‘Men don’t do Botox, they do Brotox’
– emerging configurations of masculinity in the marketing of cosmetic treatments online

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‘Approximately 15-20% of our clients are men, and the number is rising fast. Our male clients wish to be the best version of themselves […] so that they appear refreshed at their job as well as in private’ (n’age.dk). ¹

The cosmetic skincare industry is currently experiencing growth at a global scale. This is not least due to a range of new cosmetic treatments that have appeared over the last decades with cheaper and more sophisticated technologies, making them widely appealing and available for consumption. Botox (patented in 1989 and FDA approved in 2002) together with other anti-age injectables, laser hair removal and fat reduction with freezing techniques, represents a new range of ‘non-invasive’ body technologies, often marketed as natural. Such treatments have conventionally been coded as feminine, but the consumer segment of this booming market is no longer just composed of women: Men too are increasingly represented the statistics.²

In western culture, men have traditionally been expected to take on a ‘functional, aloof and distanced’ relationship to their bodies (Coffey 2017: 172), but as various scholars have argued, men’s bodies are becoming increasingly visible through a range of body-centred lifestyle industries such as fashion, fitness, tattooing and grooming (Bordo 1999, Gill et al. 2005, Ricciardelli and Clow 2009, Hakim 2019).

The internet has become a central platform for the marketing of cosmetic treatments, and Danish cosmetic skincare clinics appear to be increasingly aware that men could constitute an almost ‘untapped consumer base’ (Berkowitz, 2017: 64). On clinic websites, subpages with content especially for men are becoming the norm rather than the exception. Women are still predominantly imagined as the consumers of cosmetic medicine and do still account for the majority of procedures, but as content for men in online marketing begin to grow and formalize, clinic websites become contexts where the imaginaries of the cosmically enhanced male body can be inspected.

In this article, I explore the configurations of masculinity and embodiment that emerges around these imaginaries, as I analyse the online marketing of three leading Danish cosmetic skincare
clinics; Aglaia-klinikken, N’age and DermoCosmetic. I frame my analysis, drawing on the notion of emergent masculinities as coined by Inhorn and Wentzell; a term that accounts for ‘ongoing, context-specific, embodied changes within men’s enactments of masculinity, particularly as they encounter emerging health technologies’ (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011: 802). Emergent masculinities, conceptualized within medical anthropology, highlights how masculinity is negotiated between hegemonic and emergent forms of practice and embodiment in the context of new health technologies. Inhorn and Wentzell seeks to expands on Raewyn Connell’s concept of Hegemonic Masculinity; the notion that masculinity is plural, intersectional and hieratical, with hegemonic masculinity as its exalted ideal (Connell 1995). The emergent, characterized by the novel and transformative, continuously arises in the periphery of the hegemonic, into which it might be integrated over time (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011). While this article centres on websites, not social practise, I find emergent masculinities a productive term for exploring hegemonic and emergent aspects of masculinity, as it is produced through various emerging technologies in the context of men’s cosmetic medicine. Relying on a somatechnical understanding of embodiment as always already entangled with techné, the websites are viewed as digital technologies co-constitutive to the ways masculinity can become with cosmetic treatments. An analysis the connections and configurations through which masculinity emerges on the websites, thus points to the possibilities entailed in terms of embodiment as men encounter this emerging health technology.

In the article, I argue that masculinity in the online marketing of men’s cosmetic treatments is produced and negotiated between hegemonic and emergent forms. Drawing on relevant theories of masculinity, I show that masculinity is mediated as both effeminophobic and hegemonic, as well as inclusive and neoliberal. While the cosmetically enhanced male body is thus produced as ambiguous, I argue that it emerges around three prevalent connection: anger, career and the masculine face. I discuss the generative and disciplining trajectories of these configurations and the possibilities of (un)becoming they entail for masculine embodiment, through the emerging health technologies of men’s cosmetic treatments.

Men, consumer culture and cosmetic medicalisation

In western modernity, the white middle-aged (cis) male body has culturally represented the embodiment of normality – a productive force in terms of ensuring privileges, while simultaneously othering bodies marked by difference. In this historical configuration, masculinity has
been conceived to align with qualities of the mind in the cartesian mind/body split (Grosz 1994, Hakim 2019). With masculinity identified through the elevated qualities of the mind, the materiality of the male body has enjoyed cultural invisibility, not attracting modes of surveillance or regulation in the way that the bodies of women, racialised or sexual minorities did and do (Bordo 1999, Robinson 2000, Grosz 1994). This privileged invisibility has been eroding for some time, as the male body is increasingly embraced by popular media and consumer culture, in ways that objectify it and cast it as an aesthetic self-management project (Gill et al. 2005, Lefkowich et al. 2017, Hakim 2019). In this trajectory, the marketing of cosmetic treatments for men can easily be considered as only the latest of an array of products initially intended for women, now being re-branded and sold to men (for instance fashion, styling products, make-up and diets) (Hall 2013, Whitmer 2017, McCauley 2018).

