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This article discusses the most influential contribution to studies of men and masculinity, i.e. the concept of hegemonic masculinity developed by R.W. Connell. It points to some problematic elements of the theory and some suggestions for improvement. One criticism is that the use of the concept during recent years has been characterized by ambiguities. We argue that these problems are not based on Connell's original conceptualization but on the ways the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been adapted and used by different researchers. We argue that this ambiguity is especially a problem when it comes to questions of power relations. In the article we first outline the reception of the concept. This is followed by a critical discussion of whether dominant masculinities are necessarily always related to legitimizing patriarchal gender relations. As an alternative we suggest that an intersectional approach may offer a theoretical tool for analyzing the complexities of differences and hierarchic power relations between men. In the concluding discussion we advance some suggestions that can improve and clarify the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, e.g. distinguishing between internal and external hegemony and emphasizing that both dimensions of power presume an open empirical and contextual analysis.

Keywords: gender; masculinity; hegemonic masculinity; intersectionality; power; social equality; Scandinavian welfare states

Introduction

The following article takes as its point of departure what is perhaps the single most influential, recognized and utilized contribution to masculinity research, that is, Connell's theoretical concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). Connell's work in general and the concept of hegemonic masculinity in particular have played a significant role in studies of men and masculinity, a field which has expanded for the last three decades (Hearn, 2004; Messerschmidt, 2010, 2012). Likewise, the concept has played a central role in linking masculinity research to feminist studies. In our view the concept is one of a select few which has allowed research on men and masculinity to flourish and develop in a productive way.

Nevertheless we argue that even if the original conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity was characterized by clarity and stringency this has not characterized the use and further development of the concept. On the contrary part of the reception of the concept of hegemonic masculinity has resulted in ambiguity, in particular when it comes to questions of power relations between men and women as well as between different groups of men.

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Our purpose is to discuss some of the axiomatic premises in the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which we maintain contribute to theoretical and analytical vagueness and ambiguity. We suggest some conceptual moves, which would contribute to a constructive adjustment of Connell's theoretical concept – primarily by combining the concept of hegemonic masculinity with an intersectional approach. We emphasize that this adjustment is not a 'view from nowhere' – it is framed by a Scandinavian and Danish context, that is, a welfare society where gender equality has been a central concern for decades.

The article consists of three sections: The first section outlines the reception of hegemonic masculinity and emphasizes some basic principles and basic problems. The second section is a critical discussion of the external dimension of hegemony; it questions whether dominant masculinities are necessarily always related to legitimizing patriarchal gender relations. In the third section we suggest that an intersectional approach may offer a theoretical tool for analysing the complexity of differences and hierarchic power relations between men, what could be called internal hegemony. In the concluding discussion we summarize and discuss the main points in the article and ask how the concept of hegemonic masculinity could be adjusted in dialogue with an intersectional approach.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity: basic principles and basic problems

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally coined in an attempt to analyze and conceptualize gendered hierarchies in Australian high schools (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell & Dowsett, 1982) and labor politics (Connell, 1983). The concept was later elaborated in Connell's *Gender and Power* (1987) and in the seminal *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995). A decade later it was rethought and reformulated by Connell in cooperation with Messerschmidt (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The concept has been cited widely in social research, utilized in a large number of empirical works and has attracted a wide range of critiques and discussions, including some that we will touch upon in this article.

As a contested concept, hegemonic masculinity has been criticized for being too structural, too abstract, for reifying normative masculinity positions, for a lack of conceptual cogency which has resulted in contradictory approaches to, and uses of, the concept. For instance, Hearn et al. (2012) analyse how hegemonic masculinity has been used and adapted in a Swedish context. The authors acknowledge Connell's work and argue that conceptual analyses of how 'hegemonic masculinity has been used in specific national contexts provide important clues to power relations and specific masculinities practiced in certain national contexts that may otherwise be difficult to grasp' (Hearn et al., 2012, p. 48). However, they problematize contradictory and uncritical uses of the concept and show that it has been used in a number of quite different ways by Swedish researchers. For instance: (1) as a 'gender stereotype examined out of the context of legitimation of patriarchy an (elite) male power'; (2) as a marginalized position of some men (e.g. immigrants and old men) who are constructed as 'others' in opposition to Swedish white middle-class men; and (3) as the idealized and most popular men who support and practice gender equality (Hearn et al., 2012, p. 47; cf. Hearn & Morrell, 2012; Messerschmidt, 2012).

