

Gender Segregation in the Norwegian Labour Market

A Qualitative Study About Women in the Construction Industry



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OF OSLO**

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ABSTRACT

The Norwegian Labour market is both vertically and horizontally segregated in terms of gender. Men are over-represented in the private sector while women dominate the public sector, and there are differences in what hierarchical positions they hold and their general income. One of the most gender segregated sectors in the labour market is the construction industry. They are now looking to recruit more women, but the process is slow, and the industry has been criticised for recruiting women into an industry that is not properly prepared for it.

This thesis is based on 3 months of fieldwork and six interviews. By using a theoretical framework based on gender, masculinity, femininity, socialisation, and habitus I analyse my subjects' perception of work environment, differential treatment, and sexual harassment with the aim to understand what measures that may be needed in order for the construction industry to succeed in recruiting more women.

The lingering of outdated stereotypes still has a partial hold on society. The masculine construction worker is one of those stereotypes that may give rise to mental barriers hindering women from entering this sector. Another explanation is perhaps that these stereotypes make people unconsciously label tasks as inherently feminine or masculine. As children form images at an early age concerning what tasks men and women perform, it is also important that the school and educational system do not contribute in strengthening these images.

Further, an including work environment is crucial for making women choose the construction industry and making them want to continue. There are aspects of the work environment that can be considered excluding as women experience differential treatment and sexual harassment. It is however possible to trace an inter-generational shift in attitudes amongst the men in my study as the younger generation seemed less sceptical of female colleagues and seemed to consider the "macho-culture" outdated.

Key words: Gender segregation, femininity, masculinity, work environment, sexual harassment, habitus

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Nordic countries take pride in placing high on gender equality rankings when it is measured by certain parameters such as maternal mortality, birth rate, secondary education and labour force participation, and as of 2020 Norway is on top of the list (UNDP, 2020). In theory everything points to Norway and the Nordic countries as being role models for how to create a society with equal opportunity for all. However, the high rankings hide labour markets that are all but equal¹. Focusing on the Norwegian labour market, labour force participation is quite equal for men and women between the ages of 20-66, the numbers being 80,1% and 75,4% respectively. Part-time employment is however much more common for women at 37.3% vs 14.7% for men, and there is a large income gap with the male average at 567 400 NOK and female average at 397 500 NOK. Women have surpassed men when it comes to higher education with women at 38,8% compared to men's 30.1%. There are also significantly more men than women in the private sector, 63,3% men and 36,7% women, while the picture for the public sector is reversed. Looking at men and women in leadership roles we also find quite a gap with men holding 63,2% of these positions (SSB, 2021). The labour market is thus segregated both vertically and horizontally, as men and women work in different sectors and industries and in different roles and different hierarchal positions (Brenna, 2019, pp. 134, 137).

So how is it that a country that scores so highly on gender equity measures has such a gender segregated labour market? The short explanation is that traditionally men were considered as the breadwinners, and women as the homemakers. During the 1970's this changed, the public sector expanded and with it so did women's labour force participation (Hernes, 1987, p. 172), so women's labour force participation was closely connected to the expansion of the public sector for a long time. The other change during this period was that married women stayed in the labour market, and during the 1980's there was an increase in employment amongst mothers of small children (Jensen & Øistad, 2019, p. 14). Still today, women continue to dominate the public sector while men dominate the private sector. There are however women that do choose unconventionally, in fact more so than men, and in doing so they may end up in male-dominated occupations and industries. The construction industry is one of those sectors, and the increase

¹ For a long time, Norway had one of the most gender segregated labour markets in the world, but more recent data shows that this is no longer the case when comparing Norway to other European countries. Still, gender segregation is still significant and poses a challenge for increased gender equality (Brenna, 2019, p. 137)

in female employees is slow. However there is a growing interest in recruiting more women to the industry has the potential to speed up the process. But, converting a so heavily male-dominated occupation into a more gender-balanced one can be challenging. The industry has for instance received criticism from both internal and external sources for the wide-spread “macho-culture” that prevails in the industry, and for not being properly prepared to handle an increase in female employees due to this prevailing culture, all of which will be presented in more detail below.

Being a woman in a male-dominated occupation can present struggles that women in more female-dominated, or gender-balanced, occupations do not face. This thesis aims to shed light on why the labour market is so segregated, while also highlighting some of the struggles that women face in a male-dominated industry such as construction. By sharing my informants lived experiences I hope to provide some insight on what it is like being in a minority. However, this is not only a question of being in a minority, this is also a question of negotiating gender and challenging traditional gender roles, as well as a question of (gender) identity and mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion. These are all questions and topics that I will highlight throughout this thesis.

The Construction Industry and Gender Participation

In Norway the work force is made up of fairly equal numbers of men and women, but the labour market is segregated in terms of what kind of jobs men and women hold, and in what sector. Men are heavily overrepresented in occupations like building and construction, while the health and care services are dominated by women (SSB, Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2018). As of last year, building and construction is the third biggest industry in Norway, in terms of people employed, only surpassed by health and care services and retail (SSB, 2020). However, the industry is male dominated and only 2% of the skilled workers are female (Byggeindustrien, 2019). In comparable countries in terms of equal gender workforce participation, like Britain and Sweden, the same trend can be seen. In Sweden, as of 2019, the percentage of women is 1% (SCB, 2021). In Britain, as of 2016, 14,1% of the construction force are women, which is a slight increase since 2009 (CIC, 2016), there is however no indication of what kind of positions they hold, whether it is administrative positions or if they are skilled workers.

Simultaneously, the construction industry in Norway has a big shortage of skilled workers, as of 2019 the deficit was 14 300 workers, an 81% increase from the preceding year (Bjørheim,

2019). Reflecting this, following the EU expansions in 2004 and 2007, the construction industry has seen an increase in foreign labour, and according to statistics from The Federation of Norwegian Construction Industries² (Byggenæringens Landsforening, hereafter BNL) foreign labour makes up close to one third of all employees (SINTEF, 2017, pp. 9, 12), most of them from Poland and other East European countries (SINTEF, 2017, p. 13). The construction industry is becoming more and more international, both in regard to employees, suppliers, competition and foreign investments. This has led to considerable debates, regulations and political disagreements concerning salaries, work conditions and other problems related to difficulties with language and communication (SINTEF, 2017, p. 12).

In theory, the shortage of skilled labour should make the construction industry an attractive employer for both men and women as this deficit almost guarantees a job, with the added incentive that both Norwegian and international studies have concluded that there is fairly equal pay amongst men and women (Neumann, Rysst, & Bjerck, 2012; Ness, 2012). The combination of an enduring shortage of skilled workers, and a blaring gender gap, made the industry realise that recruiting from half of the population might not be enough. So, the construction industry is now looking to recruit more women, and some of the biggest actors in construction (f.ex AF-gruppen, JM, Rørentreprenørene) have even set a goal to reach 20% female employees by 2030. Furthermore, over the last couple of years a multitude of initiatives have emerged within the industry aimed at increasing gender-balance, inclusion and diversity, more than I am able to cover here.

Recruiting More Women

In 2019, BNL held a seminar on women in construction. The aim was for the industry to come together and identify measures for increasing recruitment of women to the industry. That same year BNL issued a report focused on women in construction, gender segregation both in education and in the labour market. In the foreword, written by BNL CEO Jon Sandnes, one can read that the industry is dependent on diversity, that there is lack of women at all levels, that more female role models are needed, and the importance of treating women with respect is emphasised (BNL, 2019b, p. 2). However, recruitment of women is slow. Female applicants³

² BNL is the third largest association in NHO (The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises) with 15 industries and 4000 member companies comprising around 70 000 employees.

³ I was, unfortunately, only able to find statistics on the number of applicants and not how many that enrolls and graduates.

for Construction Techniques in upper secondary school has stayed around 5% for several years. Numbers also indicate that women enter construction work later, and exit sooner than men, the latter possibly because fewer women transition into leadership positions (BNL, 2019b, pp. 4,11f). Further, according to a survey, half of BNL's member companies do not have any female employees, and 80% of member companies report that they have not taken any measures aimed at recruiting women (BNL, 2019b, p. 15).

BNL has also cooperated with The United Federation of Trade Unions in Norway (Fellesforbundet) to create a set of guidelines to help improve the work environment, hoping that more women will choose to work in construction. It is unclear exactly what they based these guidelines on, but there are seven of them and they are:

- There is a zero-tolerance for any kind of harassment in the workplace, and everyone has a responsibility to report cases of harassment
- All must be aware of what kind of language that is used in the workplace, and discriminating humour will not be tolerated
- All must comply with the company guidelines for acceptable behaviour, both at work and at social gatherings with colleagues
- All must avoid pictures and calendars that can be perceived as offensive by colleagues, both at work and on social media
- The workplace will contribute in facilitating for working parents
- All must contribute to keep wardrobe- and toilet facilities at an acceptable standard for both sexes
- All will contribute in making these guidelines known and be clear about the consequences if they are not followed (BNL, 2019a)

However, the construction industry has received criticism for targeted recruitment of women into an industry that is claimed to not be fully prepared for it. In a feature story on the online newspaper, forskersonen.no, Sol Skinnarland says that it takes more than recruitment campaigns to entice women to enter, and stay, in the industry. She continues to say that the stories about harassment that have flourished in the news lately are most likely not isolated incidents, and that this needs to be cleaned up before they make promises to women of an exciting career in construction (Skinnarland, forskersonen.no, 2020). In answer to this critique,

the CEO of AF-gruppen (Morten Grongstad) wrote a debate article stating that while some of the critique might be called for, the industry has done more than hold inspirational speeches during the last years. AF-gruppen have set concrete goals to double the number of female employees, make sure that they experience a good and safe work-environment, and they have arranged courses for their employees concerning unconscious bias. However, he says, they are not at the finish line yet and making sure that their promises match reality when recruiting women is one of the most important tasks, otherwise they will leave (Grongstad, forskersonen.no, 2020). Another issue that has been raised in relation to this is overtime and added work; and it is not uncommon to work 50-60 hours a week as overtime is often included in wages. This stems back to a time where men working in construction often had a partner that took care of potential children, which is no longer a reality for most in contemporary society (NemiTek, 2020).

Another aspect that is important to bring up concerning the recruitment of women is the financial incentive. Most likely it is not a coincidence that the construction industry is looking to recruit more women as research indicate that an increased gender balance leads to a higher return and can boost innovation that is needed to stay competitive. In a book published by The International Monetary Fund (IMF) it is stated that *“[E]liminating gender gaps in employment and wages would allow companies to make better use of the available talent pool, with potential growth implications”* (Kochhar, Jain-Chandra, Newiak, & IMF, 2017, p. 8). Further stated is that evidence point to *“having women on boards and in senior mangement positions has a positive impact on companies’ performance and profitability”* (Kochhar, Jain-Chandra, Newiak, & IMF, 2017, p. 8). Their explanation is that women are often more suited to meet the need of other women from a consumer market perspective, and vice versa, but also that women can help curb men’s tendency to take high-stake risks financially (Kochhar, Jain-Chandra, Newiak, & IMF, 2017, p. 8f). A report from PwC⁴, that was commisioned by CARE and Storebrand, adds that *“evidence suggests that the positive economic impact from increasing female [...] participation will be especially pronounced where the gender gap in labour market participation is high”* (PwC, 2019, p. 6), while adding gender-balanced makes for a better performance and productivity from a long term perspective (PwC, 2019, p. 7). The report also lists that possible *“positive effects of gender diversity in business [include] a stronger culture,*

⁴ A global network of firms delivering assurance and consulting services

a better managerial style, access to new markets, [and] increased ability to attract and retain talent” (PwC, 2019, p. 8).

One of the first articles I read when I began my initial research for this thesis was an interview on bygg.no with the managing director of Backe Gruppen, Eirik Gjeldsvik, in which he stated in regards to the ‘macho-culture’ that men created this problem and it is therefore up to men to solve this issue (Brekhus, 2019). Gjeldsvik continues to say, in this interview, that he is well aware of the gender segregation at construction sites and that this lead him to initiate talks with several of their female employees, aiming to find out more about their experiences at work. He says that what he uncovered was much worse than what he had imagined. After these talks, he concluded that the “macho-culture” had been allowed to grow thus making women feel unwelcome, adding that it is up to leaders in the industry to change this culture. While it might be up to leaders, I would say that it is equally up to men and women in general, although setting a good example is always important. Research also indicates that men’s ability to change in terms of gender equality (or in this case, granting women equal access on equal terms) is greater than what one might think, that under the right circumstances where men are able to choose to change their behavioural patterns one can reduce resistance and turn it into support (Norges Forskningsråd, 1999, p. 4), and thereby reduce the “macho-culture”.

Research Question

With this framing in mind, I will use a holistic approach and include theories on gender and masculinity as well as theories on both labour market and education, with the aim to shed light on the following question:

Can a broader approach, that includes theories on gender and social structures, help explain why the construction industry struggles to recruit women?

This research question is, in my opinion, highly relevant for the construction industry at large, but it is also interesting from an anthropological perspective. Approaching this with an anthropological theoretical framework has its advantages as anthropology is interdisciplinary and holistic, while at the same time being grounded in people’s lived experiences. That can allow us to “*see the micro in macro, and vice versa*” (Hasbrouck, 2018, p. 5). In addition, sex and gender have always held a prominent spot within anthropological theory as gender is

regarded as a founding principle for understanding the social, socio-economic, and political power structures that permeates society (Solheim, 2002, p. 106).

I will draw on different theories on gender, masculinity and normativity in addition to theories on habitus and socialisation, as who we are and where we come from can prove a powerful determinant of where we are going.

Outline

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter gave a brief overview of the segregated Norwegian labour market, an introduction to the construction industry, and why recruiting more women has seemingly become such a top priority, and the aim of this thesis.

In the second chapter, on theory, I will present the gender theories that are relevant for my analysis, focusing on femininity, masculinity, normativity, performativity, and habitus. These are all theoretical perspectives that I deem important to understand gender segregation and therefor the segregation of the labour market. Also included in chapter 2 are some studies of comparative relevance, from both Norway and other parts of the world, at they highlight problematic areas in the construction industry at large.

In chapter three I will present my methodology, which includes everything from gaining access to the field, the field itself, what is was like conducting fieldwork during a pandemic, and how I placed myself in the field. Also included are my ethical considerations and the methods used in conducting fieldwork and interviews.

Chapter four is about different mechanisms that keep both the labour market and education gender segregated. I also present my interviewees' in more detail and outline how, and why, they decided to pursue a career in construction, and discuss how their way into the industry fits within a theoretical framework of habitus.

In chapter five the focus is on sexual harassment. This chapter includes both legal aspects and how the construction industry itself talk about sexual harassment in the media. Further we will also hear my interviewees' experiences and opinions on this topic.

Chapter six includes different aspects of what constitutes a good, or bad, work environment, my interviewees' thoughts on work environment and how they experience differential treatment. I also share some cases from my fieldwork that highlights a "macho-culture" in

change, and how inter-generational differences can bring forward a new standard for the stereotypical construction worker.

In the last chapter, chapter seven, I will bring the different parts of this thesis together in a concluding discussion, and offer some ideas for further research.

2. GENDER(ED) EXPECTATIONS

In this second chapter we will take a closer look at theories about gender, how gender comes with expectations, and how gender is created and shaped through both norms and interaction between people. But first, a brief history, short explanation of the basic terms, why gender aspects matter, and how an anthropological perspective can contribute.

Anthropology has, by now, a long history with gender studies. From the beginning “*allocating much more importance in any society to the activities of men than to those of women*” (Hendry, 1999, p. 29) was common practice. Eventually, male bias started to get attention amongst scholars, and out this grew the feminist views that led to what is often called women’s studies, and labelling it this way also “*distinguished [it] from regular anthropology*” (Hendry, 1999, p. 31). During the 1970’s women’s studies, or feminist theory, made its entry as an academic subject both through women’s studies programmes and that the first academic journals on feminist theory were established (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016, p. 2). Women’s studies is however, like “regular” anthropology, interdisciplinary and can be applied to most topics although women’s studies is foremost concerned with power relations. Despite the fact that feminist theory can take on different shapes and forms, there are a few things that are constant features, such as “*that widely held presumptions about the naturalness of sexed embodiment, gender identity, and heterosexuality are mistaken, and that sex, gender, and normative sexuality are political constructs, rather than natural givens, and vary cross-culturally and from one historical era to another*” (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016, p. 2).

The term ‘gender’ (‘kjønnsroller’ in Norwegian) was introduced during the 1960’s as a way to separate the socially constructed sex from the biological sex and thereby refute the way biological sex was used to explain and legitimise women’s subordination. The difference between biological sex and socially constructed sex (gender) is that the first describes bodily attributes such as sex organs and hormonal differences, whereas the latter is meant to describe what is perceived to be feminine and masculine according to social and cultural norms in a given society (Korsvik & Rustad, 2018, p. 6f). It has been argued that introducing the concept of gender is “*the most important accomplishment of 20th-century feminist theory*” (Gardiner, 2005, p. 35) as it has altered the way we think about, and conceptualise, men, women, masculinity and femininity. In a way, the construction industry is an arena where the biological sex meets the socially constructed sex (gender) and clashes, as we will see in different forms in

the coming chapters. What I mean by this is that the masculine, physically strong body is often viewed as made for heavy manual labour, while the female body is not.