The wider social tendencies surrounding these shifts in gendered consumption indicate that the norms for how men should present their bodies are currently under complex re-negotiation (Bordo 1999, Calasanti and King 2007, Coffey 2016, Hakim 2019). Hakim suggests that new types of sexualised masculinity have been emerging in western culture at least since the 1960s, referencing studies of film and media culture by Neale (1983), Dyer (1983) and Mort (1996). However, attention to the increasing objectification of the male body starts to saturate around the turn of the millennium (Bordo 1999, Gill et al. 2005, Nixon 1996, Boni 2002, Featherstone 1991). As Gill et al. have noted:

It is not simply that the number of images of the male body has increased; more significant is the emergence of a new kind of representational practice in mainstream popular culture, depicting male bodies in idealized and eroticized fashions, coded in ways that give permission for them to be looked at and desired’ (Gill et al. 2005: 38).

Digital media have been instrumental in providing the technologies and pluralities that have amplified the representations of men’s bodies in new aestheticized ways, in both commercial image genres and through selfie practices (Coupland 2007, Whitmer 2017, Schroeder and Zwick 2004, Enguix and Gómez-Narváez 2018).

In an overlapping period of time, appearance as an essential marker of social identity is installed with the rise of consumer culture (Giddens 1991, Featherstone 1991). Rosenmann et al. have suggested the term Consumer Masculinity to describe how masculinity as identity in
consumer culture has become contingent upon buying the right products and displaying the right lifestyle (Rosenmann et al. 2018). The case of cosmetic medicine and the marketing of cosmetic treatments online, illustrate how consumer culture intertwines with medicalisation in contemporary society, as the two merges into a number of consumable body technologies (Elliot 2010, Conrad 2007, Rosenfeld and Faircloth 2006). The websites analysed in this article form part of consumer culture’s current orientation towards the medicalisation of masculinity.

Much research on men’s aesthetic body work and medicalisation gravitates around fitness and muscularity (Lefkowich et al. 2017, Gattario et al. 2015, Lin and DeCusati 2015, Coffey 2017). Men’s engagement with cosmetic procedures, invasive and non-invasive, has been given little attention in academic research, as almost every study on the subject has argued (Holliday and Carnier 2007, Atkinson 2008). Existing studies divides into fields of cultural history, medical ethnography and ageing studies. Elisabeth Haiken has accounted for the history of men’s cosmetic surgery in a North American context, piecing together media coverage of the phenomenon from WWI and throughout the 20th century (Haiken 2000). Scholars rooted in social sciences have explored the narrative account of men who have undergone cosmetic surgery. These studies show that a multitude of individual motives and considerations underlie decisions about cosmetic procedures, while general themes of risk management and investment in ‘body capital’ run through the accounts as well (Holliday and Carnier 2007, Atkinson 2008, Ricciardelli and White 2011, Ricciardelli and Clowe 2009). Aging studies scholars have explored the relationship between anti-ageing products and cosmetic procedures in relation to gendered ageing and ageism. They have shown how products and practices are constructed in relations to categories of naturality and gender differences (Kinnunen 2010, Ojala et al. 2014, Marshall and Katz 2006, Calasanti and King 2007).

Lacking from the research on men and cosmetic procedures however, are studies exploring the implications of non-invasive cosmetic treatments. Non-invasive cosmetic treatments represent a medicalisation trend that offers a non-surgical alternative to cosmetic surgery and is at present popularized due to its accessibility in both price and application (Berkowitz, 2017). This must be considered a novel site for scholarship on body work, as it concurrently figures in line with other on-going body maintenance regimens of the everyday, as well as being an obvious form of medicalisation, closely tied to that of cosmetic surgery. This article analyses how
non-invasive cosmetic treatments for men are imagined and produced in the marketing of cosmetic medicine online, in order to show how masculinity is both medicalized and mediatized in the Danish beauty industry.