Another kind of critique of the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on is its lack of connection to men's practices, everyday life, identity constructions and self-presentations.

Hearn (2004) argues that the focus on masculinity is too narrow, and that there is a need for examining 'the hegemony of men and about men' in order to grasp the complexity that men are 'both a social category formed by the gender system and dominant collective and individual agents of social practice' (p. 59; see also Flood, 2002). Somewhat similar Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is insufficient for understanding how men position themselves as social beings. They emphasise two main problems with the concept: one is the lack of combining macro sociological understandings of gendered power relations with the micro psychological analysis of men's identities; another is that according to Wetherell and Edley hegemonic masculinity is basically connected to one style of masculinity and one set of ruling ideas. They argue that there is a multiplicity of sense-making masculinities and that the processes of constructing these are complex, contradictory and characterized by ambiguity and subtlety.

Mirroring these different kinds of critique the concept has been defined in a number of slightly different ways, emphasizing different dimensions. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) note that hegemonic masculinity:

> …embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. (p. 832)

Whereas Messerschmidt (2012) describes it as:

> …the form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide setting that structures and legitimates hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among men. (p. 58)

These definitions call for three conceptual clarifications:

(1) In Connell's work, hegemonic masculinity is not taken to be 'normal' in a statistical sense – only a few (if any) men actually practice or enact hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Nevertheless, hegemonic masculinity regulates masculinities as men strive to live up to the 'ideals, fantasies and desires' (p. 838) embedded in hegemonic masculinity and/or when they are punished for practicing masculinity in a form perceived as different from the hegemonic. However, as mentioned above, the relationship between hegemonic masculinity at the macro level and men's practice and constructions of sense-making masculinities at the micro level needs to be clarified.

(2) Hegemony is a specific form of dominance. The concept was coined by cultural Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who emphasized that cultural hegemony describes the dominance of the ruling class based on persuasion and the ability to make bourgeois class interests appear to be common interests (Gramsci, 1971). Consequently hegemony does not rely on overt exercise of raw power, but on discursive and cultural persuasion as well as 'consent and participation by the subaltern groups' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 841). By implication, hegemony is dynamic and open to change: Exactly because it does not rely on raw force or overt oppression, hegemonic forms of dominance successively change as they absorb, integrate and assimilate counter-currents (cf. Howson, 2008). Nevertheless scholars have raised the question whether Connell and

Messerschmidt have made sufficient use of the dynamic implications of the concept of hegemony, for instance by moving beyond the assumption of fixed categories and integrating questions of antagonism and resistance (Howson, 2009; Johansson & Ottemo, 2013).

(3) The concept of hegemonic masculinity was coined to grasp both men's patriarchal dominance over women, that is, to 'conceptualize how patriarchal relations are legitimated throughout society' (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 63), *and* the hegemony of some masculinities over others. In the words of Demetriou (2001): we may talk about this as *external* and *internal* hegemony. What Connell then attempted was in a sense to *grasp the dynamics of two different but interrelated and mutually constitutive relations of dominance in one theoretical concept*. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is thus fundamentally based on two interrelated and inseparable dimensions: (a) male dominance and oppression of women; and (b) hierarchical classification of masculinities. Thus the inextricable relationship between men's patriarchal dominance over women and the internal hierarchy among men has been a fundamental cornerstone in the theory on hegemonic masculinity. Grasping these two dimensions in one theoretical concept was a creative theoretical move, but also a reduction of complexity that, from our point of view, can be problematic. Of the three mentioned conceptual clarifications the third one – the assumed inseparable link between external and internal hegemony – is the most important to our argument here. In the following we will elaborate our criticism of the link between external and internal hegemony.

External hegemony: the relationship between patriarchal gender order and a hierarchy of masculinities

Connell has continuously emphasized the centrality of the two dimensions to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In the 2005 article, Connell and Messerschmidt explicitly discussed and reiterated the premise of general oppression of women and criticized that the patriarchal gender order had dropped out of focus in mainstream research on men and masculinities.

