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Finding Fathers in Business: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Fatherhood Practices in the Swedish Business World

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Abstract

This thesis sheds light on a particular group of men in Swedish society: fathers working in business. According to R.W. Connell's theory, these men hold significant power as businesses become increasingly globalised. Moreover, Connell states, they are bearers of a new form of hegemonic masculinity: transnational business masculinity. This form of masculinity is characterised by a prioritisation of work and marginalisation of family life and stands in stark contrast to the Nordic gender equality model, which places emphasis on both parent's participation in the care for their children.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis, this thesis analyses articles from two major Swedish business magazines. The thesis investigates whether there is a discourse representing the values of transnational business masculinity, whether other discourses figure in a hierarchical relationship to this type of discourse and whether these discourses embody views of Nordic gender equality. Besides identifying a discourse representing transnational business masculinity, the thesis found four other discourses, which were called Work-life balance, Break, Investment and Equality. Though some discourses were more common than others, this thesis did not detect a hierarchical relationship. Rather, it observed several competing discourses, several ways of making meaning of paternity leave and fatherhood practices.

Keywords: Paternity Leave, Gender, Masculinities, Transnational Business Masculinity, Critical Discourse Analysis

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1. Introduction

For the past decades, a particular group of men in society have caught the attention of researchers, policymakers, practitioners and the media in Sweden and many Western societies: namely fathers. The recent surge in attention is commonly attributed to the perceived changes in attitudes to, and practices of, fatherhood. At least in part, these changes are a result of what sociologist R. W. Connell has identified as “crisis tendencies in the gender order”¹ and the subsequent changes in masculinity norms. Safe to say, fatherhood practices are currently being reshaped and reconceptualised, by media and men who practice fatherhood. The traditional family – where the mother stays at home to care for the children and the father works to earn money – is becoming obsolete.

When it comes to gender equality, private family matters have become profoundly political. Professors Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard emphasise how policies and family law concretely affect families in their everyday lives, not just in terms of leave practices, but also by implicitly contributing to the shaping of norms in parental practices.² Furthermore, Professor David H.J. Morgan indicates that individuals have a preconception of family life that has been partially shaped by “legal prescription, economic constraints and cultural definitions.”³ In addition, Finnish researchers Emilia Kangas, Anna-Maija Lämsä and Marjut Jyrkinen observe in their study on men who are fathers and working in business that mass-media plays a key role in shaping norms surrounding fatherhood and paternity leave practices. Different discourses, i.e. different worldviews and ways of making meaning, compete in these media outlets. For instance, Kangas, Lämsä and Jyrkinen observe that there is a discrepancy between a new mentality of the “present father” and workplace expectations of the “unencumbered employee,” with no obligations outside of the workplace.⁴

Kangas, Lämsä and Jyrkinen’s observation is in line with Connell’s ground-breaking theory of transnational business masculinity. According to Connell, the transnational businesses, engendered by an increasingly globalised market, can operate within a society without adapting to its gender orders. Instead, they create their own specific norms around gender practices, which generally do not value familial obligations or the husband/father

¹ Raewynn Connell, *Masculinities*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 90.

² Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard, Introduction to *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States: Comparing Care Policies and Practices*, eds. Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 2.

³ David H.J. Morgan, *Rethinking Family Practices*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 7.

⁴ Emilia Kangas, Anna-Maija Lämsä and Marjut Jyrkinen, “Is Fatherhood Allowed? Media Discourses of Fatherhood in Organizational Life,” *Gender, Work & Organization* 26, no. 10 (2019): 1433, 1437.

position.⁵ Consequently, Professors Simon B. Burnett, Caroline J. Gatrell, Cary L. Cooper and Paul Sparrow demonstrate that men who are managers and fathers are by and large invisible in the corporate world. Their paternal role is often ignored by organisational assumptions since “policies do not necessarily change social attitudes and behaviours”.⁶ Furthermore, Professor Lotte Bloksgaard demonstrates that men who work in business and men employed as managers are particularly affected by the fact that the construction of masculinity and the cultural ideals for men are closely linked with being successful professionally.⁷

In order to understand paternity leave practices in general, and in Sweden in particular, it is of importance to shed light on this particular group of fathers – to make them visible in research and in the public debate. Since mass-media plays a key role in reflecting, shaping and reshaping norms and attitudes, this thesis investigates discourses on fatherhood, as they are portrayed in two major representative media outlets for businesses in Sweden: *SvD Näringsliv* and *Dagens Industri*. The results of this thesis contribute to understanding discursive and social practices surrounding paternity leave. Moreover, when considering Connell’s theory of an emerging transnational business masculinity, which may threaten local gender orders and norms, Sweden provides an interesting case of study since it is already a leading country in regards of policies on gender equality in general and paternity leave in particular.

1.1. Purpose and Research Question

This thesis investigates contemporary discourses on fatherhood and paternity leave practices present in two Swedish media outlets, *SvD Näringsliv* and *Dagens Industri*, during the time period 2009-2019. The analysed material constitutes fifteen articles that discuss fatherhood in the context of working life and present the viewpoint of male entrepreneurs and managers. With the use of the theoretical approach and methodological tools from Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, combined with other social theories on gender and masculinities, the objective of this thesis is to shed light on a particular group of men in Swedish society: fathers in business. These men are targeted because they often move in international environments, as markets and businesses are gaining global dimensions in an increasingly

⁵ Raewynn Connell, *Masculinities*, (2005), xxiii, 256.

⁶ Simon B. Burnett, Caroline J. Gatrell, Cary L. Cooper and Paul Sparrow, “Fathers at Work: A Ghost in the Organizational Machine,” *Gender, Work and Organization*, 20, no. 6 (2013): 632.

⁷ Lotte Bloksgaard, “Negotiating Leave in the Workplace: Leave Practices and Masculinity Construction among Danish Fathers,” in *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States: Comparing Care Policies and Practices*, eds. Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 150-152.

globalised world. The business world generally consists of male-dominated workplaces and is thus an arena for a new form of hegemonic masculinity called transnational business masculinity. Whether this kind of hegemonic masculinity is visible in discourses about fatherhood practices in the Swedish business world – and whether other discourses presenting clear agendas of gender equality are also present is investigated in this thesis. The objective of this thesis is not to engage in comparative analysis of discourses found in the two selected media outlets; it is, rather, to map out and critically view active discourses within Swedish business media as a whole. The thesis is based on the premise that media plays an important role in reflecting and shaping discourses about fatherhood practices.

Inspired by the results of Kangas, Lämsä and Jyrkinen’s study on discourses within Finnish media outlets, this thesis uncovers dominant and marginalised discourses present in the Swedish business world by asking three questions: *Is there a discourse representing values intrinsic to the transnational business masculinity in the analysed articles? Do other discourses figure in a hierarchical relationship to this type of discourse? Do the other discourses embody views of Nordic gender equality as they are commonly expressed in the Nordic countries?*

1.2. Disposition

This thesis is divided into eight sections of text devised to fit the scope introduced above. In section two, below, the concept of fatherhood is problematised and contextualised. This section is followed by an introduction and discussion of the research material. In the following section, this thesis’ theoretical base is developed in three separate subsections named after theories on Gender, Masculinities and Critical Discourse Analysis. Then follows a presentation of the methodological tools from Norman Fairclough’s CDA selected for this thesis. Thereafter follows section 5, where the results of the study are presented and analysed. The analysis is conducted thematically and followed by a discussion which considers and compares the results of the analysis in a broader context provided by the theories and historical contextualisation. The discussion is followed by a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

2. Background: Problematisation of the Concept of Fatherhood

The literature that has been consulted for this thesis acknowledge that, for the past decades, there has been a noticeable surge in attention to the study of fathers and the practices of fatherhood. Researchers, policymakers, practitioners and the media have all directed their gaze towards this particular group of men. Are they right to conclude that fatherhood practices have changed? As is to be demonstrated in this thesis: language use and social practice, though clearly connected, are different dimensions and not necessarily univocal. However, in order to understand changing fatherhood practices, before discussing theoretical approaches, one ought to begin by adopting a historical perspective.

