The World Needs Bad Men.
We Keep the Other Bad Men from the Door.

An examination of the reproduction and negotiation of hegemonic masculinity in HBO's *True Detective*

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Abstract

This thesis takes its point of departure in the controversy surrounding the HBO television series *True Detective*. Utilising the theoretical framework of feminism and masculinity studies as well as the concept of hegemonic masculinity and television studies, this thesis sets out to analyse *True Detective's* representation and negotiation of masculinity and whether it is supportive of the normative gender regime. This is done by examining the male/female relationships of the series focusing on how the male characters view and treat females, as well as, the series' attempt at breaking with the normative masculinity of the TV crime genre. Furthermore, this thesis analyses the inter-masculine relationships and how men of less-valued masculinities are represented in the series, the positive potential of male bonding and the complexities of male power. The thesis concludes that while *True Detective* does follow many of the tropes of the genre which are situated as supportive of hegemonic masculinity, and thus the subordination of women and other masculinities, it also verbalises and problematises issues regarding both gender, sexual, and racial identities. Thus, it does not merely celebrate dated ideals of masculinity but rather portrays men who are troubled by attempting to fulfil these expectations of manhood.

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1. Introduction

The past few years have brought about a new surge of feminism catching the public's attention with movements such as *#MeToo* and *Time's up*. These movements focus on female empowerment concerning sexual assault, as well as gender inequality and discrimination in the workplace. Their goal is to break the silence surrounding these topics, and thereby, start a public conversation about issues women continue to face. These movements thus seek to elevate "the global consciousness surrounding the obstacles women encounter in their daily lives, both personal and professional" (Langone). The result has been an almost palpable culture shift, particularly concerning how men, often unintentionally, mistreat women. By the enormous involvement of women around the world, this new surge has sought to create 'empowerment through empathy' and to "[disrupt] all systems that allow sexual violence to flourish" by seeking to eradicate power imbalances between the genders, which is the root cause of harassment behaviour (Langone).

However, these movements have also been met with criticism as well as confusion particularly from men, who feel they no longer know how to act appropriately when it comes to women. Due to the politicisation of this cultural moment, men worry about their role as well as their behaviour, fearing accusations of sexual harassment and wondering if they too miss verbal or physical cues from women (Victor). This confusion plays into a much larger societal discourse concerning modern-day men being in a 'crisis of masculinity', in which men feel unable to be 'real' men. This is argued to be caused by the rise of feminine influence in society, which then causes a decline or even 'castration' of masculinity, associating the masculine identity with privileges that men have stereotypically enjoyed, thereby exhibiting men as victims of feminism (Dupuis-Déri).

This talk of 'crisis' is similarly reflected in mass media with Malcolm Venable from *TV Guide* arguing that men are struggling, at least partially, due to lack of role models of positive masculinity. Mass media such as television play a significant role in changing this conversation and can influence viewers with positive dynamics between both men and their children, men and women, and how men think of themselves. He further argues:

> It's hard to be what you don't see, and for a long time, TV shows conveyed what manhood means in conflicting and arguably unhealthy ways. A man was a gun-slinging cowboy like Marshall Matt Dillon […] a tough loudmouth like Archie Bunker […]; or a man-child like Homer Simpson […] Up until very recently, leading men were almost always

> white, the head of the household, straight and often a little homophobic, and oblivious or indifferent to their female counterparts – archetypes that put up rigid lines about what was considered manly or not (Venable).

Venable further argues that male role models are evolving with more progressive definitions of what it means to be a man, which in turn is helping manhood evolve for the better (Venable).

One such text, which has garnered controversy regarding its gender representations, is the HBO anthology crime drama *True Detective* with its three seasons airing in 2014, 2015, and 2019 respectively ("True Detective"). A raving success from the beginning, the first season pulled an average of 11 million viewers a week and crashed the HBO streaming service with traffic for its season finale, as well as having received an overall rating of 9.0 on IMDB (Robins; "True Detective"). However, the show's enormous success has not come without criticism, an example being television critic Emily Nussbaum's review of the first season for *The New Yorker,* in which she comments on the lack of interesting female characters: "To state the obvious: while the male detectives of 'True Detective' are avenging women and children, and bro-bonding over 'crazy pussy,' every live woman they meet is paper-thin. Wives and sluts and daughters – none with any interior life" (Nussbaum). However, Robert Pallante has a different point of view, as he writes in *Odyssey:*

> The show is told through a male perspective, and the women are depicted with their bias in-mind. 'True Detective' is not a misogynistic show. The writers use the misogyny of the male characters as a way to develop the story […] The reason the show celebrates the male characters and casts its women as merely supportive is simple: The show is for men and about men (Pallante).

While both sides argue that misogyny and hypermasculinity are big themes of the series, Pallante does not see this as an issue, but rather a narrative tool used to shape the male protagonists of the series, who according to reviewer Willa Paskin are situated within a 'very masculine, Southern cop culture' (Paskin). However, Paskin finds this problematic as she ties the appeal of the show specifically to its use of hypermasculinity and misogyny: "*True Detective* is an unfettered celebration of two men, men whose flaws and doubts and mistakes only make them more heroic, and this has been integral to the show becoming a phenomenon. The series has a lady problem, yes, but it is also a bro bonanza" (Paskin).

The contested reasoning for its controversial portrayal of manhood, as well as the use of themes such as violence and misogyny in *True Detective*, creates the base for my initial interest in examining its gender representation. Specifically, this thesis will be focusing on the aspects of hegemonic masculinity expressed through both the main characters' relationships with women as well as their relationship with other men. Furthermore, I will examine whether these traits are represented in a normalised or critical manner. Thereby determining the series purpose, as either another voice in the current discussions of gender representation or simply as a repetition of outdated ideals and masculine roles models. And thus, my thesis statement is as follows: In which ways does the characters of *True Detective* represent and negotiate masculinity in relation to both women and other men, and does this representation cause the series to support the use of misogyny and hierarchal male oppression in television?

1.1 Methodological Considerations

As mentioned, this project is concerned with the production of gender identity in a popular cultural text. For a text to be made into popular culture, it has to both contain the forces of domination as well as opportunities to speak against them, and for subordinated positions to oppose them. These texts are made by the people and are not simply imposed upon them (Fiske, *Understanding* 21). To be successful a text must attempt to appeal to what we have in common, which is the dominant ideology and the experience of subordination or disempowerment (23). Similarly, it must be relevant to a variety of readers in differing social contexts, as such it must be polysemic. A text's reading is thus determined by the reader's social conditions, and it must deny closure, absolutes, and universals (111).

In this sense, examining popular culture is relevant in relation to studying social categories such as gender, class, and race, and at the same time, the outcome of the study is affected by the reading. As all knowledge is situated, the subject position of the reader is relevant, thus, it is necessary to disclaim firstly that I am Danish, as a such, my cultural context differs from the American context represented in *True Detective*, this affects my understanding of social issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia as these concepts differ in magnitude from context to context. Secondly, I am white and a woman, and as thus, I do not personally inhabit many of the identity markers I discuss throughout the analysis. While I can never remove myself fully from my own internalised biases, by

being aware of their existence, as well as by utilising the following theoretical frameworks, I can attempt a slightly less subjective reading of the text.

Due to my focus on hegemonic masculinity, I have limited my analysis to themes in which this specific term is of most interest, as a consequence many of the series' other themes have been purposely left out. Similarly, relations of class, race, sexuality, and other identity markers were intentionally left out when not relevant to the specific theme. As the analysis focuses on production and representation of gender, normative definitions of femininity and masculinity are used throughout the project. I argue, in the gender theory section, that these should not be considered biological essentialist concepts, but rather they are a product of culture. However, this does not mean that gendered identity markers are not 'real,' as they largely affect people's lives. In order to examine how men are affected and limited by the gendered norms instated by the patriarchal ideology, men and women have to be strategically defined as binary opposites.

2. Theory

2.1 Feminism and Masculinity Studies

Feminism and masculinity studies, also known as men's studies, have a long and complicated history. Judith Kegan Gardiner, professor of gender and women's studies at the University of Illinois, puts it this way: "The relationships between masculinity, masculinity studies, feminism, and feminist theories are asymmetrical, interactive and changing […]" (Gardiner, "Introduction" 2). The women's liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s assumed an antagonistic stance towards masculinity, this was particularly due to radical feminists that led this discourse in the media. Thus, they made it seem as if feminism and masculinity were natural enemies. While this was not necessarily the case, feminists did take issue with masculinity, as several of its traditional traits were seen as responsible for the oppression of women. At the same time, men's liberation movements have often been perceived as a way for men to benefit from feminism, while still maintaining the same privileges. Thus, it was considered a modernisation of patriarchy, rather than a critique. Therefore, many feminists were sceptic of discourses surrounding the 'new sensitive man,' and other such gentle images of masculinity. However, other groups of feminists did welcome signs of progress in men (Gardiner, "Introduction" 2-3; Connell, *Masculinities* 41).

Both queer theory and feminist theory argue that mainstream masculinity is fundamentally linked to power and domination, and therefore, is resistant to change. This critique has been hard for heterosexual men to take on, and thus the connection of masculinity and power is denied in anti-feminist men's movements (Connell, *Masculinities* 42). Therefore, the antagonistic relationship was often mutual, even though masculinity studies in the 1970s and 1980s were often dependant on feminism, as it was usually studied within women's studies and gender studies programs. Men often ridiculed feminism and claimed that men were victims rather than oppressors, and attributed men's privileges on hormones, evolution, as well as logic. While the pro-feminist movement amongst men is growing, these arguments still exist in some form today. Masculinist men's movements of the 1990s sought to restore male dominance over women and saw feminism as the enemy, however, there were also pro-feminist men, who agreed that traditional gender relations were harmful to both women and men. These pro-feminist men argued that it is harmful to idealize the characteristics often associated with powerful men, as masculinity in this way is situated as opposed, not only to women, but also to less powerful and subordinated groups of men, such as homosexuals and men of colour. In this way, all men are harmed by the ideal version of masculinity, also referred to as 'hegemonic masculinity,' a term that will be examined further in the following section. Striving for this ideal, forces men into a confined role, and imposes sexual and gender conformity, thereby, making men live in fear of humiliation and failure to live up to this definition of masculinity (Gardiner, "Introduction" 2-6). Thus, these groups of men sought gender equality by attempting to change the dominance of men, and dismantle their privileges, both for the sake of men and women, as sociologist Michael Kimmel noted: "Men are just beginning to realise that the 'traditional' definition of masculinity leaves them unfulfilled and dissatisfied" (Kimmel qtd. in Gardiner, "Introduction" 6).

The first attempt at studying masculinity was done by Sigmund Freud in his depth psychology. While this theoretical work is no longer central to masculinity studies, Freud can be credited with 'letting the cat out of the bag' and disrupt the naturalness of masculinity, which made it open to enquiry (Connell, *Masculinities* 8). Women's studies started to take an interest in the male subject for instance regarding 'the male gaze' and male bonding (Gardiner, "Introduction" 5). However, there was also a pushback within feminism to study men, as it seemed to focus on the man, which is unlike what feminist studies usually set out to do (Wiegman 36). This new focus on masculinity also seemed to remove focus from specifically feminist and women's studies, to the more politically neutralised 'gender studies.' This was the case, for instance, in the branch of men's studies that were informed by Robert Bly's school of thought, who were motivated by the desire to better men's condition in

society, while minimising or even ignoring the oppression of women (Thomas 60-61). However, due to feminist theory attempting to explain male dominance and female subordination, men and masculinity play a vital role in feminist studies. As an understanding of men is needed, to understand women's social situation. Therefore, feminism needs to engage in masculinity studies to understand exactly how men are shaped by masculinity, as both genders can only be understood in relation to one another (Gardiner, "Men" 36; Gardiner, "Introduction" 9).

This turn towards studying men and masculinity is important, as it serves to 'unveil' masculinity. Before it became an object of examination, men and masculinity were hidden as the normative production of knowledge and history, as Robyn Wiegman, director of women's studies at Duke University, argues: "These arenas taught us a great deal about the relation of men to masculinity, but only as evidence of the male body's abstraction into the normative domain of the universal where shielded by humanism, both specificity and diversity were lost in the generic function of 'man'" (Wiegman 33). By leaving masculinity as a naturalised entity, it is rendered unable to change, therefore, studying men is not a betrayal of feminism, but rather it supports its cause by removing 'man' from a universal position and marking it as a gender (Thomas 61). Thus, feminism and masculinity studies agree that masculinity is not monolithic or static, but a product of different processes which results differ for individuals as well as institutions and societies. This is unlike the dominant forms of masculinity which work to maintain an appearance of masculinity as stable and natural. Masculinity is socially constructed and is recreated through media representations, as well as performances by individuals or groups (Gardiner, "Introduction" 11). While gender roles and expectations do exist, it is central that they are treated not as a prescription of certain roles on others, but rather the key use of gender is as a description of actual social relations of power between males and females, and the internalisation of these relations of power (Kaufman 185).

Feminist thinking has been fundamental to the formation of contemporary men's and masculinity studies, as Gardiner explains: "Misogyny created feminist theory, and feminist theory has helped create masculinity" (Gardiner, "Men" 36). While theories on the difference between femininity and masculinity differ, they generally define gender by men's difference from women as asymmetrical, rather than just as opposition or as negation (42). Masculinity studies further mirror feminism in the sense that it focuses on men's own experiences, as well as gender-specific suffering (Gardiner, "Men" 47). Masculinity studies have been influenced both by feminism as well as queer theory, race studies, and poststructuralism studies, but have also matured as a separate field (Gardiner, "Introduction" 2).

Currently, masculinity studies focus less on men's power over women, and more on relationships between men, as these relationships are regulated by regimes of masculinity. They look at the positive potentials of male bonding, as well as the divisive effects of racial, class, sexual, and other differences between men. They further seek to deconstruct binaries within gender studies such as victim/oppressors and dominant/other masculinities (Gardiner, "Introduction" 14, 2). This focus brings attention to inequality amongst men, as not all men share equal masculine rights and privileges. Some men are oppressed by women from the dominant race or class, therefore, assumptions about power being based solely on sexual difference are incorrect (Wiegman 35). As the world is dominated by men, power is associated with masculinity and a man's ability to exercise power, however, in reality, men's relationship to power is much more complicated. Men's lives, according to gender theorist Michael Kaufman, is a balance of power and powerlessness, as well as privilege and pain. He further argues that power causes pain, as it causes isolation and alienation from both women and other men (Kaufman 183). This does not justify men's actions of violence or oppression, however, studying and understanding dominant forms of masculinity, and how they affect men's lives could, according to Kaufman, be the basis for men embracing feminism (184).

Thus, feminism and masculinity studies have been and still are interrelated, to fully understand gender relations both binaries need to be examined. 'Gendering' men not only functions to further feminist goals of gender equality, but also provides an understanding of the complexity of what it means to be a man, and thus can also help break with the normative ideals of masculinity.

2.1.1 Gender Theory

The goal of feminism is to improve women's conditions by transforming ideologies and institutions, such as the family and corporations, that have gender biases. This is either done by trying to make women more like a traditional man or making men more like traditional women and sometimes this is done by working towards minimising the categories of gender altogether (Gardiner, "Men" 35). Feminist scholars have begun to question the very nature of binary genders, and whether this division is even possible. They are sceptical about the essentialist conceptions of gender and sexuality as something static, that is fixed by nature or God, as this would mean that they are unchangeable, and as such, feminist scholars have joined the poststructuralist suspicion of universal truths (Gardiner, "Introduction" 9, 14). This fixed definition of gender is often portrayed in mass culture, in which there is a discourse of an assumed 'true masculinity' at the core of men, with talk of a 'real man' or

a ‘natural man.’ This ‘true masculinity’ both drives the body into action, such as the discourse of men’s natural aggression and violent lust, but also limits the male body, such as the discourse that men cannot care for infants, or that homosexuality is ‘unnatural’ (Connell, *Masculinities* 45). This is what feminist gender theory has attempted to break with. Gardiner believes that this theory of gender as a social construct is the most important accomplishment of feminist theory. At the same time, the theoretical distinctions between sex, gender, and sexuality has also impacted masculinity studies (Gardiner, “Men” 35; Wiegman 50). As Gardiner explains: “[…] masculinity and femininity are loosely defined, historically variable, and interrelated social ascriptions to persons with certain kinds of bodies – not the natural, necessary, or ideal characteristics of people with similar genitals” (Gardiner, “men” 35).

In this way, feminist gender theory has worked to change the assumption that men and women contain inherent divisive characteristics, they understand traditional sexes as cultural groupings rather than facts of nature. This also functioned to ‘gender’ men and remove masculinity from its unmarked position (Gardiner, “men” 35), as Gardiner argues:

> The first feminist theories were primarily defensive, and as they questioned men’s appropriation to themselves of essential humanity, they charged that men, too, were embodied as a specific gender defined according to cultural ideals for people with similar bodies, characterised by certain phycological dispositions, and shaping social institutions to serve their interests (Gardiner, “Men” 36).

And thus, by arguing that men are no less gendered than women and that their gender also is a social construction, men and women are both situated within a gendered position (Thomas 61; Gardiner, “Men” 36). Removing the assumed normativity of masculinity, feminism has been further able to question the practices involved in patriarchal domination, as well as challenge the normative constitution of masculinity (Wiegman 43).

Judith Butler is one of the most recognised post-structural feminists to work with gender theory. She understands gender, not as something that is added onto a pre-existing subject, but rather as what constitutes the social formation of the subject, thereby gender is a social category that has been imposed upon a sexed body (Thomas 66). Butler thus argues that gender is performative, and is created through repetition of gendered rituals:

> This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation. Although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is a public action (Butler 178).

Through these repetitions, the way people perform their gender becomes naturalised, and as such, people are unaware that they are 'doing gender.' Butler further suggests that there is no gender identity before this performance, but rather the performance constitutes a person's gender identity: "There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 33). The construct of masculinity, as well as femininity, is thereby a performative constitution made up of a variety of forms, from dominant heterosexual masculinities to more subversive masculinities, such as those of homosexual men and men of colour. Wiegman argues that in this way: "The seeming naturalness of adult masculinity – heterosexuality, fatherhood, family governance, soldiery, and citizenry – can […] be viewed as a set of prescriptive norms that contain potential contradictions within and between men" (Wiegman 43). These norms repress the male subject in a similar manner to other social markers such as race, class, and sexuality (43).

