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“Metoo is a terror organization..”ⁱ

*A Critical Study of how Testimonial Injustice Operates
in Danish Facebook Discourses*

Author: *Simone Melbye Larsen*

Division of Human Rights
Studies

Department of History

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Supervisor: Lina Sturfelt

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine online sexism as a phenomenon on Danish news media platforms on Facebook. Research have shown a transgression of gendered violence online that is often produced on social media. Studies concerning Danish discourses and sexism is approached to give an understanding of the extent of online sexism. Limited research exists and the following study will provide insight into the area from a human rights perspective. The portrayals of women in discourses surrounding feminist topics are analyzed while discussing why sexist discourses online is a form of testimonial injustice. The aim is to answer the following research questions: 1. *How are women and feminist topics portrayed in discourses on DR Nyheder and TV 2 Nyhederne's Facebook platforms?*; 2. *Why are these discourses a form of testimonial injustice and in what ways do they produce and reproduce a domination of men over women?* These are answered by employing a theoretical framework with a gendered perspective on testimonial injustice while approaching the analysis with analytical tools of objectification. The primary data is comments from Facebook users that have been collected using a netnographic approach. A content analysis interprets the data and a critical discourse analysis provides a nuanced perspective of the production and reproduction of domination of men over women in Danish discourses and society. The results suggest, that credibility operates as an ideal deeply rooted within Danish ideologies. This silences women through means of epistemic objectification.

Keywords: Denmark, Facebook discourse, sexism, ideology, #MeToo, credibility, testimonial injustice, feminism, the nature of women.

ⁱ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021.

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Introduction

We find ourselves spending more time online by scrolling through an endless amount of information. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to address the way we enter online social spaces, and perhaps it is overdue that we start to value the online sphere as much as the offline. Some are starting to consider the impacts of Big Tech's power. Recently, the Norwegian media *NRK* decided to close their news platform on Facebook, *NRK Nyheter*, because the discourses on the platform do not promote the desired Norwegian values.¹ The contributions of online spheres thus have to be studied further to ensure that democracy and human rights are valued online. The impacts of social media are manifold. On the one hand, social media is used to find time in a stressful working day as we scroll to be entertained. On the other hand, social media takes a toll on our mental health.² We thus need to find sustainable ways to access the online world. Among other things, participation in online debates has to be accessible to all without fear of discrimination because of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. To live without being discriminated against is a core human rights value, but it seems it is yet to be translated to the online sphere. Studies show how online discourses are sexist and that online misogyny threatens democracy and women's rights, even in states like Denmark who promote themselves on being gender equal.

Since the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), women's rights have been of concern to popular culture, and the words "human being" and "everyone" instead of "man" in the Declaration implied a shift in the way women were perceived in society. In 1978, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Thereby, the

¹ Ritzau, 'Norges svar på DR vil dele færre nyheder på Facebook', *Ritzau*, 22 May 2022, <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/2022-05-22-norges-svar-pa-dr-vil-dele-faerre-nyheder-pa-facebook>, (Accessed 22 May 2022).

² See: A. Walton, '6 Ways Social Media Affects Our Mental Health', *Forbes*, 30 June 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2017/06/30/a-run-down-of-social-medias-effects-on-our-mental-health/?sh=d62dd382e5af>, (accessed 12 May 2022); Algoritmer, Data & Demokrati, *Sociale medier og psyken* [website], <https://algoritmer.org/befolkningsundersogelse/sociale-mediers-paavirkning-paa-psyken/>, (accessed 3 May 2022).

international community showed sympathy regarding the injustice affecting all women in unfathomable ways. Yet, there continues to be an unequal distribution of wealth, power, and rights between men and women, and women endure sexism as is it a natural part of life. The injustice of sexism is of concern to this study to understand why discourses on Facebook objectify, silence, and shame women.

This study aspires to uncover harmful and unjust discourses on two Danish mainstream media platforms on Facebook: *DR Nyheder* and *TV 2 Nyhederne*.³ To be able to retrieve data on social media, the study will rely on a netnographic approach. The ethical implications of social media research are discussed. Thereafter, prior research concerning online gendered violence, discourses, and sexism is framed in a Danish perspective. To interpret data and understand the phenomenon of sexism on social media, a gendered perspective of testimonial injustice will be applied as the theoretical framework. This study's data, i.e., comments from Facebook, will be analyzed using content analysis (CA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Lastly, a conclusion will summarize the study's findings and recommend further research.

Research Problem and Aim

Denmark is known as a country where gender equality is fundamental to Danish values. However, studies and surveys have recently shown, that Denmark may not be as egalitarian; systemic discrimination of some groups occurs. A 2019 survey on gender, equality, and rights in 23 developed countries found that Denmark is one of the least feminist nations with only one in six being feminists, and sexist attitudes such as wolf-calling were accepted by 33% of the respondents.⁴ The findings suggest that Danish culture accepts sexism and racism as long as it is merely “for laughs”;⁵ or what Danes like to call *hygge* sexism and *hygge* racism.⁶

³ As of 25 May 2022: *DR Nyheder* has 475.382 followers; *TV 2 Nyhederne* has 722.300 followers.

⁴ R. Orange and P. Duncan, ‘And the least feminist nation in the world is... Denmark?’, *The Guardian*, 10 May, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/may/10/and-the-least-feminist-nation-in-the-world-is-denmark>, (accessed 22 March 2022).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Hygge*: Something comfortable, friendly or homely.

Despite entrenched ideologies of sexism, #MeToo reached Denmark forcing several powerful men to face sexual harassment accusations and leave their respected positions. This enabled an *us vs them* discourse online. Other studies found that women and minorities are discouraged from participating on social media due to harmful discourses.⁷ Overall, there is a need to focus more on Danish ideologies that marginalize certain groups.

Decades of human rights language have aimed to ensure equality for all, yet generations of women continue to battle systemic discrimination. As much of our social world moves into the online sphere, scholarship and policy must consider how and why women are excluded from communities and public life online. Women's right to enter public debates without fear of objectification and unflattering portrayals is one of the motivations for this study. This will be accomplished by theories of testimonial injustice and sexism.

The theoretical framework enables an analysis of how women are portrayed as well as uncovering ideologies restricting women's rights. In the operational methods chapter, CA aims to uncover the most common words and phrases by Facebook users (hereafter: user) when discussing feminist topics. In the analysis, CDA facilitates an interpretation and examination of how discourses construct, legitimize and maintain social inequalities on Danish news media platforms by deconstructing present ideologies.

⁷ See: L. Zuleta and R. Burkal, 2017. Hædefylde ytringer i den offentlige online debat, *Institut for Menneskerettigheder*, Copenhagen, Denmark, The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2017, https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/ligebehandling_2017/rapport_om_haedefulde_ytringer_2._oplag_2017.pdf, (accessed 7 December 2021); L. Holck, 'Demokratiet lider, når kvinder flygter fra den offentlige debat', *Berlingske*, 8 March 2022, <https://www.berlingske.dk/kronikker/demokratiet-lider-naar-kvinder-flygter-fra-den-offentlige-debat>, (accessed 16 May 2022); Analyse & Tal, 'Angreb i den offentlige debat på Facebook', *Analyse & Tal F.M.B.A.*, Copenhagen, DK, Analyse & Tal, 2021, <https://strapi.ogtal.dk/uploads/966f1ebcfa9942d3aef338e9920611f4.pdf>, (accessed 20 September 2021); Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen, 'Sociale medier 2020: Brug, indhold og relationer', *Mediernes Udvikling*, Copenhagen, Denmark, Kulturstyrelsen, 2020, https://mediernesudvikling.kum.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumenter/medier/Mediernes_udvikling/2019/Spocialrapporter/Sociale_medier_indhold/Sociale_medier_-_brug_indhold_og_relationer.pdf, (accessed 5 January 2022).

The aim of this study is thus to analyze social media discourses to understand the phenomenon of online sexism while uncovering how women are portrayed in discourses on feminist topics. Sexist discourses are outlined and the presence of sexist ideologies as a form of testimonial injustice is considered.

The current scholarly debates include research on online sexism as being a form of violence and discussions of how unequal access to public debates online poses an issue for democracy.⁸ This study adds to scholarly work by instigating qualitative research while taking a critical approach to discourses perpetuating sexist and unjust structures that facilitates oppression of women. I will argue that the testimonial injustice perpetuated in the discourses produces and reproduces unjust structures of power favoring men and masculine traits.

Research Questions

1. *How are women and feminist topics portrayed in discourses on DR Nyheder and TV 2 Nyhederne's Facebook platforms?*
2. *Why are these discourses a form of testimonial injustice and in what ways do they produce and reproduce domination of men over women?*

Delimitations

Demographics

It is outside the scope of this thesis to determine the demographics of the users whose comments are analyzed as personal information is not accessible. Gender is acknowledged based on the user's name and whether that name is normally attributed men or women in Denmark. It is outside the scope of this thesis to consider identities outside the gender binary.

⁸ See: *Prior Research*.

The Danish Institute of Human Rights conducted a study concerning participation on Facebook. They found that men aged 50+ make up 64% of participants in debates online about socially relevant topics and those aged 18-29 constitute 8% of the debate.⁹ Further, they found that the probability of men participating in online debates of social relevancy is 54% whereas for women it is 35%.¹⁰ This shows that representation in online public debates is lacking, and potentially affects the findings of this study.

Trolls

Trolls often insert themselves in debates merely to cause unrest and discomfort, e.g., by sharing disparaging opinions or contributing with hate. According to Urban Dictionary, Facebook trolls can be defined as someone who wishes to derail debates by spouting confusion, hate, or boredom through nonsense. For further research, the presence of Facebook trolls can be of interest to investigate with concern to social media phenomena.

Ethical Considerations

The intention of this study is not to conduct research requiring informed consent, as data will be retrieved from public platforms. Furthermore, names and personal information will not be disclosed. However, researching social media entails blurred lines about privacy and consent. Data is found by a netnographic approach, hence possible ethical implications are considered.

Robert Kozinets discusses ethics in netnography. Conducting netnographic research can potentially have ethical implications resembling those of its ethnographic equivalent, e.g., research may lead back to sources despite anonymity and confidentiality.¹¹ This can, however, be overcome in netnographic research. Kozinets argue, that it is reasonable to assume that social media users are aware that what they share online is public and available

⁹ Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 'Demokratisk deltagelse på Facebook', *Institut for Menneskerettigheder*, Copenhagen, Denmark, The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2019, https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/04_april_19/Rapport%20om%20demokratisk%20deltagelse.pdf, (accessed 7 December 2021), p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ R. V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Redefined*, New York: SAGE, 2015, p. 129.

to others.¹² Moreover, social interactions archived on social media are not acknowledged as human subjects research, hence researchers can access public platforms and archives as long as ethical standards like anonymity are followed.¹³ Netnographic research on public social media platforms share similarities with a published text rather than a private exchange.¹⁴ Though researchers do not share personal information and details, it may be easy to locate sources merely by googling, as the internet records everything.¹⁵ For this study, that is overcome by translating the comments, and the original writings will not be included. The data for this study is retrieved from two publicly available platforms accessible to all Danish Facebook users. Data and data collection is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

¹² Ibid, p. 131, 148.

¹³ Ibid, p. 138.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Prior Research

The following chapter will provide an overview of prior research on online sexism. A discussion of gendered violence online is included as sexist and misogynistic content on social media can be considered abusive and harmful. A Danish context to sexism, feminism, and social media is likewise discussed. Scholarship on gender inequality in a Danish and European context is reviewed while including contributions to social media scholarship and how women and minorities are targeted in online discourses. The chapter will conclude with a summary incorporating this study's contribution to the field.

Gendered Violence Online

Online abuse, hate speech, threats, misogynistic and racist content, etc. is a form of violence although this perspective is relatively new. Gendered violence online includes online harassment, doxing,¹⁶ deepfake,¹⁷ hate speech, stalking, rape threats, and more. Despite this, online violence has long been considered less severe than its offline counterpart. Institutions are, however, starting to investigate its impacts. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) focus on gendered violence, e.g., by participating in the OrangeDay initiative where they shared their 16 days of activism campaign *Online Violence is Real Violence with a Real Impact*.¹⁸ OSCE acknowledges that online violence directly impacts women's lives and potentially contributes to economic, sexual, psychological and physical harm.¹⁹ Those who are most vulnerable to be targeted by online violence are

¹⁶ The act of revealing identifiable information about somebody.

¹⁷ According to Merriam-Webster, deepfake is: "an image or recording that has been convincingly altered and manipulated to misrepresent someone as doing or saying something that was not actually done or said." It has, among other things, been used for revenge porn purposes.

