

THE AMBIVALENT CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES

EXAMINING SPEAKER PERCEPTIONS IN DENMARK; THE INTERPLAY OF
MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES



MA THESIS

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Abstract

In recent years, there have been changes in the Nordic concept of masculinities. While Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and hierarchy is still applicable in most countries, the creation of new masculinities and femininities are vital in expanding Connell's framework. This paper examines masculinities and their interplay with femininities to understand the changes in gender- hierarchy and harmony in society. In this work, I analyze speaker perceptions of Danish men and women to expand on the insights of current Nordic society. The dissertation starts with exploring the holistic understanding of gender- hegemony and segregation in the labor market. In examining female- police officers and electricians, it is found that lingering towards pariah femininities and diminishing their expected femininity brings repercussions. Similarly, male nurses must uphold a masculine self-image by constantly addressing their sexuality in a hyper-masculine approach to escape the notion of subordinate masculinity.

Besides the labor market, this paper draws on the ambivalence men faces in creating a new masculinity that complies with gender equality and diminishes the masculine hierarchy. The changes in masculinities construct new strategies in gender relations. Thus, Jacob and Simon negotiate their masculinity through the narrative of cooperation, equality, and emotionality that provide masculinity through Nordic ideals. The paper finds that Jacob and Simon must diminish some hegemonic masculinity traits and incorporate aspects of the new masculinity to construct their relational identities to interplay with femininities.

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Chapter One: Is Masculinity in Crisis?

One might be inclined to conclude that masculinity is in crisis because the indicators of physical, psychological, and social well-being show that men perform negatively in society of late (Shpancer 2020). Also, the economic changes in society have changed the essentiality of success, as men were previously considered to have a biological advantage over women, which is no longer valid (Shpancer 2020). The economic changes are further explored by the British sociologist David Morgan, as he notes that the economic changes tend to change with societal shifts in attitude and behavior (Shpancer 2020). He further says that several recent changes, such as the rising divorce rates, most regularly initiated by women, challenge the dominant heterosexual model of husband and wife. Men are also challenged as there is a rise of female single-parent households that disrupt and undermine the traditional masculine role and identity (Shpancer 2020). Looking at masculinity, in recently published guidelines for therapists, they define traditional masculinity as a risk factor,

The main thrust of the subsequent research is that traditional masculinity- marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance, and aggression is, on the whole, harmful. Men socialized in this way are less likely to engage in healthy behaviors (Shpancer 2020).

Traditional masculinity also denoted as hegemonic masculinity in R.W. Connell's theoretical framework, is a perspective that looks to the hierarchy of masculinity and puts hegemonic masculinity at the top of the hierarchy. Individuals who enact the traditional masculinity are thought to be the culturally accepted hegemonic version of men. With recent societal changes this creates ambivalence in men because they must distinguish between what the local hegemonic masculinity is and how it differs from the regional or global understanding of masculine hierarchies.

The talk of crisis should be carefully considered, as the hegemonic hierarchy is still assertive in some regions, both locally and globally. Masculinity has many nuances and cannot

be limited to one group; therefore, saying that masculinity is in crisis is too broad a concept. Being male is not in crisis in itself, so males' problems are not caused by maleness. We should be careful not only to address the negative aspects that males endure because if we earnestly talk about a crisis, we must include that men are still sitting on most of the high capital positions and social power on a global spectrum (Shpancer 2020). Therefore, dominance remains in male hands when we address economic essentiality. Meaning, the cruciality of the masculine crisis lies in psychological and social well-being, which is one of the aspects this paper will operate within. Masculinity is constantly changing, and we cannot generalize the complex category of masculinity as being in a crisis if we do not examine it from a holistic viewpoint.

The past decades have seen a broadening of masculine studies, where the framework of hegemonic masculinity has become essential in addressing men's studies. This paper gives a new take on understanding the *crisis* in masculinity, as it explores hegemonic masculinity with the concept of undressing the kinds of crisis related to critical masculine studies. There is a deeply rooted cultural problem in portraying sex and gender roles in society, as the egalitarian approach is far from enforced. However, if an egalitarian approach is ever applicable is challenging to undress, but what is clear is that there are several issues related to changing the perspective of what is to be understood as ideals both within masculine and feminine studies. One of the problems is the ambivalence in masculine identity ranging from relational identity developments of autonomous or individualized masculinities to the interplay with femininities.

This paper will clarify Connell's theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity to examine if it is still applicable in current Western society. Afterward, this paper will broaden the perspective of the masculine hierarchy by addressing the holistic understanding of how masculinities and femininities interplay in the Danish labor market, focusing on gender dynamics and gender segregation. To examine the interplay of masculinity and femininities

outside of the labor market the paper will orbit the process of recognition and romantic heterosexual relations to understand how this arena is affected by societal changes. In doing so, the dissertation will use my interviews with Jacob and Simon and examine their narratives on how current masculinity and femininity interplay and what consequences follow when society changes the perspective on masculinities. Lastly, the ambivalence in creating a new masculinity will be examined. A concept that bears roots in the loss of traditional male breadwinner authority to understand what outcome follows the reconstruction of egalitarian masculinity and the ambivalences men meet when society changes.

Ultimately, this paper will use conducted interviews to analyze the speaker perceptions of Jacob and Simon to deduct if Connell's hegemonic masculinity is still applicable in current Nordic society. This paper will discuss the interplay of masculinity and femininity and the ambivalence in developing masculinity. This thesis takes a different approach to masculinity as it examines the dismantling of the hegemony through the concept of the emergence of a new masculinity that follows the Nordic ideal of egalitarianism.

Methodology and Data

This project's methods and empirical material are based on two interviews conducted by me, three by Bloksgaard (2009), three by Bloksgaard and Faber (2004), and one interview conducted by Bach (2019). Using both my interviews and others, I get to explore masculinity in a broader context than if I were to have undertaken all interviews by myself when the project has a time limit. Thus, to make sure I could examine masculinity and its interplay with femininity in the fields I wanted to explore, I wish to build on Bloksgaard and Bach's work.

The empirical material that I conducted for this project consists of two interviews selected from an interview study in 2021, ranging from February to April. Eight Danish men give their take on what it is like to be a man in current society. All interviewees were in

relationships or have been with partners that had an income like their own. The interviews had few restrictions but searched for men who live in equality-oriented relationships with equal work hours and pay.

This project is based on a qualitative research approach and took the direction of a semi-structured interview to enhance the processes of identity narrative. By following the semi-structured approach, I use predetermined questions but made use of the possibility of asking clarifying questions that were not predetermined based on what the interviewees replied. The beginning of all interviews remains the same. Still, the outcomes differ drastically depending on their answers, as I try not to shape their responses to make sure their narrative reflects their perceptions.

All my interviews were constructed individually using the Zoom app, as it was not possible to conduct the interviews physically due to the Corona pandemic. Each interview lasted approximately thirty to sixty minutes. We started by casually talking about the purpose of the dialogue and how I would use the interviews and make sure their names and information could in no way be traced back to them. However, I told them I would maintain their age, as it gives insight into crucial information about the roles individuals play in society based on where they are in life age-wise. Nevertheless, all names have been changed, and work fields have been blurred to protect the anonymity of the men. The interviews were conducted in Danish, recorded, transcribed, and then translated. The quotes used in this article have been translated into English. I have the transcriptions in Danish and English and have been allowed to maintain the interviews for publication.

Though I have conducted eight interviews, only two of them have been chosen for this dissertation. The reason being is that the interviewees wanted me to send them this dissertation when it was finished. Unfortunately, I told them that I would not do that, as I could not create

a fluent paper if I had to consider each word, as they may end up reading it. Three of the interviews were not approved for publication because I disagreed with their terms about sending it to them. In contrast, one of the interviews diverted from masculinity to the degree I could not use his statements. The last two interviews discarded was due to the individuals fearing that their statements could be traced back to them. Though I insisted that they would be anonymized entirely, I could not convince them, which made them unusable. Hence, I chose to make use of Bloksgaard and Bach's conducted interviews so I would be able to examine the topic of masculinity from different areas.

Importantly, I acknowledge the gender spectrum, but the interviews are limited to a heteronormative conceptualization. They all share that they are cis-gendered, heterosexual, white middle-class men and have high education. Simon has a masters' degree, and Jacob has a bachelor's degree. Simon is 29 and lives with his partner and child, whereas Jacob is 28 and has recently separated from his girlfriend. Both Jacob and Simon earn approximately the same as their partner or previous partner, meaning they are not characterized as neo-traditional families. The two interviews have been chosen because they work well with conceptualizing the issues that some men face in current society. Also, they agree with equality, but face difficulties with it.

Both Jacob and Simon grew up in what is characterized as a neo-traditional family arrangement. Jacob struggles with his relational identity development because he cannot adhere to traditional masculinity in line with a neotraditional family arrangement due to the societal shift. Jacob strives for equality but feels his role as a man in society is diminishing. Simon also agrees with equality but feels there is too much pressure on men to advocate for equality and that he is no longer allowed to voice his opinions if they are not in line with what other people say. The two interviews are chosen to shed light upon different problematics that some of the

current men in the West possess because they delineate from traditional masculinity, focusing on how especially the Nordic ideal of egalitarianism wants men to enact their masculine identity. Both Jacob and Simon's interviews are chosen because they are met with ambivalence in their masculinity development, which creates a flux in the interplay of masculinity and femininity.

Broadening Existing Research

According to R.W. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the concept of hegemonic masculinity occludes the practices of women in the construction of gender among men. However, when addressing life-history research, women play a central role in establishing masculinities. They partake in the role of mothers, wives, sexual partners, and workers in the labor market, and so forth. Therefore, for this paper to broaden the existing research, it will include the beforementioned topics, as hegemonic masculinity needs to give closer attention to the practices of women to examine the interplay of femininities and masculinities.

A more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy is crucial for this dissertation, which recognizes the agency of subordinated groups instead of maintaining the focus on the power of dominant groups. The holistic understanding of the interplay between masculinities and femininities will be address in the upcoming chapter to broaden Connell's theoretical framework. In doing so, this dissertation seeks to expand the existing research on hegemonic masculinity by adopting the consequences that both men and women are met with due to the societal shift in Western societies. The thesis will maintain its focus on masculinity and examine it through the interplay between masculinities and femininities to stay true to masculinity research.

Limitations

This paper acknowledges the gender spectrum, but due to the conducted interviews and most data is analyzed with a basis in cisgender frameworks, this paper limits the concept of masculinity to heteronormative conceptions. Throughout the dissertation, the idea of masculinity focuses solely on male-female differences. It does, though not intentionally, exclude the viewpoint of masculinity from a broadened perspective of the gender spectrum. Also, this paper is limiting its findings to changing Western culture through Nordic contexts, as I am of the notion that changes in Nordic countries can shed light on Western regional societies. Therefore, this paper has geographical limitations as it does not include, for instance, the Global South. Notably, this dissertation does include findings from Pyke and Johnson. They analyze Asian-American households and how they enact hegemonic femininity, which is addressed in the upcoming chapter of the holistic understanding of masculinities and femininities. Still, I will argue that this paper is limited to Western viewpoints. If this paper has the opportunity of being revised, it would be essential to expand its findings to the gender spectrum and include countries within the Global South. I believe the hierarchy of masculinities differs in the Global South compared to Western or Nordic countries, which would create a broader perspective on the interplay of masculinities and femininities.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Approach of Hegemonic Masculinity

This chapter seeks to clarify masculinity and captivate the research on what constitutes masculinity and the masculine hierarchy. This chapter relies on the analytical approaches of R.W Connell, Messerschmidt, and Kimmel to explore how masculinity has progressed. The dissertation will clarify theoretical frameworks of masculinity to examine men's ambivalences in current Western society.

Connell's Hegemonic Masculinity and Hierarchy

According to R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt (2005), hegemonic masculinity came to allow men's dominance over women. It was understood as a way for men to get things done, not just an identity or a set of expectations to follow. Hegemonic masculinity was not something that men typically performed. Instead, it was only a minority of men that enacted it. It embedded the appropriate actions a man should take and became a normative way of behaving. Hegemonic masculinity distinguishes between what other men were and what one wanted to become. It was the most honored way for a man to prove himself in position with others. This sparked different forms of masculinities because men positioned themselves in relations to the hegemonic masculinity, which ideologically legitimated the subordination of women, as men strived to become the dominant form of masculinity within the hierarchy of masculinities. However, I want to stress that in my understanding and for this paper, hegemonic masculinity cannot be limited to the cultural norm marked by stoicism, competitiveness, and dominance. Understanding its conceptualization is to implement the gender relations constituted through non-discursive practices, such as wage labor, sexuality, labor market, domestic labor, and childcare, which will be addressed in the upcoming chapters to create a holistic understanding of masculinity.

In exploring masculinities, it is crucial to recognize that one understanding of masculinity may not be applicable in other societies because masculinity varies historically and cross-culturally, which leads to different local, regional, and global usages. Also, Connell (2005) argues that masculinities are shapes of iterations. Though it is often related to men, it cannot be captured solely by sex. Thus, masculinity is a concept that is constantly being created and challenged (Reeser 2010). Masculinities are structures of practice that are accomplished in social- settings and actions and can, therefore, differ according to particular gender interactions.

Masculinity is not limited to males, and femininity is not reduced to females. However, this paper operates with masculinity as something that often encapsulates males. When discussing neotraditional masculinity, we often link it with men, as it has a historical aspect that creates statistical representations of the notion between masculinity and men. Also, society ascribes masculinities and femininities within sexes, which is seen in the labor field, as masculinity and femininity are often linked because some fields are defined as either masculine or feminine.

When looking at hegemonic masculinity, it is described as an entity that some men possess and others seek. Thus, hegemonic masculinity does not only create subordination of women but also the subordination of other men. Here, Connell argues that there are different categories of masculinities that reflect themselves with hegemonic masculinity. The typologies relate themselves with each other, and subordinated masculinities function as weaker counterparts to the hegemonic strain (Kimmel, Hearn & Connell 2005).