While feminists, as well as masculinity studies, argue that gender is fluid, negotiable, and created through performance, they do not argue that a turn towards androgyny has been achieved. However, they do hope that the future will include multiple gender possibilities, rather than the binaries of man and woman. They seek liberation from the naturalness of gender and holds institutionalised heterosexuality responsible for its continued existence, as it would otherwise not be socially useful, for there to be a division of two genders (Gardiner, "Men" 45).

Therefore, while feminist studies as well as masculinity studies primarily work with an understanding of gender as a cultural construction rather than determined by biology, the concept of gender still exists and affects daily life as well as academia. As culture determines gender to be binary, it is impossible to not perform a gender, as this process of performativity starts at birth. Therefore, working with binary genders, and the way these are expressed and represented, is relevant as they depict societal beliefs and norms that affect everyone.

2.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

2.2.1 Definition and Common Misinterpretations

As presented in the previous sections, historically 'gender' has been associated with women and femininity, while men and masculinity have largely remained unexamined, and thus regarded as the unmarked norm (Connell, "The Study of Masculinities" 5). This is what masculinity studies have attempted to change, and one key term in relation to understanding masculinity, and its relation to men's lives, is 'hegemonic masculinity.' This concept has been employed both in the study of real men, as well as media representations of men as hegemony also impacts the selection of images in mass media (Connell and Messerschmidt 833).

According to gender and masculinity scholar Raewyn Connell, the main objective, that both constitutes and differentiates masculinity and femininity, is the fact that men possess power and dominance. This dominance is also thep basis for the relationship between groups of men, which defines a hegemonic form of masculinity, as it is always constructed in relation to both subordinated groups of men as well as women. Power relations within masculinity was brought forth by the gay liberation movement, as homophobia is a key attribute in the dominant masculinity (Connell, "The Study of Masculinities" 8; Connell and Messerschmidt 831). Within masculinity both sexuality, class, and race are patterns of difference that enable different masculinities to be produced within the same cultural or institutional setting. However, these masculinities are not only diverse but are relations of both alliance, dominance, and subordination and are constructed through practices that exclude and include as well as exploit each other (Connell, *Masculinities* 36-37).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity originated in research of different patterns of masculinity, as well as the overall gender hierarchy and inequality in Australian high schools, and is defined as a: "[…] pattern of masculinity, which is most honoured, which occupies the position of centrality in a structure of gender relations, and whose privileged position helps to stabilize the gender order as a whole, especially the social subordination of women" (Connell, "The Study of Masculinities" 8). The concept relies on research suggesting that multiple masculinities exist, as well as evidence of men and masculinity being privileged in comparison with women and femininity (8). The Gramscian term 'hegemony' is defined as follows:

> […] a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes. Ascendancy of one group of men over another achieved at the point of a gun, or by the threat of unemployment, is not hegemony. Ascendancy which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth, is (Connell, *Gender and Power* 184).

'Hegemony' was used by Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci to understand the stabilization of class relations, he focused on the dynamics of structural change resulting in the mobilisation of classes. However, when transferring the term to gender, the issue of historical change has often been neglected. As such, it has been interpreted as a simple model of cultural control, which has been a source of misunderstanding with the use of the term (Connell and Messerschmidt 831). According to Connell, it is also a common misunderstanding that hegemony is based on force. However, hegemony is compatible with force in the sense that, in certain situations, violence can be effective in backing up dominant cultural patterns. At the same time, it is also a common misunderstanding that hegemony means a total cultural dominance. While it is dominant other groups still exist, they are subordinated rather than eliminated (Connell, *Gender and Power* 184). This is for instance evident concerning homosexuality, generally a subordinated group, gay masculinities exist on a spectrum ranging from active oppression, in the form of either discredit or violence, to incorporation, toleration and even cultural celebration in the hegemony, depending on the social context (Connell and Messerschmidt 848).

Hegemonic masculinity differs from male sex role theories, in the sense that the cultural ideals portrayed as hegemonic, do not necessarily correspond to the actual personalities of the majority of men. Rather hegemonic ideals are often a creation of masculine role models that are either pure fantasy, or real people whose life experiences are so far removed from everyday achievement, that they too are portrayed as living up to unattainable ideals (Connell, *Gender and Power* 184-185). Thus, the ideals of hegemonic masculinity do not equal the characteristics of those in power, but rather it is distinguished from other masculinities by being normative. It is not the statistical normal, but it embodies the most honoured way of being a man (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Connell comments: "The public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support. The notion of 'hegemony' generally implies a large measure of consent" (Connell, *Gender and Power* 185). Men

consent to this form of masculinity for multiple reasons, as a form of fantasy gratification, and a way to deal with displaced aggression, as is evident by the popularity of violent movies. The biggest reason is that the majority of men benefit from the subordination of women. This does not mean that hegemonic masculinity equates being outright cruel to women, and women can also feel oppressed by non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. Women can even find the cultural pattern of hegemonic masculinity more familiar and manageable. The ascendancy of hegemony is achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion, rather than by force (Connell, *Gender and Power* 185; Connell and Messerschmidt 832). The relationship between hegemonic masculinity and femininity is complex, hegemonic masculinity has to maintain the practices that institutionalise men's dominance over women, however, due to the complexity of gender relations this is difficult, and therefore, it needs to maintain "an opening towards domesticity and openings towards violence, towards misogyny and towards heterosexual attraction" concurrently (Connell, *Gender and Power* 185-186).

2.2.2 Emphasized Femininity

Due to the subordination of women, there is no 'hegemonic femininity' as a group needs dominance to establish hegemony. Instead Connell calls the female counterpart to hegemonic masculinity 'emphasized femininity':

> One form [of femininity] is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men. I will call this 'emphasized femininity'. Others are defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance. Others again are defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation (Connell, *Gender and Power* 183-184).

Women do have limited power over other women, for instance in a family setting with a mother having power over her daughter, or in an institutional setting such as a girl's school in which a headmistress has power over her students. This domination is however not the same as what is seen within groups of men, which is also evident by there being much less violence amongst women (Connell, *Gender and Power* 187). Compliance is central to the patterns of femininity, for instance women should be more sociable and less technically competent, they should be sexually passive, they should accept marriage and their role concerning childcare, and show "compliance with men's desire

for titillation and ego stroking in office relationships" (187). This femininity is performed especially for men. In order to maintain this emphasized femininity, other forms of femininity need to be held back from gaining cultural articulation and stay hidden. This is also what feminists are trying to counteract with writing women's experiences into history, as the experiences of spinsters, lesbians, prostitutes, rebels and other marginalised forms of femininity have been erased from historical articulation (188). However, during the development and research on hegemonic masculinity, the term 'emphasized femininity' and the two concepts' relation have been largely forgotten. This is unfortunate due to gender being relational, and thus gendered patterns are defined from contradiction. The focus on femininity is further important in relation to women's roles in the construction of gender among men, as women play a big part in many of the processes that construct masculinity, such as in their relationships as mothers, girlfriends, friends, co-workers and so forth. Emphasized femininity's compliance to patriarchy is still a relevant issue in mass culture, and changes in women's identity and practices also need more attention, to examine the interplay of femininities and masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 848).

2.2.3 Hegemonic Masculinity in Family and Friendships

Due to the difference in the power relation between men and women, hegemonic masculinity also affects gender roles within the family. Understanding femininity and masculinity as binary opposites, can be traced to Victorian ideals of separate spheres for men and women. Men inhabited the public sphere, and were thus active and independent, while women inhabited the private sphere, and were passive and dependent on men (Adams and Coltrane 231). These expectations caused men to have a complicated relationship to family: "Whereas boys and men 'come from' or 'have' families, they often experience profound difficulties being 'in' them, insofar as they typically seem incapable of offering the emotional intimacy of providing the personal care that have become the hallmarks of modern family life" (230). While popular culture expresses families' need for fathers, as well as men's need for families, successful boyhood and manhood has less to do with life in the domestic setting, and more to do with accomplishments outside the home, such as in business, sports, and politics. In order to obtain manhood a boy must distance himself from femininity. This distancing drives boys away from the family, which causes problems when they mature into men: "As men, they will have little ideological precedent for living harmoniously in a family environment, especially one that is increasingly predicated on ideals of democratic sharing" (230; 233).

The family is the institution in which the majority of the production and reproduction of polarized gender roles occur. While children are also socialised through school and other social communities, family is the primary and initial institution of socialisation: "[…] acting as a microcosm of society and providing a child's first exposure to interactions with others" (Adams and Coltrane 233). Within the family system, fathers tend to enforce gender stereotypes more than mothers, especially towards their sons. At the same time, masculine gender identity is also considered more fragile than female gender identity, as it requires suppressing feelings of vulnerability, as well as denying emotional connection (234). As boys are encouraged to repress their emotions, they fail to learn how to describe and make sense of their feelings (238). Through this gendered socialisation men find themselves in a contradictory relationship with family:

> Having internalized personal interpretations of masculine ideals and subsequently experienced valorization and reinforcement of those ideals in institutionalized settings, young men are expected to (re)turn to the family setting to prove their maturity […] and enact what they have learned about being men (Adams and Coltrane 239).

Traditionally, as a way to reinforce their masculinity, men did not participate in families through nurturing and serving, but instead they moulded their family to conform to their sense of entitlement, and expected that other members, especially their wives, would care for and serve them (Adams and Coltrane 239). As women started working outside the home, men lost their role as sole breadwinners. Women no longer portrayed the 'traditional woman' that served as opposition for men to be 'real men.' And through this social change in the family, it became harder to justify masculine entitlement, thus problematising men's place in the family, and causing them to reconsider the benefits of living up to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity:

> Structurally, psychologically, and relationally, these issues point to the tensions present for men in family life, tensions exacerbated by the felt need to live up to certain ideals of manhood that make them outsiders to the family. On one hand, hegemonic masculine ideals have provided them with power and privilege, in the home and society at large. On the other hand, men have begun to realize the cost of their alienation from family life (Adams and Coltrane 242).

Thus, due to social changes in which women have gained the opportunity of financial independence, marriage has become optional. Many men have opted out of family life all together, with some men choosing not to get married, and others who, after divorce, support their children financially, but otherwise disappear from their lives altogether (242).

There is a big overlap with men's relationship to friends and family as both provide trust, respect, and intimacy (Grief 35). Men often feel awkward talking about friendships, and how they feel about their friends, they feel more comfortable talking about their relationships with wives or girlfriends. Friendship is important as isolation is unhealthy for both men and women. However, male and female friendships differ, for instance men do not show as much physical affection for each other or pay as many compliments. They furthermore do not require as much verbal communication from their male friends, and competition between men happens more openly than between women, for instance during sports and similar activities (20). As men are taught to control their emotions, their opportunities to connect with other people are restricted, and it becomes difficult to connect with both friends and spouses. As a result, men develop friendships that are based on doing 'shoulder-to-shoulder' activities such as sports, while women more often develop 'face-to-face' friendships in which they interact more intimately (36-37). Friendships are formed based on several different aspects, as people are usually drawn to others based on race, age, education, values, and other structures. Similarly, life stage is important as younger men who separate from the family have greater need for friends than married men who spend more time with their family. When the children have left home, the need for friends increase again (Grief 28-29). Race or ethnicity is also of importance as members of minority groups are likely to form immediate bonds with other members, as they identify with each other, and thus a sense of solidarity exists (30).

American culture has shifted from relying on friends and the community, to becoming more centred around the homes, and people generally spend less time with people outside the family. Thus, there has been a shift from the importance of friends to the importance of spouses, as more women entered the workplace, the roles between genders became less starkly defined, and many men began to appreciate their spouses as friends. While this has its benefits, it can also be unfortunate if the spouse dies, or in the case of divorce, as the support network will be much smaller (20-21).

A reason for men often lacking meaningful friendships with other men is fear, men worry about the appearance of showing affection for their male friends, and are often embarrassed to embrace friends, as affection raises the fear that a man may be perceived as homosexual. Thus, men do not want to appear needy or vulnerable in the eyes of other men (Grief 21). This fear has had a profound

effect on how men structure friendships and has made male friendships much more circumspect. As women as well as black and immigrant men entered into the workforce, competing for jobs with the white dominant group of men, these men needed to hold on to their position of power. Effeminate behaviour was something men sought to avoid, to distance themselves from women and homosexuals (24-25). Thus, to be considered masculine, men had to maintain physical distance from other men, which also become prevalent in the way boys were raised to be 'real men,' including compulsory heterosexuality (25).

2.2.4 Positions within Hegemonic Masculinity

While women are always subordinated in relation to hegemonic masculinity, different positions are possible for men. As few men are positioned as hegemonic, the majority of men are positioned as complicit, subordinated, or marginalised within this power relation. Complicit masculinity relates to a large group of men, who are connected to hegemonic masculinity but do not embody it. They are not the 'front-line troops of patriarchy,' but are still complicit in their relation to it. In everyday situations most men's lives involve compromises with women, such as in marriage, fatherhood, and community life. In this way, they do not perform domination or direct authority over women. Similarly, they are respectful towards the women in their lives, are never violent towards women, help out with household duties, and bring home a wage. However, simultaneously they can be convinced that feminists are extremists, and thus in less direct ways be supportive of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, *Masculinities* 79-80).

Subordinated masculinities often refer to homosexual men, however, heterosexual men who are deemed to possess feminine qualities can similarly be subordinated and marked as 'wimps' and 'sissies.' The movement for gay civil rights is based on the rejection and abuse gay men experience at the hands of heterosexual men. Homophobia is a central aspect of hegemonic masculinity. However, at the same time, it is theorised that there is a fascination with homosexuality, and that homophobia is the expression of secret desires that is converted to hatred. Yet homophobia is not just a negative attitude, it involves social practices of discrimination, media vilification, and violence. Not just as abuse of individuals, but as a way to draw social boundaries between hegemonic and subordinated masculinity. In this way, the subordination of women and homosexual men are connected, as homosexual men represent a blurred boundary between masculinity and femininity (Connell, *Masculinities* 79, 39-40).

Finally, there are groups of men who embody marginalised masculinity. These groups, unlike complicit and subordinated groups, are outside the gender order and are marginalised due to other social structures such as class and race (Connell, *Masculinities* 80). Marginalised masculinity is a prevalent theme in Bell Hooks' book *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, in which she argues that black men are met with similar expectations as white men, concerning the ideals associated with being a man. While she argues that all men are damaged by patriarchal socialization, this damage is more prevalent with black men, as they both have to live up to societal expectations, while also have to defy harmful racial stereotypes:

> It is not just society's investment in patriarchal masculinity that demands that black boys be socialized away from feeling and action; they must also bear the weight of a psychohistory that represents black males as castrated, ineffectual, irresponsible, and not real men. It is as if black parents, cross-class, believe they can write the wrongs of history by imposing onto black boys a more brutal indoctrination into patriarchal thinking (Hooks 82-83).

Black men learn from childhood, that they are living in a society, that does not want them to succeed. This message comes both from media, but also from the home in which black parents feel that it is crucial to train their boys to be tough (Hooks 81). At the same time, they face pressure to live up to the responsibilities of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, they need to get a job, bring home a wage and provide for their families. However, poverty and lack of opportunities often prevent them from fulfilling these roles, leaving many black men feeling like a failure and suffering from low self-esteem (80)

Due to the domination of white masculinities, black masculinities are treated either as examples of masculine toughness, such as black sports stars, or of violent criminals. These stereotypes endorsed by hegemonic masculinity sustain institutional oppression of marginalised groups (Connell, *Masculinities* 80). This oppression leads to what Hook describes as 'black male rage' which is often interpreted as a positive response to injustice and thus as something that should be encouraged. However, Hooks argues that this rage against authorities and the world is in reality a reaction to an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness (Hooks 90).

2.2.5 Discussion of Hegemonic Masculinity

The term 'hegemonic masculinity' has been the object of much examination, critique, and confusion in several different academic fields such as sociology, psychology, and poststructuralism. As well as, mass media and online forums, in which it has often been perceived as a term used to criticise men for being too 'macho' (Connell and Messerschmidt 830). In their text "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" Connell and criminology professor James W. Messerschmidt, examine the controversial use and understanding of hegemonic masculinity. One critique, that Connell and Messerschmidt examine, is the framing of the concept of masculinity within a heteronormative conception of gender. In which gender is essentialised as male and female difference, and thus excludes difference within said categories, as well as dichotomising sex and gender, which in turn naturalises the body (Connell and Messerschmidt 836). However, Connell and Messerschmidt disagree with the criticism, arguing that: "Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (836). The central element of hegemonic masculinity is the division among men, also the concepts of gender and masculinity should not be abandoned or seen as naturalisation of the body, but rather a as shift from a categorical approach to a relational approach (837).

Another object of discussion is the question of who represents hegemonic masculinity. As many men who hold social power do not embody this masculinity, the concept risks leading to inconsistent applications, for instance by referring to it as a fixed type of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 838). Connell and Messerschmidt agree that its usage is prone to ambiguities, hegemonic masculinity should not be used as a fixed, transhistorical model as this eliminates any change in the social definitions of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily correspond to the lives of any actual men, but rather express ideals, fantasies, and desires (838).

In terms of the use of hegemonic masculinity within criminology, a third controversial aspect of its use is that it often accounts for violence and crime, and thus solely negative characteristics of men. Describing masculinity as being unemotional, aggressive, and dispassionate, which are often causes of criminal behaviour. With this: "Men's behaviour is reified in a concept of masculinity that then, in a circular argument, becomes the explanation (and the excuse) for the behaviour" (Connell and Messerschmidt 840). Connell and Messerschmidt argue that, as the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on a practice in which men have dominance over women, there are some contexts

is which this concept refers to toxic behaviour such as violence. However, these negative traits are not always what defines hegemonic masculinity, most accounts include positive aspects, such as bringing home a wage and fatherhood. As they note: "Indeed it is difficult to see how the concept of hegemony would be relevant if the only characteristics of the dominant group were violence, aggression, and self-centeredness. Such characteristics may mean domination but hardly would constitute hegemony" (840-841). However, violence does continue to be a prominent theme in mass culture, as well as recurring problem in interpersonal relations. Masculinity and violence are connected as men account for roughly 90% of homicides, assaults, and prison inmates in the USA, at the same time most professions related to violence are also possessed by men, such as soldiers, police, and prison guards (Connell, "Masculinities, Change, and Conflict" 259). While a pattern of hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily mandate violence, it can still be systematically open to violence. This can be seen in popular cinema and television, as well as the employment of practitioners of violence such as the police, in this way the 'common sense' aspect of hegemony, can help support the conditions of violence (Connell, "The Study of Masculinities" 9).