Data

In this article I analyse the online marketing to men of the three Danish cosmetic skin-care clinics Aglaia-klinikken, N’age and DermoCosmetic. Starting my research in early 2019, I conducted a thorough search using popular search engines in order to uncover how many Danish websites marketed cosmetic treatments explicitly to men. Initially I looked at the websites of both cosmetic skincare clinics and private hospitals where non-invasive treatments are performed alongside cosmetic surgeries. While almost all clinic websites of the Danish marked, had some reference to men through text or image, I found 9 websites containing substantial marketing content, directed specifically at men. One website was primarily dedicated to the marketing to men. From this total of ten websites containing specific content for men, I charted out an overview of general themes, aesthetics and affects mobilized. Based on my initial analysis of the ten websites, I selected those of Aglaia-klinikken, N’age and DermoCosmetic for analysis, as they were found to contain generalizable elements detected across the market, as well as represent a productive variance in aesthetics and framings of masculinity. The website all features dropdown menus containing catalogues of treatments, pricelists, opening hours as well as rules concerning the medical procedures. Apart from providing formalised information the websites also serve as the sales point of the clinics. According to Sanchez Taylor the internet is a key resource for consumers researching their invasive cosmetic procedures, rivalled only by word of mouth (Sanchez Taylor in Holliday et al. 2015). As clinics by and large offer identical internationally patented treatments, they depend significantly upon the persuasiveness of their marketing, including their aesthetics and framings of masculinity, to attract clients.

Situated in a Danish context, the three websites operate with in a society that can be described as fairly equal and fairly invested in gender equality. A large middle class sees nature and health as important values, connoting good morality (Kristensen et al. 2016). The Danish public healthcare system, while historically the product of a strong welfare state, is at present experiencing rising privatization. Current neoliberal tendencies increasingly cast the patient as citizen, advancing the acceptance of health-related services as commodified. Kristensen et al. points
out that ‘[t]he focus on individual responsibility is accompanied by a fast-growing industry for health enhancing services in the marketplace, which is reflected in the commercial branding of omnipresent “healthy products” (…)’ (Kristensen et al. 2016: 7). Similarly, it has been argued that ‘[m]iddle-age masculinity of the global North operates in the context of neo-liberal age relations’ (Ojala et al. 2016: 356). This means a greater emphasis on the body as an open-ended project that needs to be managed continuously in relation to aesthetics and health, in order to perform successful ageing (Ojala et al. 2016). The Danish context then, is moving towards an individualised responsibility for the maintenance of a healthy and youthful body. A project that to an increasing degree must be managed across gendered divides through a correct consumption of health-related services.

**Reading somatechnically – methodological choices**

The term Somatechnics, composed by the joining of Soma (body) and Techné (technics or technologies) was coined by a group of scholars in 2004 to shift thinking on embodiment with technologies away from normative assessments concerning technologies as either good or bad. Technologies should rather be understood through their uses and effects, and as thoroughly embedded in cultural contexts (Sullivan and Murray 2009). Embodiment, in this posthumanist framework, is defined by the ‘inextricability of soma and techné’; an understanding of bodily being-in-the-world, as always already entangled with technics, technologies and orientations, and of techné as always already enfleshed (Sullivan 2012: 302). Techné is not a means at our human disposal, technologies that we at will apply to the body, rather, techné is ‘the dynamic means in and through which corporalities are crafted or ‘continuously engendered in relation to others and the world’ (Sullivan and Murray 2009: 3).

In the case of cosmetic medicine, the injection needle and similar medical equipment is easily understood as technologies that engender embodiment, but drawing on posthumanist media scholars Kember and Zylinska, the websites come to figure as equally constitutive to this field. Kember and Zylinska propose the term mediation, as opposed to the singular discrete media object, to account for the on-going history of human life with and through media. Their thinking come very close in line with the somatechnical as they argue that mediation is an intrinsic condition of ‘being-in, and becoming-with, the technological world’ (Kember and Zylinska 2012: 17). Nebeling and colleagues posits that mediation can be used ‘to conceptualize the
process of co-constitution – or the mutual shaping of humans and media technologies – which implies that humans are always already performed through technologies’ (Nebeling et al. 2017: 3). Using this lens, the websites with their specific properties and affordances, are considered co-constitutive to the processes of embodiment unfolding in the field of cosmetic medicine.

In terms of a reading strategy the somatechnical framework enables an analysis of gender as a cultural and material doing, situated in the concrete environments, things and ideas through which bodies and subjectivities come into being. In this framework masculinity as cosmically enhanced must be explored through the contexts and connections that constantly goes into producing it (histories, technologies, discourses, objects, affects). In such a reading, a critical perspective is introduced by understating techné as epistemic and intrenched in local and global power relations. Technologies are ‘the means by which bodies and their politics are formed and transformed’ (Dahl and Sundén 2013: 227). Thus, reading somatechnically entails a scrutiny of the types of (un)becomings for which technologies holds capacity. Sullivan and Murray highlights Somatechnics as a field sensitive to processes of (un)becoming through ‘(…) the doubleness of techné as simultaneously constitutive and critical, as the dynamic materialization of becoming and unbecoming’ (Sullivan and Murray 2009: 4). This focus on techné as involved in both generative process of becoming, simultaneously belonging to manifestations of disciplining and repetitive modes of embodiment will guide my analysis.