Moreover, there is often a tendency to view ‘men’ and ‘women’ as two homogenous groups, which fails to recognise how much ‘women’, for instance, differ from each other. This is something we will see amongst my subjects as well, that they have different opinions, ways of thinking, and reasoning depending on their personality, previous experiences, age, and background.

Performativity

As the famous philosopher and feminist Simone de Beauvoir once wrote, and I paraphrase, “*one is not born, but becomes, a woman*”. This holds true no matter what the cultural context is. Judith Butler has written some of the most influential, but also heavily criticized, texts on performativity, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). In the preface to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble* she problematises her own definition of performativity since she has revised her own views based on said criticism, but mentions that what she initially sought was to show how “*what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body*” (Butler, 1990, p. xv). Here, I will depart from Butler’s original theorisation of performativity, but I will also draw on others’ use of the concept to illustrate how performativity can unveil agency and resistance.

Creating, or performing, gender is a process in need of constant repetition to be convincing. Like Butler (1990, p. 152) states “[...] *if gender is something that one becomes – but can never be – then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity [...] and repeated action of some sort*”. Ambjörnsson (2003, p. 12f) explains this further by saying that you become who you are depending on how you act, rather than the other way around, that you act a certain way because of who you are. However, she explains, it is not enough to dress in a skirt and giggle with your friends once to become a girl, gender needs constant repetition to be convincing.

Butler’s theory of performativity is founded on the notion that the fundamental normative principle of society is reproduction and thereby heterosexuality (Butler, 1990, pp. 8-9). Butler uses the “*heterosexual matrix*” to explain how the binary heterosexual gender system became normative. This matrix is a set of cultural values that makes bodies, gender and desire understandable, that separates the feminine from the masculine, but ties them together in their

shared heterosexual desire. So, this binary system sets rules that dictates, not only that you must be a man or a woman, but also how to be a man or a woman (Ambjörnsson, 2003, p. 15). Therefore, being homosexual, Butler argues, creates a problem for the binary gender system. As a lesbian, one is not fully a woman since one does not fulfil the notion of heterosexual desire, thereby creating a third gender. This is problematic in the way that it challenges “*sex and gender as stable political categories*” (Butler, 1990, p. 153). Even though we have seen developments within the multiple gender debate in recent years, both culturally and politically, the binary gender system still prevails as the normative one. This founding principle of the gender system is also important to keep in mind when reading the theories on masculinity and homosociality, as anything that appears discrepant from this seemingly stable system threatens those ideas.

Butler’s theory can also, like I mentioned, be used as a form for resistance. If the binary gender system with its normative heterosexuality is culturally conditioned, it means that what is considered to be normative can change. McNay (2016, p. 44) says “*compulsive cultural reiteration of gender norms guarantees their pervasive materialization in the bodies of individuals as the seemingly natural identities of heterosexual masculinity and femininity*”. So, anything that is in constant need of reiteration to be convincing might not be so natural after all, it might even point to its fragility. McNay (2016, p. 44) explains that “[I]mmanent in the enactment of gender norms is the possibility that they will be performed differently [that] individuals will not automatically reproduce the cultural stereotypes imposed on them but will, in fact, displace them”. McNay continues by giving gay marriage and same-sex parenting as examples of this kind of resistance by viewing their actions as cultural appropriation, acting like normative heterosexuals in an unconventional way and thereby changing the “system” from within (McNay, 2016, p. 44f).

Norms, and normativity, are the ‘silent’ rules of society that one needs to learn in order to fit in, and usually we learn these things through socialisation as we grow up. I would also claim that there are some common norms, but that there are also different norms in different parts of society. These norms might also be a result, or an expression, of a personal sense of belonging – for example, one’s behaviour or pattern of clothing may indicate a desire to be perceived as belonging to a certain social group, stratified along several subcultural lines, from musical preferences, sexual life style, career choices, and more. As performative acts can be perceived as normative, we sometimes do them without thinking about it, and this perspective will be interesting when analysing what the normative gender expectations are in the construction industry.

Further, seeing how performativity is how we act out our gender, we need to know more about how we know and learn this, which leads us to socialisation, habitus, and different forms for capital.

Socialisation and Habitus

Socialisation is the “*process by which children acquire the social, emotional, and cognitive skills needed to function in the social community*” (Grusec & Davidov, 2010, p. 691). However, anyone who enters a new arena, whether that be a job or new friendships, most likely goes through a process of socialisation to learn what rules apply in this newly entered space (Grusec & Davidov, 2010, p. 688). Here, the focus will be on the gendering processes and work-related socialisation.

One could argue that the gendering process driven by socialisation begins almost the minute one is born. Not uncommon is that girls are dressed in pink and boys are dressed in blue, meaning that we colour-code children depending on their biological sex. Even language, and the tone of voice, often differs depending on the child’s sex. Studies have shown that children often exhibit “*stereotyped beliefs about the gender roles that are dominant within their culture*” (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016, p. 527), even at young age. It has been suggested that when children discover their biological sex and come to learn that it is permanent they seek, by their own accord, to conform to the given gender norms (Ruble, et al., 2007, p. 1121). On the other hand it has been argued that limiting oneself according to stereotypes can bring a negative outcome in relation “*educational and occupational aspirations, perceived academic competency, emotional expression and social development*” (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016, p. 527), and therefore it is important to teach children how to question and challenge ruling gender-norms so that they may broaden their views on what is obtainable. However, children of parents that exhibit traditional views on gender roles tend to adapt the same way of thinking, but is unclear whether the children responds most to the ideological or behavioural cues of the parents (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016, p. 530). As a result, it may be difficult to teach children how to think or behave differently than their parents.

Here I would like to offer a more concrete example of how socialisation work amongst children, which illustrates why the stereotypical gender roles seem to be so hard to escape. In 2004, a study by Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen was published. In this study she visits mixed-gender scout camps, with children between the ages 11-15, in four different European countries, but the

country we will focus on here is Denmark. In 1999 The World Organization of the Scout Movement adopted a new gender policy with the aim to promote equal opportunity and equal partnership (Nielsen, 2004, p. 208). In Denmark, the scout leaders believed that they had accomplished gender equality, but added that they did not want equality to act as a “*moralistic straightjacket*”, in the sense that one should not overdo it, because the main goal is for the children to have fun and have harmony between them (Nielsen, 2004, p. 211). However, in this program there was not much communication between the boys and the girls, and tasks seem to be divided by stereotypical norms even though there was an understanding that tasks were to be divided equally (Nielsen, 2004, p. 221). Nielsen explains that in single-sex scout groups, the boys do not mind cooking and the girls do not mind chopping wood. But, something happens in the mixed groups as “*tasks become symbolically ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’*” (Nielsen, 2004, p. 214). Never mind the fact that the girls were more than able to take on heavy tasks, neither the boys nor the leaders eased up on their firm belief that boys are inherently stronger. Nielsen continues by saying that “*closer observations of the children at camp showed that the different gender regimes constituted the physical and mental spaces of gender in different ways, thus teaching the children to do different kinds of gender hierarchies*” (2004, p. 214). So, there seemed to be a discrepancy between how the adult leaders talk about gender equality and how the children act, something Nielsen (2004, p. 218) calls “*gender blindness*”. When adults do not recognise and ‘correct’ certain patterns of behaviour they enable the outdated division of labour to continue, and thereby allow the traditional stereotypes to prevail.

Further, a socialisation processes one goes through as an adult is organisational socialisation, which explains how employees are integrated or assimilated into a given organisation (Saks & Gruman, 2018, p. 12). Through this process new employees learn the right attitude, how to behave and how to think, but it is also where they build expectations about their job (Saks & Gruman, 2018, p. 13f). Expectations and levels of uncertainty in relation to a new role are closely connected to job satisfaction, so, if expectations are not met and one’s place in the new organisation is not found the employment is not likely to last (Saks & Gruman, 2018, p. 16). More importantly, newcomers “*also have a high need to belong*” (Wanberg, 2012, para. Organizational Socialization is Important), and sometimes it might be difficult to find your place and fit in with new colleagues without a feeling of belonging. Therefore “*tactics that an organization uses [...] are related to higher levels of role clarity, social acceptance, and self-efficacy*” (Wanberg, 2012, para. Organizational Socialization is Important). In regard to the construction industry, this is an important process when recruiting women into such a male-

dominated occupation as their first impressions and feelings of belonging might determine whether or not they choose to stay. It is possible that the same thing will happen in construction that happened at the scout camp in the previous section, that when groups become mixed in terms of gender that “*tasks become symbolically ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’*” (Nielsen, 2004, p. 214) if there is no proper plan for how to integrate new employees.

Closely connected to socialisation is habitus. Bourdieu used the concept of habitus to explain how cultural capital is expressed through actions. More precisely “*habitus can be understood as the values and dispositions gained from our cultural history that generally stay with us across contexts (they are durable and transposable). These values and dispositions allow us to respond to cultural rules and contexts*” (Webb, Shirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 36). So, one could say that habitus is a result of socialisation, the cultural capital that one has gathered and takes for granted. Capital, in this case, is a somewhat abstract term which can include “*material things (which can have symbolic value), as well as ‘untouchable’ but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), along with cultural capital (defined as culturally-valued taste and consumption patterns)*” (Harker et al, 1990, as cited in Webb, Shatiro, & Danaher, 2002, p. 22). These different forms of capital are related to social mobility, and in turn, educational and occupational aspirations. Education, Bourdieu believes, is “*the mechanism through which the values and relations that make up the social space are passed on from one generation to the next*” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 105), and also what can lead to social change as education has the power to provide equal opportunity for all (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 107). As Bourdieu focused mostly on the French school system, not everything applies to the Norwegian setting, but there are some basic principles that apply here as well, such as education being a tool for social change and mobility. I would also suggest that the different forms of capital and habitus that he outlines are relevant as education might be considered more ‘natural’ if one grows up in a home where parents have higher education. Also, “*various forms of capital [...] are recognised as having value and they can be traded or exchanged for desired outcomes within their own field or within others*” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 109f). This means that if your cultural capital is a university degree, you can exchange that for a job, and that job can produce economic capital which in turn can be transformed into material capital, and thus social mobility might be the outcome.

Masculinities

Different masculinities, hegemonic masculinity in particular, has long been used to explain men's continued hierarchy in society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 830), and "*serves as an analytical instrument to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other men*" (Jawkes, et al., 2015, p. 113). The concept of hegemonic masculinity originated in Australia during a study on inequality in high schools, and has since been further explored and developed (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 830).

The typology defines four different types of masculinities; hegemonic, complicit, marginalised and subordinate (Sargent, 2013, p. 190). Hegemonic masculinity is considered to be the embodiment of masculinity, or the norm, even though only a few number of men are able to enact this type of masculinity. Thus, all other masculinities must position themselves in relation to the hegemonic one (it is also the hegemonic one that normalises men's dominance and thereby women's subordination) (Sargent, 2013, p. 190, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Men who reap the benefits from the way hegemonic masculinities shape the gender order without formally displaying it are considered to be complicit masculinities (Sargent, 2005, p. 252). Marginalised masculinities are meant to describe the way masculinity is adapted to other factors such as class and race, whereas the subordinate masculinities are those who threaten the idea of masculinity by displaying behaviour not associated with masculinity such as gay men and men that go against traditional gender regimes (Sargent, 2013, p. 190, Sargent, 2005, p. 252).

In the Nordic context, studies on men and masculinity have attracted more attention in Sweden than in Norway. It is however possible to trace the interest in men, masculinity and feminism back to the 1950's and 1960's and the "*pro-feminist pioneers [...] who argued strongly against the unsound relationship between men and women, parents and children, and the need for a thorough change in men's gender roles*" (Breivik, 2011, p. 143). Studies and research during this time was focused on gender roles, socialisation, absent fathers and "*the sad consequences of the dysfunctional male role as the key provider and breadwinner*" (Breivik, 2011, p. 143). It was also during this time the foundation for the Men's Movement (Mänbevegelsen), that was founded in 1978, was laid (Breivik, 2011, p. 142f). Similar movements appeared in Sweden and Denmark as well, and the common feature amongst them was the "*pro-feminist position*" (Breivik, 2011, p. 142). In Norway the movement adopted the slogan 'The personal is political', while challenging traditional gender roles. This movement marked a change in society and

“provided promising vehicles for future liberation on the gender equality scene” (Breivik, 2011, p. 142).

In 1999 The Research Council of Norway (Norges Forskningsråd) published an overview of research on men in Norway, and it is stated that research on men and masculinities has not been given significant attention within traditional research. Even though there is a lot of research on men, little attention has been paid to men within the sex/gender area. Further, women’s studies has been key to raise awareness about the fact that men also have a gender, as masculinity in Norwegian culture often has been viewed as neutral, and taken for granted, instead of being viewed as something that carries significance and is worth studying. Moreover, this report goes on to say that research on men and masculinity is important in regards to the knowledge we hold about our society and culture because men’s and women’s realities differ and masculinity is not of lesser importance to men than femininity is to women. Even more important is the fact that men’s relation to other men, and to women, is important to gain understanding about problematic areas in society such as violence, sexual abuse and areas where there is an overrepresentation of men (Norges Forskningsråd, 1999, p. 3).

A lot has happened within the field of masculinity studies since The Research Council of Norway published that overview in 1999. Ten years later Norwegian sociologist Øystein Gullvåg Holter published an article where he criticised, alongside his Swedish scholars, studies on men and masculinity for being androcentric and for not incorporating a perspective that recognises women’s agency. This led him to pose the question *“[D]o critical and profeminist studies of men and masculinities retain an androcentric tendency, where men are too big and too strong? And is [...] gender equality insufficiently integrated in the field’s paradigmatic framework?”* (Holter, 2009, p. 133). He explains that his interpretation is that this androcentric focus stems from the “good big man” picture, a picture that *“magni[fies] men’s social size and importance”* and *“enlarges the subject out of proportion, implicitly reducing women and ignoring the role of social structure”* (Holter, 2009, p. 134). Holter also discusses if the concept of hegemonic masculinity is still relevant as its main focus is on power. He argues that in the Nordic countries where gender equality is advanced the *“power model needs to be opened up in terms of material, economic and symbolic contexts”* (Holter, 2009, p. 143) especially as the younger generations tend to hold on to gender equal norms in a higher degree.

In Sweden, research on men and masculinity were heavily influenced by Connell’s theory concerning hegemonic masculinity during the last part of the 1980’s. This theory was also of more significance in a Swedish context than in other Nordic countries at this time, partially

because it fit with their political agenda concerning gender equality and partially because Sweden conducted more research in this area (Hearn, et al., 2012, p. 36f). Before hegemonic masculinity, research on men and masculinity had been criticised for not offering “*useful tools for understanding the dynamics of masculinity and gender relations*” (Hearn, et al., 2012, p. 36). Therefore it was suggested to put masculinity in a framework built on “*masculinity as a social construct, shaped by power relations intersected by structures of class, ethnicity, and sexuality*” (Hearn, et al., 2012, p. 36). I will therefore move on to look at theories on homosociality as these can help explain power relations and how masculinity is socially constructed.

Homosociality

Homosociality is “*frequently used in studies on men and masculinities, there defined as a mechanism and social dynamic that explains the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity*” (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p. 1). It has also been used as an explanation of how men maintain the patriarchy through their friendship, but also the intricate connection between homosociality, homosexuality and homophobia. Sedgwick (2008, p. 3) states that “*modern Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more and more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity*”. So if sexuality is the most prominent part of one’s identity, then, putting this in relation to hegemonic masculinities, and the fact that homosociality foremost relates to nonsexual, same-sex relations, it leads to a high degree of homophobia amongst men (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p. 2), as homosexuality threatens the idea of their masculinity.

Further, Flood (2008, p. 341) argues that masculinity is something you achieve through homosociality, that only men can legitimise another man’s masculinity and therefore seek approval from other men, while at the same time competing and identifying with them. This, he explains, is why women play an important role in men’s homosocial bonding since they can act almost as a currency for masculinity and status. Sexual achievements can gain a lot of admiration, especially if the woman is someone who would normally be considered to have higher status (Flood, 2008, p. 345f). Women are however not only important as currency for praise and admiration, their bodies act as a site where men’s heterosexuality materialises. Heterosexual desire and sex becomes a form for bonding amongst men, a way to maintain a

close friendship while at the same time establishing their heterosexual orientation (Flood, 2008, p. 349).

To serve as an example of how homosociality and male-bonding can play out we can look at a debate post I recently read in Bergens Tidene (Bergens Tidene, 2020) written by a 13 y o girl. Here she wrote that she was fed up by the fact that girls her age hear comments every day like “*whore*”, “*pussy*”, “*object*”, “*fuckable*” and “*your place is in the kitchen*”. She continued to say that when the boys are gathered, they have a tendency to spit out offensive comments which she experiences as suppression techniques, that the boys constantly comment on their looks and their bodies. Further she says that when they are asked why they do it the answer is normally that girls are too easily offended and sensitive, that they are humourless and that they need to understand that the boys are only joking, that it is their “*guy talk*”. Studies, however, suggest that this kind of talk is not so innocent, and cannot be squared away as simply ‘guy talk’. Male bonding can take the shape of collective sexual harassment, as the boys in this debate post show, or that they collectively engage in coercive forms of sexual interaction and practice. This, Flood (2008, p. 350) says, is because “*[M]ale bonding feeds sexual violence against women and sexual violence against women feeds male bonding*”, and points to several other studies that also make connections between patriarchal bonding and violence against women.

