


## PARADÍGMAS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN OUR TIME: HAVE WE OVERCOME IT?

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### ABSTRACT

This article proposes a debate on gender identity issues, with a main focus on masculinity in the twenty-first century. Moving towards a perspective that is not limited to sexuality, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is explored, influenced by various theoretical fields, such as cultural, sociological and psychoanalytic studies. The methodology adopted involves the writing of oneself and the recollection of personal experiences, highlighting the importance of this reflection on subjectivities in the training of future teachers. The results and discussions address the influence of patriarchy and the historical construction of masculinity, as well as its hegemonic manifestations in various social contexts, such as education, work and health. It is concluded that hegemonic masculinity perpetuates male domination over women and non-normative men, but its definition and practice are complex and varied, and it is important to consider individual and contextual particularities in the analysis of male identities.

**Keywords:** Hegemonic Masculinities. Gender. Society. Speeches.

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## INTRODUCTION

This text aims to address a debate on gender identity issues in the field of masculinity. The main challenge is to expose the conflicts that occur around the understanding and expectation for men in the twenty-first century, going beyond issues of sexuality, the subject to be recognized as masculine. We start from the assumption that being a man involves, beyond the questions of desire, the perspectives and expectations of normativity. They are legacies of an archaic patriarchy, outdated, but still present in people's imagination. Faced with this obstacle, we took as a path for this discussion, foundations that start from stories of the self.

In the field of location and epistemological basis for this writing, Rosa Maria Fischer (2021) is one of our main references. As a writing, it has as a reference debates that discuss masculinity, its diversities and recognizes it as an epistemological field adjusted to cultural studies. Such a location allows us to recognize the subjects, their subjectivity and their confrontations. As a central reference, we have Connell's studies; Wood (2005); Connell (2013); Santos (2016); Santos et al (2018); Santos et al (2019) and Santos et al (2023), authors who focus on the topic and consider it an important field to be discussed in our time, due to the process of vulnerability they trigger in our society, putting certain groups even at risk of suicide.

When we seek meaning in this introduction to what is understood, in our time, as masculinities, it is worth considering that masculinity is a term that does not reach the broad meaning. This is because it is not about one, but about different masculinities that interact with each other (SANTOS, 2016). By broadening the discussion, Connell (1995) states that there are specific patterns of masculinity in social groups, some more respected than others, and the word used for this type of masculinity is hegemonic. The author also reinforces that masculinities are, at all times, in the process of construction in each subject, in each place and social group. In this, the production of a particular type of masculinity considered exemplary requires political struggles and, consequently, the defeat of other masculinities considered alternative or subaltern. The author goes further and makes the following outline:

Let me offer a definition – brief but reasonably precise. Masculinity is a configuration of practice around the position of men in structured gender relations. There is usually more than one such configuration in any given gender order of a society. In recognition of this fact, it has become common to speak of "masculinities"

(CONNELL, 1995, p.188).

Referenced in the author, we know that masculinity is not singular, therefore, it is plural, always inserted in a gender perspective and in the social context in which it is constructed. The researcher goes further, stating that masculinities are much broader than simple definitions given by the biological field. It is complex, unnatural, involves economics, state, family and sexuality, among others. Furthermore, the change from the term masculinity to masculinities confirmed the cultural rootedness of the genre and brought to the debate its immersion in power relations and the biopolitical dynamics of society. An indispensable debate for teacher training in our time.

Thus, seeking to locate, a little, the origin of this discussion presented here, it comes from a work developed in an undergraduate course at a Federal Public University, located in the Triângulo Mineiro - MG. The disciplines take place during three semesters of initial training, and throughout this period, they allow a reflection and a reevaluation of the identity that is built from the family and even the school process in which we are subjected from a very early age. Aiming to train future teachers, the movement is for them to be able to reflect on the subjectivities they bring accumulated over the years, in the strengthening of what they are, what they can become and how to transform all this apparatus into a tool for a more reflective teaching identity, based on personal writing.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Reinforcing, this work is based on a set of memorials, produced in a mandatory discipline, of a biology degree. In the context, students are called to seek, in their memories, meaningful experiences. At a certain point, they transform this exercise into writing. Some of these students make up the Research Group on Education, Masculinity, Culture and Subjectivities - GPEMCS and their writings guide us in academic debates, based on their own narratives - the memorials.