¹⁸ OSCE Secretariat, 'Could you tell that she is experiencing violence?', *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* [website], <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/505138> (accessed 9 February 2022).

¹⁹ Ibid.

minority women and women involved with politics, journalism, and activism.²⁰ A UNESCO study from 2020 suggested that 73% of women journalists had experienced online violence.²¹

One form of online violence is when women receive rape threats on social media.²² Hardaker and McGlashan (2016) discuss these threats as having several issues because of their online nature. Online rape threats are difficult to investigate due to inadequate legislation and a lack of resources and skills to investigate new methods of illegal behavior.²³ Furthermore, the large amount of online violence combined with the anonymity of social media makes it difficult for authorities to uncover the extent.²⁴ Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper (2017) found that victims of online abuse feel responsible to prevent a recurrence, enabling a sense of self-protection rather than exposing it as an institutional systemic problem, thereby causing a vicious cycle.²⁵ Despite social media encouraging positive revolutions in some areas, it likewise facilitates negative behavior which is noticeable in the rise of online abuse.²⁶

The European Institute for Gender Equality states that violence experienced by women and girls online must be addressed as gendered violence.²⁷ Hardaker and McGlashan (2016) found that women are more likely to be victims of online abuse. They scrutinized men's role in online abuse and located discourses where ideologies of online abuse it related to opinions about masculinity. For instance, some argued that "real" men do not rape, abuse, and threaten women.²⁸ The study showed that women are the primary targets of abuse with a sexual nature

²⁰ Ibid; Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017.

²¹ J. Posetti et al., 'Online violence Against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts', UNESCO, Paris, France, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375136> (accessed 24 March 2022), p. 5.

²² C. Hardaker, and M. McGlashan, "'Real men don't hate women": Twitter rape threats and group identity', *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 91, 2016, p. 80.

²³ Ibid, p. 81.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 80.

²⁵ R. Lewis, M. Rowe, and C. Wiper, 'Online abuse of feminists as an emerging form of violence against women and girls', *Brit. J. Criminol.*, vol 57, 2017, p. 1477.

²⁶ Hardaker, and McGlashan, "'Real men don't hate women", p. 80.

²⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Cyber violence against women and girls* [website], <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls>, (accessed 9 February 2022); Galpin, 'At the Digital Margins? A Theoretical Examination of Social Media Engagement Using Intersectional Feminism', *Politics and Governance*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2022, p. 1-2.

²⁸ Hardaker, and McGlashan, "'Real men don't hate women", p. 88-89.

in Twitter discourses, and threats were utilized in a misogynistic tactic to control how women contribute to online debates.²⁹ Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper studied UK discourses on feminist politics and found gender inequality in online spheres to be similar to its offline counterpart, thus gender inequality can be understood as “an extension of offline gender relations.”³⁰ The ideologies of the offline sphere is visible online where gendered violence is contextualized within ideologies that reinforce and emphasize harmful behavior online.³¹ The anecdotal evidence found by Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper shows how discourses of feminist politics attract threats of violence as well as ideologies of sexism, prejudice and misogyny considered to be mundane.³²

There is a lack of empirical evidence and theoretical insight into how online violence affects social and political movements such as #MeToo, thus this thesis aims to make a contribution. Twitter followed by Facebook are the social media primarily used to debate feminist politics: 88% of Twitter users and 60% of Facebook users in the study had experienced online abuse.³³ However, the experience of abuse is subjective; some will consider abuse mundane and others will consider it threatening.³⁴ Scholars have discussed how some women feel empowered when experiencing abuse whereas others are disempowered from debating feminist politics.³⁵ Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper (2017) further found an intersection between oppressive structures such as racism, homophobia, and misogyny. This is also present in the following analysis and will be developed further. How people experience abuse subjectively can be transferred several networks, as e.g., women debaters are likewise an exposed group.

Though not specifically stated, DR’s series on digital behavior, *Vi kommer og dræber dig* (Eng. We are coming to kill you) concerns gendered violence online. Among other things,

²⁹ Ibid, p. 88-91.

³⁰ Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper, ‘Online abuse of feminists as an emerging form of violence against women and girls’, p. 1462-1463.

³¹ Ibid, p. 1465.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, p. 1469.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 1470.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 1475; P. Zeinert, N. Inie, and L. Derczynski, ‘Annotating Online Misogyny’, *Association for Computational Linguistics*, 2021, p. 3182.

they discuss how men and women do not receive the same respect when participating in online discussions. Men are more likely to receive feedback based on their opinions and statements, i.e., it is not personal.³⁶ Women, however, receive feedback of personal slander with no relevance to the debate.³⁷ It can hence be argued that an act of dominance is being exercised over women in online debates. DR is one of the two main inquiries in this thesis why it is worth noting that though DR themselves expose sexist discourses online, they likewise reinforce sexist ideologies on their Facebook platforms. DR's role will be examined in the analysis. For this thesis, it is worth investigating sexist discourses and online gendered violence in a Danish context while considering Danish ideologies of feminism.

Denmark: A Gender Equal Nation?

An opinion poll by YouGov and Cambridge Globalism Project from 2019 revealed how only one in six Danes consider themselves to be feminists.³⁸ The poll further showed how there was little support for the Danish #MeToo movement; well below average compared to other countries as only 4% of men and 8% of women had a favorable impression.³⁹ Leine, Mikkelsen and Sen (2020) argue how gender equality in Denmark is a myth so well-established that it generates social inequality, racial discrimination and ideologies of violence.⁴⁰ This supports the findings from the European Agency Union for Fundamental Rights ((FRA) who categorized Denmark as the European country with the highest occurrence of male physical violence including sexual assault and stalking.⁴¹ The report showed that 52% of Danish women between the ages of 15 and 79 had experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner or non-partner - the highest among the nations.⁴² The report

³⁶ 'Profil af en tastaturkriger', *Vi kommer og dræber dig*, DR, 23 August 2021 [television programme].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Orange and Duncan, 'And the least feminist nation in the world is... Denmark?', 2019.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ M. Leine, H.H. Mikkelsen, and A. Sen, "'Danish women put up with less': Gender equality and the politics of denial in Denmark', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2020, p 181.

⁴¹ Ibid; Fundamental Rights Agency, 'Violence against women: An EU-wide survey. Main results report', European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Vienna, Austria, 2014, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf, (accessed 29 March 2022).

⁴² Fundamental Rights Agency, 'Violence against women: An EU-wide survey. Main results report', European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Vienna, Austria, 2014,

was, however, deemed untrustworthy in Danish media who argued that Danish women had become equal to such an extent that they imagine gender inequality.⁴³ The discourses surrounding the report quickly became racialized as Danish politicians and journalists discussed how Muslim men must accept Danish values such as gender equality.⁴⁴ This exemplifies the intersection between oppressive structures as gender inequality became an issue of minorities. Despite the report's findings, Danish media continued to argue it is a matter of interpretation as Danish women simply put up with less stating that they "mismanage gender equality."⁴⁵ According to Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, this is a politics of denialism. Denialism operates in Danish discourses by trivializing and racializing violence and separating *them* from *us*.⁴⁶ Structural oppositions such as this are evident in discourses analyzed for this thesis which shows that the politics of denial is deeply entrenched in Danish ideologies. Gender inequality is, as a consequence, understood as private and isolated incidents.

The exceptionalist approach to gender inequality in Danish discourses contributes to a Western trend where issues of male sexual violence and systemic gender inequality are projected onto migrant cultures.⁴⁷ This is visible in Swedish discourses as well, as Edenberg (2020) found media discourses of male sexual violence to be racialized and culturalized despite how #MeToo showed that male sexual violence occurs across different cultures.⁴⁸ Swedish values were outlined as being in danger because of patriarchal immigrant cultures thereby taking an exceptionalist approach to gender inequality as seen in Denmark.⁴⁹ This

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf, (accessed 29 March 2022), p. 17, 28.

⁴³ Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, "Danish women put up with less", p. 182.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 186, 189.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 183; For discussions on racialization of male sexual violence and gender equality, see M. Ticktin, 'Sexual Violence as the Language of Border Control: Where French Feminist and Anti-immigrant Rhetoric Meet', *Signs*, 33, no. 4, 2008; and S. Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2017.

⁴⁸ E. Edenberg, 'Endangered Swedish Values: Immigration, Gender Equality, and "Migrants' Sexual Violence"', in O. C. Norocel, A. Hellström, and M. B. Jørgensen (eds.) *Nostalgia and Hope: Intersections between Politics of Culture, Welfare, and Migration in Europe*, IMISCOE Research Series, 2020, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Ibid; Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, "Danish women put up with less", p. 183-184.

approach produces racist ideologies while suppressing problems of violence and discrimination. Galpin (2022) takes an intersectional approach to gender and racial inequality on social media. She argues that participation on social media is inseparable from the inequalities we find in the offline sphere, thereby supporting the arguments of Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper.⁵⁰ By utilizing a critical feminist epistemology, Galpin argue that the dynamics of power on social media enables an inequality of participation in European democracies, inter alia, because European scholarship neglect to focus on gender and marginalization.⁵¹ She draws on Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as well as Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas' public sphere theory and argues how an intersectional approach to participation on social media is necessary to understand the gendered and racialized power structures of the online sphere.⁵² An intersectional approach aims to address experiences of the most marginalized groups to understand the restrictions of online democracy.⁵³ This thesis will draw on intersectional aspects, although it will not be framed as a theory. Rather, it is used as an analytical tool to analyze and understand the power structures visible in social media discourses. As will become evident in the analysis, discourses reflect stereotypical views of women and minorities by framing it as *us vs them* ideologies.

Puncher and Markowitz (2022) critically examine the normalization of sexist ideologies by using CDA to uncover how language maintains unequal power structures in cases of sexual assault. They argue that discourses perpetuated by defenders of clergy misconduct uphold an ideology of patriarchy.⁵⁴ By applying Kate Manne's theory on the moral economy, they found that patriarchal ideologies are upheld by himpathy⁵⁵, erasure of women, and testimonial injustice.⁵⁶ In discourses of himpathy, there is a lack of concern for victims e.g.,

⁵⁰ Galpin, 'At the Digital Margins? A Theoretical Examination of Social Media Engagement Using Intersectional Feminism', p. 1; Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper, 'Online abuse of feminists as an emerging form of violence against women and girls', p. 1462-1463.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid, p. 2

⁵³ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁴ L. Puncher, and L. Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', *Discourse and Society*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2022, p. 75.

⁵⁵ Himpathy is the disproportionate sympathy awarded to male perpetrators of sexual violence. See K. Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, Oxford University Press, 2017.

⁵⁶ Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 76, 79-80.

by arguing people are not perfect and using disclaimers like “but”.⁵⁷ This is similar to whataboutism, which is observed in the following analysis, where debates are derailed. Erasure of women is noticeable in discourses that fail to mention victims or when victims are portrayed as being perpetrators thereby minimizing the experience of victims and preserving patriarchal ideologies.⁵⁸ Testimonial injustice concerns how men are viewed as credible whereas women are not, which will be developed further in the theoretical framework. Puncher and Markowitz argue that, in the moral economy of patriarchy, the predisposition is to feel sympathy for men accused of sexual misconduct, i.e., those who do not, violate patriarchal norms.⁵⁹ This may affect whether women participate in online debates.

68% of social media users have refrained from participating in online public debates because of the harmful rhetoric.⁶⁰ By focusing on Danish social media, Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski developed a study on misogynistic abuse while acknowledging subjectivity.⁶¹ Their main concern is the need to develop a digital content moderation software programme because the language online is abusive to such an extent that it harms users and content moderators.⁶² The scholars found a cultural difference in how misogynistic language is used. In Spanish, discourses of dominance are profound, in English, it is a matter of discredit.⁶³ The difference in language makes it difficult to objectively label misogyny and online abuse, why Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski (2021) propose to focus on how culture is a contributor to how sexism operates. Similar to this thesis, Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski studied Danish discourses and found that neosexism is particularly visible meaning there is an entrenched belief that gender equality is achieved.⁶⁴ Neosexism is approached further in the analysis as this study similarly shows how women’s experiences are discredited by arguing it is men who are victims of

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 80-81; Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 89.