Messerschmidt (2012) later offered a clarification of the distinctiveness of hegemonic masculinity arguing that 'certain men may maintain power over other men (without legitimating patriarchal relations)' (p. 72). He thus suggested a distinction between hegemonic masculinity and two other non-hegemonic forms of masculinity – dominant and dominating masculinity – which do not necessarily legitimate men's power over women (Messerschmidt, 2010, 2012):

- *Dominant masculinities* are prevailing in a given social formation and are in that sense authoritative. Such masculinities by definition dominate other masculinities but only in the broad sense that any emphasized norm by definition tends to marginalize the non-normative.
- *Dominating masculinities* are involved in more overt, explicit or brute oppression of men who practice other masculinities.
- *Hegemonic masculinities* are characterized by dominance through cultural and discursive consensus as opposed to overt use of raw force, physical coercion, etc. Hegemonic masculinity furthermore legitimizes patriarchal gender relations.

Messerschmidt thus emphasized that the concept of hegemonic masculinity concerns only masculinities that contribute to legitimating patriarchal relations. In addition, he stressed the importance of an analytical grasp of non-hegemonic masculinities.

> To conceptualize fully hegemonic masculinities, then, scholars must unravel dominant, dominating, and other types of nonhegemonic masculinities from hegemonic masculinity. And this distinction between hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities further facilitates the discovery and identification of 'equality masculinities': those that legitimate an egalitarian relationship between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among men. (Messerschmidt, 2012, p. 73)

Messerschmidt's distinction between dominant, dominating and hegemonic forms of masculinity is constructive, as it complements and clarifies the concept of hegemonic masculinity. However, it may not solve the basic problem that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is inevitably woven into an understanding of social relations as basically patriarchal – that is, an understanding of external hegemony (patriarchal power relations) and internal hegemony (power relations between masculinities) as two sides of the same coin. The problem is not that Messerschmidt does not leave room for alternative non-hegemonic masculinities, he clearly does, but rather that there is very little, if anything, in the basic theoretical premises of the concept of hegemonic masculinity that allows gender researchers to explain how such alternatives may emerge. The premise of oppression of women therefore remains a theoretical axiom in analyses of hegemonic masculinity.

Although we do not consider it analytically sound to disallow the importance of oppression of women as central to the analysis of masculinity, we argue that it can be problematic to collapse external and internal hierarchy into one single theoretical concept which is basically anchored in an understanding of masculinity as legitimizing patriarchal oppression of women. There are certainly empirical instances where the most normative and legitimate forms of masculinity are in fact forms of masculinity that also legitimate men's dominance over women – indeed these instances may make up the majority of gender relations across the globe. But this empirical observation should perhaps not be translated into a theoretical axiom since it would be highly deterministic to assume that the most normative and legitimate form of masculinity in any society and at any historical point in time is also one that legitimates patriarchy. As an alternative we suggest that the question of power relations between men and women (and between men) is considered an open and empirical question related to different contexts and local settings. Treating external and internal hegemony as *separate analytical dimensions* might provide analytical sensitivity and an opening towards Connell's and Messerschmidt's (2005) argument that it is 'perhaps possible that a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic, as part of a process leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies' (p. 833).

A somewhat similar objection has been central to some strands of recent critique of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Beasley (2008a) has argued that:

> […] it is politically deterministic and defeatist to assume that the most dominant (in the sense either of most powerful or most widespread) ideals/forms of masculinity are necessarily the same as those that work to guarantee men's authority over women. (p. 88)

Beasley thus maintains that one cannot simply assume that prevailing masculinities also legitimize patriarchal gender relations (cf. Beasley, 2008b; Howson, 2008;

Messerschmidt, 2008). Elaborating on Beasley's argument we would add that it is empirically possible to point to contexts where masculinities that do not legitimate patriarchy – or at least do not do so unambiguously – are becoming dominant in the sense of being the most normative, celebrated and legitimate.