Connell accounts for two different patterns of violence within hegemonic masculinity. The first being violence to sustain dominance over women, this intimidation ranges from wolf-whistling and office harassment, to domestic assault and murder by the woman's 'patriarchal owner' for instance an ex-husband. Physical violence is often accompanied with verbal abuse, and while most men do not harass women, those who do will not likely think of themselves as deviant, as they believe their actions to be justified by their authority in the patriarchal ideology (Connell, *Masculinities* 83). The second pattern of violence exists within the gender politics among men, as most episodes of major violence, such as military combat and homicide, transpire among men. The use of terror draws boundaries and excludes, in this way, violence becomes a way to claim or assert masculinity over other groups (Connell, *Masculinities* 83).

A final discussion relates to the subject position of the man within the theory, with arguments stating that hegemonic masculinity does not question how and why men conform or resist an ideal. Rather a discursive method should be used, in which hegemonic norms should be defined as a subject position in discourse, that is strategically used by men in specific circumstances. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it works in their favour, as well as distance themselves when needed. Thus, the focus should not be on types of men, but rather on how men can position themselves within discursive practices (Connell and Messerschmidt 841). Connell finds that discursive strategies have certain limits, as they are not concerned with the economic inequality and the state, which are crucial

to change in masculinity (Connell, *Masculinities* xix). Furthermore, Connell and Messerschmidt do not see the subject as missing from the theory of hegemonic masculinity, and argue that: "Masculinity is defined as a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations […] The concept of hegemonic masculinity embeds a historically dynamic view of gender in which it is impossible to erase the subject" (Connell and Messerschmidt 843). They do, however, agree that the agency of subordinated groups also should be taking into account, to create a more inclusive understanding of gender hierarchy (847-848). While the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been the object of much discussion, Connell still believes that it is an effective way to theorise masculinity, as he states:

> In my view we still require a way of theorizing gendered power relations among men and understanding the effectiveness of masculinities in the legitimation of the gender order. This is necessary if theories of masculinity are to connect with wider theories of gender and are to have any grip on practical issues such as the prevention of violence. Therefore, I think the concept of hegemonic masculinity […] is still essential (Connell, *Masculinities* xviii).

To conclude, hegemonic masculinity is the representation of the ideal masculinity within a given group or society by which all men are judged. Often this ideal is unrealistic and unachievable for the average man. Furthermore, it is implicated in the subordination of women and marginalised groups of men, as it legitimises men's power and domination. The term is not a static transhistorical characteristic of a dominant masculinity but is determined within a given group. Men and women consent to and comply with hegemonic masculinity, due to its presentation as being natural and culturally normative.

2.3 Gender and Television

Television studies as an academic field emerged from film, media, and cultural theory in the 1970s, while it was previously treated as a subfield of these existing theories, it has since been accepted as a study in its own right (Feasey 1). While television studies have focused on many different aspects of television, one of the major topics is gender roles and stereotyping. The main focus of television is the representation of people, its characterisation is different from other media, such as cinema and

theatre, in its serial form which establishes a different sense of 'nowness.' The constant repetition of the characters on screen make them appear to live in a similar time frame as the audience, which make them appear more real, thus blurring the difference between fact and fiction, the real and representation (Fiske, *Television* 150-152).

Until recently, the study of gender roles has focused on femininity and women, due to feminisms interest in unmasking the way women are depicted on TV. This focus has led to representations of masculinity and men's roles going largely unnoticed (Feasey 1-2). Similar to the argumentations of the importance of masculinity studies within feminism, overlooking masculinity in TV means that it continues to appear as something fixed and beyond enquiry. Therefore, studying the representation of men and masculinity reaffirms its position as a socially constructed gender. Film and media communications scholar Rebecca Feasey argues that this lack of accounting for different masculinities means that, how television programs either adhere to, negotiate, or challenge hegemonic masculinity has often gone unnoticed. However, these examinations are vital: "[…] not because such representations are an accurate reflection of reality, but rather, because they have the power and scope to foreground culturally accepted social relations, define sexual norms and provide 'common-sense' understandings about male identity for the contemporary audience" (Feasey 4).

Media scholar John Fiske further examines masculinity and television in his work *Television Culture* focusing both on gender roles and representation, as well as how the narratives are built to appeal to either a male or female audience. Fiske uses *The A-Team* as an example of a television series that caters mostly to a male audience. Shows like this, he argues, do not need to produce a text that allows oppositional or restrictive readings, but rather a negotiating reading strategy as male subcultures are situated less in opposition to the dominant ideology. Thus, stereotypically masculine texts' relationship with patriarchy is not as resistive as feminine texts (Fiske, *Television* 200). Men do still experience problems with patriarchy's construction of masculinity, in relation to television an issue is the gap between the imaginary and the real, which is wider than what the male viewer wishes. The traits often associated with masculinity revolve around individualisation or power and control, however, in real life, men are often unable to exercise such power. Therefore, masculinity becomes insecure, which produces the need for shows that stabilises it in its traditional form, as Fiske maintains:

> Like any ideology, patriarchy works through alibis, absences, and reductive misrepresentations to disguise the masculine insecurity upon which it is based. Like most

> masculine texts, The A-Team works by writing out of its world three of the most significant cultural producers of the masculine identity– women, work, and marriage (Fiske, *Television* 204).

Women are absent as they represent what is repressed in the male, and the traits that are devalued in a patriarchal society, such as vulnerability, commitment, and nurturement (Fiske, *Television* 205). In male narratives women are a threat to masculinity, as they represent opposing wishes and values, and as such, they are rejected from the narrative (206). Thus, women in popular culture are typically represented as either victims or whores as these are the two main categories that allow the clearest subordination to men (Fiske, *Understanding* 108). Minimising the female threat of intimacy leads to male bonding, a close relationship separated from feminine values. This relationship is goal-oriented rather than relationship-oriented, meaning that the relationship exists to reach a goal and depends on action, rather than a need for intimacy and emotion. The relationship is thus externalised, and therefore, does not affect the masculine independence. However, this avoidance of intimacy also isolates the male subject (Fiske, *Television* 215). Furthermore, work represents a threat to masculinity however, this threat is more contradictory. The conditions of work often subject men to situations, in which they are dependent and powerless. However, simultaneously it is through his work that a man's position as the family's breadwinner is established, which in turn gives him power within the family as well as the privilege of being depended on by his family (208).

While the real experiences of masculinity are more complex than the representations on screen, television as a medium still has the power to define norms and conventions of gender and sexuality (Feasey 155), and therefore, the study of televised masculinity is important as the representations on screen have real-life influence. Feasey argues that television should use this influence for social change and that:

> […] to encourage masculinities that transcend the narrow hegemonic stereotype means enabling these men to draw on traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics and allowing them to move freely between public and private spheres. Perhaps then we can talk about hegemonic masculinity as something that men should pity and fear rather than something they should be seen to aspire to (Feasey 155).

Thus, studying television is relevant, as it represents people, and thereby masculinity and femininity. Due to this representative function, how television programs negotiate or challenge cultural gender norms, such as hegemonic masculinity, is important, as it has the power to provide common-sense understandings of gender roles, and thus influence its audience.

2.3.1 The Police Drama Genre

Fiske argues that narratives are stereotypically structured differently depending on whether the target audience is male or female. He draws on media and women's studies scholar Mary Ellen Brown's work on soap operas as a traditional feminine narrative form. Fiske argues that the main focus of masculine narratives tends to lie with goals and achievements, while feminine narratives deal more with people and relationships (Fiske, *Television* 215). Similarly, soap operas stereotypically emphasise the process "of problem solving, intimate conversation, and the feeling that people undergo" (Fiske, *Television* 217), while the masculine narrative: "emphasizes action, dialogue is minimal and often curt […] Determination to succeed replaces feelings, mechanical ingenuity replaces insight into people, and success in problem solving replaces the process" (217).

Unlike soap operas, the genre of police and crime dramas is traditionally considered one of the most masculine genres of television due to the focus on: "[…] the public sphere, professional roles and the male world of work" (Feasey 80). Feasey argues that the simplistic formula of the police genre of 'crime, pursuit, and capture' seems conducive to representations of hegemonic masculinity. However, Feasey also argues that while this is true in some cases, the genre has undergone a vast change, stating:

> […] the genre has produced some of the most tormented and troubled images of the male on contemporary television. Indeed, the cop show has witnessed a dramatic change in the representation of the police from the safety of the citizen in uniform to the more ambiguous image of the undercover field agent in recent years (Feasey 80)

This genre transformation has happened in relation to the shows' social contexts, in the 1950s the popular image of the police was the extremely honourable police officer, who represented the 'good' fighting the 'bad' criminals. The 1960s moved towards a more nuanced perspective of the police, as well as good and evil, often showing flawed characters. However, both the '50s and '60s shows:

"made it clear that the police were working for the good of the community and that however flawed their personal characteristics, their commitment to justice was paramount" (Feasey 82). This perception changed in the 1970s as crime rates were rising, and thus a more aggressive and rule-breaking police force was represented, in which the hero would make use of unconventional, violent, and often illegal methods in order to secure justice. While this presentation of police officers seems oppositional to the previous more conservative television characters, they all presented the same notion of 'moral certainty.' Meaning that no matter their actions, they were always represented as being right regarding their moral reasoning (83). Towards the 1990s the general opinion towards the police force had changed to such a degree, that portrayals of the honest and honourable police officer, as well as a generally successful police force, seemed unrealistic. The crime drama thus began to break down and challenge the moral certainty that existed previously, as well as the clear distinction between the 'bad' criminal and the 'good' police officer. Since then, Feasey argues: "[…] the definition of the moral and legal has become clouded by the representation of 'bent cops' and 'sympathetic villains' (Feasey 83), making the characters of the police drama more complex and thus more interesting.

While the general moral complexity of the police drama has changed a lot over the years, other aspects of the genre remain more or less the same. The genre continues to present the same type of masculinity throughout this period, as the police officer is still predominantly white, male, and heterosexual. Concerning the genre's female characters, Feasey argues that:

> […] on those rare occasions where we are introduced to a female officer in an effort to 'challenge the masculine hegemony' of the genre […] the character is either asked to bare her flesh from week to week […] to investigate gendered crimes and domestic concerns such as sexual abuse and rape […] to examine women's issues such as sexism, misogyny and frustrated promotion or to play out the pressures of police work on personal relationships (Feasey 83-84).

While the masculinity of the male characters is a major part of their characterisation, this is rarely verbalised or explored. At the same time, female characters often revolve around explicit gender issues. Similarly, the relationship between the officers' professional and personal lives are made more explicit with female police officers, whereas the pressure of the job rarely seems to be an issue for male police officers. Male police officers are often represented as ignoring their families in favour of

their work, thus sacrificing their personal lives for the common good: “In short, their success in the public sphere seems to demand a sacrifice in the private realm” (Feasey 84). In this way, the traditional masculine genres such as the police drama, continues the values of hegemonic masculinity, by both excluding women while also representing men as more important than women (86).

In conclusion, Fiske argues that television narratives are structured in a way that speaks mainly to either a female or male audience. However, due to the ever-changing nature of television, as Feasey examines, these structural differences should be understood less as ‘rules’ and more as tendencies. Feasey argues that one of the most traditionally male narrative genres is the police/crime drama genre, as they are usually set in the public sphere and driven by action over conversation. The genre has undergone a big transition, going from morally ‘good’ police and ‘bad’ criminals to a more complex morality with often flawed heroes. There is mostly male main characters or heroes, and when female characters are present their gender is usually a more explicit part of their characterisation as masculinity is generally normalised.

3. Analysis

Masculinity exists in relation to femininity, therefore, to single out masculinity and how this is enacted by men, comparisons of the genders, treated as binaries, are necessary. Within the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity, multiple masculinities exist, and thus comparisons between different way of enacting masculinity are also necessary. Hegemonic masculinity is always relational; thus, it is within these two sets of power relations that identity negotiations take place, and as such, these are the focus of this analysis. The analysis examines the three seasons of the HBO anthology series *True Detective* written and created by American author and screen writer Nic Pizzolatto, following criminal cases investigated by teams of primarily male police detectives.

Season 1 takes place mainly in rural Louisiana, in which State Police Detectives Martin Hart, Woody Harrelson, and Rustin Cohle, Matthew McConaughey, investigate the ritualistic murder of a prostitute in 1995. The case leads them on to a larger political conspiracy, finalised after they are interviewed about, and subsequently decide to rework, the case in 2012.

Season 2 takes place in the corrupted ‘vice haven’ city of Vinci, California in the present day, in which Vinci PD Detective Raymond Velcoro, Colin Farrell, State Detective Sergeant Antigone Bezzerides, Rachel McAdams, and Highway Patrol Officer Paul Woodrugh, Taylor Kitsch, have to

cooperate in the investigation of a high-profile murder. At the same time career criminal Frank Semyon, Vince Vaughn, similarly investigates the murder, as he was in business with the deceased. The murder leads the investigators on to a larger conspiracy, eventually leading to the deaths of everyone but Bezzerides who flees to South America with Semyon's wife.

Season 3 is set in Arkansas, telling the story of one missing children's case in 1980, 1990, and 2015 respectively. State Police Detective Wayne Hays, Mahershala Ali, and his partner Roland West, Stephen Dorff, investigate the disappearance of two children, one of whom is found killed. In '90 the case reopens with new evidence that the girl is still alive. Finally, in 2015 a retired Hays, who is suffering from dementia, is interviewed for a true-crime documentary about the case, ultimately leading him to solve it.

The analysis is divided into two sections. The first section named 'Family-Life and Relationships with Women,' focuses on the use of romantic relationships with women, as well as fatherhood, as identity markers for the male characters of the series. The second section 'Inter-Masculine Relationships' focuses on the male characters' relationship to their sense of masculinity in relation to masculine ideals, as well as the series' portrayal of non-hegemonic forms of masculinity.

3.1 Family-Life and Relationships with Women

While the main characters of *True Detective* all work in male-dominated areas, mainly related to police work, much of their portrayal and identity negotiation revolve around their personal lives, romances, and families. These relationships are the focus of this section of the analysis.

This section is divided into the themes: 'Patriarchal Ownership' relating to Martin Hart's ideals regarding male/female relationships both romantic and familial. 'The Housewife Myth' relates to the series portrayal of gender relations within marriage, mainly focusing on Wayne Hays' relationship with his wife. 'The Female Detective' focusses on the series' use of this familiar trope, as an attempt to verbalise gender. And finally, 'Fractured Families and Fatherhood' relates to the portrayal of the theme of masculine socialisation and the following parental struggles.

3.1.1 Patriarchal Ownership

Season one of *True Detective* follows Detective Martin Hart and his divorcee partner Rustin Cohle. At the opening of the season Hart has been married for roughly ten years to Maggie Hart, with whom

he has two daughters. Initially, a false contrast is set up between the two detectives, with Cohle being the unsuccessful family man while Hart is portrayed as successful. This contrast is corroborated by scenes of comparison, such as Cohle sitting alone in his empty apartment, smoking, looking miserable and unhealthy, cut to Hart lying snuggled up in bed with Maggie, his young girls sneaking in, and waking them up, the room full of joy and laughter (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 08:35). This picture-perfect illusion, however, is quickly broken as Hart shares his wisdom on marriage when interviewed for a case deposition years later:

> […] You got to decompress before you can go being a family man. What you get into working, you can't have the kids around that. So sometimes you got to get your head right […] It's for your wife and kids, too. You got to take your release where you find it or where it finds you. I mean, in the end, it's for the good of the family (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 12:41).

In this way, Hart justifies his affair with the young and attractive Lisa Tragnetti, arguing that his sexual relief is for the benefit of his family. While is able to justify and rationalise his actions to himself, as a means of coping with his stressful job, when Cohle hints to the affair he becomes aggressive (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 23:11). This disproves his logical argumentation in the deposition and shows that in reality, he feels shameful for his behaviour. Thus, transforming his guilt to righteous indignation towards Cohle for commenting on his sex life or family life.

Hart's justification for his actions is further expressed through scenes showing tension at home, seemingly proving that he is unable to find release from stress with his family. Maggie is dissatisfied with Hart working too much, and not spending enough time with his family. This seems to be a recurring argument, as Hart exclaims: "Years, we've been through this. Sweetheart listen to me. There is nowhere else I want to be!" to which Maggie replies: "I wonder if you even know you're lying" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 41:24). Even though she is unaware of his affair, Maggie feels that he is distant and disinterested in his family. Hart is dissatisfied with having to deal with conflicts at home, and is angry with Maggie for not providing him with a peaceful place, from which he can destress from his job, saying about home and family life: "It's supposed to be what I want; it's supposed to help me" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 42:01). Hart understands family as an institution in which he is entitled to love and appreciation. In the same way, he understands his relationship with Tragnetti as purely for his sexual satisfaction and as a means for him to decompress. Thereby, he is disregarding both women's needs,

wishes, and emotions and focuses solely on his own. Thus, Hart understands his role as a man, the family's provider and patriarch, to be a role of privilege, in which he has the right to be supported unconditionally. Meanwhile, women's roles are secondary, as the helper of men rather than as individuals. This view of women supports Raewyn Connell's description of complicit masculinity, in which the man is not directly or outspokenly misogynistic, and often lives in harmony with his wife and other women in his life. However, at the same time he enjoys and believes in the privileges, he receives from his position within the patriarchy (Connell, *Masculinities* 79-80). This view is similarly verbalised in his scorn for prostitution, for which he is told off by a prostitute: "Girls walk this earth all the time screwing for free. Why is it you add business to the mix, and boys like you can't stand the thought? I'll tell you, it's 'cause suddenly you don't own it the way you thought you did" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 30:42). While Hart believes he is against prostitution as it is demeaning towards women, the prostitute argues that men like him are actually against it, as it places the ownership of the woman's body with the woman. Thus, removing the woman from Hart's perceived role as a passive supporter and helper of men, and placing them in a position of agency.

This privileged position gives Hart a sense of ownership and grants him the right to be the sole receiver of affection and attention from both his wife and his girlfriend. This sense of ownership causes conflicts between Hart and other men, as he feels a need to protect, what he perceives to be his 'property.' For instance, when Hart returns home to find that Cohle has returned his lawnmower, cut his grass, and subsequently talked with Maggie in the kitchen:

> HART: "What the hell you think you're doing, man? At my house, when I'm not here? […] You mow my lawn?"
> COHLE: "Just what'd you think I'd be doing over here when you're not around, Marty? What's our problem, you and me?"
> HART: "No problem. I just don't ever want you mowing my lawn, all right, I *like* mowing *my* lawn" (Pizzolatto s1 ep3 19:51).