2.1. The Fathers of Past Generations

In his dissertation *Det goda faderskapet i svenskt 1800-tal*, Swedish historian Tomas Berglund describes changes in the practices and ideals of fatherhood during the modern age. In the opening pages, Berglund notes that men have historically been absent from everyday family life. He then describes how the Swedish state, through reforms and policies, has spent the last century attempting to shape a softer, nurturing father ideal, where the father becomes involved in household responsibilities and child-care in equal measures as the mother. The political incentive, the objective, was, and still is, gender equality within the nuclear family. To demonstrate how these efforts have borne fruit, contemporary fathers are often portrayed in stark contrast to the absent fathers of previous generations. The public discourse of the present father, as it is conveyed in the media, typically endorses this generalised view of the fathers of the past. Through his research, Berglund finds this discourse, if not false, then at least problematic.⁸ Berglund, as well as Psychology Professor Graeme Russell, find that the fathers of the past seem to have been very concerned with and attached to their children, and faced similar issues as the fathers of today.⁹ These results conclude that the public discourse is based on insufficient knowledge of the past. Furthermore, they beg the question of whether contemporary fathers truly are that different from past generations of fathers? Is the current public discourse of the present and involved father really representing reality?

⁸ Tomas Berglund, *Det Goda Faderskapet i Svenskt 1800-tal*, (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag 2007), 11-12.

⁹ Graeme Russell, "Adopting a Global Perspective on Fatherhood," in *A Man's World? Changing Men's Practices in a Globalized World*, eds. Bob Pease and Keith Pringle (London: Zed Books, 2001), 55.

Despite his critique of the simplified view provided by public discourse, Berglund does not deny the generally accepted conception of how capitalism fundamentally changed men's ideals and fatherhood practices during the nineteenth century. Capitalism, through industrialisation and urbanisation, brought a never before seen kind of competition within the labour market.¹⁰ Furthermore, Historian Gunhild Kyle recounts that a redistribution of labour was central as societies changed from being based on self-sufficient family households, to gainful employment.¹¹ The basic structures of the family were thus irrevocably altered. Men were allotted the role of economic providers and women were charged with taking care of the household, including bringing up the couple's children. The father, who had previously been an active participant in the lives and education of his children in the self-sufficient household, was now increasingly excluded from domestic matters. Naturally, his possibilities of being involved in his children's lives were diminished. Here, Berglund comments on the lack of problematisation: processes of cultural change are almost always met with some kind of resistance. Why would the father willingly give up his power over the education of his children? The accounts of nineteenth century man's exit from the domestic sphere rarely document any resistance. Neither do they properly account for the variations in fatherhood practices pertaining to class, ethnicity and other cultural and sometimes individual factors. In conclusion, Berglund explains that, rather than the history of fatherhood, one should speak of the *histories* of fatherhoods.¹²

2.2. Contemporary Fatherhoods

Though the public discourse believes contemporary, involved fathers to be unprecedented, they may in reality not be historically unique. Albeit the public knowledge of the fathers of the past may be insufficient, it does, nonetheless, not discredit the common *perception* of a recent change in the ideals and practices of fatherhood. This change is most keenly perceived by the fathers of today, men who feel that they cannot look to their fathers for guidance in how to practice fatherhood. Through qualitative interviews, Professor Ulf Hyvönen, demonstrates how "men – as fathers – are increasingly left to their own efforts in defining the concept of fatherhood. Being a father no longer equates to simply stepping into a pre-existing role" (the

¹⁰ Tomas Berglund, (2007), 20.

¹¹ Gunhild Kyle, "Från Patriark till Pappa," in *Faderskap i Tid och Rum*, edited by Philip Hwang (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2000), 158.

¹² Tomas Berglund, (2007), 20, 38, 49.

author's translation).¹³ This leads to the understanding that the practice of fatherhood is individualised and that, therefore, there must be innumerable variations. Concurring with Hyvönen, Björk Eydal and Rostgaard illustrates that contemporary fatherhood is diverse and should therefore be referred to in its plural form: fatherhoods.¹⁴

Despite the fact that the practice of fatherhood is increasingly individualised, fathers do not exist in an empty void, unaffected by the outside world. Fatherhood, as it is defined by Björk Eydal and Rostgaard, "is believed to reach beyond daily practices and relations in individual families by also including the social constructions of expectations towards fathers".¹⁵ This is true not just in our times, as historian John R Gillis demonstrates: men do not naturally become fathers simply by having a child, they become fathers through social and cultural recognition and validation.¹⁶ Furthermore, Berglund argues that, throughout history, Western ideals for fathers have been complex and ambivalent, which has rendered every man alone in his struggle to balance the tensions created by demands from societal norms and ideals on the one hand and the demands of everyday life on the other hand.¹⁷ Russell finds that the fathers of today are facing the very same tensions. No man can successfully incorporate all varieties of fatherhood in his own practice.¹⁸ That is why Professors Deborah Lupton and Professor in Lesley Barclay argue that many men still struggle with creating their own identity in between the multiple, competing discourses available to them.¹⁹

As mentioned previously, the Swedish state has during the last century implemented several reforms and policies in order to change the way men practice fatherhood. This has resulted in what we now know as the Swedish (or Nordic) gender equality model. This model places emphasis on both parent's participation in the labour market as well as their equal participation in the care for their children. A family consists of dual earners and dual carers and both parents are expected to make use of the paid parental leave they are entitled to. This expectation is explicitly expressed in the father's quota, i.e. paternity leave, that is non-transferrable to the other parent.²⁰

¹³ Ulf Hyvönen, "Att se Pappan med Barnets Ögon," in *Faderskapet i Tid och Rum*, ed. Philip Hwang (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2000), 115-116.

¹⁴ Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard, (2015), 5.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ John R Gillis, "Alltid Lika Problematiskt att Göra Fäder av Män," *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*, 1993:1, 15-17.

¹⁷ Tomas Berglund, (2007), 20-21.

¹⁸ Graeme Russell, (2001), 56.

¹⁹ Deborah Lupton and Lesley Barclay, *Constructing Fatherhood: Discourses and Experiences*, (London: Sage, 1997), 16.

²⁰ Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard, (2015), 2.

Why have media, researchers and politicians taken a recent interest in promoting men as carers? Or, to frame the question differently: why are men's practices identified as an issue which needs to change? The answer is complex. However, I have concluded that there are three contributing factors which, when considered together can shed some light on the matter.

Firstly, the answer lies in the change of practices and expectations of women. Lupton and Barclay present their case for how the Women's movement, more specifically the second wave of feminism and women's entry into the work force during the 1960s and 1970s were one of the major incentives behind today's discussions about the practices of fatherhood. With women contributing to support the family economically, the breadwinner father swiftly became redundant.²¹ Secondly, with children's rights gaining ground throughout the twentieth century, there has been a shift in perspective from the rights of men and women as parents, to that of the child's needs and rights to be cared for. This shift is especially noticeable in the Nordic countries. Associate Professor of Family Law Hrefna Friðriksdóttir, explains how the focus on the rights of children in Nordic family law has led to an increase in the legal status of the father.²² Thirdly, one cannot attempt to answer a question of changes in men's practices without discussing the dark sides of masculinity: violence, mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse. These aspects of masculinity have become increasingly scrutinised over the past decades. For instance, Irina Novikova et al. observe in the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* that "some men are [...] increasingly recognised as gendered social problems in many European countries"²³ and that studies show how traditional masculinity is regarded as dangerous to men's health. Novikova et al. highlight the fact that "one cannot adequately address either the issue of promoting men as carers or the issue of men's violence without a mutual consideration of the linkages between the two topics".²⁴ Similarly, Russell discusses family therapists' and social workers' concern with the "lack of involvement and support from fathers"²⁵ and how they define this as a key issue in families experiencing problems. Observations show that there is a relationship between a lack of responsibility for family, work and nurturance and domestic violence and incest.

²¹ Deborah Lupton and Lelsey Barclay, (1997), 1.

²² Hrefna Friðriksdóttir, "Nordic Family Law: New Framework. New Fatherhoods," in *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States: Comparing Care Policies and Practices*, eds. Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 56.

²³ Irina Novikova et al, "Men, Masculinities and Europe," in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, eds. Raewyn Connell, Michael S Kimmel and Jeff Hearn (Electronic Resource: Sage Publications, 2004), 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452233833.n9> .

²⁴ Ibid. 6.

²⁵ Graeme Russell, (2001), 56.