The first typology is hegemonic masculinity. The second typology is characterized as subordination; for instance, homosexual men are subordinated by heterosexual men. When we hold the subordinate masculinity against hegemonic masculinity as the ideal, this form of masculinity serves as inferior to which Connell (1995) writes,

Hegemony relates to cultural dominance in the society as a whole. Within that overall framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men. The most important case in contemporary European/American society is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men.... Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men. (p. 78)

The third typology is complicity, which according to Connell (1995), is described as "Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy...". All men benefit on some level from being masculine, even though they do not have to enact masculinity on the *frontline* or embody hegemonic masculinity.

The last typology is marginalized masculinities, which differs from hegemony, subordination, and complicity as it no longer interacts with the gender order. Instead, the marginalized masculinities cannot conform to hegemonic masculinity and cannot receive the benefits hereof, as it is often linked with class and race.

Few may enact hegemonic masculinity, but this hierarchy of typologies indicates that even the least dominant male subgroup is higher in the hierarchy than women. However, the hierarchy also shows how there is a clear distinction between hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is not limited to the powerplay of men over women but the control of other men (Donaldson, 1993).

Crucially, Connell indicates that subordinate masculinity blends with femininity because no other apparatus is used to distinguish femininity from subordinate masculinities. As we are left with no apparatus to distinguish femininity from subordinate masculinities, we are forced to reduce femininity to the practices of women and masculinity to those of men (Halberstam, 1998; Lorber, 1998; Martin, 1998). According to Connell, there are no hegemonic femininities (Connell 1987), "All forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. For this reason, there is no femininity that holds among women the position held by hegemonic masculinity among men" (p. 187). Instead, Connell (1987) coins the term emphasized femininity which she describes as,

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. (p. 184–185)

Connell indicates multiple femininities; however, her focus lies within the relationships among masculinities and is not elaborated further (Schippers 2007). Emphasized femininity may be central to men's dominance over women, but it cannot be limited to the only mechanism for

ensuring men's domination. When examining masculinities, the typologies are crucial because they address the vital notion that hegemonic masculinity is in a constant search for acknowledging superiority over both women and other men.

Many scholars have taken up Connell's conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities. However, the central part of gender theory understood as the interplay between masculinity and femininity is still under-theorized. While many have tried to theorize female masculinities, hegemonic, and subordinate femininities, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue there is a need for more research and theory on femininities,

The concept of "emphasized femininity" focused on compliance to patriarchy, and this is still highly relevant in contemporary mass culture. Yet gender hierarchies are also impacted by new configurations of women's identity and practice, especially among younger women—which are increasingly acknowledged by younger men. We consider that research on hegemonic masculinity now needs to give much closer attention to the practices of women and to the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities. (p. 848)

To examine hegemonic masculinity in contemporary society is to acknowledge that society is constantly changing and that Connell's framework includes the semantics of *traditional* masculinities where it cannot be considered applicably hegemonic in all societies. The increase in *modern* aspects of masculinity is to contextualize between what was previous and current masculinity. The dichotomy of masculine attitudes gives rise to the understanding that contemporary masculinity should not be linked with previous identification. However, it is crucial to maintain that view, to understand what society is moving towards, as a negative discourse of traditional masculinity gives rise to new masculinities.

Traditional masculinity is often understood as patriarchal, whereas modern masculinity is contrasted by being more expressive, egalitarian, and peaceful (Connell 2012). Those two concepts indicate a narrative of progress as it moves from tradition to modernity. However, this paper is yet to acknowledge the significance of this movement or if Connell's theoretical

framework of hegemonic masculinity is still applicable in contemporary society. Thus, this paper will examine the ambivalence men are met with when society shifts the sought for masculine role while examining the interplay of femininities and masculinities.

Chapter Three: The Holistic Understanding of Gender Hegemony

This chapter will examine the interplay between femininities and masculinities, recover the feminine counterpart to hegemonic masculinity, and examine femininities. To address gender dynamics, I will discuss empirical and conceptual difficulties utilizing Connell's framework for femininity. The original conceptual framework offered by Connell cannot be fully applied to contemporary Western society. We are moving towards an egalitarian approach but are met with adversity. This chapter will examine those difficulties to improve and develop masculinity research and further a reformulation of Connell and Messerschmidt's work. I will build on Connell's theoretical framework by examining the interplay of masculinities and femininities from the labor market perspective. In doing so, I will examine the Danish labor market's gender segregation, where many jobs are considered *masculine* or *feminine*. Here, I will discuss the labor market by utilizing interviews conducted by Bloksgaard & Faber (2004) and Bloksgaard (2009). I turn to Connell and how gender hegemony operates through masculinities and femininities. In doing so, men's dominance over women is centered and creates difficulties and ambivalence both for men and women in the Danish labor market, outlining how gender- dynamics, and hegemony are in flux.

Applying Connell's Theoretical Framework to Femininity.

I agree with Connell and Messerschmidt's notion that there are multiple femininities. Still, to examine them, I will use the framework of hegemonic masculinity to link it with the idea of femininities. In doing so, I will expand on the Western limitations to their theoretical

framework and create a holistic understanding of femininities. In doing so, this chapter will examine racial hegemony to address femininity as a whole and determine if race plays a part in creating femininities. Pyke and Johnson's (2003) work on femininity in Korean American and Vietnamese American second-generation women seeks to identify the correlation between subordinate and hegemonic femininity in white femininity and Asian femininity. Pyke and Johnson examine how second-generation Asian American women describe their assumptions about the nature of white- and Asian femininities. The Asian American interviewees respond that their world is patriarchal and fully resistant to change, whereas the white American is constructed as the prototype of egalitarianism (Pyke & Johnson 2003). Hence, their framework constitutes the differences related to opposing forces of equality and female oppression, in which they argue the different traits for racialized femininities,

... white women are constructed as monolithically self-confident, independent, assertive, and successful-characteristics of white hegemonic femininity. That these are the same ruling traits associated with hegemonic masculinity, albeit in a less exaggerated, feminine form, underscores the imitative structure of hegemonic femininity. That is, the supremacy of white femininity over Asian femininity mimics hegemonic masculinity. We are not arguing that hegemonic femininity and masculinity are equivalent structures. They are not. Whereas hegemonic masculinity is a superstructure of domination, hegemonic femininity is confined to power relations among women. However, the two structures are interrelated with hegemonic femininity constructed to serve hegemonic masculinity, from which it is granted legitimacy. (p. 50–51)

Pyke and Johnson's study increases our understanding of the theoretical framework of femininity and understanding the racialized gender hegemony in inequalities among femininities and women. We have seen this conceptual perspective from the typologies from Connell's work, but to elaborate on masculinity is to examine the interplay between masculinity and femininity and femininity in general. Pyke and Johnson's study creates awareness of multiple femininities and a gender hierarchy from a racial perspective. White femininity is hegemonic and non-white femininities are subordinate. But, according to Schippers (2007), the

notion of racialized femininities doing gender across cultural worlds are met with flaws. Schippers contests Pyke and Johnson, where she takes up Connell's concept of hegemony. Schippers (2007) addresses creating a new femininity that contradicts hegemonic femininity to expand on Connell's hegemonic masculinity and research the power relations between men and women.

The first flaw is that Pyke and Johnson's framework does not give much conceptual room for identifying multiple femininities within race and class and which serve the interest of male dominance and which do not (Schippers 2007). If we follow Connell's notion of emphasized femininity, it is the theoretical approach of accommodating the needs of men in the best way. But with hegemonic femininity in Pyke and Johnson's framework ascribes the valued traits "self-confident, independent, assertive, and successful" as characteristics of white women, concerning their hegemonic strain over subordinated Asian women. Still, if we rely on Connell's framework, I disagree that those characteristics of white hegemonic women are constructs that serve men's interests from a masculinity perspective.

I agree with Schippers' second point that though Pyke and Johnson's theory suggests that hegemonic femininity follows the viewpoint of hegemonic masculinity. There is no conceptual apparatus that explains how men benefit from the gender domination of white- and Asian femininity. Also, I do not think this notion lies within the realm of gender hegemony. Instead, I believe it is based on racial dominance. White women's characteristics also fall within the realm of racial hegemony, as neither of those traits is considered gendered traits; instead, it is deemed to be ethnic/racial, and that the inequality between white- and Asian women is based on racial hegemony and not gender hegemony (Schippers 2007). Connell's theory states that hegemonic men are at the top of the hierarchy and that emphasized femininity helps

masculinities in the best way. Thus, Asian women must be the preferred racial femininity compared to white women, as they adhere to traits that relate closer to emphasized femininity.

Pyke and Johnson do demonstrate the outcome of the relationship between white- and Asian women as an intersection of gender and race. But Pyke and Johnson's work does not better the understanding of how the relationship between different femininities is implicated in gender hegemony. Therefore, we are still in need of a theoretical framework for the multiple femininities that Connell mentioned. From the perspective of Connell, Pyke and Johnson manage to shed light on hegemonic femininity from two perspectives. The first being, that white women adhere to traits that appear hegemonic from the perspective of women, as it is the most sought for femininity as it relates to equality. However, Asian-American qualities that the women feel forced into are from the perspective of Connell seen as hegemonic femininity because it helps men. Therefore, through the usage of Pyke and Johnson, it is possible to understand the interplay of femininities and sheds light on the perceived feminine attributes that are hegemonic from a racialized perspective. Also, their framework helped explain the role of femininities through the relations of superiority for men that benefit them as a group (Schippers 2007).

In summary, this chapter aims to examine a holistic understanding of femininity. In doing so, Connell's theory must be reworked as it does not incorporate a satisfactory conceptual framework for femininity to explore the interplay between masculinity and femininity. Thus, this chapter will offer a conceptualization that expands on femininities from a perspective that no longer seeks to help masculinities but functions as a threat to men. Afterward, the chapter will examine how masculinity and femininity interplay with each other and determine if men are still dominant over women. The paper will discuss the labor market and the ambivalence for men in feminine jobs and women in masculine jobs. In doing so, the dissertation will

examine a holistic understanding of gender hegemony and gender segregation and see what happens to individuals who do not comply with society's expectations based on their gender.

Recovering a New Femininity

Masculinities and femininities can be considered gender projects, as they are created by producing and moving through either masculinity or femininity by engaging in masculine or feminine practices (Schippers 2007). Traits traditionally perceived as male in Western society include leadership, courage, assertiveness, etc. When examining masculinity as a gender project, it is identifiable, as there are traits or sets of practices that people, groups, and societies can enact over time and across space (Schippers 2007). Hegemonic masculinity relates to qualities characterized as manly and legitimates a hierarchal order that ensures the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Emphasized femininity, henceforth called hegemonic femininity for clarity, are the qualities that are described as womanly and seek a complementary relationship to masculinities, which ensures the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

The two definitions indicate an elevated status for men compared to women. I argue that similarly to how masculinity has several typologies, so does femininity. Therefore, to examine the gender order besides male domination, Connell (1987) writes, "Femininity organized as an adaptation to men's power, and emphasizing compliance, nurturance, and empathy as womanly virtues, is not in much of a state to establish hegemony over other kinds of femininity" (p. 188). Though Connell argues that the state of femininity is not to establish a hegemonic typology over others, it must be deduced that if there is one form of femininity that compliments masculinity to a higher degree, there must be at least two different femininities. One of hegemonic understanding and one without. Pyke and Johnson introduced this perspective through Asian American and white American views on hegemonic hierarchy. Both

previous definitions and this quote by Connell show how femininity is seen according to masculinity and gender domination. If gender hegemony is found through the relationship between femininities and masculinities, so must the multiple identifications and hierarchical configurations (Schippers 2007).

This paper has found that hegemonic gender relations are created through symbolic constructions of desire, which means some traits are related to masculine and feminine characteristics. But, as described in previous sections, if masculinity is defined from physical strength, authority, stoicism, and competitiveness as characteristics that distinguish men from women and legitimize social dominance based on these characteristics, they must simultaneously remain unavailable to women. If this is valid, then to ensure men's exclusive right to these traits, feminine symbolic configurations must simultaneously be stigmatized. Here, I find a specific need to reformulate Connell's theory, as I do not find it sufficient to describe femininity and masculinity, as it does not give much conceptualization for change.

So far, it has been concluded that hegemonic femininity is in line with how to serve men best, which means that there is also subordinate femininity, that does not compliment masculinity and the hegemonic version to the same extent. But how do we characterize a femininity that does neither? If masculinity is limited to men and femininity is limited to women, there must be severe social repercussions for women who enact hegemonic masculinity traits. Here, I refer to characteristics and practices embodied by women who are solely interested in having sexual desire only for other women, being sexually inaccessible to men, or being aggressive. To address this perspective, I will turn to Schippers (2007) and her conceptualization of addressing a femininity that constitutes a refusal to the hegemonic strain and is no longer compliant with feminine subordination to the masculine. A femininity that threatens masculinity and cannot be limited to hegemonic- or subordinated femininity. It

contradicts how a female is expected to act and constitutes a refusal to the relationship between femininity and masculinity that was previously argued as demanded by gender hegemony (Schippers 2007). Therefore, to explain this typology of femininity, the next section will add an extra layer to Connell's theory.

Pariah Femininity and Recreating Connell's hierarchy

When looking into Schippers (2007), she addresses a different kind of femininity that does not relate to Connell's theory. Something she calls *pariah femininity*. I agree with her statements as she found that women who practice features of hegemonic masculinity challenge the hegemonic harmony between femininity and masculinity, as these pariah femininities are stigmatized and sanctioned from the societal perspective of how females are supposed to act (Schippers 2007). She argues that hegemonic femininity is elevated compared to pariah femininities. Still, they cannot be considered subordinate femininities because they are not regarded as inferior, as much as they are considered tainting to the relationship between femininity and masculinity (Schippers 2007). When a female performs characteristics related to the pariah femininities, they take on a new identity and are sanctioned as a "lesbian," "slut", or "bitch" (Schippers 2007). From a hegemonic gender order perspective, they contaminate social life and are considered socially undesirable (Schippers 2007).