**Effeminophobia in men’s cosmetic medicine**

As already suggested, men currently experience an increasing pressure related to body ideals from popular and commercial culture, and a growing number of men medicalize their appearance through varying forms of lifestyle medication. However, men’s cosmetic self-presentation still represents a tension-ridden grey area and has been described as a culturally ‘delicate’ topic (Hall et al. 2013). Hall and colleagues have argued that men’s consumption of cosmetic make-up products online is perceived as taboo, even with the rising popularity of these products. They state that men and cosmetic self-presentation is considered to be ‘antithetical’ (Hall et al. 2013).

To understand the perceived antithetical nature of men and cosmetic self-presentation, and how it influences upon the configurations of enhanced masculinity of the clinic websites, the work of Eve K. Sedgwick is relevant. In *Between Men* (1985) and *Epistemology of the Closet*
(1990), Sedgwick theorises how patriarchy depends on homophobia for organising men’s homosocial interactions. By showing how the homosocial and homosexual interlace as a somewhat unbroken continuum among women, Sedgwick is able to uncover how heterosexual masculinity, in opposition, depends upon the violent exclusion of homosexuality for its authority (Sedgwick 1985). Male-to-male relations and desires structure and maintain the privileges of patriarchy, while men’s interest for one another is always wrapped up in fear of homosexuality (Sedgwick 1985). To maintain the contingency of heterosexual masculinity, homophobia polices the symbolic borders of masculine sexual identity. Sedgwick introduced the term effeminophobia in the essay *How to bring your kids up gay*, in which she analyses normative culture’s fear (and diagnosis) of effeminate boys who ‘display a preoccupation with female stereotypical activities’ (Sedgwick 1991: 4). Effeminophobia, then, is used to account for the stigmatisation of homosexuality for men as gravitating around the display of effeminate characteristics (Sedgwick 1991).

The notions of homophobia as theorized by Sedgwick, is on some accounts tied to past social conditions, as homosexuality is no longer repressed in society to the extends that is once was. Still, effeminophobic fear causes men’s cosmetic treatments to be perceived as a ‘delicate’ topic and even antithetical to masculinity. The stigma of men’s embodiment of femininity is articulated most directly on the men’s page of the DermoCosmetic website. In the description of an increasing male consumer segment, the clinic attempts to separate men’s cosmetic treatments from references to femininity. They state: ‘Many men still have reservations about getting started with these [cosmetic] treatments. This is not least because men are not always treated according to their needs as MEN. Instead, they are subjected to a kind of “one (feminine) size fits all” approach’ (dermocosmetic.dk). With this gesture, indicating that it is an aversion towards femininity (not financial limitations or techno scepticism) that is keeping men away from the promised benefits of cosmetic medicine, DermoCosmetic feeds into this dilemma. The clinic seeks to establish a separate symbolic space for masculinity, producing strictly guarded gendered boundaries. Implied is the assumption that femininity should be avoided at all costs.

As cosmetic medicine centres heavily around appearance, the problem raised with effeminophobia becomes a matter of visible detectability, and although a visibly ‘treated’ appearance is considered ‘a bad result’ by most clinics, for men the stakes are expressed to be high, as the language of fear and suspicion shows: ‘Men often ask the question: Do I risk ending up with a ‘treated’ appearance, or even worse: Will I get a feminised facial expression [...]?’
Effeminophobia has been an important parameter for navigating masculine self-identity in past homophobic cultures. In contemporary society, where a number of lifestyle industries seek to encompass male consumers, it is clear that men’s possibilities of becoming with such body technologies is still entrenched in the negative affects of effeminophobia.

Sedgwick’s notions of effeminophobia easily ties into hegemonic masculinity, and it’s concept of the internal hegemony; the continued subordination of marginalised men (Connell 1995, De-metriou 2001). In the following, I will show how masculinity configures as hegemonic around the connection of anger as related to Botox treatments, and how the hegemonic and emergent is negotiated with reference to effeminophobia.

