

Masculinities and Fatherhood

Perspectives from men in prison

Florencia Fernández

Department of Sociology
Bachelor's Thesis, SOCK01 - 2012
Supervisor: Terese Anving

Abstract

This thesis consists of a study whereby five imprisoned men were interviewed regarding their perspectives on masculinity and fatherhood. Drawing upon critical gender theory, masculinities theory (R.W. Connell, M. Kimmel and J. Hearn among others) and intersectional approaches to social studies, the author analyzes the interrelationship between notions on masculinity and fatherhood, from a point of view of discourse and practices. The dialogue between masculinity and femininity, as well as the position of women is also addressed. The contradictions that characterize the interviews, both in terms of discourse and the practices described, reveal the complexity of masculinities as a social construction and the challenges that hegemonic masculinities and dominant ideals imply for a large group of men. The thesis concludes that recognizing and fostering a multiplicity of masculinities and forms of fatherhood may be a positive change in the direction of dissolving social hierarchies.

Key words: masculinity, fatherhood, hegemony, prison, gender, intersectionality

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the invaluable insights provided by the five men who offered me the chance to sit down and talk to them. Thank you for sharing a piece of your stories with me and for thereby making this essay possible. I would also like to thank the Staff at Kriminalvården for their assistance in conducting the interviews.

To my supervisor Terese Anving, thank you so much for your immense dedication, guidance and encouragement.

Lina Gustafsson, thank you for saving me with your proofreading and constant support. Thank you Stefan, Malena, Mamá, Papá, dear friends and family for all the love and motivation.

Table of Contents

- Abstract 1
- Acknowledgements 2
- Table of Contents 3
- 1 Introduction 4
- 2 Objective and research questions 5
- 3 Previous research 6
- 4 Theoretical framework 8
 - 4.1 Brief historical view of Masculinities as a field of study 8
 - 4.2 Feminist theory, Gender and Masculinities 9
 - 4.3 Conducting studies of Masculinities 11
 - 4.3.1 Revision of the concept of Hegemonic masculinity 12
- 5 Method 14
 - 5.1 Interviews 15
 - 5.1.1 Access to the field and the Population of the Study 15
 - 5.1.2 Conducting the interviews 17
- 6 Analysis 18
 - The relationship between masculinities and fatherhood 18
 - 6.1 Becoming a man 18
 - 6.2 Becoming a father 20
 - 6.3 Presence and absence 23
 - 6.4 The difference between motherhood and fatherhood 25
 - 6.5 An intersectional understanding of economic issues and the impact on the family .. 27
- 7 Conclusions 32
- Bibliography 34
- Appendix 1 36
- Appendix 2 39

1 Introduction

In a seminar on Elimination of Violence against Women in November 2011 in Argentina, the situation of women in prison was addressed, referring to the gender-based violence commonly exerted upon them. The serious hinders for imprisoned mothers to be close to their children were put forward and given thorough consideration; but some questions remained unasked: what are the hinders imprisoned men encounter when exercising their fatherhood? In what ways does the focus on women/motherhood represent a backlash for women by strengthening ideas of a natural or intrinsic relationship between both notions? Is fatherhood a duty, a right, or both?

After a reform in Swedish legislation in 2010¹, parents serving a sentence in the Prison system can have their infant child live with and be taken care of by them, regardless the parent's gender (always considering the child's best interest first). This reform, progressive and quite unique, follows a series of Swedish legislation aimed at achieving gender equality through welfare policies (Klinth & Johansson, 2010).

This thesis emerges from an interest in current debates about gender equality policies, as well as in theoretical understandings of specific gender dynamics. The conference and the legislation reform mentioned above gave way to the context in which this thesis is situated, i.e. the specific hinders for men to be fathers that result from imprisonment (such as limited visiting time or limited telephone conversations) and what thoughts and ideas these hinders trigger for them.

¹*Fängelselagen* 2010:610 Chapter 2§5.

2 Objective and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to gain further understanding of masculinities as a social construction and how the men in question construct their identity as men and fathers in their specific context. This is done by analyzing their accounts in dialogue with theory of gender relations, institutional and social practices, and material conditions. The thesis main focus is to put together two concepts, *masculinities* and *fatherhood* in the context of imprisonment, and apply feminist and critical gender theory onto the perspectives of five men I interviewed.

The main research question is: How do men in prison construct and interrelate masculinity with fatherhood? And what strategies do they make use of to *become* men and fathers?

When conducting the study, I have put forward other secondary questions in order to have a broader analysis of the topic: In what ways do these aspects of a man's life (masculinity and fatherhood) influence one another? What happens with fathers and their relationships with their children when they have a limitation to exercise their fatherhood, such as being in prison? How do their notions of fatherhood relate to current social norms, both in their desires, wishes and the gender practices that they have incorporated through life, not only in their own personal structures but in external structures such as working life, paternity leave, etc.?

By conducting interviews and focusing on the theoretical framework based on key work on studies of men and masculinity, I hope to answer some of these questions and put forward new enquiries that may arise.

3 Previous research

Studies on masculinities and fatherhood, both theoretical and empirical, have been conducted in many parts of the world, across various disciplines². In Sweden, some authors have written extensively on the subject and discussed the relationship between fatherhood and masculinity, especially with regard to the debates on gender equality and father leave. While the theoretical framework includes researchers from various countries, in this section I name a few Swedish researchers in order to contextualize the thesis in this country. Imprisonment per se is beyond the limited scope of this work, but still functions here as a specific factor affecting the experiences of the interviewees. Further, studies of masculinities and fatherhood can encounter several differences and similarities depending on what discourses are considered legitimate. Therefore, I here name three books that represent some of the research conducted in Sweden.

Gender researchers Roger Klinth and Thomas Johansson are two of the authors in Sweden that have written extensively on the subject. In *Nya Svenska Fäder*³ (2010), they provide a historical overview of the debates on gender equality that have taken place in Sweden since the 1970's, the implications on welfare policies and the results on the figures regarding father leave. Starting with data showing that men only take 20% of the total parental leave, the authors are interested in discussing the case of fathers sharing the leave equally i.e. 6 months or more (2010:22). They aim at finding out how they reason about fatherhood and what factors have led them to spending that particular time with their children. Apart from the historical review, they analyze a series of interviews with fathers that have taken parent leave and in this way provide primary material. The authors take into consideration questions of gender and class in their analysis, by mentioning intersectional perspectives. However, the population of the study is not very widespread in terms of class or ethnicity.

²The limited scope of this thesis allows only for a selected discussion of previous work. For detailed accounts on historical studies of masculinities and also on fatherhood, see Connell, 2005; for critical role theory see Pleck, 1981; a comprehensive study on masculinities and social welfare is Pringle, 1995. For an intersectional analysis in Swedish welfare and family politics, see Fink & Lundqvist, 2009.

³“New Swedish Fathers” (my translation).

Thomas Johansson and researcher Jari Kuosmanen edited *Manlighetens många ansikten- fader, feminister, frisörer och andra män*⁴ (2003). In this volume, the focus toward a stronger presence of “other voices” is more emphasized, and the book is, according to the authors, strongly influenced by queer theory, among others. In this volume, two articles by researcher Lars Plantin are published, which provide insightful analysis on the importance of linking class and economy to debates and analysis of fatherhood and welfare policies.

In order to understand the third aspect of my research topic, imprisonment, I considered sociologist David Wästerfors’ book “*Fängelsebråk*”⁵ (2007). In this work, Wästerfors conducted a study of the conflicts that arise in prison from an interactionism perspective based on theories of Erving Goffman, Georg Simmel and Randall Collins. He analyzes the interviews and arrives at the conclusion that the character of the prison as a total institution, the self and masculinities converge in a specific behavior where conflict arises from interaction but not to the degree usually described e.g. in media. The change from conflict to calmness is analyzed from the mentioned perspectives and the presence of a gender perspective by analyzing the roles of prisoners and guards results useful.