When looking into Connell and Messerschmidt, in 2004, Messerschmidt found empirical work on adolescent violence and gender. In one of Messerschmidt's (2004) case studies, we meet a working-class white girl named Tina. She was considered one of the popular girls at school until she began wearing more revealing clothes, where her friend started saying she "dressed like a whore" (p. 89). She physically assaulted her friend and was expelled from the popular girl group she was part of before. Afterward, she was praised by other females and was recruited into another group considered the *badass group*. The new group differed from

the *preppy girls*, as the badass girls embodied a form of sexualized, aggressive, and physically tough femininity. When relating Tina's different groups to the idealized relationship between masculinity and femininity, hegemonic femininity, and pariah femininities, it is clear that there are various enactments. The badass girls embody pariah femininities. The preppy girls represent the idealized relationship between femininity and masculinity, which creates a clear distinction between hegemonic femininity and pariah femininity. As a result, the badass girls were considered lower in status than the other group. The symbolic construction of the pariah group shows a clear undesirability. The girls' sexual agency and physical violence are considered deserving of punishments through social expulsion because they threaten male dominance and contaminate the gender hierarchy (Schippers 2007). Being a potential challenge to male dominance creates a challenge to femininities, especially hegemonic femininity, as they help and accept male domination and female subordination (Schippers 2007).

When relating Schippers' pariah femininities to hegemonic masculinity, there is a clear correlation. Schippers (2007) argues that,

Pariah femininities are actually the quality content of hegemonic masculinity enacted by women-desire for the feminine object (lesbian), authority (bitch), being physically violent ("badass" girl), taking charge and not being compliant (bitch, but also "cock-teaser" and slut), they are necessarily and compulsively constructed as feminine when enacted by women; they are not masculine. (p. 95)

When a woman portrays authority, she is still not considered masculine; instead, she is a "bitch" and undesirable (Schippers 2007). Thus, the symbolic construction of pariah femininities are women possessing traits related to hegemonic masculinity but are met with repercussions and stigmatization. However, they are crucial in the overall structure of gender domination. Without pariah femininities, examining the interplay between femininities and masculinities would be lackluster and is, therefore, vital to implement as an addition to Connell's theoretical framework.

This section has examined femininities and the creation of the pariah femininity and the consequences of neglecting society's expectations of gender enactment. However, this chapter has yet to explore the interplay of masculinities and femininities. Just as hegemonic masculinity remains attributed to men, hegemonic femininity must also stay in correlation with women. When a man exhibits traits attributed to femininity, such as having masculine desire, being compliant, or physically weak, he is subject to the same sanctions as the pariah femininities because he breaks with the hegemonic harmony. Connell mentions that homosexual men are categorized as subordinate to other masculinities. Like pariah femininities, the subordinated ideologies disrupt the assumed naturalization of the complementary desire between the two sexes. Relying on Schippers (2007) again, she argues that weak, compliant, and ineffectual men dislodge authority and physical strength from the manly social position. Thus, creating the negative characterizations of the "fag," the "pussy", and the "wimp," which are men that enact traits related to femininity (Schippers 2007). Therefore, both women who exhibit masculinity and men who embody femininity are considered contaminating social relations and hegemonic- harmony and hierarchy.

In conclusion, individuals who exhibit behavior that is not according to what is perceived as normalized are just the beginning of understanding gender inequality. My focus is not on identifying and describing the behavior of men and women. Instead, it is the interplay between femininities and masculinities, which I have partly explored by further adding to Connell's theory on masculinity. This chapter has added to Connell's framework by examining the understanding of hegemonic femininity from the perspective of racialized femininity and women enacting hegemonic masculinity as pariah femininities.

My focus will now lie on identifying how masculinity and femininity are addressed in society, applying current femininities and masculinities to individuals, and examining the

ambivalence and consequences of the societal shift. Through empirical research, I will address how society is in flux when addressing females perceived as masculine and men who are seen as feminine due to their jobs. Ultimately, examining the interplay of masculinity and femininity in the labor market.

Hegemonic Gender Harmony and the Labor Market

the paper will use interviews from Bloksgaard & Faber (2004) and Bloksgaard (2009) to examine the state of masculinity in the labor market and examine the interplay between masculinity and femininity. The chapter examines how people can be forced into subordinated gender identities by occupying roles that are either considered masculine or feminine. With the high gender segregation in the Danish labor market, this section will examine if some job functions, tasks, and professions are gendered as either masculine or feminine. This section will seek to understand what problems those individuals meet in gendered occupations and examine if masculinity is still dominant. Here, I strive to address individuals' experiences with how they are affected by societal ideas, preconceptions, and relations between gender and work. And obtaining a deeper understanding of how the gender division is continuously being made and remade through men and women's development of gendered identities through their work. Hence, this section aims to recover how femininity and masculinity have been defined or displaced in the labor market and place them in the center of gender- hegemony and dynamics. Thereby examining the interplay of masculinity and femininity because it includes a different perspective of how individuals are forced into or subordinated masculinity, subordinated femininity, or partake aspects of pariah femininity based on their occupation.

To address gender segregation at the labor market, it is essential to mention that what is considered a feminine-, or a masculine job can vary locally and regionally. Therefore, this section will focus on the Danish labor market, as I believe that those statistics are transmittable

to most Western perceptions. When addressing the Danish labor market, it is crucial to acknowledge that it is considered one of the most gender-segregated labor markets in Europe (Emerek & Holt 2008). The reason is horizontal segregation, which refers to a systematic distribution of employment in different professional fields, and sections (Dahlerup 1989). There is a higher percentage of men becoming craftsmen and IT experts and women who work in the field of secretaries, nurses, and educators (Bloksgaard 2011). In addition to horizontal segregation, vertical segregation refers to the hierarchy of the labor market and specific workplaces (Dahlerup 1989). Vertical segregation happens because women often rank lower in the hierarchy regarding pay, promotions, and chances to enhance qualifications in their jobs compared to men. When looking at the labor market, we have *female jobs*. They have traditionally been considered jobs in coherence with assisting *male jobs*, such as nurses who assist doctors or secretaries that help executives. Here, vertical segregation is integrated with horizontal segregation. They tilt towards men's favor, as men are more likely to be employed in fields with more upward mobility and opportunities for further qualifications (Bloksgaard 2011).

Lastly, there is also the terminology of sliding gender segregation, which constitutes that when both men and women are in the same field of work and with the same education, men are typically assigned jobs with the most prestige (Dahlerup 1989). Though Danish women participate among the highest in the world and almost equally as men, they work in different labor markets compared to men (Bloksgaard 2011). With gender segregation comes problems in the labor market. If we look at the three terminologies, they all favor men, which means that we can draw parallels to the hegemonic harmony.

When looking at the gender-segregated work labor with most women, we sense a parallel between the job function of women's jobs and hegemonic femininity. In addition, we

see that being a male comes with ascendancy in both horizontal- and vertical segregation. When looking at certain professions that are mainly dominated by one sex, it is apparent that jobs such as fireman and craftsman are constituted as male jobs, whereas midwives or nurses are distinguished as female jobs. A crucial feature of gendered positions and inequality is that men often attach a higher status and attain more prestige from their job functions compared to women. Here, we can draw parallels to the previous section in this chapter, as the interplay of femininity and masculinity comes into play. There is a gender- hegemony and harmony that is constantly being displayed in the labor market. Like individuals that defy the standardized notions of masculinity and femininity through either subordinated masculinity or pariah femininities, they were all met with sanctions or stigmatizing. Similarly, repercussions are evident with men partaking in feminine jobs and women working in masculine jobs.

Men in Gender Unconventional Jobs and the Following Repercussions

This section will examine empirical studies to form a comparative analysis among men in the social and health care professions and female electricians through interviews from Bloksgaard (2009). Also, this section will examine interviews of male nurses and female police officers from Bloksgaard & Faber (2004). In doing so, I will discuss the repercussions that men and women are faced with through the interplay of masculinity and femininity in gender-segregated occupations.

According to 2021 figures from the Danish Council of Nurses, men represent about 4% of Denmark's total percentage of nurses. Also, according to Statistics Denmark (2020), women represent about 1% of the total percentage of Danish electricians. Those statistics give examples of gender segregation within the Danish labor market in contemporary society. When choosing education and work, our choices are based on what is meaningful to us, and parts of our identity and self-image are formed through occupation. The images constructed of men and

women are built on dichotomy and are reciprocally exclusive. Specific frameworks of how women or men are supposed to act in a given field create normalization at jobs.

Some jobs have connotations of femininity or masculinity and are perceived as appropriate or inappropriate depending on your gender (West & Zimmerman 1987). People who break with this established conception challenge their sex, the hegemonic order, and gender harmony. Individuals who separate with gender patterns are met with skepticism or have trouble appearing as sufficiently masculine or feminine, which can have repercussions for the hegemonic balance and create sanctions for those individuals. Therefore, men tend to show signs of masculinity in a feminine job or must prove that they are masculine by differentiating themselves from women by avoiding tasks that are seen as feminine (Williams 1991, Alvesson & Billing 1999). Especially the social and health care employee Keld is met with prejudice by occupying a female job:

They find it hard to swallow. 'Can men really do that??' They get a bit surprised. And a bit shy too, because they know that you are in close contact with the patient. It's not a male job. It's a soft job... A lot of my family and friends were surprised, when I chose it. They still think it's a job for women and are surprised that a man can do the job and be so intimate with other human beings in a job. My parents are still having trouble understanding it. They are saying: 'Are you giving ladies a bath then???' (Bloksgaard 2009c)

Keld acknowledges that he does not consider it a *male job*. His family refers to him washing women instead of men as a sign of a masculine task because they might think there is a positive connotation to helping a naked woman instead of a naked man. Such reactions from Keld's surroundings are instrumental in creating gender segregation. He is met with a negative attitude about his occupation, which is crucial as the labor market plays a big part in identity creation. By discouraging individuals seeking employment in a profession similar to this, they have to defend what they do for a living. People are especially uncomprehending the notion that men will decisively engage in occupations with a female majority (Bloksgaard 2011). Men who

break with the normalization of professions by choosing a feminine job are met with the notion that they must necessarily be feminine, which puts them into subordinate masculinities.

The previous social and health care employee, Michael, chose to interrupt his education of becoming a nurse because he was met with prejudice in his masculinity identity and says: "I remember the first comments, when I started: What the hell? Have you become gay? You get a lot of comments like that. About it not being very masculine." (Bloksgaard 2009c). Also, the social and health care employee, Tobias, has experienced similarities: "Well, it has always been said that it is a job for women, and if a man got employed there, he's either gay or strange. I've heard that a lot. From friends and such... But they think it is cool that I have the guts to do it" (Bloksgaard 2009c). It is crucial to address hegemonic masculinity because Keld, Michael, and Tobias partake in subordinate masculinity from others' perspectives as they engage in feminine jobs. Ultimately, people question Michael, and Tobias' masculinity, making them defend their choice of occupation by confessing their sexualization.

As established previously, men who engage in male object desire and showing female traits are stigmatized. They do not uphold the naturalization of striving for hegemonic masculinity, which explains their discursive actions toward Michael and Tobias. Generally, the two men express a fear of appearing feminine, as there are clear indications that they will be judged or deemed unmanly because of their unconventional choice of work. Repercussions include prejudices about homosexuality which cause ambivalence in identity work. Michael and Tobias actively say that they do not belong in subordinated masculinities and consequently exhibit a kind of *hyper-masculinity* as they try to refrain from subordinate masculinity (Bloksgaard & Faber 2004).

To conclude, Keld, Michael, and Tobias are using strategies to refrain from being portrayed as subordinated masculinities and try to maintain aspects of hegemonic masculinity

in the eyes of others. In doing so, Michael and Tobias uphold a masculine self-image by addressing how they are not homosexual and denying the perception that others have toward them for working in a woman's profession.

When relating this study to females who occupy male jobs, they are facing different repercussions. According to Bloksgaard (2011), the two studies differ in the stigmatization and stereotypes about homosexuality when working in the opposite gender's profession. Here, she mentions that only a few women are met with homosexual prejudice in their working life. Instead, their repercussions lie within the field of identity work.

Women in Gender Unconventional Jobs and the Following Consequences

When femininities interact with masculinities, some men doubt women's expertise because they break with the normalization of occupations (Bloksgaard 2011). Women must prove their worth by showing that they can do the work equally to men. Because women are met with prejudice, they attempt to downplay their gender to diminish the difference between men and women (Bloksgaard 2011). In downplaying their femininity, one way is to change their appearance. Mona, a police officer, argues that though she has long hair, she never wears it hanging because she does not find it appropriate and matching the role of a police officer:

I would never wear my hair hanging loose at work. I don't think it goes with the uniform... I don't know whether it's because it looks untidy, but it sends a signal. I wear my hair hanging loose in my spare time, so it is something I'm conscious of, to look decent. I don't think it looks right standing there in a uniform, supposed to radiate authority, and then have your long hair with hairspray in it hanging loose ... Here at the secretariat I could have it hanging but it is so deeply ingrained in me. (Bloksgaard & Faber 2004).

Having long hair or wearing a skirt symbolizes femininity, which Mona finds inappropriate in a situation where she must maintain an authoritarian position. She mentions that it is difficult to explain. Still, through the above section, it can be found that Mona struggles with showing femininity because she must downplay her femininity to appear as gender-neutral as possible.

If not, she will be met with repercussions due to changing the naturalization of gender segregation. Also, women often downplay their femininity to downplay their sexual attractiveness because it can lead to severe problems in their working lives (Bloksgaard 2011). Repercussions such as being associated with non-professionalism in the police force, where she must try to imitate men, due to masculinity being fragile when it comes to a flux in the naturalization of hegemonic- order and harmony (Bloksgaard 2011).