As an academic discussion, it is centered on sensitive writing, challenged to "produce empathy, vibration, restlessness in the reader. This is because rare are the cases of research that shows itself with this vitality, such as raw flesh, thorns in our flesh." (FISCHER, 2021, p. 3). Directed by the author, we realize that, among others, this peculiarity is quite possible in research that focuses on subjectivity, that is adjusted to the demands of the human sciences and, therefore, is in the field of qualitative research. In this

way, the focus is on personal writing, a very common trait in education based on the weaving of memorials.

About its value, it refers us to the way we use this writing and the expression it allows us, in the exercise of our own memory. It is a movement that evokes this memory, the memorization of those discourses that reached us and crossed us, as Foucault (2011) points out. They are like threads of value, in the composition of the subject, in the centrality of the personal universe and, easily perceived, in the subjectivity of the stories of the self. Ellis (2004, p. 12) shows us that this memory exercise is an important tool and can "[...] be used in research and writing, since its purpose is to systematically describe and analyze personal experience, in order to understand cultural experience". But how best to understand what memorials are? In the search for forwarding an answer, we can consider that:

We live in a sea of stories, and like the fish that (according to the proverb) are the last to see the water, we have our own difficulties in understanding what it means to swim in stories. Not that we are not competent to create our narrative accounts of reality – far from it, we are, rather, too versed. Our problem, on the contrary, is to become aware of what we do easily automatically.' (Bruner, 2001:140)

Almost poetically, this is a clear way of describing what it is or how to understand or define a memorial. It is a memory that, even distorted or nebulous, of what is present in our identities and life histories, which allows us to understand, by leading us to revisit the cultural contexts in which we were at some point. Brito (2010) advises us that the memories of experiences are pillars that help to shape a better look at the future and, once frequently visited, strengthen our identities, providing guidance on who we are, where we come from and why we are the way we are. It would be like an indispensable movement for an academic writing that intends to be perceived as genuine and authentic. The author points out that:

[...] the development of both awareness of the experiences lived, and self-knowledge, situating the narrator as the subject of his own story [...]. With this understanding, we realize that the narrative enables the reconstitution of historical and sociocultural processes experienced in different contexts [...] (BRITO, 2010, p. 55).

In this path of understanding, although it seems like a complex challenge, Fischer (2021) proposes the valorization and centrality of creative processes in the various configurations that memory allows to build. The author calls our attention to consider the details of our memories, in order to allow the emergence of a meaning, sensitive and lingering looks, which involve our stories. But how to move in this direction? Faced with such an undertaking, the challenge is to bring our truths, in the sense of Foucault (2007), given the truth. Confessing ourselves and our reflective writings in the form of a memorial, this being a good tool and exercise.

Inspired by the aforementioned authors, the challenge was to connect theory and practice, life and thought, work and movement, without letting that fleeting moment escape, not ceasing to inquire, enter a moment of crossing, seek arguments and information in ourselves and, at the same time, draw the possibilities of thought that our memories offer us, reinventing the path, if necessary, learning and strengthening ourselves in the escape routes that Foucault (2007) describes.

It is worth considering that, when we consider the importance of sensitive writing that involves authentic stories, our current context has valued this sensitivity as an emerging mark of future researchers. A trait that can and needs to be developed from graduation, from these modes of creation such as memorials, perceiving the diversity and complexity of the world perceived by the personal gaze, while still being interesting for those who look or what is looked at. As for the movement in question, it is valid because:

Such a method would operate through fragments and intensities, without abandoning the horizon of something broader – which would mean constructing provisional totalities, sometimes marked by minimal events, not always clearly visible. A method to which exceptional, rare, deviant events are much more interested, and not the great facts that, strictly speaking, are visibly similar to so many others. (FISCHER, 2021, p. 11)

It is a movement, which is also a writing method that Castejon (2023) signals as ethical and aesthetic, which brings us closer to the human being we are and the other who is. It puts us in the foreground to accompany and understand the motivations and sufferings that each of us experience. It would be a movement of analyzing discourses and accepting the singularity of the things said, Santos (2016) points out. This implies an attitude towards life, from an ethical and political perspective, and from an intellectual perspective. It is a

movement of empowerment and awareness that there is an identity, and that thinking about myself and others is always navigating in the midst of differences, recognizing them and learning to live with them.