⁶⁰ Analyse & Tal, ‘Angreb i den offentlige debat på Facebook’, *Analyse & Tal F.M.B.A.*, Copenhagen, DK, Analyse & Tal, 2021, <https://strapi.ogtal.dk/uploads/966f1ebcfa9942d3acf338e9920611f4.pdf>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

⁶¹ Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski, ‘Annotating Online Misogyny’, p. 3182.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 3184; See: Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, “”Danish women put up with less”: Gender equality and the politics of denial in Denmark’.

gender inequality. Other than neosexism, they found that Danish discourses entail aspects of discredit, stereotyping, and objectification.⁶⁵ Due to lack of research in the field, Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski (2021) could not conclude whether neosexism is a Danish cultural phenomenon. Galpin (2022) notes that though discourse analyses are valuable to understanding online abuse, much abuse continues to happen in private by direct messages, e-mails, etc.⁶⁶ Research on social media in a European context has to be expanded to include ethnography, interviews, etc. as it is only then gendered and racialized oppression in European democracy can be uncovered.⁶⁷

Summary and Contribution

As mentioned, there is limited research in the area of online sexism and how it affects social and political debates. This study will add to the ongoing scholarly debate by critically examining ideologies in Danish discourses with a qualitative approach. Research has been done concerning how ideologies may silence women, but much is still to be done in the area of why it is an injustice and how it perpetuates gender inequality. By arguing that sexist discourses preserve a patriarchal ideology producing unjust structures, this research will provide insight into how men and masculine traits are considered a Danish ideal. The reproduction of dominant narratives allows ideologies of sexism, prejudice, and misogyny to prevail. Much scholarship applies a quantitative method, why a qualitative approach to discourses is needed. What is lacking is research from a human rights perspective that also considers the past years' debates on #MeToo. As will be seen in the analysis, #MeToo is being used as an argument to grant women a credibility deficit.⁶⁸ By focusing on how credibility is utilized as a tool by patriarchal ideologies, my analysis will show how women's contributions are devalued through sexual objectification and silencing. To the best of my knowledge, discourses on social media have not yet been examined through the theoretical perspectives of this thesis, why the following analysis will add new perspectives.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 3185.

⁶⁶ Galpin, 'At the Digital Margins? A Theoretical Examination of Social Media Engagement Using Intersectional Feminism', p. 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See: *Theoretical Framework*.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will outline and discuss theories employed in the analysis. Testimonial injustice is the main theory contextualized in the analysis with Miranda Fricker being the primary scholar. The theoretical aspects of testimonial injustice are discussed below. Objectification is discussed with theoretical insights from Martha Nussbaum, Sally Haslanger, and Amia Srinivasan. Sexism is an epistemic injustice and is utilized as an analytical in the analysis. Sexism is intrinsic to the thesis as a whole, as it explains the structures upholding gender inequality. A brief discussion of patriarchy is included as a reclaimed concept to explain the preservation of women's oppression. The chapter will conclude with a summary to outline the theoretical concepts and analytical tools that are referred to in the analysis.

A Gendered Perspective on Testimonial Injustice

Fricker refers to *testimonial injustice*, i.e., the primary form of *epistemic injustice*, when prejudice causes a discrepancy of credibility between a hearer and speaker.⁶⁹ It occurs when the hearer's prejudice against the speaker restricts the credibility of the speaker's words, consequently limiting the credibility of the speaker.⁷⁰ When discrimination and prejudice intersect, it enables testimonial injustice causing sexism, racism, etc. As people can get a credibility deficit, they can similarly gain a credibility surplus which is when they are granted an excessive amount of credibility compared to what they reasonably deserve. As Manne notes, in cases of sexual violence, perpetrators are granted the benefit of the doubt (a credibility surplus) whereas victims are considered less credible.⁷¹ Credibility surplus is bestowed to members of society who are considered to have a higher status, i.e., men and masculine traits.⁷² The consequences of this are discussed in the analysis. Closely related to prejudice in the interpretation of others' credibility is *identity prejudice*. According to

⁶⁹ M. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1, 4.

⁷¹ Manne, *Down Girl*.

⁷² Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 76.

Fricker, identity prejudice explains how prejudice is based on social type such as skin color, arguing that it is a fundamental aspect of testimonial injustice.⁷³

Once testimonial injustice intersects with e.g., sexism, it reveals how epistemic injustice exists within a larger framework of social justice. Fricker labels this *identity-prejudicial credibility deficit*.⁷⁴ Identity-prejudicial credibility deficit is an injustice as it prevents people from becoming their truest self, i.e., it is an intrinsic injustice.⁷⁵ Epistemic injustice hence relies on unequal power structures and systemic prejudice which individuals cannot overcome without institutional change.⁷⁶ This is similar to how the patriarchy operates. The patriarchy relies on unequal power structures that benefit men and masculine traits while oppressing others. Epistemic injustice is thus located within structures that uphold the patriarchy. More on the patriarchy will follow in the next section.

Fricker introduce *epistemic objectification* by drawing parallels between sexual objectification and silencing. Sexual objectification and silencing are exemplified in discourses in the analysis. Epistemic objectification represents the tendency in which trustworthiness aligned with prejudice determines whether some groups are even asked to share information, i.e., participate in discourses.⁷⁷ This is an example of *epistemic exclusion* as some groups are denied access to the community of shared information:

Those social groups who are subject to identity prejudice and are thereby susceptible to unjust credibility deficit will, by the same token, also simply tend not to be asked to share their thoughts, their judgments, their opinions.⁷⁸

Therefore, it is worth considering that if women are epistemically objectified, they will be excluded from sharing their experiences. This aspect has been visible in international

⁷³ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 7-8.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 130.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

discourses about consent as women experience that saying no is less valid than when a man does. This kind of epistemic injustice is rooted in silencing, and it is executed, inter alia, by pickup artists.⁷⁹ The prejudice a hearer has towards certain groups will deny any potential exchange of information also known as *pre-emptive testimonial injustice*.⁸⁰ These groups will thereby be in prejudicial deficit to such an extent that any potential testimony is improbable – the group is silenced because of identity prejudice and lack of credibility.⁸¹ A silenced group will at times be asked to share information, but structural injustices functions as a means to deprive them their right to contribute to the *pool of collective understanding*, i.e., their voices are excluded from what is generally considered as knowledge and they are treated as objects.⁸² The primary harm of testimonial injustice is thus epistemic objectification:

When a hearer undermines a speaker in her capacity as a giver of knowledge, the speaker is epistemically objectified.⁸³

Objectification

Objectification is widely discussed and acknowledged in feminist scholarship. Nussbaum introduces seven features presupposed in the objectification of people and Rae Langton adds three features complimenting Nussbaum’s: See table below.

Feature	Explanation
<i>Instrumentality</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as a tool for the purpose of the objectifier
<i>Denial of autonomy.</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as having no autonomy or self-determination
<i>Inertness</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as having no agency

⁷⁹ A pickup artist is a self-identified dating coach attempting to coax women into sexual relations.

⁸⁰ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, p. 130.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, p. 131-132.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 133.

<i>Fungibility</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as interchangeable with other objects
<i>Violability</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as having no integrity; something that can be broken
<i>Ownership</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as an item that can be bought and sold, i.e., owned
<i>Denial of subjectivity</i> (Nussbaum, 1995)	Treating a person as if their experiences and feelings are irrelevant
<i>Reduction to body</i> (Langton, 2009)	Treating a person as they are nothing but flesh and body; dehumanizing
<i>Reduction to appearance</i> (Langton, 2009)	Treating a person based on their looks and how they appeal to senses
<i>Silencing</i> (Langton, 2009)	Treating a person as incapable of speaking

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One of these aspects has to be present if it is to be understood as sexual objectification of people, hence they will be applied in the analysis to discover if there is an oppressive patriarchal ideology in the discourses. Haslanger also discusses objectification and explains the continuation of women's objectification by men is contingent on the *norm of assumed objectivity*. Therefore, in societies where there is male dominance, the norm perpetuates women's objectification because it comes across as being natural.⁸⁵ It is an epistemic injustice that women, by nature, are assumed to be objects of male desire.⁸⁶ Nussbaum and Fricker argue that being treated as an object is not necessarily ethically bad as it depends on context.⁸⁷ If objectification is to be considered epistemically bad, the ethos of being dehumanized must be present.⁸⁸ Merely treating someone as a means is not by itself

⁸⁴ M. Nussbaum, 'Objectification', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1995, p. 257; Langton, R., *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 228-229.

⁸⁵ S Haslanger, 'On Being Objective and Being Objectified', in L. M. Antony and C. Witt (eds.) *A Mind of One's Own. Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1993, p. 106-115.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Nussbaum, 'Objectification', p. 251; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*. p. 133.

⁸⁸ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*. p. 133-134.

epistemically bad. Therefore, testimonial injustice involves a morally bad epistemic objectification, where a speaker's epistemic subjectivity is undermined by a hearer's prejudice and attitude.⁸⁹

For the purpose of the analysis, exemplifying a testimonial injustice is valuable. Srinivasan discuss silencing as a testimonial injustice in cases of fake rape accusations. Fake rape accusations are of epistemic interest because they are often used as arguments suppressing #MeToo. Srinivasan explains how fake rape accusations are considered scandalous because they affect *innocent* men who are:

disbelieved, mistrusted, his reality twisted, his reputation stripped, his life potentially ruined by the manipulation of state power.⁹⁰

This is a testimonial injustice because rape victims are not granted the same moral outrage.⁹¹ Innocent men accused of rape are granted excessive amounts of sympathy (credibility surplus), whereas female rape victims are disbelieved (credibility deficit). This silences women and victims of sexual violence.

Sexism

Hannah Dawson argues that feminism only makes sense insofar as you believe in sexism.⁹² Many refute the existence of sexism, as outlined in the chapter on prior research, making it challenging to legitimize the objects and claims of feminism.⁹³ A feminist approach requires an analysis of the relationship between sexism and social, economic, political and cultural ideologies. Providing a nuanced perspective of how sexism operates in society, the objects

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 133-135.

⁹⁰ A. Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex*. London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2021, p. 3.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² H. Dawson, 'Why we need feminism now' *Prospect Magazine*, 20 March 2021, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/arts-and-books/why-we-need-feminism-now>, (accessed 2 May 2021).

⁹³ Ibid.

and claims of feminism are ultimately legitimized leading to social justice and gender equality.⁹⁴

Many women experience an intersection of oppression, why it is important to battle sexism with an intersectional approach.⁹⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality* in 1989, by arguing the importance of addressing the particular ways black women are subordinated, which is essential if we are to establish a framework where women's experiences can enable policy change.⁹⁶ Intersectionality is thus an important approach to consider, yet only insofar as it is not rooted in a white experience of patriarchy.⁹⁷ Susan Okin, however, is concerned that we pay too much attention to intersectionality, arguing that we must not forget that women are oppressed qua being women despite other oppressive intersections.⁹⁸ McAfee challenges this stating that though the goal of feminism is to eradicate sexism, sexism cannot be eliminated as long as other oppressive practices remain.⁹⁹ Oppressive institutions are rooted in modern society, hence all power relying on oppression must be eradicated.¹⁰⁰ The intersection of oppression has been located in my data and scrutinized further.

Sexism rests on norms preserved in the patriarchy and is thereby normalized.¹⁰¹ The patriarchy is an ancient concept and Lerner argues that it can be dismantled.¹⁰² Today,

⁹⁴ Ibid; Dawson, 'Why we need feminism now'.

⁹⁵ N. McAfee, 'Feminist Philosophy', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [website], <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-philosophy/>, (accessed 7 November 2021).

⁹⁶ K. Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1, 1989, p. 140.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 156-157.

⁹⁸ S.M. Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, New York, Basic Books, 1989, p. 6-7.

⁹⁹ McAfee. 'Feminist Philosophy'.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion, see: L. Heldke, and P. O'Conner, *Oppression, Privilege, and Resistance: Theoretical Perspectives on Racism, Sexism, and Heterosexism*, New York, McGraw Hill, 2004.

¹⁰¹ McAfee, 'Feminist Philosophy'.

¹⁰² "Patriarchy [...] means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources", G. Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 239; p. 6.

popular culture has largely reclaimed the concept to fight oppressive structures. Srinivasan argues that feminism is a movement that begins once women recognize their inferior status is built on nothing but their sex.¹⁰³ Sex has long been considered as natural and non-political, though not if we are to believe Srinivasan who argues that women's bodies are assigned societal value.¹⁰⁴ Srinivasan acknowledge that women have always lived in a world that was governed and created by men (patriarchy). Women have always contested rules that prioritized men, but women's contestations today are much more organized and public.¹⁰⁵ Norms of masculinity have long prevailed and allowed men not to listen to women when they speak up about injustices, but according to Srinivasan, it is wrong to insist that men have not known better.¹⁰⁶ Rather, (patriarchal) norms have allowed men to prioritize their pleasure at the expense of women's.¹⁰⁷ This is an interesting aspect to include in the analysis, as it will provide insight into how sexism is maintained as a testimonial injustice. Another way the patriarchy is upheld is through misogyny, which enforces the subordination of women and polices women's actions.¹⁰⁸ Sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy work together. According to Manne, sexism and misogyny operate under the patriarchy: sexism justifies the patriarchy, and misogyny polices and enforces it.¹⁰⁹ Sue Einhorn (2021) supports this notion arguing that women policing other women enforce the patriarchy.¹¹⁰ The patriarchy consists of an intersection of oppressive forces including the fear of men's violence which is embedded in women's daily lives, which may explain why women police each other as a means of protection.¹¹¹ Sexism thus acts as a way to justify gender discrimination where misogyny differentiates between what is a good woman and what is a bad one.¹¹² Manne frames it as: 'Sexism wears a lab coat; misogyny goes on witch hunts.'¹¹³

¹⁰³ Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex*, p. xi.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. xi-xii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 20-21.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Manne, *Down Girl*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 78-79.