In Maputo, Mozambique, Groes-Green (2011) has identified the emergence of what he conceptualizes as 'philogenous masculinities'. According to Groes-Green (2011) prior research has highlighted harmful and oppressive forms of masculinity among African men, although more 'gender equitable masculinities' also exist in Africa. He thus identifies a philogenous form of masculinity among a specific group of young African men, which favours 'agency, security, respect and well-being' of female subjects (p. 3). He goes on to say that this shift in normative masculinity is caused by a number of underlying changes in gender relations in Maputo such as the influence of 'western' ideals of gender equality, new laws (including family laws that criminalize domestic violence), the political promotion of women's rights (at least discursively) as well a strengthening of gender equitable values in schools, which may have made traditional African female power more legitimate (p. 16).

Several authors have investigated whether new and more gender-equality friendly masculinities are emerging in Scandinavia. In Norway, Aarseth (2009) has argued that some groups of men are constructing new forms of masculinity that are supportive of the demand for gender equality and which result in a transformation of the gendered division of labour, in particular by taking an equal share of emotional and administrative work within families. According to Aarseth, feminist demands for gender equality, which are institutionally backed by a wider context of Scandinavian gender equality oriented policy, as well as changes in late modernity, which make these men opt for a more modern and aesthetically desirable lifestyle have contributed to this transformation. Similarly, Olsen and Aarseth (2006) have, in a comparative study of food and masculinity in Denmark and Norway, concluded that the recent interest in cooking among middle class men is not just a new expression of masculine privilege. On the contrary this new tendency points towards a more gender equal sharing of housework duties. In Sweden, Forsberg (2007) has investigated what he terms as 'involved fatherhood' and found that contemporary young fathers tend to emphasize emotional and practical involvement in their children's lives, that they distance themselves from traditional masculinity and that they embrace ideals of gender equality. It is however not quite obvious whether this discursive shift parallels a similar shift in the actual distribution of housework, and it can be argued that some of these shifts are perhaps better understood as shifts towards child-centeredness rather than an investment in gender equality (Forsberg, 2007). In Sweden Mellström (2006) and Holth and Mellström (2011) have investigated attitudes and practices towards gender quality and parenting among male engineers. A reorientation towards gender equality and new fathering discourses are found, including distancing from traditional patriarchal father roles. There are however ambivalences around these new orientations and the new ideals are not always put easily into practice (Holth & Mellström, 2011; Mellström, 2006). Across these Scandinavian studies it can thus be argued that traditionally gender-quality friendly Scandinavian welfare states have played a role for a shift in normative masculinity.

Although contradictions, ambivalences and complexities are undoubtedly central to understanding both the Scandinavian and Mozambican context the research summarized above does make it plausible that masculinities which can either reasonably be considered close to what Messerschmidt (2012) terms equality masculinities or which at least do not

contribute unambiguously to patriarchy are becoming authoritative and dominating in these contexts. These observations thus point to the necessity of treating external and internal hegemony as analytically separate dimensions.

In the same line Groes-Green (2011) has argued that gender researchers must equip themselves with concepts that allow a grasp of the existence of forms of masculinity that may dominate over other forms of masculinity but may not necessarily reproduce men's dominance over women; and he has argued that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not very useful for this purpose:

> Although Connell clearly leaves room for alternative masculinities, these are primarily defined in negative terms, as male practices and ideals that are subordinated to more hegemonic forms and therefore *it remains unclear how philogynous and gender equitable masculinities might develop*. (p. 95, emphasis added)

In one sense, Groes-Green is running into open doors. As noted above the concept of hegemony itself implies an openness to social change and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) are keen to emphasize this when they are argue that: 'Without a very clear focus on this issue of historical change, the idea of hegemony would be reduced to a simple model of cultural control' (p. 831) and point out that gender theory needs to emphasize that history is open ended, so that 'hegemony might fail' (p. 853). In other words, the theory proposed by Connell never ruled out the possibility that more equality-oriented forms of masculinity may prevail. However, Groes-Green (2011) opens an important debate by pointing out that hegemonic masculinity as a conceptual tool and analytical lens does privilege a perspective that reads men's dominance over women into masculinity. The basic theoretical premise of patriarchy on which the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based simply does not allow for an explanation of how alternative equality oriented masculinities might emerge. Therefore, more gender equal forms of masculinity will continuously be seen as (politically) important but theoretically inexplicable exceptions within this framework. In that sense the concept equips us epistemologically to see the points where external and internal dominance coincide, points where patriarchy is reproduced by dominant forms of masculinity.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity and the theory it is based on are therefore not very suited for answering Connell's and Messerschmidt's (2005) call for looking for changes in masculinity 'leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies' (p. 833) or Messerschmidt's (2012) call to identity forms of masculinity 'that legitimate an egalitarian relationship between men and women' (p. 73). We might at best be able to identify such masculinities but not to explain how they emerge or acknowledge when they are prevailing or perhaps becoming culturally dominant. It is thus telling that Messerschmidt (2012) after reviewing a wide range of literature which utilizes the concept concludes that the studies primarily identified 'construction of new strategies of patriarchal relations and thus redefinitions of hegemonic masculinities' (p. 70).