3. Research Material

Svd Näringsliv and *Dagens Industri* were chosen as representative media outlets for this thesis due to their wide reader base and generally broad reach throughout Sweden. *Svd Näringsliv* is the business section of the daily newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet (SvD)*, a newspaper which positions itself politically as independently conservative. *Dagens Industri (DI)* is a leading business magazine in Sweden, focused on enterprise and the national and global market. *DI* positions itself as politically independent without any ideological affiliation.

The articles analysed in this thesis were accessed through *Svd Näringsliv*'s and *DI*'s electronic databases. The keyword *paternity leave* (pappaledighet) was typed into the digital search engines and generated a total of 91 articles in *DI* and 89 in *Svd Näringsliv*. Since this thesis investigates modern discourses on fatherhood in contemporary society, the search was limited to a ten-year period and only the articles published between 2009 and 2019 were taken into consideration. They numbered 56 and 39 respectively. Out of the 95 articles that the searches yielded, fifteen were long enough, discussed fatherhood in the context of working life and presented the viewpoint of male entrepreneurs and managers. These fifteen articles constitute the basis for the analysis.

4. Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

This thesis employs theories from three different disciplines: Gender studies, Masculinity studies and Critical Discourse Analysis. These theories were chosen based on the understanding within CDA that texts in isolation do not provide sufficient information for analysis; CDA requires multiperspectivalism and an interdisciplinary approach.²⁶ Therefore, several theoretical approaches are applied in order to analyse the discursive and social practices present in the collected data. These theoretical approaches are developed below.

²⁶ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 66.

4.1. Gender

Gender studies is a broad and rich field of research with many contributors. This section is not meant to discuss different theories of gender, but rather to provide a basic outline of important concepts within the field of Gender studies. These concepts are of importance for the reader's understanding of the subsequent analysis. Therefore, this thesis presents the basics of gender theory based on the comprehensive contributions of sociologists Raewynn Connell, Rebecca Pearse and Professor Jennifer Germon.

Connell and Pearse write in *Gender In World Perspective* that gender is often taken for granted: we recognise individuals as men or women and have arranged our world to fit into a binary structure based on this dichotomous premise.²⁷ This arrangement, this way of structuring of the world, in an order based on gender has become so familiar that it seems natural to us.²⁸ However, as Professor Germon notes, this gendered structure of the social world is, in fact, a product of historical processes. Furthermore, the way that gender is talked about today, is also a result of a historical trajectory.²⁹

Connell explains that “gender is a way in which social practice is ordered”.³⁰ This gendered order involves relations of power, production and cathexis (emotional attachment). Firstly, the general structure of power relations in contemporary Western societies is based on the overall dominance of men and the subordination of women. This structure is commonly referred to as the patriarchy. Secondly, gender also affect divisions of labour, and consequently the division and accumulation of capital. It is a rule, rather than an exception, that men constitute a majority of the people employed in management, accountancy, law and IT. As a consequence, women usually work behind the scenes, performing the unpaid domestic work that enable men to pursue careers in gainful employment. Connell's poignant observation tells us that the fact that it is men and not women who manage the major corporations and possess large private fortunes is not a statistical accident, but rather a consequence of these gendered relations of production. Thirdly, gender order shapes the practices surrounding (sexual) desire, for instance expectations of heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality.³¹

Connell and Pearse argue that gender is incredibly complex and its definition elusive; gender is a social construct, and it is realised in practices for self-realisation and at the same

²⁷ Raewynn Connell and Rebecca Pearse, *Gender In World Perspective*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 5.

²⁸ Raewynn Connell, (2005), 74.

²⁹ Jennifer Germon, *Gender: A Genealogy of an Idea*, (Electronic Resource: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-2.

³⁰ Raewynn Connell, (2005), 71.

³¹ Raewynn Connell and Rebecca Pearse, (2015), 3.

time it is product of history. Gender is never confined into “roles” or personalities. Instead, gender is realised in everyday practices. People are not born masculine or feminine, rather they become gendered individuals as they move through life. Furthermore, social practices – or, rather, gender practices – both shape and are shaped by social reality. Womanhood, manhood and everything else is “a condition actively under construction”.³² The patterns gender constitutes are not clear, though they might seem like a given to us, they are in reality elusive and complex.

4.2. Masculinities

Connell notes that masculinity is plural and complex by nature and, therefore, “masculinity is not a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced”. In order to study masculinities, Connell explains, one must see them as part of a larger structure, i.e. of gender relations. Thus, a study of masculinities naturally entails a study of gender relations. Moreover, this is explained by the fact that masculinities are relational by nature; there can be no masculinity without femininity.³³

The acclaimed work *Masculinities* presents Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinities, which describes the gendered power relations among men and explains how masculinities legitimise gender orders. The theory is based on the understanding that there are multiple masculinities that coexist in any given society. Hegemonic masculinity is not universal, nor is it fixed; rather, Connell explains, “it is [...] the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations”.³⁴ The group of men who claim hegemony sustain a prominent social position in society. However, Connell demonstrates that hegemonic masculinity is not solely about practice, it “can [also] be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy”.³⁵ In fact, only very few men belong to the group practicing hegemony. The remaining majority of men either sustain it by being subordinated, complicit or marginalised. Nevertheless, Connell notes, hegemonic masculinity is perpetually contestable and can be challenged by other types of masculinity, or by women. For instance, today, there are non-profit organisations run by, and for, men, dedicated to changing

³² Raewynn Connell and Rebecca Pearse, (2015), 6.

³³ Raewynn Connell, (2005), 67.

³⁴ Ibid, 76.

³⁵ Ibid, 77.

destructive norms surrounding masculinity. NOMAS (National Organisation of Men Against Sexism) in the USA and MÄN, in Sweden, are two organisations whose existence signifies that hegemonic masculinity is currently being challenged, and that it is thus essentially historically contingent.^{36 37}

Connell's works, concepts and theories are great contributions to the field of Masculinities. Her work is permeated with deference and humility in front of the pluralistic and elusive nature of masculinities. However, in her attempt to avoid essentialism, Connell's arguments tend to become rather circular. For instance, Connell observes that there are infinite variations and exceptions when it comes to gender and that gender is practiced differently across the globe. Hence, Connell states, the attempt of creating a generalised science of gender risks reflecting the observer rather than the observed. Yet, Connell reasons that we must try to create knowledge of masculinities from a global perspective and the theories she developed about hegemonic masculinities have since been applied in, among other disciplines, studies on globalisation.

Senior Lecturer in Politics Juanita Elias and Reader in Politics Christine Beasley argue that Connell's theories are becoming less pertinent since they "[belong] to the first wave of globalisation scholarship."³⁸ They propose a rethinking of the concept where the discursive dimension of masculinities and globalisation is reconsidered. The following analysis is based on the recognition that, on the one hand, Connell's theories provide a basic structure and vocabulary for discussing gendered power relations between men and different forms of masculinities. On the other hand, this thesis is aware that the application of these theories to a global context requires caution and due consideration of the discursive dimension.

4.2.1. Transnational Business Masculinity

Transnational business masculinity is a concept Connell identified in the 1990s. It names an emerging form of hegemonic masculinity which is based on the understanding that the creation of global markets and the demands of transnational capital have become crucial features in the organisation of modern-day societies. This formation bestows managers and entrepreneurs, as key actors in the global economy, with a significant amount of power. This group of people

³⁶ National Organization for Men Against Sexism, "NOMAS FAQs," accessed May 24, 2020, <https://nomas.org/>

³⁷ MÄN, "Om MÄN," accessed May 24, 2020, <https://mfj.se/>

³⁸ Juanita Elias and Beasley, Christine, "Hegemonic Masculinity and Globalization: 'Transnational Business masculinities' and Beyond," *Globalizations*, 2009:6, 288-290.

overwhelmingly consists of men who are thus bearers of the new form of hegemonic masculinity: transnational business masculinity.³⁹

In an increasingly globalised world, global actors such as (1) transnational and multinational corporations, (2) the international state and international institutions of diplomacy, (3) international media and (4) global markets in capital and commodities actively participate in the shaping of a world gender order and create “new [global] arenas of gender relations beyond individual countries and regions”.⁴⁰ In the face of this understanding, it is important to consider the effects of globalisation on hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity and, respectively, their impact on local gender orders.