Once in front of the students' memorials, we perceive in them, testimonies, documents, narratives full of stories and personalities. The lens used in front of them are some of the principles of discourse analysis, of the French line, well discussed by Foucault (2011). In this way, we seek the correlation between discourse and history. In this field, Fischer (2015) clarifies that:

Analyzing discourses with Foucault means accepting the rarity of things said (or statements), it is certainly a kind of attitude towards life, an ethical and political attitude, and also an intellectual one, by which we assume that there is no identity between ourselves and what we investigate, and that thinking is always navigating in the midst of differences. (FISCHER, 2015, p. 126)

Thus, discursive sequences were taken as the unit of analysis – clippings and excerpts from the memorials produced by the undergraduates in training. In this way, Santos (2000) clarifies appropriate challenges in this movement of analysis. For the author, it is valuable to be aware of:

Significant evidence, observed in the research setting, that arises from a preliminary analysis of the records collected. This evidence appears as data from elements often not foreseen in the initial project, but which are revealed in the scanning of the corpus. Thus, the topic to be investigated is more clearly framed, offering greater consistency to the hypotheses defined for the research (SANTOS, 2000, p 231).

In the light of these markers, based on the regularities in the writings, the meanings in the discourse were sought, with the objective of perceiving to what extent society, educational institutions such as the school and even the family, have proposed to adjust bodies and identities, contributing to the aggravation, complexity and pain of a life that does not accommodate what is expected of the body and the identity of the other.

## **RESULTS**

A considered result that research in this field has been presenting and that this work confirms, is that it is a mistake to validate the hierarchy of masculinities constructed within

gender relations as a simple continuum linked to the patriarchal subordination of women. This is because men's gender identities do not reflect practices related to equality, as they do with those related to violence. In addition, we must consider the establishment of gender inequalities, the role of cultural constructions including the combined actions of gender dynamics with race, class and region. In fact, such statements find support in Connell's work; Messerschmidt, (2013). As a result, in this environment, hegemonic masculinity can become synonymous with a model of a rigid, domineering, sexist and "macho" man, allowing us to better understand the field of violence in which they engage with their own body, with the body of the other and the body of the woman.

## **DISCUSSION**

I think that since always, and that I understand myself, the challenges of being a man are things that have haunted me, but that I never wanted to dwell on. I could never think much about it and I preferred to keep memories and bad events more and more in my unconscious. I don't even know if it was what I preferred, but it was what happened. That is why I affirm that in my life experience, not being the man who is expected of me has hurt and hurts for fear of being judged, of being excluded. This is something that has always happened at school, to receive looks from other children who studied with me. Not to mention the fear of disappointing my parents and family. Society always put it in my head that not having the expected macho manner was wrong, that it was a reason for jokes and ridicule. I don't think there was a more specific thing that made me suffer, I suffered from a set of things that happened to me on a daily basis, insecurity and fear of being who I am. I feel affected to this day by the bullying I suffered at school, once coming from a specific boy, they said they were going to beat me just because I was a man, they were threats that made me afraid every day, afraid to go to school and leave the house, afraid of suffering and being mocked. Nowadays I still feel that people are judging me, that I'm still a laughing stock for whatever reason. This is the most difficult question to answer, whether or not I suffered or what made me suffer the most. There were several days when I wondered if my life would be easier if I was different, like the other boys. There were times when my greatest desire was to be someone else. After thinking about everything I've been through and who I've become, I don't believe so, I don't want to be someone else, but this process of acceptance is too difficult, too painful indeed.