As an alternative there might be significant analytical gains from treating internal and external hegemony as two different dimensions that may or may not coincide. There are three arguments for this: (1) Treating the dimensions as separate would allow gender researchers to acknowledge contexts where dominant forms of masculinity do not legitimize patriarchy in an unambiguous way, or where changes in dominant masculinity towards more gender equality friendly forms are taking place; (2) Acknowledging such changes is a central prerequisite for identifying the social, historical and institutional

circumstances that condition, shape and cause such changes in masculinity. Pinpointing such conditions is absolutely central to a political feminist project of gender equality regardless of how one might otherwise define it; and (3) Treating these dimensions as separate would strengthen the possibilities of making multifaceted and complex sensitive analyses of power relations, in particular concerning how gender intersects with other social categories such as class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and age.

But why not use the distinction between hegemonic and nonhegemonic as suggested by Messerschmidt? As stated above the theoretical basis for understanding nonhegemonic masculinities remains fragile in Connell's and Messerschmidt's writings. Another issue may also be raised: From our point of view this distinction is too simplistic both at a theoretical and an empirical level because it presumes that it is clearly identifiable whether a given form of masculinity is hegemonic or non-hegemonic. At a theoretical level we will argue that in order to understand the complexity in gendered power relations there is a need for re-articulating Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity focusing less on deterministic and stable power relations and more on contradictions, antagonisms, ambivalences, ruptures and on-going struggles to create hegemonic formations (Howson, 2009; Johansson & Ottemo, 2013). At the historical and empirical level we will argue that in contemporary societies, masculinities are not simply oppressive towards women or not. Rather, structural changes as well as identity positions may often contain ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions. Some of the Scandinavian empirical research summarized above points to such ambivalences. Furthermore it is possible that Scandinavian welfare states may see the emergence of masculinities which both strengthen end weaken patriarchy, for instance highly educated men in corporate top positions who in their work promote a masculine culture which directly or indirectly excludes women, while at the same time are devoted to a high degree of gender equality in their family lives (Christensen & Larsen, 2008). In general terms we consider it plausible that the gender equality regimes of the Scandinavian welfare states, despite their substantial differences, may succeed, or are in fact already succeeding, in promoting masculinities which are either close to what Messerschmidt (2012) terms equality masculinities in some aspects or which are more ambivalent but at least do not contribute unambiguously to reproducing patriarchy (Holth & Mellström, 2011; Holter, 2007).

Despite Messerschmidt's contribution, we thus maintain that conceptual problems about the relationship between external and internal hegemony persist. This takes us to the next point on internal hegemony and intersectionality.

Internal hegemony: hierarchic power relations and differences between men

The second basic question we address concerns internal hegemony, that is, power relations between men and the hierarchy between different forms of masculinity.

As outlined above, the concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated within a feminist theoretical framework, which considers patriarchy as a gender system that facilitates men's dominance over and oppression of women. However, Connell emphasized that hegemonic masculinity was also based on a hierarchic power relation between men and different masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is thus distinguished from other masculinities in the current Western gender order: (1) subordinated masculinities, e.g. homosexuals; (2) complicit masculinities, e.g. men who gain from hegemony and obtain a *patriarchal dividend*[1] even if they do not represent a hegemonic

position themselves); and (3) marginalized masculinities, e.g. men who are disqualified due to their class or race/ethnic position (Connell, 1995).