Transnational business masculinity, Connell stresses, is not uniform, and neither is management. There are, for instance, other kinds of management in development which emphasise interpersonal skills and teamwork, and value qualities that are traditionally feminine. However, Connell notes that the desired attributes of entrepreneurs are generally coded masculine. Entrepreneurs are associated with competitiveness, accompanied with a kind of ruthlessness. Female entrepreneurs and managers participate “on the same terms as the men,” i.e. they need to develop the same desired masculine attributes in order to compete for the same positions. Connell observes that transnational business masculinity prizes “the willingness to discard other ties and generate a particular kind of performance;” it is the “life-denying labour of entrepreneurial management,” where the domestic world is marginalised and the family is devalued. Furthermore, there is a tendency among managers perpetuating transnational business masculinity to manage their bodies and emotions like they manage their finances at work.⁴¹

Elias and Beasley question Connell’s understanding of the transnational business masculinity as the form of masculinity currently occupying the hegemonic position. They do not deny the possibility that this is the case, but they argue that it is not possible to state that the transnational business masculinity is in a hegemonic position based on the research currently available. Furthermore, Elias and Beasley criticise the claim that a specific group of businessmen obtain hegemonic status. They suggest, instead, that transnational business masculinity is sustained and practiced through the discourse they represent and are represented by.⁴²

³⁹ Raewynn Connell, (2005), xxiii.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. xxiv, 257, 264.

⁴² Juanita Elias and Beasley, Christine, 2009:6, 288-289.

4.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

Providing a definition of discourse is not a straightforward matter, particularly since the term is often used in colloquial speech and scientific texts without any particular definition. Not to mention the fact that there are several different approaches within discourse analysis, and they do not agree amongst themselves as to what constitutes discourse or how to study discourses. Professors Marianne W. Jørgensen and Louise Phillips conclude that discourse analysis is based on the “general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people follow when they take part in different domains of social life,”⁴³ for instance, within medicine, politics or academia.

Discourse analysis entails both theories and methods and every discourse analytical approach adheres to certain philosophical premises while also proposing specific methodological tools and practices. Jørgensen and Phillips stress that each discourse analytical approach consists of a “theoretical and methodological whole”⁴⁴ and that discourse analytical methods are not to be used without the respective theories.

4.3.1. Theoretical Approach

Jørgensen and Phillips illustrate how Critical Discourse Analysis understands that there are discursive and non-discursive practices and that they together, in a dialectical relation, construct the social world.⁴⁵ This means that there are other dimensions of the social world and of social practice that adheres to different logics than discourse. In CDA, discourse as a concept is reserved for semiotics, i.e. text, talk and other forms of communication, like gestures or visual images for instance. However, discursive practice – i.e. the production and consumption of discourse – and other social practices are never completely separate dimensions.⁴⁶ For instance, social relations are in part realised through language, but they also include other properties – like class and gender – which need to be studied with the help of other disciplines

⁴³ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2010), 264.

– like economics and gender studies. In this sense, Jørgensen and Phillips conclude, discourse “both constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices”.⁴⁷ Discursive practices can sustain social structures, be involved in the process of changing them, and also simply reflect them. This is what Fairclough understands to be the dialectical relationship between discursive and non-discursive practice.⁴⁸

According to Jørgensen and Phillips, CDA is based on social constructionism, structuralist and poststructuralist theory about language. Social constructionism is, in turn, based on the premise that our access to reality is confined to our representations and categorisation of the world. Structuralist and Poststructuralist theory place the fundamental claim, similar to that of social constructionism, that we can only gain access to reality through language. In other words: the reality people perceive, exists due to their particular way of talking about it. In this sense, a critical discourse analyst might say that “reality” is simply a product of discourse. Yet, knowledge of the world is not simply a reflection of reality, because knowledge is produced in historical and cultural contexts and can thus vary and change over time. Knowledge and truth, i.e. different worldviews, are defined in the social world, which is in turn constantly produced and maintained through social interactions. Some statements and actions are common and naturalised in certain worldviews, while others are rare and sometimes even unthinkable. Therefore, the accessibility to different worldviews, or discourses, lead people to behave in different ways. People construct reality but are also constrained by it.⁴⁹

CDA, like other discourse analytical approaches, draws on theories from Michel Foucault. For instance, CDA understands that humans, as subjects, are produced in and through discourse. The subject, in Foucault and Fairclough’s view is decentred, i.e. the subject is not an autonomous entity who uses language, rather, the subject is used unknowingly as a medium for culture and discourse. Furthermore, CDA is based on Foucault’s theory of knowledge and power, which understands that “truth is a discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge determine what is true and false”. Power is found in social practices. Power is not only repressive, it is also productive, since it creates the social world within which we live.⁵⁰

Another important concept in CDA is ideology. Fairclough recognises the existence of ideology as “meaning in the service of power”. He understands that there is not just one ideology, but several and they contribute to the maintenance and transformation of power

⁴⁷ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 18-19, 61.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 4-6, 7-9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 13-15.

relations. Although Fairclough recognises the existence of ideologies and their effects on discursive practices, he reasons that there are also non-ideological discourses. Furthermore, Fairclough states that individuals are able to distinguish between ideological and non-ideological discourse and to resist ideological messages. People are able to become “agents of discursive and cultural change” if they creatively combine elements from several different discourses – which they access through the mass-media or through social interactions – to create new, hybrid, discourses. However, the individual subject is still limited to the discourses which he or she has access to.⁵¹

According to Fairclough, “social practices networked in a particular way constitute a social order”⁵² and each social order is in part constituted of a discourse aspect, which he refers to as the *order of discourse*. A social order is, for instance, the gender order described above. Furthermore, Fairclough illustrates that “an order of discourse is [...] a particular social ordering of relationships among different ways of making meaning”.⁵³ Within any given order of discourse, there are several discourse types.⁵⁴ Discourse types consist of discourses – which are either dominant, marginal, oppositional or alternative ways of making meaning – and genres – which are distinct usages of language such as interviews, poems or scientific articles. There is always one way of making meaning within any order of discourse which legitimises the existing social order, i.e. the dominance of particular social groups and the subjugation of others. This discourse is the dominant, or hegemonic, discourse. However, the hegemonic position of a dominant discourse can always be challenged; different ways of making meaning are involved in a constant struggle for hegemony. Thus, Fairclough concludes, any order of discourse is an open system which can be challenged every day in social interactions.⁵⁵ CDA provides the methodological tools and theoretical framework needed to map out these different kinds of discourses within an order of discourse and to investigate the relations between discourse and social and cultural processes of change.

4.3.2. Methodological Tools

There are a number of methodological concepts and tools at disposal within CDA, though Fairclough assures that it is not necessary to use all of them; they should rather be used as

⁵¹ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, 2002, 16-18.

⁵² Norman Fairclough, (2010), 265.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 67.

⁵⁵ Norman Fairclough, (2010), 265.

guidelines depending on the nature of the analysis.⁵⁶ This thesis analyses texts in the shape of articles and therefore the appropriate methodological tools and concepts for this particular scope have been selected. The selected tools and concepts are listed and explained below, written in italics on first appearance.

Though CDA assumes that all communicative events consist of text (which may be speech, writing or visual images), discursive practice and social practice, the material for the empirical study of discourse is the text. When studying texts, it is important to ask how they are produced, distributed and consumed, since this varies depending on the genre of the text. Newspaper articles, as the ones analysed in this thesis, belong to a kind of genre which is produced collectively, i.e. there are several contributors to its conception. Fairclough notes that the *rhetorical mode* of newspaper articles is chiefly about giving information. Rhetorical modes can otherwise be argumentative or narrating, for example. The news-giver, as Fairclough refers to the author of the text, is the source of knowledge and information, information of which the reader is a passive recipient. However, articles may also diverge from the typically formal mode of public institutions and simulate dialogue between news-giver and reader, and in a conversational manner change the relationship into a *more symmetrical/equal one*.⁵⁷

CDA engages in linguistic analysis of texts and uses grammatical concepts like *transitivity*, *nominalisation*, *modality*, *word meaning* and *keywords*. Transitivity refers to the relation between subjects and objects in sentences. It is possible to distinguish agency, causality and the attribution of responsibility through transitivity. One should look at whether sentences are passive or active and how this affects the position of the subject/object. Furthermore, nominalisation – i.e. the derivational process of creating nouns from words of other word-classes – usually makes subjects redundant. Utterances without subjects seem more like statements of facts.⁵⁸ In terms of modality, Jørgensen and Phillips explain that it concerns “the speaker’s degree of affinity with or affiliation to her or his statement”.⁵⁹ For instance, the use of modalities like “think” or “perhaps” in utterances signals uncertainty and a lower degree of commitment to what is stated in the sentence. Furthermore, the use of modal verbs – like may, might, can and could – also signals a higher degree of uncertainty, as opposed to sentences without modal verbs, which often appear as statements of facts. Fairclough notes that different

⁵⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 225.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 126, 129, 235.