These three studies are mentioned here in order to very briefly illustrate some of the research already existent in the areas that I will analyze in my thesis. As advanced in the introduction, the element of imprisonment adds another dimension to fatherhood and masculinity since it is a hinder (limitations to be physically present as a father) and also influences gender relations within the prison environment, the tasks performed in there, etc.

⁴“The many faces of manliness- fathers, feminists, hairdressers and other men” (my translation).

⁵“Prison fights – Analysis of conflicts in prisons” (my translation)

4 Theoretical framework

In “Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities”, sociologists Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R. W. Connell present the approach applied in their work, which I have found useful to guide my study:

“By a specific, rather than an implicit or incidental, focus on the topic of men and masculinities; by taking account of feminist, gay and other critical gender scholarship; by recognizing men and masculinities as explicitly gendered rather than non-gendered; by understanding men and masculinities as socially constructed, produced and reproduced, rather than as somehow just “naturally” one way or another; by seeing men and masculinities as variable and changing across time (history) and space (culture), within societies, and through life courses and biographies; by emphasizing men’s relations, albeit differentially, to gendered power; by spanning both the material and the discursive in analysis; by interrogating the intersecting of the gender with other social divisions in the construction of men and masculinities”. (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, 2005:3)

This framework contains several elements that I consider to be fundamental in order to conduct research about masculinities. By understanding gender as a social construction, influenced by history and economic relations, essentialism is avoided. Even if this essay does not elaborate on history, the focus on construction of a masculine identity assumes its vital role. The three authors mentioned, therefore, rely on an analysis based on gender as a system of power relations, the processes through which masculinities are produced and reproduced, and the intersectional perspective which casts light upon the influence of other factors in the life of a person, such as class and race/ethnicity. It was important for this research to pay attention to the various preconditions with which the respondents form their understanding and their explanations of what masculinities mean to them and how they relate to this concept.

4.1 Brief historical view of Masculinities as a field of study

Kimmel, Hearn and Connell argue that gender as a research field has focused on women and has also been developed by women, making gender visible in academia and forums through feminism: Gender studies thus made visible and challenged the position of men, and now, the field of masculinities which resulted from feminist theories of patriarchy and gay studies (focusing on the hierarchy of masculinities due to sexual identity) has been active for 20 years (ibid 2005:1; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:831). As Connell argues in her key work “Masculinities” (2005), the first studies of masculinities within social science were based on

the “sex role” framework, exemplified by Talcott Parsons’ functionalist sociology in the 1950s and his study of instrumental (masculine) and expressive (feminine) orientations. This first generation of sex role theorists, Connell argues, were of the view that, due to socialization, sex role learning provided harmony and stability and ensured necessary social functions (ibid, 2005: 23). This political complacency, continues the author, is what triggered much of feminist theory in the topic (though the sex role framework was retained), and the assumed inherent concordance between norm and personality (ibid, 2005: 23; 25). The problems with sex role theory included lack of power perspective, and ethnocentrism among others (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, 2005:5).

As Connell suggests, sociology was also the home to the break from sex role theory, where gender is understood as constructed in interaction; therefore, if there is yet no settled paradigm for work on masculinities, the following are common themes being studied: the construction of masculinity in everyday life, the importance of economic and institutional structures, the significance of differences among masculinities and the contradictory dynamic of gender (Connell, 2005:34-35; Kimmel, Hearn and Connell:2005:5).

4.2 Feminist theory, Gender and Masculinities

Anthropologist Susan Paulson provides the following definition of gender:

Gender is a sociocultural system which structures and gives meaning and power to the roles and relations of men and women [...]. Gender influences upon the construction of actors and social coalitions; on the composition and functioning of institutions; and in the development, distribution and use of tangible and intangible assets [...]. (Paulson et al, 2011. My translation)

This definition, like the framework mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, brings into consideration the importance of gender as a social construction, as formative of institutions and social relations, and as influential upon economic structures. It has a strong identity component, which is similar to the statement that gender gives meaning through which one becomes socially intelligible (Butler, 1990:23; Holster, 2005:20).

Consequently, masculinities and femininities are also social constructions, because they are “defined as a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:843). It is relevant to enquire, argues humanities researcher Todd Reeser, *who* creates masculinity and where it comes from, because considering that it can be created only by the family, or media, or any other means becomes a simplification of its complexity (2010:17). Said complexity can be understood not only in

terms of what creates it but also in terms of how this process actually takes place. As Reeser asserts, masculinity is created, changed and challenged *constantly* (2010:18, my emphasis). Thus, masculinity is a cultural project, meaning that it implies work, effort and strategies which are based on a normative masculinity and, in this way, masculinity seems to be an effortless attribute of the privilege it simultaneously justifies and disguises (Gardiner, 2001:17).

Gender professor Judith K. Gardiner's abovementioned quote addresses patriarchy and its intrinsic relation to masculinity. Following this view, men's everyday experiences are to be located within the broad framework of patriarchy, and within the aspect of large-scale social structures and processes (Connell, 2005:39). Putting together patriarchy and masculinities is, however, neither automatic nor simple. Gender, unlike patriarchy, appears more often as a concept in research and this is not surprising, argues sociologist Øystein Gullvåg Holter, since the structures of patriarchy (or structural gender inequality) and its effects are obscure and difficult to recognize as such (such as gendered violence and rape; wage differences, etc.). In what could arguably be understood as a defense for conducting gender studies with a more clear or visible focus on patriarchy, Beverly Skeggs argues that "[f]eminist theories are usually more adequate to understand the lives of women than those which do not take women and power into account" (Skeggs, 1997:24); for this reason, it is important that studies of masculinities are conducted with the aid of feminist theory, so that the main arguments of gender, power and women studies provide a comprehensive analysis.

The combination of fatherhood and masculinities represents an interesting object of study, in my view, because it leads to challenging the gender ground of European philosophy, as Connell explains (2005:164), whereby men are *rational* beings, as opposed to *emotional* women: this has affected science as well as popular culture and social life, as men are to devote their time to a specific group of tasks, which have culturally and socially translated into providing the household's livelihood, taking care of government tasks or even defending the nations militarily, among other activities. Women, on the other hand, were assigned in this gendered division of labor, the role of guarding the created private space of the home, and through the role of care providers and moralizers of men and children, provided an "antidote to the anxieties generated by a market economy" (Lewis, 2000:31). Motherhood (and the role of women in the private sphere with the consequent exclusion from the public sphere) became in turn interpreted in terms of "nature", ascribing the nature/culture dichotomy to the gender(ed) question of parenthood.

Gardiner explains that several feminist theories do not see violence and other traditionally masculine attributes as natural (as does e.g. radical feminism) but rather as developed through social practices, for example, Nancy Chodorow (Gardiner, 2005). These theories consider that masculinity is negative even for men; that men would benefit from equal responsibility of children, and that this would decrease the woman's caring burden. I agree with Gardiner that equal parenting measures often seem very optimistic in their plausibility and their effects, but she suggests that more research about the impact on men, women and societies should be conducted.

4.3 Conducting studies of Masculinities

When putting masculinities studies into practice, one must bear in mind the fact that studying men and their actions and later labeling them as masculinities is a mistake, states Connell, and the reasons that lead to this mistake are at least the following three: 1) the researcher has already a previous idea of what masculinity is; 2) the researcher has already categorized people into the Man/Woman binary, and 3) defining masculinity in terms of what men empirically do is a narrowing of the concept which excludes the analysis of masculine (or feminine attitudes) regardless of who displays them (Connell, 2005: 69). This is the same criticism that Judith Halberstam puts forward when she states that studies of masculinities have almost exclusively dealt with men and maleness, and that they usually revolve around the "social, cultural and political effects of male embodiment and male privilege" (2001:345).⁶

The constructivist nature of masculinities inherently leads to plurality. However, apart from studying its variations, it is important to analyze this variety in terms of power relations. Connell has put forward the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" in order to recognize relations of alliance, dominance and subordination, i.e., the gender politics within masculinity (Connell, 2005:37). Hegemonic masculinity is described as a derivation of Antonio Gramsci's concept regarding class relations.