In addition, homosociality can be used to explain women’s exclusion from power (I believe this is applicable to different forms of power), as “*maleness constitutes a precondition for male bonding within clientelist homosocial networks*” (Shin, 2016, p. 320). What this means is that men build a form for capital by exchanging information and favours with other men, and as they identify more with people of the same gender they also consider men to be more reliable and competent, and thereby easier to cooperate with. As men more often than women hold positions of power, and are more likely to bond with other men, women are excluded from power as their potential homosocial capital is of less value in comparison. So, even if there are formal rules dictating gender equality, women are excluded because of these informal exchanges and transactions between men (Shin, 2016, p. 320f). Even though patriarchy might be an outdated term in relation to gender inequality and exclusion “*systematic gender-related discrimination still appears in many areas*” (Holter, Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities: Direct Gender Hierarchy and Structural Inequality, 2005, p. 19).

Studies of Comparative Relevance – Women in Male-dominated Occupations

Women in male-dominated occupations have gained attention over the last decades, especially within sociology (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 920). As women started to enter unconventional occupations like the military, doctors, lawyers, and data programmers, a new set of challenges presented themselves in relation to the labour market and male dominance. There is a broad literature on women's experiences working in male-dominated occupations, and what I offer as background material here is not a full overview. The articles and studies I will introduce here are the ones I found interesting and relevant, both theoretically and methodologically, for my own project, but I hope that they also highlight the importance of continuing to do research on the subject from different angles and perspectives.

Sociology professor Amy Denissen has written several articles on women in the construction trades, here I will present two of them. In the first study, women's navigation and negotiation of gender boundaries and identity within the male-dominated construction industry is explored. Denissen says that working in construction has long been considered to be the very embodiment of masculinity, that “[F]or men, doing gender is generally congruent with working in the building trades” (2010, p. 1051). Dominant masculine culture deems women as inferior, which puts women in a double-bind. While trying to fit in and proving their competence as a co-worker by adopting some male characteristics, they must simultaneously preserve their female attributes, something Denissen calls contradictory gender expectations (Denissen, 2010, p. 1052). She also argues that this double-bind becomes evident when there is a conflict between “a feminine presentation of self and a masculine way of doing the work” (Denissen, 2010, p. 1057). This conflict can lead men to “‘protect’ women from the heavy and difficult aspects of their jobs” (Denissen, 2010, p. 1057), which she calls paternalistic beliefs. These paternalistic beliefs might have negative outcomes for women as “first, they are not teaching women to do the work themselves; second, it can make women appear incompetent in the eyes of tradesmen; and third, it can undermine women's sense of their own abilities” (Denissen, 2010, p. 1057). Denissen concludes that much of previous research underestimates women's agency and their ability to strategically manoeuvre this double-bind, that by adapting to different situations they can “limit the implications of being a woman in a male-dominated job” (Denissen, 2010, p. 1065). Women can do so by finding and focusing on other commonalities such as ethnicity or class, and by combining both masculine and feminine traits in their occupational identity they might be able to subvert gender boundaries. However, these strategies are not always successful and Denissen states that her “main argument [in this article] is that the exclusion of women in

the building trades is reproduced despite women's active and concerted resistance" (Denissen, 2010, p. 1066).

The second study by Denissen, co-written with sociology and gender studies professor Abigail Saguy, focuses on women's resistance strategies in relation to sexual orientation and gender presentation. The argument they present is that women threaten the entrenched masculinity in the building trades, and as an effort to neutralise this threat all women are labelled as lesbians, and thereby not 'real' women (Denissen & Saguy, *Gendered Homophobia and the Contradictions of Workplace Discrimination for Women in the Building Trades*, 2014, p. 382). However, homosexuality threatens the heteronormative order, and the assumed subordination of women, so to subdue that threat men sexually objectify all women, which means that women that are not able to perform femininity in a correct way will be more susceptible to hostility (Denissen & Saguy, *Gendered Homophobia and the Contradictions of Workplace Discrimination for Women in the Building Trades*, 2014, p. 383). Throughout the article they show how women navigate these obstacles by combining masculine and feminine traits as a way to gain acceptance both as women and as co-workers. This navigation, they say, is part of an ongoing debate of whether or not it "*disrupts patriarchy or [...] reinforces the dominant gender order*" (Denissen & Saguy, *Gendered Homophobia and the Contradictions of Workplace Discrimination for Women in the Building Trades*, 2014, p. 399). It is difficult for women in male-dominated spaces to induce changes to this masculine and heterosexual atmosphere, and therefore it is argued that women's networks are crucial. However, there are so few women in construction and they are often isolated from each other that potential networks struggle to be effective (Denissen & Saguy, *Gendered Homophobia and the Contradictions of Workplace Discrimination for Women in the Building Trades*, 2014, p. 400).

Further, in a Norwegian study that also concentrates on women's gender-performative actions and manoeuvring, they have put more emphasis on the importance of clothing. As men has dominated the construction industry for a long time most clothes are designed after the male body. Although the women in this study expressed a wish for clothes that fit better, they did not want clothes that exposed their feminine shapes, as they did not wish to attract unnecessary attention and they figured everyone could see they were women anyway. To dress the same way as men do was a way for them to blend in and be 'one of the guys'. This, it is stated, refers not only to their wish to be socially included but to be considered an equal in terms of being a construction worker (Neumann, Rysst, & Bjerck, 2012, p. 245). However, there was a discrepancy between what the women said and what they did, suggesting ambivalence toward

the ruling gender norms. This ambivalence can be traced through their attitudes towards their work clothes as some of them feminised their looks and outfits by wearing make-up, jewellery, singlets and keeping their hair long even though they expressed a wish to blend in. One woman even suggested that she refrained from cutting her hair short for fear that she would be labelled as a lesbian (Neumann, Rysst, & Bjerck, 2012, p. 245). This interplay between wanting to be one of the guys while simultaneously being a woman, but not too much woman, is reflected throughout the study. It is also suggested that women strive for a gender-neutral expression, but that they are not quite on target. In trying to finding the balance in this heteronormative environment they must not be too masculine (suggests that they are lesbians), and they must not be too feminine (can lead to bad reputation), and in this balancing act they legitimise the heterosexual matrix instead of resisting it (Neumann, Rysst, & Bjerck, 2012, p. 248).

A British study, by former craftswoman turned PhD-student Kate Ness, suggests that although women might find construction to be liberating work with good wages, it can be threatening and hostile at the same time (Ness, 2012, s. 655). Here as well, masculinity in relation to construction work is emphasised: *“The identity of male construction workers is defined in relation to their masculinity and their masculinity is defined in relation to their tough job”* (Ness, 2012, s. 661). Through analysing a series of reports from the Respect for People⁵, Ness is looking to explain women’s exclusion from the construction industry. What she finds is that by issuing these reports, critique against the construction industry and its bad practices can be contained as it gives the impression that they are looking for change and better practises. In conclusion Ness states that there is *“an element of concession (in that it is conceded that women can work in construction) but it contains the advance within limits (women cannot do all jobs in construction). Thus, the discourse contributes, in a small way, to reproducing the dominant ideology that construction work is men’s work”* (Ness, 2012, s. 671). This suggests that the construction industry, in Britain at least, do not put their money where their mouth is, thus change is unlikely to happen.

Another British study, by Employment Relations Professor Tessa Wright, focuses is on informal interactions in the workplace. In the theoretical framework for this article it is stated that *“sexuality has been shown to be integral to organizational life”* (Wright, 2016, p. 349), especially in male-dominated occupations as *“sexuality becomes a focus of interest once women workers are present”* (Wright, 2016, p. 349). This perspective has been criticised for

⁵ A working group set up by the Minister for Construction

overlooking women's agency, and focusing on *"friendships at work that cross boundaries of sex and sexuality has been proposed"* (Wright, 2016, p. 350) as an alternative. This study is based on British women's experiences of working with other women in male-dominated occupations. Wright found that women usually fell into two different categories, those who liked working with other women, and those who did not. Those who liked working with women felt that other women were *"easier to relate to than male colleagues"* (Wright, 2016, p. 353), and vice versa. Only a few women in her study claimed *"that working with women was not very different from working with men"* (Wright, 2016, p. 353). Further stated is that women in male-dominated spheres who informally meet with other women can receive negative reactions from their male colleagues, and that this can act as a *"deterrent to women participating in formal networks for women, established to provide precisely the support that isolated women may need"* (Wright, 2016, p. 354). This is pointed out as especially important concerning newly recruited women since their priority often is to *"become accepted as 'one of the lads'"* (Wright, 2016, p. 354), which consequently can lead them to isolate themselves from other women. Here she also points to other studies that have shown that men sometimes pressure women to prove their loyalty and the price of becoming *"'one of the boys' may be a willingness to turn against 'the girls'"* (Wright, 2016, p. 354). In conclusion, Wright found that some women chose to identify with *"'masculine' interests to distance themselves from typical 'femininity'"* (Wright, 2016, p. 358), assumingly in an attempt to fit in with the boys, and that men *"may consciously frustrate attempts at female solidarity by stoking hostility between women in order to maintain male dominance in the workplace"* (Wright, 2016, p. 358).

The last study here takes us back to Bourdieu, habitus and homosociality. Sociology professor Abigail Powell and professor of Gender and Employment, Kate Sang, use a 'bourdieusian' perspective on habitus in their theoretical explanation on why the construction industry is so segregated in terms of gender. They state that the *"'habitus' in the 'field' of construction and engineering is one in which jobs in the industry are seen as intrinsically male"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921), and what makes it habitus is that the way *"construction [...] work is described and carried out is rarely questioned"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921). This 'habitus' is internalised by those who work in the industry and contributes to the gender segregation since people in position of power are more likely to choose people most like themselves, which means that since the construction worker is male, men are more likely to choose other men through *"homosocial reproduction"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921). This process, they state, is where gender inequality is reproduced and what Bourdieu called 'symbolic violence'. 'Symbolic

violence' is *"not physical, but may take the form of people being denied resources, treated as inferior or being limited in terms of realistic aspirations"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921), and this is what keep women from having the same opportunities as men. As these structures are internalised, they seem natural and are therefore not questioned, and this leads to what they call misrecognition. Misrecognition in this case relates to the process where *"individuals 'forget' that they are produced by the social world as particular types of people"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921) and that social structures and processes become *"veiled, so that masculinity and femininity are misrecognised as natural, essentialised personality dispositions"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921). In this process of misrecognition, they state, women help reproduce their inferiority by accepting the way things are since this presents as the natural order of things. Here they also raise the issue of this theory lacking the perspective of women's agency, but claim that this theory is still useful as it still offers a *"framework for understanding the continued oppression of women, specifically that continued symbolic violence forms women's habitus"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921). In conclusion they argue that this perspective is useful in understanding the continued under-representation of women in construction, but this is also *"valuable in a broader sense since it shows how the sociology of everyday life can reveal something about the practices and processes of gender"* (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 931).

Summary

The theories presented here all describe how gender, masculinity, femininity and what we perceive as normative might actually be social constructs. Performativity described how gender is the social construct through which we act out our biological sex, within a heteronormative framework built on heterosexual desire. The theories on socialisation and habitus showed us: first, that socialisation is how we learn to behave according to societal norms and how these norms are internalised so that they appear to be something natural; second, that socialisation is a gendering process, and learning how to perform femininity and masculinity is part of that process, meaning that acts and tasks can become gendered as well; third, that we often go through a new socialisation process when we enter a new job and learn how that workplace is organised; and lastly that habitus is a result of socialisation and the different types of capital that one has collected growing up, and how these capitals can be traded for other capitals and thereby be transformed into social mobility.

Further, theories on masculinity and homosociality are often used as an analytical tool to explain women's subordination as certain attitudes and practices amongst men help sustain gender inequality, and that homosexuality, and even women, threatens the idea about the construction worker and thereby their masculinity. However, these theories have been criticised for being androcentric and not acknowledging women's agency, implying that women are passive bystanders with no willpower of their own.

The studies I presented that I found to be relevant for this thesis included theoretical frameworks of how working in the construction industry is perceived to be intrinsically masculine, and how women are put in a double bind as they are supposed to be both feminine and masculine at the same time. That the construction industry is heavily male-dominated, and that women are sometimes viewed as intruders, can also lead to misrecognition and "symbolical violence" as people forget that what we see as normal, or natural, are just gendered constructions and performative acts.

This chapter and these theories led me to extend my research question and ask the following:

- How are work tasks coded as 'feminine' or 'masculine' in the workplace?
- How might a concept of masculinity and homosociality help us understand how men position themselves in the workplace?
- What is the construction industry in Norway doing to accommodate women?
- What kind of misrecognition might I be able to identify in my empirical data?
- How does Bourdieu's concept of habitus, capital and education relate to my informants?
- Is sexual orientation more important to establish as more women enter construction sites?

3. METHOD

The night before my first day of fieldwork I set my alarm early. I woke up nervous and went straight for a quick shower, hoping that would wake me up. Then I had a cup of coffee and watched the sky turn pink as the sun rose over Oslo. At 5.15 I got dressed, as part of fieldwork is dressing the part, I put on a t-shirt with the firm's logo on it and a pair of hiking pants that at least somewhat resembled work pants. I put my lunch, my new safety shoes and a sweatshirt in my backpack and left to catch the bus. I triple checked the schedule so that I would not get on the wrong one, nervous to be late as the construction manager had told me that it would be good for me to arrive in time for the morning meeting at 6.30 am. The bus was on time, but, unfortunately I decided to follow the men dressed like construction workers as I assumed we were heading the same way. However, we arrived at a gate that was closed to me as I did not yet have an access card. So, I had to walk around and ended up being late for the morning meeting. I had made arrangements to meet the construction site supervisor that morning since I had met him once before when I went to the construction site to introduce myself and tell him about my fieldwork. As I headed up the outdoor stairs to the offices I wondered if I would recognise him. The construction site manager agreed to take me on a tour of the site, and I put on my safety shoes and then a yellow helmet, a signal vest and a pair of safety glasses that I was handed. As we headed down the outdoor stairs again, I was terrified of falling, because let me tell you, those shoes make you feel like you have clown shoes on. The plastic safety glasses did not help matters either as your depth perception changes. We made our way over the partially gravelled dirt, and I felt like one of those dogs in the online videos that just had shoes put on for the first time, lifting my legs too high, trying not to stumble in my clown shoes and not fall into any puddle holes. All I could think was "I will never blend in".

In this chapter I will present the field, my methodological approaches and ethical concerns. When writing this I have drawn on both my Project Proposal (Kjellgren, 2019) and my Fieldwork Report (Kjellgren, 2020), as they have laid the foundation for this chapter.

Access to the Field

This project was originally initiated by BNL as they had just held the conference that I mentioned in the introduction, about women in construction. This was a new area for them as well, and they had just started working towards making more women choose the construction

industry and making them want to stay there. The reason they wanted an anthropology student was that they initially wanted someone to study the “macho-culture” at construction sites and see how that culture potentially hindered women from entering this line of work. The idea was also for them to help me find a construction site where I could conduct my fieldwork. Then the pandemic hit, and in March 2020 society shut down and it was uncertain for a long time if I was going to be able to conduct fieldwork. This was also a time where companies struggled to meet restrictions and everything was a bit chaotic. BNL, I imagine had enough on their plate, so as it turned out they were not able to offer much help. They did send out an email to their member companies asking if anyone was willing to host me, and they got one answer. When I contacted them, I unfortunately did not get a reply. I did hit a few more dead ends before I struck gold. One day I got a phone call from a very excited friend telling me that a friend of hers was about to apply to an apprentice programme to become a carpenter, and that this programme was specifically aimed at women. She sent me the ad for the programme and reading it I figured that this might be a perfect opportunity to get in contact with the construction industry, as there currently is a lot of focus on women, or rather lack thereof, in construction.

That same day, I sent them an email where I shortly presented my project and asked them if they would be willing to let me conduct fieldwork with them. This firm was quick to answer and asked for a Zoom-meeting where I could present a more detailed description of my project. They had a lot of questions about practical concerns and *how* I planned to conduct my fieldwork, since it is not possible to just walk onto a construction site unsupervised and without mandatory safety courses. These were problems I had not yet reflected on, as I had never set foot on a construction site before. Shortly after this initial meeting they contacted me again with an invitation to visit one of their sites, as they thought it would be beneficial for me to get an impression of how things work. That visit helped me to make a more concrete plan to present to them. During our second Zoom-meeting I was able to present a plan that they liked, but that they had to run it through management before giving me their final answer. After that it was a quite long process to get everyone onboard and find a construction site willing to have me. Then finally, right before the general staff holiday I got a phone call telling me everything was set up and that they had found a construction for me and an apprentice willing to let me tail her. After taking an online basic safety course, buying safety shoes and some appropriate clothing, I was ready to begin.