To Hart, Cohle has crossed a boundary and has attempted to fulfil Hart's responsibilities and privileges, as the provider for his family. Hart likens this to seducing his wife, suggesting this was his motive for coming over, when he was not at home. Hart feels threatened by Cohle's presence and feels that Cohle has entered his territory without permission, and thus he becomes aggressive in an attempt to hold onto what he feels is rightfully his.

Similarly, when Tragnetti breaks off the affair, to date a man with whom she can have a future, Hart again feels like another man taking away his possession. He gets drunk and violently breaks into Tragnetti's apartment in the night and beats up her date (Pizzolatto s1 ep3 39:26). In both cases, Hart uses threats and violence to establish his dominance, however, not towards the women themselves, but rather other men, whom he feels is threatening to take away his 'property.' While he is not physically abusive towards either his wife or girlfriend, he is often verbally and emotionally abusive, calling them by insulting words and making them feel responsible for his problems and emotions. This is one of the patterns of violence which Cornell accounts for, in which Hart feels he is within his rights as the women's 'patriarchal owner.' Which is further illustrated when he subsequently refuses to apologise to Tragnetti or acknowledge that he did anything wrong. Cornell argues that men who perform this form of violence and harassment, generally do not see themselves to be deviant, as they believe their actions were well within their rights and authority in the patriarchal ideology (Connell, *Masculinities* 83).

Due to feeling disrespected by Hart's refusal to apologise or take responsibility for the break-in, Tragnetti tells Maggie about the affair, resulting in her leaving him. When Hart returns to his empty house and a note from Maggie, his tears quickly turn into anger, as he refuses to take responsibility for his marriage falling apart. His perception of himself as innocent is in line with his position within the gender hierarchy. As Tragnetti explains: "You think it's OK what you do? All of you think it's OK to treat your wives the way you do, to treat women the way… fucking liars and bullies, and this is what you get!" (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 12:35). To establish his innocence, Hart displaces blame first to Tragnetti, saying "I have children. You blew up my life, you fucking whore!" (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 12:46), suggesting that the lives of his family were ruined by Tragnetti's actions, rather than by his own. Then he displaces blame onto Maggie, accusing her of being responsible for breaking up his family, as she does forgive him but wants a divorce (s1 ep4 19:32). And finally, he tries to blame Cohle for meddling in his life and judging him (s1 ep4 21:48). By attempting to own two women and thus disregarding their emotions and needs, he ends up losing both, however, he still feels as though they were in the wrong, as he sees the ownership of women as his patriarchal privileges.

Maggie eventually takes him back, Hart continues to struggle with his role as a husband, as he explains to Cohle: "I like something wild; I always did. It feels like it smooths out the other parts of my life" (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 22:15). Hart not only had the affair for sexual gratification but adventure and to feel good about himself, in a way he was denied at home, due to the lack of responsibilities

and commitment in his affairs. His second affair begins after a scene in which Hart is sent out to run errands and has to purchase feminine hygiene products. Hart feels emasculated and instead of going home, decides to go to a bar where he meets Beth, a girl he tried to talk out of prostitution some years prior. She flatters him, calling him a good man and talks of how there is nothing wrong with the way God has created us, and that the universe forgives all. This speaks to Hart's insecurities about his lack of masculinity, as well as validates his sexual desires, making Hart feel accepted and supported (Pizzolatto s1 ep6 09:52; 15:48). Unlike his first affair, in which Hart was actively pursuing Tragnetti, this time Beth is actively pursuing him. She is portrayed as initiating the affair, she frequently calls him and tries to persuade him to come over, and she sends him provocative pictures. This time Hart is not in control of the affair, he does not need to seduce her, but rather is being seduced, thus Beth cannot be 'owned' or taken as his possession. This makes Hart less interested in continuing the affair, however, he is unable to resist her charms. In this way, Hart appears less as a controlling, territorial man and more as a victim of his sexuality.

While Hart feels that, in his situation, it is a woman who is responsible for seducing him, the same sexual agency does not apply to the women in his family. When Hart has to pick up his daughter from the police station, having been caught having sex with two young men in a car, he is furious (Pizzolatto s1 ep5 28:19). While he abuses her verbally, he still refuses to believe, that she was not a victim, but was there of her own volition. When she refuses to acknowledge his authority as her father, he slaps her. However, while he is upset with his daughter, his real complaints lie with the men she was with. He understands their actions as an attack on his property and honour, which becomes clear when he goes to see them in jail. The jail guard unlocks the door and says he will be gone for some time. Seemingly, he approves of Hart's sense of vendetta and understands him as justified within his rights, even though it is against the law.

> YOUNG MAN: "I didn't know Audrey's dad was a cop. I didn't mean no disrespect."
> HART: "[…] We got you on stat rape. You know that, right? You know what happens to pretty boys like you who go up to the farm on stat charges? […] Two choices: we do this here, with an understanding that not you or any of your river rat boys comes within a hundred yards of my daughter, or… file those charges. Got a lot of brothers in Angola who love to owe me a favour […] Man's game charges a man's price. Take that away from this if nothing else" (Pizzolatto s1 ep6 01:48).

The young man argues that he did not mean to disrespect Hart, suggesting that having sex with his daughter could be seen as an action, that affects the honour and integrity of the father. In this way, the young men and Hart all seem to agree, that women are a possession of their father or husband and as such, the father would have to consent for her, rather than her consenting for herself. Hart feels that it is his responsibility to restore his family's reputation by punishing the boys, even though it makes him physically ill, as he throws up by his car afterwards (s1 ep6 04:21). He tells them that a 'man's game charges a man's price,' thus, he argues that there are consequences in having relations with women, particularly when that woman belongs to another man. This corresponds to his attack on Tragnetti's new lover, as well as his protectiveness of his wife from Cohle.

When Maggie learns of the second affair, she wants a divorce again, and knows from experience that simply leaving Hart is not going to grant her that. He will continue to come back for her, as long as he believes she belongs to him. Thus, she knows she cannot simply hurt his feelings, but rather she needs to hurt his pride, deciding that the biggest betrayal would be to seduce his partner Cohle (Pizzolatto s1 ep6 44:43). Knowing that she is only going to be free when Hart no longer wants her as his possession. While Hart is unable to physically assault his wife upon hearing the news, grabbing her neck but eventually letting go, he still feels the need to protect his pride against Cohle. When Cohle shows up at the police station, Hart makes sure to put his gun in his drawer as he gets himself ready for the fight, knowing that his anger might lead him to use it (s1 ep6 50:33).

After the divorce Hart lives an empty life with no real relationships, no contact with Maggie or his daughters, a mostly unsuccessful PI business, and spending his evenings sitting at home watching TV and eating microwaveable meals (Pizzolatto s1 ep7 25:03). Hart's character is ultimately represented as a failure to live up to societal expectations of hegemonic masculinity, he is unsuccessful in both business and his personal life, and thus his status is lowered in both regards. He is no longer respected by subordinate police officers as an authority, or his family as a patriarch and provider. Being interviewed for the deposition, he explains the reasoning for his downfall: "Remember what I said about the detective's curse? Solution to my whole life was right under my nose… that woman, those kids… and I was watching everything else. See, infidelity is one kind of sin, but my true failure was inattention. I understand that now" (Pizzolatto s1 ep5 24:35).

While Maggie is rewarded with a happy ending and a new husband, Hart is punished for his misogynistic view of women as a man's property and as subordinate helpers of men. By not respecting the women in his life or treating them as individuals with their own goals and desires, he ends up losing them. In this way, his endeavours to act like a man of hegemonic masculinity end up causing

his downfall and diminishing his position within the masculine hierarchy. Thus, *True Detective* uses the character of Hart to portray the toxicity of hegemonic masculinity towards women, and any other men in their lives, and most importantly how detrimental the effects can be for the men trying to enact it.

3.1.2 The Housewife Myth

This section deals with the theme of normalised gender positions within marriage. Mainly focusing on the storyline of season three's Wayne Hays and Amelia Hays' courtship and marriage, and their differing expectations of Amelia's role within the marriage.

When Wayne Hays is first introduced, in the 1980 storyline, he is seen passing the time with his partner Roland West. Hays tells West that he does not want to get married, as he argues "[…] I'm not a big enough asshole to put a woman and children through that" (Pizzolatto s3 ep1 10:13). Similarly, when West attempts to shoot a fox, Hays stops him, saying he feels uncomfortable with hunting if there is not a level playing field (s3 ep1 14:06). These statements show Hays' views on marriage, he understands the institution as oppressive for women and children in which, he as the husband and father is positioned as the 'asshole' patriarch who dominates them. He feels the playing field is uneven, and that women are naturally at a disadvantage; thus, he does not wish to participate.

His determination against marriage starts to fade when he meets Amelia, she is college-educated, has a background in the civil rights movement, works as a teacher, lives alone in a nice apartment, and has ambitions to become an author. She furthermore shares Hays' views on marriage, saying: "I was engaged for seven months. I broke it off. I didn't want to be married, I realised" (Pizzolatto s3 ep2 35:14). She too has come to the realisation, that marriage does not equal happiness for women, and has actively chosen to be on her own. This places her outside Raewyn Cornell's grouping of 'emphasized femininity,' as she does not wish to comply with the subordination of women to accommodate the interests and desires of men, but rather has chosen to resist and thus remain on her own (Connell, *Gender and Power* 183-184). By not complying, and thus, remaining independent, she is able to have agency, which is important to her, as she explains to Hays, when he asks why she wants to be a writer: "I feel I have a voice. You think I went to college for four years to be like my mother?" (Pizzolatto s3 ep7 18:38). Like Hays, she understands the gender inequality within marriage, and fears ending up as a subordinate housewife with no power or agency, not being able to speak or think for herself. She feels that marriage would take away her opportunities, and thus

her hard work would be wasted. Through her knowledge of her self-worth, she is not tolerant of being treated with disrespect, telling Hays after an argument: “I don’t let people talk to me the way you did, few women, no men” (s3 ep8 01:07:28). Amelia will not be dominated or disregarding, she is strong-willed and independent, and does not let others mistreat her. This leads Hays to know that she is the right woman for him. He does not wish to dominate, and she refuses to be dominated. In this way, their marriage would not be an unequal union, but rather a partnership in which both would be happy and thrive as individuals.

However, as time passes this ideal differs from reality, which becomes apparent in the 1990 storyline. Now Hays and Amelia are married and have two young children, the missing children’s case has just reopened, and Amelia is about to publish a book about the original case. Amelia offers to help Hays gain information and uses her charm to flirt with police officers. When she is successful, Hays becomes angry and rather than thank her for her help, he is dismissive of her and shames her for not spending time with the children (Pizzolatto s3 ep3 25:50). Instead of celebrating her independence, which was what he initially found attractive, Hays is annoyed with her success and ambition, as it negatively affects his self-worth as her husband:

> WAYNE HAYS: “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I haven’t expressed better how inadequate and useless I’ve been made to feel.”
> AMELIA HAYS: “Yeah, ‘made to feel,’ you’re this person things just happen to. Your job, your marriage… your family, your feelings, everything’s just happening to you. You’re this grown man with no agency of his own. Fate just keeps throwing him curveballs. How awful for you these trials and vicissitudes. Look it up.” […]
> WAYNE HAYS: “I’m not the one with my head in the clouds for the last five years. ‘oh, I’m a be a great writer, let me just use this awful tragedy to take myself on to better things.’ Because you always gotta be on your way to better things.”
> AMELIA HAYS: “At least I have some kind of drive. I can’t even say what moves you anymore. I think you stay upright out of habit. This walking wounded, poor me” (Pizzolatto s3 ep4 00:08:19).

They are both unsatisfied with the way their relationship has evolved over the last decade. Hays was demoted to a job he dislikes, while Amelia got to follow her dream of writing. This has caused Hays to feel weak and inferior to Amelia, thus, making him feel emasculated within his family unit. At the

same time, Amelia is tired of having to deal with Hays feeling ashamed of himself for not living up to masculine ideals, taking his lack of success and insecurities out on her. Hays' is angry with Amelia's strategy of partial compliance and partial resistance. He blames her for not fulfilling her role within the marriage, as the natural caretaker of the children, and for not complying with 'ego-stroking' her husband (Connell, *Gender and Power* 187). While Amelia's intellect and independence made her exciting and fun in their courtship, Hays' no longer think these attributes are attractive in a marriage. He initially feared having to dominate a woman, however, due to feeling inferior to his wife, in relation to both professional success, intelligence, and ambition. He feels the need to tear her down to feel equal to her again, for instance by refusing to celebrate her victories, and stopping others from congratulating her (Pizzolatto s3 ep5 20:48). Hays' feeling of emasculation and inferiority, thus changes his views of marriage and Amelia, he no longer celebrates her individuality, but rather tries to push her into a compliant form of femininity:

> AMELIA HAYS: "You know what this is? You trying to control me. Now you're running around doing your thing, you want me home, washing clothes, making dinner. This will shock you, but I have bigger dreams than just making a house for you to brood in."
> WAYNE HAYS: "I did nothing but support you, whole time, years, while you were working on that fucking book"
> AMELIA HAYS: "Yeah, as long as I was around, saw to the kids, kept *your* house" (Pizzolatto s3 ep5 24:59).

Amelia is accusing Hays of wanting her to be his housewife, his inferior, this is especially evident in the line: 'kept your house', as if their shared home and family belongs to him as the patriarch. Hays feels that these accusations are unfair, however, while he did support her by providing for his family financially, he did not support her dreams and ambitions, referring to years of her work as 'that fucking book.' In this way, Hays feels that he has met the expectations of his role as husband, while Amelia is rejecting her assigned role as a wife, and thus, indirectly she is rejecting Hays. While Hays grants her independence, he is only supportive of her within the limitations of her expected gender role, therefore, he believed that writing as a hobby was acceptable. However, when writing turned into a profession and made her less able to fill do her wifely duties, he is no longer supportive of her as this goes against the norms.

True Detective plays with the expectations of 'the housewife' in all three seasons. In season one, Maggie Hart is portrayed as a housewife in the earlier episodes, she is always at home, always cooking or doing dishes when talking with Hart. However, once she leaves him, and thus stops complying with his wishes, it is revealed that she works as a nurse. It is only when she starts to take action in her life, that she is portrayed as a professional woman with an education and a good job (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 19:32). Similarly, in season two, career criminal Frank Semyon's wife, Jordan, is initially portrayed as simply a good wife, chatting with his associates, making conversation with their wives, being charming and attentive at parties. However, as the series progresses, she is shown as an active participant in Semyon's business, she is ready to protect Semyon with a gun when the situation demands it, and she remains calm and business-like when walking in on Semyon having just killed a man (s2 ep7 32:21). She similarly does not comply with the image of the stereotypical housewife, she is no 'damsel in distress,' but rather she is smart and capable. When Semyon tries to save her from danger, she refuses, saying: "[…] fuck your martyrdom. I came into this with my eyes open, same as you" (s2 ep8 00:09:09). She refuses to be saved or to be considered weak and innocent. In this way, all of the three married women of the series are portrayed as resourceful, intelligent, and independent. The extent to which they choose to comply with their husbands' wishes and societal expectations, seems to be actively chosen rather than forced upon them.

Returning to Robert Pallante's review of *True Detective*, as quoted in the introduction, he argues that the women are depicted through a male bias. Thus, the series focuses on the male characters' misogynistic views of women rather than the women themselves (Pallante). This distinction is useful when analysing the role of women within the series. While Maggie Hart is initially portrayed as a nagging and unpleasant housewife, this is due to the viewers only being given Martin Hart's point of view. She is not seen interacting with her friends or co-workers because Hart does not see that side of her. He does not understand her true value until she leaves him, and thus neither does the viewers. Similarly, Amelia is also cast as a supporting character, because the series revolves around Wayne Hays' story, and thus, it is his perspective that is brought forth. However, through the male characters dismissing and underestimating the women in their lives, the show is not simply furthering the patriarchal ideology, or the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, in which the subordination of women is considered natural. But rather the series sets up the expectations of stereotypical gender relations within marriage, to break with them, to show the viewer other alternatives and to portray women who do not just comply with societal expectations. While the male characters' negative reactions to female agency can be seen as misogynistic, this can further be seen

as the series' attempt at a discussion and critique of hegemonic masculinity, as these behaviours are punished, leading the male characters to regret their unjust behaviours. Hart ends up with a sad, unfulfilling life, Semyon refuses to flee with Jordan and is killed, and Hays refuses to listen to Amelia or read her book and ends up realising that she had the answers to solve the case.

By setting up these scenarios in which women are more capable than first anticipated, and men's reactions to them, the series does not excuse the male characters' behaviour but chooses to show aspects of these men's lives, which are frequently missing in masculine narratives (Fiske, *Television* 203-204). And thus, instead of creating reductive misrepresentations to disguise the insecurities that the patriarchal ideology is based on, *True Detective* chooses to emphasise these gender relations. Therefore, using a 'housewife myth' in order to break with it, can be seen as a way for the series to comment on the normalisation of this portrayal of women in TV. As well as commenting on the normalisation of images of the perfect hegemonic man by portraying damaged and flawed characters.

3.1.3 The Female Detective

Season one of *True Detective* was criticised for its lack of female characters, and for the existing characters being 'paper thin' and 'lacking interior life' (Nussbaum). Perhaps due to this criticism season two sports a female detective, Antigone Bezzerides, as one of the season's four main characters. John Fiske argues that the reason women are absent in masculine narratives, such as the crime genre, is that they represent traits such as 'vulnerability, commitment, and nurturement' which threatens masculinity, as they are opposed to masculine values (Fiske, *Television* 205-206). However, when the series introduces Bezzerides, it is made clear she is not a stereotypical female character. The scene opens with an establishing shot of her apartment, showing multiple weapons, a beaten-up practice dolly, and piles of books about knife skills and self-defence. As well as Chinese takeaway food containers and alcohol. From her apartment alone, Bezzerides is portrayed as anything but the female 'housewife' stereotype, she has 'masculine' interests relating to fighting, and is no homemaker, having ordered out instead of cooking and does not seem to care about keeping a neat house (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 12:05). In this scene, Bezzerides exits her bedroom with Steven Mercer, a male police officer, who has spent the night. Mercer seems perplexed about something, she wanted to do in bed, something he thought it was uncommon for women to like. When Mercer shows interest in wanting a more serious relationship with her, Bezzerides is dismissive and uninterested. In this

way, Bezzerides' sexuality is also portrayed as not fitting the ideal of emphasized femininity, as she is not sexually passive, but both seems to take charge of her sexuality, as well as dismisses commitment. Thus, avoiding emotional connection in favour of sexual desire. Through this first impression, Bezzerides is portrayed as having none of the feminine values or traits described by Fiske, making her able to partake in the masculine narrative, without posing a threat to its use of masculinity.