⁶I have conducted this study on masculinity and fatherhood by interviewing imprisoned *men*. Despite the limited scope of this thesis, I consider it very relevant to listen to Halberstam's (2001) request to move beyond the automatic relation man/masculinity and include other embodiments and other possibilities, such as female masculinity or lesbian fatherhood. Connell and Messerschmidt argue the need to reframe the concept masculinity and include notions of embodiment and its importance in the social context. This is, the authors argue, a consideration deeply influenced by queer theory (2005:851).

“Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005:77)

Connell states that hegemony can only be established if there is a correspondence between cultural ideals and institutional power, collective if not individual. It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, which is the main constituent of hegemony.

Nevertheless, since the dominance of a group of men may be challenged by women (and other groups of men, I would add –see discussion below), hegemony is a historically mobile relation (Connell, 2005:77). A key point is that the concept hegemonic masculinity stems from the recognition that there exists not only diversity within masculinity but also relations, of alliance, domination and subordination. In her words: “Hegemony does not mean total control. It is not automatic, and may be disrupted- or even disrupt itself. The relationships constructing masculinity are dialectical (2005:37).

A related concept is thus subordination, because within the overall framework of hegemony, there are specific gender relations between groups of men, and according to Connell, the most contemporary case in European and American society is the subordination of homosexual men to heterosexual men (Connell, 2005:78). Complicity is another component of Connell’s theoretical framework; the number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small, yet the majority gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, i.e. the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (Connell, 2005:79). The last concept that completes the framework is marginalization, which is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group (Connell, 2005: 81). These concepts mentioned here are what constitute Connell’s framework to conduct studies, analyzing both hegemonic/subordinated masculinities and marginalization/authorization on the other.

4.3.1 Revision of the concept of Hegemonic masculinity

Two elements in Connell’s discussion of the concept Hegemonic masculinity must be problematized. First of all, it is the binary men/women Connell takes for granted what complicates her definition. However, in an article from 2005, Connell together with James Messerschmidt undertake the task of revising the concept of hegemonic masculinity, considering comments and criticism put forward by various authors. Precisely in connection with this binary, Connell and Messerschmidt revise this positioning and cast more light upon the challenging of masculinities by other men, as well as the complicity of groups of women

in maintaining the status quo. The importance of including women is not only such because of power relations and complicity. Women, they argue, are central in the construction of masculinities and therefore the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities must be paid attention to (2005:848).

An interesting reflection has to do with the durability of non-hegemonic patterns of masculinity, which in the authors' interpretation can be due to well-crafted responses to marginalization (2005:848). Finally, they add that "gender relations are always arenas of tension, and a given pattern of hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic to the extent that it provides a solution to these tensions, tending to stabilize the patriarchal power or reconstitute it in new conditions." (2005:853). This role of hegemonic masculinity is very important to underscore, not only in terms of patriarchal relations as described by feminist theory but also in connection with other categories that are subordinated.

The importance of subordination lies in the relationship existing among masculinities and the various ways in which masculinity as a notion or as an ideal is pursued. In Holter's words: "The men at the top of the social hierarchy may use mainly gender neutral ways to achieve their aims. For example they may use their economic or political influence, and the men below will use what THEY have – namely, their gender" (Holter, 2005:20). This quote is linked to an intersectional perspective on hierarchies. That is to say, categories such as gender do not stand by themselves and do not influence a person's social life or situation alone. Instead they interact with other categories and more truthfully describe the complex group of factors that have an impact on the power, agency, and capabilities of a person. Like economic historian and Paulina de los Reyes and sociologist Diana Mulinari argue, intersectional perspectives develop an analysis that is able to establish the power relations in society and the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources (2005:11). In the end, these perspectives have to do not only with legitimizing the liberatory character of science, but also, understanding knowledge and academic practice as embedded in the social life and political struggles (ibid, 2005:10).

5 Method

In this chapter I will describe how the empirical part of the study was conducted. Before that, however, I would like to present a reflexive discussion regarding social research that has been a constant thought throughout this work.

Situating knowledge

The topic of the thesis has obviously been very interesting for me since the beginning. Still, daunting concerns about how the study would be conducted, ethical considerations and how I would best put forward the respondents' thoughts and feelings were something I reflected upon constantly.

As a sociology student, I have come across theories and concepts that the respondents did not know of. During the course of the interviews, I had to change some words in order for my questions to be understood (e.g. “masculinities” for “manhood/manliness”). However, and as I expected, despite the academic language that sometimes seeped through, the respondents had very clear and strong views and opinions. With this discussion, I am referring to the position of the researcher (student), whose knowledge is considered “legitimate”, whereas the knowledge of the *knowers*, to borrow sociologist Beverley Skeggs' term (1997:17-19), can be interpreted, contextualized, explained.

My position as a student conducting a university study was analyzed in various ways by the five respondents⁷: John wondered if their answers would appear on magazines, or said that he expected a photographer to be in the interview. On repeated occasions, Daniel told me “write in your thesis that it's all very hard for us”. What they were saying is clear to me: I was a *means* for their words. *They* are the ones who know what is happening to them, how they are feeling, and what their families are going through. They are the knowers.

Michael, another respondent, referred to experience and knowledge by saying: “Maybe you are smarter than me, but maybe I am smarter than you”. Every conversation, the research interview in particular, is affected by the different positions that the participants occupy. Research, unlike previous beliefs, is far from being objective (Ryen, 2004:30). Michael made

⁷ A detailed presentation of the respondents appears in the following pages.

it clear that we both had knowledge, even if about different things. As Skeggs argues, there is an abundance of cultural, social, economic and educational capitals that must be taken in consideration (1997:17).

Methodological reflexivity is inevitable if one wants to challenge power relations and categories of analysis that mask prejudice and privilege (ibid, 1997). Patricia Hill Collins, when presenting the cross-discipline she named Black feminist thought, states that bringing this group and all others that have not been considered voices in sociology provides an insight to aspects of reality that had remained hidden or unacknowledged (2004 [1986]: 104). In no way will I be able to describe the specificity of the respondents' lives in this short and limited essay (Skeggs, 1997:21), but by questioning my position, my objectives and the ways in which I have conducted the study I believe I am one step closer to being fairer to the five men who let me borrow their words.

5.1 Interviews

5.1.1 *Access to the field and the Population of the Study*

The fact that I decided to conduct the interviews with men in prison implied an expected difficulty concerning access. Entering a prison was obviously not easy, but I had the opportunity to conduct these interviews thanks to help and interest of the staff at *Kriminalvården* [Swedish Prison and Probation System], who, methodologically speaking, functioned as my gatekeepers.

One Children Ombudsperson at Kriminalvården forwarded my presentation letters (see Appendix 1) to authorities in several prisons in the country, one letter aimed at the authorities and the other at the persons that could be interested in participating in my study. One prison authority replied, with the confirmation of five men being interested in talking with me.

The population selection was not directly conducted by me. My first contact with a project leader at a Swedish City Library led me to the Ombudsperson at Kriminalvården. This person established contact with several prison authorities who in turn informed several imprisoned men about my study. The five men who replied have children and were interested in talking with me about their insights on fatherhood, masculinity and imprisonment.

It is worth mentioning that when I selected this population for my study, I was advised of the challenges it would imply to obtain access. While I was able to enter the prison and talk to

the men that offered their help,⁸ I was not able to conduct a selection based on any specific criterion established by me⁹ and the selection was thus conducted *for* me. All of them have very good contact with their children, which I assume is the main reason why they accepted to participate in this study.

Because of the sensitivity of the respondents' situation (which is further discussed below in the section regarding ethics) and in order to avoid the slightest possibility for their identification, I have replaced their names with five names common in English.

I will present the respondents briefly, so that the five different life stories can be identified by the reader of this thesis whilst the respondents' anonymity is ensured as much as possible. The five respondents are serving long sentences, ranging from 6 to 14 years. All of them have done most of the time, and are soon to receive electronic tagging¹⁰. They are all allowed home leave now, and some of them are already in contact with the Swedish Employment office.