When examining Mona, it is interesting how her personality of an authoritative occupation lies within the boundaries of pariah femininities. She must be commanding, tough, and often physically strong to fit within the role of a police officer. According to the above analysis on pariah femininities, those characteristics parallel the problems in Mona's femininity perception. Within the police officer profession, there are many characteristics of pariah femininities that stand in relation to how women should act or look. To be authoritative and physically strong are deeply ingrained traits in the police profession, but adhering to pariah femininity is met with sanctions. Therefore, to expand on Mona's femininity perception, this section will turn to the police officer, Linda, who shares insight into the problematics in occupational identity creation:

I think that as a woman you receive more respect if you are yourself. I'm not on of the guys, although I can do the same things as the guys! I can see that sometimes if I'm saying something coarse, then my male colleagues are almost bowled over, because they think I'm too rough – then they actually become a bit offended. (Bloksgaard & Faber 2004).

When women enter a male occupation, they have to make sure they do not entirely adhere to pariah femininities. Else, they are sanctioned by both society and individuals closely related to them because they break with gender harmony. Women have to be careful not to overstep the boundary between the two sexes; they cannot appear too feminine, but they also cannot adhere too much to masculine traits.

According to Linda, when she shows too much masculine discourse and talks like her male colleagues, they become offended because she no longer fits with what they consider *feminine discourse*. By being too front or coarse, she lingers towards masculine traits and removes some attributes of femininity, which brings repercussions, though she may be trying to fit in with the men. Therefore, women and men who do not live up to the appropriate gender behavior as expected create a flux where they are met with skepticism.

When relating women's experiences in different professions that are male-dominated, they feel that they are being influenced by the masculinization characterized by their occupation (Bloksgaard 2011). In male employments, Linea, a former electrician, says:

You adapt a terrible language. Craftsman jargon. But you don't think about it. Suddenly you have to make an effort to think about it outside work, to talk nicely as a girl ought to talk. (Bloksgaard 2009c).

By examining Linda and Linea, it is apparent that they feel they must adapt to the jargon at work to appear more like the men and downplay their femininity. When they are no longer at work, they can go back to their femininity but, at the same time, make sure they do not adhere to any pariah femininity characteristics after work. Therefore, both women must conform to the apparent hegemonic order in their work and spare time. If they were to adapt to masculine traits continuously, they would be met with repercussions of adhering to aspects of pariah femininity. Thereby, their femininity interplays differently with masculinity than masculinity interplays with femininity. Though both sexes are sanctioned by adhering to a subordinate-masculinity or pariah femininity, they have different repercussions.

Consequences of the Interplay in the Labor Market

This paper must go more in-depth with the consequences to look at hegemonic masculinity and its interplay with femininity. So far, we have found repercussions for each sex when they portray a different perceived gender identity, such as females that work within

masculine professions and vice versa. However, what is yet to examine is the evident interplay of inequality within gender-segregated workplaces. The division of the nurse occupation is a clear example. There are stereotypes and stigmatization for men, for instance, for the male nurse, Nicolai. His colleagues expect him to perform tasks that are *required of men* because he should adhere to the gender norms such as heavy lifting, repairing technological equipment, or dealing with violence (Bloksgaard 2011). Nicolai says:

If something needs to be fixed: 'Can't you fix it Nicolai?' I'm not very good with machines, when we get new machines, I'm actually late to get to know them. I'm more interested in people and not so much in mechanics. But if a machine is not working at our department, they always shout: 'Nicolai, please come and take a look at it and find out what's wrong?' But Nicolai doesn't always know what to do! (Bloksgaard & Faber 2004)

His colleagues are complementing the notion that there are expectancies for men within the profession. In doing so, it links Nicolai with the social construction of what is considered masculine. If Nicolai cannot do the things expected of his sex, he loses the status of masculinity. Therefore, Nicolai is in constant flux regarding his masculinity for two reasons. The first problem is that he has to address his masculinity and make sure he is not limited to a subordinated version. Previously, it was found that heterosexual men in feminine occupations had to make people aware of their sexualization to ensure that they would not be perceived as subordinate. The second is that if he does not adhere to what is considered masculine through his actions, he is further removed from the perception of hegemonic masculinity.

Concerning nurses, 4% of nurses in Denmark are males (Danish Nurses Organization 2021). In Denmark, 5% of nurses' top positions are men, with 211 men and 3948 women as of 2021 (Danish Nurses Organization 2021). Now, I have mentioned repercussions for men regarding the interplay of masculinity and femininity in a female-dominated profession. However, women have similar problems because the hegemonic order put men on a pedestal and subordinate women. One would think that within a job where 96% of the occupants are

women, they would be treated with a higher status than men, but that is not always the case. Again, I will return to the nurse Nicolai, as he is met with problematics through the social construction of masculinity and how it impacts the division of labor within the nursing profession:

Many people think that when you're a man, you are most likely in charge of the ward. And if I say 'this is Karen the charge nurse or Bodil the assistant charge nurse, then they kindly shake hands with them but keep on talking to and looking at me! And the girls – my colleagues - do the same thing. And the doctors too. A lot of times it makes me feel uncomfortable. Just as recently as today, when our chief physician did his rounds, he came up to me and said, 'What about this Nicolai - how is it with this?' So I said 'You'll have to ask the charge nurse, because I don't know anything about it!' (Bloksgaard & Faber 2004)

According to Nicolai, he has to admit defeat in both of his statements when he is asked. This issue is especially crucial to examine as it brings two significant problems: the ambivalence that Nicolai faces by being confronted with expectations attached to his male sex that he cannot live up to, which puts pressure on him. He must attain extra knowledge or go beyond his profession to not be met with setbacks in his masculinity creation and professional expectancy.

The second issue is the existing gender mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity, which negatively impact his relations with his colleagues and boss. By other people diminishing Nicolai's boss in favor of Nicolai creates an ambivalence of advantage above his female superiors. By not addressing the charge nurse or assistant charge nurse, both Karen and Bodil may create an impropriety because Nicolai's masculinity-status dominates their experience in this scenario and occupation.

Besides Nicolai, the issue creates inequality, as the interplay of masculinity and femininity is in flux when it comes to professions. The hegemonic strain can be transferred outside of societal proportions to the occupational field, where experience should be ranked higher than gender. However, occupations with a female majority are met with inequality in

the interplay between masculinities and femininities for both men and women, which is apparent through Nicolai's statements.

Instabilities stem from horizontal- and vertical segregation in the labor market, which are found in the inequality in professions with a majority of women due to the hegemonic strain that follows men in the workplace. Simultaneously, the hegemonic pressure leads to problems for men in jobs with a female majority because there are expectancies for men based on their sex. In addition, similarities arise for females in male occupations, as there are parallels between men in female fields and the problematics that lie within this realm.

According to an interview with Kirsten, made by Bloksgaard & Faber (2004), suggests that some female police officers feel that women are left with tasks that include assignments typically associated with femininity, in which Kirsten says: "officers in charge who think they must look after us, so if there are some violent tasks, they will not send us out." Women are doubted in considerations of their femininities because they are treated differently based on their sex. This debate furthers the inequality based on gender segregation in the professional field, where the interplay of femininities and masculinities still create unequal judgment. Hence, both women in male-dominated occupations and men in female-majority professions show severe repercussions for individuals who choose to work in gender-segregated fields.

Concluding Masculinities, Femininities, and the Professional Field

This chapter has addressed and furthered Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity by including a new femininity called pariah femininity. In addition, it has explained problems with the interplay between masculinity and femininity when one group differs from the naturalization of what society deems as expected of one gender. In doing so, this chapter has discussed masculine and feminine professions to examine the identity constructions of men and women. Also, it has been examined what repercussions they are met with and how those

individuals are in constant flux with how they act and are perceived. Also, this chapter has found that men and women rarely seek employment in jobs that are considered suitable to the opposite sex, as they are met with sanctions and inequality when it comes to what tasks are expected of them or what tasks they are given.

When women enter a male occupation, they must make sure they do not entirely adhere to pariah femininities. Else, they are sanctioned by both society and individuals closely related to them because they break with gender harmony. Women must be careful not to overstep the boundary between the two sexes; they cannot appear too feminine or adhere too much to masculine traits. Through interviews, it is found that when women adapt too much masculine jargon, others become offended because the women no longer fit with what is considered feminine discourse. By being too front or coarse, they linger towards masculine traits and remove feminine attributes, which bring repercussions, though they may be trying to fit in with the men.

Similar to the female police officers, the male nurses have to adapt their actions to the appropriate social construction of how they appear according to their gender. The male nurses mentioned throughout this paper create hyper-masculinity by constantly addressing their heterosexuality and doing tasks that are more in line with masculinity to appear less feminine. Men are using strategies to refrain from being portrayed as subordinated masculinities. In doing so, they uphold a masculine self-image by constantly addressing their sexuality and denying the perception that others have toward them for working in a woman's profession. If they do not meet those criteria, colleagues, and people closely related to them see them as subordinated masculinities due to their feminine occupation. Therefore, men and women who do not live up to the appropriate gender-expected behavior create a flux where they are met with skepticism. Thus, the chapter demonstrates that in Denmark, there are gendered jobs, work, and tasks.

Constructions portrayed as masculine and feminine lead to inequality and sanctions, explaining the general structure and explanation of why the Danish labor market is highly gender segregated.

In conclusion, the gender-segregated labor market continually cements the stereotypes and stigmatizations within male- or female professions. Stereotypes define a social categorization of Western culture, where men and women are expected to act in specific ways and partake in jobs according to their sex. Those who break with this conception are met with sanctions or skepticism, fostering ambivalence and uncertainty in their self-image and identity creation. In continuation, this chapter has examined masculinity, femininity, and the hegemonic strain in current Western society by examining the interplay between masculinity and femininity and the repercussions when individuals break with the societal understanding of jobs appropriate for the opposite sex.

By examining the interplay of masculinity and femininity in the labor market, it is essential to address the interplay outside the labor market. This paper will move in a new direction of examining the masculine need for recognition, as hegemonic masculinity is not limited to the powerplay of men over women but includes the control of other men (Donaldson 1993). The complexity of recognition is crucial to understanding masculinities. It is vital to find why hegemonic masculinity has been proven to be at the top of the hierarchy, but notably as engaging if this form of masculinity is still at the forefront of the most desirable masculinity.

Chapter Four: The Process of Recognition and Challenges in Relational Identities

This paper will move in a new direction of Connell's hegemonic masculinity through an individualized framework to examine the highest praxis of masculinity outside of the labor market. This chapter examines the process of recognition in contested patriarchy, where several typologies of masculinity conceptualize how men and women interplay with each other. The

recognition process cannot be limited to the division of gender, as it needs to include the fundamental social division of men and women. Thus, this chapter will orbit the area of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary society to understand if current males still seek reliance in hegemonic masculinity.

This section will address the current sought perception of masculinity to examine if it still follows Connell's concept. In doing so, the paper operates with the interplay of masculinity and femininity through the notion that society is changing to an egalitarian approach where women are increasingly gaining more individual selfhood, understood in the way that women are no longer codependent and can do what men can. Thereby, I will use the conducted interview of Jacob and Simon to examine their understanding of what is different now, compared to previous masculinity conceptions, and how they describe being a man in current society.

Jacob and the Ambivalence of Patriarchy and Equality

The notion of equality is essential to Jacob's narrative about his previous relationship. Jacob, who has recently separated from his girlfriend, explains that they had different ideas of running the household and felt stuck in a position where he could not be himself. Throughout the interview, Jacob orbits the dilemma of what role to play in society. He feels he cannot relate to the regional Western hegemonic masculinity as an ideal identity creation due to society changing. Later in the interview, Jacob adheres to the concept of neo-traditional masculinity from hegemonic masculinity. He believes that even though there is no longer the same need to be the breadwinner, it is still crucial in attaining recognition from his partner. Jacob feels flustered when I ask him about current society:

Interviewer: How would you describe being a man in current society?

Jacob: I, phew, yeah, maybe a slight feeling of being repressed by women, even though it's based on something that I annoyingly agree with. This

thing about achieving as much equality in society as possible. But it also leaves me with a feeling that I no longer, to the same extent, can be *me* in the sense that *me is...* What purpose I have as a man in society. [...] I feel a little bit that we as men are, or... The man is forgotten in society now. Because We... Yeah, because women can do everything by themselves now, which she wasn't able to before. She can work by herself; she can feed her own family without a man. She doesn't need a man financially to have a kid. So, what do I do now? I mean, what is my role now in society as a man? (Appendix B, l. 1-6 & 13-18).

Egalitarianism proves to pressure Jacob's identity process, as he is in limbo with wanting equal rights and maintaining the structure of hegemony. Jacob wants to remove the hierarchy of men and women, but at the same time, he wants to rely on the role of regional hegemony as he does not know other roles to play. Ultimately, creating a paradox for Jacob because he wants to play the part of the breadwinner but cannot find his place in current society as he cannot adhere to that concept as it is in flux with the Nordic ideal of egalitarianism.

According to Kimmel (1996), masculinity and the male ego have declined since the 1960s. This decline for Jacob creates a tabula rasa, where he no longer knows what role to play in society as a man. The hegemonic white heterosexual man is being challenged in the job market and household by women and minorities. The lack of purpose causes men to look to traditional forms of masculinity to find meaning for themselves, which is demonstrated through the interview with Jacob. He keeps referring to the bond between men's function in society and the need for capital. When looking at Jacob, it is apparent that he is struggling due to the shift in the political and socio-economic sphere. Here, Jacob struggles with attaining his place in the household and society because the breadwinner mentality no longer fits the male role in many Nordic and Western cultures. The role of not being the provider is crucial in addressing masculinity according to the historical background of America as Kimmel (2010) notes:

Since the country's founding, American men have felt a need to prove their manhood. For well over a century, it's been in the public sphere, and especially the workplace, that American men have been tested. A man may be physically strong, or not. He may be intellectually or

athletically gifted, or not. But the one thing that has been non-negotiable has been that a real man provides for his family. He is a breadwinner. (p. 325)

Regarding Kimmel's quote, Jacob cannot find his role in society related to the breadwinner mentality as being diminished with the societal shift. Since he cannot partake in the traditional role of the breadwinner that used to be the primary identity role that men could rely on, he now needs to find meaning in other aspects.