As a text that proposes to discuss masculinities, the initial report, presented as an

epigraph, tells us how the process of construction of masculinity has been in our time. By considering the fragment "*keeping memories and bad events each time*" we have a notion of the complex process of pain or even feelings of inferiority that the social relationship triggers in the face of different masculinities that do not meet expectations. In this same sense, considering "*There were times when my greatest desire was to be someone else*" calls us to the place of responsibility towards the generations in formation, the way in which the school occupies the place of agent and device of control of the expected identities and how it needs to be rethought. It is an organized apparatus centered on the production of expected bodies and identities, the hegemonic standard of masculinity. For Santos (2016), there is a discipline about the body, family life, leveraged by the school, with the full support of society. For the Author:

It is common to notice that, in the midst of the processes of disciplinarization, resistance and escape routes are built, a consequence of their enormous capacity to escape. The assumption is that there are circumstances in which the suffocations exerted by disciplinary mechanisms make it impossible to build such routes, making it possible to install violence. And we would thus have suicide as a path or end point for those who are unable to adjust to the normative or adapt to escape routes (SANTOS, 2016, p. 78).

Within what is described, what is expected is a standard masculinity, called hegemonic. The definition of the term in the hegemonic conception, as stated by Connell (1995), was formulated at the end of the last century and has influenced current thinking about men and gender. Connel (2019) draws our attention to the applicability of the theme, which ranges from education and work that militate against violence between men and women, to health and counseling. historically, for Connell and Messerschmidt (2013), throughout the 1970s, there was an expansion of work on the male role, which critiques norms about roles that strengthen men's oppressive behavior. This provided a conceptual basis for anti-sexist men's movements. Another issue concerns power and difference, central to the gay liberation movement, from which an analysis of the oppression of man by other man has developed.

Santos et al (2018) will show us that this field of violence is easily identifiable when observing the non-normative man, who does not meet the rigidity of the expected male conduct and the social risk to which he is subjected, including the risk of public violence,



and the narrative cut initially inserted confirms this. The brief excerpt of speech leads us to perceive how the processes of construction of these masculinities occur from the family and how they can bring subjective marks to these masculine identities in the future. The fragment narrates:

At the beginning of my adolescence I had some difficulty in school activities, and when I asked my parents for help with homework, I always ended up crying because I didn't understand what I was taught. Many times I had to hear things like 'Become a man', leading me to understand that, because I am a man, I could not cry or express my feelings, I believe that this has contributed to becoming the person I am today, because I have a lot of difficulty talking about what I feel and what bothers me. But despite everything, I see that they didn't say it out of malice or because they wanted to offend me in some way, but because they were raised in this pattern and ended up passing it on.

From the inserted fragment, Foucault (2007) allows us to perceive that the issue of gay liberation is linked to an attack on gender stereotypes that ignores the historicity and place of these norms. The fragment "*Many times I had to listen to things like 'Become a man'*" is important for understanding these dynamics. The idea of a hierarchy of masculinities arose directly from the experience of homosexual men with violence and prejudice on the part of heterosexual men, the conventional masculine.

In this field of knowledge and understanding, theorists have developed increasingly sophisticated contributions on the ambivalent relationships between gay men and patriarchy, in relation to conventional masculinity. Connell; Wood (2005) points out that an equally important source was empirical social research. In this sense:

A growing corpus of field studies was documenting local gender hierarchies and local cultures of masculinities in schools, in male-dominated workplaces, and in popular communities. These studies added the ethnographic realism that the literature of sexual roles lacked, confirming the plurality of masculinities and the complexities of gender construction for men, and bringing evidence to the active struggle for dominance, which is implicit in the Gramscian concept of hegemony (CONNELL; MESSERSCHMIDT, 2013, p. 28).

In this same field, we can say that the concept was also influenced by psychoanalysis. Freud was responsible for producing the first analysis of biographies of

men, which was portrayed in the book "Man of Wolves". The book shows how the adult personality was a system under pressure, with tensions suppressed but not eliminated. Psychoanalysis was responsible for popularizing the concept of "gender identity" and schematizing its variations in the development of male adolescents, the best known being those involving transsexualism. Other authors influenced by psychoanalysis have dedicated themselves to researching the power of men, in the various possibilities of development of the concept of gender and the tensions and contradictions between existing conventional masculinities and the fragility that such movements unleash. In this circumstance, let us consider fragments of the inserted excerpt that describes such a demand as *"I have a lot of difficulty talking about what I feel and what bothers me"*.