Robert is in his early 50's. He came to Sweden from a European country as a teenager and completed his university studies here. After that, he got involved in drug dealing and has served sentences more than once. He has two daughters, but has contact with only one of them. He is separated from his wife.

Anthony is in his 30's. He was born and raised in a Swedish big city, and has three daughters. He worked for several years in his own company until a series of economic losses, after which he got involved in criminality and was eventually convicted. He is separated from the mother of his daughters. Despite being born and raised in Sweden, in the course of the interviews he positions himself, at least culturally, as belonging to his parent's country of origin (non-European).

Daniel is in his 40's and has three children. He is from a European country and came to Sweden as a young adult. He does not have a trade, but he has already obtained employment through the Swedish Employment Agency. He is married with the mother of his children.

⁸One of the respondents, Daniel, told me that the staff who suggested their participation mentioned that they would be of great help to me and my study. The same respondent repeated a few times that he was very glad to *help* me and he hoped his answers were *useful*.

⁹Possible criteria for selection could have included age group, type of crime committed (due to the limitations of this study, had the crime been violence against one's own children or their mother would have been more complex and thus problematic to tackle).

¹⁰When a person is in the final stages of their sentence, that is, in transition from prison to community, they may be allowed to have home visits and have nominal employment, and in these cases they are monitored through an electronic device.

Michael is in his 40's. He has served sentence for five years. He has one child from his ex-wife and two children with his present wife, and has very good contact with all of them. He is born in a non-European country and came to Sweden as a child.

John is in his 40's and came to Sweden when he was a teenager from a non-European country. He is married, has five children and has very good contact with them. He has worked in the hospitality sector and will return to his previous job after his time in prison.

During their time in prison, all the respondents have worked in various activities, such as a gardening shop. Some of them have studied courses at university, languages and computer skills. Daniel explicitly applied to a cook program in order to obtain an education, but was denied this study.

5.1.2 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were scheduled so that they would suit the respondent's activities, such as work or lunch breaks. They ranged from 55 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes and were conducted in the prison, in a room especially arranged for visits. The prison staff welcomed me and allowed me into the room, where I waited for every interviewee. All five interviews were recorded in order to facilitate my full concentration in the conversation, and I informed my respondents on how I would guarantee their anonymity. None of them objected to their voices being recorded, but one of the respondents assured me that even if unconsciously, the view of the recording machine would remind him of police interrogations and would probably affect his answers. Nevertheless, he encouraged me to record the interview.

I had previously drafted an interview guide (see Appendix 1), in order to conduct a semi-structured interview. The benefit of applying this method was flexibility in the conversation, allowing for freedom for digressions and associations that I had not foreseen in my guide. At the same time, having a guide allowed me to stay on focus and make sure that all my relevant topics were covered for my later analysis.

The recorded interviews were transcribed word by word for my posterior analysis, indicating pauses, repetitions and doubts in order to be able to interpret meanings behind the words that would appear in a text. The quotes included in the analysis were translated into English, respecting the same criteria used when transcribing the interviews.

6 Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyze the interviews by identifying the following subtopics for analysis: Becoming a man, Becoming a father, Presence and Absence, The difference between motherhood and fatherhood, and Intersectional understanding of economic issues and their impact on the family.

The relationship between masculinities and fatherhood

6.1 Becoming a man

What does it mean to be a man? And what is the relationship between being a man and masculinity? These questions, to some of my interviewees, seemed either a tricky question or downright absurd. It was taken for granted that masculinity and being a man was the same, as well as obvious.

There were many interesting moments in the conversations, and the topic masculinities, whilst difficult to grasp, turned out to be discussed through various statements, assumptions, imaginaries and resulting contradictions. I took these contradictions very seriously, meaning that their very presence suggested to me the construction of masculinities, its discourse. It is precisely within discourse that power and knowledge merge, and therefore it is not possible to expect consistency: rather, what should be expected is a multiplicity of discursive elements related to various strategies (Foucault, 1976:100 ff). This is also because masculinity does not represent a specific kind of man, but rather “a way in which men position themselves through discursive practices” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:841).

Judith Halberstam wonders “[d]o heterosexual men experience their masculinity as authentic most of the time or any of the time?” (2001:353). Some recurrent elements describing the idea of masculinity were mentioned in the answers:

“Men are the stronger ones and they often get jobs that require strength and so... and then, unfortunately it is men who get these positions in politics or as bosses, because they are men. But I think that a man, in my view, is the strong one, in relation to the woman, who is... the beautiful one. Vulnerable. A man cannot be hurt, he cannot cry, you know. He is the one that must be strong in all situations. But a woman is more sensitive, needs more love”. [Anthony]

I interpret Anthony's use of command words (*cannot* be hurt or cry, *must* be strong) as an indication of the discourse of what 'real men' are supposed to be like. He is very much aware of a gender system and how it creates hierarchies, and, like in the quote above, he repeatedly used words such as *unfortunately* when describing said privileges. In my analysis, this use of words as if lamenting the status quo can be the consequence of a discourse in Sweden where privileges of men over women are to a great extent condemned. Therefore, it is possible that whether Andrew agrees with men's privileges or not, he feels the need to challenge women's subordination, even if only discursively. When Connell describes the concept complicity, she means that men that would be identified as 'alternative masculinities' still can show a behavior that indicates complicity with hegemonic masculinity (2005); still, this does not mean that men cannot be aware of power differences and even be critical of them (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Florencia: What does it mean to be a man?

Michael: To be sound, to be smart. And to be able to handle everyday life. That's a man. If you are hungry, you can cook. Women usually do the cooking, but men also have to know how to cook. How to do the laundry. That's a man. If women can, we can too. A man has to be able to manage with not having it all...

The "dialectical" relationship between notions of man and woman are abundant in the material, such as this reply by Michael and even Anthony's words above. What defines a man is not only argued in terms of natural traits and behavior, but also in comparison to the definition of what constitutes a woman. These definitions are produced within a binary men/women, and make reference to Butler's argument that this binary constitutes a way to make the world (and ourselves) intelligible (1990:23).

At some point during the conversation with Anthony, we talked about masculinity in the prison context:

"I don't think that you go around thinking "I want to become a man". You are born a boy, and then hormones, thoughts... but I think a whole lot depends on upbringing. You are taught to behave in certain ways, hide other ways. You cannot show some sides of you if it can lead to you getting hurt. Like here in this environment. Here you have to stand for yourself. So... you have different masks. Maybe you are not who you seem to be, but you need to take that role. Then, you become friends, you relax, find your way around. Then, you can start changing masks. But still... always with your claws ready. [...] When I open the door, I put on this... role [makes a gesture as if it were a jacket]. When I

am in my room, I breathe out; take that “role” off, watch TV”. [Anthony]

I find this quote startling, considering the description of the behavior in prison and the connection to Erving Goffman’s theatre metaphors (see Wästerfors, 2007). Later on, Anthony makes a similar comment regarding life outside prison, being out in a bar and trying to pretend to be someone in order to be able to talk to girls comfortably. Further, he describes the importance of building muscles, of showing through one’s body that one is not someone to argue with. The fact that Anthony’s analysis of the construction of masculinity is so closely attached to the body and the physical space provides an interesting example of the way a man’s body and masculinity is established as an automatic relation. In this way, what becomes clear is that men that do not have the ability to work out these strategies (putting on manly roles as if they were jackets, controlling the division between the private space where one can be oneself and public space with its constant negotiations) fail to be considered men “fully”. In this way, regardless which hegemonic characteristics are legitimate in each context, hierarchies and subordination appear among men. Another important result is that, following Halberstam’s argument, the relationship between a female body and masculinity is not automatic and becomes problematic and challenging.

6.2 Becoming a father

In the following quote, Anthony replies to my question regarding the moment he became a father by describing the change in his life brought about by the birth of his first daughter:

One was young and dumb, and, like all young people, used to party a lot on the weekends and stuff like that... but then my daughter was born and... suddenly I had to assume the responsibility, I could no longer do whatever I wanted. Everything’s changed. All of a sudden one becomes mature, one had to take on the father role. [Anthony]

Daniel responded in the following way:

F: How did you feel when you became a father? How did it affect you, how did you change?