Connell's work should be acknowledged for emphasizing differences, inequalities and hierarchies between men – a topic that was not considered central to gender research at the time Connell's theory was coined. The question remains, however, whether Connell's theoretical framework offers adequate analytical tools for an analysis of these differences. Another question is how to understand the complexities of gendered power relations if these are not axiomatically presumed to be linked to the legitimizing of patriarchy, that is, how can we develop a theoretical framework suited for grasping how complex power relations can not only strengthen but also weaken male privilege?

We suggest that an intersectional approach may offer methodological and theoretical tools suited for analyzing the complexity of differences and inequalities between men as well as between men and women. Nowhere does Connell explicitly use the term intersectionality, but there is nothing in her work that excludes the use of this theoretical concept. In fact, Connell (1995) writes in the first edition of *Masculinities*:

> Because gender is a way of structuring social practice in general, not a type of practice, it is unavoidably involved with other social structures. It is now common to say that gender 'intersects' – better, interacts – with race and class. We might add that it constantly interacts with nationality or position in the world order […] white men's masculinities, for instance, are constructed not only in relation to white women, but also in relation to black men. (p. 75)

Connell is thus well aware that gender is continuously produced and reproduced in interplay with other social categories, even though the verb 'interact' is preferred over 'intersect', for reasons we shall not speculate about here. In the reformulation by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), this openness to intersectionality is repeated, although briefly and in passing: 'every structural analysis defines new intersections of race, class, gender, and generation' (p. 845). Given the explicitly declared interest in hierarchies among men and in the importance of class, race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality, it is peculiar that Connell's theory includes relatively little systematic theoretical conceptualization of this interplay. We thus maintain that creating a dialogue between the concept of hegemonic masculinity and an intersectional approach could get masculinity studies at least some way to remedy this omission.

The argument that taking the concept of intersectionality seriously could be productive for masculinity research because it can strengthen the ability to grasp the complexities of gendered power relations is not new (e.g. Christensen & Jensen, 2010; Christensen & Larsen, 2008; Hearn, 2011; Mellström, 2003, 2009). The concept stresses the interaction between social categories such as gender, class, race/ethnicity, age and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1991). It is a travelling concept, which has developed across different contexts and disciplines. It originated in the USA, where black feminists put their particular situation in relation to gender and race in focus in order to challenge white middleclass women's dominance in the women's movement and black men's dominance in antiracist organizations (Collins, 1993, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).[2] The original American debate put relatively high emphasis on structural power relations (Collins, 1989). In the UK, the concept was developed within the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Phoenix, 2006; Squires, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2007). In Scandinavia, the concept was first taken up by postcolonial gender researchers (e.g. Andreassen, 2005; de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005) and poststructuralist gender researchers, especially in the humanities and

social psychology (e.g. Gressgård, 2008; Lykke, 2003, 2005; Staunæs, 2003; cf. Mørck 2005). Later, Scandinavian gender researchers in sociology and political sciences adopted the concept and emphasized that intersectional analyses must be able to encompass the interplay between structures and institutions at the macro-level and identities and lived lives at the micro-level (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Christensen & Siim, 2006; Jensen, 2006, 2010).

Across debates and differences, the overall aim of intersectional analysis has been to explore intersecting patterns between different structures of power and how people are simultaneously positioned – and position themselves – in multiple categories, such as gender, class, and race/ethnicity (Phoenix, 2011; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). In our view an intersectional approach refers to *a common analytical core i.e. that different social categories mutually constitute each other as overall forms of social differentiation or systems of oppression* (Collins, 1998; de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005; Mellström, 2003) *as well as in creating complex identities, where different identifications are always mutually constitutive* (Buitelaar, 2006; Staunæs 2003). Drawing on the work of Pringle (2008), we might add that this mutual constitution takes place in dynamic, paradoxical and often contradictory ways (p. 110). Furthermore, Choo and Ferree (2010) have argued for a process-centred approach to intersectionality in order to grasp complexity and multifaceted analyses. They emphasize the need to focus on dynamic forces rather than (closed and final) categories, 'racialization more than races, economic exploitation rather than classes, gendering and gender performance rather than genders' (Choo & Ferree 2010, p. 134; cf. Feree 2011).