Instead of following a strategy of partial compliance, similar to other women in the series, she lives in complete non-compliance with the expectations proposed by hegemonic masculinity, leading her to an almost misandrist stance towards men. This is pointed out by her father, a member of a religious commune:

> You should spend less time in a state of resistance making up problems for yourself […] A failed marriage, a few relationships, you're angry at the entire world and men in particular out of a false sense of entitlement for something you never received. Your entire personality is an extended criticism of my values […] Do you even like what you do? Or is it just a reflexive urge towards authority out of defiance? (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 33:45).

Her father accuses her of making problems for herself by being in 'a state of resistance,' and referring to this resistance as being caused by 'a false sense of entitlement.' Thus, he criticises her for her non-compliance to the patriarchal ideology, while arguing that her anger and feeling of mistreatment is founded in her imagination and has no holding in the real world. He diminishes her emotions and values, and attempts to remove their legitimacy, by arguing that she is only defiant to punish him, and not due to her agency or societal insight. Criticising Bezzerides' decision to become a police detective, and simultaneously congratulating his other daughter on doing pornography, shows his skewed perspective on female independence. Suggesting that female agency should only be granted when it is supportive of the normative hegemonic ideology. This toxic male influence is what Bezzerides is trying to escape. Being raised to doubt herself, leads her to aggressively defend herself and her choices, which becomes apparent when she tries to break off the affair with Mercer, to which he does not react well:

> MERCER: "You know you fucking started this."
> BEZZERIDES: "Don't push this somewhere ugly. Just be a little mature about it. Have some dignity."

> MERCER: “Dignity? You’re a real suck em’ and leave em’ type, huh?”
> BEZZERIDES: “you talk to me like that again, you’re gonna need a little baggie to carry your teeth home” (Pizzolatto s2 ep3 25:16).

When Mercer suggests that she does not have any dignity, due to her being a woman who has casual sex, she becomes aggressive and threatens him with violence. Thus, she reacts with aggression rather than emotion, choosing a defensive masculine response.

The relationship between the two is represented with a role reversal of feminine and masculine traits, in which he wishes to commit to her and share emotional vulnerability. Meanwhile, she is too consumed with her job to care for personal relationships, and thus dismisses his advances. Furthermore, she is his superior at work, reversing the stereotypical male boss and female secretary workplace romance. However, upon ending the affair, he feels emasculated and shames her for her sexuality, to feel powerful and superior to her and thus attempts to win back male superiority. To ensure she is not subordinated, Bezzerides uses her fighting and weapon handling skills, to make herself equal to men, and thus closing the physical gap between men and women, as she explains to Raymond Velcoro:

> Could you do this job if everyone could physically overpower you? I mean forget police work; no man could walk around that way without going nuts […] The fundamental difference between the sexes is that one of them can kill the other with their bare hands. Man of any size lays hands on me, he’s gonna bleed out in under a minute (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 38:08).

Bezzerides uses her knives as tools to ensure her safety as well as her independence. By using ‘equalisers,’ she is not dependent on men to protect her, and she does not have to fear men, as these help to level the playing field of physical strength and ability. Like men, the thought of inferiority makes Bezzerides ‘go nuts,’ and thus she needs the reassurance of weapons to function in a world, in which her gender has a major disadvantage that could get her killed.

Due to Bezzerides being a female detective, her gender, as well as gender relations, are verbalised much more in her storyline than with any of the male detectives. In her exploration of the TV crime genre, Rebecca Feasey argues that female police officers are often introduced as a means to challenge or break with the prevailing hegemonic masculinity of the genre. However, the female

detectives often end up being asked to either use their bodies in the line of duty, or to investigate 'women's issues' such as sexual abuse, and acts of misogyny (Feasey 83-84). This is also true in *True Detective* in which Bezzerides is isolated as a woman in a man's world. For instance, in an establishing scene of the male locker-room at the police station, which is portrayed as a lively and social place with a lot of activity. The scene cuts to the female locker-room in which Bezzerides is seen alone, looking glum while hiding weapons in various locations on her body (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 37:42). Her position as a female detective is articulated, and as Feasey describes it, she appears marked by her gender. For instance, her superior asks her to flirt with Velcoro to gain intel, saying: "I'm not saying fuck him, but maybe let him think you might fuck him" (s2 ep3 22:47), she is meant to use her position as female in ways that go beyond her job as a detective. Similarly, she poses as a prostitute to gain access to a party with criminal activity, having to submit to a very thorough body search as well as demeaning language and behaviour from men (s2 ep6 35:23). Her cases also revolve around prostitution and missing women, and thus the fact that she is female becomes a major part of her assignments as police. As well as a major part of her characterisation, specifically concerning how she negotiates and subverts her femininity, and tries to distance herself from femininity all together.

Her character further takes part in 'women's issues' concerning sexual harassment. While male characters of the series, for instance, Martin Hart, take part in forms of sexual harassment of women, Bezzerides' storyline is the only one in which this topic is verbalised and carries consequences. After breaking off her relationship with Mercer, he reports her for sexual misconduct and coercion, getting her suspended and requiring her to partake in a sexual harassment seminar. Bezzerides objects knowing that Mercer is only attempting to get back at her, telling her boss: "You do realise they're all giving Mercer high fives out there, right?" (Pizzolatto s2 ep4 32:49). She feels unfairly treated, telling her boss that this would never have happened is she was a man, to which her boss disagrees. This results in the following scene at the harassment seminar:

> MALE ATTENDEE #1: "Sexual harassment's a political tool. You pay a compliment, and a chick lawyers up."
> MALE ATTENDEE #2: "That shit's about looks, too. Difference between something like what I'm here for and flirting is how good looking a dude is. How's that fucking fair."

> SEMINAR LEADER: "Now this reflex to project blame upon the victim is going against the sorts of habits we want to encourage. Detective Bezzerides, how do you feel about your actions?"
> MALE ATTENDEE #2: "Can I just ask, what the fuck are you doing here? Who wouldn't want her sexually harassing you? Am I right?"
> SEMINAR LEADER: "See, that kind of thing that could be considered inappropriate."
> MALE ATTENDEE #2: "What? It was a compliment."
> BEZZERIDES: "Oh, it's alright, it's alright. I understand. But I don't know. I mean, what can I say? I just really like big dicks […]" (Pizzolatto s2 ep5 06:01).

Through the character of Bezzerides the series takes up women's issues relating to work-place treatment and victim-blaming. As well as, the issues women face, when drawing up boundaries and taking action against inappropriate behaviour. However, by subverting the situation and having the female character forced to take this course, it is ridiculed and belittled. Bezzerides does not take the subject seriously, making inappropriate comments about her presence there, and refusing to address her situation, or comment on the actions described by the other participants. While Bezzerides is preoccupied with breaking free from her father's, as well as the societal, expectations of how to be a woman and feels the need to have weapons at hand to protect herself from men, she disregards the issues other women in similar work environments face. In this way, she not only chooses to remain separate and independent from men, but separated from women, as well as her identity as a woman. While her job revolves around 'saving' women from prostitution and powerful men, she seems to have little interest in helping women, who, like herself, are feeling threatened by men's treatment of them. Thus, this can be seen as a reflection on *True Detective* not taking misogyny seriously. However, by having Bezzerides disregard societal issues that she has personally overcome, she no longer functions as the 'token' woman in the group, and thus no longer represent women as a whole. Much like the male detectives, she becomes individualised as a person with her own battles, rather than shouldering the battles of an entire gender. In this way, the disconnect between the stereotypical female detective and Bezzerides can be seen as an attempt at 'un-gendering' her, and thus equating her with her fellow main characters.

In this way, *True Detective* refuses to use Bezzerides' character as an antidote to the claims that the series is misogynistic, by not making her a perfect, idealistic feminist. While Bezzerides falls into many of the stereotypical themes related to the female police officer, her character can furthermore

be seen as an attempt to break with tradition. She is not portrayed as idealistic or as living by a much higher moral standard than the male character but as an equally flawed and damaged individual.

3.1.4 Fractured Families and Fatherhood

Unsuccessful fathers and bad family relations are prevalent themes in *True Detective*, starting in season one, growing to be the biggest theme in season two, and lastly attempted to be rectified in season three. These themes mirror the issues relating to hegemonic masculinity as a roadblock, socialising men to be emotionally distant and reserved and unequipped to fit into family life (Adams and Coltrane 230)

The family situations of season one's Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle both play a part in their outlooks on life, and their positions as family men. Both were fathered by hard, ex-military men, whose deployments are used as identity markers. Hart talks of his father with pride: "You know, my dad, I had about six inches on him, and even in the end, I still think he could have taken me. Yeah, Marines, Korea. Never talked about it. There was a time that men didn't air their bullshit to the world. You know, it just wasn't a part of their job" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 05:30). To Hart, his father was the epitome of masculinity, strong and accomplished, a war-hero with no outward sign of emotional baggage. Meanwhile, Hart's mother was a perfect example of traditional femininity: "My mother, Donna Reed type. Packed lunches, bedtime stories" (s1 ep2 05:01). These traditional family values are what Hart has tried to reproduce for himself, entering into the police force and marrying a nurse. Both professions stereotypically fitting of their genders and roles in the family, Hart being the protecting father and Maggie being the nurturing mother. Hart expects his family to be traditional too, and understands his position as privileged, being the one who is served and catered to in the family, and thus he takes little responsibility for household chores or childcare. When he is unable to sustain this ideal, as is discussed in detail in a previous section, his sense of his masculinity falters with it. Losing both his role as a husband and father, he is unable to live up to the example of ideal manhood his father has set for him.

In contrast, Cohle's experience of family in his childhood was completely different. When Hart asks: "Your mom still alive?" Cohle absentmindedly answers "maybe" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 05:01), seeming indifferent much to Hart's surprise. This complicated relationship with his family is further explored, when Cohle is asked about his father:

> We never really liked each other […] He was in 'Nam. Met my mother on leave in Galveston. Time he came back, I was two. She dumped me on him […] He was a survivalist, I guess you'd call it. Had some very fucking strange ideas […] I headed back to south Texas […] My old man always made like I let him down that way. Said I had no loyalty (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 30:19).

While Cohle's father had a similar background to Hart's, this is not something Cohle envies or admires, but rather he considers his father odd and unfeeling. Similarly, his mother did not live up to any traditional motherly virtues, abandoning him and leaving him with no motherly love or influence throughout his childhood. Like Hart, Cohle attempted to create a family for himself, marrying a woman with whom he had a daughter. However, due to his bad childhood and family relations, as well as the tragic loss of his daughter and the subsequent divorce from his wife, Cohle has a much more pessimistic view of fatherhood. Cohle's loss of his family has had a deep impact on him, causing him to close himself off from others, not pursuing friendships or other relationships. He lives a rootless existence, moving where his job takes him and sleeping on a mattress on the floor of his living room in his empty house. Having no relatives leaves a void in his life and leaves him feeling unimportant: "[…] I'd lay awake thinking about women, my daughter, my wife. I mean it's like, something just got your name on it, like a bullet or a nail in the road" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 01:37). He compares family with a sense of belonging as well as a destiny. Cohle's trauma and subsequent nihilistic world view, leads him to see no value in having children, as he states: "I think the honourable thing for our species to do is deny our programming, stop reproducing, walk hand in hand into extinction […]" (s1 ep1 16:10). He suggests that humans do not act from a position of free will, but rather understands family as a useless ideal, we have become socialised to believe in.

Instead of dealing with his emotions caused by the trauma of losing his daughter, he tries to convince himself that it was for the best, and that it was the 'honourable' outcome for both himself and his daughter:

> You know how I think about my daughter now? You know what… what she was spared? Sometimes I feel grateful. Doctors said she didn't feel a thing […] isn't that a beautiful way to go out? Painlessly, as a happy child […] Well, you got to think of the hubris it must take to yank a soul out of nonexistence into this meat […] And as for my daughter, she spared me the sin of being a father (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 44:11).

Having experienced the trauma of a bad childhood, feeling unwanted and unloved by his parents, he argues that her death spared his daughter the damage of growing up. He has come to the conclusion, that he would have been a bad father, and thus through her death, he was spared having to live with the fact, that his presence negatively influenced her. In the final scenes of the season, Cohle emotionally recounts his near-death experience to Hart, saying that he felt his daughter and father waiting for him, and was able to feel their love before he woke up (Pizzolatto s1 ep8 46:14). Feeling an overwhelming sense of love and belonging, maybe for the first time, enables Cohle to let go of his pessimism, and start to heal from his trauma.

Trauma seems to be the driving factor behind all four main character's relation to family and upbringing in the second season of the show. Antigone Bezzerides grew up in a religious cult, in which multiple of the other children, as well as her mother, eventually committed suicide (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 31:44; s2 ep1 33:12). Paul Woodrugh grew up in a trailer park, as the illegitimate child of a former exotic dancer, he has a toxic relationship to his mother and has never known his father (s2 ep2 13:21). The prevalence of this theme was the topic of Indiewire's review of the season, stating:

> 'True Detective' coalesced in its final moments into being a season about the cancerous legacies of parenthood, the sins and damage passed on to kin, and (perhaps more pretentiously and less successfully) the suffering that permeates our existence just through surviving the tangled process of growing up (Perez).

This is particularly relevant for Detective Raymond Velcoro, whose storyline revolves around trying to keep his son, as his ex-wife Gena Brune wants sole custody. In his first scene, he is dropping off his son, Chad, at school, telling him to keep his head up and be strong, and thus face his issues in a masculine way (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 03:06). While Velcoro has good intentions with his son, his parenting is negatively influenced by his alcohol and drug addiction. As a result, his relationship with his son is more reflective of his own needs. This is evident for instance when he finds out that bullies have taken Chad's new shoes, Velcoro demands to know who did it and verbally abuses and threatening Chad with violence and humiliation (s2 ep1 35:42). Velcoro tries to help his son by beating up the bully's father as a punishment for his son's actions (s2 ep1 43:22). And thus, attempts to use violence to solve his son's problems, which shows Velcoro's values gained through his childhood. This is evident when Brune confronts him about the attack:

> VELCORO: “Well, I don’t know anything about that, but sometimes a good beating provokes personal growth.”
> BRUNE: “It’s not like you know any other way, right? God damn it, Chad gets anxious when he has to be around you” (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 24:24).

From Brune’s statement, it seems that Velcoro has grown up with violence and the threat of beatings, as the only way to correct bad behaviour. While Velcoro tries to protect Chad from the damage of growing up, Brune suggests that his hardened masculinity is the cause of his damage.

Velcoro’s influence in his views on fatherhood is portrayed through a scene with his father, who is portrayed as a pot-smoking, alcoholic, retired police officer. He lives a lonely existence, romanticising the good old days, and hates seeing the world changing around him (Pizzolatto s2 ep3 27:22). While Velcoro tries to be helpful and kind to his father, their relationship is strained and awkward. This relationship is similar to Velcoro’s relationship with his son, Chad is quiet and uncomfortable around Velcoro, who seems unable to connect with him, and insecure about his abilities to parent him (s2 ep6 22:44). Brune believes Velcoro is broken by his rough childhood, saying that he is “no longer strong enough to stay decent” (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 25:55). The traditional strand of masculinity he was raised with damaged him, making him unable to show vulnerability and only handle his emotions through violence and self-destructive behaviour.

As Brune was raped around the time Chad was conceived, and she and Velcoro had been trying to conceive for a long time to no avail, Brune wants a paternity test to find out Chad’s true parentage. Velcoro vehemently denies any suggestions that Chad is not his biological child and refuses the paternity test. Not being the father would be humiliating and emasculating to Velcoro, as it would suggest he is infertile, as well as having raised the offspring of another man’s attack on his wife. However, Velcoro also has more honourable reasons for wanting to keep Chad’s parentage unknown. He is trying to gift Chad a legacy that is less damaging to his identity. When Velcoro realises he is losing the custody battle, he relapses back into his drug abuse to dull his emotions. He calls Brune saying he will not contest custody, if she promises never to tell Chad that he might not be his son (Pizzolatto s2 ep6 30:36). In this way, Velcoro puts his son first, he sacrifices playing an active part in his life, to protect Chad from learning that he might be the product of rape. Thus, he attempts to spare him the pain and inner turmoil this would cause him. Velcoro realises that the best thing he can do for his son is to be an absent father, and thus, sacrifices his role as a father for his son’s happiness.

Season two's Frank Semyon is equally scarred from his childhood, having grown up with his alcoholic father, who used to lock him in the basement when he went out, leaving him alone for days on end (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 02:54). Semyon grew up in poverty and grew rich and successful through criminal activity, however, he has aspirations to become a legitimate businessman. Semyon believes having children is essential. Upon entering into a new business, he is overjoyed with the thought that this will leave a legacy, that his descendants will financially benefit from (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 40:44). Similarly, he explains to his wife, Jordan, that wealth only has meaning if you have children: "Yes, but you need children to leave it to. It's never really yours. You don't take it with you" (s2 ep2 02:26). He works hard to ensure, that his future children will have a better start to life than he did, and he enjoys the ego-boost of having been responsible for creating a powerful family. Semyon is motivated by bettering himself and attempting to achieve a powerful status within the hegemony of masculinity, to remedy the powerlessness and poverty of his childhood. In this scheme, not only money but also marriage and children are necessary to live the ideal masculine life and become a true patriarch.

Similarly, he suggests to Velcoro that a family is an antidote to his problems: "Need to get back on that horse, my friend. A good woman mitigates our baser tendencies. You got time. Have more kids. We're trying. Gonna be doing this IVF thing" (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 49:53). However, even though he is confident when talking with Velcoro, Semyon is struggling with the reality of having children. He tells Jordan he feels uncomfortable with IVF, as it is unnatural (s2 ep3 08:13), repeatedly puts off having children due to poor timing, as well as reacting poorly when Jordan suggests adopting instead of continuing to try to conceive, as he argues: "You don't do somebody else's time. My own kid, I see. Yeah, it's my responsibility. But you don't take on somebody else's grief […] I mean they all come in with their own. At least with your kid it's your sins" (Pizzolatto s2 ep4 2:54). When talking of children, Semyon does not talk of emotion or a wish for family life, but rather compares them to a prison sentence, a responsibility, a grief, and sees children as the carrier of their parents' sins. He seems scared of having a child, knowing that his parenting is going to affect their lives, and thus, he too might be responsible for a child's suffering and growing up damaged. Therefore, Semyon's desire for a child is due to a sense of duty, another step to achieve a higher status in the male hierarchy, rather than a wish for being a father.