**Botox and the anger line – ambiguous embodiment**

Botox is currently the most popular non-invasive cosmetic treatment worldwide (ISAPS 2018). It’s popularity stems in part from the visible results it renders, in part it is extremely time efficient and lucrative for cosmetic practitioners to administer. In fact, ‘(t)here are very few other medical-cosmetic procedures that are as profitable as Botox’ (Berkowitz 2017: 4). Marketing injections with botulinum toxin as masculine, is then a strategic place to start the re-branding of cosmetic treatments for men. This effort unfolds across media platforms, in formalised advertising and for instance through the popularizing of a hashtag like #Brotox, introduced by clinics and taken up by private social media users. In the general presentation of Botox on the Aglaia website a prevalent connection producing men’s cosmetic treatments as related to anger and aggression takes form. Here the toxin used to cosmetically reduce mimic-induced facial lines is said to reduce the worry lines between the eyebrows (aglaia-klinikken.dk). The text is flanked by images of women wearing white housecoats depicted in relaxed postures. A sensation of wellness and tranquillity emanates from the soft bright colours of the image. On the men’s page, however, the clinic states: ‘Many men can be disposed to a marked […] anger line, located between the eyebrows.’ (aglaia-klinikken.dk, emphasis added). Whereas Botox for women is produced as an investment in cosmetic wellness, that can reduce the signs of worrying (women imagined as caregivers and coordinators of family affairs, as well as more anxious and sensitive), for men lines in the glabella area are framed through anger. Following this logic, the Aglaia clinic references testosterone as a central component of men’s skin: ‘The most important singular factor in
the difference between men and women’s skin is the hormone testosterone’ (aglaia-klinikken.dk).

Karkazis and Jordan-Young write that testosterone naturally exists in all male and female bodies, yet it is used as a metaphor for a particular type of masculinity. Testosterone emerges in culture, they write, through a web of direct claims and indirect associations ‘that circulate around testosterone both as a material substance and as a multivalent cultural symbol’ (Karkazis and Jordan-Young 2018: 7). In popular scientific context, testosterone is often held accountable for what is constructed as men’s biologically determined behavioural patterns such as aggression, competitiveness and sexual drive (Karkazis and Jordan-Young 2018).

By marketing men’s Botox treatments as a remedy for the angerline, the textual elements of the website produces an embodiment that is manifested through qualities of masculine force, drive and power. There by making men’s Botox appointments at cosmetic skincare clinics a question of managing the visual traces of a testosterone fuelled life. Drawing on Connells theory of hegemonic masculinity, these are qualities easily associated with the ideology of masculinity by which it is informed. The textual elements of the men’s page thus become productive in formulating an embodiment with Botox, that can encompass hegemonic masculinity characteristics.

Materializing along with the text, are the images of the website. These stand out through their conceptual distance from the claims made about anger and testosterone. Situated as a banner on the men’s page, an image shows the face, neck and left shoulder of an undressed man looking at himself in a mirror. Standing in a space that seems private and intimate, maybe his bathroom, he applies a skin care product to his cheek. The hand applying the product looks soft, the fingernails are meticulously cut, his hair and beard are trimmed and short and his appearance is well-managed. Behind him a window illuminates the background with warm white light. The man smiles softly at his own reflection in the mirror, as he cares for his face. The image as a technological property of the website allows for a configuration of masculinity as an embodiment of self-care, tactile materiality and softness. Through Eric Anderson’s Inclusive Masculinity Theory, the image of the man caring for his face, can be understood as enabled by social change. Anderson posits that western culture is shifting away from the homophobia that used to characterise it, allowing for inclusive forms of masculinity to manifest alongside orthodox ones (Anderson 2009). When masculinity becomes more inclusive, there will be ‘a marked expansion
in the range of permissible behaviours for boys and men’ (McCormack 2012: 10). Caring for one’s appearance and engaging in processes of cosmetic self-presentation as a man, can be understood as such an expansion.

Cosmetic medicine as a market-oriented and emerging health technology, thus produces ambiguous notions of masculinity and masculine embodiments, as exemplified through the split between hegemonic and emergent/inclusive configurations in the textual and visual elements on the Aglaia website. The ambiguity at play here, reflects the tensions surrounding the emerging health technology of men’s cosmetic treatments, and it’s supposed antithetical nature. In the context of cosmetic appearance work, the references to hegemonic masculinity can be read as a marketing strategy, invested in exorcizing effeminophobia. This is done by anchoring down masculinity in traditional, hegemonic configurations, and thus charting out a safe and recognizable space for consumer masculinity. Meanwhile as the context of cosmetic appearance work has not traditionally been informed by such values, and visual elements are clearly proposing a more tactile and embodied masculinity, the hegemonic elements come to appear as much as performative displays, as normative affirmation. This tension in the data, can be read as creating an opening, a possibility for becoming, as it has not yet settled down into any one fixed or final form. The coexistence of these ambiguous elements appears effortlessly integrated and coherent, as they materialize through the digital materiality of the marketing platform. The technological properties of the online marketing establish a scope of masculine embodiment, available for the user of the website to navigate and consume.