Interestingly, Jacob agrees with egalitarianism, as he wants to achieve equality, even when it diminishes his understanding of what role to play in society. He acknowledges that society is moving in the *right* direction, even when it limits his opportunity perspective. When I asked Jacob about what he meant by not being himself anymore, he talked about new rules that he had to live up to in society. Here, we talked about the rules he found himself stuck in, where he mentioned that society creates unreal expectations for men:

Interviewer: Are there any of the previous implicit rules that also apply now?

Jacob: Of course, because if... As a man, you have the idea that you must earn money... Because if your friends ask you if you want to do something, then you must make sure, that you're not just henpecked by your partner. There is something... something cool and boyish... or something manly about receiving a big paycheck and being able to show off the newest things. So, when you have your friends over, then it's cool to show off something they don't have, that you do. (Appendix B, l. 29-35).

When examining Jacob, he keeps looking towards the traditional masculinity traits of capitalism. He wants to be there for his partner because he needs her recognition and the feeling of having a role to play in society. In addition, the notion that men need more recognition than women is promoted because Jacob previously mentioned that he found a similarity between being the breadwinner and occupying a proper role in society. Also, he argues that he wants capital to create the feeling of recognition from his friends.

Money plays a big part in Jacob's identity creation, as he keeps orbiting the subject of wealth, both from a partner's perspective and as a component for being recognized by others. Hence, the tabula rasa does not function as a clean slate for him to start over. Instead, it is reset with the notion that what needs to give him meaning are things that lead back to traditional values. Thereby, Jacob is ambivalent because he wants to adhere to the Nordic ideal of equality but keeps returning to the Western regional aspect of traditional hegemonic masculine traits. Jacob's identity creation is in flux because he cannot find meaning for himself in society, leading him to search for recognition based on what was previously sought-after traits in men. Qualities that no longer follow the local masculinity creation as society is ever-changing, which changes how masculinities interplay with femininities.

What is vital for Jacob is that he maintains individuality by having the narrative of choice. Thereby, the aspect of a henpecked husband is especially threatening to his identity. His hierarchy of values is in flux because he needs recognition, but there are different forms of recognition that he needs. Some are characterized by friends compared to partners, which is continued in the next section.

Relational Identity Development and the Search for Recognition

Jacob is in ambivalence with his relational identity where the notion of choice and individuality plays a big part in his identity development, in which I ask him:

Interviewer: What do you mean by henpecked, and why is it negative?

Jacob: Someone who does anything the partner asks you to do. You live according to her life and not your own, and it's negative in the understanding that we, as men, of course, want to live our own lives, so everything doesn't just revolve around her. We're a pair. And it's not like you don't want the best for your partner, but in a relationship, it's healthy to have some distance from each other once in a while. And, of course, I want to be able to take care of her and be financially stable. But it's a tricky topic because I know that I can do it by myself, but so can she now, so she doesn't need me for that anymore like she used to. But on the other hand, it's really great that women can take

care of themselves... and... I'm not to fall too far behind... If I don't do anything, then I'm not attractive to the female anymore. (Appendix B, l. 36-47).

There are several things that Jacob says, which are worth addressing. First, similarly to the previous section, he refers to the financial aspect that occurs in a relationship. This is interesting because he keeps referring to their relationship as something that does not seem like an equal setting. Jacob distances himself from the idea that he must take care of her, but at the same time, he keeps referring to the fact that he wants to take care of her financially. This indicates that his difficulties in the relational viewpoint are not limited to the financial aspect because he does not incorporate the idea that his partner might also appreciate occasional distance from him. By not addressing her perspective, he indicates a narrative of individualism.

Secondly, he incorporates me into his statement by suddenly changing his discourse from "I as a man" to "we as men," which means that he seeks my recognition in his narrative about not being too tied down. In the interview, he comes off as wanting to be recognized for both his income and the fact that he is independent. By including me in his discourse shows that recognition is crucial for Jacob's identity creation. As he orbits the notion of recognition, Jacob underlines the argument that men need both men's and women's recognition.

To understand why Jacob is met with problems in his relational identity development, this dissertation turns to the Italian psychoanalyst Luigi Zoja (2001). He states that since the Second World War, the male self-image and patriarch family ideal has been based on the individual's financial- transactions and decisions (Zoja 2001). Thus, the father's primary focus was work and income, where time spent with the family bore less sense of guilt. The feeling of guilt is linked with the loss of the patriarch role, where Jacob's identity is based on the financial aspect of items because he desires recognition from friends. Thereby, when examining Jacob's desire for recognition, the previous patriarch identity is still connected to the modern man's identity, as the male identity is bound to the individual's professional achievements. The reason

being is that society is changing how masculinities interact with femininities in a community that moves in a direction that no longer favors men to the same degree as it previously has. Thereby, if men in especially Nordic countries relate to traditional masculinity, they may face difficulties in their relational identity development. Women may not want to interplay with men based on ideals that do not correlate with contemporary society as it does not favor equality.

Jacob acknowledges that he no longer has the same status based on his masculine sex. He shows vulnerability at the end of his statement and mentions that he must keep up and not fall too far behind if he wants to attain female attraction. A perspective that acknowledges the societal change and distances himself from traditional stoicism. Thus, creating a paradox of desire for recognition, which according to Alexander Kojève, can be satisfied by developing individuality and the universalization of reciprocal recognition (Illouz 2012). With an increase in the egalitarian social order, greater gender equality should bring greater individuality and mutual recognition.

According to Jacob, he cannot achieve recognition if he does not continually try to keep up with what he calls “the norms and regulations of society” and make sure he does not fall too far behind women. Thus, to maintain attraction is to accept that increasing autonomy is the condition for increasing recognition. Instead of limiting his viewpoint to himself, he must incorporate his partner’s viewpoint. However, Jacob is not without the perspective of autonomy, as he claims that they are a pair, where occasional distance is healthy from each other. Still, this discourse of incorporation to both individuals is not maintained when he says: “we as men, of course, want to live our own lives, so everything doesn’t just revolve around her.” This statement does not include his partner’s autonomy, thus, limiting recognition, which is crucial for the development of individuality. Hence, when masculinities interplay with femininities, autonomy creates recognition, but if Jacob diminishes his partner’s perspective, she cannot be

recognized, which limits recognition for himself. Reciprocal relations are crucial for acknowledging each other and developing relational identities, which is vital in an egalitarian society that acknowledges autonomy.

Autonomy and Men's Dilemma in Current Society

To address the issues of society is to examine the cultural changes that affect men in troubling ways to help their interaction with women and create autonomy for both sexes. William Liu, a professor in counseling psychology who studies masculinity, says: "Society is changing, but we don't talk to white men and ask them what they are struggling with [...] There's a tendency to minimize it, yet the distress and disconnection are very real." (Weir 2017). Similarly to Liu's argument, Jacob struggles with his identity as he says:

Jacob: But it also leaves me with a feeling that I no longer, to the same extend, can be *me* in the sense that *me is...* What purpose I have as a man in society. [...] I feel a little bit that we as men are, or... The man is forgotten in society now. Because We... Yeah, because women can do everything by themselves now, (Appendix B, l. 4-6 & 13-15)

The quote functions as a clear indication that Jacob battles with finding his role. Levant adds to Liu's argument that many men feel that their masculine ideology is under attack (Weir 2017). An ideology based on a set of gender norms that approves features such as heterosexual behaviors, toughness, dominance, self-reliance, restriction of emotional expression, and the avoidance of traditional feminine- behavior, and attitude (Weir 2017). Levant says that those gender roles are socialized into individuals starting from as early as infancy due to the gender roles of parents, male relatives, peers, and teachers (Weir 2017). Men who rely more on traditional masculinity or have been enacting it since early childhood may feel threatened due to the societal shifts, and Jacob fits into this idea. His masculine search looks towards some of those ideals, which can be explained as he grew up in a neo-traditional household with a father as the breadwinner.

An individual that this paper has not examined is the conducted interview of Simon. He is 29 years and argues that his father plays a different role in society than he does. A perspective that both Simon and Jacob were met with in their childhood. Simon describes that:

Simon: Back then, it was more acceptable to be a businessman, raw as it sounds, where work meant more. It was about the big paycheck and caring about your job, and then my mother was more the caring character at home, the one who took care of my two siblings and me. (Appendix A, 1, 34-38).

According to Simon and Jacob, they both grew up in households where the father was seen as hegemonic, and their mothers partook in the role of hegemonic femininity from the perspective of masculinity. Thus, according to Levant, gender roles are socialized from childhood and explain why they both struggle with the societal change that moves toward equality. However, Simon differs from Jacob, as he does not need recognition. Instead, he struggles with how society has changed to an approach where, according to himself, he says: “You’re on your toes because I, as a man, am always scared to do something wrong or tread on someone’s toes.” (Appendix A, 1. 18-20). I will discuss Simon more in the upcoming chapter. Still, he plays a vital role in clarifying how men are met with dilemmas in a constantly changing society where men do not attain the same prestige as they previously did.

The societal shift threatens the role of men because there is an increase in the influential role of women. There are more women in the labor market, and with the acceptance of same-sex relationships, the sexual arena is affected. The sexual arena has changed drastically, as women are not reliant on men anymore and can have children by themselves while sustaining themselves without a man. In addition, same-sex relations are increasingly being accepted on a regional level, creating more opportunities for individuals to make their individual or autonomous decisions based on what they want in a society that accepts more differences. However, this also brings dilemmas for heterosexual men, as hegemonic masculinity is not

acknowledged to the same degree anymore. Also, men who adhere to subordinate masculinities may be met with repercussions, which was concluded in the last chapter. In addition, men who relate to subordinate masculinities through homosexual relations are also met with consequences, as society has not fully implemented an acceptance for all sexualities on the gender spectrum. Therefore, men are being challenged in an ever-changing society from a relational perspective.

Relations are crucial for the interplay between masculinities and femininities. If men must adhere to the avoidance of traditional feminine- attitudes or behaviors, then their engagement in same-sex relations is threatened. With a change in society, the sexual arena is limiting itself for heterosexual men due to fewer opportunities in finding their role in relationships, with other sexualities being more profound and accepted on the local and regional level. This perspective can explain Jacob's struggles. He keeps referring to women being able to do everything by themselves as women do not need to relate to cooperation with men or hegemonic feminine traits. The masculine autonomy is met with dilemmas for Jacob and Simon, because according to Liu, the culture is changing, and it no longer favors the stereotypical male point of view (Weir 2017).

Addressing Jacob and Simon's masculinity, the fundamental concept of hegemonic masculinity still bears roots within local contexts discussed in the last chapter through the labor market. The concept remains in combination with the plurality of masculine and feminine interplay and multiple patterns of masculinity. Certain masculinities are more socially central and associated with social power and authority; the critical note is that it differs depending on the context and setting. The concept of hegemonic masculinity still presumes the subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities and femininities at the labor market. Since it is still prevalent in society, it makes sense that Jacob seeks to maintain this type of masculinity in contexts that

lie outside of the labor market. With the hierarchy of masculinities being a pattern of hegemony that lies within cultural consent, institutionalization, and discursive centrality means that there are socially dominant masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Jacob wants to relate to the dominant masculinity, but with changes in gender relations and the dominant pattern of masculinity being challengeable, the masculine hierarchy may look different in the coming years (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

This paper argues that hegemonic masculinity is changeable and that society is moving in a direction that challenges the hegemon. The focus is not constructing a new hegemonic masculinity but dismantling the hegemon, where changes in global, regional, and local societal levels form masculinities differently. The difference in masculinities constructs new strategies in gender relations, which create recognition in unique aspects that lie within the realm of autonomy, equality, and the option for individuality. Thus, redefinitions in socially admired masculinities are vital in the creation, reflection, and interplay between masculinities and femininities.

Concluding the Search for Recognition

What is crucial in Jacob's masculinity construction is the capitalistic aspect, as he believes it is associated with recognition. In addition, he has a desire for recognition from both women and men because his previous partners did need not him to be the breadwinner due to the societal shift. Jacob seeks reassurance in traditional masculinity because he does not know which role to play instead of looking toward where the societal shift is moving. To change his narrative of masculinity and develop his identity and role in society, Jacob's understanding of masculinity must change to fit with Nordic ideals. Also, Simon is met with the dilemma of a societal change because he is afraid to voice his opinion as he feels he will be looked at askance if he differs from other individuals. Therefore, Jacob and Simon's relational identity is in flux

because their masculine identity does not favor them the same way it did in their father's generation.

Masculinity needs to accept a tabula rasa and no longer look to the traditional masculinity of patriarchy. Instead, the creation of new masculinities must break free from the association of competitive capital. Jacob agrees with the egalitarian perspective that women no longer need men to take care of them and have not been for a long time. Therefore, the need to not fall behind should be promoted through positive attributes of masculinity instead of looking at the regional hegemonic masculinity that no longer fits with the local understanding of masculinity. To encourage a new hegemony is to accept that positive attributes should be linked with autonomous relational identity creations where equality is the focal point.