¹¹⁰ S. Einhorn, 'From a woman's point of view. How internalized misogyny affects relationships between women', *Group Analysis*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2021, p. 482.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 489-490.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 80.

¹¹³ Manne, *Down Girl*, p. 78-79.

Theoretical Application

Testimonial injustice is the overall theoretical approach to the analysis, specifically including epistemic objectification which is the primary harm. Nussbaum and Langton's features are utilized in the analysis to understand the oppression and silencing of women through objectification. This conveys how the sexual objectification of women is intrinsic to Danish ideologies. Haslanger's norm of assumed objectivity is understood in the analysis as being an answer to why the objectification of women is accepted, e.g., through the normalization of women's nature. Though identity prejudice is not included as a theoretical aspect in and of itself, it is applied as an analytical tool alongside an intersectional approach explaining unjust structures.

Data and Data Collection

This chapter will outline how data has been collected for the study. The process required the selection of social media platforms, specification of keywords, a netnographic approach, and translation of sources. The netnographic approach entails lurking and archiving which is briefly discussed. Lastly, notes on data and fieldwork are summarized.

Selection of Social Media Platforms

Multiple social media platforms were considered for this study including Instagram and Twitter. However, due to the scope of this research, only one platform could be examined further: Facebook. As Instagram is a photo and video sharing platform, it does not have the same ability to expose textual discourses of interest to the aim of this study. Twitter is an interesting platform when investigating discourses of political interest, and several social movements originate from the platform. There is also little concern about access to data as Twitter is largely public. Despite its positive qualities, Twitter was disregarded based on its technical qualities such as the limit of characters for posts and comments. Furthermore, there have already been conducted numerous studies of discourses on Twitter.¹¹⁴

Facebook is an appropriate platform because of the study's focus on textual material. Facebook is the biggest social media platform with 2.91 billion users worldwide,¹¹⁵ and it is likewise the social media platform with the highest number of users in Denmark (77%, 2019).¹¹⁶ The second most well-used social media platform in Denmark is LinkedIn (41% (2019)), indicating that Facebook by far is the most influential platform in Denmark.¹¹⁷ 64% of Danes use Facebook daily and entertainment and opinion sharing are among Danes'

¹¹⁴ See: J. Rasmussen, 'Should Each of Us Take Over the Role as Watcher? Attitudes on Twitter towards the 2014 Norwegian Terror Alert', *Journal of Multicultural Discourse*, 10, no. 2, 2015.

¹¹⁵ Statista, *Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 2nd quarter 2021* [website], <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>, (accessed 2 December 2021).

¹¹⁶ Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen, 'Sociale medier 2020', p. 6.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 13

favorite ways to use Facebook.¹¹⁸ It is thus the platform most relevant to examine when locating discourses that represent Danish ideologies and beliefs. For locating these discourses, keywords were chosen.

Keywords

To locate relevant news articles on Facebook, keywords were decided prior to data collection. Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski's (2021) study share similar traits to this including the search for predefined keywords and related topics. A similar approach is adopted for this thesis. The keywords will enable an examination of sexist discourses and ideological beliefs. The predefined keywords are: *seksuelle overgreb* (Eng. sexual assault), *grænseoverskridende adfærd* (Eng. abusive behaviour), *krænkelse* (Eng. violation), #MeToo, *sexisme* (Eng. sexism), *beretninger* (Eng. narratives), *krænkelseskultur* (Eng. grievance culture), *ofre* (Eng. victims), *seksuel chikane* (Eng. sexual harassment), woke and cancel culture. These keywords are chosen because they emerge in articles regarding feminist issues such as sexism or sexual assault. Hence, news postings where aspects of feminism are acknowledged were examined for possible data.

The keywords were chosen based on a pilot study and through CA. A pilot study was conducted prior to this study to determine strengths and weaknesses such as the use of keywords. The pilot study found that the beforementioned keywords are possible to locate in news postings on *DR Nyhederne* and *TV 2 Nyhederne*'s Facebook platforms. Some keywords were rejected based on the pilot study, e.g., *kønsidentitet* (Eng. gender identity), as it entails aspects outside the scope of this thesis. CA contributed to outlining relevant keywords by reviewing comments and headlines alongside one another to locate traits and topics.

CDA is also employed as a method, and the risk of bias when choosing keywords is discussed further in the next chapter. The chosen keywords ultimately reflect the results of the study as they revolve specifically around topics concerning feminism and sexism. However, by

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 14-16.

acknowledging the focus of CDA as being a method to discover the production and reproduction of power and domination in discourses, it remains valid to analyze certain topics without it inflicting the reliability of the study and findings.¹¹⁹ Once the social media platforms were decided, the methods reviewed, and the keywords defined, a netnographic approach to data collection was initiated.

Netnography

The study takes a netnographic approach by investigating online communities, i.e., *DR* and *TV2*'s news platforms on Facebook. Netnography was developed in 1995 by Kozinets who aimed to study online communities. The purpose of netnography is to obtain an understanding of online social interactions and/or content in the context of culture and experience.¹²⁰ One of netnography's main strengths is the dual nature of its research.¹²¹ Kozinets explains netnography as:

explore[ing], reveal[ing] and understand[ing] realities and social worlds as they change in a coevolutionary process with technoculture.¹²²

The internet is both an archive and a place of communication, ultimately offering data with artifacts of online social interactions. Anette Markham (2021) supports Kozinets (2015) by stating that entering the digital world of research requires an open and imaginative mind where researchers must follow what makes sense at the moment, rather than adhering to strict rules.¹²³ A platform like Facebook includes overwhelming amounts of data, though the data itself does not have meaning without context, thus validating a “go with the flow” kind of research. As Markham notes, the tradition when collecting discourses in a natural

¹¹⁹ T.A. van Dijk, ‘Multidisciplinary CDA: A plea for diversity’, in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.) *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2001, p. 96.

¹²⁰ Kozinets, *Netnography*, p. 54.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 68.

¹²² *Ibid*; Technoculture: a culture defined by its technological properties.

¹²³ *Digital Ethnography: More a Mindset than a Tool* [Video], Germany, 2021, Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-EQ6begTms&t=1948s> (accessed 5 October 2021).

environment includes listening, writing, and recognizing contextual surroundings.¹²⁴ It is thus important that researchers ask themselves what naturally occurring discourse is in online cultures, and how that can be obtained as data.¹²⁵ According to Kozinets' framework of netnography, it is participant-observational research where data represents an ethnographic understanding of online social experiences.¹²⁶ Netnography is an extension of ethnography, thus there may be combinations of netnography beyond Kozinets' understanding.¹²⁷ It is significant to netnographic research that researchers keep an open mind. Netnography is applied to understand online social experiences while confronting social media structures, agency, and power.¹²⁸ It is fundamental to netnography to examine values as its purpose is to decolonize online communication while focusing on empowering and liberating individuals' access to the internet, rather than favoring those who are most powerful.¹²⁹ Netnography hence concerns emancipation and power, enabling CDA as a method as well as the aim of this thesis to understand how sexist discourses is a form of testimonial injustice through.

Two significant aspects of netnography that have contributed to data collection will now be discussed.

Lurking

Donald Strickland and Lester Schlesinger (1969) discuss lurking as being both participant and non-participant observation, as the researcher places herself in the periphery of a field in an aware decision.¹³⁰ Markham notes that participation is not always *facie ad faciem*.¹³¹

¹²⁴ A. Markham, 'Fieldwork in Social Media: What would Malinowski do?', *Qualitative Communication Research*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2013, p. 439.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kozinets, *Netnography*, p. 67.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 116.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ D.A. Strickland, and L.E. Schlesinger, "Lurking" as a Research Method', *Society for Applied Anthropology*, 28, no. 3, 1969, p. 248.

¹³¹ Markham, 'Fieldwork in Social Media', p. 440.

When justifying lurking in research there is a discrepancy that has to be acknowledged, which is the etic/emic distinction. Strickland and Schlesinger explain it as:

the interpretation of the observed behaviour(s) is not dependent on understanding what the person behaving ‘really’ means (the emic factor). As public behaviour assumes an indeterminate audience of actual or potential strangers who may not have fully mastered the culture, the emic ingredient is confined to gross signals that even marginal members of a society will understand.¹³²

The researcher hence does not emerge herself with the observed, but rather places herself in a situation that does not obscure the observed behavior.¹³³ As Facebook is both a public and private platform, it is reasonable to assume that users are aware that there are receivers of messages who are strangers. Lurking is therefore an accepted way of non-active participation.¹³⁴ The first wave of the Web consisted mostly of a one-way communication without conversation: it was like reading a book.¹³⁵ The Web still has this feature. It is not merely a tool for conversation and sharing. Kozinets calls this the “online library metaphor” and argues that on platforms like Facebook many users still read and lurk, rather than actively engage.¹³⁶ Archiving makes an approach such as lurking possible.

Archiving

Archiving is one of the most well-used ways of observing when researching social media. According to Kozinets, online social experience and interaction consist of two fundamental parts: archives and live communication. It is also in the use of archives that netnography differs from ethnography. Social media functions as an archive because communications are kept on record, whereas in-person interactions leave only memories. Having access to all information shared on a given topic including Tweets, articles, etc. may seem like a limitation to a netnographer. However, Kozinets argues instead that it presents an opportunity:

¹³² Strickland, and Schlesinger, “‘Lurking’ as a Research Method’, p. 248.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 249.

¹³⁴ Markham, ‘Fieldwork in Social Media’, p. 440.

¹³⁵ Kozinets, *Netnography*, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Netnography is positioned somewhere between the vast searchlights of big data analysis and the close readings of discourse analysis.¹³⁷

The archiving process is closely linked with the collection of data. As it was not possible to know when relevant news were posted, the archiving was beneficial to the data collection. As Facebook is one big archive, it was possible to go back and locate comments and news posting that are significant to the study. The limitation to archiving in this sense is that *DR Nyhederne* and *TV 2 Nyhederne* have content moderators on their platforms. Some comments may have been removed from the comment sections before they were retrieved as data. However, this provides insight into how epistemic objectification of women is normalized.

Once the netnographic approach to data collection was successful, the sources were translated.

Translation of Sources

The data is found in Danish. Original Facebook comments are Danish except for a few examples like ‘woke’, ‘MeToo’, and other English terms that are used daily. These comments are translated into English. Translation of original comments may cause a loss of context and/or content, including paraphrases or Danish words that may not be properly translated without definition. To overcome this limitation, short definitions will be provided if there is no direct English translation. Non-translated Danish words will be written with emphasis. Due to the limits of the study, only I have translated the data. This has assigned some limits to the data, as others may have preferred other phrases, grammatical choices, etc. However, being a native Danish speaker who is familiar with the culture, the immediate limitations to such translations are minimal.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

Notes on Data and Fieldwork

The data from Facebook has been collected through fieldwork conducted in six months ranging from 1 September 2021 to 28 February 2022. As mentioned, I conducted a pilot study which was placed at the beginning of this period. The pilot study's most common codes are sexism, objectification, culture, islamophobia, and victimization. The current study's most common codes are introduced in the next chapter. After having conducted the pilot study, the data collection for the present study commenced. Because of the nature of netnography, it was possible to locate data at all times due to Facebook's archiving properties. Though data has been retrieved continuously throughout the fieldwork, the discourses examined are located on *DR Nyhederne* and *TV 2 Nyhederne*'s platforms within the time frames of October 2021 and February 2022. These temporal restrictions are necessary to ensure quality over quantity, enabling a qualitative analysis of ideologies and attitudes.

As some posts consisted of 1000+ comments it was decided that no more than 250 comments on each post could be scrutinized. Thus, approximately 6000 comments have been read as part of the fieldwork. Many comments were disregarded because they were tags, emojis, gifs, or gibberish. Ultimately, 293 comments from *TV 2 Nyhederne* and 338 comments from *DR Nyhederne* have been examined thoroughly for their sexist content. In total, 631 comments have been scrutinized for their sexist properties equaling to about 10% of the examined comments. However, not all comments have been included in the analysis due to the scope of the thesis.

