global perspective.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Off, G., Charron, N., & Alexander, A. (2022). Who perceives women's rights as threatening to men and boys? Explaining modern sexism among young men in Europe. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 84. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.909811

Palmer, B., & Simon, D. (2010). *Breaking the political glass ceiling: Women and congressional elections.* Routledge.

Paxton, P., & Hughes, M. (2007). *Women, politics, and power: A global perspective.* Pine Forge Press.

Pesonen, S., Tienari, J., & Vanhala, S. (2009). The boardroom gender paradox. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, *24*(5), 327–345. https://doi.org/10.1108/17542410910968797

Phillips, A. (2000). *Närvarons politik. Den politiska representationen av kön, etnicitet och ras*. Studentlitteratur.

Sackeyfio, N., & Kaba, A. J. (2022). Gendering environment and climate change in the Economic Community of West African states & the East African Community: Why representation matters. *The Review of Black Political Economy*, *49*(2), 203–222. https://doi.org/10.1177/00346446211036762

Schlamp, S., Gerpott, F. H., & Voelpel, S. C. (2020). Same talk, different reaction? Communication, emergent leadership and gender. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *36*(1), 51–74. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-01-2019-0062

Skogsstyrelsen. (2021). Retrieved August 8, 2022, from https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/nyhetslista/allt-farre-och-aldre-skogsagare/

Small, S. A. 1995. Action-oriented research: Models and methods. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *57*(4), 941–955. https://doi.org/10.2307/353414

SOU. (2009). 2009:54. Uthållig älgförvaltning i samverkan. https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/4c1931e996684c168b45c6bfc8df13d8/uthallig-algforvaltning-i-samverkan-sou-200954/

Stedman, R. C., & Heberlein, T. A. (2001). Hunting and Rural socialization. *Rural Sociology*, *66*(4), 598–617. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.2001.tb00086.x

Svensk Jakt. (2021). Retrieved August 8, 2022, from https://svenskjakt.se/start/nyhet/var-tionde-medlem-i-jagareforbundet-ar-kvinna/

Tengelin, E., Bülow, P. H., Berndtsson, I., & Dahlborg Lyckhage, E. (2019). Norm-critical potential in undergraduate nursing education curricula: A document analysis. *Advances in Nursing Science*, *42*(2), E24–E37. https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000228

Van den Brink, M., & Benschop, Y. (2014). Gender in academic networking: The role of gatekeepers in professorial recruitment. *Journal of Management Studies*, *51*(3), 460–492. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12060

von Essen, E., & Allen, M. P. (2018). Taking prejudice seriously: Burkean reflections on the rural past and present. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *58*(3), 543–561. https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12183

Wängnerud, L. (2009). Women in parliaments: Descriptive and substantive representation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *12*(1), 51–69. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.053106.123839

Westermann, O., Ashby, J., & Pretty, J. (2005). Gender and social capital: The importance of gender differences for the maturity and effectiveness of natural resource management groups. *World Development*, *33*(11), 1783–1799. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2005.04.018

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, *1*(2), 125–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002

Wide, J. (2015). 2015:96, Social representativitet i den lokala demokratin. Partierna som politikens grindvakter? In *Låt fler forma framtiden! Forskarantologi* (pp. 111–162). Wolters Kluwer.