The next chapter examines Jacob and Simon's relational identity development with the focal point of masculine and feminine interplay. This paper will change its perspective to the ambivalent construction of a new masculine identity that fits within an egalitarian society. In doing so, Simon and especially Jacob will have a guideline for creating their role and masculinity. The new masculinity is promoted and reconstructed through family ideals, where both partners can find positive equilibrium by discussing emotions and feelings. Crucially here is to accept that society is in flux and has not transformed to a fully egalitarian society but is moving towards that direction. Some men may still enact and look towards traditional regional hegemonic masculinity. However, they may meet dilemmas in their relational identity creation similarly to Jacob or be in flux with how to act within society like Simon.

Chapter Five: The Ambivalent Construction of a New Masculinity

With the emergence of recognition needed for men due to women's resistance to patriarchy, it is crucial to examine the interplay between men and women. In Connell's theory, the legitimization of men's dominance and women's subordination is vital for the social

construction of hegemonic- harmony, performance, and creation. However, there has been a change in masculine behavior in recent Nordic countries where the notion of hegemonic order and interplay of men and women have changed. Men are starting to encounter new practices and attitudes in the field of egalitarianism. Nordic researchers such as Bach (2019) and Bloksgaard (2011) have researched the emergence of new family practices. Ideals that focus on the egalitarian approach of emphasizing the nurturing practices of involved fatherhood and the challenging process of being a man.

This chapter will examine the development of a new masculine man, which constitutes gender equality-based family orientations, and the dismantling of the power hierarchy in relationships as a new way that Nordic men perform masculinity. To address the new masculinity, I will discuss the current state of masculinity and the interplay of hegemonic masculinity. Afterward, I will build on Bach's (2019) theory on nondominant Danish masculinity. Bach (2019) investigates Danish men who are partners of professional and high-achieving women and how they negotiate with their masculine identity through family engagement. The men engage with multiple cultural ideals as they legitimate and explain their family practices through choice, involved fatherhood, and gender equality to construct their identities (Bach 2019). I will build on Bach's theory by including my own conducted interview relating the difficulties men are met with from egalitarianism. Crucially is the discussion of Simon and Jacob struggling with their masculine identities due to society's changes in how other people want them to act and how they are in flux regarding their enactment of masculinity.

As conducted in the second chapter, hegemonic masculinity is still present in Danish society through the labor market. Also, in the previous chapter, it was found that enacting hegemonic masculinity in relationships creates a dilemma in relational identity creation. Thus, to examine a new emerging masculinity, I will take the perspective of gender harmony and the

dismantling of the hegemon. The interplay between masculinity and femininity cannot be found at its core without operating with the importance of human duality in intimate relationships. Thus, this chapter is crucial in researching how men can enact their masculinities to understand the complex ways masculinity and femininity interplay and are performed in society.

Explicating the Need for a New Masculine Man

The importance of conceptualizing a new form of masculinity and engaging with gender-egalitarian masculinities relates to a critique of Connell's theory. I believe that her theory cannot be ascertained as an umbrella theory for masculinities anymore. Connell's work will always have roots in the conceptualization of masculinities. Thus, her theories heavily color my framework of the new masculine man and the interplay of masculinity and femininity. Connell's hegemonic masculinity serves as a concept developed to comprehend the social dynamics of hierarchical power relations between femininities and masculinities and the binary position of man and woman.

In chapter one, hegemonic masculinity is conceptualized as the idealized and most valued conceptual configuration of masculine practice, making it the most strived for masculine ideology (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). I mentioned briefly that the establishment of sovereignty includes structures of power such as race, class, sexuality, and the crucial aspect that what is considered hegemonic in Western society is not the same in a global context. Meaning, hegemonic tendencies are found at a regional- and local level. However, as Connell's answer to hegemony started a few decades ago, the current situation of sovereignty does not attain the same value as it did previously. Here, the interviews of Simon and Jacob share the viewpoint of present Danish men and their problems with the change in hegemony.

The emphasis on patriarchal power dynamics is a problem when current Western men believe that old patriarchic masculinities are given the same status as previously. I want to

stress that I do not dismiss patriarchal power structures, which were prevalent in the third chapter, as hegemonic masculinity still ascribes a high value in the labor market in Denmark. However, when it comes to the egalitarian approach in relationships, I stress the difficulty of maintaining the framework of patriarchal power structures, as women have been given more individuality, which was concluded in the last chapter. Meaning, men and women cannot uphold the patriarchic hegemonic power dynamics to the same degree in current society as it no longer ascribes the same values and acceptance as before. Therefore, this section will theorize a new masculine man because, in the context of Nordic gender-equality regimes, there is a need to further hegemonic masculinity to understand how masculinity interacts with femininity at the micro-level of relationships.

In Western and Nordic masculinity, the framework of the new masculine man bases its need on a cultural perspective. As society is changing, so does the cultural acceptance of how we portray our identities and interact with other individuals. Through culture, we organize new strategies of actions and model our ways of feeling and thinking to fit with our surroundings. Therefore, we cannot maintain the old patriarchy if the culture and society change in a direction that does not support the previous hegemonic habits. According to Swidler (2001), cultural work, such as illustrating gendered family arrangements, is more prevalent and visible in society when new patterns are in tension with previous- experiences and modes of action. Meaning, when we look at a new masculine identity, it is in flux because some people will try to hold on to previous hegemonic perceptions, while others enact new patterns.

Within the field of masculinity studies, hegemonic masculinities are shed light on when ideologies are enacted, and individuals feel threatened by how they see themselves and how other people see them. An example was found in the third chapter. Several male nurses tried to attain masculine status by enforcing hyper-masculinity to refrain from subordinate

masculinities. According to Messerschmidt's (2000) research, he found that violence is often connected with occurrences of *masculinity challenges*. In addition, Kimmel (2005) and Connell (2005) found that the fear of being labeled as weak, subordinate, or feminine came to organize a principle of constructing masculinity, similar to the masculine degradation male nurses met at work. Though the nurses did not enact violence, they can be seen as individuals that came to defend their masculinity by relating to hyper-masculinity out of fear of being labeled as subordinate.

This chapter examines the need for a new masculine identity, as the previous hegemonic masculinity cannot be attained in its fullness in current Nordic society, especially when it comes to the Danish construction of masculinities. This chapter will challenge the hegemon by dismantling the hegemonic power hierarchy. Furthermore, it will examine if it is possible to assume that the structure of nondominant masculinity can be considered equal in status to other masculinities.

Dismantling the Hegemonic Hierarchy

I have mentioned how the defining characteristic of hegemonic masculinity bases its concept on practices that permits men's collective dominance over women. However, when examining hegemonic masculinity at micro levels instead of macro, it is apparent that the hegemonic understanding cannot be attained in most Nordic countries in terms of relationships. Wetherell and Edley (1999) examine hegemonic patterns and found that the most effective way of being a man and exemplifying hegemony in some local contexts is demonstrated through one's distance from regional hegemonic masculinity. Thereby, one cannot always adhere to previous conceptualizations of acting and performing masculinity or femininity when culture changes. The last chapter examined how Jacob was in flux when performing masculine identities because he exhibited regional hegemonic masculinity in a local context. He met

adversity because it is difficult for him to find a partner as he must give up his regional hegemonic patterns. Thereby, regional hegemonic masculinity cannot be exemplified in local contexts when examining the hegemonic hierarchy, as it differs depending on location.

Complying With Gender Equality

In my interview with Simon, I talk with him about what it is like to be a man compared to his father's generation. I wanted to have a clearer understanding of his parent's relationship to examine if he adheres to similar traits or constructs his masculine identity through a local masculine praxis. He argues that it was different:

Simon: Well, I think it was more old school, as you know it. Back then, it was more acceptable to be a businessman, raw as it sounds, where work meant more. It was about the big paycheck and caring about your job, and then my mother was more the caring character at home, the one who took care of my two siblings and me. (Appendix A, l. 34-38).

To understand hegemonic masculinity here is to examine that he mentions a clear definition of what is accepted now compared to then. He says that it was acceptable for men to be businessmen, where work triumphed the perspective of the caring father. The last chapter examined how Jacob found his identity related to the previous construction of the businessman. Still, he could not adhere to it, which created a flux in his masculinity creation. Both Simon and Jacob respond to the question of different societies with an answer that relates to the traditional patriarch. They stress how their fathers took the role of the breadwinner and had to be the head of the family. Both Jacob and Simon compare their marriages with their parents, and they both argue their father was the provider and decisionmaker. More focus was on the father, who positioned himself as the head of the family where his decisions and opinions entailed heavy responsibility. When I ask Simon about the generation gap, and if there are any differences, he elaborates that there is a clear difference:

Simon: I think there's greater pressure on me as a man to advertise that we're all equal, that is, men and women. [...] I feel a little bit that if I don't agree with everyone else, then I don't correlate to what we, in society, want to strive for, and then I'm suddenly a male chauvinist. It's like, I'm not allowed to have my own opinion unless it fits with what everyone else wants me to say. (Appendix A, l. 3-4 & 28-31).

Simon keeps orbiting the notion of egalitarianism and hegemony. He argues there is pressure on him to advertise for egalitarianism, indicating no fluency in achieving it without actively advocating for it. His actions are examined as complying with equality instead of advocating for equality. Simon does not want to be looked at askance and says he is not allowed to have an opinion that is not in compliance with others. Therefore, I question Simon about the differences for his generation compared to his father's and if he thinks it is possible to adhere to those characteristics in which he says:

Simon: Yea, you can, but I feel like it's not in the same way. It seems like it's more of a deal that is being made about who works more and who is at home more than the other. And then you have to have the same wage and make sure you do equally as much, but for some reason, I feel pressured to show that I'm more at home [than her] and doing more for the baby and that I'm totally fine with earning the same wage (Appendix A, l. 40-45).

There are several things to examine in this quote. First, like Jacob in the previous chapter, Simon is in flux regarding his sense of position in society and what role to play. They both mention that they cannot adhere to the same hegemonic hierarchy as their parents. Also, they orbit the notion of equality without knowing they can reflect their masculinity through this perspective. Simon says that society has changed, so you must cooperatively make agreements on who does what at home, which indicates that he cannot become the head of the family like his father.

At the beginning of the second sentence, he mentions gender-equal traits crucial in narrating the egalitarian perspective by talking about wages and helping each other equally. Yet, to Simon, he must carry more weight, which is prevalent when he says that he feels

pressured to do more than his wife. Hence, the perspective on equality in the household creates a dilemma. To Simon, by feeling forced to do more, it can be seen to be more egalitarian through cooperation and feelings of worth as an individual his wife can rely on. However, it can also be seen from a societal perspective where the roles have changed.

The feeling of pressure can be seen as the societal pressure caused by the change in culture mentioned in this chapter and the last. Women are given more individuality caused by their increased involvement in the labor market and being financially stable without men. And men being more in line with feminine traits such as involved parenthood constitutes the progress in gender equality and the Nordic ideal. Simon must be more engaged as a parent, helping her more, and being more accessible by being at home. According to Connell's theory on masculinity, those aspects are constituted as emphasized femininity if a woman portrayed this. In the third chapter, the nurse Nicolai and others were put into subordinate masculinities due to their feminine occupations. Due to their feminine traits in their daily lives, which are like the traits that Simon portrays, it creates a problem in their masculine identity. Meaning, according to Connell's theory, when Simon adheres to these egalitarian traits at home, it is a sign of femininity instead of hegemonic masculinity.

When Simon attempts to be the best spouse possible and makes sure that he is an asset to the household and their relationship, it would be logical to adhere to hegemonic masculinity in the sense of Connell because that is the highest valued masculine praxis possible. Similarities occur in Jacob's masculinity process. He sticks to the regional level of hegemony, which does not work for him due to the societal shift. Simon and Jacob must look at society and adapt to how it changes over time if they want a more precise perception of acting as the most valued masculine identity. Thereby, suppose Jacob adheres to characteristics that are associated with hegemonic masculinity at a local level. In that case, he will help his identity creation because

he will make sense of his role in society. In addition, according to Wetherell and Edley (1999), Jacob may create the best form of local hegemony by distancing him from regional hegemony. In doing so, his interplay with a future girlfriend will create better opportunities for him, as he will make sense of his selfhood and role in an egalitarian society.

On a different note, Simon struggles with how he is forced to advocate for equality. Complying is not enough, and he fears speaking with his wife about issues related to the interplay of femininity and masculinity from a historical perspective. However, Simon's perception of relationships falls in line with the Nordic ideals of gender equality. He wants to help his spouse in aspects that do not relate to the old hegemonic patriarchy that lies within the attributes of regional hegemony. On the regional level, hegemonic masculinity includes strength, assertiveness, confidence, independence, and competitiveness. Whereas being gentle, emotional, dependent, and compassionate are characteristics of hegemonic femininity. But, throughout this section, the two constructs have been mixed regarding how masculinities and femininities interact, especially in Denmark. Therefore, this paper must address the local level of hierarchy to understand how its construction differs from the regional hegemony and how it interplays with masculinity and femininity in Denmark.

Examining the Local Hierarchy

Simon and Jacob are in flux with their masculinity because they are influenced by the cultural differences in the Nordic ideals when they try to understand masculinity from a regional level. Therefore, in this section, the cultural work involved with constructing gender equality-oriented masculinities is analyzed to demonstrate that local masculinity changes cause problems in the narrative of Simon and Jacob's masculine identity creation. I will examine if societal changes in relational choices, fatherhood, and egalitarianism are regarded as strategies that men use to negotiate their power positions. With Simon and Jacob dealing with their role

in relationships through compliance and autonomy, I will examine if they find a way to narrate their difficulties into masculine identities by escaping subordinate masculinities through constructing new masculine identities. I will rely on Bach (2019) and her framework on constructing nondominant masculinities where men narrate their masculinities through the perspectives of choice, fatherhood, and gender equality.

Simon adheres to equality and sees relationships as a joint effort, where both partners engage in deals where they come together and discuss how things should be. Simon mentions that though they, from a societal point of view, should earn the same wage and engage equally in being at home, he feels pressured to do more than her. His perspective on the household can be linked to the previous chapter on recognition because he wants to be recognized as the head of the household if we relate his identity creation with hegemonic masculinity.