Season three takes a more positive turn with regards to family relations, as Wayne Hays continues to be a present and loving father throughout his children's lives. Hays' childhood is not explored in the series, other than a mention of his mother with whom he lived in impoverished conditions (Pizzolatto s3 ep8 27:01). Hays is often seen interacting with his children, and his son

functions as his main caretaker in his old age. While he was able to give his children a stable middle-class childhood, he too worries that his children were marked by his unemotional fathering, as he tells his adult son:

> […] Did I teach you to withhold? […] I didn't intend that; I didn't realise it was happening […] Before you ever knew me, I wasn't scared much. I wasn't a fearful man. I did things people even called brave. Y'all made a coward of me. I've been terrified since the day you were born. Maybe you know what I mean. Can't shrink from it. Can't be stingy, son. People you love, can't hold it back, see? […] (Pizzolatto s3 ep6 35:05).

His son is visibly emotional but has a difficult time talking about this with his father and quickly changes the topic. Neither he nor his father is accustomed to talking of love or their feelings. The series portrays Hays as the only successful father figure, as someone who has remained present and invested throughout his children's lives, for instance, shown in a scene in which he drives his daughter to college, becoming emotional at the thought of her leaving home (s3 ep7 02:32). Hays describes fatherhood as becoming a 'coward,' as an event that had a deep and meaningful impact on his life. It changed him from an unafraid man with a deep-rooted masculine suppression of his emotions to a man with vulnerability, who had something to lose. While Hays initially did not want marriage or children, gaining a family was rewarding to him and his storyline ends with him idyllically sitting on the porch surrounded by family, and watching his grandchildren play (s3 ep8 01:05:47).

True Detective uses the first two seasons to portray characters that were broken from their childhoods, whether due to abandonment issues, poverty, or being socialised to unattainable ideals of masculinity and family life. Often the men's inability to get in touch with their emotions, a result of their socialisation, is causing them to lose their marriages as well as their children. However, season three attempts to break with this pessimistic view of masculinity in a family setting. The series portrays Hays as a man whose family changed him for the better, enabling him to break with some of the traits he gained through being raised to be a man. Thus, through season three, *True Detective* suggests that men are not automatically fated to be isolated or outsiders in their families but rather can learn and gain fulfilment through becoming an active participant in family life.

3.1.5 Sub-Conclusion

Through the analysis of gender roles within romantic relationships, the use of the female detective trope, and masculinity within the family setting this thesis found a complex negotiation of gender roles and social expectations.

Martin Hart believes in traditional gender roles and understands his role to be the patriarch and Maggie's position to be that of a traditional, supportive wife. Due to Hart's poor treatment of his wife and other women in his life, he is later represented as a powerless outcast and a character to be pitied. Meanwhile, Wayne Hays initially admired Amelia's independence and self-reliance, however, this causes him to feel emasculated in their marriage, as he feels unable to perform his assigned role. Through these romantic relationships, the question of gender roles and norms are verbalised and the men's lack of adaptability and willingness to understand their wives' point of view is ultimately represented as their downfall, with Hart being alone and miserable and Hays regretting dismissing Amelia after she passes away. In this way, the positive representation of the married women, as well as the punishment of the husbands' complicity to the hegemonic gender hierarchy, reads as a critique of the normalised subordination of women.

Antigone Bezzerides was found to embody several aspects of the traditional trope of the female detective, however, she also transgressed as her behaviour did not mimic values and traits generally tied to women. Rather she presented herself in a more masculine manner, prioritising her work over relationships and reacting with aggression rather than emotion. While her storyline revolves around 'saving' women, she is not a feminist icon and belittles sexual harassment. In this way, she does not correct the general misogynistic tone of the series. While this can be seen as problematic due to the series' use of harassment presented as a joke, and general underrepresentation of women, Bezzerides' response can also be seen as a way to remove her from the role of the token female character. Thus, the series removes the burden of representation in an attempt to 'un-gender' her, and present her as an individual rather than an embodiment of feminism.

Finally, the characters' familial relationships were explored through the theme of childhood trauma and negative gendered socialisation. This was verbalised through the often-pessimistic view of family life in the series. The majority of the detectives have been negatively affected by their childhoods and have grown to become aggressive, unable to get express their emotions, and having poor coping mechanisms. Furthermore, this affects the characters' view on parenting and makes them less able to form positive bonds with their children. Wayne Hays is the only character who has a

successful family life, he breaks with masculine norms and is more in tune with his emotions, and thus, succeeds in bonding with his wife and children. Thus, the theme of 'doomed' masculinity is alleviated through Hays' storyline which offers a positive alternative.

4.2 Inter-Masculine Relationships

Within masculinity, a man's place is situated in the hierarchy depending on how far from hegemonic masculinity, he is determined to be. This hierarchy is both prevalent in institutions, such as the workplace, but also in social life in which some men have more power and influence than others. These inter-masculine relations are the focus of this section of the analysis.

Similar to the first section, this section is divided into themes: the first theme 'The Self-Hating Gay Man' focuses on characters who hide their homosexuality to be accepted by others. 'The Marginalised Detective' focuses on hierarchical aspects of racial groupings, mainly between white and black men. 'Male Bonding' relates to the portrayal of male friendship, especially in relation to characters who do not have a romantic partner. And finally, 'Power and Powerlessness' relates to the characters' issues relating to power and authority which they are all subject to, thus how they negotiate their masculinity within the constraints of patriarchal institutions.

3.2.1 The Self-Hating Gay Man

Homosexual men, as well as men with 'feminine' qualities, are deemed subordinate by heterosexual men as their sexual preferences or attributes make them deviant in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Thus, seemingly blurred the boundary between what is considered masculine and feminine. This deviance is punished through homophobia, in which these men are discriminated against and abused, as a way for heterosexual men to distance themselves from femininity, and thus, retain their position within the inter-masculine hierarchy (Connell, *Masculinities* 79, 39-40). The negative associations with homosexuality leading to self-hatred is a theme that is dealt with to some extent in both the second and third season of *True Detective*. In season two, this is portrayed through one of the seasons main characters, Highway Patrol Officer Paul Woodrugh, while in season three it is examined through a minor character, Tom Purcell, the father of the missing children. In both cases, their sexualities are kept secret, and both commit to relationships with women.

Paul Woodrugh is traditionally attractive, which leads others to assume he is popular amongst women. For instance, Bezzerides comments that he should be in charge of interviewing prostitutes to 'put those looks to use' (Pizzolatto s2 ep3 09:21), and his mother says: "All the girls are nice to you Paulie, haven't figured that out by now? […] you've got a hounds blood just like your daddy" (s2 ep2 12:57). Both suggesting that Woodrugh successfully passes as a heterosexual man. His appearance and behaviour seem to suggest traditional masculinity, without any of the stereotypical effeminate mannerisms associated with homosexuality.

Woodrugh's denial of his sexuality is evident as he visits his girlfriend Emily, she is attractive, dressed in lingerie and tries to initiate intercourse, however, Woodrugh excuses himself saying he needs to shower first. In the bathroom, he takes medication to correct erectile dysfunction. He looks nervously at the door, worrying that Emily will come in and discover his deception, and looks at the time as he waits for the effect of the pill to kick in (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 39:33). When he comes out, he does not seem to enjoy himself, but turns his head away from Emily and looks uncomfortable. Woodrugh is frustrated with himself for being unable to force himself to be heterosexual and tries to remove himself from the intimate situation, dealing with his shame by speeding on his motorbike, as a way to vent from his emotional turmoil. Similar to other characters who deal with their emotions by getting into fights or abusing drugs and alcohol, Woodrugh deals with emotion through self-destructive acts, and thus endangers himself as a way to create distance from the pain his sexuality is causing him (Pizzolatto s2 ep1 46:39).

Emily can tell something is wrong, but is unable to locate the problem, eventually breaking off the relationship, saying: "God, whatever happened to you, I can't fix it" to which Woodrugh replies: "There is *nothing* wrong with me" (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 42:39). He is not only trying to convince Emily but even more so himself, blaming her for their relationship not working out, as a way to further hide his sexuality. Later when Emily tells him she is pregnant, Woodrugh sees this as his opportunity to remove himself from subordination altogether, asking her to marry him and telling her "This is the best thing that could happen" (s2 ep4 23:42). However, even though his marriage would solve the issue of his image amongst other men and gain him the natural position as a family patriarch within hegemonic masculinity, he is dreading his future. This is evident as he secretly pours alcohol into his drink at dinner with Emily and her mother, as they start planning for the baby's arrival (s2 ep5 28:54). He does not engage with the conversation and seems uninterested and unhappy, as he downs his drink. Emily remains aware that something is off between them, later asking:

EMILY: “Why did you get with me, Paul? Why did you even ask me out?”
WOODRUGH: “I’m just trying to be a good man.”
EMILY: “Well, you don’t try right” (s2 ep7 00:09:43).

Woodrugh feels that the only way he can succeed as a man, is to try and pass as heterosexual. However, Emily believes that he is fooling himself, as he is disinterested in being with her, and starting a family together. Woodrugh believes that being a good man is standing by Emily and their impending family, even though he is unable to relate to her emotionally, the way she wants him to. He is thus striving for an ideal that makes him unhappy and ignoring his own emotions, in fear of rejection and torment he would receive for owning up to his sexuality.

In season three the father of the two missing children, the main case the detectives are working on, Tom Purcell also marries a woman perhaps to hide his homosexuality. They too got married right after his wife found out that she was pregnant, and Purcell argues that they never really got to know each other, but just got married because of the kids (Pizzolatto s3 ep2 27:39). The union was not a happy one, the house is described as a tense and unhappy place, they no longer sleep in the same room, and rumours circulate that his wife was having multiple affairs. His sexual orientation is first hinted at when his wife’s cousin says he has always felt sorry for Purcell and suggests that he is not the kind of ‘strong male’ that his wife needs (s3 ep2 17:36), suggesting that he has feminine qualities or in other ways is not a ‘real’ man.

Both Woodrugh and Purcell are eager to avoid being branded as subordinate masculinities and thus overcorrect to appear more masculine. Woodrugh uses verbal homophobia to distance himself, telling a co-worker: “[…] and this one fag at the bank tried hitting on me, almost clocked the guy” (Pizzolatto s2 ep2 21:14), as well as becoming physically violent when a friend from the army, with whom he had an affair, touches his arm and Woodrugh aggressively stops any further attempts at psychical intimacy (s2 ep3 33:53). Similarly, Purcell’s co-workers saw him enter a gay-bar and gave him a hard time for it, resulting in Purcell feeling isolated and alienated from the other men at his work. When they are surprised that he is back at work, after his children going missing, Purcell acts provocatively and threatening, trying to stand his ground: “What’s your fucking problem? [is] My dick showing? […] How long are you motherfuckers gonna stare at me? Somebody got something to say about me? My family?”, when his boss takes him to the side to, he changes his tune, going from angry to upset saying: “I’m the guy no one wants to be, huh? I’m a fucking joke, right?” (s3 ep2 22:57). Furthermore, he beats a man up for calling him ‘Tom Purses’ and making overt comments

about his sexuality (s3 ep6 41:23). Both men fear the rejection and isolation their sexuality might bring them amongst other men, thus leading them to take extra measures to stop any association between themselves and homosexuality, Purcell even tries to 'cure' himself through a church program (s3 ep6 13:45).

Woodrugh deals with his sexuality by ignoring it completely, when his friend from the army, Miguel Gilb with whom he had a short affair, asks him about going to veteran support meetings, he argues: "[…] if you want to get over something, maybe sitting around and remembering it in every detail ain't the right way" (Pizzolatto s2 ep3 32:16), while Gilb suggests that acknowledging your past is a good thing, hinting towards their relationship, Woodrugh sees no benefits or possibility in coming to terms with his own sexual identity. This is further supported by the location of their meeting, at a racetrack in a crowd of people, drinking beer and both looking towards the track rather than at each other. The energy of the setting thus suggests that they share masculine interests rather than a more intimate relationship. After drinking heavily while interviewing prostitutes at a bar, Woodrugh wakes up undressed in Gilb's apartment, Gilb invites him to stay for breakfast but Woodrugh wants to leave. On his way out Gilb tells him: "You let yourself go man. Be what you want. It ain't bad" (s2 ep4 05:18). Afterwards, Woodrugh is seen discretely crying in his taxi. Even though Gilb suggests that being openly homosexual is not that bad, Woodrugh is unable to stray from what he believes is the 'real' way to perform masculinity. As he tells Velcoro in the following scene: "I did everything they said, man. Army, PD. But it doesn't matter […] Been listening to them so fucking long that I don't even know who the fuck I am […] I just don't know how to be out in the world, man" (s2 ep4 13:18). This quote both refers to the difficulty returning to civilian life after deployment but can also be read as Woodrugh's frustration with hegemonic masculinity, which he tried to achieve to the point, he could no longer recognise himself. He feels that even though he has altered himself to fit in and be accepted in relation to societal standards, it was not enough leaving him in a situation in which he feels obligated to get married and supress his sexuality for the rest of his life.

Woodrugh's complicated relationship to his masculinity can be seen as a reflection of his mother's opinions on how he should behave like a man. When he tells her, he is going to marry Emily, she is disappointed, saying: "You're a good-looking white man, and you want to get in shoot-outs and become somebody's husband. You could do anything you want. If I was a man, I'd have had the world. Dumb bastard" (Pizzolatto s2 ep5 16:48). Woodrugh is striving for masculine ideals, working a dangerous and respectable job and marrying a woman and starting a family. However, instead of

being proud of him, his mother blames him for not taking advantage of his privileged position being both white, attractive, and male. While she claims that he is privileged and is not taking advantage of the liberty and independence this position brings, she still shames him by hinting at his sexuality: "I carried you for nine months and I've been carrying you ever since with your weirdness. You're strange. All your good friends, the boys. Yeah, I know about you, Paulie" (s2 ep5 19:00). In this way, Woodrugh is met with paradoxical expectations of morality when negotiating his masculinity. He is criticised for doing 'the right thing' by Emily and societal expectations of him, but further is criticised for deviating from the norm.

In the end, Woodrugh hiding his sexuality is his downfall. He is blackmailed with pictures of Gilb and him together, threatening to expose him to Emily (Pizzolatto s2 ep7 00:06:01). And to retrieve his pictures he knowingly walks into a trap. Gilb tells him he should just be honest with himself, in this way he would not have a weakness that others could use against him (s2 ep7 00:47:21). Thus, suggesting that it is not his sexuality in itself that causes his demise, but rather his refusal to live honestly and accepting himself. However, after his death, a police officer comments: "Why do you care? You know the guy was a fag, right?" (s2 ep8 14:26) Suggesting that his death was less meaningful due to his subordination. In this way, *True Detective* treats Woodrugh's homosexuality as the fatal flaw dooming his life whether he decided live openly or not.

While the portrayal of different negotiations of masculinity functions as a way to diversify the experiences of *True Detective's* characters, the self-hating gay man is a tired trope on television, as Chris Mandle argues in his review of the second season: "[…] a character feeling suicidal, depressed, bitter and angry at the world because he can't deal with coming out is something we've seen on telly countless times before, and a tortured gay soul is not going to do anything for a show that's struggling to avoid stereotype-infested waters" (Mandle). While this representation is not necessarily unrealistic, framing homosexuality as the direct cause of the characters' misery, as well as the cause for Woodrugh's death, does little in terms of positive representation for the LGBT community. The series offers compulsory heterosexuality as the only solution to Purcell and Woodrugh's problems and portrays both men as failing to break with normative masculine ideals. While *True Detective* often breaks with normative views of women, it portrays a much more pessimistic view of male homosexuality, suggesting that the fear of being considered feminine is worse than a lifetime of depression or even death.

3.2.2 The Marginalised Detective

While subordinated masculinity refers to men who are rejected and lowered in the social hierarchy due to possessing 'female qualities' either relating to personality or homosexuality, the category of marginalised masculinity falls outside the gender order. Marginalised men are rejected due to societal structures such as race and class. Hegemonic masculinity represents the dominant group of men, within racial relations white masculinities dominate non-white masculinities, and black masculinities are thus oppressed and often portrayed with the unfavourable stereotypes of possessing 'dangerous' masculinity (Connell, *Masculinities* 80).

True Detective mainly deals with the negotiation of marginalised masculinity in its third instalment, in which one of the two main characters, State Detective Wayne Hays, deals with being an African American police officer in Arkansas in the 1980s and 1990s. Both season one and two portray mainly white masculinities, and most explicitly deals with race and ethnicity as a theme concerning gangs, with Rustin Cohle, from season one, being forced to participate in a white biker gang's attack on an African American gang (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 47:03), and Frank Semyon, from season two, referring to gangs by their nationality or ethnicity such as 'the Mexicans' or 'the Russians' (s2 ep6 37:45, s2 ep7 0:35:05). Both season one and two also portray minorities within the police station, however, only as minor characters or extras (s1 ep1 30:28; s2 ep2 06:49).

The character of Wayne Hays was originally written as a white man, and the show's creator, Nic Pizzolatto, was initially hesitant to cast Mahershala Ali in the role, as he explained in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*:

> I think I had felt that maybe, in the modern landscape, that I would need to make race the forefront of the story if I were to (cast Ali as the main character in a show set a Southern town in 1980) […] The story is about time and love and memory. I don't want to ignore race, but I would hate for those larger themes to be subsumed because we're suddenly telling a story that's mostly about race (Pizzolatto qtd. in Hibberd).

Similar to how crime dramas often lack women, as it seemingly brings along a responsibility to verbalise and explore gender-related issues (Feasey 83-84), Pizzolatto understands race as a marked masculinity. Thus, he feared that the character's identity of being a black man, becomes an overpowering identifier, and skews the theme towards a portrayal of racial issues. However,

Pizzolatto further argued that having Hays be African American turned out for the better, as his existential isolation was brought forth by his status as an outsider, thus opening up new dimensions in the character (Hibberd).