Daniel: It felt good... one cannot describe the situation... if one hasn’t been... if one doesn’t have children. I was totally confused.

And this was John’s response:

John: One got more responsibility. One had to be responsible. In a way, one becomes a father. The father role comes into the picture...

Florencia: You said earlier that when you got married you became a man...

John: Like... you are more responsible. When you get married you become responsible. You take responsibility for the whole family... you have your own apartment, you do the shopping... you become a man, one can say. You are a man. You are not childish anymore.

All the respondents used exactly the same word when I asked them what happened to them the moment they had their children: responsibility. One can say that this answer is not surprising. Feeling confused, happy and shocked at the same time was probably also an expected response. Responsibility may thus seem a platitude. Still, I want to focus on this word because I interpret it as a connecting thread in the discourse of what constitutes a father and, also, what constitutes a man.

As Anthony states above, one suddenly becomes mature and takes on the father role. I asked several questions regarding the “father role”, intending to find out how it is interpreted, understood and put into practice by the five men. The meaning of responsibility suddenly starts changing, and contradictions arise as the conversations progress. What I interpret is that what happens suddenly, *becoming a father*, is the adjustment to pre-conceived ideas and ideals of what a father should be. When Anthony says that he (felt he) had to stop partying- whether he did it or not- and when John says that one can no longer be childish, notions of age, maturity and adulthood come into play, intertwined with their own life stories:

I actually think that one has *A* father role, or at least one thinks one has one, until you actually become a father. Then, you become a father, and everything you imagined disappears all of a sudden, unexpectedly. [Anthony]

Another factor that was very much present in the interviews was the change in ways of being fathers, compared with the past (their own fathers) or with changes in social norms:

Florencia: Do you think there exists an ideal of what fathers should be like?

Robert: No, I don't think so. I think it's all up to every person. One cannot make generalizations, because we are different people. So one can't say, you should be like this or like that. But there are, yes, rules that we have... for example I was raised in [country] but also the time was very different, compared with nowadays. In that time, normally, the father, you know, was out working and came home every now and then... but still there was a sense of safety, because if something happened, it was him one turned to. To get help.

Florencia: Do you think this ideal has changed over time?

Robert: yes...it's different.

Florencia: In what ways?

Robert: You know, the elders, you had to respect them. And you could get punished sometimes. I was hit by my father sometimes, when I got bad grades or did silly things. It was... physical punishment, you know. I can't accept that, I would never do that to my child. [...] I try to be friends with my daughter, so that she can trust me. I don't want her to obey and say, yes, father. We have to be able to communicate and all that. Be friends.

- -

"In my case I am the youngest sibling... and it has always been, you know... mom, mom, mom. Dad was just there. Like, the father provides for the family, he is there when he is needed, he played sometimes. And it was the same with my first daughter, because her mother and I got divorced when she was one year old. I had no idea... I was not even present during the delivery [...] But it was different with the other two daughters. I had suddenly become more of a father according to Swedish traditions. I think I became a person... I had never expected. But it was positive. [Anthony]

Anthony and Robert point at the way different circumstances can lead to a different type of fatherhood. Robert is clearly reflecting on the way changes in fatherhood have occurred in terms of generations, in that an authoritarian role is no longer seen as positive, e.g. when he mentions his condemnation of physical punishment. John, at various points in the conversation, complained about the current role of the state, by saying that

"It's the police who own our children now. We have no control over them. We are scared even to touch them. And if they do something wrong, they come and blame us".

There are two ways in which I see a connection between fatherhood and masculinities in this section. First of all, fatherhood is described as a characteristic, or a behavior of men. They can choose in what ways to be fathers and even the behavior can alter depending on the circumstances. As will be discussed below, masculinity is exactly the opposite; it is described as a static trait, constituent of men as if by nature (Reeser, 2010:23). The fact that fatherhood and masculinities are not described on similar terms is in my opinion an indicator of the way gender (and therefore masculinity) is taken for granted as a static characteristic of human beings. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt argue, gender orders construct multiple masculinities, whose patterns vary by class and generation (2005:835). Fatherhood, also a gendered concept, is understood in its variety, but with responsibility being a basic denominator, which in my interpretation has to do with the strong connection of fatherhood and the idea of masculinity.

A second aspect of John's argument is the interference of the state in his fatherhood. Connell argues that the State is a masculine institution, because it's "organizational practices are structured in relation to the reproductive arena" (2005:73). As I have stated earlier, hegemonic masculinity is a flexible concept and should be approached relationally. I would like to put forward, therefore, the possibility of interpreting John's view of the State and the police as in relation to a hegemonic masculinity, which does not allow him to be a father fully.

6.3 Presence and absence

As mentioned above, being a father is constantly described by the respondents in terms of presence and absence. This can be related to changes in attitudes toward fatherhood, which depend on realizations, arguments about maturity or a sense of attachment that developed with time, such as the case of Anthony. The tension between presence and absence is also explained through descriptions of lifestyles and behavior that affected the kind of relationship the respondents had with their children/families. Again, the contradictions here are many, and I interpret them as ways of approaching the questions, coming to terms with one's life and doing such a reflexive ransacking of their own experiences because of my interviewing them.¹¹ Also, ideals of fatherhood, as discussed earlier, seem omnipresent, which make the interviewees be very careful about what they reply.

Florencia: How did everyday life look like with your family before prison?

Daniel: I did every possible thing! I was all the time with my children and I have always had very good contact with them and my wife. At some point we were separated, but got back together- it didn't work very well but then it all began again.

Florencia: And what about the activities in the house? Did you participate in them?

Daniel: We didn't share! (laughs). But in the country where I come from, it's the wife that takes care of the house chores. But now I have changed. We share the work, we help each other.[...] Now we share, I help as much as I can. When I go out on home visits, I take care of it all.

Florencia: And what was it like before?

Daniel: It wasn't like that before. I have to be honest, it wasn't. I had a lifestyle which was a bit... I was out a lot. I have changed a lot now, during this time in prison. How can I describe it? I used to

¹¹ Throughout the interviews, I often felt that the respondent's attitudes during the conversations shifted between an explanatory tone, telling me how things *actually are*, and an apologetic attitude, especially when telling me about their absences. In some ways, therefore, the respondents interpreted my position as an interviewer in different ways and answered accordingly.

think a lot about being out [of the house]. But now I think only about my family, my children and wife.
[...] Maybe I have become a grown up (laughs).

Daniel's words show an insight about his own behavior that has taken some time to come to his mind. Like all the respondents, the time in prison has made them change the way they think, the priorities they have had earlier, and how they intend to be in the future.

Florencia: Do you think there is an ideal of how a father should be?

Daniel: Men have a role. First and foremost, that they do not end up like I did. That they take on full responsibility for their family, in every way.

Florencia: How do you feel in relation to that ideal?

Daniel: Like I said, I have lived a life that I have chosen... but, made the wrong choices. And I regret what I have done.. I regret it, but what's done is done. I can't undo it, we go into the future. But I try to do differently. To become a better father.

Unlike the results put forward by Klinth and Johansson (2010) and the ones shown by Plantin (2003a), where fathers' explanations to the importance of personal development (the child as guide, teacher), or even in relation to their careers, what is abundant in my material is the shift in time from a more absent fatherhood to a future planned in terms of compensation –guilt towards their children and wives- and also in terms of a personal realization, a change in priorities, so as to avoid being separated from their families again (still, the focus is on the injustice for their children and wives).