In the last chapter, I mentioned Kimmel (2010) and his quote on the one thing that is certain in society: “a real man provides for his family,” which can be related to Simon’s statement and identity creation. Instead of being the breadwinner, Simon can support his family by being more at home and helping his wife with their child. In this way, by being more at home, Simon attains a position of being the head of the household differently from limiting the view to income. He relates to clear new profound patriarch masculine perceptions by providing for his family through a new mentality that does not correlate with the breadwinner mentality. Still, it may also be possible to acquire hegemonic tendencies by narrating his identity differently. To examine this perspective, I will rely on Bach’s (2019) interview with David, where he constructs a new masculine view of being the head of the household through a different narration of masculinity. David creates a different masculine approach to his identity creation to distance himself from subordinate masculinity though he partakes in what I describe as hegemonic feminine tendencies transformed to masculinity.

Gender Equality, Autonomy, and a Cooperative Household

David's perspective on marriage is like Simon and Jacob's in several aspects. To begin, when comparing his marriage with his parents, his father was the head of the family, the breadwinner, and the one who made the most decision, something David describes as a position that, in his opinion, would entail too much of a heavy responsibility (Bach 2019). As a response to the traditional patriarch, David stresses how he is happy with being in a relationship where they share decisions, and he does not have to take the same role as his father (Bach 2019). Also, he argues that he would never adhere to a powerful demonstration of the traditional family related to the patriarchic approach (Bach 2019). Instead, he likes that he and his wife are in a more democratic arrangement of shared responsibility and decision-making (Bach 2019). When asked that it might appear like he is taking on greater responsibility than his wife through taking care of the household and the children, David says:

Well yes, on a relatively simple level like picking up children and cooking and taking care of the children and things like that. But I have less responsibility in terms of running the household economy, buying a new car and . . . and deciding the pedagogical line at home and things like that, because we simply share that. (Bach 2019)

When David talks about equality, he tries to maintain a narrative that shows that he and his wife are doing things together. Neither of them has the deciding vote compared to his David's father and his relationship. Interestingly, when you analyze David, he states that he acknowledges that it is plausible that people see him as the head of the household. Still, at the same time, he mentions that he has less responsibility when it comes to the economy. Crucially, he notes that the deciding factor is always shared. Meaning that the wife, though it is her income, never gets to decide without his influence. But when it comes to cooking, taking care of the children, etc., he gives himself more responsibility. Though David uses the narrative of equality

in his relationship, in the latter part of the interview, he reflects on masculinity and autonomy when asked if he believes masculinity is in crisis:

That depends a lot on what you mean by, I mean, what you relate to being a man. Because, I mean, if we are talking about, let's say, that you are part of a team, in a community of interests at an equal level, if you then find that your value as a man declines, then I strongly disagree. But clearly if you frame it in terms of having to give up some of your power with regard to being in charge of the household economy or how to raise the children, well, then it's true. Compared to my dad, for instance, I have given up a lot of power, I mean, downright power or the right to make all the decisions, the probability of directing my own course. I can't do that. I have to involve my wife. Or not involve my wife or not even involve, we have to; I'm not the one involving her. It's a joint effort. And I want that, really. It gives me so much more. (Bach, 2019)

We see several links between what David says and what both Jacob and Simon argue. They all give up power as their local hierarchy does not rely on regional hegemonic approaches to masculinity. Relationships have changed, and society has moved to a more egalitarian approach. The interplay operates differently than previously, with one partner being both the head of the family and the breadwinner. A perspective that David makes sure does not apply to him. He does not give her the opportunity of upholding both the role as the head of the family and the breadwinner, as it would leave him with a function of subordination. Instead, he makes sure to address his position and how his wife does not make decisions without making sure he agrees, which gives him an essential role in their relationship.

The interplay between masculinity and femininity in household hegemony is changing. Society is turning to egalitarianism in relationships where men can enact a form of hegemonic femininity while staying true to their masculinity. This direction does not intend for men to take a feminine role. Instead, it creates a new position for themselves, even when their masculinity lies closely related to the exact part of previous femininity. It is crucial for masculinity-creation because the men throughout this thesis strive never to take on subordinate masculinity ranging from the male nurses to Simon, Jacob, or David. Though some of them

partake in a role equal to their binary counterpart, the men must make sure they are not limited or comprehended as similar to women. Hence, men must evade feminized or subordinate masculinity because it will hurt their masculine identity creation, diminishing their perception of the role they are to play in society and how they interplay with femininities. If they were to accept feminized masculinity or subordinate masculinity, they would be met with sanctions, like mentioned in the third chapter.

Similarly, femininities that act in masculine ways or adhere to pariah femininities would also be sanctioned from a societal perspective. Thus, the interplay between masculinity and femininity is crucial in examining how men in Denmark and most Western countries with an ideal of equality construct a new masculine identity. It is a form of masculinity that adheres to egalitarianism while not giving up their masculine praxis of some hegemonic attributes but linking it with hegemonic femininity traits.

David is in a relationship where they change the perception of the hegemonic hierarchy. The roles swap, which is interesting for his masculinity creation, because by rejecting the traditional assessment of masculinity, he reinforces a gender equality-oriented self (Bach 2019). David mentions that if you relate masculinity with being part of a team and in a community of interests at an equal level, then in his opinion, he does not lose masculine capital through his male identity in his relationship (Bach 2019). However, when addressing masculinity from the perspective of Connell, David reinforces himself through a version that involves mutuality, reciprocity, and cooperation (Bach 2019). Ideals that are not seen in hegemonic masculinity but relate to feminine ideals. Also, David uses the image of his father as the patriarch to contrast himself as a person with different purposes (Bach 2019). It is apparent that through the interview, David does not come off as an individual who struggles with his masculine identity.

Nor must he adhere to hyper-masculine behavior, as seen in previous chapters with other men in subordinate positions.

In similar ways to David, Simon produces a narrative of equality and displays a gender equality-oriented self. Simon stresses several times how he and his partner share everything, but at the same time, he feels forced into the position of equality. Simon cannot rely on the traditional patriarchic relationship, as his wife would not allow it. He notes the troubles from sharing the duties at home because he believes he cannot ask his wife to take care of things previously related to historical feminine aspects. Therefore, Simon argues he feels pressured:

Simon: Well, umm, I feel like I constantly have to do something extra, so there's this constant voice in the back of my head that says, "Well, don't forget to do something extra, and be more helpful at home." It's pretty hard because if one day I don't have the energy to cook, and I ask her if she will do it, she looks at me almost judgmentally. Of course, I understand that she might also be tired, but it's like we can never escape the stigma of the woman in the kitchen, and I'm now a total jerk because I just asked her to adhere to that again. (Appendix A, l. 45-52)

Though Simon initially comes off as an individual who feels forced to advocate for equality, everything he says relates to equality and cooperating with his wife in the household. Simon, in general, shares the responsibilities of gender equality because he admits that he does more at home to create an egalitarian family. He mentions pressure to advocate for equality throughout the interview: "I also want equality in society. But, umm, I often think that it's difficult. Don't misunderstand me. Umm. If you don't actively say you want equality, people automatically assume you don't want society to change" (Appendix A, l. 28-31). Simon tries to explain and legitimate his frustration that it is not enough to show equality at home. According to Simon, he must do more than be in a gender-equal-oriented relationship.

Like Simon and David, the narrative of equality follows in the interview of Jacob. However, when you analyze the later part of the interview, there are noteworthy mentions in how he narrates his masculinity from the perspective of Connell. Jacob uses a narration of

dominance when I ask him what he means by avoiding the status of a henpecked man, in which he starts talking about autonomy and cooperation:

Jacob: Someone who does anything the partner asks you to do. You live according to her life and not your own, and it's negative in the understanding that we, as men, of course, want to live our own lives, so everything doesn't just revolve around her. We're a pair. And it's not like you don't want the best for your partner, but in a relationship, it's healthy to have some distance from each other once in a while. And, of course, I want to be able to take care of her and be financially stable. But it's a tricky topic because I know that I can do it by myself, but so can she now, so she doesn't need me for that anymore like she used to. But on the other hand, it's really great that women can take care of themselves... and... I'm not to fall too far behind... If I don't do anything, then I'm not attractive to the female anymore. (Appendix B, l. 37-47)

At the beginning of the interview, he mentions how he feels repressed by women, and in this quote, certain aspects mimic that feeling. Jacob's discourse changes several times. He draws on several discursive resources that rely on equality by saying that they are a *pair*, and he mentions how it is healthy for both partners to have distance from each other at times. However, this perspective changes throughout the interview, where his discourse changes briefly, where he means to portray a gender equality-oriented self but constructs a language of dominance.

When Jacob says, "We as men, of course, want to live our own lives," he excludes her, indicating that only men want distance and that women do not. Also, he says that he can take care of her and be financially stable without including her in this sentence. Though he mentions afterward that he knows he can do it, so can she now (indicating she could not before) and that she does not need him to the same extent anymore. He uses a language of dominance, as he presents that she needed him previously; though things have changed, he still comes off in a way that he can function by himself better than she can. Jacob quickly reconstructs his narrative to validate a language of equality. Every time he mentions something that he can do by himself, he notes that she can do the same afterward. Crucially is, Jacob never mentions her perspective

or how he sees himself in her eyes. For instance, when he says he wants to take care of her, he never mentions that she may also want to help him.

Using a dominant narrative, he creates a form of masculinity that showcases an image of authority, which the whole interview was trying to deny. He wants to display cooperation and gender equality in the interview but creates a narrative of power, which creates hegemonic masculine tendencies of dominance. Much like Jacob, David also creates a narrative of power where he is included in every decision his wife makes, but she may not necessarily be included in his. Though the narrative follows the egalitarian approach, there are still aspects for the interviewees where dominance comes into play when examining the interplay of masculinity and femininity. This ambivalent construction of masculinity for Jacob can be linked with the first sentence in the interview, where he mentions that he feels repressed by women. He must uphold this hegemonic perspective to not come off as subordinate to his previous partner, contrasting the new form of local masculinity with the regional understanding of hegemonic masculinity.

The Ambivalent Construction of a New Masculinity

This chapter has shown how Jacob, Simon, and David produce narratives of equality through their choices in the interplay of masculinity and femininity. They make equality-oriented discourse but include contradictory narratives because they do not want to appear as subordinate men. This chapter needs to examine what it means for the three individuals to produce these stories, why they do it, and how it affects the interplay of masculinity and femininity in the big picture of hegemonic masculinity. In doing so, it will operate with the ambivalence in constructing a new masculinity. Crucially, the paper will not operate with categorizing the new masculinity in relation to Connell's hierarchy of masculinities, as it does not seek to relate it to either hegemony or subordination. I want to expand on Connell's

theoretical framework but not renew the unequal perspective of power hierarchies. Instead, this paper seeks to examine the new masculinity in a tentative society where the diminishing of the hegemon is a possibility. In doing so, the focal point lies on the ambivalences men experience in constructing their masculinity by relating the new masculinity to current and previous masculine approaches.

The three men all position themselves in different male positions in their respective families, showing different ways to interact in relationships. They share that they want to help their partners and create cooperation but are met with difficulties that create ambivalence in constructing their masculinity. Simon talks about how relationships are considered deals where you agree on mutual terms, from who works more to who should be more at home than the other. Here, Jacob differs as he argues that men should not be too henpecked but make sure that the partners complement each other because both men and women can do everything equally now. Jacob claims that the limitations only apply to men because they do not have a place in society anymore, now that women have acquired more individuality. Lastly, David emphasizes enacting the role of the supportive husband because he adapts to the needs of his partner and adjusts his ambitions by staying at home to fit with her job requirements (Bach 2019).

Focusing on Connell, David takes on hegemonic femininity, but I would argue, in a masculinist way through actions of choices. Still, according to himself, he creates a narrative that does not comply with threatening the intelligibility of a masculine man (Bach 2019). Instead, he makes a narrative of sacrifice, where he creates his wife's career by saying she would not be able to do the things she does if it was not for him (Bach 2019). The three men claim that they want equality and enact an egalitarian approach at home, but they simultaneously reinstall themselves in control.

In a way, the narrative of choice functions as a strategy to navigate between masculinities. To deny the femininely implied role of *the supporter at home*, they restore their masculinity by saying it is a choice they made. By creating a narrative of choice, they deny a subordinate position. They narrate themselves as part of a team and, at the same time, the head of the household. Also, they partake in the role of involved fatherhood, which can be seen as a sacrificial choice, and according to Simon, he feels he must make sure he is more at home and more helpful with the child. In doing so, Simon adheres to child-centeredness, which is an accessible normative ideal in the Nordic context (Bach 2019). Simon's narration adapts to the new dimensions of cooperation, care, and emotionality that provide masculinity in Nordic ideals.

Through forming one's masculine selfhood, the notion of choice and involved fatherhood are crucial. The narrative of involved fatherhood cannot be linked with restoring masculinity in the same way that choice can (Bach 2019). Involved fatherhood works to create an egalitarian approach with a focus on gender-neutralizing parenthood (Bach 2019). Whereas the narrative of choice shape one's selfhood. Now, Simon is in flux when it comes to the narrative of choice, as he feels forced into the position that he is in instead of narrating it as his own choice. He feels pressured to be more at home and is afraid to voice an opinion in dichotomy with other individuals' thoughts. Therefore, Simon is in an ambivalent construction of the new masculinity because though his narrative relates to the new masculinity, he is in flux with understanding why society is changing. The problem for Simon is that society is in a tentative state where it has neither accepted the new masculine approach nor diminished the hegemon.