On my first day, the construction site supervisor showed me around and introduced me to few team leaders. After this I got introduced to the female apprentice and her team. This apprentice,

and her co-workers, turned out to be very easy-going and welcoming. But I will admit it was a little bit awkward at first as there is really nothing natural about standing around watching people work. I am not sure fortunately is the right word, but as I knew little to nothing about construction work, asking questions about that was one way to get the conversation going. On their end, they also had quite a bit of questions about my project that I answered to the best of my ability. Eventually, they put me to work as well doing small tasks like assembling door handles as they worried that I would be bored standing around watching them work. After a while I got promoted and was allowed to both drill into concrete and put up inspection hatches, so in addition to empirical knowledge I also learned some practical skills.

Fieldwork During Covid-19

When I wrote my Project Proposal, I was blissfully unaware of the pending pandemic that would enter, and alter, our lives a few months later. My original plan was to focus on men and how masculinity is reproduced in such a male-dominated sector as the construction industry and base my thesis on 5-6 months of participant observations. However, the restrictions and the uncertainty that followed the pandemic made me wonder for a long time if fieldwork would be possible at all, and we also got an offer from the institution to write a literary based thesis instead. I waited, because I hoped that things would become better, and they did during summer of 2020. So, in August I was able to start my fieldwork, but the same restriction applied there as well; we were supposed to keep distance, limit contact, and not sit too close to each other during breaks and lunch. So there were a lot of considerations and evaluations to be made from week to week, and sometimes even day-to-day concerning public transport and mandatory home office for everyone that did not *need* to physically go to work. That we were supposed to limit social contact is also one of the reasons I decided to stay with the same person throughout my fieldwork. In addition, many people worked more or less alone, and often with headphones on to reduce noise. Further, with the time being limited, as I got started 3 months late, I found it most sensible to stay with one person as I got to know her, her thinking, and how she navigated the construction site in more detail rather than risk only obtaining superficial knowledge from several people.

In the beginning of November, there was a full lock down again. At this point I decided not to continue my fieldwork, as I felt that I had run out of arguments for continuing. So, I felt that

the responsible decision, for both me, the people I followed, and society at large, was to end my fieldwork and instead put more emphasis on secondary sources.

As mentioned, this was supposed to be a thesis about men and how masculinity is reproduced. However, as I got placed with a female apprentice and learned more about her doubts about entering the industry, and why she eventually decided to pursue this, made me think about the divided labour market in the Nordic countries, and what it is like entering a male-dominated sphere. In addition, parallel to my fieldwork I attended online webinars with Diversitas⁶ and read articles on bygg.no, and the seemingly heavy focus on both sexual harassment and recruiting more women stood out, so paired with my (limited) fieldwork it seemed like a wise decision to focus on this moment.

The Field: At home, But Not At ‘Home’

Conducting fieldwork, or participant observation, is the most common way for anthropologists to obtain information and empirical data. But before going out on fieldwork, one must construct a field. In early anthropology the “Field” was normally composed of what the field of Anthropology and anthropologists used to call primitive people and exotic places. Now, on the other hand, the concept has widened and the *“field is not equivalent to a simple geographical or social space, nor is it a simple mental construction of the ethnographer, but it does require both of these elements”* (Madden, 2017, p. 39). In my case, I conducted fieldwork at ‘home’. This is something that has become more common in contemporary anthropology, to study one’s own society, and by now it is a somewhat outdated notion that one must have enough distance, both geographically and culturally, to stay objective and produce proper ethnographic knowledge. Now, the concept of distance is more of a *“theoretical stance”* (Passaro, 1997, p. 153). Admittedly, it might require a more thorough thought process when placing yourself in the field, and regarding additional ethical considerations, which I will discuss in more detail below.

At ‘home’ is in itself an interesting concept worth discussing. Anthropologist Raymond Madden states that *“like community and society, home is a term that is typically used inconsistently, or rather, is broadly interpreted, even in anthropology”* (Madden, 2017, p. 45). Home can reference a variety of entities, it can be a country, a region, a culture, or even people,

⁶ Diversitas is a leading network in Norway that promotes gender-balance and diversity in the construction industry

and like Madden I had not thought about the fact that home can be “*such a big place*” (Madden, 2017, p. 45). Even though I am a Swede, Norway is now my home and the place where I have lived for most of my adult life. At the same time, where my parents live is also my home. Moreover, I can be at home in a political sense in the Scandinavian region since “*all three countries share similarly active welfare institutions, with a strong emphasis on rationality and regulation*” (Bruun, Jacobsen, & Krøijer, 2011, p. 2). In the societal aspect the Scandinavian countries also share similarities in that we value individualism and equality, as “*equality is considered as both a part and an outcome of social life*” (Bruun, Jacobsen, & Krøijer, 2011, p. 6), while individualism “*cast as independence, autonomy, and freedom, [...] are valued positively, [...] individuality, expressed as egoism and self-assertion, and originality are not held in very high regard*” (Bruun, Jacobsen, & Krøijer, 2011, p. 6). And like Madden, I would define ‘home’ as familiar, but also as a “*mixture of geographical, emotional, social, and cultural components, which are brought together under the rubric of familiarity*” (Madden, 2017, p. 46).

My geographical field became a relatively big construction site on the outskirts of one of the larger Norwegian cities. I came there with a plan, but fieldwork can prove messy and “*all kinds of practical and intellectual issues get in the way*” (Bernard, 2006, p. 70). Meaning that you can plan all you want, but you still do not know what you will find once you are there. So, I did not end up with the empirical data I set out to collect. Further, “[T]o a certain extent, participant observation must be learned in the field [...] Consequently, you have to experience participant observation to get good at it” (Bernard, 2006, p. 359f). And yes, it is tricky, and it is partially awkward, and I am more than willing to admit that had I had more time or had I been a more seasoned researcher my empirical findings might have been more comprehensive. Even so, for me participant observation was the key to gaining insight into an industry I knew almost nothing about beforehand. To be able to interact and experience their day-to-day helped shape my understanding and, as a result, inspired me to shift my focus, as mentioned in the previous section.

Positioning: Learning to Bite My Tongue

Anthropologist Evans-Pritchard (1976, p. 25) wrote that the “*charming and intelligent Austrian-American anthropologist Paul Radin has said that no one quite knows how one goes about fieldwork*”. I did not understand just how true this is until I entered the field, because

there really is no blueprint for how to do it. Like mentioned, doing fieldwork at ‘home’ comes with a different set of advantages and challenges than going abroad to an unknown place. The advantages in case this are, of course, that there mostly are no language barriers and that I was able to do some fieldwork at all during a global pandemic, whereas most of my challenges were connected to my own prejudices (of which I am very aware).

Before I began my fieldwork, I did some background research, but just enough to be able to write a project proposal. I felt that most previous research was quite critical of the construction industry, and media coverage in Norway during this time focused a lot on the lack of women, the macho-culture, and sexual harassment in the industry. I did not want to go into the field with those ‘glasses’ on as I feared that would taint my views and lead me to actively look for problems and shortcomings and overanalyse if things possibly could be interpreted as sexual harassment. I wanted to have my own experience, to have as blank of a slate as possible. That said, no one has an entirely blank slate. Everyone has opinions and views and trying to hide mine was perhaps one of the biggest challenges. Like Evans-Pritchard (1976, p. 242) stated, on studying others, *“it is inevitable that he will view its people’s institutions in contrast to his own and their ideas and values in contrast to those of his own culture”*, therefore it is *“important to reflect on and account for how one’s own values and attitudes affect the choice of topic, data sources and interpretations”* (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019, para. A, 1. Norms and values of research). In my case, I am a working-class woman and a left-leaning feminist that has taken quite a few classes in gender studies. On top of that, I was at ‘home’, but still not at home in the sense that this was a part of society that was somewhat unfamiliar to me. I will admit that conducting fieldwork at home in a culture that I recognise and expect to be in a certain way, was a bit difficult. Tolerance for views and opinions that were not in line with, or close to, my own was probably lower than it would have been in a foreign location. I did get to hear both stories and jokes, and perhaps even some implications, that I did not necessarily agree with. Under normal circumstances I would probably have challenged some of these stories and opinions, but showing them other ways to look at things was not my job here, it was to observe and perhaps follow up with questions if there was an opening for it. Like Bernard (2006, p. 370) states *“[T]he goal is not for us, as humans, to become objective machines; it is for us to achieve objective – that is, accurate – knowledge by transcending our biases”*. As I got more used to spending time at the site I got better at biting my tongue, and after that adjustment period it became more like going to work, and at work you wear a different ‘hat’ than you do in private.

Interviews

As mentioned, during my fieldwork a new idea took shape, to focus on recruitment, sexual harassment and work environment, which is why I decided to base my thesis more on interviews than the actual fieldwork. I needed more informants to tell me about their decision to enter the construction industry and their experiences of being a woman in this male-dominated occupation. Two of the women I interviewed I had met during my fieldwork, the others I was put in contact with after sending out emails to a few different larger companies, as I figured the larger companies would probably have more female employees than smaller ones. As I knew that there are few women in construction, I did not want to limit my informants to only include adult apprentices, as I was happy to get any informants at all, but as it turned out all but one was an adult apprentice.

Beforehand I sent out consent forms to all the informants, which they read, signed and returned to me. All my interviews were conducted via Zoom, a version of the programme that is provided by the university and approved for recording interviews. Before I started the recording, I repeated their rights to anonymisation and that they at any time can withdraw consent, and also asked about their name and age so that the stored recording would be anonymous. I did not store the recordings with video, only audio.

The interviews were semi-structured, so I had an interview guide⁷ prepared that included the topics I wanted to cover and to be sure all my informants got the same questions. Doing semi-structured interviews has its advantages as you do not need to ask the questions in the same order, and you can ask follow-up questions if something interesting is said (Bryman, 2012 , p. 471). I believe this makes the interview a little bit more conversational instead of interrogational. All interviews lasted between 25-35 minutes.

I also believe it is important to recognise that doing interviews via Zoom is not the same as doing it face to face. Firstly, since these interviews were conducted from home the possibility for disturbances are bigger; secondly, seeing yourself during videocalls can also be a distraction if you are not used to it; thirdly, it is harder to read people's expressions and sometimes harder to hear them, especially if the line is unstable.

⁷ See Appendix 1 for the interview guide

Ethical Considerations and Anonymisation

To begin, even though this project was initiated by BNL they have not had any influence over my project or the research process, and no raw data has been, or will be, shared with them.

Before I began my fieldwork, this project was notified, and approved by, the Data Protection Services (NSD). I also wrote a consent form where the aim and purposes of my research were presented. These consent forms were handed out during my fieldwork to people that I was in daily contact with and wanted to include in my thesis in some way. During one of the first days of my fieldwork I also introduced myself to (almost) everyone and explained what I was doing at the construction site, so even though only a few people got the consent form they were all informed of me and my role. I was genuinely surprised a few times, even though I had introduced myself in front of everyone it still seemed like some had forgotten about that. Weeks after I had presented myself a man came up to me and asked, out of curiosity, who I was and what I was doing there because he and a couple of colleagues had been wondering. So, I explained again why I was there, and I got a positive response. Another time, and this was my fault because I should have made more of an effort to clarify my role, the apprentice I followed switched teams and one of the men there, it turned out, was not entirely comfortable with my presence. When this came to my attention, I spoke with him and explained who I was, and added that I would be more than happy to back off when he was guiding and teaching ‘my’ apprentice. After this talk everything got a lot better, I gave him some space, and he seemed to relax and became much more talkative.

During fieldwork, none of the people I had daily contact with were worried about anonymisation or that my project would cause any problems for them. Quite the opposite, most seemed genuinely excited to be part of it and during fieldwork my subjects regularly made jokes about them choosing their own fictional names for the thesis. Even so, I found it important to anonymise my informants as this is close to home, and sensitive subjects such as sexual harassment and work environment were discussed. Furthermore, it is likely that their employers will read this thesis, and also that I am not in a position to judge what an employer might find problematic about my subjects’ stories. Their stories no longer belong only to them, now they have been interpreted by me, and I feel an obligation to protect their integrity since “*responsible research also includes assessing unintended and undesirable consequences*” (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019, para. A, 3. Responsibility of research).

In the process of anonymisation I have divided and mixed my informants, and slightly changed their age. As all interviews were conducted in Norwegian, translating them was in a way an anonymisation process in itself, in transcribing and translating them into English I have however tried to stay as close to the raw material as possible but avoided, to a certain extent, frequently used words and expressions so that speech patterns would be less recognisable.

My Interviewees

Here, I will make a short presentation of my six informants, a more thorough presentation will be given in chapter 4. Some of them I have met in person, others I have only “met” over Zoom when conducting the interviews. And, as previously stated, they have all been anonymised by mixing their stories, slightly changing their age, where they come from, and their previous education and employment.

Linda is 30 years old. She is an educated nurse and has previously worked in a nursing home. She cohabits and has one child.

Emma is 35 years old. She has an education as a property master and worked in the movie industry for a few years. She is single and has no kids.

Jenny is 39 years old. She does not have a previous education, although she enrolled in health work at upper secondary school she did not finish. Previously she has worked at a sawmill and in retail. She is married with two kids.

Nora is 43 years old. She is an electrician and mechanical engineer and has worked in the construction industry since she finished upper secondary school. She is single and has no kids.

Sophie is 28 years old. She is an educated furniture maker and has previously worked in retail and as a DJ in Ayia Napa for two summers, and she has built boats. She cohabits and has no kids.

Anna is 37 years old. She is an educated architect and previously worked in retail, customer service, and managed a gym. She cohabits and has no kids.

4. SEGREGATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND EDUCATION

As stated in the introduction, Norway has one of the most gender segregated labour markets in the world, men are over-represented in the private sector while women are over-represented in the public sector. In this chapter I will cover a few theories and mechanism that keep the labour market segregated, such as different gendered expectations on men and women, what personality traits that are valued on the labour market and how gendered wording affects job applicants.

Partially, traditional gender roles and stereotypes prevail in Norway, and it is still more difficult for women to combine a career with family responsibilities, as women, according to Smeby (2017), tend to care more than men about being a good parent in the eyes of society. Smeby looks at the gendered expectations that are connected to mother- and fatherhood and says that the concept of moral responsibility is more about how they want to be perceived as parents rather than the needs of the child. Moral responsibility can also vary according to, for example, class and culture but is set by current social norms, and by acting morally responsible one can manage others' perception and thereby gain acceptance. However, mothers and fathers are not subject to the same kind of scrutiny and therefore fathers seem to care less about how their parenting skills are perceived by others (Smeby, 2017, p. 90). From her study she draws the conclusion that there is a gendered demand on parents, as most of the mothers in the study were the ones to pick up the children from the kindergarten and this a way to uphold their image as a good mother. The mothers also seemed to *"compensate for a full-time working day through the symbolic act of picking up their children 'early'"* (Smeby, 2017, p. 101). Also, the mothers seemed to have a bad conscience when they picked up the children late, which the fathers did not. Neither did the fathers *"feel the need to satisfy cultural expectations of coming early to get the children"* (Smeby, 2017, p. 101). Smeby further suggests that women working in male-dominated occupations, or women who have prominent jobs, seem to have lesser problems with picking up the children late. Explanatory factors can be that women adapt their male co-workers' sentiment about picking up children, or that their job demands that they work longer hours in order to keep up and keep their job (Smeby, 2017, p. 102). So, with this double breadwinner model we have here in Norway, mothers are under a lot more pressure than fathers as they are supposed to both hold a full-time job while still fulfilling all social expectations that go into being a good mother. This might also help explain why women are so heavily over-

represented in the public sector, as that sector is often viewed as more family friendly (Bufdir, 2021b).

Further, seeing how segregated the labour market is and what jobs men and women hold, can we assume that the labour market automatically favours men, that simply because they are men they are already ahead? There have been studies on whether masculine and feminine personality traits matter on the labour market, and whether masculine traits in women matter. In a quite recent study, conducted in Britain by a group of researchers within the field of business and economics, they say that the correlation between gender and labour market outcomes has frequently been subject to research, but that *“the importance of individual masculine and feminine personality traits as casual determinants of labour market outcomes”* (Drydakis, Sidiropoulou, Bozani, Sandra, & Patnaik, 2018, p. 622) has received far less attention. In this article, what they identify as stereotypical masculine personality traits are *“strong, technically competent, ambitious, self-sufficient and authoritative leader who can maintain control of his emotions”*, whereas they identify the feminine with *“empathy, sensitivity, loyalty and a caring disposition”* (Drydakis, Sidiropoulou, Bozani, Sandra, & Patnaik, 2018, p. 622). They conducted the study by sending out job applications to vacancies in the London area. Two applications were sent to every employer, one with feminine traits and one with masculine traits, other than that the fictitious women were essentially identical. The aim was to see if they got different responses in the selection process (Drydakis, Sidiropoulou, Bozani, Sandra, & Patnaik, 2018, p. 624). In their theoretical framework they categorise the masculine traits as more important to an employer as these traits tend to signal effectivity and higher rate of success, while pointing to several studies where masculine traits make for positive associations. Here they also point to women who dissociate with traditional family values tend to have a more successful career (Drydakis, Sidiropoulou, Bozani, Sandra, & Patnaik, 2018, p. 623). Their findings indicate that the fictive application exhibiting masculine traits were treated more favourably and could expect both higher salary and better career prospects than those with feminine traits, indicating that women might experience discrimination on the labour market. They state that *“Women can be disadvantaged in relation to how they are appraised, not simply on the basis of their achievements, or on their productivity levels, but rather on the gender group to which they are aligned”* (Drydakis, Sidiropoulou, Bozani, Sandra, & Patnaik, 2018, p. 627).