In addition to what has already been presented, historically we can observe that the research carried out by psychoanalysts has been analogous, in terms of gender, to research in sociology on power structures, with an emphasis on the dominant group. For Cannell; According to Messerschmidt (2013), hegemonic masculinity was seen as a pattern of practices and actions, and not just a series of expectations of roles or an identity. This seems to have remained little changed over the decades, aggravating the domination of men over women and other non-normative men or men with a hegemonic profile.

Through this, according to the authors, hegemonic masculinity has differentiated itself from other masculinities, especially those considered subaltern, by showing itself as the most respected way of being a man. This creates pressure on those who do not fit this pattern, leading them to try to adapt (SANTOS, 2016). In ideological terms, this dynamic perpetuates the subordination of women in relation to men and even of action over other men who are adjusted outside the hegemonic pattern. It is worth considering, according to Cannell; Messerschmidt (2013), that some men, even if they do not behave in a dominant way, still receive the historical benefits of patriarchy, a phenomenon known as "male complicity". Moreover, the effectiveness of the concept of hegemony is due, in part, to the support of heterosexual women, who often reinforce these norms and power structures.

Another important issue to point out from Connell; Wood (2005) is that hegemony is not seen as an act of direct violence, although it is sustained by force. For Cannell; Messerschmidt (2013) its meaning is related to the ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions and persuasion. So, the question that arises is: has this changed? We are in the twenty-first century, near the end of a new decade, and it was expected that things would be different and more understood. The excerpt, *"because I have a lot of difficulty in saying*

*what I feel and what bothers me.*", emphasizes the strong social pressure that makes it difficult to express feelings, showing that, even with the passage of time, this bad action remains alive, despite the many voices that contest this situation.

Seeking to locate the debate in the past, historically these ideas have been considered abstract and defined by the logic of the patriarchal gender system. Thus, it was believed that gender relations were historical and, therefore, could undergo changes. In this context, hegemonic masculinities emerged in specific situations and were open to transformation over time, even if patriarchy tried to naturalize it and frame it to a set of expectations. As a result, there could be disputes for hegemony, and old forms of masculinity could be replaced by new ones, but this was not as easy as one might think. This was a positive point in a theory that was otherwise quite dark, making possible a more authentic and less oppressive way of being a man, as part of a process that would help reduce hierarchies in gender relations and so we arrived at our time with all these possibilities of readings.

However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity was used in analyses that include patterns of resistance, power struggles and bullying among boys and became harmful. The relationships with the curriculum, gender-neutral pedagogy were explored, as we can well experienced in the last government of the country in 2018, promoting and acting on the school and any manifestation of debate on the subject. All of this serves as an apparatus to understand the techniques and identities in groups of teachers, such as physical education instructors, biology teaching, within a school that frames by itself. The thesis also influenced the concept of criminology. Data shows that men and boys commit the most conventional and the most serious crimes, compared to women and girls (SANTOS et al. 2023). The picture is alarming when we talk about self-violence and the efficiency of male suicide in relation to attempts among women (SANTOS, 2016)

Moving forward with time, the ideals of multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinity were increasingly used to understand men's health-related habits, such as "playing hurt" and attitudes that put their health at risk (CANNELL; MESSERSCHMIDT, 2013). Thus, the contents on hegemonic masculinity that enter into these issues contributed to the understanding of men's exposure to risk situations, as well as their difficulties in dealing with disabilities and traumas. So strong on the one hand, so fragile on the other.

The notion of hegemonic masculinity, according to the authors, was also significant in institutional studies, where the common character of bureaucracies and work

environments was increasingly recognized. Ethnographic observations and dialogues traced the institutionalization of hegemonic masculinities in specific contexts and their role in organizational methods of decision-making. A common focus of these researches is Cannell ; Messerschmidt (2013) was the military institution, where specific patterns of hegemonic masculinity are often dominant, but have become increasingly controversial.