I want to stress that David, Simon, and Jacob are not rebelling against hegemonic masculinity, but they diminish the hegemon by complying with new masculinities. When

examining David, his traits are presented as personal preferences in his relationship, whereas Simon and Jacob's masculinities are created from societal aspects. When looking at hegemonic traits such as autonomy, courage, strength, and determination, some are found in David's narrative. David meticulously stresses cooperation and produces the image of reciprocal relationships, which reorganizes the meaning of independence and autonomy (Bach 2019). In contrast, Jacob does not intelligibly control his masculinity like David, so he struggles with his masculine identity-creation. However, when looking at the new masculinity, traits such as autonomy and determination are present when David and Simon demonstrate their choice in helping and being cooperative, which no longer indicates a feminized approach.

While it is crucial for all three men to not appear as subordinate men, some do it by voicing autonomy in a masculinist way, where others do not. Especially Jacob and Simon struggle with how they perceive themselves and their independence because of the Nordic ideal. The two interviewees' discourse rarely uses the plural subject and primarily tells their story, focusing on "I." In contrast, David stresses the usage of "we" to produce a narrative of relational autonomy (Bach 2019). By constantly referring to his decision as plural, David's discourse orbits plurality, family life and reinforces a storyline of partnership and mutuality (Bach 2019). Using a narrative of cooperation, David stresses a change in society and how the Nordic ideals of gender equality are being performed in his relationship (Bach 2019). His narrative fits with the cultural description of democratic relationships. A perspective that Jacob and Simon feel forced into but agree with to adjust to the local masculinity.

The three men are seen as gender equality-oriented individuals that provide a contextual framework for a new masculine identity that can be seen as moving towards local masculinity. A form of masculinity that remains authoritative regarding the interplay of femininity and

masculinity but helps provide their partners and their career with support and helps take on family responsibilities to form an egalitarian societal approach.

Concluding the Ambivalence of the New Man and Its Interplay With Femininity

This chapter has offered insights into how the three Danish men, Jacob, Simon, and David, produce new masculinities. This chapter has found that to examine the new masculinity is to acknowledge that it is crucial to dismantle hegemony and explore it through global, regional, and local masculinities. What is hegemonic and sought for as the ideal masculinity depends on the country and local context. With a focus on Simon, Jacob, and David, it was found that understanding their masculinity creation is to not rely on regional hegemonic masculinity. Instead, they look towards the local context of Nordic ideals as more critical for the interplay between masculinities and femininities, as hegemony varies depending on cultural changes.

Society is turning to egalitarianism in relationships where men can enact a form of hegemonic femininity while staying true to their masculinity. This new masculinity does not intend for men to take a feminine role. Instead, it creates a new position for themselves, even when their masculinity lies closely related to the exact part of previous femininity. It is crucial for masculinity creation because the men throughout this thesis strive never to take on subordinate masculinity. Though some of them partake in a role equal to their binary counterpart, the three men must make sure they are not comprehended as similar to women. Hence, men must evade feminized or subordinate masculinity because it will hurt their masculine identity creation. Unless they intelligibly create their masculinity through narratives of choice and involved parenthood that expands on what is allowed within their masculinity.

This paper illustrates the ambivalence the three men are met with when constructing their new masculine identities that rely on family arrangements, equality, and cooperation in the household. The three men claim they want equality and enact an egalitarian approach at home, but they simultaneously reinstall themselves in control. They adjust to the societal understanding of how they are to enact their masculinity, though they are met with ambivalences in their masculinity creation. They talk about their relationships to illustrate equality but simultaneously use a narration of dominance to avoid subordination. Simon, Jacob, and David negotiate their masculinity by reconstructing the meaning of autonomy through new dimensions of cooperation, care, and emotionality that provide masculinity through Nordic ideals. Nevertheless, through choice and involved fatherhood, they form their masculine selfhood as relational instead of individualizing. However, they attain a sense of autonomy because they can narrate choices while constructing their relational identities.

This chapter argues that Jacob, Simon, and David perform gender equality-oriented masculinities. Still, Jacob and Simon are met with ambivalence in their identity performances due to the removal of regional hegemonic attributes and a new focus on local traits. While the Nordic ideals look towards an egalitarian society, this paper argues that the interplay of masculinity and femininity is still in flux as gender transformations cannot be considered a linear process. Though the interplay between femininities and masculinities moves towards equality and cooperation, the new masculinity still involves resistance to giving up authority. Thereby, the narrative of choice functions as a strategy to navigate masculinities. The three Danish men create their masculinities by relating to regional hegemonic masculinity traits while also incorporating traits from hegemonic femininity to construct a new masculinity. A masculinity that gives meaning to their relational identity development and realizes that their

masculinity is not supposed to mirror their parents' generation. Thus, including a unique aspect in how masculinities and femininities interplay in contemporary Nordic society.

Chapter Six: Concluding the Ambivalent Construction of Masculinities

I have offered insights into the holistic understanding of how masculinities interplay with femininities through a qualitative analysis of Jacob's and Simon's narratives. Society is in a tentative state where men are met with ambivalence in their masculinity construction because of the societal shift toward egalitarianism. With egalitarianism, the global and regional hegemonic hierarchies do not apply to the same degree in the local context of Nordic countries, as the focus lies with dismantling the hegemon instead of creating a new hegemonic masculinity. The new masculinity that lies within the spectrum of feminine aspects of cooperation, care, emotionality, choice, and involved fatherhood finds itself outside of the masculinity hierarchy. The new masculinity development brings problems for some men. They must construct a new sense of self by relating to the preferred societal identity creation rather than looking at previous generations or regional hegemonic structures.

Through examining the interplay of masculinities and femininities at the labor market, it was found that both men and women are sanctioned if they differ from the naturalization of their sex. When women enter a male occupation, they cannot adhere to pariah femininity, or they will be sanctioned for being too masculine. In examining female- police officers and electricians, it was found that being too front or coarse lingers towards masculine traits and diminishes their expected femininity, which brings repercussions from trying to fit in with the men. Similarly, men in feminine occupations must uphold a masculine self-image by constantly addressing their sexuality in a hyper-masculine way to escape the notion of subordinate masculinity. Therefore, men and women in the Danish labor market are met with skepticism when they do not live up to the appropriate gender behavior expected of them due to Denmark's

high gender segregation. In conclusion, the gender-segregated labor market continually cements the stereotypes and stigmatizations within male- or female professions.

Besides the labor market, the paper examined the speaker perceptions of Jacob and Simon. It was found that their relational identity development is in flux. With society changing, Jacob's masculinity construction cannot rely on the traditional breadwinner mentality that he saw his father relate to when he was growing up. As a result, Jacob does not know which position to play in society. He seeks reassurance in traditional masculinity while agreeing that he will not find an appropriate relational identity without developing his identity in relation to the Nordic ideals.

It was concluded that Simon is met with the dilemma of being afraid to voice his opinion as he feels he will be looked at askance if he differs from other individuals. Therefore, he is in an ambivalent relational identity creation because his masculine identity does not favor him the way his father was. Thereby, the chapter concluded that masculinity needs to accept a tabula rasa to encourage a new masculinity in a society that seeks to diminish the hegemonic hierarchy.

Jacob and Simon comply with the societal shift but are in flux due to fractal recursivity. If they are not hegemonic, they must be subordinate; however, as society is changing, they must incorporate the Nordic ideals into the masculine creation and interplay with femininity. They must diminish some hegemonic masculinity traits and incorporate aspects of the new masculine development to better their relational identity development and search for recognition.

Conclusively, this paper has argued that hegemonic masculinity is changeable and that current society is moving in a direction that challenges the hegemon, where the focus is not on constructing a new hegemonic masculinity. Instead, the purpose is to dismantle the hegemon where changes in global, regional, and local societal levels form masculinities differently.

Meaning, the shift in masculinities constructs new strategies in gender relations, which creates recognition in unique aspects that lie within the realm of autonomy, equality, and the option for individuality. Thus, this paper has analyzed Danish speaker perceptions and examined the ambivalent construction of masculinities and their interplay with femininities.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview with Simon

- 1 Interviewer: Do you feel like it's different for you as a man now, compared to, for
2 instance, your father's generation?
- 3 *Simon:* Yes, I guess I think so. I think there's greater pressure on me as a man to
4 advertise that we're all equal, that is, men and women. And if I say anything
5 that's wrong or make a joke about something that men think is funny, but
6 women don't, then I feel like everyone is looking at me askance, because if
7 you tread on a woman's toes, then all women will come after you.
- 8 *Interviewer:* I have a few follow-up questions. Is it okay if we divide it into pieces?
- 9 *Simon:* Sure
- 10 *Interviewer:* You mention this thing about joking. Do you have an example, since you
11 say that it's different for you compared to your father's generation?
- 12 *Simon:* Everyone wants to be a hero, is the underlying aspect, I think. But I believe
13 that's how it's always been, for instance, you see all these social
14 experiments on the internet, where a man and a woman decide to fake an
15 argument, where the woman yells, scold, and hit the man, and everyone just
16 walks by and go on about their day. But if it's the man who yells, pushes,
17 or hits the woman, then everyone comes because now this woman must be
18 saved from this situation. And I think that's a bit how society is now. You're
19 on your toes because I, as a man, am always scared to do something wrong
20 or tread on someone's toes.
- 21 *Interviewer:* You mentioned earlier that you must advertise for equality. Do you want to
22 elaborate?
- 23 *Simon:* Yea, it is, umm, well, I feel a little bit that if I don't agree with everyone
24 else, then I don't correlate to what we, in society, want to strive for, and
25 then I'm suddenly a male chauvinist. It's like, I'm not allowed to have my
26 own opinion unless it fits with what everyone else wants me to say.
- 27 *Interviewer:* You're using the word "we" when you speak of society.
- 28 *Simon:* Well, it's because I also want equality in society. But, umm, I often think
29 that it is difficult. Don't misunderstand me. Umm. If you don't actively say

30 you want equality, people automatically assume you don't want society to
31 change.

32 *Interviewer:* We talked about the fact that it's different for you compared to your father.
33 How do you think it was for his generation?

34 *Simon:* Well, I think it was more old school, as you know it. Back then, it was more
35 acceptable to be a businessman, raw as it sounds, where work meant more.
36 It was about the big paycheck and caring about your job, and then my
37 mother was more the caring character at home, the one who took care of
38 my two siblings and me.

39 *Interviewer:* Is that not possible anymore?

40 *Simon:* Yea, you can, but I feel like it's not in the same way. It seems like it's more
41 of a deal that is being made about who works more and who is at home
42 more than the other. And then you have to have the same wage and make
43 sure you do equally as much, but for some reason, I feel pressured to show
44 that I'm more at home [than her] and doing more for the baby and that I'm
45 totally fine with earning the same wage. Well, umm, I feel like I constantly
46 have to do something extra, so there's this constant voice in the back of my
47 head that says, "Well, don't forget to do something extra, and be more
48 helpful at home." It's pretty hard because if one day I don't have the energy
49 to cook, and I ask her if she will do it, she looks at me almost judgingly. Of
50 course, I understand that she might also be tired, but it's like we can never
51 escape the stigma of the woman in the kitchen, and I'm now a total jerk
52 because I just asked her to adhere to that again.

Appendix B: Interview with Jacob

1 *Interviewer:* How would you describe being a man in current society?

2 *Jacob:* I, phew, yeah, maybe a slight feeling of being repressed by women, even
3 though it's based on something that I annoyingly agree with. This thing
4 about achieving as much equality in society as possible. But it also leaves
5 me with a feeling that I no longer, to the same extent, can be *me* in the
6 sense that *me is...* What purpose I have as a man in society.

7 *Interviewer:* What do you mean by not being able to be you anymore?

8 *Jacob:* I guess, primarily, that you must make sure that you adapt to society's new
9 regulations or norms all the time, because if I, as a man, don't comply, then
10 I am just another of those men that don't really want equality anymore.

11 *Interviewer:* You mentioned that you, as a man, don't have a purpose in society anymore.
12 Do you care to elaborate?

13 *Jacob:* Uhm, yeah. I feel a little bit that we as men are, or... The man is forgotten
14 in society now. Because We... Yeah, because women can do everything by
15 themselves now, which she wasn't able to before. She can work by herself;
16 she can feed her own family without a man. She doesn't need a man
17 financially to have a kid. So, what do I do now? I mean, what is my role
18 now in society as a man?

19 *Interviewer:* You previously mentioned new regulations. What are they?

20 *Jacob:* It's some implicit regulations we live by as men because we always hear
21 what women really seek in men on television, radio, or podcast. And those
22 are some unreasonable demands to achieve as a man. They must be the
23 perfect dad, we always need to know how to cook, be in a good mood, ready
24 to listen in a conversation... umm, be sensitive, but not too sensitive, we
25 need to show some toughness, which we know from the ideal man. He also
26 must be able to throw them around in the bedroom if she wants, and we
27 have to respect it if she doesn't, because if you as a man want to be with
28 your partner, I mean sexually, then first, you have to ask for permission.

29 *Interviewer:* Are there any of the previous implicit rules that also apply now?

30 *Jacob:* Of course, because if... As a man, you have the idea that you must earn
31 money... Because if your friends ask you if you want to do something, then

32 you must make sure, that you're not just henpecked by your partner. There
33 is something... something cool and boyish... or something manly about
34 receiving a big paycheck and being able to show off the newest things. So,
35 when you have your friends over, then it's cool to show off something they
36 don't have, that you do.

37 *Interviewer:* What do you mean by henpecked, and why is it negative?

38 *Jacob:* Someone who does anything the partner asks you to do. You live according
39 to her life and not your own, and it's negative in the understanding that we,
40 as men, of course, want to live our own lives, so everything doesn't just
41 revolve around her. We're a pair. And it's not like you don't want the best
42 for your partner, but in a relationship, it's healthy to have some distance
43 from each other once in a while. And, of course, I want to be able to take
44 care of her and be financially stable. But it's a tricky topic because I know
45 that I can do it by myself, but so can she now, so she doesn't need me for
46 that anymore like she used to. But on the other hand, it's really great that
47 women can take care of themselves... and... I'm not to fall too far behind...
48 If I don't do anything, then I'm not attractive to the female anymore.