'I was responsible but I haven't always been there. I owe them a lot. I owe my wife a lot. I have to make it up to them. I will draw a line around us and separating what is outside. Now I want time with them. No more friends, no more drugs, nothing, nothing, nothing. I have lots of time left. I want to be with them. It's not a joke, she has done everything. She was always there, helping, helping. Took care of the children, the food. Now it's my turn. She can rest a little.' [Michael]

Daniel contradicts himself in that he first says that he has been close to his children all the time, and has had good contact with them and his wife. But later on he refers to his previous "lifestyle", which apparently kept him from doing so. It is actually one of the things he regrets more, and which becomes his objective once he is released from prison, to make up for his mistakes, to sever all contact with previous relations with friends and relatives that led him to

the kind of life that affected his family so much:

D: I am no longer interested in being outside on the street and all that. I want to be a family person, more than I was before. Maybe I have grown up a little [laughs]. Well, I was a grown-up before too... but I did not reflect on the mistakes I was making. Now I have had plenty of time to think what I have done wrong and that's why I have changed so much in the past 6 years I have been locked up".

F: You speak of being more family-oriented. In what way are these "new" thoughts, this new way of thinking, influenced by your children?

D: They influenced a lot, it's important, because there is no one that can help my family apart from me. It is only me who can help them. Nobody else.

From these words, at least two things can be identified. On the one hand, when Daniel says that nobody else can take care of his family, he may be referring to the responsibility he assigns to fatherhood, (similarly to some of the other respondents), and therefore, only he can provide for his family and take care of them. This can be connected mostly to the economic sphere, since his wife does not work. In this way, a family arrangement based on the father as provider and the mother as child-rearer proves problematic when an unexpected situation (in this case, imprisonment), arises. One may argue the extent to which imprisonment is completely unexpected if one deals with activities legally banned by a country's laws. Still, to Daniel imprisonment was not something he feared or considered either likely or serious. On the other hand, a gender pattern becomes salient. Some of the respondents, such as Daniel in the case mentioned, seem to imply that women and children cannot "survive" without them. Yet, they obviously have.

6.4 The difference between motherhood and fatherhood

Connell and Messerschmidt argue that there is a tendency to conduct men's studies and studies of masculinities focusing on them, as if women were not part of the analysis (2005:837). I have not been able to interview women for this study due to its limited scope, but I have had this warning in mind, especially when discussing Halberstam's writing. In this section, I provide an analysis of the relationship between motherhood and fatherhood as constructed and explained by the respondents.

"With my first daughter, I was still very young. The oldest is 15, so I was quite young when she was born [...]. With my other daughters it was different; I was at home, since I worked on a freelance basis. I took six months parental leave and she [the mother] worked. It's the best, because then I could be

really close to my daughter, I could be there the first time she crawled, and her first steps... I was both mother and father during the day, until she came back from work. It was really rewarding".
[Anthony.]

Anthony infers here that there is an intrinsic difference between being a mother and a father, and, in Anthony's case, the mere presence in the house during the day and witnessing his child's development seems to be a characteristic of 'mothers'. While breastfeeding is an obvious reply as to why mothers are different than fathers, Anthony also mentioned that he used to be 'one of those guys' who were disgusted easily by all things corporal. Yet, a profound change came about with this second daughter, and by taking care of her daily, he became used to be in contact with the 'dirty' aspects of child-rearing, such as changing diapers or sucking snot from his daughter's nose with his own mouth. The fact that he got used to it and was proud of it implies the assumption that mothers have a different reaction to these phenomena, and that there is something 'bodily' about it. The embodiment of gender is a crucial topic but is beyond the scope of this thesis. What his answer also suggests is that the reaction to the bodily aspects of child-rearing, and prolonged to most of what is said to naturally constitute a woman, can change, that adaptability is a characteristic of human beings and that therefore those divisions among men and women are purely cultural.

Regarding housework and the gendered division of labor, Daniel expressed the following:

Daniel: I am lucky that I have found a job [which he will work with in a few months] and I try to make it easier for my wife. I want to take responsibility for the whole family. I will take care of the children, everything, everything, everything. Still... I have limitations, but when I am out on home visits, like I said at the beginning. I take responsibility at home, I want to clean, do the dishes, I want to cook, just make it easier for her, so that she feels a bit more secure when I am home, it's not easy for her. She has done enough, taken care of the three children, send them to school, wait for them, cook, do the laundry and the dishes, and nothing apart from that. It's tough, it's not easy. She is being more punished than I am. It's not easy to be locked up in prison, but when you think about the difficulties she has... she is a woman, but she is manly, one could say... because she takes on all the responsibility all the time.

It's important here to mention the fact that Daniel's wife is not doing anything different from before. She is doing all the work that she probably did before, since Daniel admitted to not being present at least in what concerns housework and everyday child-rearing activities. Maybe the difficulty is the lack of money. Being the (incumbent) head of the family is the reason why she suddenly becomes *manly* in Daniel's eyes.

Similarly, John argues that women are supposed to do work at home and men should do hard work because of muscles and strong arms and backs. So it is natural that women will take the responsibility to take care of the children. He continues:

‘But that it’s actually work too. When I was taking care of the child, when I had parental leave [because he had higher income than his wife]. I did everything, changed diapers, cleaned the house, prepared the meal so that it would be ready when she came home...do the shopping. I mean... that’s a lot of work! There is no man who can manage to do it! And they can do it! I almost feel sorry for them’ [John]

The work women do is seen as impossible, yet he did it throughout six months. The fact that he first argues about questions of strength and fragility and later on described the incredibly hard work that raising children involves is a contradiction that can be explained by the ideology behind the gendered division of labor which fluctuates between recognition and dismissal of domestic work. I believe this fluctuation is a constant in the way many men express themselves about women, similarly to the ‘Madonna/whore’ paradox (see e.g. Edwards, 2007).

Women are presented and described by the respondents as being of key importance for their exercising of fatherhood. Either because thanks to the good contact with them they get to see their children often or because they have worked at home and raised the children. The fluctuation between idealizing their partners/wives as the reason why their children have survived their absence, yet maintaining that it is the father’s domain to be responsible for the family is undoubtedly perplexing. I am of the view that this is however very much present in the discourses of what ‘man’ and ‘woman’ represent, and the fact that these notions have helped us understand the world makes it very difficult to get rid of these assumptions and see how relations are functioning in different ways right in front of our eyes.

6.5 An intersectional understanding of economic issues and the impact on the family

The intersection class and gender (and race/ethnicity, as discussed below) are arguably inherent in the notion of parenthood. In the case of my respondents, the resources they and their families rely become decisive for the possibility of exercising their fatherhood. The possibilities to meet their children in person, talk to them and play with them, depend highly

on the economic situation of the family. The visits to the father in prison cost money, and in some cases, decisions about how often these visits can be paid depend solely on budget, not on willingness or even the need to meet. Both Daniel and Michael tell in detail the strategies they make use of in order for the family to be able to meet:

Florencia: Is it easier for them [wife and children] to come and visit since they live nearby?

Michael: well... easier...we book a cab for them because they cannot come here with the bus. It's a long way from the bus station. And the younger child is 4 and cannot walk that long, like two km. Only a few hundred meters. So, they come by taxi and go back by taxi. It's like 400 kronor every time they come here. So we do this, they come and visit twice a month, then I go once on home visit and the fourth visit we rest [laughs a little]. I mean our budget... our economy rests a little. But so far so good... nothing to complain about.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Previous research), the interrelation of class, economy and parenthood is not always present in studies about fatherhood. The discussion about statistics for father leave in Sweden, for instance, are often focused on gender equality, comparisons with other countries and the state of welfare policies. On introducing “New Swedish Fathers”, Klinth and Johansson put questions regarding the (low) 20% of leave taken out by fathers in Sweden: they are interested in knowing who these men are and why they say *yes* to father leave instead of *no* (Klinth and Johansson, 2010:22). This book, as the authors argue, is based on a study with men who belong to a middle-class group, with stable economy and decisions over their work life (ibid, 2010:204). But this is not the case of the respondents in this thesis.