Still, one thing to consider, based on the authors' arguments, is that international studies strongly validate the initial contestation that gender orders construct multiple masculinities. Santos (2016) shows that, even in culturally homogeneous countries such as Chile, there is no singular masculinity, since standards vary according to class and lineage.

In another famous homogeneous country, Japan, Connell and Messerschmidt (2013) discuss the "emergence of childcare" as an aggrandizement of masculinity. However, the concept of masculinity is criticized for being rooted in a heteronormative conception of gender, which reinforces the opposition between male and female, ignoring the disharmony and divergence within gender categories. Masculinity is entrusted with the perpetuation of the division between sex (biological) and gender (cultural), marginalizing or naturalizing diverse bodies. Faced with this problem, Madlener and Dinis (2007) discuss other references and searches, in the sense of clashes and directions. For the author:

We should fight for the overthrow of the current social standards – nuclear family, bureaucratization of relationships, marriages tied to traditional ceremonies, etc. – and not simply for the insertion of diversity in these standards. [...] In this way, we hope to collaborate with a discussion that goes beyond the mere struggle for civil and/or religious union, and for the guarantee of rights that are imposed on us as necessary and correct. We seek to take a step further, even if in an initial and theoretical way, so that everyone can recreate new forms of existence (p. 59).

According to the description, the struggle is for it to be possible to break with discourses that do not go beyond norms and that interfere in the composition of identities, causing discomfort, pain and poor memory accommodations, as the initial report presented here well describes. This is because we can easily observe that several structures of masculinity are identified, which have impacts on the boy's life and on his school environment, even though many boys do not fit exactly into the traditional categories; in fact, boys manifest complex relationships of acceptance and rejection of these categories. These values are rarely questioned. In this, we can highlight the following quote: *"I see that*

*they did not say this out of malice or because they wanted to offend me in some way, but because they were raised in this pattern and ended up passing it on".*

In this context, although it is currently common to criticize that the concept of gender adapts heterosexuality as a standard, this idea has often been contested. While correctly identifying a problem in gender prototypes, it does not offer adequate judgment on relational gender models and historical approaches that analyze gender construction. It is observed that, with the increase in the concept of hegemonic masculinity, divisions among men, especially the exclusion and submission of homosexual men, have been central issues. The preservation of heterosexuality has been a recurring theme in debates about hegemonic masculinity, and this issue has drawn attention (CONNELL, 1995). As theoretical discussions, they have sought the meaning of a "new sociology of the body". In this, it is important to have a broader knowledge of what is understood of the body, since the challenge is to seek the reach of the best they can make of their lives in various fields. In this sense:

The body has become what is at stake in a struggle between children and parents, between the child and the instances of control. The revolt of the sexual body is the counterfeit of this offensive. How does power respond? Through an economic (and perhaps ideological) exploitation of eroticization, from tanning products to pornographic films... As a response to the revolt of the body, we find a new investment that no longer takes the form of control-repression, but of control-stimulation: 'Be naked, but be thin, beautiful, tanned!' Each move of one of the opponents corresponds to the move of the other. It is necessary to accept the indefinite of the struggle (FOUCAULT, 1996, p. 147).

By seeking to understand the body in a broader way, this discussion still calls us to a shift to the so-called "school of governmentality". The one that invests and has investment to make bodies within the norm, in the field of sexuality, gender and adapt them to the place of feminine and masculine, obeying the genitalia that one has at birth. It is worth considering that the school, as a control device, is no different from the family or other social instances. The question lies in its strength, in the time it remains in the life of the child, the adolescent, the young person, molding them. Adjusting your identity to what is expected.

Hall (2000) is to help us understand the conflicts that non-normative identities have experienced, what bodies not adjusted to hegemonic masculinity have been subjected to. In

this way, Foucault (2007) is prodigal in signaling to us, in a profound way, the forms of government, of the State, of others and of oneself and the mechanisms of resistance of subjects and bodies when they perceive themselves as incapable of meeting what is expected of them and their identities. The author describes both the techniques and technologies involved in controlling the body, gender, as well as how these bodies can become transgressors, identities that can occupy space. It is worth considering that to be outside the norm is to have a sick body, as psychiatry claimed until the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century (SANTOS et al, 2023). In this, the health of the body, in this way, can be considered a challenge of school biology, of the state government and of the government of others.