In the following, I explore the notion of career as a prevalent connection unfolding in the data. Through my analysis, I show how the configurations of masculinity forming around it, adds a dimension of social temporality to the ambiguity negotiated between hegemonic and emergent masculinities.

**The Axe or the Scalpel**

On the N’age website the Danish fashion and media celebrity Uffe Buchard is presented as a brand ambassador. Apart from being the only male ambassador, Buchard is also the only one of the clinic’s ambassadors to be depicted in black and white instead of colour. In the image of him, he looks at us with a crooked smile and a stern gaze, the black and white colouring gives the image a toned down and serious air. The visual techniques used for depicting him differs
from those used to depict the female ambassadors. Buchard is publicly known as gay, but as he materializes through traditional image conventions of masculinity, he appears at a conceptual distance from the negative affects of effeminophobia. Just as we saw in relation to Botox and the anger line, tensions related to masculinity emerging in new forms, are negotiated into consumer-friendly configurations through references to hegemonic masculinity. This is also made clear in the following, as Buchard is quoted to have a ‘busy daily schedule with a demanding and extremely outgoing job’ (n’age.dk). It is through his career that Buchard is constructed both as vital and powerful, but also in need of cosmetic appearance work - in order to perform at his best ‘when I meet people’ (n’age.dk). Building on this, a second prevalent connection is produced around men’s cosmetic treatments, that of career. On N’age it is stated that: ‘Our male clients […] want the inner and the outer to align, so that they appear refreshed at work as well as in private’ (n’age.dk).

To appear refreshed at work ties into a logic of competition and the expectation that men are always interested in doing well at work, getting a promotion or at least not being fired. Elisabeth Haiken traces the cultural belief that a man’s appearance is crucial to his economic status as a historic anchoring point in men’s cosmetic surgery. She quotes the New York Times for a headline from a 1973 article on the topic; ‘Fearing the axe, men choose the scalpel’ (Haiken 2000: 395). Haiken shows how plastic surgery first entered the established field of (North American) medicine in the wake of World War One. A time when surgeons faced the challenge of restoring injured soldiers to appearances that would make it possible for them to re-enter society. This aim is most easily translated into the ability of holding a job, and thus being able to provide for a family (Haiken 2000). Throughout the rest of the 20th century, ‘the economic justification provided the frame of reference that enabled surgeons and their patients to redefine cosmetic surgery as masculine common sense rather than effeminate vanity’ (Haiken 2000: 393).

While the mention of work life and career was not present anywhere in the general marketing to women, a testimonial from a man on DermoCosmetic reads: ‘I’m a salesman and I have a lot of contact with clients every day. After I have had the Botox treatments, I feel more relaxed and confident’ (dermocosmetic.dk). Many of the images directed at men amplify the message, by showing male models wearing white shirts and other professional attire. The Aglaia clinic states that ‘[t]he treatments are fast, effective, and you can return to work directly after’ (aglaia-klinikken.dk). The notion that a man’s appearance is crucial to his economic status is articulated as a
justification for men’s engagement in cosmetic appearance work, and it can be read as another reference to hegemonic masculinity. This is done by drawing on the masculinity tropes of men as breadwinners (the heads of the family), and men as oriented towards performing and succeeding at their jobs. Professionalism together with qualities of competitiveness and drive, are integral to the hegemonic ideal.

Meanwhile the logic behind ‘The Axe or the Scalpel’ can also be understood from a different perspective. In his book *Work that Body*, Jamie Hakim builds on Gill’s and Scharff’s point; that neoliberalism is always already gendering and that women are its ideal subjects (Hakim 2019). Hakim argues that men, too – especially after the financial crisis of 2008, are experiencing increasing precariousness. In this process men are subjected to neoliberalism’s feminising axiomatic, resulting in a variety of new practices. When the male body is intensified as a site ‘where the cultural politics of neoliberalism are being negotiated’, men’s lived experiences are brought closer in line to those of women (Hakim 2019: 26). For women, negotiating the precarity of the neoliberal every day by aestheticizing and sexualising their bodies, is not new. Hakim writes that as precarity becomes the experience of the middle class too, (some) men resort to similar strategies as a means for value creation through the body (Hakim 2019).