At various points, the respondents mention their (ex)wives or (ex)partners, and from these accounts it is possible to ascertain that another structural difference that influences the relationship between masculinity and fatherhood is the stratification among men and women in society, as well as the class position of the family in question. In the quote below, Anthony describes a situation that he believes is widespread in Sweden, namely the decision of fathers taking father leave in relation to their salary:

If we talk about Sweden, the father role is almost like shared responsibility. The government wants parents to share the leave. In the best case, they want the mother to go back to work after half a year or so. But there are still many people who say, the father earns more, so the best is that she stays at home and the father works. Unfortunately it is like that. [...] it depends on the situation. If you live in a house and have lots of bills... then the mother stays at home, it's impossible for the father. (Anthony)

From his words, it is possible to see that the family economy influences the decisions around parenthood, leave and care work. Therefore, the underlying relation is one of gender and class. For example, researcher Lars Plantin describes in his article (2003) how the respondents to his research calculated the amount they would receive from the State and how much they would have to pay back depending on the salaries of the mother and the father and in that way decided who would take the parent leave. One of the respondents states that money is not important when one has enough to pay the bills (2003:173), and this seems to be the same kind of reasoning behind Anthony and his ex-partner's leave-taking and when he refers to other people.

Both Plantin's research results as well as Anthony's understanding of the situation around him point at structural differences in which women have in general lower salaries. This has an unavoidable effect on the family arrangements and could be considered both a result and a cause, or directly, a cycle. One can wonder what underlying assumptions about gender and caring work are legitimate so that the fact that women are the most represented group taking parental leave is unquestioned. Taking for granted this probably *unfair* but still *natural* arrangement –to borrow Anthony's phrasing- shows in my view that the structural difference between women and men in the labor market can be said to be based on ideas of what women and men should do but is also decisive in the reproduction of this arrangement. It is therefore not surprising that changes in salary equality, careers and job opportunities occur (if ever) very slowly.

An important discussion that arose while interviewing Robert pointed at the connection between capitalism and gender and pointed towards the argument that masculinities (as stemming from that connection) is often negative even for men:

Florencia: yes, I think it's interesting to understand in what ways there is a connection between fatherhood and masculinity... because there are ideas about the father being the authority, and the mother is the one who takes care of the children, the fathers go out and work...

Robert: Yes, I think ... it depends on how you live, economically speaking. The economy is important. It has become something very important for this generation [...] We think too much about the economic part, and we forget the rest. The rest one had. There is always someone making a sacrifice. It's often fathers who make the sacrifice, you know, to be able to pay for things...

Florencia: when you say sacrifices, what do you mean? What is it a man loses?

Robert: To be with the family. That's the problem. [...] Because this is how the system works, the

capitalist system works so that you have to consume as much as possible. Consume and throw away.

I believe this quote is very interesting because of the connections that Robert establishes between gender order and a capitalist system, in the same manner as Holter suggested (in Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:839). This could be interpreted as the negative aspects of capitalism on women, men and families. Now this is based on a heterosexual family, it would be interesting to further research the impacts of capitalism in other family constitutions.

The fact that respondents are in prison is not only a hinder in the way they can exercise their fatherhood (just like economic hinders). It also plays an important part in the social position of the person, and the consequences therein. Charles Tilly, when discussing his concept “durable inequality”, explains that the creation of inequality is relational, because it takes place in the social interactions between people and groups of people and only to a lesser extent on individual choices and decisions (quoted in De los Reyes and Mulinari, 2005:34):

“It’s not easy for us to get jobs outside. We have to fight a lot. We have to be tougher than ever. We have to struggle five, six times more than ordinary people. When an employer sees that I have been in prison for seven, eight years. What do they think? Should I employ them? But to get social security after seven years... it’s... we have our honor also. We can’t fall so low”. [Daniel]

Their position in society after prison will be difficult, maybe even more than before they were arrested. And it is certainly connected to their ideas of masculinity, when Daniel says that he has honor, that he has to be able to work. But also this position will affect his fatherhood, because Daniel is particularly worried about the fact that his children are bullied at school and told to “shut up” because their father is in prison.

I would also like to draw attention to one last factor that was present in the interviews, that is, the constant othering processes due to preconceptions of religion and “race/ethnicity” expressed by the five men. These processes will not be analyzed here due to the limits of the thesis and because it was not an initial element of my research question. I do think, however, that these discussions illustrate even more the multiplicity of masculinities and the constant change, depending on the dominant type of masculinity in a specific time and place (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:838). Whilst the respondents are very much aware of the Swedish fatherhood discourse, a variety of models, ideals and practices are discussed and criticized by them, and I believe this represents an interesting space for future research.

To conclude this discussion on intersectionality, I would like to agree with Holter’s argument that “relations among masculinities do not result from the exercise of personal

power by men over women only; at least we must factor in the institutionalization of gender inequalities, the role of cultural constructions, and the interplay of gender dynamics with race, class, and region” (cited in Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:839).

7 Conclusions

In this thesis I have qualitatively studied the relationship among men, masculinities, and fatherhood in the context of imprisonment. I have sought to understand how masculinities are constructed and what role fatherhood plays in this construction. I have also analyzed the ways in which discourses about what is characteristic of “men/fathers” and “women/mothers” are contradictory, not only in speech but also in practices.

The thesis therefore draws on a theoretical framework including researchers R.W. Connell, Jeff Hearn and Michael Kimmel and their work on masculinity studies. The relevance of feminist and queer theory is considered by including approaches by Judith K. Gardiner and Judith Halberstam. Gender is understood as a cultural system which structures and gives meaning to social life and institutions, and to personal identities. It is within gender that notions of masculinities arise. It has been a key element of my positioning to apply an intersectional approach to the study, focusing on the interrelation of gender and masculinities with other sociological categories that enable social analysis, such as class and ethnicity. The emphasis on this thesis has been on gender and class, and only superficially touching upon ethnicity. Therefore, a deeper discussion on ethnicity and its impact in the masculinity-fatherhood relationship needs to be pursued in future studies.

The analysis consisted of analyzing subtopics, such as becoming a man, becoming a father, the construction of women’s role in this relationship, and an intersectional understanding of their position. “Becoming a man” agrees with the theories that constitute the framework of this thesis, that masculinity is discursively constructed as an authentic, inherent characteristic of men and their man bodies, even if the same discourse puts in evidence contradictions. It further provides examples of how this construction also brings about hierarchies and relations of subordination among men. The section “Becoming a father” provides a different discourse, since fatherhood is understood as a role that is learnt, and that has to do with maturity and a sense of “responsibility”. Fatherhood almost takes men by surprise, unlike masculinity. The relationship of these two notions is explored by the respondents, by showing the inherent position in the family a man has and the duties this entails. This position is challenged by their reality, i.e. the fact that they are in prison and their wives are able to and actually do take the position of head of family. A further challenge to

the intrinsic connection masculinity/fatherhood are the various accounts of the tasks performed in the house typically done by mothers and fathers and how these can largely vary depending on external factors. Finally, the intersectional discussion aims at providing room for the experiences of men/fathers that do not belong to the middle class, and how their experience of fatherhood varies drastically from images otherwise portrayed in Swedish media and culture. All in all, the results include paradoxical practices with regards to what the respondents identify as masculinity and fatherhood as well as a constant fluctuation between what is seen to be stable categories, natural attributes and social constructions.

I have tried as much as possible to respect the words of the respondents and interpreting them with the aid of theory has been a challenge. Similarly I have put effort in describing the respondents' conversations bearing in mind the sensitivity of the subjects we discussed, the difficulty of the situation they are in, yet balancing this with their own responsibility for everything they have said. Many contradictions appeared in our conversations, and that has been interpreted as a sign of the complexity of discourse and social life, and the extent to which one is able to reflect upon one's behavior.

By interviewing men in prison, I have tried to counterbalance the said abundant information on middle-class fathers in Sweden and attempted to give a room for men who do not belong to that group to voice their views and talk about their experiences. Daniel told me to write down "that it's not easy for us". It is not easy for them, being men and fathers, feeling that the responsibility towards their families is so difficult to put into practice.

For them, there is no chance to rewind time. There is only time past, time done and time to come. And thinking of the future of these men, and the society in general, this thesis arrives at the conclusion that accepting a multiplicity of masculinities, a multiplicity of fatherhoods can be a way of dissolving the dominant ideals that so few people can attain.