Operational Methods

The following chapter will discuss the operational methods. CA will code and interpret data before moving on to CDA, which will critique the production and reproduction of dominance. Furthermore, this chapter will include a section on research design since there is no ready-made method to CDA. The research design outlines the methodological choices.

Content Analysis

As a method, CA aims to identify cultural characteristics such as attitudes or opinions of a particular topic.¹³⁸ It is an observational method of description rather than intervention.¹³⁹ CA supports both quantitative and qualitative methods why a multi-method approach is possible in order to provide an overview of the collected data from Facebook.¹⁴⁰ Lindsay Prior (2020) suggests that CA can be used as a preliminary method to code and interpret data whereafter CDA can provide a complex understanding of the studied phenomenon.¹⁴¹ In this thesis, CA will be approached as a hybrid method alongside CDA as online discourses of sexism are examined by studying attitudes and ideologies. A multi-method approach is beneficial when analyzing discourses where content and context are interwoven.¹⁴² An interesting aspect of CDA concerning this thesis is how it can approach data not originally intended for research purposes, e.g., comments on Facebook.¹⁴³ Though CA can be used for images, emojis, etc., it is textual media that is examined for this study. The analysis of emojis is not included in this study why they are not incorporated in the comments in the analysis. This choice does not interfere with the content and context of the discourse. The codes that have been found will function as a dictionary for similar studies, making the method replicable and valid for further research.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ J.W. Drisko, and T. Maschi, 'Content Analysis', Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ L. Prior, 'Content Analysis', in P. Leavy (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 543-544.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 563.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ Drisko and Maschi, 'Content Analysis', p. 44.

When approaching CA it is important to show how data is collected, coded, and analyzed for the research to be transparent and valid.¹⁴⁵ For this thesis, the data is collected as described in the previous chapter. Hereafter, the data from Facebook is coded in the software programme NVivo to identify attitudes towards feminist issues and women. By coding the data, it is found that the most common themes in the discourses are:

- Objectification
- Victimization
- Sexism
- Culture
- #MeToo
- Whataboutism

Moreover, research has to properly demonstrate how the important aspects of the material is decided and incorporated.¹⁴⁶ The following will outline how codes are defined:

- The medium: News media's Facebook platforms
- Genre: Comments
- Criteria: Must include posts of feminist relevance
- Parameters: See *Operational Methods: Notes on Data and Fieldwork*
- Units of meaning: Attitudes towards feminist topics
- Categories: Conceptual traits of sexism
- Titles: As the category is conceptual traits of sexism, specific words related to sexism is coded:
 - Victim
 - Culture
 - The mention of "women" or "feminist"

¹⁴⁵ Prior, 'Content Analysis', p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ Drisko and Maschi, 'Content Analysis', p. 12.

- Violations
- Objectification

Codes are understood as keywords in the analysis when CDA aims to discover cultural attitudes and ideologies. The material discovered by CA is applied in the analysis to locate common themes e.g., #MeToo and whataboutism to understand why sexist discourses are a testimonial injustice. Had the data not been coded, it would limit the understanding of how words and phrases are used to convey Danish values. CA requires interpretive decisions by researchers thus it risks being biased. However, that should be overcome by being transparent.¹⁴⁷ Not all comments were deemed relevant or appropriate for this study, which has been discussed in the chapter on data collection.

Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Teun A. van Dijk (1993), CDA is a multidisciplinary approach capable of uncovering and critiquing social inequality by focusing on:

the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance.¹⁴⁸

Dominance is understood as being how powerful groups exercise social power leading to social inequality, inter alia, gender inequality, e.g., by hiding acts of dominance.¹⁴⁹ The production and reproduction of dominance is important to uncover in this study to understand why sexism prevails as a testimonial injustice. CDA is political in nature and should include perspectives from society. van Dijk argues that CDA aims to locate power relations and processes where legitimization and concealment of dominant structures inhibit social equality, and this can be done by analyzing communication.¹⁵⁰ The discourses examined in the analysis has sociopolitical dimensions and CDA can locate the unjust structures and current ideologies present in Danish culture. Norman Fairclough

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 19, 42.

¹⁴⁸ T.A. van Dijk, 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', *Discourse & Society*, 4, no. 2, 1993, p. 249.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 249-250.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 252; van Dijk, 'Multidisciplinary CDA', p. 119.

(2001) explains that CDA highlights social issues by focusing on emancipation; it is a problem-based method contributing to finding solutions.¹⁵¹ CDA can thus uncover unequal structures of power in sexist discourses on social media. Bhavani, Chua, and Collins (2020) claim that CDA critically contributes to how we understand social structures and power.¹⁵² Ultimately, the method confronts phenomena that uphold social inequality and challenges contradictions, power relations, and ideologies of domination.¹⁵³

Phenomena studied in CDA threaten the well-being of certain groups. Hence, van Dijk argues that CDA requires researchers to reveal unequal power relations by taking on several roles of social and political scientists, social critics, and activists.¹⁵⁴ Dominance often requires means of legislation and institutionalized inequality.¹⁵⁵ According to van Dijk, power is directly related with access to discourse: those in power has access because of their privilege being decision-makers, whereas those who lack power has limited access to discourse.¹⁵⁶ In this study, those in power to change the narratives of sexist discourses online are *DR* and *TV2* as they determine what news is shared on their platforms including their – at times – provocative titles. They have, to an extent, control over what Danes discuss on social media. As discussed in *Prior Research*, women and minorities are the targets of abusive language online and thus refrain from participating in online discussions. Therefore, inequality is already present concerning who participates, i.e., women and minorities have less access to discourse and consequently also power.

¹⁵¹ N. Fairclough, 'Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method in Social Scientific Research', in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, London, SAGE, 2001, p. 124-125.

¹⁵² K-K. Bhavani, P. Chua, and D. Collins, 'Critical approaches to qualitative research', in P. Leavy (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*, 2nd end., Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 244.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 244, 248.

¹⁵⁴ van Dijk, 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', p. 253.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 255.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 256-257.

Research Design

According to van Dijk (2001), there is no distinct method of CDA. He argues that a specific procedure to CDA would be counter-productive to its purpose which is to focus on social inequality and the (re)production of power and domination.¹⁵⁷ The following chapter, *Analysis*, will thus not follow any rules but rather engage with suggestions appropriate to the aim of the thesis.

van Dijk discusses how CDA can be of value to research concerning the role of sexism in society as the method can analyze topics, attitudes, and ideologies.¹⁵⁸ The following analysis will be framed according to a similar approach. When studying sexist discourses, it may be relevant to include a text-context analysis allowing for an examination of the shared beliefs located in discourses.¹⁵⁹ This will be done by conducting a *topical analysis*. A topical analysis aims to give a general idea of the discourses, e.g., by defining and exemplifying topics by macrostructures (M).¹⁶⁰ A topical analysis could be considered as the following:

M1: #MeToo threatens the rule of law

M2: Men are victims of a witch hunt

M3: #MeToo have gone too far

A topical analysis is developed further in the next chapter.

Following a topical analysis, van Dijk suggests an analysis of *local meanings*, referring to the meaning of words, their coherence, use of propositions, etc.¹⁶¹ The purpose is to reveal ideologies that often polarize discussions by indicating *us vs them* ideologies.¹⁶² Analyzing local meanings often expose the use of *positive self-representation* as opposed to *negative other representation*; we emphasize *our* positive traits and *their* negative qualities while

¹⁵⁷ van Dijk, 'Multidisciplinary CDA', p. 95-96.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 99.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 102.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 103.

¹⁶² Ibid.

refraining from representing other aspects.¹⁶³ Local meanings exposing ideologies are examined in the analysis before turning to *implicit meanings*.

Implicit meanings in discourses are frequent and represent underlying beliefs without proclaiming them.¹⁶⁴ Implying that women are attention seekers is for instance an expression of an ideological presupposition enforcing a discourse of sexual assault being a women's problem. The intention of the speaker may be difficult to identify, so researchers must be aware of *interactional concerns*, i.e., positive self-representation.¹⁶⁵ Presuppositions are important to investigate as meaning and knowledge are often constructed through assumptions.¹⁶⁶ Assumptions often do not require explanations as they are considered as known thereby silencing or highlighting specific discourses, i.e., it is ideological.¹⁶⁷ In the analysis it will become evident how presuppositions reflect something as being a given., i.e., it is considered known and logical.

In democratic states like Denmark, power is accepted only insofar as it is understood and accepted as being legitimate. Ideology comprehends a shared belief system, e.g., shared by a nation.¹⁶⁸ Ideology thus has a certain kind of dominance as it can be exploited to enforce power by some over others.¹⁶⁹ An ideology is for example how discourses concerning violations against women promote violence as being rare isolated events rather than an institutional injustice rooted in systemic gender inequality. Such an ideology promotes gender-based violations as being sporadic events thus serving those in power rather than the least powerful members of the community. The main approach to CDA in the following analysis is hence to locate how ideologies are shared as knowledge.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 106.

¹⁶⁶ D. Machin, and A. Mayr, *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis*, NY, SAGE, 2012, p. 153.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 153-154.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 24-25.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Analysis

In the underlying sections, the data retrieved from Facebook will be analyzed employing critical discourse analysis. First, a topical analysis is embraced focusing on macrostructures in the discourses. Thereafter, local meanings are analyzed to identify concealed ideologies. This is followed by an analysis of ideological presuppositions. The analysis is finalized with a section discussing the power of credibility concerning testimonial injustice and sexual objectification. The theoretical framework and analytical tools are continuously incorporated throughout the analysis.

Topical Analysis

Analyzing the comments indicates a clear polarization in social media discourses. In most of the examined discourses, there are either supporters or opponents of feminist political concerns. Feminism generates a divide between different beliefs in Danish discourses in posts regarding #MeToo, gender quotas, consent, and similar. The discourses evident in these posts share common traits, i.e., the sexual objectification of women and the suppression of women's experiences. The following macro propositions summarize the discourses studies for this analysis:

M1: #MeToo threatens the rule of law

M2: Feminists support #MeToo

M3: #MeToo targets men

M4: Legislation supported by feminists target men

M5: Denmark is founded on the rule of law

M6: There is gender equality in Denmark

M7: What about men

M8: Women whine when they demand equality

M9: Women do not follow patriarchal norms

M10: Women are liars and attention seekers

M11: Feminism and #MeToo threatens Danish values

These areas give a general idea of the discourses and how there is a shared belief system in place in discourses concerning feminist political issues. The above macro propositions express principles of a neosexist ideology similar to what Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski found in their study of the Danish language.¹⁷⁰ This implies that gender equality is achieved and that any social or political movements stating otherwise threatens Danish values. These principles are considered when reflecting upon whether sexist discourses in Denmark (re)produce domination of men over women by granting men and masculine traits a credibility surplus while women and feminine traits are granted a credibility deficit.

Local Meanings: Feminism as a Threat to Danish Values

The sexual and epistemic objectification of women as well as the suppression of women's experiences are especially visible in the studied discourses. Common to the majority of the comments is that women are portrayed according to what Haslanger calls the norm of assumed objectivity: in a male dominated society, women's objectification is natural.¹⁷¹ There is an ideological belief present in the discourses about how women should abide by their nature and patriarchal norms, even though it is not specifically stated. This will be analyzed in the following section.

In discourses, structural oppositions are widely used by mentioning only one of two concepts, e.g., good, honest, fake. They imply a difference in quality.¹⁷² If someone states victims are liars it similarly assumes that perpetrators are trustworthy. Assumptions, lexical choices, genre, etc., reflect certain ideologies. Pronouns are often used to affiliate someone with one group compared to another.¹⁷³ In discourses analyzed for this study, structural oppositions are common. In the following excerpt, several oppositions are used:

¹⁷⁰ Zeinert, Inie and Derczynski, 'Annotating Online Misogyny', p. 3184.

¹⁷¹ Haslanger, 'On Being Objective and Being Objectified', p. 106-115.

¹⁷² Machin and Mayr, *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 39.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 84.

Think we hear about violations on a daily basis now. Or do people just not tolerate anything anymore after one have entered the real world.¹⁷⁴

This user employs *we*, *people*, and *one* to assume a distance from debates on violations. Stating how *we* hear about violations daily implies a community of shared perceptions. *People* imply an *other*; someone that the user oppose because *people* are understood to be intolerant people who complain. Lastly, *one* distances the user from what it means to enter the real world. It implies that violations are normalized to such an extent that it is not considered an injustice.