Apart from Hays, season three also deals with the storyline of Bret Woodard, a Native American Vietnam war veteran who collects thrash and sells it to the scrapyard. When two children disappear from a predominantly white neighbourhood, Woodard's status as an outsider and lowlife makes him suspicious to the people in the community. Woodard is brought in for questioning with Wayne Hays and his partner Roland West, where he defends himself:

> Came back from overseas '72 […] things didn't work out, my marriage. I was gone too long […] I ain't one of them burnouts. You know, comes back, busting guys up, getting high. And I ain't a bum. I keep a house. I pay my way […] It ain't my world. Less than yours even. But I did pretty good, following orders. Now? You ever do this? I miss when 'don't get killed' was the only thing on my to do list (Pizzolatto s3 ep2 04:40).

Hays and Woodard connect over the difficulties of re-entering society after being deployed, as well as facing the discrimination of both being burned out veterans and minorities. The discrimination towards Woodard is much more pronounced than the discrimination towards Hays, due to his lowly status as a scrapper and seemingly the neighbourhood's only person of colour. This distrust and discrimination lead to a group of white men beating him up, suggesting he is a paedophile. Woodard tries to defend himself, declaring: "I live here! I have rights! I fought for your fucking rights, you assholes!" (Pizzolatto s3 ep3 34:57). However, his status as coloured outweighs his status as a war hero. The leader of the attacking group wears a cap with an American flag, as he threatens Woodard and tells him to get out of the neighbourhood. The flag is used again later when the attackers come to Woodard's house, where he has stashed weapons and set traps for them, and he peeps out through a window using the flag as a curtain (s3 ep4 1:01:42). The first use of the flag shows an exclusive patriotism, wearing it while telling Woodard he does not belong, sends the message of white domination, suggesting that Woodard does not belong. The second use in Woodard's house shows that he too has a strong sense of patriotism towards America and believes in its values. In both cases it is used in relation to the men taking the law into their own hands, both parties feel within their rights to protect themselves from others with any means necessary. When Hays enters Woodard's house following the massacre, Woodard tells him that he missed him on purpose, honouring their

connection as fellow outsiders. However, as Woodard refuses to be reasoned with or taken pity on, Hays kills him in self-defence. While Hays' actions are praised by his white co-workers, he feels guilty, and feels as though he has betrayed their shared history, as Woodard is now remembered as the perpetrator of the massacre, and not as acting in self-defence against racist abuse (s3 ep5 06:46).

Hays also struggles with negotiating his identity as a black man in a society dominated by white men. While he has a good relationship with his white partner West, he is distrustful of white people and feels marginalised and purposely overlooked in the police department. While he is uncomfortable discussing this with his superiors, he vents to West:

> HAYS: "I knew they wouldn't listen to me, but you should have stopped that."
> WEST: "Me? What am I supposed to do? You were there."
> HAYS: "I'm saying, I talk it don't mean anything. Don't matter if I'm right. You at least, you talk, it means something to them […] They ain't my tribe, man. Take care of your shit."
> WEST: "Tribe? Where you think you are, asshole?"
> HAYS: "I know where I am."
> WEST: "Do you? It don't sound like it?"
> HAYS: "Son, I know where I am in a way you will never understand"
> (Pizzolatto s3 ep2 37:34).

Hays understands racial boundaries as signifying different 'tribes,' and thus West is held responsible for not interfering with the actions of other white men, and not using his privileged voice to influence them. West denies Hays' tribal metaphor, feeling no group mentality towards other white men. Hays points out that he is aware of where he is, meaning West will never understand the feelings of racial marginalisation in America the way Hays does. By 'marking' West as white, and thus holding him responsible for the actions of 'his people,' Hays gives West the burden of representation, similar to how minorities are seen as representatives of their race, and women as representatives of their gender. He similarly calls out West's privilege when he is promoted, saying: "Good for you, Lieutenant. Say, that promotion for merit or did it come with the pigmentation?", to which West replies: "Well, I think, unlike some others, I lacked a big fucking mouth. Hell, with affirmative action you could have been my boss by now" (Pizzolatto s3 ep3 49:19). West argues that his success within the police force does not stem from his privilege as a white man, but rather his ability to follow orders and respect authority.

Suggesting that Hays' lower position within the police force is caused solely by his disobedience to his superiors rather than his race. Thus, West denies any preferential treatment of him and diminishes Hays' claims of racial discrimination.

The tribal metaphor is relevant in relation to the setting, in which distinct communities are separating racial groups from each other. When a white woman is interviewed about a black suspect, they ask her if he mentioned, where he lived, to which she replies: "No, well, I just assumed that would have been with the rest of them over the tracks at Davis Junction" (Pizzolatto s3 ep4 0:07:01). Suggesting, that all black people in the town live segregated from the rest of the community. Both West and Hays dread having to make inquiries at the black community, upon arriving everyone around them stop in their tracks, and look after the car, showing a deeply rooted distrust against authority. The suspect, Mr Whitehead, refuses to let them inside his house and insists on talking to the police in the public location in front of his home. Keeping the conversation within sight of his many neighbours and speaks loudly drawing in a large audience. When asked about his location on the day of the children's disappearance, he shouts: "Y'all come over here! Come watch these nefarious men, what they're trying to do to me! And you. How you gonna wear that badge?" (s3 ep4 0:14:50). Whitehead engages the community in what Bell Hooks refer to as 'black male rage,' raging against injustice and the authorities (Hooks 90). He implies that the police are trying to set him up and that Hays is betraying his race by being a police officer. Whitehead proceeds to rile people up with accusations of police wanting to frame a black man, and the group becomes aggressive, throwing things at them and vandalising their car. With the situation out of hand, Hays and West need to draw their weapons but leave without taking further action.

Even though Whitehead, as well as the rest of the community, saw Hays as an outsider and a traitor. Hays still feels loyalty towards 'his tribe,' which is prevalent in West and Hays' conversation afterwards:

> WEST: "Believe this shit? I mean, bit of an overreaction, don't you think?"
> HAYS: "Would you have done it. Would you have shot one of them?"
> WEST: "If it was between him and me. And no, I could give a fuck what color he was."
> HAYS: "You sure about that?"
> WEST: "The fact these were black folk probably gave me more pause. Mob of white people surrounds me, smashes up my ride, be a lot less hesitation what I'd do."
> HAYS: "Can we say this was anonymous vandals?"

WEST: “We’re not going with ‘irate negros’?” (Pizzolatto s3 ep4 0:17:10).

Hays feels solidarity with the community and sides with them rather than with West, refusing to criticise the community’s behaviour, and asking to lie about the car, to spare them police action. Similar to his connection with Woodard, Hays does not wish to give more ammunition to the negative stereotypes about minorities, and he tries to use his position within the police to protect their reputation from more harmful stories.

While Hays condemns white people for racist remarks, he also uses the stereotype of black masculine physical toughness to his advantage, using the threat of prison rape from black men, as a way to threaten white men into compliance. For instance, he says: “Talk shit about us, I’ll have monstrous niggers fuck him to death in his cell” (Pizzolatto s3 ep2 46:36) and threatens a teenaged boy to make him talk: “He’s saying tell the whole story. Or train your ass to be an entrance. I know brothers inside, will tear your guts up, fucking you stupid” (s3 ep4 0:58:34). In both cases, explicit use of racial signifiers adds to the threat. When they talk to the teenager ten years later, he has been scarred from their encounter, blaming Hays’ rough treatment of him as the cause for his phycological issues. After the meeting, Hays is baffled by the man’s feeling of injustice and continues to rant while West keeps directing the conversation back towards the case. Hays argues: “Believe that guy? Acting like I ruined his life? Please explain to me all the hardships and tribulations of being a white man in this country” (s3 ep5 13:54). Suggesting that white men are incapable of feeling unjustly treated by authorities, due to their racial privilege, and that white men thus are unable to be positioned as victims. Thus, while Hays judges others around him for having racial biases, he refuses to believed that his misuse of authority as police is able to hurt white men.

While Pizzolatto did not want Hays’ storyline to revolve around race, this did end up being the most prevalent theme, with Hays often bringing up the topic of racial bias and being shut down. However, unlike its representation of subordinate masculinity the series does attempt to show an evolution of racial relations from casual, everyday racism in the 1980s to the ‘modern landscape’ of 2015 in which the interviewer tells him: “[…] I’m interested in the intersectionality of marginalised groups within authoritarian and systemic racist structures” (Pizzolatto s3 ep2 20:49). The scene is played as a joke, in which the young white interviewer suggests she has superior knowledge of racism due to her education, however, without having lived through it. Even though the scene functioned as an awkward attempt at raising the issue of racism, this is the first time racial discrimination is

validated for Hays. Thus, the series suggests positive changes in the marginalisation of black men within the hegemony, from racism being present but denied in the ’80s to being validated in 2015.

3.2.3 Male Bonding

Of the three instalments of *True Detective*, season one and three share a similar character structure in which two male detectives work closely as partners which grow to be a meaningful friendship. While season two does portray male friendship to a degree, for instance with Raymond Velcoro and Frank Semyon’s meetings, or the few friendly conversations between Velcoro and Paul Woodrugh, friendship is not the dynamic that drives character development or brings the story forward.

As mentioned in the theory chapter, men often find it difficult to form meaningful relationships with other men due to the barrier of homophobia. Men fear to appear vulnerable and feminised in the eyes of other men, and thus lose their status within the masculine hierarchy (Grief 24-25). Due to this, male friendships tend to be less intimate and focused more on common activity than deep conversation (36-37). According to John Fiske traditionally male narratives, such as the crime drama genre, seek to minimise the threat of feminine values by exhibiting goal-oriented relationships, in which the characters are together based on a common goal rather than a need for intimacy. While this can lead to male bonding, it also functions as a way to isolate the male subject (Fiske, *Television* 215).

At the opening of season one of *True Detective*, in the 1995 storyline, Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle have recently been partnered up, after Cohle’s transferral to the department. Their relationship is initially awkward, Hart being traditional in both his values and manner of doing police work, while Cohle has a more intellectual and philosophical approach. To Hart, Cohle comes across as strange, and while Hart initially tries to start a conversation, Cohle’s worldviews makes Hart uninterested in friendship: “My luck, I picked today to get to know you. Three months, I don’t hear a word from you […] and now I’m begging you to shut the fuck up […] I got an idea. Let’s make the car a place of silent reflection from now on, okay?” (Pizzolatto s1 ep1 16:43). When Cohle is invited over for dinner, he tells Maggie Hart about his past, and Maggie privately reproaches Hart for not getting to know his partner (s1 ep1 44:24). Showing a typical female view on friendship in which intimate, personal conversations is in focus.

While they do not initially bond on an emotional level, their partnership does grow to a friendship, in which Hart defends Cohle to their superiors (Pizzolatto s1 ep1 19:08) and Cohle keeps

Hart's affair a secret and helps him stay out of trouble when he kills a man on the job (s1 ep3 41:23; s1 ep5 15:44). They are loyal to each other; however, they are not close, as they are separated by their different positions, Cohle as a loner and Hart as a family man. Cohle does attempt to have a relationship, which ultimately does not work out, as he explains:

> Laurie, […] it broke off. It was for the best, you know, I gave her cause. I can be hard to live with, you know, I don't mean to but, I can be critical. And sometimes I think I'm just not good for people, you know, it's not good for them to be around me. You know, I wear 'em down, you know, they get unhappy" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 10:33).

Cohle believes himself to unhealthy for other people, and thus feels that he is unworthy of people's affection. Cohle does not speak warmly of either women or marriage, for instance referring to Martin Hart's many girlfriends as 'crazy pussy' (Pizzolatto s1 ep4 22:06) and referring to marriage as 'this whole man-woman drama' (s1 ep4 31:57). Hart finds his lack of interest in family life problematic, saying about Cohle: "Yeah, I'll tell you guys, and believe me, past a certain age a man without a family can be a bad thing" (s1 ep1 09:34).

As Hart sees their relationships statuses as the defining difference between them, their friendship is terminated when Cohle sleeps with Maggie, as Hart blames Cohle for his divorce. Hart beats him up and Cohle quits, thus terminating their partnership as well (Pizzolatto s1 ep6 50:54). This scene transitions to the 2012 storyline in which they meet again for the first time since the fight. The taillight on Cohle's truck, which was broken during their fight, is still broken, symbolising the scars from their broken friendship which has never healed (s1 ep6 54:44).

Upon meeting again, there is still resentment from Hart's end, saying: "If you were drowning, I'd throw you a fucking barbell" (Pizzolatto s1 ep7 04:50). And Cohle is only seeking out Hart to get him to help solve a case, and thus only seeks to re-establish their partnership to reach his goal. However, after Hart reluctantly agrees to work with him, they start to rekindle their friendship. As Hart's now ex-wife Maggie comments: "All this time, you two, and just… just like that?" (s1 ep7 17:19), surprised that they could so easily pick their relationship back up. This time, they are both loners, which becomes apparent when Cohle tries to create small talk:

> COHLE: "How you been? You know, besides work, what do you do?"

> HART: "I'm sorry, I just… I don't ever remember you asking a personal question before. Uh… you know, I just stay busy, fish, girlfriends."
> COHLE: "You seeing anybody?"
> HART: "Not really. Some dates. You know it's all pretty casual […] quiet life. I don't stay out late. I just… I go home. You?"
> COHLE: "Ah, I'm about the same. No girlfriend. Just go to work, go home" (Pizzolatto s1 ep7 24:19).

At this point, both are living lonely, isolated lives and are at a point in life where they have a greater need for companionship. Thus, this time their friendship, while still goal-oriented, becomes much more personal as they spend time together talking about their lives and feelings (s1 ep7 43:12).

Upon finally finding their suspect, both men are severely hurt. Cohle has been stabbed and is bleeding heavily. Hart tries to comfort him, cradling his head in his lap and telling him his wounds are not that bad (Pizzolatto s1 ep8 37:37). This newfound intimacy continues at the hospital in which Hart wishes to take care of Cohle, and Cohle finally breaks down his emotional barriers and confides in Hart (s1 ep8 48:32). Now that the case is over, their common goal is terminated and their friendship no longer hides behind their partnership but becomes a close intimate friendship based on mutual respect and affection, as a way for both of them to end their isolation.

In season three, detectives Wayne Hays and Roland West have an already established relationship from the onset of the series in 1980. Both are initially single and are introduced to the series in a scene in which they are hanging out in an abandoned parking lot, drinking beer, trying to shoot rats, and talking about life (Pizzolatto s3 ep1 08:58). They are good friends who enjoy each other's company and share a background in the army, as well as a willingness to overstep the law to do their job (s3 ep2 41:55). However, when Hays meets Amelia, their relationship starts to change, as Hays is put in a position in which he chooses Amelia over his career, and thus effectively chooses his new romantic partner over his partnership with West. While Hays argues that this will not affect their friendship, West is hurt (s3 ep8 0:16:24). Between the 1980 timeline and 1990 timeline, the pair have little to do with each other, Hays being busy with his wife and kids, while West, like Cohle, continues to be a 'loner.'

In this time West bonds with Tom Purcell, the father of the missing children West and Hays are investigating. In '80 West is called out to a bar where Purcell has been detained for making a scene, West is understanding of Purcell's problems, and kindly offers him to sleep on his couch, rather than

taking him to the police station (Pizzolatto s3 ep4 0:36:53). In ‘90 West is seen visiting Purcell again, who is now sober and a member of a church, the two seem to be on good terms, West is proud of Purcell and Purcell credits West with turning his life around (s3 ep3 38:13). West further tries to protect Purcell as he is investigated (s3 ep6 04:58), and when learning that Purcell was homosexual, he continued to defend him, saying: “Everybody’s got weaknesses. Don’t mean he did that to his kids” (s3 ep6 14:01).

West is a compassionate man and a good friend, he seems to be drawn to isolated men who require companionship, befriending Purcell when he is at the lowest point of his life, and when no one else seems to care about him. He also stays loyal towards Hays and defends him against any racist remarks, as well as tries to help him with his career in ’90 (Pizzolatto s3 ep3 50:18). Thus, West does not distance himself from men who hold lower statuses of the masculine hierarchy, to maintain his position, but values friendship over his reputation. This may be due to his time in the army, after which he has seen many men being troubled and suffering from isolation and emotional turmoil: “A lot of guys have trouble when they come back. I heard one of my old rodeo buddies is on the street in Shreveport. Another buddy went to prison in Oklahoma, killed a dude in a bar fight […]” (s3 ep1 43:53), while West only speaks of friends of his having difficulty getting back from war, he too struggles, which might be the reason he is unable to connect with women, in the same way, he connects with men.

Unlike Cohle who is mainly disinterested in dating, West enjoys flirting with women, commenting how he should come to church more often, due to the number of pretty women there (Pizzolatto s3 ep 4 0:24:59). However, while he enjoys flirting and dating women, he has difficulty committing, which becomes apparent when he and his on-and-off-again girlfriend Lori invite Amelia and Hays over for dinner. The couple recently bought a house, even though West preferred renting. Hays asks if the house is too much of a commitment for him, which West half-heartedly denies. When asked if they are going to get married, it appears to be a touchy subject and a source of arguments between them (s3 ep5 19:40). Even though West and Lori have known each other for nine years, West feels unable to fully commit to her.

In ’90, after Purcell has ‘committed suicide,’ and West and Hays have fallen out again due to different views on the case (Pizzolatto s3 ep7 06:51), and an illicit interrogation gone wrong (s3 ep7 43:01), West is left alone and miserable. He reacts by going to a bar and picks a fight with a group of rough-looking men (s3 ep8 0:26:07). Drinking and fighting are his only mechanisms for coping with his emotions. Upon being thrown out of the bar, he sits in the parking lot, beaten up, drunk, and crying

when a stray dog comes by and seems to comfort him (s3 ep8 0:31:37). The dog, like himself, is alone and in pain, craving love and affection.

When Hays meets West again in 2015, he lives alone far away from the city with a yard full of stray dogs, whom he spends his days taking care of. Hays is surprised at his isolated house, saying West was always more of a 'people person' (s3 ep5 40:35). What attracted West to the strays was the same thing that made him compassionate towards his friends, as they were all misfits who needed friendship. West is friendly towards Hays, but is also disappointed in him for never reaching out:

> WEST: "You know '80? We stop being partners. You get married. It's natural for people to drift apart. This right now? This ain't that. All this time. You never picked up the phone. Never dropped by for a beer. Never said you're fucking sorry, once […] And I was gonna put that shit aside. Have a drink with you. Reminisce […] but look what you're doing."
> HAYS: "How many of those you go through a week?"
> WEST: "Hey, fuck you, man! I'm fine… alone out here. No woman. No kids. And no old friends. So that means I get to drink exactly as much as I want to! You don't judge me, motherfucker. I know you. I know what you did. What I did. You talking about my drinking? I'd whip your ass if it wouldn't kill you. And you still ain't apologized."
> HAYS: "[…] can't remember my life, man. I can't remember my wife… I don't know, if you tell me I did something wrong, well, OK. I'm sorry" (Pizzolatto s3 ep5 49:46).