In addition to male personality traits being held in higher esteem, it is not uncommon that gendered wording is used in job recruiting material. I will not go into detail about the origin of

gendered wording, as for this particular purpose it is more interesting to look at the mechanisms of exclusion that follows gendered wording. Gendered wording has been used as a tool to investigate institution-level factors that contribute to inequality, and whether women abstain from applying to job adverts that are written in masculine-coded language. What this means is that there are documented differences in the way men and women speak and what words they use, as “*women are perceived more communal and interpersonally oriented than men, whereas men are more readily attributed with traits associated with leadership and agency*” (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011, p. 110f). What follows is that masculine words are considered to be words beginning with ambitio-, challeng-, compet-, independen-, self-confiden-, whereas feminine words start with collab-, loyal-, respon-, trust-, agree-, (Gender Decoder, n.d.). The theory of gendered wording suggest that by using these types of words one can “*facilitate the maintenance of inequality*” (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011, p. 111), meaning that how the job advert is written affects the feeling of whether or not you will belong in a certain occupation. Further hypothesised is that “*masculine wording likely signals that there are many men in the field and alerts women to the possibility that they do not belong*” (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011, p. 111).

However, trends suggest that women, more often than men, choose unconventionally and occupations that once was male dominated, such as economics, are now more balanced in terms of gender. And, occupations that once were male-dominated, such as law and medicine, are now dominated by women (Bufdir, 2021a). Here we tap into another thing that is very interesting, namely that when “*occupations experience a larger inflow of female workers [...] this leads to their devaluation, translating into a lower status and a decline in wages*” (Busch, 2018, p. 1351)⁸. As mentioned previously in this chapter, women might be at a disadvantage because of the gender group they belong to, and because men’s skills and personality traits often are valued higher than those of women. So, even if they perform the exact same tasks, the work of the woman will consequently be of less value because we are not rid of the “*deeply rooted gender beliefs about the fundamental differences between men and women*” (Mandel, 2018, p. 671).

⁸ There have been several studies to support this, see f. ex (England, Allison, & Wu, 2007) (Levanon, England, & Allison, 2009)

Here we have taken a brief look at the labour market and identified some mechanisms that keep the labour market segregated, but this does not paint the whole picture. We need to look at education as well, as this is where the foundation for the segregated labour market is laid.

The Educational Division

Whenever the segregated Norwegian labour market is discussed, school and education are often highlighted as part of the explanation. The traditional choices being made in educational and occupational settings have been problematised both politically, academically, and by actors and social partners connected to the labour market. In 2018, Bjerrum Nilsen and Henningsen published an article in which they looked at gender differences over time in education, and what those differences might implicate in relation to higher education and choosing career paths. They state that:

“[G]ender differences in school and education appear to be a result of a complex interaction between what gender means on a psychological and motivational level for the students, how their choices are institutionally and structurally framed, and how both things change over time” (Nilsen & Henningson, 2018, p. 7)

They continue by saying that the gender differences in education are especially evident when looking at vocational subjects such as construction and health work. They do not, however, have an adequate explanation for the following, but speculate that girls and boys either choose subjects they feel that they can master, that they are influenced by cultural norms and expectations, or the fact that they make this choice during a period, or at an age, where they might feel insecure about their identity and therefore make “safe” choices (Nilsen & Henningson, 2018, p. 12). When it comes to higher education, the gender differences can partially be explained by girls’ and boys’ choices during upper secondary school as more girls than boys enrol in general studies, implying that more girls intend to move on to higher education.

In a 2019 governmental report, written by #UngIDag-utvalget⁹ that was led by Loveleen Rihel Brenna, they determined that gender segregation in education contributes in keeping the labour market segregated, but that the segregated labour market also affects what education boys and girls choose (Brenna, 2019, p. 133). Continuing, they state that through history tasks have been coded as masculine and feminine but that these have changed over time, and that gender, age

⁹ A working group with 12 members that are researchers, practitioners, pupils, and students.

and social position also have determined what kind of tasks one perform. Today, teenagers' own wishes and personal traits are more likely to influence their choice in occupation, as formal barriers are gone, and one is free to choose what education and occupation one wants to aim for. As a result, women's educational levels, and occupational aspirations, have increased and diversified, and led to more equalisation. Despite this, gender segregation is still a prominent factor both in education and in the labour market. They suggest that this can partially be explained by the fact that external factors influence what choices teenagers make, since their choices are not made in a vacuum but affected by both society, friends and family. This means that they are also affected by the segregated labour market, as children form an image at a quite early age about what occupations and what tasks men and women do, which in turn limits their choices either consciously or unconsciously (Brenna, 2019, p. 133f). So, even if the formal barriers are gone, when an occupation or a sector is heavily dominated by one gender, mental barriers rise instead. On a societal level, this segregation and these mental barriers leads to lesser flexibility and problems surrounding recruitment of men and women into certain sectors. Therefore the labour market suffers as well as companies are not able to reach, or tap into, the populations' full potential (Brenna, 2019, p. 134).

Further, as mentioned in chapter 2, Bourdieu found education to be of great importance as he saw this as a mechanism through which the next generations inherits values, but also where social mobility is either made possible or suppressed (Webb, Shirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 105f). Following that logic; a second governmental report from 2019 acknowledges the gender differences concerning education and states that these differences will likely increase in the coming years. The report also states that there are clear differences between the genders at all levels, but that it is the responsibility of the school to take preventive measures against this (Stoltenberg, 2019, p. 11). However, it is not only gender that influence what educational path one chooses. Class and social background also influence the choices, as do parent's involvement in their child's education. According to Bourdieu

“home and family life also play a significant role in social reproduction, as the degree to which the child's family habitus fits in with the school habitus has consequences for the success of the child in acquiring the values, dispositions and cultural capital that characterises the school” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 116)

Put more simply, one can say that those who come from a lower socio-economic background are more likely to choose a vocational education than those with a higher socio-economic status.

This has also to do with what we consider high- and low-status occupations, children from a higher socio-economic class will most likely not aim for an occupation with a lower-class standard and therefore choose higher education rather than vocational education. It is also more likely that girls from a lower socio-economic class will choose unconventionally as male-dominated occupations have higher status than female-dominated occupations, and this way they can choose a vocational education and still gain higher status jobs (Bufdir, 2021a).

As stated here, as well as in chapter 2, parents and habitus might have more influence than assumed when it comes to children's education and what education they decide to pursue. I will now turn to my informants and their way into the construction industry, what education they have, and what kind of work they did previously. Finally, I will discuss the different part in relation to the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2.

How My Interviewees Ended Up in Construction

According to the studies and theories mentioned previously, parents have more influence over what career path their children choose than they might think. In addition, like mentioned in the previous section; choosing unconventionally was more likely amongst children of parents with lower education. But how did my informants end up here, what do their parents do, and what education do they have?

All but one of my informants are adult apprentices, and for them it was not a straight road into the construction industry. All but one of my informants have other, or additional, education and some of them have prospects of other jobs that have possibilities for a higher salary than the construction industry. Still, they have made the choice to work in construction because they find this line of work enticing.

Linda (30 y/o) finished upper secondary school, and then continued on to higher education, both within the health sector, even though she initially had secret dreams of working in construction. During the last semester in school, when she wrote her bachelor thesis, she started to realise that the health sector was not really something she was passionate about. After she finished school, she took a job at a nursing home, and again she started dreaming about the construction industry. She says that she is happy about her choice and that the best thing about construction work is that you are able to use both your brain and your body at the same time. Her father is an electrical installer and her mother is a social worker, which are quite

conventional occupations, but they did not say anything about her changing careers or choosing unconventionally.

Emma (35 y/o) originally wanted to pursue building and construction in upper secondary school but decided not to due to fear of being labelled as a lesbian, as she expressed that that was the sentiment at the time where she grew up. Instead, after finishing upper secondary school, she decided to become a furniture maker. However, finding an apprentice-spot was difficult, so she ended up working part-time as a manager for a gym. She also did some waitressing and other odd jobs before eventually deciding to do what she had wanted all along: to become a carpenter. Emma is the only one of my informants that still has some doubts about this line of work, not because of the environment, but because she feels that the work they do is not really construction it is more assembling. So her doubts are more connected to taking pride in the work she does, which might be related to her previous education as furniture maker, but she is hopeful that she will have other, or more, opportunities after she gets her trade certificate. Emma's mother did not have any education, but her father was an able seaman. Her mother has been very supportive of her choice to pursue a career in the construction industry.

Jenny (39 y/o) enrolled in health work when entering upper secondary school. She is however the only one of my informants not to finish upper secondary school as she felt unmotivated and eventually decided to quit. She has some regrets about the fact that she did not stick it out long enough to get her diploma. After quitting school, she worked in retail, at restaurant, and also helped build boats. Her parents did not have any education to speak of apart from primary and lower secondary school, and they have been very supportive and are happy that she finally has something that she likes that also gives her a vocational education that she has use for. Her parents have both held jobs that they did not enjoy, so they are very happy that she has found a job that she finds satisfying.

Nora (43 y/o) began her vocational education in upper secondary school and has worked in construction even since, except for when she took a break to pursue a university degree in mechanical engineering. She told me that the thought of a vocational education being an unconventional choice did not really strike her until she became an apprentice and got comments from co-workers about her being a girl. Originally, she had plans to become an architect, but she got introduced to the construction industry before applying to upper secondary school and therefor decided to go in that direction instead. Both of her parents also have vocational educations and work in different parts of the construction industry. Initially, her father was against the idea that she pursued that line of work based on her being a girl, that she

is too tiny, and that girls did not have access their own locker rooms. Her mother on the other hand was more encouraging and saw the possibilities rather than the obstacles. Nora, as well, is happy that she decided to pursue a career in the construction industry as she likes the fact that she gets to be active and use her body.

Sophie (28 y/o) finished general studies in upper secondary school and thereafter took some years/time off and tried to figure out what she wanted to do with her life. She has worked in retail, customer service, and tried her luck as a DJ in Ayia Napa before going back to school to become a property master, as she figured it would be fun to build things for a set in theatres or movies. After that she worked as an assistant in the movie industry for a short while. She eventually quit that business as she felt the work environment could be a bit hostile and competitive. Her mom works as a health worker but has no additional education apart from upper secondary school. Sophie's mother did have some doubts about her choice to become an adult apprentice, mostly since it is such a male-dominated place of work. Sophie on the other hand do not have any doubts about her decision, she expressed that her only regret was not entering the construction industry sooner.

Anna (37 y/o) has a degree in architecture and worked as an architect for a few years. She did not feel fulfilled sitting in front of a computer all day and felt that the days grew longer and longer. She expressed that she had always known that she wanted to work with her hands but did not know where to start. Eventually she realised that her real interest was not drawing walls, it was building the walls. By chance one day she saw an ad from a construction firm that was looking for adult female apprentices, she jumped at the opportunity, replied to that ad and has never looked back. She says that she still feels like she did that first day, "*I'm so happy, I feel really lucky*". Both her parents work in the municipality, but do not have academic educations. Her mother has also expressed that she found this choice of going into the construction industry a bit strange, since she has an education already, but that she decided not to say anything at first because it was not her choice to make.

Do They Fit Within the Theoretical Framework?

Before analysing my interviewees' stories, I want to go back and look at terminology in the theoretical framework. Bufdir (2021) uses the concept lower socio-economic status to describe those who typically chooses a vocational education. For me, lower socio-economic class is a somewhat problematic concept, as it implies little or no education, and a low salary. In my

understanding, those with a vocational education do not fit under the concept of a lower socio-economic class (other than that they may not have much academic education). At least not today, as working in construction today is not necessarily equivalent to a low salary. For this purpose, I will replace that concept with working class, as that is descriptive term for those engaging in manual labour within the industry, construction, and transport sector (Store Norske Leksikon, 2021). Important to note is that the Norwegian concept of working class has shifted over the years, and it does not hold the same meaning in today's society as it did 30 years ago. In addition, numbers from SSB shows that there will be a lack of people with a vocational education in the coming years as the demand increases faster than the skilled labour force does, meaning that vocational educations should be encouraged (SSB, 2020).

After learning more about my informants and how they ended up in the construction I am inclined to go back to some of the questions I posed at the end of chapter 2: How worktasks are coded as either masculine or feminine; how a concept of masculinity can help us help us understand how men position themselves in the workplace; and how well Bourdieu's concept of habitus, capital and education is recognisable in my interviewees' stories.

To start, how worktasks are coded as either feminine or masculine can be traced through education as well as physical tasks on the job. A common denominator for all my informants is that they come from working-class homes, that their parents hold quite gender traditional occupations, and all of them have vocational educations, if any. So, according to the theoretical framework, where it is suggested that children often conform to gender norms (Ruble, et al., 2007, p. 1121) and the "*stereotyped beliefs about the gender roles that are dominant within their culture*" (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016, p. 527) at an early age. Further stated is that children of parents who exhibit stereotypical gender roles tend to adapt to the same way of thinking (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016, p. 530). Even so, it was only Linda and Jenny who enrolled in a heavily female dominated education in upper secondary school – health work, although Jenny did not finish. Also, all but one parent (who eventually came around) have been supportive of the unconventional choices their children have made, and it might be that all my informants were relatively free to choose their own path as according their respective habitus there might not have been any expectations on them to pursue higher education.

Why Emma and Linda did not pursue construction earlier can perhaps be explained by looking at cultural expectations, norms, and insecurity. Emma expressed that she feared being labelled a lesbian if she enrolled in building and construction in upper secondary school, indicating that cultural norms and misinterpretation of identity are important factors at that age, just as stated

in the article by Nielsen and Henningson (2018). However, previous research has established that it is not uncommon for women in construction to be labelled lesbians as a way to normalise their presence, as shown in the articles by Wright (2016) and Denissen and Saguy (2014). Linda has grown up with parents that have very traditional occupations, so it might have been cultural norms and habitus, combined with the “safer” choice, that made her pursue a bachelor’s degree in health work. Perhaps Smeby’s (2017) study is applicable as well and can provide some insight into my informant’s choices. In her study she claims that stereotypical gender roles partially prevail in Norway, and that mothers tend to care more than men about being good parent in the eyes of society and connects this to moral responsibility. Combined with the theory of gendered wording where women are portrayed as being more “*communal and interpersonally oriented than men*” (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011, p. 110) it might be that it is not just mothers, but that women in general care more about public perception than men do, which can be one of the external factors that hinder young women from making unconventional choices.

It was only Nora who made the choice at an early age even though both Linda and Emma secretly dreamed about working in the construction industry as well. Both of Nora’s parents work in the industry, but she originally wanted to become an architect. As her father was so promptly against her working in construction, one might see her plans to become an architect as an opportunity to work at another level of construction – drawing and designing buildings instead of physically building them. Anna, on the other hand, did become an architect even though she initially wanted to work with her hands and body. That Nora decided to pursue the construction industry at upper secondary school, while Anna did not, can perhaps be traced back to their respective parents as they grew up in different habitus. Nora had two parents in the construction industry which means that she had more intimate knowledge about the industry and role models at home with vocational educations. Anna’s parents hold jobs in the municipality, and that they have “office-jobs” might have influenced her and it is not common that one opts for a job that is considered to have lower status than the parents’ jobs (Bufdir, 2021).

On a last note, all of my informants, except Nora, did not make the choice to enter the construction industry until they were adults. This is in line with the findings of BNL (2019b) as well, that women often enter the construction industry later than men. Although it is not possible to identify exactly why, whether they were influenced by the segregated labour market, home environment, peer pressure or insecurity, the fact that they waited remains. Important to

note here concerning external factors, where there is a lack of information in my empirical data, is that friends often influence the choices one makes during lower and upper secondary school, and I know nothing about that part of their lives and if friends were a contributing factor in their choices during this time.

Summary

In this chapter I presented some theories on the mechanisms that keep the labour market and education segregated in terms of gender. Even though we have come quite far concerning gender equality in Norway, men still seem to have an advantage in the labour market in the sense that masculine personality traits are often valued higher than feminine traits.

The mechanisms covered here, apart from that masculine traits often are valued higher than feminine, includes: first, that women tend to put more emphasis on family and being perceived as a good parent; second, that when male-dominated occupations that experience a high inflow of women the status of said occupation will decrease; third, that gendered wording in job recruiting material can have an effect concerning what applicants that respond.

The educational system is also pointed out as a contributing factor to the segregated labour market, as teenagers tend to be affected by habitus and other external factors, such as society, parents, friends, and mental barriers, when choosing their educational path. This is partially explained by the fact that stereotypical gender roles still prevail and still dictates what constitutes masculine and feminine occupations. It is however stated that girls who grow up in lower socio-economic homes are more inclined to choose an unconventional occupation.

The theoretical framework on education is partially evident in my informant's stories as well, but their stories also show that choosing unconventionally while growing up in a working-class home is more intersectional and complex than discussed here.

5. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

As previously stated, sexual harassment of women in male-dominated occupations is not uncommon, and the construction industry is no exception. In this chapter we will focus on different aspects of harassment, and take part in my subjects' experiences, or lack thereof, with harassment.