⁵⁸ Norman Fairclough, (2010), 269.

⁵⁹ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 83.

genres are prone to use particular types of modalities. The media, for example, often figures as a speaker of authority by presenting their interpretations as facts.⁶⁰ Jørgensen and Phillips demonstrate that this is accomplished through the use of categorical modalities and the preference of objective modalities over subjective modalities. For instance, it is more common to find the sentence “It is wise” than “We think it is wise” in various media outlets.⁶¹ Word meaning focuses on the use and meaning of certain lexical items, which can be referred to as *keywords*. These keywords are words of general, local or cultural importance. Their meanings may be variable, changing and have multiple potentials.⁶²

Other concepts considered in this thesis are *ethos*, *intertextuality* and *metaphors*. The rhetorical term *ethos* is applied since CDA investigates how people construct themselves, i.e. their social identities, through discourse.⁶³ Intertextuality, as it is defined by Jørgensen and Phillips, is the condition whereby all new texts implicitly or explicitly draw on earlier texts.⁶⁴ If, how and why metaphors are used, and their influence on ways of thinking and practice is also considered in this thesis.

5. Results and Analysis

This section is divided thematically into five subsections representing the five different kinds of discourses discussing fatherhood practices and paternity leave that were identified in the analysed material. In this thesis, the five types of discourses are called *Transnational business masculinity*, *Work- life balance*, *Break*, *Investment*, and *Equality*. Articles presented in the Transnational business masculinity discourse embody values intrinsic to transnational business masculinity, i.e. a prioritisation of work and a marginalisation of the family. The discourse named Work-life balance (an English translation of the Swedish term *livspussel*) often figures alongside other discourses but is in some cases distinctive. In these articles the need for, and the possibility of, a good balance between work and family life is emphasised. Furthermore, the discourse demands that corporations facilitate good work-life balance for their employees. In the discourse called Break, children are seen as presenting the opportunity to take a break

⁶⁰ Norman Fairclough, (2010), 269.

⁶¹ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 84.

⁶² Norman Fairclough, (1992), 236.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 230.

⁶⁴ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 73.

from work and life in general. Paternity leave offers time for contemplation and reflection. The discourse called Investment presents children as investments and urge businessmen to take paternity leave to invest time in their children. This investment is sure to yield future profits in terms of personal development and qualities that can later be put to use at the workplace. Finally, the fifth discourse, Equality, is perhaps the most straightforward discourse. Articles stressing the use of paternity leave as means to reach gender equality at the workplace are placed in this subsection.

There are seven articles from *SvD Näringsliv* and eight from *DI*, amounting to a total of fifteen articles. Although all articles discuss fatherhood from the viewpoint of male managers and entrepreneurs, they vary greatly in terms of length and scope. Due to this variation, some articles are only briefly touched upon while other articles, where the theoretical yield is greater, are discussed in depth. Since the articles are in Swedish, all quotes included in this analysis have been translated by the author.

5.1. Transnational Business Masculinity

The article “Så blev svensken spelkung” was published in *DI* on February 8, 2014, portrays Patrick Söderlund, CEO at the video game company Electronic Arts (EA). In the article, there are many adjectives and nouns that are coded masculine. For instance, Söderlund is described as a king of games (*spelkung*), a competitive person (*tävlingsmänniska*) with a strong competitive instinct (*tävlingsinstinkt*) and he holds a powerful position professionally. The fact that the article mentions that Söderlund’s is tall may also be interpreted as a measure of his masculinity. Moreover, the article mentions that Söderlund does many different kinds of sports, which, as is demonstrated by Connell, is a classic arena for the embodiment of masculinity.⁶⁵ What is interesting about the article is that Söderlund persistently highlights other aspects of his personality. For instance, he discusses his interest in cooking, his desire to make an impact, the negative aspects of his bad temper, his recurring spells of self-doubt and his failures at school. All of these aspects contribute to building his social identity, and his ethos. A person’s ethos does not necessarily mirror reality, it is rather the version of the self that the speaker wishes to portray in order to appear in a positive light to the reader. The fact that Söderlund is open about his flaws inspires sympathy and thus works in favour for his ethos. Two quotes by

⁶⁵ Raewynn Connell, (2005), 54

Söderlund particularly demonstrate this openness. In the first quote, Söderlund reflects on his performance as a father:

I did not want to be the type of father whose children later in life tell him ‘you were never home, dad’. But, to be honest, that is exactly what I get to hear right now. It makes you think, and there will come a day when one feels one cannot continue in the same manner any longer.

Söderlund explains that he has become the type of father he did not want to be: the type who prioritises work. What is particularly striking is that he uses intertextuality to refer to a stereotypical situation where the children accuse their father of being absent. The sentence “you were never home, dad” brings associations to the image of the absent father. Section 2. of this thesis demonstrates that this image is often endorsed by the media and typically used in contrast to the ideal of the involved father. Söderlund is aware of this contrast and he admits to coming up short as a father. Interestingly, his confession and the regretful tone evoke sympathy from the reader. Additionally, this quote is interesting in terms of modality. By admitting that he wishes he were a different kind of father, Söderlund also concedes that he could change. However, he does not commit to change, but rather he escapes responsibility by ending the sentence in a vague reference to the possibility of change in an abstract future.

The second quote follows a short informative paragraph stating that Söderlund “made sure” to take a couple of months of paternity leave. However, the next sentence informs the reader that Söderlund has stopped trying to introduce the Swedish model of paid vacation and parental leave into the corporation. Söderlund explains:

Believe me, I have tried to be a vanguard, but it is too deeply rooted in the American system. It is hard to convince an American that employees work more efficiently if they receive more vacation or if they are allowed parental leave.

What Söderlund describes as attitudes rooted in the American system, attitudes which do not value commitments outside work, are equivalent to the work ethics of transnational business masculinity. Though Söderlund does not seem to agree with this discourse, he has fallen in line with and complies with its norms and expectations. He thus adopts the role of the victim and attributes his failure to introduce paid parental leave to these outer circumstances of which he has no control. The use of an objective modality, like “it is,” in the sentence “it is too deeply

rooted in the America system,” instead of a subjective modality, like “I think it is” makes Söderlund’s interpretation appear as a fact, rather than an opinion and lends credibility to his own victimisation.

”Öresunds vd ska bli pappa – säger upp sig”, was published in *DI* on November 16, 2017. It is an informative article that features two interviews, one with Gustav Lindner who is the current chief executive of the investment company Öresund, and one with the future CEO who is to replace Lindner. The article confirms the prejudice that management and family life are difficult to combine, if not impossible. The author of the article tries to portray Lindner as a vanguard for involved fatherhood, but Lindner does not want to shoulder the role. He explains that ”the board would have been perfectly fine if [he] were to go on parental leave. But if you are a CEO in business [...] it feels wrong to disappear for three to four months”. Lindner’s words and the sentiments he describes are very representative for the discourse of Transnational business masculinity, which does not value obligations outside work. What is interesting is that Lindner’s reflections on the concept of paternity leave as a break in life suggests that he is aware of the existence of multiple discourses. He reasons that “I wanted to try out what all the young people seem to be doing and take a break, and it seemed like a good time to try it now that I am about to become a father again.” With this statement, Lindner provides another key to understanding the Break discourse: it may be representative of a younger generation of fathers.

It is not clear if Lindner is aware that, by quitting his job, he perpetuates the assumption that having a career and a family cannot be combined. If he is aware, then his choice to quit his job may be interpreted as a rebellion against the norms of the hegemonic form of masculinity. However, his decision to quit, instead of taking paternity leave, may also entrench him further in the patterns of transnational business masculinity. Lindner even points out that “setting an example would perhaps have been to take parental leave and hire a temporary chief executive” instead.