Often discourses presume *us* whereas it is implicit who *them* are. By not explicitly mentioning who the *other* is, it implies that certain ideologies do not align with expressed beliefs or norms.¹⁷⁵ An argument that is reflected in many discourses is: *We live in a community based on the rule of law*. This does not explicitly mention who *we* are, but there is a shared understanding that *we* are a community thereby implying that the *other* acts in an opposite way from what can be expected as a member of said community.¹⁷⁶ Here, the discourse assumes that members of this community in which *we* live cannot reasonably share experiences of sexual violations and then expect them to be believed, as it is a matter for the legal authorities. Thus, sexual predators are granted a credibility surplus and victims of sexual assault are granted a credibility deficit. It is based on the level of trustworthiness expected from the involved parties. Another user makes a similar statement:

Crazy with reverse burden of proof in a community founded on the rule of law (M)¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ DR Nyheder, 01.10.2021.

¹⁷⁵ Machin and Mayr, *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 39-40.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ DR Nyheder, 19.02.2022.

This is an epistemic objectification because women are automatically deemed untrustworthy and they are, by that account, not asked to share information. Another user turns to sarcasm to provoke this kind of reasoning:

Yes, it's a good think it isn't here in Denmark it is like that (W)¹⁷⁸

By using sarcasm this user implies that she is annoyed with how the discourse is derailed to concern women's trustworthiness. Women are often considered untrustworthy, but they are likewise deemed irrational:

I'd better get a signature from the man I am with, so he won't report me one day if he gets angry with me.. (W)¹⁷⁹

This user refers to the consent law, which sparked much debate as the legislation was ridiculed by many who mocked how people were now forced to sign a contract before having sex. This mockery has led to a general acceptance where a contract is used as an argument against the consent law, though activists continuously declare that such a contract is counterproductive to the purpose of the law. Discourses surrounding consent thus often come down to ideas of who can be trusted, and women are those who are granted less credibility. The below comment is a good example of how men are conceived as rational beings, who would (obviously) not report someone. The excerpt is a direct response to the comment above:

Don't worry, men don't do that. (M)¹⁸⁰

“Don't worry” is supposed to calm women by stating that men do not falsely accuse women of rape, implying that women falsely accuse men. This derails debates about consent, which is not supposed to be a gendered issue, but becomes one as debates portray women as liars.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

It signifies one of two things: men are masculine and by that account, they do not report others for lack of consent; or, women act irrationally in an attempt to gain attention or protect their reputation. Both have sexist nuances. As long as consent is conveyed as being a threat to the privacy and legal rights of men it contributes to othering and silencing of women, where women are denied subjectivity and autonomy while being treated as tools of the oppressor. Eventually, the debate limits women's agency by trivializing consent, and it exemplifies epistemic objectification.

Structural oppositions do not merely imply a difference in quality but also refer to ideologies considered as opposites. The following excerpts exemplify how patriarchal norms are granted credibility surplus by opposing feminism and #MeToo to what can be considered reasonable legislation:

Woke-feminism as law (W)¹⁸¹

It's a feminist law. (M)¹⁸²

Metoo is a terror organization.. (M)¹⁸³

By referring to the Danish consent law as *feminist* and *woke*, the users refer to the legislation as being opposite of what is culturally appropriate or customary to Danish society while also refraining from acknowledging the purpose of the legislation. These comments convey an ideology that *feminist legislation* should not be passed in a developed society based on values of gender equality because it conflicts with the accepted norms. Referring to #MeToo as being a terror organization prompts an immediate negative other representation of what can reasonably be expected in a Western country. When discussing terrorism, Danish discourses often lay weight on securitization and democracy by noting how terrorism is a threat to Danish values, freedom, and security. Furthermore, public discourses often signify how

¹⁸¹ DR Nyheder, 19.02.2022.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021.

others pose a danger to Denmark and Western democracy which is, more often than not, rooted in Islamophobia.

Us vs them discourses are thus examples of structural oppositions. In the examined discourses, there are three identifiable types of *us vs them*. First, there are discourses where men oppose themselves to feminism and women:

Let the women fight so we oppressed can live in peace. 30 years ago, I received a blowjob and I wasn't asked if she was allowed (M)¹⁸⁴

This user position himself in a group of *us*, i.e., men. He constructs gender inequality as being a women's issue rather than an institutional injustice. Furthermore, anecdotes are often used to imply how some things are unlikely.¹⁸⁵ In this case, it is unlikely that women are oppressed because of his sexual experience. It silences women's experiences, although it is difficult to determine if there is any sarcasm present in the comment.

Some distance themselves to feminism by equating #MeToo with feminism:

Am so tired of those MeToo feminists (M)¹⁸⁶

Equating #MeToo with feminism shows how, as Manne suggests, sexual predators are granted a credibility surplus.¹⁸⁷ Some comments turn to whataboutism e.g., by incorporating victimization:

Of course we need to treat women properly, but there are also women who treat men poorly, should we men also have a movement called Maskulinister and prey on women all the time like MeToo feminists do. They take the role of victims all the time (M)¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ DR Nyheder, 19.02.2022.

¹⁸⁵ Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 85.

¹⁸⁶ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021.

¹⁸⁷ Manne, *Down Girl*.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

No, HTS¹⁸⁹ want to keep the role of victim alive, exempted from women's responsibilities in their relations with men. That way, you can sneak and access powerful positions in society, with the *krænkelsskort*¹⁹⁰ in the bag to sustain a position of victim, feminism will maintain the ultimate power to remove all troublesome male power position on its way (M)¹⁹¹

Stating that feminism preys on men implies whataboutism, as this user tries to derail the debate to make it a men vs women problem. Disclaimers like “but” is often employed to signify something natural.¹⁹² Here, it is used to express that it is valid to prey on women because women do the same through feminism. Victimization is likewise used to silence women's experiences. Here, women are taking on the role of victims because they need attention or use their sexuality and their perceived vulnerability as a weapon to combat men. Similar to the suggestion that #MeToo is a terror organization, these excerpts similarly include ideas about how gender equality may lead to women threatening Danish values. These discourses demonstrate a general misconception that #MeToo and feminism are about hating or fighting men.

Then, there are discourses where women oppose themselves to feminism and other women:

Metoo is an insignificant debate that I am sick and tired of listening to and it has to be faded out. I have never felt violated or anything and this thing with a Frenchman having put his hand on Helles thigh years ago... get over it!!! It is such a small and insignificant thing and something you shouldn't even be violated about and she shouldn't even mention him (W)¹⁹³

Can't you just leave us women be. We are capable of making our own decisions. And not be dictated by a woman as Trine Bramsen. (W)^{194,195}

¹⁸⁹ Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the former Danish Prime Minister.

¹⁹⁰ Approx. a violation card: Similar to the 'race card', used in a derogatory manner to explain how some people position themselves as victims.

¹⁹¹ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021.

¹⁹² Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 85.

¹⁹³ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021

¹⁹⁴ Trine Bramsen is the Danish Minister for Transport and of Equality.

¹⁹⁵ TV 2 Nyhederne, 21.02.2022.

That is crazy. Things will go badly with all those women in the top..... Now I will probably be reprimanded because of what I write (W)¹⁹⁶

With the skills she has shown us I think it is best that us women stick to what we know best. (W)¹⁹⁷

These discourses differ from those written by men in that there is a moral question to #MeToo and feminism.¹⁹⁸ For example, some women claim that feminism and #MeToo are irrelevant because they, themselves, have not experienced violations (in their subjective opinions). Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski and Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper state how abuse is subjective and experiences of violations cannot be generalized.¹⁹⁹ When a user asserts that a woman has to “get over” a violation, it signifies those women have to follow patriarchal norms of having to act nice and not share intimate details. It silences women and victims of sexual abuse, harassment, and more. In this case, it portrays an ideology where women who speak up are considered problematic to patriarchal norms. Women do not want other women to break patriarchal norms as it may reflect badly upon them too. This is what Manne and Einhorn discuss when arguing that misogyny allows women to police other women as a means to protect themselves.²⁰⁰ The above excerpts implying how women are not suited to manage top-level jobs because of their gender likewise concerns women’s nature in the patriarchy, where women are regarded as caretakers before anything else. Claiming that women should stick to what *we* know best, assumes that women’s nature is deeply embedded in patriarchal understandings of the value women brings to society, i.e., care work, preparing dinner for her family, etc. This is an identity-prejudicial deficit as implying women belong in certain places in society prevents some women from becoming their truest selves.

Finally, some discourses reflect feminist beliefs:

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Profil af en tastaturkriger’.

¹⁹⁹ Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper, ‘Online abuse of feminists as an emerging form of violence against women and girls’, p. 1470; Zeinert, Inie, and Derczynski, ‘Annotating Online Misogyny’, p. 3182.

²⁰⁰ Einhorn, ‘From a woman’s point of view’, p. 489; Manne, *Down Girl*, p. 34.

Very nice how fast this debate was derailed and became about false reports and about how bad we should feel for men. 1. Consent law applied to both men and women. 2. False reports are extremely rare. 3. At least 7000 women are raped annually in Denmark. 24000 women are exposed to forced sexual intercourse each year or attempt thereof. 4. Disappearingly few are reported and even less are convicted. But let's never speak of the real problem. (W)²⁰¹

It is bizarre that so many men feel bad about themselves / are offended /feel degraded and persecuted / become so desperately angry, - when we talk about the consent law (M)²⁰²

Of course it has to be the most well-suited, but that requires that they are considered in the first place when positions are filled. As long as it is a male dominated world that are in charge of hiring there will be a Huey, Dewey and Louie effect. (W)²⁰³

These users employ factual statements and irony to get their message across. The first comment argues that other users derail the debates rather than discussing the issue that is presented, i.e., gendered sexual violence. By referring to the “real” issue she implies that other users discuss something that is not relevant; they mock the premise of the debate. It signifies how other users are aware of what the debate regards but choose to derail it rather than listen. The second comment calls out men for their role in derailing feminist debates, by claiming that men feel attacked by the consent law despite it protecting every citizen. The user assumes that the disruptions in the discourses are problematized by men who experience it as a threat to their status or legal rights. Lastly, a user refers to an idiom to amplify that Denmark is male-dominated and such a society will reproduce domination as long as there is no one to question it.

From having studied local meanings, the analysis will turn to ideological presuppositions.

²⁰¹ DR Nyhederne, 19.02.2022.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ The Huey, Dewey and Louie effect describes how managers tend to hire someone who looks like themselves; e.g., men will tend to hire men; DR Nyhederne, 21.02.2022.

Ideological Presuppositions

Structural oppressions is evident in the examined discourses and are hidden behind implicit meanings. Most noticeable are sexism, though there are also instances of transphobia and Islamophobia. When discussing sports, sexist presuppositions are especially visible:

Star players ??? In women's football??? (M)²⁰⁴

like parasites they infest a sport men created, one that generates billions of money. Compared to men's leagues, so few bother to watch women's football and they produce bread crumbs compared to men's football Still they demand, in the name of equality, the same pay as men!?! They are parasites on a product build stone by stone for more than a century. (M)²⁰⁵

These excerpts show how women are not welcome in sports that have a culture of embracing – sometimes toxic - masculine traits over feminine. First, one user refers to the impossibility that women can accomplish something in football thereby labeling women as less worthy than men because of their gender; an identity prejudice. By asking rhetorical questions, the user diminishes the accomplishments of women football players and ridicules any progress toward gender equality. The other user takes a primitive approach by describing football as being created by and for men, and that women have to stop trying to take over the sport by demanding feminist tactics such as equal pay. Men and the masculine traits of football are here considered of higher status and are thus granted a credibility surplus.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, Nussbaum's feature fungibility is noticeable as the user treats women as interchangeable with another object: parasites.²⁰⁷ It enables an epistemic objectification of women football players. It is implied that women should consider themselves lucky to be allowed to play football thus they cannot simultaneously demand equal pay. A woman confronts the sexism in the above comments:

²⁰⁴ DR Nyheder, 01.10.2021.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 76.

²⁰⁷ Nussbaum, 'Objectification', p. 257

Infest a sport created by men?? How about you crawl off your big horse smart ass! And by the way, you are not allowed to use a dishwasher, central heating, the windshield wiper in your car, you cannot use the computer, and you cannot play monopoly as that is invented by women! Is this honestly the way to go? (W)²⁰⁸

This user tries to expose the double standards by demonstrating the irrational statement that women infest a sport created by men. By making it a matter of which gender invented what, the conversation is limited to unjust ideologies about what men and women are entitled to. She concludes her comment with what is presumably a rhetorical question, i.e., it is supposed to make a point. The misogynistic discourse is challenged.