To begin, last year there were several articles around the web about the "Ida" (Ida-saken). A woman that was called "Ida" in these articles spoke up about her experiences with sexual harassment in the construction industry. In an article on bygg.no, she shared her story (Byggeindustrien, 2020a):

The "Ida" Case

Ida is 18 years old and excited about her first placement as an apprentice. However, two days in the harassment starts. The harasser is also an apprentice, and when they are alone, he starts to put his hand on her, tickle her, pushes himself up against her when he passes her. One day he spanks her butt in front of their team leader who responds by saying that he did see that, and that he has no desire to be involved in a case about this. Harassment continues and "Ida" gets a stomach-ache and dreads going to work. One day, after being called the "firm's mattress", she had enough and went to the management to make a report. From there matters became even worse. She was called into a meeting with her harasser and she felt that management protected him instead of her. He did admit to the harassment, which led to him being moved to another project. A few months later "Ida" was also moved to another project. However, this was the same project her previous harasser was moved to. Again, she went to management and told them that she did not feel safe and that she had no wish to work alongside him. Management reacted by getting angry and telling her she had no right telling them to fire him, and further told her that they could not guarantee that they would not have to work together again. "Ida" concluded that enough was enough and decided to quit as she could not take it anymore. Unfortunately, her story does not end here. She got a new job as an apprentice, and things were good for a while. Then she was moved to a new project where she was the only woman, and harassment started up again. People stared, talked about her behind her back, pressed themselves against her when passing her in the corridors, touched her butt, and then laughed about it. To get to the lunchroom she had to pass the men's locker room, and there was no door

between the locker room and the lunchroom. She felt uncomfortable about this and raised this issue many times. Her male co-workers did not appreciate having an outspoken female colleague, and it reached the point where her co-workers stood in a circle, surrounding the exit of the women's locker room one day so that she had no way out. Eventually she pressed passed them as they all laughed at her. This time however, she did not feel the need to quit as her boss transferred her back to her previous placement where she liked working.

The Construction Industry and Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment took the world by storm in the fall of 2017 when movie producer Harvey Weinstein was accused of sexual harassment and rape on Twitter with the #metoo, and the tweet encouraged other women to also speak up about this issue (Bråten, 2020, p. 24). All research that has been conducted concerning this shows that women are much more exposed to sexual harassment at work than men are (Bråten, 2019, p. 31). In the construction industry this has led to the #nårgrunnmurensprekker, which translates into 'when the foundation cracks', a public call that several CEO's, directors and other higher-up's in the real estate business have signed. Here they said that sexual harassment is more widespread than they had imagined, that according to a survey they conducted, over 60% of the respondents had experienced sexual harassment in some form (NRK, 2017). However, in 2020, leaders in the construction industry again called out, this time in an article on bygg.no, claiming that the #metoo-movement never quite reached the industry, that sexual harassment seems to be something that everyone knows about but do not talk about. For women in the industry it is often difficult to stand up and tell their stories of sexual harassment. There are so few of them, and they become highly visible and easy targets if they do decide to speak up (Byggeindustrien, 2020c). They continue to say that women are often told from the beginning that they need to be able to 'take a punch', and that they must not be offended by trifles; and it is a working environment like this that encourages women not to speak up (Byggeindustrien, 2020c). Further, in an article on Fremtidens Byggenæring (an industry newspaper), one can read that industry organisations are well aware that the construction industry has had a bad culture when it comes to reporting sexual harassment and that these events often gets shoved under the rug. Nevertheless, in this article it is stated that the industry should instead thank those who speak up because you cannot change what you do not know, and reports of harassment are an important part of bettering the culture overall (Fremtidens Byggenæring, 2020). Wendt, who works in the industry and is active in the Equality and Inclusion Committee, agrees. She says in an article that putting sexual

harassment on the agenda is not meant to put the industry in a bad light or scare women away. Rather, talking about women's challenges can help solve them and help create a better work environment, which in the long run might encourage more women to choose to work in construction (Byggeindustrien, 2020b).

Legal Aspects

It is difficult to discuss sexual harassment without looking at the legal aspects, namely the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act. In the introduction to this act one can read that

“The purpose of this act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, [...] sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression [...] or other significant characteristics of a person.

‘Equality’ means equal status, equal opportunities and equal rights. Equality presupposes accessibility and accommodation.

This Act has the particular objective of improving the position of women and minorities. This Act shall help to dismantle disabling barriers created by society and prevent new ones from being created” (Lovdata, 2018)¹⁰

In section 13 of this act it is stated that harassment is prohibited and that harassment is defined as any act or statement that serves the purpose of being *“offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome”* (Lovdata, 2018)¹¹, whereas sexual harassment is defined as *“any form of unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome”* (Lovdata, 2018)¹². In

¹⁰ This is an official translation by Lovdata. The original text is as follows;
Lovens formål er å fremme likestilling og hindre diskriminering på grunn av kjønn, graviditet, permisjon ved fødsel eller adopsjon, omsorgsoppgaver, etnisitet, religion, livssyn, funksjonsnedsettelse, seksuell orientering, kjønnsidentitet, kjønnsuttrykk, alder og andre vesentlige forhold ved en person.

Med likestilling menes likeverd, like muligheter og like rettigheter. Likestilling forutsetter tilgjengelighet og tilrettelegging.

Loven tar særlig sikte på å bedre kvinners og minoriteters stilling. Loven skal bidra til å bygge ned samfunnsskapte funksjonshemmende barrierer, og hindre at nye skapes.

¹¹ This is an official translation by Lovdata, the original text is as follows;
Med trakassering menes handlinger, unnlater eller ytringer som har som formål eller virkning å være krenkende, skremmende, fiendtlige, nedverdiggende eller ydmykende.

¹² This is an official translation by Lovdata, the original text is as follows;

this same section it is also clearly stated that it is the responsibility of the employer or manager to prevent harassment, and that it is forbidden to take part in any form of harassment (Lovdata, 2018). The wording in this act is interesting as they use the wording ‘purpose’ and ‘effect’, or ‘formål’ and ‘virkning’ in Norwegian, which points to a person’s intentions and how a statement or act is perceived. This can be interpreted as problematic in more than one way. First, can we ever firmly establish a person’s intentions? If a person experiences an act or a statement as harassment, but the intention was not to harass, is it then not harassment? The law is subjective, not objective and therefore interpretive, and can vary according to any given situation and the people involved.

Moreover, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority clearly states that an employer is obligated to conduct a risk analysis in order to identify conditions that can lead to sexual harassment, and then implement preventative measures. All companies and organisations are also supposed to have a system where employees can report harassment, which they are obligated to do, anonymously or not (Arbeidstilsynet, n.d.). The employer also has a responsibility to follow up on all reports or notifications about any kind of harassment, to investigate circumstances, follow up on all parties involved and implement measures to prevent possible harassment from happening again. Further, it is important that the person handling the report does not have any personal interest or conflict in the matter, that all parties be heard, that documentation is done properly, and that personal privacy is kept intact (Arbeidstilsynet, n.d.). However, it is stated that many have an unrealistic expectation when it comes to other’s ability to set things right, and that one needs to be prepared to go into dialogue with both management and the harasser in order to find a good solution (Arbeidstilsynet, n.d.). All this seems easy enough, create a system and follow it. In reality it might not be so black and white. Often in cases involving harassment it is word against word, and if the said harassment happened without anyone witnessing, if there is no ‘paper trail’ or no one who can collaborate your story by saying that the same thing happened to me, it is likely that the case gets dismissed (LDO, n.d.).

In connection to these judicial aspects: in 2017, researchers from NTNU conducted a study about ethical frameworks in the construction industry, and they presented the results in an online article on Byggenæringen. Although this study does not have scientific status it still, in my opinion, has a point concerning how one might approach juridical vs ethical. The researchers investigated the 50 biggest contractors, a list provided by bygg.no, in Norway and

Med seksuell trakassering menes enhver form for uønsket seksuell oppmerksomhet som har som formål eller virkning å være krenkende, skremmende, fiendtlig, nedverdiggende, ydmykende eller plagsom.

found that only 19 of them had an official ethical framework. All the 19 existing ethical frameworks expressed legal and illegal behaviour, but only 15 of them explicitly expressed the difference between ethical and unethical behaviour. From the study they drew the conclusion that these frameworks ought to include both juridical and ethical guidelines, as an ethical framework signals what kind of attitudes and manners that are acceptable. That way you can get to the issue of ‘boys will be boys’, and thereby help prevent potential harassment (Byggeindustrien, 2017).

Further, Danish professor of political science, Anette Borchorst, suggests in an article, where she is interviewed by Lilleslåtten, that sexual harassment is not about sexual attraction, but rather about power and hierarchy, that the harasser often is someone who has worked there longer or is in a position of power (Lilleslåtten, 2018). Borchorst has written a book about sexual harassment in Denmark called *Sexual harassment in the workplace – professional, political and juridical traces*¹³, and according to her it takes a trained eye to spot sexual harassment and she continues to say that it is very unusual that a person being harassed report this on their own accord. Neither is it unusual that the woman takes partial blame even though she was not at fault, Borchorst says. The woman might ask herself if her smile was too inviting or if she was unclear in some way, it might also be that she played along in the beginning but that it became too much eventually. Few cases reach the court of law, but if it does it is still word against word, and Borchorst says that:

“[T]he harassers often say that they acted in good faith. When the harasser is a colleague or a superior, they almost always admit that something has happened, but that it was mutual. They say that they thought the women were in on it and that the women haven’t been clear enough.” (Lilleslåtten, 2018).

My Interviewees’ Stories

During the interviews, I asked my informant if they felt comfortable talking about sexual harassment and all of them said yes. Even though, initially, I did not want this thesis to focus too much on sexual harassment it became difficult to write about women in the construction industry without addressing it because there is such a focus on harassment at the moment. Like stated in the introduction to this chapter, the aim is not to act as judge here, but rather highlight

¹³ I did order this book from the library, as it was not in the catalogue at HumSam, but unfortunately it arrived too late.

and problematise the stories and try to put them in an analytical framework. Before we continue there are a two things to keep in mind; first, it is important to note here that we only get one side of these stories; second, that I did ask some leading questions to get them to reflect on things I was curious about, and this might have been things they otherwise would not have thought, or talked, about. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all my subjects have experienced harassment or situations they felt were uncomfortable, and this can be due to the fact that most of them have not been in the industry for very long, they might work at a construction site that has a good work environment and culture, and it might be that they differ in their perceptions of what constitutes harassment. So, with that in mind, what are their thoughts on harassment, and how do they define it? These are some of the stories that my subjects told me:

Nora

Nora has worked in the industry for a long time and during our interview, Nora told me that the women she knows in the industry usually divide harassment into two different categories: the everyday harassment, and gross harassment. Nora is also one of the unfortunate ones that has experienced both kinds of harassment. One of the stories about gross harassment she shared with me happened, as with “Ida”, during her time as an apprentice:

“The worst thing I have experienced was when a team leader came on to me when I was an apprentice. He started texting me all hours of the day, wanted to take me out for dinner and wanted this and that, I said ‘No, no, no, no’. Then he started at work, inviting me out, and then he started touching me at work. I couldn’t tell anyone, I had no one there that I trusted, I didn’t know who to talk to”

For Nora, this all culminated one day when she stood, bent over, working on something when her team leader, and the rest of the management team, walked past her and he put his hand between her legs. Nora says:

“I felt that enough is enough, so I told my boss. But what they did, because he was so important, he was team leader for about 70 workers at that site, he was 50 and I was like 17 or 18, so they moved me to another site and let him stay [...] so that’s a common solution, the ones who harass is often important and can’t just be moved”

Nora goes on to say that it is difficult when you are young and the only female amongst many men, because then there is no culture for alerting management, and if you do you usually end up perceived as being the problem. This story reflects well what Borchorst said about harassment being a display of power, hierarchy and seniority (Lilleslåtten, 2018), but it also reflects the “shove it under the rug”-reaction that the industry now is looking to get rid of (Fremtidens Byggenæring, 2020).

Nora also had a story that is harder to define, as she says that:

“Some harassment is difficult, like, you can’t really prove it, it’s ... can’t really say what it is. Like, this one time when I was at a warehouse to pick up supplies, it was far from the nearest neighbour, and I thought I was alone. All of a sudden a guy comes walking, he was on the phone talking to someone, and when he passes me he says to his friend ‘there’s a beautiful young lady here, but I wouldn’t dare, she has a knife’. You start wondering if that was a compliment or a threat. Perhaps you can say it’s a disguised threat, because then he can hide behind it as just being a compliment”

After hearing this story, I had to ask her how many times she had reported things like this to her bosses, and her answer was “*Two times*”. As she has been working in the industry for quite some time and had several stories about sexual harassment I had to ask for the reason why, and she said that “*it wasn’t handled ‘correctly’, so you don’t want to do it again*”. So, I asked her if other colleagues had witnessed any situations, but she said “*No, because these men know how to protect themselves*”. I continued to ask Nora if she had changed jobs many times, and if episodes like the ones mentioned here was a contributing factor, and she said that she had changed jobs a few times and that “*maybe it’s been because of episodes like these, and when I chose to go back to school it was because I was so fed up with the harassment, I needed a break*”.

In relation to this I also asked her if things had become better over the years, and she answered that:

“No, it looks like that on paper, but not necessarily when you get to the point. It’s often if it’s a reoccurring problem, I have experienced that if a person gets several complaints, then they might think that there’s something to it. But it has to come from different people. It’s hard, it’s hard being your own advocate and stand up and tell your story without having any real proof. You’re already in a very

vulnerable situation, you don't want to make things worse for yourself. You're often broken down by the harassment already"

The upgraded Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act that commenced in 2018 targets women and minorities with the purpose of bettering their standing in society. However, as I discussed earlier, the wording in this act might make it difficult to stand up to harassment as its wording suggest that defining harassment is based on intent and effect, and if there is only effect and no intent reporting it might lead nowhere. As Nora says, it is difficult to prove harassment as the men can claim that comments were intended as compliments, and therefor if there is only effect and no intent it is word against word.

The conversation then moved on to how women in the industry are different and how one sets the bar differently for what, and how much, one tolerates. This led Nora into the topic of the "everyday harassment" and she said that:

"Then there are these things you stop thinking about [...] There are these jokes that you stop thinking about because you get used to them. Like one time when I told my, then, team leader that I had a doctor's appointment and his response was 'oh, with a gynecologist?', so his first reaction is making a joke about my vagina. Why is that the first thing he thinks of when I say I have a doctor's appointment? Then a few months later I had a new doctor's appointment, and he says 'oh, are you pregnant?'. Somehow, he was so preoccupied with making these types of woman-jokes. Even if it had been true, is it something to joke about?"

Jokes can be used in different ways which a recent study of the Danish and Norwegian military shows. This was a collaborative study by Norwegian researcher Ulla-Britt Lilleaas, Norwegian professor Dag Ellingsen, and Danish postdoc Beate Sløk-Andersen, and I believe that the essence of this study is applicable here as well as both the construction industry and the military are male-dominated sectors. This study focuses on the double function of humour and jokes in relation to sexual harassment, how sexualised humour can contribute to the exclusion of women, and if this can be a reason why so many women quit after the basic training (Lilleaas, Ellingsen, & Sløk-Andersen, 2020). As mentioned in the introduction, the construction industry also struggles with women quitting too soon, so it might be possible that the same mechanism are in play. In their study, Lilleaas et al connects male humour to both homosociality and hegemonic masculinity and says that humour with sexual over- or undertones can help male bonding and create a sense of community, or brotherhood. They continue to say that including

and excluding mechanisms go hand in hand, and that while the humour works in an including way for some it excludes others, like women, but that the harsh tone can also help separate those who can ‘take it’ from those who cannot. They further suggest that humour can also be a way to establish their male culture, as some soldiers felt that the status as a soldier was devaluated as women entered this arena, and they need a way to find a cultural demarcation line in this system where women are now supposedly their equals. Also suggested here is that, for women in a male-dominated occupation, it is often better to adjust than complain (Lilleaas, Ellingsen, & Sløk-Andersen, 2020, pp. 17-18).

As the saying goes: it is all fun and games until someone loses an eye. On a more serious note, it made me think that *if* women do get bothered but eventually stop thinking about jokes and comments like the ones Nora got, and just overlook them, it will in a way help normalise it or keep it in status quo. So, when new women enter the construction site and see that other women do not react to these types of jokes and comments, it is likely they will not speak up either, even if it bothers them. If you are in minority, like women still are at construction sites, you may not have much influence over the language or the jokes. A situation like the one outlined here would work against the goal of the industry as they are looking to eradicate this type of jokes and comments.

Linda

When I asked Linda if she had ever experienced any form for sexual harassment, she gave a short answer: “*No, no ... no, not really, no*”. As she has family in the business (her father being an electrician) I was curious as to whether she thought it was to her advantage that she had previous knowledge, as opposed to people that have never set foot on a construction site before, and she agreed, but I felt that she chose her words carefully when saying that “*Sure, we’re people and we we’re different. There are differences in what we put up with. It’s not a piece of cake for everyone entering such a male-dominated profession*”.

