

## Overcoming Mistrusted Masculinity: Analyzing Muslim Men and Their Aspirations for Fatherhood in Denmark

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**Abstract :** This study investigates how Muslim fathers in Denmark are struggling to overcome notions of mistrust from teachers and educators. Starting from school-home-cooperation (parent conferences, school-home communication, etc.), the study finds that many Muslim fathers do not feel acknowledged as a resource in the upbringing of their children. To explain these experiences further, the study suggest the notion of 'mistrusted masculinity' to grasp the controlling image these fathers meet in various schools and child-care-institutions in the Danish Welfare state. The paper is based on 9 months of fieldwork in a Danish school, a social housing area and in various 'father groups' in Denmark. Additional, 50 interviews were conducted with fathers, children, mothers, schoolteachers, and educators. By using Connell's concepts 'hegemonic' and 'marginalized' masculinity as steppingstones, the paper argues that these concepts might entail a too static and dualistic picture of gender. By applying the concepts of 'emergent masculinity' and 'emergent fatherhood' the paper brings along a long needed discussion of how Muslim men in Denmark are struggling to overcome and change the controlling images of them as patriarchal and/or ignorant fathers regarding the upbringing of their children. As such, the paper shows how Muslim fathers are taking action to change this controlling image, e.g. through various 'father groups'. The paper is inspired by the phenomenological notions of 'experience' and in the light of this notion, the paper tells the fathers' stories about their upbringing of their children and aspirations for fatherhood. These stories share light on how these fathers take care of their children in everyday life. The study also shows that the controlling image of these fathers have affected how some Muslim fathers are actually being fathers. The study shows that fear of family-interventions from teachers or social workers e.g. have left some Muslim fathers in a limbo, being afraid of scolding their children, and being confused of 'what good parenting in Denmark is'. This seems to have led to a more lassie fair upbringing than these fathers actually wanted. This study is important since anthropologists generally have underexposed the notion of fatherhood, and how fathers engage in the upbringing of their children. Over more, the vast majority of qualitative studies of fatherhood have been on white middleclass fathers, living in nuclear families. In addition, this study is crucial at this very moment due to the major refugee crisis in Denmark and in the Western world in general. A crisis, which has resulted in a vast number of scare campaigns against Islam from different nationalistic political parties, which enforces the negative controlling image of Muslim fathers.

**Keywords :** fatherhood, Muslim fathers, mistrust, education

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