However, early criticisms of the concept raised the question of who effectively represents hegemonic masculinity. It is worth noting that it is common for many men with great social power not to incorporate the characteristics traditionally associated with this masculinity, which suggests that social power does not imply conformity to male stereotypes, Cannell points out; Messerschmidt (2013). However, many men identified by researchers as hegemonic models do not have a clear masculine essence. The researchers use the case of surfers as a popular example of this form of masculinity, showing how complex and often contradictory this picture is.

However, for the authors, the hegemonic status of male youth influences their behavior, requiring them to conform to norms of masculinity defined by their social group. This can include risky attitudes, such as drunk driving or getting into fights, which are seen as ways to assert your masculinity, Cannell points out; Messerschmidt (2013). Another issue to consider is that it is necessary to criticize the concept for leading to uncertain interpretations, sometimes referring to a continuous type of masculinity and at others, any form that is dominant in a given time and place, as the authors point out. Similarly, the concept fails to specify how the acceptance of hegemonic masculinity actually manifests itself in practice. There is confusion about who is in fact a hegemonically male man (SANTOS, 2016; SANTOS et al., 2019)

In other respects, vagueness in gender definitions can be recognized as a tool of hegemony. Considering that an elaborate definition of masculinity is constituted in a social process and the speech cut already inserted allows this consideration. On a broader popular level (which we will call "regional" from now on), there is a circulation of dazzling male role models, which are exalted by churches, narrated by the mass media, or

celebrated by the state. These models refer to (but also distort, in various senses) the trivial realities of social practice, because the subject of real life is fragile, and this cut allows us to consider that he may be fragile, yes, although it does not demonstrate what fits him to an identity marked by a certain alienation.

In this way, hegemonic masculinities can be constructed in a way that does not actually reflect the life of any real man (CONNEL, 1995). However, these models manifest themselves, in various senses, as widely distributed ideals, fantasies, and desires. They offer examples of relationships with women and solutions to problems in gender relations. In addition, they connect with the practical constitution of masculinities, as a way of living the local situations of everyday life. In doing so, they contribute to hegemony in the gender order. It is not surprising that men function as examples at regional levels standards set here, but inadequate there.

This is because they are included in specific social environments, such as in formal organizations. Returning to our excerpt, hegemonic models of masculinity, considered socially legitimized, are present in family groups. For example, how men deal with domestic work responsibilities and women's so-called "double shifts", both at home and at work (CONNELL; WOOD, 2005). This is a good example of these roles and their configurations from one place, state, country, to another. They are hegemonic patterns of masculinity involved and contested throughout life, building male power from women's experiences instead of just based on the subordination experienced by them (SANTOS, 2018). Thus, it is believed that a distinction must be made between "patriarchy", a long structure of subordination of women, and "gender", a specific system of exchanges that emerged in the context of modern capitalism. Santos et al. (2023) connect this to issues of women's incarceration in our time. But it also shows us the high rate of suicide among young people today, triggered by the vulnerability of the non-hegemonic male of sexual identity outside the norm (SANTOS, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

However, it can be reinforced that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on practice, which allows the continuity of the domination of men over women and over non-normative men. It is not unpredictable that, in some contexts, hegemonic masculinity actually refers to the toxic practices of men over women, which, in this context, can be easily perceived and identified. Thus, we would like to point out that violence and other

abusive practices are not always defining characteristics, since hegemony has numerous definitions. To this end, we reinforce that one of the most effective ways to "be a man" in certain local contexts can be the demonstration of distance in relation to regional hegemonic masculinity and the same non-legitimized ones. Conclusively, we affirm that masculinity does not represent a certain type of man, but rather a way in which men position themselves through discursive practices.

This is because hegemonic masculinity "sees" only the structure, making the subject invisible: the individual is lost within an ideological apparatus or an innate will to power. The concept fails to specify how and why some heterosexual men legitimize, reproduce, and exercise their domination, even though they are a social minority in relation to women and other men. In this, we conclude that it is preferable to concentrate on discourse, on the ways in which men know themselves in order to practice the "work of identity"

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