I continued by asking her about the humour at the construction site, and she said that: “*Well, I think the humour is good. It’s often just ... well, standard humour in my opinion*”. As she said “often”, I asked if she had ever experienced any jokes that were over the line for what she felt was acceptable, and she answered:

“No, nothing that I react to. Everyone might not feel that way. But I can say this: other girls would have reacted, I know that. I spent a lot of time at my dad’s job, so it’s nothing new or surprising, it’s as expected”

As Linda states here, that she has another take on what constitutes harassment might be that she had a family member in the industry, and growing with spending time at her father’s job she might have become accustomed to the language and knew what kind of work environment she was entering, and as she freely admitted – it might not be a piece of cake for everyone entering such a male dominated profession.

Sophie

Sophie had never experienced any sexual harassment either, but she did offer a story she found funny:

“It’s not harassment or anything but, another site I worked at, in the canteen when we started there was this calendar with pictures of women and we girls used to joke about replacing it with a calendar with men in it. But before we had time to do anything about it, someone must have thought that it was embarrassing or something that we sat next to it. So suddenly it was replaced by a calendar with cats [laughs]. I don’t think that they thought anything of it before us girls came, but when we sat there having lunch I actually think it was them who felt uncomfortable by the situation and replaced it”

That these types of calendars are found in male-dominated spaces is probably not a surprise. Seeing this in light of theories of homosociality these types of calendars can serve as a symbol of heterosexuality that men can bond over and establish their heterosexual desires. As this type of bonding is something women are not meant to be part of, the replacing of the calendar can be viewed as both including and excluding at the same time. Also, concerning calendars with naked women, in 2018, the then CEO of AF-gruppen, Morten Grongstad banned naked calendars from their construction sites. He was surprised by the fact that their equipment suppliers still sent out these types of calendars in 2018, and he decided to send a clear message that they would not do business with companies like that. Grongstad also added that it was not only women who reacted negatively to calendars like that (Byggeindustrien, 2018), implying that men also are under the perception that they do not belong in the workplace.

Anna

Anna and I talked quite a bit about harassment, and initially she said that she had not experienced any harassment, but she did remember one of the first meetings for the new female apprentices when she started in the construction industry, and she told me this:

“From the beginning, they said ‘if you experience something, even a small thing that bothers you, you come to us’. They seemed so determined! [...] But then I thought, why are we warned about this and not the guys? So I suggested that instead of giving us a lecture and warning us, you should give the guys a lecture about how to act when there are women around. Instead of telling us that ‘if a guy does this it’s actually harassment’”

Now, we cannot know if they did not talk to the boys as well. What we can assume on the other hand is that the focus on sexual harassment and recruitment of women might have contributed to them teaching the girls what is acceptable and unacceptable, and perhaps to let them know that it is okay to report incidents.

As we continued to talk, she suddenly remembered a thing:

“Then there was this one colleague, he didn’t really do anything but he had a lot of comments like ‘do you want to make a porn’ and ‘you’re so delicious when you’re working standing like that’, ‘I want to fuck you when you’re standing like that’ and ‘you’re such a bad girl, we should punish you’, things like that”

Telling this seemed to spark her memory and she continued to talk:

“Then there was this other thing, it wasn’t really harassment either, but there was this guy who was too good to me if you know what I mean ... too kind. He insisted on doing things for me all the time, and insisting ... well, it was really important to him what I thought of him. He was older than me [...] then, at some point, I started feeling his eyes on me all the time. Watching me all the time, checking if I needed anything. He was too nice, and you can’t really say that ‘this guy is bothering me’, why? By being too nice. No, you can’t describe it in a bad way”

This man continued to stay in close proximity to Anna, and started showing her pictures of his home and asking what she thought of the new colour on his walls, his new sofa, and telling her

that him and his wife had not had a relationship for a long, long time. Anna did not know how to react to that or what she was supposed to say. After a while the team leader realised that this man might have become a bit overwhelming. Anna says that the team leader switched things around so that she would have less to do with him. Even so, in the end she chose to switch to another team entirely. Before this, she says, the team leader had spoken to her and said:

“I know this guy, I have worked with him for a long time. I know he can be a bit too much sometimes but he’s a bit unhappy at home so he has fun at work’. It was okey, I’m an apprentice and was supposed to switch teams anyway. But this time, it was an excuse to switch teams”

Anna continues to share her thoughts on this:

“It becomes about the woman even though it is the guy who has done something wrong. The team leader spoke to me, but I don’t think he spoke to the guy [...] He recommended that I tell this guy directly if I think he becomes too much. But I felt like I would be cruel to do that because he didn’t seem harmful, I didn’t see any sexual behaviour in his actions, so you hesitate [...] There is a fine line you know ... it’s really tricky. He was much older than me, so for me he was someone to respect in a way”

As one cannot know for sure what this man’s intentions were, it complicates the situation even more. If you do not know a person’s intentions it might be even harder to know how to handle a situation, like Anna’s reasoning reflects. Romances between co-workers are allowed, and they happen. However, if the romantic feelings are one-sided, and you add the junior/senior aspect to it, it complicates things further. But, perhaps this man was just in need of some attention or a friend, which brings us back to Borchorst again; if you offer that attention and then start to feel like Emma did, that it became too much, it might be difficult to retract and draw a line and you might start to wonder if you were too inviting.

Jenny

Jenny also stated that she had not experienced harassment of any kind. She also said that she knew that she was entering a very male-dominated occupation, and that she had experienced this kind of environment before when she built boats and stated that it can be fun working with mostly men. When I asked her how she experiences the humour she said that:

“It depends who you are working with, in what team. If you’re working with the older generation it’s a different kind of humour, there’s some nice words. Many different kinds of humour would be a good way to say it”

She further states that, in her opinion, the jokes and the humour has not crossed any lines or made any situations uncomfortable for her.

Emma

Emma, like Linda, gave the impression that she thought the sexual harassment issue was somewhat made up to be more than it is. Neither of them had really experienced anything that they would classify as harassment. It was my impression when talking to them that they thought other women complained over situations they would not think twice about, and not think of as sexual harassment. Like Jenny said: *“we’re people and we’re different. There are differences in what we put up with”*. To exemplify this, during my fieldwork, I recall talking to Emma after she had been to an apprentice meeting, and she retold a story that had come up during the meeting when they talked about harassment. One of the women attending the meeting had told a story that she found offensive, a man had been showing them how to put insulation into walls and had said something along the lines of that you need to think of the insulation as a woman, and had then made thrusting movements with his hips while pushing the insulation in. Emma thought of this a funny story and could not believe anyone thought of this as offensive. This story can be seen in light of the previously mentioned military study as well, namely how men use humour to establish their male culture and how men find a cultural demarcation line between them and the women entering “their” arena (Lilleaas, Ellingsen, & Sløk-Andersen, 2020, p. 18). This story also goes to show that women are not a homogenous group that think alike about everything, differences in lived experiences and personal opinions shaped by those lived experiences will impact their thinking. Therefore, what they find funny and what they tolerate will vary.

I did not experience or witness any situations that I found uncomfortable during my time at the construction site, but I did however end up in a situation I found a bit strange. We were putting a door handle on a balcony door, and since there was no front door one could easily see us from the hallway. The rest of the team was standing in the hallway talking, and a man we had never seen before walked by a few times. Then he walked past in the hallway two, or three times more and made approximately the same comment those times; *“Look, the women are working”*. We

did find it a bit strange, and laughed about it, but did not really think much of it. A few moments later another man, dressed in normal clothes, walked into the apartment where we are and asked if he (the man who made the comment about us working) had been bothering us, because if we had found him offensive we should tell him, and he continued to say that this man can be a bit out-spoken. We figured that this man must be the other man's boss, and that they are sub-contractors and not part of the construction firm. My informant answered that she did not have a problem with it, that she can take comments. The man answered this by saying "*Yes, you can take a bit, but there is a line somewhere*". Had it not been for his last comment I probably would not have thought more about this. That there is a line somewhere is obvious, but who it is that is supposed to draw that line is more unclear. The Equality and Anti-discrimination Act do draw a line but as it is based on intention and perception this line can still be considered unclear. What this incident illustrates is the difficulty of defining harassment and the lack of correlation between people's understanding of a given situation. The comments were obviously enough to make this man's boss react and take action, my informant however had not reacted to said comments, and we know nothing about what intentions that prompted the comments. It is not possible to draw any conclusion about intent or purpose here, but this boss that came and talked to us after might be aware of the current focus on both recruiting more women to the industry and sexual harassment. Regardless, it was good to see a leader taking responsibility and according to the military study (again), it is crucial that leaders set boundaries for what kind of language that is acceptable and are consequent in dismissing all forms of ridicule (Lilleaas, Ellingsen, & Sløk-Andersen, 2020). Just to clarify, I am not suggesting that this man was trying to make a mockery of us, the point was to show how an employer can take responsibility and follow up on the actions of their employees.

Summary

In this chapter I have covered parts of the construction industry's focus on sexual harassment, some of the legal aspects connected to this, and my interviewees' experiences and thoughts concerning sexual harassment.

The Equality and Anti-discrimination Act defines sexual harassment as "*any form of unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome*" (Lovdata, 2018). As this act lends itself to interpretation, because of the wording "purpose" and "effect", it makes it even harder to define what constitutes

harassment. The industry at large has been criticised for shoving reports of sexual harassment under the rug and telling women that they need to toughen up instead of welcoming reports of sexual harassment so that they more efficiently can prevent these kinds of episodes.

That sexual harassment is a relative term is also evident amongst my subjects. Two of them have experienced episodes of sexual harassment or episodes that they found uncomfortable, while others thought it was made up to be more than it is. Still, during fieldwork and interviews I heard stories that are problematic from a theoretical point of view, and the stories I presented here covers everything from gross harassment to ambiguous friendships and jokes between colleagues.

6. WORK ENVIRONMENT

Over the last couple of years, there have been several articles about creating a work environment within the construction industry that is inclusive for all and make women who enter this line of work want to stay (see articles previously mentioned: Byggeindustrien, 2020, Byggeindustrien, 2019, LDO, 2019) Understandably, a good work environment matters, but how can one define work environment, or a good work environment?

In Norway, work environment is regulated according to the Work Environment Act, and included in this Act is both physical and psychosocial aspects. The purpose of the act is:

- “a) to secure a working environment that provides a basis for a healthy and meaningful working situation, that affords full safety from harmful physical and mental influences and that has a standard of welfare at all times consistent with the level of technological and social development of society,*
- b) to ensure sound conditions of employment and equality of treatment at work,*
- c) to facilitate a satisfactory climate for expression in the undertaking,*
- d) to facilitate adaptations of the individual employee's working situation in relation to his or her capabilities and circumstances of life,*
- e) to provide a basis whereby the employer and the employees of undertakings may themselves safeguard and develop their working environment in cooperation with the employers' and employees' organisations and with the requisite guidance and supervision of the public authorities,*
- f) to foster inclusive working conditions¹⁴.” (Lovdata, 2021)*

To start, physical work environment can be considered especially important to the construction industry as the work they do is physically heavy, and the noise and harmful air pollution increase the risks connected to cardiovascular diseases, decreased lung function and hearing,

¹⁴ This is an official translation by Lovdata.

and other musculoskeletal disorders (BNL, 2021, p. 2). In addition, in the construction industry there are annual reports of 8-10 deaths, around 800 people that suffers permanent injuries, and around 8000 incidents that require sick leave (BNL, n.d.). Numbers further indicate that around 50 per cent of reported sick leave is work related, and the number is even higher when counting only the people on sick leave for neck, arms, and shoulder pains (Arbeidsmiljøportalen, n.d.). This prompted BNL, in cooperation with the United Federation of Trade Unions in Norway (Fellesforbundet) and Norwegian Worker's Union (Norsk Arbeidsmandsforbund), to map out how one more effectively can limit risks and injuries by implementing measures in an early phase of a building and construction project and thereby create a better, and safer, work environment.

The National Institute of Occupational Health in Norway defines work environment as how one organises, plan, and execute work tasks. They further state that work environment differs from one workplace to another, and that work environment affect employees' health and commitment to the job, that in turn affects results and productivity (STAMI, n.d. (a)). Psychosocial work environment is more focused on autonomy, support from colleagues, and leaders being including, just and helpful (STAMI, n.d. (b)) As stated in the Work Environment Act (2021), equality of treatment and inclusive work conditions are important aspects of a healthy work environment. After conducting fieldwork and interviews it is my understanding that physical and psychosocial work environment are more intertwined than I first imagined. As construction is heavy work, and heavily male-dominated, it is easy to assume (based on previous chapters) that women face more challenges in this line of work and the psychosocial aspects therefor are crucial.

Inclusive Working Conditions

During my interview with Nora I asked what is was like for her when she came in as a young apprentice, she said she felt it was a bit rough:

“As long as I was on service it was fine, then it was often me and a colleague in a car and we had some good talks and became good friends. At construction sites where there were a lot of men and I was the only female, that was hard [...] They kept me at a distance and I wasn't really included ... and the bigger the site the harder it was to become one of them”

It was my experience that many worked more or less alone during the day, often with headphones on to reduce noise. If one works alone and is kept at a distance during breaks and lunch, as Nora, the psychosocial conditions are not at an acceptable standard.

Since there were no regulations concerning locker rooms for women when she started, I was curious about how she felt about that, and she said:

“Well... in regard to locker rooms ... I felt that was fine, I didn't mind. I wore a long t-shirt, you adjust. I could change on the toilet if I wanted to”

As stated in the introduction, the construction industry has been criticised for recruiting women into an industry that is not fully prepared for it. Sharing locker rooms can be viewed as bad work environment from both a physical and a psychosocial perspective. In an article on bygg.no one can read that separate locker rooms can be important for women's perception of safety in the workplace, and feeling comfortable, but that this is also a question of gender equality (Byggeindustrien, 2020d). The fact is that it was not until last year, in 2020, that separate locker rooms for men and women became mandatory at construction sites, and the hope is that in making this mandatory it will be regarded as a symbolic act as well, signalling that women are welcome (Byggeindustrien, 2020d).

In my interview with Anna I also asked if she felt that she got treated differently because she is a woman, and Anna had felt that same scepticism that Nora mentioned, and she said that:

“You noticed that some were sceptical, but there were also some who were open-minded and welcomed us. But there were some sceptics in the older generation, we noticed that when we came in that it was a bit ‘what are you women doing here?’ [...] ‘what can you contribute?’. Then there was the younger generation that was more like ‘Cool, there's women at the construction site’. So we noticed that [generational] divide I think”

Emma on the other hand said that it was nice entering a big firm, as they have both the will and the money to accommodate women. Linda also felt her current work environment was including, and that she recently had an epiphany when she got a fun task and she thought *“Oh, this is cool. This is why I'm here”*.

“Let me help you with that”

During the interviews I also specifically asked my interviewees if they felt that they get treated differently from their male co-workers and, if so, how they feel about that. The reason that I chose to focus on differential treatment in the interviews are the studies mentioned in chapter 2, the studies of comparative relevance, and the Work Environment Act as they all emphasise this.

When I asked Nora if she ever felt treated differently because she is a woman, she gave the following answer:

“Well, there is a difference between men that never have worked with a woman before, and those who have. Those who have never worked with a woman can be a bit ‘I’ll take that for you, it’s heavy’, or ‘that’s dirty, you don’t have to do that’. I mean, it’s nice, but also a bit wrong”

Emma also feel that men treat her differently because she is a woman, and says *“Yes, that’s one way to put it ... You get doors opened, if you’re carrying something heavy the men come wanting to help. Had I been a man that wouldn’t have happened”*. I asked her how she feels about that, and she answers that *“I think they see me as weak, or I just think that ‘sure, go ahead, help me’ [she laughs] No, but really, I don’t mind, I don’t see that as a problem, it’s fine, nice to get some help”*.

Jenny also says that the men she worked with were quite eager to help with the heavy lifting. So I asked her as well how she feels about that. She said that she *“didn’t mind”*, but I sensed a bit of ambivalence here, so I kept asking a bit and asked if maybe there were two sides to it; one that it is nice to get help, but the other might be that perhaps they do not think that you have what it takes to do the job? But she said that *“I don’t think that’s it ... well, some might think that, of course, but I think it’s more that they think of women as weak ... because they think we find things heavy, but we don’t”*.

Sophie has a similar opinion about men helping with the heavy stuff, saying that:

“Maybe they can’t help it? They tend to say that ‘oh, this is heavy’, ‘you don’t need to do this, I will do it, you do this lighter work’. It’s like they can’t divide the job according to your physical strength [...] I understand the thinking behind it because they are trying to be nice [...] but on the other hand, they are not even considering letting me try. I was discussing this with some other girls, and they experience the same thing. Some guys decide that beforehand that you can’t do it because you’re

a girl and you are not strong enough. They only think about physical strength. To me it's not such a bad thing but it should be up to me to say that I want to try anyway [...] If I need help I will ask for it"

Linda however feel that they get treated quite equal at her current place of work, but adds that:

"Well, in the beginning it was like 'let me get that for you, it's heavy', but like I said I need to get it myself whether it's heavy or not. I mean, I know that it's heavy, it's a heavy job and doesn't do any good to just say that it's heavy"

Emma could not think of situations when she felt treated differently and said that *"I rather think it's advantage.. asking to borrow some extra muscle when you need it [...] Yeah, no, no prejudices [from men], more helpful"*. Emma continued by pointing out that not all men are the same, that not everyone likes the harsh language that often characterises the industry, but that she however appreciated having more female colleagues now, having worked with mostly men before. Even though they might not hang out outside of work hours, she did express that it kind of makes her feel safer at work and that the tone becomes different when there are more women at a construction site. Having more women at a construction site, so that they can form a network and support each other in this male-dominated sector, is something that Denissen and Saguy (2014) also pointed out as important.