Both are emotional and West agrees to help Hays out with his investigation, however, he is more interested in protecting Hays from himself as he is in denial about the progression of his dementia. In the end, after they have solved their case, West offers to move in with Hays to help him out, and they embrace emotionally (Pizzolatto s3 ep8 0:48:09). Their friendship has, similar to Hart and Cohle, transgressed from investigative partners to life partners, and West is thus included in Hays' family (s3 ep8 1:06:23).

Season one and three thus both end with the two men being on their own, using their friendship as a means to end their isolation and gain a bond for their mutual benefit. Season one portrayed both men as either incapable or unwilling to create lasting bonds with women. Both Hart and Cohle are traumatised by the horrors they have witnessed through their jobs in the police force and feel unable to relate these emotions to women, thus, having a male partner who has been through the same, is

easier. Similarly, in season three both Hays and West have served in the army and subsequently in the police force. However, while this has rendered West unable to form meaningful connections with women, Hays is able to bond with Amelia. Both the ’80 and ’90 timelines are essentially a romantic arc focussing on the blossoming relationship between Amelia and Hays, while West becomes a supporting character. However, in the ’15 timeline, when Amelia has passed away, the male bond prevails, focusing on the partnership of West and Hays.

While the friendships stay true to Fiske’s genre traditions, in terms of focusing on male action-driven relationships, the series also digresses. There are few depictions of female friendships, as the majority of females in the series exist as minor characters who are only portrayed in relation to men, however, ‘feminine values’ are still present due to the way the friendships evolve to be ‘relationship-oriented.’ In both season one and three the partnerships continue after the common goal is resolved and grows to be an intimate bond in which they are no longer afraid of appearing emotional, vulnerable, or feminised in the eyes of the other. Thus, being able to bond with other men, creates a situation in which the male characters can defy the hegemonic expectations of masculinity, normalised through men’s socialisation, and are able to find solace from their emotional and social isolation.

3.2.4 Power and Powerlessness

As is explored throughout the analysis, hegemonic masculinity both grants men power but also a feeling of powerlessness. The source of power is found in the subordination of women and other groups of men. In relation to women, *True Detective* often breaks with stereotypical portrayals of women in crime drama television by having the women be empowered in their relationships with men. However, while this is true for the few ‘main’ women, the series also portrays the power relation in which men hold power over women, particularly concerning the theme of prostitution. In season one the sexualisation of women is prevalent already in the intro, which is littered with objectified shots of the female body. Due to the series initial victim being a prostitute, Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle spend time interviewing prostitutes to gain intel. While prostitution, as well as soliciting, is illegal in the majority of the US, prostitution is largely normalised in the series, and the detectives have no interest in prosecuting anyone engaging in the sex trade. The series continues the normalisation of displaying women in positions as sexual objects, for instance through establishing shots in a strip club in which the camera lingers on the semi-nude women before picking up the plot

(Pizzolatto s1 ep4 10:12). Similarly, at the biker gang's bar, undressed women are dancing and mingling amongst fully dressed men (s1 ep4 37:06). In this way, the power relation of women as commodities and men as buyers is established.

This theme continues in season two with prostitutes littering the background of a large portion of the scenes, portrayed as a normalised part of the city's nightlife and discussed as a popular source of income (Pizzolatto s2 ep3 40:22). In season three, prostitution has less to do with the actual crimes investigated and is only mentioned by Roland West: "I'm a feminist. They wanna sell me a piece of ass, they got the right. Shit, you're paying for it one way or another" (s3 ep1 09:53). Instead, the mother of the missing children fills the part of the fallen woman and is looked down upon and judged for being sexually promiscuous (s3 ep2 18:57). In all three seasons, the social issue of sex work goes more or less unnoticed by the male characters, while it is a concern for the female characters, with Maggie Hart worrying about her daughters (s1 ep3 23:12), Antigone Bezzerides trying to save both her sister and another woman from sex work (s2 ep1 14:37; s2 ep7 17:26), and Amelia trying to console the mother, who believes herself to be a whore and a bad person, saying: "A lot of times we do things to hurt ourselves, because we believe we deserve to be hurt" (s3 ep4 0:46:34). Suggesting that women degrade themselves due to feelings of unworthiness and powerlessness.

While the male characters are empowered in relation to women, they too suffer from their position within society. This relates to John Fiske's argument about work as both a male threat and privilege, in the sense that work often put men in positions in which they are powerless due to having to follow the commands of their superiors, while also providing them with power within the family unit (Fiske, *Television* 208). Due to its focus on the male world of work, the crime drama genre is considered one of the most masculine genres, however, at the same time, Rebecca Feasey argues that it also provides the most tormented and troubled images of men in television. As the genre evolved, so did the portrayal of the police officer, as the genre started to challenge the morality of its detectives as well as the distinction between the inherently good police officer and bad criminal, with the representation of 'bent cops' and 'sympathetic villains' (Feasey 80, 83). Feasey hopes that the future will bring even more diverse portrayals of men on television arguing that this would open up the discussion about hegemonic masculinity not as something to aspire to but rather something to pity and fear (Feasey 155).

True Detective is no stranger to speculative morality and the portrayal of the 'bent cop.' This inner conflict of police work is described by Hart:

> You know, I've seen all the different types. We all fit a certain category, the bully, the charmer, the surrogate dad, the man possessed by ungovernable rage, the brain, and any of those types can be a good detective, and any of those types can be an incompetent shitheel […] A lot of it had to do with how they managed authority. There can be a burden in authority, in vigilance, like a father's burden. It was too much for some men. A smart guy who's steady is hard to find (Pizzolatto s1 ep1 07:30).

Hart argues that authority can be difficult to manage, as police officers the characters have power and authority in society and the hegemony as the institution that enforces the law. However, this position within the hegemonic hierarchy is difficult for the characters to manage as is evident through the series, in which the detectives often misuse their authority to more successfully perform their duties. This is verbalised by Cohle in season one: "Of course I'm dangerous, I'm police. I could do terrible things to people, with impunity" (Pizzolatto s1 ep2 20:03). By suggesting that attributes such as 'uncontrollable rage' and being 'dangerous' are accepted and even appreciated within the police force, they argue that the job inevitably entails violence. This expectation is particularly relevant in relation to season one and three, and to a lesser degree season two, in which the detectives often misuse their authority in relation to violence, with Cohle beating up men to gain information (s1 ep2 25:30), Hart killing a man on the job (s1 ep 5 15:05), and West and Hays regularly abducting men and bringing them to a secluded location in which they beat them up until they confess, which also leads to murder (s3 ep2 41:57, s3 ep7 42:03). They all engage in other illegal activities such as threats of violence or death, buying and using illicit drugs, breaking and entering, ignoring prostitution and so forth, however, these actions seem to have no impact in relation to the law and the characters are never prosecuted for their actions. The detectives of *True Detective* seem to operate under what Feasey refers to as 'moral certainty' meaning that their actions, while illegal and traditionally immoral, are presented a being the right thing to do due to the detectives' moral reasoning (Feasey 83). In this sense, their actions are regarded not as corrupt or evil, but rather as understandable, as these crimes were committed in the pursuit of justice for others and not for self-interest. As Cohle explains to Hart: "[…] world needs bad men. We keep the other bad men from the door" (s1 ep3 45:09).

However, while the corruption and illegal use of violence and authority are congratulated in the main characters, these same actions are villainised by the higher-ups in the police hierarchy. In all three seasons, the detectives are met with the expectations from their superiors that the political

aspects of police work are preferred to actual justice, in the sense that solving a case quickly or finding a suspect within a certain demographic is preferred, rather than giving the detectives the resources to get to the bottom of the case and finding the real perpetrators. Thus, corruption and collusion are recurring themes in the series' representation of police work. In season one Cohle ties a chain of ritualistic murders and paedophilia to a powerful family including both the state governor and the police captain (Pizzolatto s1 ep6 26:50). He accuses the family of using its power within the authorities to cover up the killings and keep it out of the press, which his superior shuts down and refuses to let him investigate. The catalyst of season two is the murder of the town manager in which three different police departments fight for jurisdiction in order to protect themselves by either covering up or exposing his corruption and collusion (s2 ep2 06:42). And thus, the detectives are asked to work against each other, Velcoro seems used to this and questions his department whether they want it solved (s2 ep2 09:51). In season three the police department is eager to get a conviction in both openings of the case, and thus places blame on dead people as this looks better for higher-ups' political careers (s3 ep7 05:45).

All three seasons similarly operate with the contrast of one detective wanting justice regardless of political or personal consequences, Cohle, Bezzerides, Hays, and a partner who understands the reality of their job, and thus is more pessimistic on the possibility of true justice, Hart, Velcoro, West. This contrasting understanding of their power and authority as police causes tension in the partnerships, with Hart and Cohle falling out due to their disagreements on the case, and later Cohle forces Hart to help him seek justice in secret, as he argues "a man remembers his debts" (Pizzolatto s1 ep7 03:19), suggesting that Hart has an obligation to the victims whose perpetrators were never punished, and that it must be done by them due to the police being compromised by powerful men. Similarly, Bezzerides is intent on pursuing the case, while Velcoro tries to dissuade her saying that the Mayor is set on taking her down and suggests that the mayors connections keeps him out of trouble (s2 ep4 07:12). Bezzerides is frustrated that on one seems to care about the deaths and that it seems to suggest a larger political conspiracy. She wants Velcoro to get involved, to which he replies: "[…] because my power of influence are so meagre in this sublunar world of ours, I try to limit the people I can disappoint. And I make sure to know the differences between my obligations and somebody else's" (s2 ep5 33:57). Velcoro feels a sense of powerlessness and thus distances himself from the moral obligations Bezzerides feel they are subject to, due to their position as law enforcement as well as having knowledge of corruption. This discussion is repeated again in season three in which Hays argues that they have to continue to work the case: "Oh, come on, man. It's too

big for that political bullshit" to which West argues "It ain't bullshit to the Man. You ever learned that; you wouldn't have been on a desk last ten years" (s3 ep5 37:26). Thus, West argues that the only way to succeed within the police force is to keep quiet and do as your told, embracing the lack of power your position within the hierarchy grants you, in other words consenting to the power of others and thus settling into one's place in the hegemony.

The series presents somewhat pessimistic endings for the characters and simultaneously presents itself as a critique of patriarchal power. The first season's finale ends with the death of one of the perpetrators, but without successfully connecting the crimes to the powerful people who are responsible, as is reported on the news: "[…] The State Attorney General and the FBI have discredit rumors that the accused was in some way related to the family of Louisiana Senator Edwin Tuttle" (Pizzolatto s1 ep8 41:15). Season two ends with the death of three main characters in their pursuit of justice, and the exile of Bezzerides. Velcoro is posthumously framed for crimes, he did not commit, and all the corrupt, rich, and powerful men remain corrupt, rich, and powerful (s2 ep8 1:16:41). However, there is still a sliver of hope as Bezzerides tries to get the true story told. In season three the case is first solved 35 years after it occurred, thus the majority of the people involved have passed away before its conclusion. However, an accomplice to the crimes confesses the events to Hays and West, seeking to finally be punished for his actions to let go of his guilt, to which Hays replies: "We don't have the authority" (s3 ep8 0:43:49). In this way, season three focuses more on the partners' failure to save the children and less on the punishment of the people who harmed them.

Throughout the series the political power ruling the police force are represented as corrupted, driven by little interest in protecting the people, but rather a self-serving interest to create good press which is rewarded with being raised through the ranks. With the police force's role as the enforcement of law, it is also an enforcement of the current ideology on which the law is based. Thus, as a major part of patriarchy representing the police as a corrupt institution, filled with power hungry men who only care about personal gain, can be seen as a critique of the hegemony, in which the power given to some causes despair amongst the rest. And thus, in order to become a 'true detective' one must break with the expectations set up by one's superiors within the police, as well as common morality, in order to protect those with less power and make sure that justice is served.

3.2.5 Sub-Conclusion

This section of the analysis focused on examining the inter-masculine relationships in the series specifically regarding subordinated and marginalised masculinities as well as male bonding and the characters' complicated relationship with power.

Through the examinations of less-valued forms of masculinity, the portrayal of subordinated masculinity was problematic. Both Paul Woodrugh and Tom Purcell were represented as suppressing their sexualities in fear of rejection and subordination by other men. Both men found their sexuality a burden, and for Purcell even a sin. Woodrugh's inability to 'come clean' led to his death, however, posthumously he is furthermore shamed for his sexuality, leaving a sense of there being no positive outcome for a man in his position. In this way, *True Detective* frames homosexuality as his fatal flaw, while the series frequently empowers women, it fails to empower subordinate masculinities and frames this as an identity that needs to remain hidden. Unlike Woodrugh, Wayne Hays uses his marked masculinity in an attempt to help other marginalised groups, he often verbalises institutionalised racism, and the issues he faces being in a less powerful position than his white partner. He furthermore manages to turn his position into an asset using white men's fear of black masculinity against them and thus weaponizing stereotypes. Through Hays, marginalised masculinities are verbalised and humanised, thus, offering nuanced representation.

Regarding male bonding, close friendship between men is represented as a way break with hegemonic masculinity and the fear of appearing feminine. While the two friendships detailed in the section started as action-driven partnerships with a common goal, they were able to transgress this distinction and become intimate and relationship-oriented, when the characters needed companionship. Through this transition, these men became comfortable appearing vulnerable and emotional in front of their friend, and they formed a deeper understanding and connection with the other person. Thus, male bonding is represented as a way in which the male characters were able to defy the expectations of hegemonic masculinity and the deep-rooted homophobia, and thus end their physical, as well as, emotional isolation.

Finally, the characters find themselves in the difficult power relation in which they are both in possession of power while often feeling powerless. Being a police officer gives the characters power and authority within society. While they often misuse this authority, this is accepted due to being motivated by supporting the common good. Meanwhile, the detectives appear powerless within the

police force at large, which is represented as misusing authority for self-interest, therefore, appearing corrupted and evil. Thus, while the characters take up an authoritative position within the patriarchy and take advantage of its privileges, they are simultaneously fighting against the patriarchy in the search for true justice. In this way, *True Detective* frames the characters as taking a complex position of being both complicit and rebellious towards hegemonic norms.

4. Conclusion

Positive representation on television is important, as it is difficult to 'be what you don't see,' and thus, the traditional, unhealthy representation of masculinity makes it difficult to find positive roles models, with whom men can identify (Venable). The reception of the HBO television series *True Detective* was controversial, some argued that it was a celebration of manhood while others argued that it conveyed tired and harmful stereotypes of both men and women. This controversy formed the basis of my thesis, which set out to examine how *True Detective* represents and negotiates hegemonic masculinity regarding both the male and female characters. As well as, how this representation can be seen as either supportive or critical of these norms. Using the theoretical framework of masculinity studies and hegemonic masculinity the analysis took its point of departure from *True Detective's* representation of the power relations within male/female relationships as well as inter-masculine relationships.

The thesis found that while women take up much less screen time, the series does not simply utilise misogyny in an uncritical, unprogressively manner, and it does not treat the main female characters as subordinate to men. While the majority of these women play supporting roles as the wives of the main characters, they manage to break with traditional, societal expectations, as well as their male counterparts' expectations, and are all portrayed as intelligent and resourceful. Even though men's treatment of the leading women in the series is at times misogynistic, this treatment is not simply normalised but is often 'punished' within the narrative. This sense of female empowerment is, however, not extended to minor characters or extras, the majority of which are sex workers. Prostitution is vastly normalised in the series, and little is done by men to support these women.

Breaking with tradition is further evident regarding Antigone Bezzerides who rejects most feminine norms, she is fiercely independent, obsessed with her job, and unemotional. She is thus

framed more like the male characters than the other female characters. Though her rejection of her gender can be seen as the series belittling feminist issues, this can also be seen as a way to individualise Bezzerides, thus making her a flawed character who focuses on her own issues rather than bearing the burden of being 'the feminist antidote.' Amongst the male characters other subordinated groups are represented. Paul Woodrugh is struggling with homosexuality, trying his best to be perceived as heterosexual to retain his position in the masculine hierarchy. While this suppression becomes one of the main themes of his season, *True Detective* fails to add anything meaningful to this portrayal. Woodrugh is encouraged to live openly but refuses, even though his refusal causes his death. Thus, suggesting that male rejection is worse than both living a lie or dying. In this way, the empowerment of women is not extended to gay masculinities who are represented as irrevocably repressed. The series representation of marginalised masculinity is more pronounced and negotiated more freely, the third season deals with this group both through the African American detective, Wayne Hays, and multiple minor characters. Hays often comments on the unfair treatment of marginalised groups, while his claims are often dismissed by his partner, the framing of the series takes Hays' point of view and backs up his statements. Furthermore, the 2015 storyline suggests social development and validation of his claims.

The characters are mainly unsuccessful in romantic relationships, similarly they frequently fail in parenting roles. The theme of childhood trauma and negative socialisation, which is prevalent in all three seasons, problematises men's ability to successfully parent children and maintain their role in a family unit. This problem of male isolation and lack of emotional vulnerability, however, is alleviated through the theme of male bonding in which the characters are able to relate a male partner and thus find intimate companionship. In this way, the series promotes male friendship as the way in which men can heal from the trauma of childhood and manhood, in a way they are unable to in romantic or familial relationships.

Throughout the relationships in the series, both male/female and inter-masculine, the main difference is power and status within the masculine hegemony. This is not only the main driving factor in the character's personal lives but continues to be presented as the main issue in their professional lives. The detectives are in a position of power in society representing an authority as law enforcement, however, within the hierarchy of the police departments they are powerless and subject to the will of their superiors. By framing the police force as corrupted and self-serving, the detectives' rebellion against their superiors become a fight against the patriarchal regime, thus, to be a 'true detective,' one has to be willing to misuse and risk one's power and authority, and one's status

in the hegemony, in order to attempt to take down superior power structures. By framing the detectives attempts for justice as mostly unsuccessful, *True Detective* comments on and problematises white, heterosexual, male dominance. The series does make use of misogyny and suppression of un-hegemonic masculinities, as well as heavily features dominant masculinities as protagonists, but it does not simply support these characterisations. Through the characters' flaws and failure to live up to masculine ideals, the struggles of masculine expectations, as well as modern gender relations, are forefronted and explored, thus representing the complex issues of current day masculinity in the mainstream media.

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