The remaining three articles, ”HM-chefen lovar att inte bli långvarig”, published April 26, 2011, ”Nya volvochefen: jag har väntat på den här dagen”, published September 1, 2011 and “Persson kliver fram”, published September 9, 2011, all portray traditional men in business who have never taken paternity leave. These are men who have prioritised work and whose careers have been made possible by the fact that their spouses have taken care of the domestic responsibilities. The colloquialism “it has not been suitable work-wise,” (det har inte passat yrkesmässigt) common in Swedish, figures in both “Persson kliver fram” and ”Nya volvochefen: jag har väntat på den här dagen.” There are no modalities in the expression, which

gives it an air of finality and dismisses further questions. It presumes that these men's situations were unique and that they had little choice in the matter. The fact that the same expression figures twice makes it an intertext and strongly suggests that the same discourse is present in both articles.

The article "HM-chefen lovar att inte bli långvarig" presents Karl-Johan Persson, CEO of H&M. The second paragraph of the article introduces the reader to the fact that "[Persson] has never taken paternity leave with his two children, seven and two years old, but prioritises family activities on his spare time, like his son's football games on the weekends." The way that the word prioritise is used in this sentence is curious in a contradictory way. It creates the illusion that Persson prioritises spending time with his family, when the truth is that he never prioritised staying home with his children over his job. Moreover, as is demonstrated by Connell, the activity of attending his son's football games, instead of shopping for clothes or changing diapers, is a classic trope for men practicing hegemonic masculinity.⁶⁶

5.2. Work-Life Balance

On October 10, 2016 the article "Konsult tar ledningen och fortsätter växa" was published in *DI*. The essence of the article is summarised in the first two sentences of the introduction: "The eternal question: small children and self-employment – are they compatible? Yes, but it requires discipline and the ability to delegate." Neither the question nor the answer is uttered by a clear subject. The speaker, Gustaf Richt, does not appear until the next sentence. This is interesting in terms of transitivity since, as previously mentioned, the absence of a subject makes an utterance seem like a statement of facts, rather than one possible interpretation. Furthermore, the expression "the eternal question" is an element of intertextuality which suggests that the topic is old and already familiar to the reader. It might even suggest that the article assumes the reader is the one posing the question which in turn simulates a dialogue between the author of the text and the reader.

Richt is the self-employed owner of a small consulting business. Richt admits that he finds it difficult to balance work and family, but he asserts that it is both possible and worth while. In his statements, he uses few or no modalities, which shows a high level of commitment to the truth of the statement. For instance, he says that "It happens once in a lifetime that Victor

⁶⁶ Raewynn Connell, (2005), 55.

is little. It must be possible to piece things together if you have skilled employees and committed co-workers”.

The fact that Richt prioritises his son enough to take time off work, that he has a democratic view of management and that he has the ability to share the workload with colleagues all clearly counteract the hegemonic form of masculinity present in the discourse of Transnational business masculinity. Yet, one might argue that Richt’s statements only make sense if they are positioned in relation to the hegemonic form of masculinity. Although he shows a high level of commitment to his statements, Richt’s rhetorical style is argumentative and his tone is defensive. If it were obvious that Richt was supposed to take his paternity leave, and thereby delegate what would normally be his work tasks, the article would not discuss these topics. Perhaps Richt is aware that in other prevalent discourses, balancing career and family is not as obvious a decision for a man as it would be for a woman in his position.

The article “För 25 år sen gifte man sig med byrån” was published in *SvD Näringsliv* on December 12, 2012. The article portrays Per Rönström who is CEO of a firm of solicitors called DLA Nordic. Rönström and the author of the article allude to the difficulty of striking a good balance between work and family by using a series of expressions that compare the relationship to the job with a romantic relationship between two people. For instance, Rönström uses expressions like “you married the firm” and the word partner figures in the following sentence. Though partner is used as a technical term in law, the article seems well aware of the fact that it is more commonly used when one talks about relationships between people.

Work-life balance and equality are the key topics of the article. Rönström concedes that achieving “balance in life” as a solicitor and a parent is difficult. However, he asserts that it is possible if the employer and the employee have the right attitude and utilise the technological tools available. These technological tools would, for instance, allow one to work from home. Furthermore, Rönström comments on how the climate has changed and that there has been a shift in attitudes since he started working. For instance, he says that: “Nowadays there are different kinds of demands for things like balance in life and parental leave, which is not necessarily a question of gender.” Rönström refers to his perception that both men and women nowadays wish to take parental leave. He also notes that it is considered strange if they do not grab the opportunity.

The article titled “Scania Martin Lundstedt”, published in *SvD Näringsliv*, November 21, 2011 features an interview with Lundstedt, CEO of Scania. Lundstedt represents the work-life balance discourse since he emphasises the role that the company has to play in facilitating balance for its employees. In addition, Lundstedt uses the keyword balance when he notes that

“We, as a company, cannot take responsibility for the division of domestic responsibilities, but we can create the right circumstances for our employees to find balance in life.” Like Rönström, Lundstedt also perceives a shift in attitudes. Lundstedt notes that in order for companies to be gender equal and be able to help their employees find work-life balance, big companies and corporations need to play their part in changing attitudes, values and greater societal structures.

5.3. Break

The article, “Inte ett feministiskt ställningstagande”, published in *SvD Näringsliv* May 14, 2019, is an interview with three men in their early thirties whose common denominator is that they are currently taking their paternity leave. Already in the introduction the author of the text summarises the essence of the interview: all three men view paternity leave as a time to connect with their child and a time for contemplation and reflection on life in general. This article was categorised as belonging to the discourse of paternity leave as a break from work because of its emphasis on time for contemplation and the use of keywords and expressions like *pause*, *time off work* and *reflection*. The article does however also mention keywords from other discourses like Investment and Equality, although these are not referred to as frequently as the Break discourse.

Besides viewing paternity leave as a break, the author of the text demonstrates that all three fathers view paternity leave as a given – as if their desire to stay at home with their children is natural and self-evident. The introduction is also a point of interest on a linguistic level – in terms of transitivity and modality – since the first sentence of the introduction is without subject and includes several nominalisations. As previously demonstrated, nominalisations typically make subjects redundant, and utterances with missing subjects seem more like statements of facts. Without a clear responsible agent/causer, the event described by the sentence seem like a natural event – which is exactly the aim of the article, i.e. to portray paternity leave as something natural. The subjects of the interview and the statements, the three fathers, are not introduced until the following sentence.

Since this thesis focuses on fathers who have careers in business, only two of the three fathers interviewed in the article are discussed in this section: Erik Mellenius, a 34-year-old accountant and Johannes, a 32-year-old engineer. When asked about his opinion on parental leave, Mellenius highlights that the time he spends taking care of his child may contribute to his own personal development. His statement brings associations to the Investment discourse.

However, he does distance himself from his own statement with the use of the modal verb *may*, which shows that the discourse on children as an investment is not dominant in the article.

Furthermore, Mellenius underlines that the greatest benefit he draws from his paternity leave is the opportunity to take a longer period off from work. He describes this period as a break, from work in particular and life in general. Interestingly, he explains that he is not dependent on this pause to connect with his daughter; he believes that mornings, evenings and weekends off work would have been enough time to connect with her properly. This pause from work, he clarifies, is important because it gives him “time to reflect and think about other things than work”. In Mellenius’ eyes, paternity leave is about spending time with oneself, as well as with one’s child. This view is in stark contrast to the life-denying discourse of Transnational business masculinity, where men and women are expected to prioritise work above everything else.

Mellenius is the first father to be introduced in the article. He explains his view on paternity leave practices in the following manner:

I am surprised at the number of couples who do not split the time equally as we do, and that many mothers use up much more of the allotted time. It is such an easy thing to do, it is not a feminist statement. It is obvious that one wants to stay at home with one’s child, and it is nice to be off work as well.