All my informants have one thing in common, they have all been treated differently at work because of their gender. They have all experienced that men offer to carry heavy stuff and some of them have felt that men are sceptical to them. One way to look at this is that normative acts are performed, as Sophie said: *"maybe they can't help it"*, suggesting that it is a normative act to help women with heavy stuff. Or, along similar lines, it can be that tasks get coded as feminine or masculine when the construction site becomes mixed in terms of gender, and as the stereotypical construction worker is a strong and male, carrying heavy things becomes a masculine task. But, we can also go back to Denissen and her ideas about paternalistic beliefs which lead the men to *"'protect' women from the heavy and difficult aspects of their job"* (Denissen, 2010, p. 1057). Denissen also states that the negative outcomes are that the women do not learn to do the job themselves, and that it might undermine their sense of their abilities. Although not all my informants seemed to mind getting help with lifting and carrying heavy things, others saw it more like the way Linda expressed it: *"I need to get it myself whether it's heavy or not. I mean, I know that it's heavy, it's a heavy job and doesn't do any good to just say that it's heavy"*. Here, it is possible to trace women's agency, that many theories have been

criticised for lacking or overlooking, because my informants were well aware of the fact that this “help” were offered because they were women, as Emma said, “*Had I been a man that wouldn't have happened*”. Sophie also expressed similar thoughts when she said that it should be up to her to try on her own and then ask for help if she needed it.

One can further problematise these paternalistic tendencies by extending them to include misrecognition and “symbolic violence”. As stated by Powell and Sang in chapter 2, the habitus of the construction industry is that the “*jobs in the industry are seen as intrinsically male*” (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921), meaning that women must work harder to prove their competence. As one of the negative outcomes of paternalistic attitudes is that it can lead women to downplay their own abilities, paternalistic attitudes can be seen as symbolic violence as women are, in a way, “*treated as inferior*” (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921) when men over and over offer their help. This is where the misrecognition happens, when “*individuals ‘forget’ that they are produced by the social world as particular types of people. It means that social processes and structures are veiled, so that masculinity and femininity are misrecognised as natural, essentialised personality dispositions*” (Powell & Sang, 2015, p. 921). In turn, by accepting help without reservations, by seeing it as “nice” they help reproduce their perceived inferiority.

On a last note concerning paternalistic tendencies: helping co-workers can also be considered part of what makes a work environment a good one. So, stating in absolute terms that men helping women is a bad thing might be more nuanced than discussed here. As with harassment, it is not about the one incident, it is when that one incident becomes a systematic pattern that is no longer beneficial that it may be considered a problem.

These were the stories told by my informants during the interviews that I conducted. But I also have some cases from my fieldwork that I would like to share.

“Macho-Culture” and Inter-Generational Differences

During my first days at the construction site, as I was curious, I asked one of the men on the team, Jakob, what he thought about having female colleagues. He was very positive and said that he likes the fact that more women are entering construction, that a lot has happened in just a few years, and also that it makes the guys “*pull it together*”. That last comment I interpreted as that the men watch their language and behaviour a bit more when there are women around.

Jakob continued to say that he also prefers adult apprentices as they are more serious about learning and working and knows what they want. Another day, I met an electrician from a sub-contractor who mistook me for one of the carpenters, so I explained to him that I was conducting fieldwork for a thesis about work environment at construction sites. He looked at me and said “*Oh, good. That’s needed*” and continued to make a remark about this construction site being better than most. Looking at just these two encounters, it might very well be like Emma said, that not all men appreciate the harsh language. This can be supported by looking to the study by Neumann et al (2012), that I mentioned in chapter 2, where the men they encountered in their study also expressed that having female colleagues was a good thing as it toned down the, often sexualised, ‘rough talk’ and led them to talk about things aside from “men stuff”. So, the presence of women moderates the way men talk, but at the same time disrupts the essence of being a “real man” (Neumann, Rysst, & Bjerck, 2012, p. 247). Further, looking at this is light of hegemonic masculinities and homosociality, and how those concepts affect how men position themselves in the workplace, those statements can be viewed as resistance towards hegemonic masculinities. In my theoretical framework, the construction worker and hegemonic masculinity were pointed out as the embodiment of masculinity, so this might influence how men are supposed to act out their gendered identity and position themselves. Men who do not comply to this framework might be considered subordinate and thereby threaten the idea of the masculine construction worker (see Sargent 2013, Sargent 2005).

Moreover, we all act different in various social encounters, for example, one might not talk and act at the same way at work as one does at home, one adapts to the environment and the setting. So what I took from these two encounters, in regards to how men position themselves in the workplace, was that men who are uncomfortable with the macho-culture might be put in a similar position as women are when trying to fit in. Men usually enter construction earlier than women (BNL, 2019b, p. 11), and go through a socialisation process where they learn to adapt to the organisational culture, and when being new, and in addition young, resisting the prevailing norms can prove difficult, and there is no reason to assume that fitting in with colleagues should be less important for men than it is for women. Consequently, men might adapt to the rougher tone and thereby, willingly or not, enable the macho-culture to continue.

I have two more cases that are relevant to discuss, the first one is an incident that shows the interplay between ideas of masculinity, a generational difference and perhaps traces of resistance. The second story illustrates how the masculine identity is threatened when someone makes assumptions that do not correlate with one’s internalised image and identity. These

stories can, in my opinion, provide some perspective of men's reasoning and in addition provide an opening for a potential change, or a shift, in regard to the normalised masculinity in the construction industry.

This first case took place during a general meeting: the meeting was drawing to an end, and the last topic on the agenda was the annual health check-up. The construction industry is heavy work and the safety and health of their employees seemed to a priority, so this check-up was free of charge. I could immediately make out the generational difference when they responded to this check-up. The older generation did not seem to concur with the importance and necessity of a health check-up, which immediately received a response from the younger generation. The younger generation showed quite the opposite attitude, and seemed genuinely grateful for this service. In Sweden there have been studies on men's health in relation to the idea of hegemonic masculinity, and it is argued that *"in the framework of a hegemonic masculinity [...] a man should be independent, self-reliant, powerful, strong, tough, robust and invulnerable"* (Nobis & Sandén, 2014, p. 206). This suggests that illness or poor health is a display of weakness and can therefore lead to a loss of masculinity. This, I believe, can be especially troublesome for men in the construction industry since, as stated in chapter 2, the construction workers often consider themselves the embodiment of masculinity and they rely on their body and their strength to do the job. However, the younger generation seemed to partially resist this notion and displayed more a more positive attitude, suggesting that they experience a greater social acceptance for caring about their health than the older generation.

This second story was told by Will, a member of the team I worked with. The story played out a few years ago when he was still single. He and a friend went to a store to buy duvets, and as they both had quite big beds, they both considered buying a double duvet. The clerk came over and asked if they needed any help, and they said that they were looking for a double duvet. The clerk apparently made an assumption about them being a couple and asked them which one of them were in charge. Will's friend got so upset by the clerk's assumption about them being gay that he stormed out of the store. This interaction with the clerk shows both how fragile the normative heterosexuality is and how important it is to firmly establish one's sexual orientation. As explained in chapter 2, gender is something one becomes, a performative act, and performing it the right way as dictated by the heterosexual matrix is important when one wants to present oneself in accordance with the normative framework. So that Will's friend reacted the way he did, by storming out, can be interpreted as him feeling that he failed in performing the "right" kind of masculinity. From my perspective this was a reoccurring thing during

fieldwork, the establishing of one's sexual orientation, as that there were a lot of jokes being made about being gay or straight and homosexual acts. Implicitly this might also have been a way for women in an established relationship to signal that they were unavailable, or a way to establish a demarcation line that confirmed that they were colleagues and nothing more by placing sexual desire where none of them wanted to venture. On another note, previously mentioned studies have suggested that there is an underlying fear in the construction industry of being labelled as anything other than straight (as Emma mentioned, she was afraid to be labelled a lesbian if she enrolled in building and construction during upper secondary school), especially amongst men. Being a gay man is not masculine, it threatens the prevailing norm and puts the whole system of homosociality at risk, and being a gay woman is neither feminine nor masculine enough. So, in making this a joking matter, and at the same time more than a joking matter, might have been an attempt to neutralise the issue of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation.

Summary

Creating a good and including work environment is important regarding women wanting to continue working in a such a gender segregated sector as the construction industry or not. The Work Environment Act highlights both physical and psychosocial aspects as important for a good work environment. The physical work environment may be considered especially important for the construction industry as this is a high-risk sector. The psychosocial aspect is important regarding the psychological health of employees, their perceived autonomy, support from co-workers, and their commitment to the job.

As previous studies have highlighted, women regularly get treated differently than their male co-workers. The one thing that all my informants have experienced is that men help them lift and carry things that they consider to be heavy, as the construction worker is often portrayed as strong and masculine whereas women may be perceived as less strong. This kind of differential treatment may lead women to underestimate their abilities.

Further, it is possible to trace an inter-generational shift regarding what constitutes masculinity in the construction industry today. The "macho-culture" may be on its way out as the younger generation enters the industry, and acknowledging the health risks connected with line of work no longer seems to be equal to being "weak".

7. CONCLUSION

“Albert Einstein once said that if he had an hour to solve a problem, he’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem, and 5 minutes thinking about solutions” (Hasbrouck, 2018, p. 68), and I am inclined to agree. Finding a solution to the gender segregated labour market is everything but easy. It is an intersectional maze of mechanisms, beliefs, normalisation processes and performative acts. Throughout this thesis the lack of women in the construction industry, and in male-dominated professions in general, has been outlined and problematised. Striving to see the whole picture and framing a problem holistically is part of an ethnographic perspective, and such an approach will hopefully either provide answers or raise new questions as means to an end.

What stands out most here, is the heavy focus on the male, masculine embodiment of the construction worker. This lingering stereotype, that most people would deem outdated, still has a partial hold on society, maybe more than most are aware of. So, perhaps conforming to stereotypes are a more unconscious act today than decades ago as society has become more gender equal. However, these structures that follow stereotypes seem to go so deep that they influence both language and assumed personality traits, as seen in chapter 4 where mechanism that keep the labour market segregated were discussed. This lingering of outdated stereotypes can partially be explained by the fact that it is demanding to change thought patterns (Mörck, 2002, p. 172). But, making people aware, and teaching them how to recognise this, might be a step towards change.

Another step towards change might be the most obvious one, by hiring more women they become less of an abnormality and will stand out less and less as numbers increase. However, women need to *want* to enter the construction sector, and then the construction industry need to make them *want* to stay. One of my initial thoughts was to learn more about my interviewees’ thought processes, their potential worries, and doubts, about entering the construction industry as I thought that would provide insight when trying to recruit women. As it turned out, which was quite surprising to me, my informants did not really have any doubts or worries. It was other circumstances that delayed their entry. In chapter 4, regarding education, I tried to illustrate how our perceived free will might not be so free after all as it is possibly more socially and culturally conditioned than we are aware of, along the same lines as prevailing stereotypes. Herein lies an opening that may be worth investigating, that also might encourage women to

enter the construction industry sooner. Education often is highlighted as one of the contributing factors to the segregated labour market, along with possible mental barriers that rise when an occupation is heavily male dominated (Brenna, 2019, p. 134). These mental barriers are connected to problems surrounding recruitment of men and women into certain sectors, but it is possible that these mental barriers were there all along, only they become more apparent alongside freedom of choice. So, is it possible to present education in a different way that makes, or encourages, teenagers to choose differently? My interviewee Nora was introduced to, and got to try, the construction industry before she applied to upper secondary school and therefore changed her plan and decided to pursue construction work instead of becoming an architect. In addition, both Anna, Linda, and Emma showed an early interest in working with their hands and building things but did not know how to make a career out of it. So, letting more teenagers try different occupations, and experiment more, might lead them to discover that they can master things they were unaware of, and that might tear down mental barriers. It is also my understanding that we often talk about an academic education in more favourable terms than we do vocational education, as the deficit of skilled workers will only continue to increase in the coming years a change in discourse is necessary.

Further, it is my belief that we need a more fundamental change for the labour market to change. Attitudes in society need to change, and we need to stop labelling occupations and tasks as inherently feminine or masculine as skills are not connected to gender. It is a fairly convincing argument that is made regarding norms and stereotypes holding people back from making career choices that are unconventional, at least at a young age. Deciding on a career path when one is 14-16 years old is hard, there are still so much to discover and not least discover who one is a person outside of school. I thought I was a grown up at the age of 17-18, looking back now I was nowhere near that. Trying to fit in and trying to live up to the expectations from both friends, family and society can easily be confused with knowing who you are. School is almost like a parallel universe to the “real world”, you have the cool kids, the nerds, the gangsters and the athletes and you kind of have to pick where you belong and stick to it. This can make it even harder to pave your own path and make unconventional choices, because one might end up separated from one’s friends.

Throughout this thesis there has been a quite heavy focus on the obstacles and challenges that the construction industry struggles with, especially in regard to women and the “macho-culture”, so much so that one might wonder why anyone would consider entering the business. One side of this is sexual harassment, and it can be a complex issue that is difficult to define,

as illustrated in some of the stories here. There were examples of clear cases of harassment, but also more unclear ones, and in addition there were examples of humour or jokes that goes at the expense of being a woman. One part of what makes it difficult to define is that women have different perceptions of what constitutes harassment, another part is that sometimes harassment is perceived as implied and can be explained away by saying that it was meant as a compliment or as a joke and not intended as harassment, a third part is the judicial aspects. The industry is encouraging women to speak up about harassment, so that they are made aware and can change things for the better. However, reporting a leader or a co-worker is difficult. First of all, the women reporting incidents of harassment must feel safe in doing so and must know that they will be taken seriously instead of being viewed as the “problem”, Second, this is someone you work with and possibly see every day, and if an incident is not handled correctly, as in the case with Nora, it can lead to other consequences such as other colleagues feeling the need to choose sides, or lead other social sanctions. As for judicial aspects, all companies are obligated to conduct a risk analysis and implement measures to prevent harassment. That this is properly followed up on, and that there are actual consequences for misbehaving is important and perhaps this needs to be emphasised more clearly. I am inclined to agree with Anna about what she said about that we keep warning women instead of teaching men how to behave. This takes me back to primary school where we were told that the boys pull our hair because they like us, we keep making excuses for boys and men by, more or less, simply saying that “boys will be boys”, and that is not good enough. It is not that one, maybe harmless, isolated incident that is the problem here. The problem is when there are too many of these incidents so that it becomes a pattern, and patterns can easily be normalised if no one breaks the pattern.

Another aspect concerning sexual harassment is that judicial regulations, if properly followed up on, can prove powerful agents for changes in attitudes when people realise that it was not the end of the world. Previous examples of this is for instance the Seat belt legislation and the law that prohibit indoor smoking. Today, it is unheard of to not to use a seat belt in the car, and even most buses today have seat belts. Also, it was not too long ago that smoking at pubs and restaurants was the most natural thing in the world, still, it seems like it was eons ago. The fuss that commenced when this law was proposed was quickly forgotten once it was in place and people seemingly realised that not waking up and smelling like an ashtray was not the worst thing in world. Hopefully, the same change in attitude can happen in the construction industry as well, once they overcome old stereotypes, and having a female co-worker might seem like the most natural thing in the not too distant future.

Further, another thing worth mentioning connected to transforming the construction industry and creating an inclusive work environment is the inter-generational differences. During my fieldwork I could sense a change happening, both in attitudes concerning female colleagues, the “macho-culture”, and in what constitutes a masculine perspective on health. So, empowering the younger generation and encouraging them to speak up against attitudes they do not identify with might also be a path to change.

Further Research / Epilogue

What I have covered here is nowhere close to covering all the aspects of the construction industry and the segregated labour market. The segregated labour market is not a construction industry problem per se, it is a societal problem, and definitely in need of more research.

Many of the Norwegian reports that I read when writing this thesis were based on statistics and generalisations, and I believe that an anthropological perspective can be a useful addition as it has the potential to pick up on nuances and provide a deeper perspective than questionnaires and statistics can. As the construction industry is so segregated in terms of gender, and gender holding a prominent place within anthropology as the founding principle for understanding the social world, a perspective such as this can help understand what hides behind statistics and generalisations.

Moreover, bringing an anthropological perspective into the construction industry might prove beneficial in more than one way. As work environment differ from place to place an anthropological perspective can provide deeper insight and help tailor measures to be implemented in order to improve work environment. Further, assuming that there are indeed prejudices concerning women and their abilities, bringing them forward and explaining them may prove beneficial for management and those in leadership positions as they may become aware of potential prejudices and differential treatment, and in being made aware they can overcome them and set an example for the rest.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide:

- Background information:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Previous work experience
 - Parents education/occupation

- At work:
 - What does a normal day look like?
 - Female colleagues?
 - Differential treatment?
 - Humour?
 - Do jokes ever cross a line?

- Harassment:
 - Have you ever experienced harassment?
 - If so, any incident you feel comfortable telling me about?
 - Did anyone witness it? Reactions?
 - Did you tell anyone?
 - Support?
 - Is this a topic at your place of work?

- What is the best thing about working in construction?