There are also instances of people merely asking questions. The intentions of the below comment are unknown, but the question itself does not necessarily assume that a lie is exposed:

What do the 11.000 rape cases build upon? How has it been calculated when there were only 2.400 reports? (M)²⁰⁹

A user responds to this question:

“and only about 300 convictions, that must equal about 2100 lying conniving women. (M)²¹⁰

The first user asks a question, whether or not the question is ill-intended or well-intended is not possible to determine with these methods. However, the user who responds to the question labels women as being untrustworthy, i.e., the nature of women. That women are untrustworthy is discussed in the theory chapter, where Fricker argues how untrustworthiness aligned with prejudice (epistemic objectification) determines whether women are asked to share information.²¹¹ Thus when the user assumes that 2100 out of 2400 women are liars, it

²⁰⁸ DR Nyheder, 01.10.2021.

²⁰⁹ DR Nyheder, 19.02.2022.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*: p. 130.

is an epistemic objectification aiming to silence women. It likewise supports Manne's claim that sexual predators are granted a credibility surplus.²¹²

At times, the debates are derailed to such an extent that it is difficult to see the purpose. The comment beneath has transphobic characteristics:

It is one's skills that are crucial – NOT gender! The next thing will probably be quotas for transsexuals
(M)²¹³

This excerpt was included in discourses about gender quotas. Despite the content of the article and corresponding legislation only including the gender binary, this user reflects on how he finds the legislation to be bizarre by referring to transsexuals to exemplify and communicate how odd it is to consider gender as an aspect of vacant positions. This is a pre-emptive testimonial injustice because identity prejudice intersects with credibility deficit. Exploiting transsexuals to communicate skepticism draws on injustices of transphobia and derails the debate. It does, however, illustrate an intersectional experience of oppression where stigmatization and marginalization are exploited to prove a point. Another user similarly exploits a particular group to convey a message. Here, it is the exotification of foreign women:

danish women aren't worth the trouble do you want a proper woman as a girlfriend or wife abroad is the only place they exist. consent is important but what is it good for when women can't be trusted and consent can be taken back after intercourse and used as a weapon (M)²¹⁴

This can be considered somewhat of a backhanded compliment where the user uplifts one group of women while discriminating against another, all the while insulting both. This excerpt comprises sexual objectification and exotification, limiting women as an object to be desired or owned. By implying that one can merely find a girlfriend abroad assumes that

²¹² Manne, *Down Girl*.

²¹³ TV 2 Nyhederne, 21.02.2022.

²¹⁴ DR Nyheder, 19.02.2022.

foreign women can be bought, i.e., it represents Nussbaum's feature of ownership.²¹⁵ That consent is important "but" only to a certain extent assumes a natural discourse of women's untrustworthiness. Thus, this comment likewise encourages an ideology of Danish women being untrustworthy, something that Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen similarly found in discourses about gender inequality in Denmark.²¹⁶ Weaponizing women's sexuality demonstrates how feminist policy and legislation are understood as something combatting men, i.e., *us vs them*. The following excerpt similarly weaponizes women's sexuality:

Need attention, 20 years later, or need money. I am so sick of those women who use their sexuality as a weapon. Indecent. (M)²¹⁷

Calling women who share their #MeToo stories "indecent" is a moral judgment where women's betrayal of patriarchal norms is exposed. It grants a credibility surplus to sexual predators while epistemically objectifying women and considering them violable.

Closely related to Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen's findings is the assumption that women feel violated because they have gained power to such an extent that they imagine gender inequality:²¹⁸

Denmark is in terrible decay. Women are apparently so strong in today's Denmark that they are constantly violated and need extraordinary assistance (M)²¹⁹

This contributes to the myth that Denmark is gender equal which enables ideologies of violence and sexism. Furthermore, the idea that Danish women merely put up with less shows how hidden gender inequality in Danish society is. Sexism is not seen as problematic as it is normalized and trivialized by portraying women as someone who imagines issues to gain attention, e.g., by weaponizing their sexuality. This is a philosophy of women's nature and

²¹⁵ Nussbaum, 'Objectification', p. 257

²¹⁶ Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, "'Danish women put up with less'", p. 182.

²¹⁷ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021.

²¹⁸ Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, "'Danish women put up with less'", p. 182.

²¹⁹ TV 2 Nyhederne, 21.02.2022.

contributes to an ideological presupposition that women are among the reasons why Danish values are threatened. There is a negative representation of Danish women presupposing feminist issues as being a women's problem rather than something rooted in institutional inequality. Sexism is revealed as an intrinsic ideology in Danish discourses when women's bodies are discussed and become highly objectified. In posts about female beach handball players, who no longer have to wear bikinis, the discourses convey sexist attitudes:

Don't wanna watch it anymore (M)²²⁰

The number of viewers will decrease rapidly, just saying (M)²²¹

The number of viewers will take a nose dive (M)²²²

Then you might as well remove that crap from the Olympic programme. (M)²²³

If they don't wear bikini, the sport will die (M)²²⁴

The above comments do not directly sexually objectify women, but they imply that the reason why it is no longer interesting to watch the sport is that there will no longer be women in bikinis. That is, women's bodies have contributed to their interest rather than the sport itself. This is an epistemic objectification and the women are treated as tools for the objectifier (instrumentality). Other comments, however, objectify women by limiting them to being sexual objects of male desire:

Can they play WITHOUT bikini, or do they have to? (M)²²⁵

I will be watching in case they take off their bikini (M)²²⁶

²²⁰ DR Nyheder, 11.10.2021.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

So from now on they can be naked? Well that would increase the number of viewers (M)²²⁷

All naked? That will be epic! (M)²²⁸

Wow. Looking forward to them not wearing a bikini. But all naked? There will probably be many viewers at those matches (M)²²⁹

These comments also treat women as a tool of the objectifier, and they are moreover dehumanized and limited to bodies judged by their appearance and object of male desire. These users reduce women's bodies to objects of their desire and pleasure by vividly imagining their naked bodies. Rather than acknowledging women as people, they are dehumanized and subjected to the male gaze. These discourses are often defended by arguments of it being for fun - it is *hygge* sexism.

Calling out these sexist and objectifying comments is rare and often assumes aggressive tendencies:

Will the interest for beach handball increase or decrease now? Who is guessing that the sport will die within a 10-year period? (M)²³⁰

A user calls out the sexual objectification:

then it must die. A sport shouldn't survive on basis of violations and sexism. Horny idiots who can't separate sports and pin up girls can fuck off. Pornhub was invented. The idiots have plenty of opportunities to look at something they can jerk off to. (M)²³¹

²²⁷ TV 2 Nyhederne, 11.10.2021.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ DR Nyheder, 11.10.2021.

²³¹ Ibid.

The above comments are interesting in the sense that only men have contributed to the discourses. This presumes that ideologies foster male desire and pleasure at the expense of gender equality. What is noteworthy here, is how islamophobia was regarded as a potential threat to male desire:

Burqa now (M)²³²

Yes a burqa would probably be more politically correct. (M)²³³

Situating the burqa in discourses where women's bodies are sexually objectified and male desire encouraged is a way to expose the burqa as being an *other*; the opposite of a bikini. The bikini represents Western values whereas the burqa represents a threat to Danish culture and values. It depicts an intersection of oppression where it is assumed, inter alia, that women who wear a burqa are suppressed by Islam, i.e., an *other*. As Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen and Edenborg suggest, it is not uncommon for discourses to approach *othering* by labeling them as threatening which ultimately silence women and *others*.²³⁴

Women's sexuality reveals unequal power dynamics in Danish discourses. Not only is rape at times referred to as sex, but discourses expose ideologically based moral judgments when women have liberal attitudes to sex and sexuality, i.e., they break conservative norms. This can be seen on posts about sugar dating:

One reason why women in general are untrustworthy, when they accuse famous men for assault. A large part of the women offer themselves. We know that after a long life. (W)²³⁵

This suggests that women are violable and generally untrustworthy. It silences women who have been violated by famous men and is an epistemic objectification. Famous men who are accused of sexual violations are especially prone to be granted a credibility surplus because

²³² TV 2 Nyhederne, 11.10.2021.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, "'Danish women put out with less; Edenborg, 'Endangered Swedish Values'.

²³⁵ DR Nyheder, 14.10.2022.

of their higher status in society.²³⁶ This user likewise weaponizes women's sexuality by stating that women do not deserve sympathy in cases of sexual assault because they have asked for it. It is implied that it is a women's nature to exploit her sexuality. Another user questions this statement:

how many women offer themselves? And what does sugar dating have to do with assaulting interns?
As far as I know, they are neither sex workers or sugar daters? What exactly is the point of your statement? That all assault and rape accusations are untrustworthy because a very small part of Denmark's female population are active on sugardating.dk? does that also mean that all women lie on social media, because some women do? Or that all men are nice, because most are? (M)²³⁷

He exposes an irrational argument that all men are nice because some are, whereas all women lie because some do. By generalizing men and women like this, men will always be granted a credibility surplus, and women will always be granted a credibility deficit. It is noteworthy to mention how it is a man who questions a woman's moral judgment of other women. It is rare to find comments where men expose women for their misogynistic beliefs.

Women are silenced when assumptions of gender inequality benefit men at the expense of women. This is done by a positive self-representation that assumes something to be known and considered as knowledge. In a post about men's lack of access to crisis centres this becomes evident:

The men are always losers compared to women. This is both in divorce, the children in divorce (where the woman is always right and have the power) and all other points. You should be equal. (W)²³⁸

Men and fathers have no rights in DK. (W)²³⁹

Those rules are made by women, for women (M)²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 76

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ DR Nyheder, 22.10.2021.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

That's right tell that to Me Too. Women are only interested in cases where they believe men has the advantage by being a man. That's why they remain the weaker sex. (M)²⁴¹

Fathers and men in general have never had a dog's rights in this female dominating, half communist country ! (M)²⁴²

Some of these excerpts imply that women are at fault if men experience a lack of rights. Victimizing men at the expense of women assumes that men's experiences are more worthy to be heard than women's, which is a testimonial injustice. The discourses differ greatly compared to those where women's rights are being discussed. What they have in common is, however, that women are deemed untrustworthy in both. Women are portrayed as unfair rulers only interested in issues that benefit themselves. Furthermore, labelling Denmark as a communist country derails the debate by classifying feminism and women's rights as being left-wing political issues that a democratic society ought not to be concerned with.

After having discussed ideological presuppositions, we will turn to the final part of the analysis which is on the power of credibility.

The Power of Credibility

Men and masculine traits have long been granted a credibility surplus. As has become evident, that is still the case in current public discourses. However, are we to follow Srinivasan's reasoning, it is slowly changing:

The rules that have really changed, and are still changing, do not so much concern what is right or wrong in sex: women have been telling men the truth about that, one way or another, for a very long time. The rules that have really been changed [...] is that [men] can no longer be confident that when they ignore the shouts and silences of women they demean, no consequences will follow.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex*, p. 20-21.

#MeToo has especially contributed to this change, though the power of being granted a credibility surplus should not be underestimated. As mentioned in the theory chapter, testimonial injustice is when prejudice causes an inconsistency of credibility thus allowing an intersection of discrimination and prejudice leading to sexism.²⁴⁴ Credibility is usually granted to those who are considered to have a higher standard in society, thereby giving them excessive credibility compared to what they deserve.²⁴⁵ The unjust outcome of credibility deficit and surplus is noticeable in the discourses, e.g., how we should respect the reputation of – innocent – men, before acknowledging the words of victims.

Dominant narratives in discourses can potentially hide institutional inequality, e.g., by communicating sexual violations as being private and isolated incidents. Despite the level of cases that were revealed during #MeToo, dominant narratives managed to maintain an idea that sexual violations are not rooted in systemic injustice but are occasional tragedies. These narratives rely on power dynamics that silence women by reducing their contributions to the debate as being nothing but attention-seeking:

Can everybody see me, can everybody hear me. She butts in everywhere. (W)²⁴⁶

STOOOOOOOP..... It's too much with all that me too. that women today feel violated for something that happened years ago. No, stop it, it makes me sick (W)²⁴⁷

Women whine too much. You are adults, fkn solve it yourself instead of crying about it 10 years later (M)²⁴⁸

Sad that someone finds it necessary to expose people in public who are unable to defend themselves, and for a hand on the thigh for about 20 years ago. (W)²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, p. 1.

²⁴⁵ Puncher, and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 76.