Mellenius’ reflections are noteworthy on three levels. First of all, Mellenius states that he is surprised that a majority of men and women do not split their parental leave equally. His surprise is based on the premise that caring fatherhood is natural, and thus naturally expressed in the practice of paternity leave. Either Mellenius is oblivious to the way norms, discourses and economy affect social practice, or he genuinely believes that these factors are inconsequential in the face of the naturalisation of involved fatherhood. Second, it is worth noting how Mellenius explicitly distances himself from feminism. As Mellenius argues that his decision is not a feminist statement, he once again asserts that caring fatherhood is a natural phenomenon. In addition, the statement assumes that since his choice to be an involved father is the natural choice, it should not necessarily need to be described as a political act. Finally, Mellenius’ unwillingness to be associated with feminism is worth noting since the fact that he can even consider staying home with his child can be attributed to the feminist movement’s century-old struggle for equal rights. Perhaps Mellenius wishes to assert his masculinity by distancing himself from feminism – a political movement traditionally associated with women

– or perhaps he believes that he lives in a post-feminist society, i.e. a society that is beyond structuring on the basis of gender. In a post-feminist society, paternity leave is not a privilege, it is, simply, a right.

The discourse Mellenius conveys does not exactly mirror real social practices – simply looking at the statistics published by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) presents one with a different picture. The latest survey, conducted in 2017, states that less than 20 % of all parents in Sweden split the time equally.⁶⁷ Mellenius seems to be more or less aware of the statistics, but at the same time he still seems to be perplexed by them since they do not reaffirm his view of reality. His surprise is not unexpected since, as previously discussed, people’s only access to reality is through discourse and in the Break discourse, paternity leave has become a naturalised practice.

Johannes, who does not want to tell his surname in the article, holds similar opinions about paternity leave. He explains that he and his wife did not need to discuss the matter in depth, because “it was pretty obvious that that was the way we were going to do it. I look forward to getting to know my child. [...] And it also feels pretty good to split equally”. There are a number of modalities to consider in his statement. The use of pretty (*ganska*) in front of obvious suggests a degree of uncertainty to the truth of the utterance. However, the use of obvious stands in clear contradiction, and makes the utterance appear as a statement of fact. In the last sentence, two modalities, feel and pretty, are used in combination, suggesting that splitting the time equally may not be Johannes’ primary reason for going on paternity leave. It is, rather, a bonus.

The fact that the word *natural*, and other equivalents, are used by the fathers in the article to describe the desire to stay at home with their children is exceptionally interesting since the term has, as touched upon in section 2., historically been used about women and motherhood in order to keep them in the domestic sphere. In the discourse presented in this article, the word is used with the understanding that parenthood is natural, but about men instead of women. This usage taps into what was discussed in section 4.1., i.e. that gendered practices are social practices that are so familiar that they have become “naturalised” in the public eye. In addition, Professor Susan Halford notes, “motherhood has historically been seen as a central aspect of feminine identities, fatherhood has always competed with other elements

⁶⁷ “Andel föräldrar som delat lika (40/60) på dagarna när barnet fyllt 2 år, barn födda 2005-,” Försäkringskassan, March 12, 2020.

in the constitution of masculinity, particularly with paid work.”⁶⁸ In the light of this, the Break discourse is particularly interesting since it emphasises the importance of other identity markers than one’s occupation.

The article ”Weekend: kalsongdirektören bygger en ny borg”, published in *DI* June 25, 2010 features an interview with Björn Borg’s CEO Arthur Engel. The language in the article is unusually expressive, the title is a play of words and several metaphors and proverbs are used throughout the text. Interestingly, the phrase paternity leave is not used until the second half of the article. Here, Engels explains why he chose to quit his former job, adding, almost as a side-note: “Besides, I wanted to stay at home for a year with my oldest daughter and get a break from life”. Technically, Engels did not decide to take paternity leave. He quit his job in order to stay at home with his daughter. This brings associations to Gustav Lindner, who was presented in section 5.1.. Lindner also saw his transition into fatherhood as a reason to quit his job. However, while Lindner presents the more conservative case of conflicting loyalties to his job and family, Engels clearly emphasises that he views paternity leave as a break. Furthermore, Lindner bases his decision on the conviction that a good manager is too important to take longer periods of leave from work. Though Engels’ decision may have been subconsciously influenced by the same negative associations about combining work and family as Lindner’s decision was, he does not explicitly mention any of those traditional values. Instead, Engels explains that he views children as a privilege and affirms that he “had promised [himself] that, if [he] ever had children, [he] would make sure to spend time with them”. This is why Engels is placed in the break discourse and not in the Transnational business masculinity discourse.

5.4. Investment

On February 23, 2014, the article “Barnen blev ett karriärlyft” was published in *SvD Näringsliv*. The article depicts Anders Lundh, who is currently on paternity leave from his job as a customer manager at Microsoft. In the first paragraph of the article, the reader is informed of the fact that many couples split the parental leave equally, but later when they go back to work it is much more common for the woman to take greater responsibility for the children. She might even reduce her working hours. The first sentence of the second paragraph informs

⁶⁸ Halford, S, ”Collapsing the Boundaries? Fatherhood, Organization and Home-Working,” in *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13, no. 4 (2006): 6.

the reader that “The Lundh family did the opposite” and thus presents the family as an anomaly, a curious object of study.

Lundh and his wife have two children together. When their oldest child was little, Lundh’s wife was offered a new job. Consequently, they decided that Lundh was to be the primary caregiver so that his wife could focus wholeheartedly on her career. When Lundh reflects on their decision he says that “It was not strange for me. I had just been on parental leave. This just felt like a natural prolongation.” The fact that the article has Lundh reflect on the decision to take a bigger responsibility for his children further enhances the perception that it is an uncommon decision.

Though the use of the word *natural* brings associations to the Break discourse, Lundh does not think that having children offers a break from his work or his career. A major part of the article is dedicated to describing how he used his transition into fatherhood as an incentive to further his career. In many respects, Lundh embodies the values intrinsic to the transnational business masculinity. He is competitive, goal-oriented and cares a lot about his job and his personal development. The fact that he has scheduled every waking hour of his life, with efficiency in mind, brings associations to the men described in section 4.2.1. These are men who manage their lives and bodies like they manage at work. Moreover, Lundh uses keywords like *efficient*, *rational* and *successful* that are common in the Transnational business masculinity discourse. Yet, Lundh does not perpetuate the values present in that discourse. Instead, Lundh has found a way to include his children in his work-life; he sees his children not as an opportunity to take a break from work, but as a resource contributing to his personal achievements. Lundh reasons that: “I really believe in spending time with the children when they are little. The relationship we build now will benefit me a lot in the future. It feels like an enormous investment in myself.” As mentioned in section 4.3.1., Fairclough states that people are able to create hybrid discourses and become “agents of discursive and cultural change”⁶⁹ if they creatively combine elements from several different discourses. This is what Lundh does: he uses elements from Transnational business masculinity and Break – the two discourses that are ostensibly the furthest apart – and creates a new way of making meaning that allows him to be a successful father and a successful businessman.

Robert Lerner is a civil engineer working with system development at Unikum, a business that develops web services for schools. Lerner is interviewed in the article titled “Allt fler manliga ingenjörer stannar hemma”, which was published in *SvD Näringsliv* October 27,

⁶⁹ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 17.

2011. Lerner, like Lundh, is optimistic about his paternity leave and believes that it has benefitted his career. He says that “I take myself more seriously now, the family situation has made me grounded, and because of that I operate better at work too.” There are no modalities in the statement, which suggests that Lerner fully commits to what he says.

Lerner describes paternity leave as “a good time for contemplation [...] which is in turn good for the job.” Though *contemplation* is a keyword in the Break discourse, Lerner’s utterance does not necessarily represent this discourse. The Break discourse emphasises the positive aspects immanent in the act of reflecting and contemplating. In contrast, the focus of Lerner’s statement lies not in the benefits of contemplation per se, but in how contemplation contributes to his occupational career.

Another article expressing the discourse of investment is ”Föräldraskap fördel i karriär,” which was published January 4, 2009 in *SvD Näringsliv*. Though the article’s main focus is on a workshop in work-life balance, a short, but rich, segment depicts the two working fathers Arvid Axland, founder and chief executive of an advertising agency and Björn Sundegård, employee at a consultant business within IT. Axland clearly sees the benefits children and paternity leave brings. He says that “parenthood makes you good at seeing things from new perspectives. And in our business it is important to notice new aspects.” Sundegård is of the same opinion. He says that: “Being a father makes you mature and gives you a new perspective on life and it gives you new sets of values. In turn this is also beneficial in relation to the customers, and when you run into problems.” Both Axland and Sundegård thus underline the way having children and taking paternity leave can benefit your career.