But what does this principle of mutual constitution inherent to the concept of intersectionality mean to studies of men and masculinity, and how can class, 'race', ethnicity and gender be said to shape, form, perhaps even constitute masculinity? Basically, intersectionality scholars would claim that other forms of social differentiation, such as class, race/ethnicity and sexuality will influence, form and shape masculinity (cf. Choo & Ferree, 2010). The meaning, experience and power relations of gender and masculinity thus vary for different ethnic groups, according to class, age, etc. According to an intersectional approach, the same is true for social forms of differentiation on a systemic, structural or institutional level. Here it is argued that class, gender and ethnicity can be considered mutually constituted social systems (Andersen, 2005). As stated by Collins (1998), 'As opposed to examine gender, race, class, and nation, as separate systems of oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another' (p. 63). On this level the concept of intersectionality contains a theory of *institutional interpenetration* (Choo & Ferree, 2010). In other words, categories are not parallel or static, neither on an identity micro level nor on a structural macro level (Hancock, 2007, p. 70).

The category of gender is thus unstable and is successively altered by the intersection with other categories. As Kofoed (2005) puts it, 'categories can exaggerate each other or subvert each other or even cancel each other' (p. 44). One way to think about this is that class, race/ethnicity and sexuality can support the dominant position and male privilege of some men because it strengthens the legitimacy of their masculinity. Likewise, masculinity can intersect with other categories in specific configurations that challenge or even subvert male privilege. It can thus be argued that class, race/ethnicity, and sexuality can weaken or subvert the legitimacy of some men to the extent that they are either unable to gain any form of patriarchal dividend, or can only lay claim to a symbolic form of patriarchal dividend in the reduced form of being able to at least claim (hyper)

masculinity – and heterosexual conquest – in a social situation where very little else can be claimed. In such situations, the actual content of patriarchal dividend may be strongly reduced, while masculinity as a symbolic form and a dimension of social identity is exaggerated through the interplay with, for instance, blackness and working-classness; criminalized street cultures among socially marginalized ethnic minority men may provide an almost paradigmatic example (Bourgois, 1995, 1996; cf. Jensen, 2010). In other words, intersectional theory can help us grasp how being a man can be a category of disempowerment and lack of privilege rather than a privileged position.

Intersectionality theory also provides insight into the complex processes, which advance some masculinities to the top of the hierarchy and relegate others to the margin; in Connell's (1995) terms, how some masculinities become hegemonic and others come to be marginalized (Christensen & Larsen, 2008). As an example of such an intersectional analysis of masculinities, it can be argued that in a predominantly white society occupied with ethnic difference – such as contemporary Denmark – whiteness is central to hegemonic masculinities. However, in order to obtain legitimacy and symbolic power, white hegemonic masculinity needs to define itself in a relational opposition to other masculinities. In the current Danish and Scandinavian context, these 'others' are often ethnic minority men who are marginalized and made illegitimate. In a sense (minority) masculinity is constructed as Danish white masculinity's 'other'. These processes of marginalization and 'othering' – the relegation to the bottom of the hierarchy of masculinities – can be said to subvert several concrete dimensions of male privilege for ethnic minority men and result in marginalization in the labor market and in the educational system. To add to the complexity, ethnic minority men are often marginalized and 'othered' because they are (imagined to be) too masculine or (imagined to) have excess masculinity, that is, they are (seen as) carriers of atavistic, patriarchal, non-equality oriented forms of masculinity. In a sense, men and masculinities that are constructed as non-equality oriented are relegated to the position of hegemonic masculinity's other, especially when they are also working class and Muslim (Gottzén & Jonsson, 2012; Jensen, 2007).

Conclusion

The article has discussed some of the basic problems inherent in the concept of hegemonic masculinity and how it has been adapted and used in a number of different and contradictory ways. Below we summarize and discuss some of our main points.

We consider it problematic to maintain a general understanding of patriarchal oppression and at the same time argue for more nuanced and complex understandings of masculinities and for shifting and ambiguous gendered power relations (both between men and men and between different groups of men). In other words, it seems peculiar to take an interest in the complex gender relations concerning the hierarchies among men and at the same time assume a clear-cut patriarchal gender order *vis-à-vis* the relations between men and women. As we have shown empirical examples from the Scandinavian context demonstrate the need to develop more nuanced analyses. It can thus reasonably be argued that the gender equality regimes of the Scandinavian welfare states are succeeding in making masculinities dominant that do not in an unambiguous way contribute to the reproduction of patriarchy. Such 'new masculinities' may be said to dominate other masculinities in the sense that an emphasized norm by definition tends to marginalize the non-normative (internal hegemony) but it is

questionable whether they contribute in any clear-cut way to the oppression of women (external hegemony).