With Hakim it is possible to see what emerges around men’s cosmetic treatment and the referencing of jobs and career as connected to the notion of entrepreneurial selfhood and the body as an open-ended-project. Indicating that value must continually be produced through optimizing and aestheticizing the body. On the N’age website the following is stated: ‘Our male clients wish to be the best version of themselves […]’, and on the website of Clinque Noir ‘[w]hen men obtain a fresher and younger skin […] they have more time to be who they really are’ (cliniquenoir.dk). Both statements draw on discourses of self-improvement and, as the notion of being the best version of yourself and being who you really are ties into a neoliberal understanding of the self, as a project in need of work in order to be able to perform and compete.

The only image on the men’s page of N’age shows a middle-aged man, he is wearing a black business shirt, slightly open at the neck. His hair and his beard are newly trimmed and styled in a fashionable manner. Visible lines form around his eyes, as he sends us a winning smile, revealing an unusually white set of teeth. He carries authority through his straight posture and assertive expression but appears relaxed and carefree through his suntanned and smiling appearance. When being in shape, styled, relaxed and tanned (as the guy in the photo) becomes the
product for men, with an imperative of being who they really are, masculinity unfolds in an emerging configuration that fits Hakim’s notion of neoliberalism’s feminising axiomatic. Though this point of analysis, we see that the negotiation of masculinity is bound to social temporality, as Hakim's analysis, specific to the first decades of the 21st century, interlaces with and disrupts Haiken’s model of men as breadwinners, tied to the 20th century.

**Masculinize your face**

In this final paragraph, the masculine face as a third connection point around which masculinity is configured in the marketing of cosmetic treatments is analyzed. The presentation of what non-invasive cosmetic treatments can do is premeditated in accordance with very specific gendered criteria of success. Specific strategies for masculinising the face resonate between the websites. On the DermoCosmetic website a *template* stated to reflect ‘a universal ideal for a good masculine appearance’ is presented (dermocosmetic.dk). The template as a concept, is a tool intended for the reproduction of a shape into various copies. The template in question dictates the combination of ‘strong and un-curving eyebrows’, ‘few facial lines’, ‘a strong and reasonably perpendicular jaw line’ and ‘a marked chin’ (dermocosmetic.dk). The idealisation of these specific features is amplified by images of male models on the websites, but they also permeate popular culture more generally. While the ‘universality’ of this ideal should be understood as continuously produced and upheld by popular culture, Connell writes that hegemonic masculinity becomes visible in society through what she terms *exemplars*. Exemplars are not necessarily the most powerful men – they might be a celebrity or a fictive character, but they embody and make visible the type of masculinity that is at present celebrated as exalted (Connell 1995). A quick browse through current male celebrities, international and local, gives flesh to the template suggested by DermoCosmetic, in a seamless fit with the face type, made visible as exalted in popular culture. As the technologies of cosmetic medicine are invested with normative ideals in terms of what it should be produced, the (un)becoming of men’s engagement with these emerging health technologies enter into a disciplining trajectory.

The injection-fabricated perpendicular jaw line and the presence of few facial lines holds the promise of bringing the consumer closer to a cultural ideal, and the privileges it entails (at least for a time). While it should be noted that not all male consumers of cosmetic medicine pursue
masculine facial features, on the men’s subpages, the clinics reinforce the notion of the idealised masculine face as a sales point. This must be understood as a powerful connection, that transcends the discussion of hegemonic or emergent masculinities, as beauty can becomes a vehicle for all types of masculine embodiment. Seeing as beauty has been given the force to elevate all types of identity in western culture (be they oriented by the neoliberal, inclusive, hegemonic or otherwise).

This superimposes a body ideal that will never be fully attainable by anyone (but will probably keep consumers consuming). In this instance men’s cosmetic medicine falls close in line with that of women’s, an industry which has been criticized by feminist scholars for adding to the negative body image and low self-esteem experienced by many women (Bordo 1993).

So, while the connection of *the masculine face*, provides width encompassing all configurations of masculine embodiment, it also makes explicit the disciplining scope it entails.

In explicitly spelling out of what the masculine face should look like, the clinics engage in a disciplining production of masculine embodiment, that must be read as limiting to the types of (un)becomings facilitated in men’s cosmetic treatments. Whereas the connections of *anger* and *career* analytically explored were found to be more ambiguous in terms of the embodiment they charted out, containing reference to both hegemonic, inclusive and precarious forms of masculinity. The notion of *the masculine face* does not provide many generative openings, as it taps into a prevalent cultural script (or template), that seems only a little too recognizable.