²⁴⁶ DR Nyheder, 04.10.2021

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Common to these excerpts is the epistemic objectification where women are considered as attention seekers and untrustworthy. Violations are considered private rather than institutional. Women are hence violable and silenced as sexual predators are granted a credibility surplus. One of the ways women are silenced is by diminishing their experiences based on temporal qualities, i.e., how can women be violated today for something that occurred in the past. Women are belittled by being called “whiners” who complain about violations that the speakers think are insignificant. Stating that time is a factor in whether women are allowed to share their experiences invalidates women’s contributions to the community by granting them a credibility deficit. This grants perpetrators a credibility surplus as well as sympathy, because the victims of violations are assumed to be at fault for their violations. Discourses of women being at fault for their violations are sometimes visible alongside whataboutism:

Think a consent law is important, but has it resulted in innocent men being imprisoned must be the actual question? (M)²⁵⁰

This user focuses on whether innocent men have been imprisoned because of the consent law, which is implied as being the most logical question because he uses a disclaimer. By this, women’s experiences are assumed to be less worthy of acknowledgment than men’s because women are presumably liars. Srinivasan discusses how the presumption of innocence is irrelevant in such matters because the principle acknowledges it is worse to wrongly punish than wrongly exonerate.²⁵¹ Nonetheless, the dominant narrative remains to be that (innocent) men are awarded sympathy and women are untrustworthy.

The power of credibility also produces dominant narratives in discussions about women’s access to the labor market. Since it is argued that Denmark practices a politics of denialism, it is widely assumed that men and women have equal access to the labor market including

²⁵⁰ DR Nyheder, 19.02.2022.

²⁵¹ Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex*, p. 9.

high-paid positions. Hence, in discourses of gender quotas, it seems unfair to many that positive discrimination is accepted as a tool in a democratic society like Denmark:

No, just no, it has to be according to skills, not gender, where is the equality in this? (M)²⁵²

Gender equality populism – yuck. Women should not be seated on boards simply because they are woman. They should be seated on boards if they are qualified and interested in the work. (W)²⁵³

These comments assume that women are not qualified or interested in the work, and explains why they are not represented in board rooms to the same extent as men are. As a user implied earlier in the analysis, however, the Huey, Dewey, and Louie effect explains why men possess more board seats than women: it is because they are men and men are more likely to hire men who look like them. Yet, as Denmark practices denialism and projects gender inequality onto migrant cultures,²⁵⁴ it is not odd that many Danes do not fathom why positive discrimination such as gender quotas are necessary to ensure gender equality. The politics of denialism are visible in the below comment, where it is argued that debates on #MeToo and gender inequality are exaggerated:

“You have to look long and hard for more privileged people. And I suspect that this metoo case is more about book sales and “being part of the game” than it is about a hand on the thigh. By the way I believe that most men out there have experienced something significantly worse than Helle Thorning-Schmidt – or at least more than enough so that we can put the exaggerated world image of how oppressed Danish women are to bed. Denmark is not a “patriarchy”, so feminism has wandered out on a colossal delusion.” (M)²⁵⁵

The dominant narrative supports the ideology that gender inequality is not a structural injustice because Danish women merely imagine it.²⁵⁶ This user implies that feminism is irrelevant in a country like Denmark because there is no need to focus on unequal power

²⁵² TV 2 Nyhederne, 21.02.2022.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, “Danish women put up with less”, p. 183.

²⁵⁵ DR, 04.10.2021.

²⁵⁶ Leine, Mikkelsen, and Sen, “Danish women put up with less”, p. 182.

structures in a country that is not patriarchal. The denial of sexism in Danish society normalizes gender inequality by making it valid to objectify women's bodies and silencing women's contributions to sports, policy change, etc. Puncher and Markowitz's discussion of the normalization of sexist ideologies shows how sexism is upheld by patriarchal ideologies.²⁵⁷ Thus, Denmark is a patriarchy insofar as there is sexism. Feminism is therefore required because Danish women are oppressed by a culture that denies their contributions and upholds unjust power structures where men and masculine traits are favored over women and feminine traits.

#MeToo is generally portrayed as an evil aiming to destroy people's freedom. It is visible for instance in how #MeToo is illustrated as a terror organization or when it suggested that #MeToo threatens the rule of law. Feminism is similarly depicted as threatening the rule of law as well as being predatory. It is claimed that feminism limits the freedom of Danes, e.g., visible in discourses surrounding the consent law. These discourses present women as liars who take advantage of legislation for their benefit. One way to explain why men and women participate in sexist discourses is because of internalized misogyny. Misogyny has an inherent gender bias sympathizing with men and masculine traits, thereby showing a general distrust of women. Women should be and do certain things within the pre-established patriarchal framework if they are to be granted a credibility surplus. The shaming of women online is not a rare occurrence, and by referring to women as merely whining when they shed light on structural injustices is a common way to silence women.²⁵⁸ Internalized misogyny is hidden in what has come to be accepted ideologies about women including everything from women are bad at math to it being women's fault if they are raped and sexually harassed. Manne argues that these internalized social norms about how women should be and what they should do are intrinsic to the patriarchal ideology.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Puncher and Markowitz, 'Sexism in Facebook discourse about clergy misconduct', p. 79-80

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Manne, *Down Girl*, p. 46-47.

Finally, it is interesting to discuss how users call out *DR* for alleged double standards. *DR* has created several shows that may come across as provocative or immoral– at least if we are to follow the reasoning of some users. Among others, *DR* have produced programmes about sugar dating and OnlyFans.²⁶⁰ Following the show, *Fie*, *DR* was accused of promoting OnlyFans as a porn site because they attributed positive traits about the way Fie earned her way of living by sharing sexually explicit content.²⁶¹ Users thus questions *DR*'s morals, here in articles about sugar dating:

DR has run several uncritical shows about Sugar dating and OnlyFans which have inspired youths to make bad decisions. Close DR. (M)²⁶²

Inspired by a dr3 documentary she writes herself. It is hence DR's huge interest for viewer numbers and sex that created her problems. (M)²⁶³

Where do I locate DR's self-critical angle? The woman writes she was motivated to prostitute herself because of DR's own documentary on sugar sating, but DR only directs critique towards the platform for sugar daters? DR plays a role in her story, but excuse themselves from any responsibility. Is DR with their (increasing) experimental and controversial programmes becoming a threat to young people's mental and emotional health? (M)²⁶⁴

These discourses imply that *DR* endorses testimonial injustice and objectification, inter alia, by denying subjectivity, using participants as tools for their purpose and treating people as having no integrity. *DR* is exposed as a corporation that produce and reproduces sexist discourses comprising dominant narratives. When *DR* tolerates debates surrounding their

²⁶⁰ See 'Gina Jaqueline – En sugardaters fortælling', *Gina Jaqueline – En sugardaters fortælling*, *DR*, 1 October 2017 [television programme]; 'Våde veninder', *Våde Veninder*, *DR*, 22 August 2021 [television programme]; 'Fie', *Nogle gange lokker pengene mig*, *DR*, 24 January 2021 [television programme]; and 'Se på mig', *Se på mig*, *DR*, 29 August 2021 [television programme].

²⁶¹ T. Benner, and I. Herskin, 2021., 'DR beskyldes for at promovere nyt pornomedie', *Politiken*, 31 January 2021, <https://politiken.dk/kultur/art8081617/DR-beskyldes-for-at-promovere-nyt-pornomedie>, (accessed 13 May 2022); M. Enevoldsen, 'DR beskyldt for promovering af pornomediet OnlyFans i ny Fie Laursen-dokumentar', *Soundvenue*, 1 February 2021, <https://soundvenue.com/film/2021/02/dr-beskyldt-for-promovering-af-pornomediet-onlyfans-i-ny-fie-laursen-dokumentar-439024>, (accessed 13 May 2022).

²⁶² DR Nyheder, 14.10.2022.

²⁶³ DR Nyheder, 10.10.2021.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

productions and posts to produce sexist discourses, it harms the participants of their productions as well as possible viewers who may see their lifestyles subjected to sexist ideologies of objectification and silencing. *DR* has a responsibility to ensure an ethical standard that protects the integrity of contributors to their productions. Otherwise, they produce harmful content enabling sexist ideologies. Furthermore, they misuse their power as a large public service network to exploit people's vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, it has become apparent that women and feminist topics are portrayed as untrustworthy. Danish online discussions on *DR Nyheder* and *TV 2 Nyhederne* presume women are liars while feminism and #MeToo threaten Danish values. The portrayals are framed through arguments about the rule of law as well as reflections on how #MeToo breaks norms about what can be considered reasonable. The discourses are often limited to perceptions about women's nature compared to Danish values which ultimately silence and objectify women. Credibility operates as an ideal in Danish society why it is normalized to silence and shame women who are not assumed to have integrity.

The examined data convey prejudice and discrimination limiting women from being heard thereby excluding them from public discourses. The analysis shows how men and masculine traits are granted a credibility surplus as they are represented as trustworthy and convincing. This allows suppression of e.g., women's experiences of sexual violence. On the other hand, women and feminine traits are granted a credibility deficit by being depicted as untrustworthy, unreliable, and as breaking with patriarchal norms. The analysis exemplifies how testimonial injustice is present in Danish society. As the online sphere can be considered an extension of the offline sphere, it can be derived that sexism is deeply rooted in Danish ideologies in all areas of society.²⁶⁵

The Danish online discourses produce and reproduce domination of men over women by sexually objectifying women through trivializing and normalizing sexist language. As a result of testimonial injustice, women are silenced and not considered reliable, i.e., they are not deemed suitable to contribute to what Fricker calls the pool of collective understanding.²⁶⁶ Danish women are thereby victims of the primary harm of testimonial

²⁶⁵ Lewis, Rowe, and Wiper, 'Online abuse of feminists as an emerging form of violence against women and girls', p. 1462-1463.

²⁶⁶ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, p. 132-133.

injustice, i.e., epistemic objectification. Consequently, as women's experiences are not heard, men and masculine traits dominate Danish ideological belief systems.

My thesis has contributed to the scholarly field by employing a qualitative analysis where the silencing and credibility deficit of women is understood as being an injustice. Where others have approached similar discourses with quantitative methods to represent the extent of online hate and sexism, my research has based its findings on a qualitative analysis of sexist comments to show how dominance is (re)produced on Facebook platforms on Danish news sites. This is, to the best of my knowledge, the first research of its kind examining social media discourses by applying a theoretical framework of testimonial injustice. Among other things, this analysis has uncovered how culture and ideologies contribute to a continuance of sexism, e.g., through *hygge* sexism.

Human rights scholarship has to consider how human rights are affected in online spheres. Public discussions on Facebook are especially relevant because algorithms affect what content users are exposed to. Furthermore, Facebook remains the largest social media platform and is widely used for community purposes. Human rights research has to consider whether the profit of Big Tech is prioritized at the expense of human rights online; one can only contemplate if that is the case. Social media discourses may limit the realization of human rights online and take into account how discrimination in the offline sphere translates to the online sphere. Moreover, access, freedom of expression, etc. have to be ensured for all people who participate in online communities. The ability to participate in online communities is a keyword to the findings of this analysis since it is found that sexist discourses are an injustice rooted in institutional denialism of gender inequality that normalizes the epistemic objectification of women by silencing and sexually objectifying them.

Future Research

There is little insight into how online sexist discourses persist and how they contribute to social inequality between those who have access to share their beliefs online without discrimination and those who have not. Some scholars have argued that it is threatening to democracy that women and minorities refrain from participating in online discussions, but there is little knowledge about what the consequences are of this, and whether our approach to social media should be reconsidered to ensure fairness and equitable access. This will, however, probably not be possible as long as Big Tech like Meta profits from the current framework as their platforms primarily include perspectives from the most powerful.

This analysis contributes to an understanding of how sexism is normalized in Danish culture, and I propose that more qualitative research in the area should be conducted with an intersectional approach to understand how oppression acts within the structures of social media. Furthermore, if it should ever be possible to challenge the current discourses online, research about the intention of people's contributions to public debates should be outlined, e.g., is it because there is a sense of humor and a longing for the "good-old-days" involved? My findings cannot conclude whether online sexism exists across cultures due to a lack of research. It is hence of interest to investigate this further to see why supposed gender-equal nations have citizens who experience oppression. This thesis has also raised the question of whether Danish news media should follow Norway's *NRK* and stop sharing news on their Facebook platforms.²⁶⁷ This requires further research into how values are expressed online and whether it empowers citizens or not.

Overall, this research is intended to facilitate a broader discussion of how we promote justice on online platforms. As the world is quickly changing, the online sphere is confronted with new usages each day. Are human rights equipped to keep pace with modern technology? If not, how do we ensure their survival?

²⁶⁷ See *Introduction*; Ritzau, 'Norges svar på DR vil dele færre nyheder på Facebook'.

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