Thus, in our point of view much could be gained from treating external and internal hegemony as two different dimensions that sometimes coincide and sometimes do not. We find it problematic to focus (only) on points where these hierarchies coincide, and we find it problematic to reproduce a theory that either makes us see only these points or remains unable to explain and understand points where dominant forms of masculinity *do not* serve as a vehicle of men's power over women. Gendered power relations are dynamic, unstable and ambiguous, and dominant forms of masculinity do not always legitimize patriarchy. Therefore the question of men's patriarchal oppression of women must *remain an open empirical and contextual question*. Gender and masculinity researchers therefore need to develop theoretical frameworks that can grasp changes, complexities, ambivalences, ruptures and resistance.

We have also emphasized that contemporary masculinity positions are seldom either unambiguously equality orientated or oppressive towards women. Masculinities can be identified where men support and practice gender equality while they simultaneously contribute to the exclusion of women. This illustrates the need for analyses that can grasp nuances and complexities.

Furthermore, patriarchal gender relations may not be relevant to all studies of men and masculinities. Sometimes it may be relevant to focus only on the hierarchical power relations and differences between men. Even though Connell's theoretical concept has made it possible to investigate differences and power hierarchies among men, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been conceptually and theoretically tied to the question of whether specific masculinities contributed to the (re)production of patriarchal power relations. One of the unintended consequences could be that the more specific problem of power relations between men has not been sufficiently analysed. We think this dimension should be developed further, because such knowledge is central to understanding developments in masculinity in contemporary societies and to grasping social differentiation in society on a more general level. Here we have argued that a dialogue with an intersectional approach may be a fruitful way of supplementing and developing the concept of hegemonic masculinity. This approach makes possible multifaceted and process-centered analyses, where different social categories are understood as mutually constitutive. Forms of social differentiations other than gender (class, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality etc.) will thus influence, shape and construct masculinities. The focus will be on the dynamic power relations, and this focus can sharpen the grasp of changes within and overlaps between different masculinities rather than localizing fixed categories and power relations. Another advantage of an intersectional approach is that it is well suited for multilevel analyses that are able to grasp the interplay between structures at the macro-level and identities and practices at the micro-level. This means that overall gendered power structures are not excluded from men's everyday social practice, and the constructions of sense-making masculinities. It remains, however, an empirical question how they impinge on concrete social contexts.

In light of this discussion, the question remains whether it is feasible to continue using the concept of hegemonic masculinity? We have argued that Messerschmidt's division between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity only partially solves the problems we have raised, because it entails a perhaps too reductionist and dichotomous distinction between masculinities that reproduce patriarchal oppression and masculinities that do not; and because this distinction does not in itself provide any theoretical tools

that can explain the emergence of alternative gender equality oriented masculinities. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is so deeply anchored in the theoretical history of masculinity research that 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' is both undesirable and impossible. Rather, we suggest that gender researchers who use the concept pay due attention to: (1) the separateness of internal and external hegemony; (2) that power relations concern not only men's oppression of women but to a similar degree men's dominance of other men – and that these two forms of oppression do not necessarily coincide; (3) that an understanding of both dimensions of power presumes a dynamic approach to power as well as open empirical analysis of contextualized power relations; (4) whether the power relations of internal and external hegemony overlap is similarly an empirical question; and (5) that research that analyses complexity and contradiction between different masculinities should be strengthened.

Notes

1. Connell (1995) defines patriarchal dividend as 'the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women' (p. 79); this dividend can take the form of 'honor, prestige and the right to command' as well as material privileges (p. 82).
2. It can be argued that intersectionality thinking predates the construction of the actual term 'intersectionality'. For decades, black feminists in the USA and Britain have worked with the interplay between gender and race (Anthias & Yuval-Davies, 1983; Collins, 1989; Combahee River Collective, 1977; hooks, 1989). Likewise, Marxist feminists have emphasized the interplay between gender and class (Hartman, 1981; Walby, 1990).

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