Bibliography

- Butler, Judith (1999). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. [New ed.]
New York: Routledge
- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. 2. ed. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Connell, R.W. & Messerschmidt, James. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity. Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), pp. 829-859
- De los Reyes, Paulina & Mulinari, Diana (2005). *Intersektionalitet: kritiska reflektioner över (o)jämlighetens landskap*. Malmö: Liber
- Eduards, Maud (2007). *Kroppspolitik: om moder Svea och andra kvinnor*. Stockholm: Atlas
- Fink, Janet & Lundqvist, Åsa (ed.) (2009). *Välfärd, genus och familj*. Malmö: Liber
- Foucault, Michel (1990). *The history of sexuality. Vol. 1, The will to knowledge*.
Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Gardiner, Judith Kegan (ed.) (2001). *Masculinity studies & feminist theory: new directions*.
New York: Columbia Univ. Press
- Gardiner, Judith Kegan (2005). Men, Masculinities and Feminist Theory. In: Kimmel, M. S., Hearn, J. & Connell, R.W. (ed) (2005). *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Gullvåg Holter, Øystein (2005). Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities: Direct Gender Hierarchy and Structural Inequality. In: Kimmel, M. S., Hearn, J. & Connell, R.W. (ed) (2005). *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Halberstam, Judith (2001). The good, the bad and the ugly: Men, women and masculinity. In: Gardiner, Judith Kegan (ed.) (2001). *Masculinity studies & feminist theory: new directions*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press
- Hill Collins, Patricia (1986). Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” reprinted in: Harding, S G. (ed.) (2004). *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*. New York,

- N.Y.: Routledge
- Johansson, Thomas & Kuosmanen, Jari (ed.) (2003). *Manlighetens många ansikten: fäder, feminister, frisörer och andra män*. Malmö: Liber
- Kimmel, Michael S., Hearn, Jeff & Connell, R.W. (ed) (2005). *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Klinth, Roger & Johansson, Thomas (2010). *Nya svenska fäder*. Umeå: Boréa
- Lewis, Gail (2000). 'Race', gender, social welfare: encounters in a postcolonial society. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Paulson, Susan & LundResearchTeam (2011). "Pautas conceptuales y metodológicas. Género y dinámicas territoriales". Working Document N° 84. Rural Territorial Dynamics Programme. Rimisp. Santiago, Chile.
- Plantin, Lars (2003). Mänsföräldraskap. In: Johansson, Thomas & Kuosmanen, Jari (ed.) (2003). *Manlighetens många ansikten: fäder, feminister, frisörer och andra män*. Malmö: Liber
- Plantin, Lars (2003). Det "Nya faderskapet" – ett faderskap för alla? In: Johansson, Thomas & Kuosmanen, Jari (ed.) (2003). *Manlighetens många ansikten: fäder, feminister, frisörer och andra män*. Malmö: Liber
- Pleck, Joseph H. (1981). *The myth of masculinity*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P.
- Pringle, Keith (1995). *Men, masculinities and social welfare*. London: UCL Press
- Reeser, Todd W. (2010). *Masculinities in theory: an introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Ryen, Anne. (2004). *Kvalitativ Intervju. Från vetenskapsteori till fältstudier*. Malmö: Liber
- Skeggs, Beverly (1997). *Formations of class and gender: becoming respectable*. London: Sage
- Wästerfors, David (2007). *Fängelsebråk: analyser av konflikter på anstalt*. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Appendix 1

Letters of presentation of the study - (Translated from the original in Swedish)

Hello,

My name is Florencia Fernández and I am a Sociology student at Lund University. I am currently finishing my BA diploma and writing my final thesis, and due to my interest in gender studies I have chosen to conduct a study on perspectives about masculinities and fatherhood by people who are doing time in the Swedish prison system.

My objective is to conduct interviews and analyze in what ways fatherhood and masculinities are linked together, what strategies people make use of to exert their fatherhood and, in a wider perspective, how gender is understood and constructed by the participants. Doing time is a hinder in being a father at least when it comes to the time and opportunities they have to meet their children. I am interested in learning about their thoughts regarding their absence, not only in relation to the feelings of their children, but also the feelings they experience being away.

I intend to contribute as much as I can to the understanding of gender and fatherhood, how roles change and in what ways masculinities, as a cultural project, influence a man's life in positive and negative ways.

I would like to interview 10 men who are willing to participate in this study. Every interview will last approximately 1 hour and will be recorded.

Ethics and anonymity

The participants may interrupt the interview if they no longer want to partake in the study.

Names, locations and any other information that can lead to their identification will be used in the study.

The recorded material will be kept so that no one except me can access it or identify the participants.

The interviews can be conducted in Swedish, English and Spanish. The final work will be written in English.

Below are my contact details

[Address] - [e-mail] [Telephone]

Thesis supervisor at Lund: TereseAnving, Terese.Anving@soc.lu.se

I include a letter that can be distributed to people who would like to participate in the study.

Many thanks in advance for your help,

Best regards, FlorenciaFernández

Hello,

I am a Sociology student at Lund University. I am currently finishing my BA diploma and writing my final thesis, and due to my interest in gender studies I have chosen to conduct a study on perspectives about masculinities and fatherhood by people who are doing time in the Swedish prison system.

I would like to conduct interviews and analyze in what ways fatherhood and masculinities/manhood are linked together. Therefore I am interested in interviewing men who are currently in prison and have children and who would like to discuss with me what it is like to be father and be away in prison. How does this situation affect you? What does it mean to you as a man and as a father?

Your opinions are very important for me to study the place of fatherhood in a man's life, and more specifically when a man is in prison,

I would like to interview men who are currently in prison and who:

- Have children
- Are interested in talking about fatherhood and manhood
- Would like to participate in a 1-hour long individual interview

INFORMATION ABOUT INTERVIEWS AND DATA COLLECTION

The interviews can be conducted in Swedish, English or Spanish

The interviews will be recorded but will not be listened to by anybody else besides the interviewer. Only short quotes will be used in the final article.

The interviews will be kept without names, locations or other reference information.

The participant may interrupt the interviews if he no longer wants to partake in it.
If you would like to participate, contact the staff so that a meeting can be arranged.
Many thanks in advance for your attention and hopefully we can meet in an interview.

Best regards,
Florencia Fernández

Appendix 2

Interview guide - (Translated from the original guide in Swedish)

Background

Could you tell me a little about yourself (that you would like to share with me). Eg: age, your previous experiences, moments in your life?

Family: How many children do you have? When did you become a father?

How did your life change then? In what ways did you change? How were you influenced by becoming a father? How did it feel like?

How have you spent your time with your children? What is the contact with your child/ren like now that you are in prison?

Fatherhood

What are your thoughts about being a father? What does it involve for a person? How is a person affected/influenced by the fact that one becomes a parent? Do you think that being a mother is different from being a father? In what ways?

How would you describe a “typical father”? Do you recognize yourself in that description? Do you pursue that ideal of “typical father”? In what ways?

Masculinity

What makes men “manly”? In your opinion, what constitutes a man? What do men do to be manly/ men? Do you think that all men want to be manly?

Throughout your life, how have you experienced the idea of manliness/ masculinity? Have you done specific things in order to achieve an ideal of masculinity?

In what ways are masculinity roles /men’s roles destructive or positive? Is it possible for a person to get rid of these “roles”

Imprisonment

How is fatherhood affected by the fact that you are presently in prison? Have your previous views on fatherhood changed since you have been in prison?

How has the contact with your children been like? And the overall organization in the family? Have you participated in the projects for fathers (such as the Storytelling project, etc.?) What was your participation like? Did you feel a connection, companionship with other fathers?

Have you discussed fatherhood and your feelings about it with other fathers in the prison? Is it easy to speak to others about this?

Is there any question/ topic that you think I should have asked? Is there anything else you would like to add to our conversation?

Thank you very much for talking to me and helping me with my study!