In the case of Axland and Sundegård it is important to consider that newspaper articles are produced collectively, and in this particular article the author has designed the text to highlight that “parenthood is beneficial to your career”, as is stated in the title. There is a risk that the author of the text has chosen to include these particular statements in order to endorse a certain kind of discourse. Therefore, it is possible that Axland and Sundegård ascribe to other discourses as well. This thesis is aware of this fact, but the analysis limited to the scope of the text.

The article ”Lämnar över babyn till nästa generation: ’företaget är vårt femte syskon’” was published in *DI* on November 10, 2018 and depicts three members of the Jakobson family who owns the business Babybjörn. Björn and Lillemor Jakobson founded the business in the 1960s and the company is still family owned. The title of the article (in English: “handing over the baby to the next generation: ‘the company is our fifth sibling’.”) is ostensibly a play of words since the word baby also figures in the name of the company. Underneath the surface,

the title is an innovative way of presenting the quandary of the conflict between prioritising work or family life; it turns the job – the company Babybjörn – into a child of equal importance as the couple’s other children. Although it is said in jest, there is weight in the statement. Presenting the business as a child makes the reader inclined to sympathise with the couple’s consideration and care for their business, adding to the couple’s ethos as parents and individuals.

After the paragraph quoted above follows a paragraph where one of the couple’s daughters explains that Björn watched every football match she and her sisters played. Björn comments, jokingly, that: “Yes, I was team-captain for 15 years, and I usually say that that was the best CEO-training.” Even though the utterance is said half in jest, it presents children as a means for developing professional skills, which is what the Investment discourse does.

5.5. Equality

The article ”Carl-Henrik Svanberg: jag hade gärna varit hemma med mina barn” was published in *DI* June 19, 2018. It features an interview with Volvo’s chairman of the board, Carl-Henric Svanberg, on the topic of equality. Svanberg talks about fatherhood with the use of many modalities like would have liked to, should and would. As previously stated, the use of modalities signals a higher degree of uncertainty and a lower degree of commitment to the truth of the statement. If Svanberg had uttered a sentence without modalities, like for instance: “I regret not being home with my children,” the message would have been unequivocal. As it is now, the way Svanberg expresses himself is ambiguous and elusive. It seems as if he is well aware of the discourse of involved fatherhood and equality and tries to construe a picture of himself that fits with the values prevalent in the said discourse. For instance, Svanberg points out that: “I have a wonderful relationship with my children. But when I look back in time, I would have liked to experience being home with them. But those were different times and other values were prevalent.” With the reference to abstract concepts like time and values, Svanberg avoids taking responsibility for not having stayed at home with his children. The way that the sentence is worded presumes that it was not possible for Svanberg to choose to act in a way contradicting the worldview prevalent at the time. Svanberg thus confirms the notion that the

accessibility to different worldviews, or discourses, lead people to behave in different ways. People construct reality but are also constrained by it.⁷⁰

6. Discussion

This section considers and compares the results of the analysis, relating back to the theoretical approaches presented in section 4. Additionally, the categorisation of the five discourses presented above is discussed, as well as differences and similarities between the discourse types. Moreover, the research questions stated in the introduction are once again considered in relation to the results of the analysis. Finally, the results of this thesis are compared to the results of the Finnish study by Kangas, Lämsä and Jyrkinen.

The decision to divide the articles into five different discourse types was made on the basis of the use of specific keywords and the existence of similar or identical intertexts. As was presumed, the analysis found that there is a discourse presenting values intrinsic to Connell's concept of transnational business masculinity. Several articles embraced this particular form of hegemonic masculinity and portrayed men who, knowingly or unknowingly, put their careers first and family second. In addition to this discourse, the analysis found that several of the identified discourses embody aspects of the Nordic model of gender equality. In these discourses, the idea of the present, involved father was prevalent. There was one discourse that most clearly opposed the values of transnational business masculinity, the discourse called Break. The men belonging to this discourse had actively chosen to take paternity leave in order to experience a break from work. For these men, becoming fathers, and being involved fathers is viewed as something natural. Furthermore, fatherhood presents them with the opportunity to reflect and contemplate on life. Choosing to take a break from work in the middle of one's career is unimaginable in the Transnational business masculinity discourse, where the job is a key part of one's identity. The men who express the values of the Break discourse seem to have found other ways, besides their occupation, to establish their identity.

Interestingly, several discourses often figure in the same article. For instance, in the article "Öresunds vd ska bli pappa – säger upp sig", Lindner seems to be aware of the existence of other discourses. He mentions that he wishes to take a break, because that seems to be what the younger generation of fathers are doing. Lindner seems to have been made aware of the

⁷⁰ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 4-6, 7-9.

Break discourse, and it has presented him with the possibility of being an involved father, without feeling guilty about being away from work. However, the power structure of the Transnational business masculinity discourse still enacts its influence on Lindner and because of this he does not take paternity leave, he quits his job.

Furthermore, this thesis identified a hybrid discourse, consisting of two other discourses: Break and Transnational business masculinity. This discourse was named Investment. The men presenting the Investment discourse creatively use elements from two discourses to combine involved fatherhood as something natural, while retaining the competitive drive to have a career. Whether these men become “agents of discursive and cultural change,”⁷¹ such as CDA describes, is yet to be seen. If future research shows that the Investment discourse continues to have an impact on men’s fatherhood practices, this may very well be the case.

As was stated in the theoretical framework, CDA understands that the social world, including social identities, is produced in discursive practices and social interactions. People access reality through discourse, and therefore people are led to behave differently depending on what discourses they have access to. This phenomenon was demonstrated by Svanberg, Rönström and Lindner, above. Although, these three men represented different discourses, they all reflected on changes in the expectations of working fathers and all of them reflected on how these changes allowed them to pursue different ways to practice fatherhood.

This thesis asked whether other discourses figure in a hierarchical relationship to the Transnational business masculinity type of discourse. With the exception of the Investment discourse, which merges two discourses into one, the analysis found that in isolated cases, where several discourses figured in the same article, one type of discourse typically occupied the hegemonic position. However, there was no clear majority of the articles belonging to one particular discourse, which would have suggested that there was a clear hierarchy in general. Instead, the articles were distributed quite evenly among the five discourse types that were identified.

This thesis found different, more diverse results compared to the Finnish study conducted by Kangas, Lämsä and Jyrkinen. For instance, there is an immediate difference in sheer numbers; Kangas, Lämsä and Jyrkinen identified two types of discourses, one of stasis and one of change. This thesis identified five types of discourses. There were, however, articles that presented statements reminiscent of the discourse of change, but these statements were

⁷¹ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, (2002), 17.

minor and not substantial enough to allude to an entire discourse – such as the one the Finnish study found. The articles containing these statements portrayed men who had already had a long career in business and reflected over the changes that had taken place over the years. The articles discussed in the subsection about Transnational business masculinity can be argued to represent the discourse of stasis. However, since this thesis only viewed articles from one time period, 2009-2019, it is not possible to conclude that this discourse has been present for a longer period of time.

7. Conclusion

This thesis found that within the two major business magazines *SvD Näringsliv* and *DI*, there is a discourse which embodies norms and attitudes intrinsic to the hegemonic form of masculinity that Connell calls transnational business masculinity. Furthermore, the thesis also found that there are several other discourses active within the Swedish business world. These other discourses presented values of gender equality, opposing the marginalisation of the family and either proposed work-life balance or prioritising life outside of work. Though some discourses were more common than others, this thesis did not detect a hierarchical relationship in between them. Rather, it observed several competing discourses, several ways of making meaning of paternity leave and fatherhood practices.

Though the thesis produced intriguing results, the scope is too limited to imply generalising conclusions about the discursive and social practices surrounding fatherhood and paternity leave in the Swedish business world. In order to produce such results, more substantial research including, for instance, collecting quantitative and qualitative data such as surveys and interviews, needs to be conducted.

8. Suggestions for Further Research

Professors Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard note that Sweden, as part of the Nordic region, is characterised by its gender equality, family friendly policies and dual earner/dual carer model.⁷² It is beyond the capacity of an essay of this size to observe and compare regional differences within Europe, though such a comparison would certainly pose an important topic for further research.

⁷² Guðný Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard (2015), 13.

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