**Concluding remarks**

As outlined in this article, the male body is becoming increasingly visible in popular and consumer culture, and men are under an increasing pressure to perform and conform to contingent masculine body ideals. In tandem with this cultural development, various industries orientated towards the medicalising and aestheticizing the male body are gaining popularity. In this context, the cosmetic skincare industry is experiencing a rise in male clients and is increasingly marketing products and procedures to men. In this article, I have analysed the configurations of masculinity and embodiment produced in the online marketing ‘for men’ of three Danish cosmetic skincare clinics; Aglaia-klinikken, N’age and DermoCosmetic. I have employed the notion of *Emergent masculinities* as an analytical frame, in order to conceptualise negotiations and transformations of masculinity, as becoming *with* the technologies of cosmetic medicine. In my
analysis I found that masculinity and embodiment was produced through ambiguous configurations, as the cosmetically enhanced male body was mediated through textual and visual elements referencing both effeminophobia, hegemonic masculinity, inclusive masculinity and precarious notions of masculinity. This ambiguity reflects the negotiation of masculinity between the hegemonic and the emergent in the context of the emergent health technology of men’s cosmetic medicine. Hegemonic elements manifested on the websites producing configurations that anchored down masculinity into well know forms, seeking to expell effeminophobic fear. Instead, men’s cosmetic treatments are aligned with testosterone, anger and competitiveness and the hegemonic masculinity trope of men as breadwinners. Simultaneously emergent elements produced masculinity as inclusive through visual elements mediating masculinity as embodied, soft and self-caring, as well as precarious through the notion of neoliberalism’s feminizing axiomatic. Therefore, masculine embodiment and its possible (un)becomings was produced in non-fixed and ambiguous terms.

Meanwhile masculinity and embodiment were found to configure around three prevalent connections on the websites. The first was composed by references to anger in the framing of men’s Botox treatments, as opposed to framings of worry when the treatment was marketed to women. The second one consisted of references to career as a permissible motive of men’s engagement with appearance enhancing bodywork. It suggested that the imaginaries of cosmetically enhanced masculinity are tied to the general unfolding of social temporality. The third was composed by the notion of the masculine face. This last connection was found to have a very narrow scope, producing embodiment through the disciplining logic of the template, elevating specific facial features as universal ideals. This configuration represents a significant challenge to the (un)becomings which can emerge, as men engage with the technologies of cosmetic medicine.
In Denmark, invasive cosmetic procedures are under legal regulation and must be reported to Sundhedsstyrelsen (the national Danish health authority). The same does not apply for non-invasive treatments, therefore an exact number of treatments per year is hard to come by. Privately commissioned national studies, as well as in international statistics (ISAPS) does however provide an indication. On e-sundhed.dk, official numbers show that men’s invasive cosmetic procedures have risen by roughly 300% between 2008-2018. For non-invasive procedures, a study commissioned by N’age and carried out by Voxmeter in 2020 suggests that 1.6% or around 30,000 Danish men have had a cosmetic treatment at some point. The study was based on an online questionnaire answered by 1,109 men between the ages of 18 and 69. Voxmeter estimates the industry of cosmetic injectables to represent a net value of 200 million DKK a year (Voxmeter report 2020).

In Masculinities Raewyn Connell (1995) theorises masculinity as plural, intersectional and hieratical. Within the social system of gendered relations, hegemonic masculinity is the dynamic configuration that at a given time holds the place as the exalted ideal of masculinity – as such, it serves to legitimise patriarchal power relations, implying the continued subordination of woman and marginalised men. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant ideology of masculinity, and as such, few actual men – if any – will embody it consistently over time, but all men will be required to position themselves in relation to it (Connell 1995). It follows that those who engage it successfully have more power, than those who cannot (Waling 2019). This is what Demetriou has termed the internal hegemony (Demetriou 2001).

Eric Anderson’s coined the term Inclusive Masculinity in the 2009 Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities. He frames social change as a key component through which inclusive forms of masculinity have start to manifest alongside orthodox ones. Based on ethnographic research in young men’s peer-groups Andersons argues that western culture is shifting away from the homophobia that used to characterise it, allowing young men to include gay peers in friendship networks, be more emotionally intimate with friends, as well as physically tactile with other men (Anderson and McCormack 2018). It should be acknowledged that substantial critics have been directed towards Inclusive Masculinity Theory. O’Neill for one has made it clear that Anderson´s theory appears problematic from a feminist point of view, as it does not take woman into account, neither does it succeed in analysing gendered power relations between men and woman. As such Inclusive Masculinity Theory reinforces a postfeminist status quo (O’Neill 2015). DeBoise has criticized Andersons for declaring homophobia to be generally declining, based on fieldwork among a small and privileged social group. This risks erasing awareness of the struggles that went into and continue to go into the recognition of gay rights, while celebrating white, middle-class youths for the advances of these struggles (Deboise 2015).
References


Draft version of the published article


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**Websites**

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